



JOYFUL REFLECTIONS

Every person you help...makes ripples in society.

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GREETINGS

Dear Friends: I recently celebrated my 83rd birthday. I want to share with you some of the comments people made concerning my age. I will add my responses.

1. You're kidding right? ***I wish I were, but I am not.***
2. You don't look 83. ***Who is your eye doctor?***
3. You don't act 83. ***I am not sure if that is good or bad.***
4. Don't you know that 83 is the new 63? ***How can you say that with a straight face?***
5. Does it bother you turning 83? ***No, not really. I know that God has a plan for my life, which includes the number of years He wants me to live, as well as what He wants me to do with them.***

June Block wrote the following, which I try to follow.
I choose to grow old proudly and triumphantly. Not old and worn, weak and weary, not old like a rotten apple, shriveled and tasteless; but old like cheese ripened to exquisite sharpness. Not old like an old calendar, out of date and useless; but old like an old painting, its beauty bringing new pleasure with each new viewing. Not old like an outdated newspaper now lining the birdcage; but old like the Bible whose truths still speak to those who will hear. Not old like an old magazine tossed into the rubbish, but old like an old valentine, its message pure and sweet though the paper has grown yellow and brittle. Old like the last delicious bit of ice cream from the bottom of the dish held for a moment on the tongue and savored before it passes to eternity. Let me savor the words and all that they mean when I say, "I HAVE GROWN OLD."

For me, one of the secrets to growing old gracefully is to keep your sense of humor. **You don't stop laughing because you have grown old; you have grown old because you stopped laughing.** When I was on the radio five days a week for fifteen minutes, I would end my program each day with a joke. I must admit that some of them were corny. I remember getting a letter from one individual who wrote, "I liked your program today—your joke was okay."

Most people don't make the distinction between happiness and joy. **For most people, happiness lies in the future. "I will be happy when..."** In an affluent society, people expect to be happy every moment of every day. Viktor Frankl spent time in a German



Father Scott with his mother, Anna Seethaler, and his older brother, Michael.

concentration camp. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, he writes about those special people in the camp who never lost hope and were willing to help others. The Germans were able to take everything from them—but not their humanity. I find few joyful people these days. I believe it is often because of the news media. After constant exposure to stories about war, natural disasters, fraud, and political attacks, the viewer struggles to find many reasons to be joyful. The poor in Oaxaca don't have any televisions, so they are not exposed to all the bad news in the world. **Although their lives may not be "happy," they are still joyful people.** I find a big difference between children living in the USA and children living in Oaxaca. I have never heard a child in Oaxaca complain about being bored. After completing their chores, they will amuse themselves with simple toys or play games that they make up with their siblings.

These are the words from the last half of the Serenity Prayer: "Living one day at a time. Enjoying one moment at a time. Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace. Taking as he did the sinful world as it is, not as I would have it. Trusting that he will make all things right, if I surrender to his will. That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever."

As we move through the fall, I hope you can enjoy the cooler evenings and—depending on where you live—the beautiful color-changing of the leaves.

God bless you!
Father Scott

A Knock on the Classroom Door

The following is an excerpt from Chapter 1 of the recently completed biography, *To See the Face of God: The Life and Legacy of Father Scott Seethaler*. The biography is available for purchase through the Amazon website as a hard copy or a Kindle download. The QR code will take you directly to the Amazon page. Alternatively, you may search for “Father Scott Seethaler biography” in the Amazon search bar.



Author's Note

Father Scott Seethaler, O.F.M., Cap., was born **Thomas Charles Seethaler**. When he joined the Capuchin community, he relinquished his first name and adopted the name “Scott.” Therefore, Father Scott is alternatively referred to as “**Thomas**” or as “**Father Scott**” depending on the time of his life being discussed.

Chapter One: A Knock on the Classroom Door

The sudden sound of knocking broke the rhythm of Sister Bede's math lesson. Slightly perturbed by the interruption, she opened the classroom door and exchanged hushed words with **Father John Lukasik**, the assistant pastor of **St. Henry's Catholic School**. Their words were inaudible to the eighth-grade students, who were left wondering why the short Polish priest was taking the highly unusual step of intruding upon their class.

Seated at the back of the classroom, **Thomas Charles Seethaler**, age thirteen, gazed out the window at the beautiful fall foliage on display that crisp October afternoon in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Abruptly, **Sister Bede** turned around and pointed directly at Thomas.

“Thomas?”

“Yes, Sister?”

“Father Lukasik is out in the hallway. He would like to have a word with you.”

Thomas's mind raced as he walked out of class and entered the hallway. What had he done wrong? Was he in trouble? Was there an illness in the family? A crisis at home?

“Yes, Father?” asked Thomas.

“I would like to ask you a question,” Father Lukasik replied.

“Yes, Father.” Thomas's anxiety rose higher.

“Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?”

The question surprised Thomas, but he answered honestly. **“Yes, but when I was younger.”** At that point he was thinking about becoming a lawyer.

Father Lukasik replied, “Well, I would like for you to think about becoming a priest.”

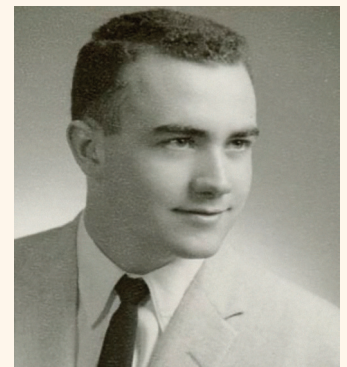
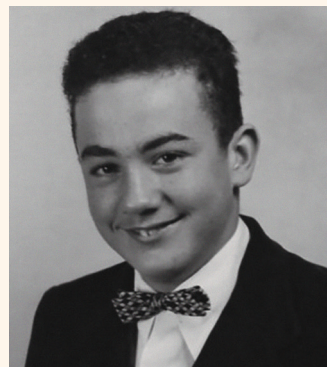
“Well, Father, I don't think that I'm worthy enough to be a priest.”

Father Lukasik replied without hesitation. “If only worthy people were called to be priests, there wouldn't be any priests at all. Please... think about it.”

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**Thomas thought himself an unlikely candidate for priesthood.** He wasn't an altar boy. His family was religious but not overly devout, and beyond Sunday Mass they didn't have much contact with the church. Nor had his older siblings shown any inclination towards a religious vocation. One paternal cousin had entered St. Fidelis Seminary in Herman, Pa., three years earlier, but Thomas had little contact with him.

That evening Thomas told his parents about his conversation with Father Lukasik. They expressed no strong opinions either way. **“It's your choice,”** they told him.



*Father Scott in elementary school (left) and in high school (right).*

Thomas gave serious consideration to Father Lukasik's probing question. He thought about the subtle devotion that was being encouraged during his grade school years.

Thomas mused over these times: “The sisters taught me how to practice the sacrament of the moment, to enjoy being with God in each moment of the day. To this day, I occasionally get up and go over to the window of my room and look out at the grass. It's very soothing to my eyes and my heart. **The secret is to enjoy the moment. To be attentive to all the signs of God working in our daily lives.** If we do this, we will not despair.”

Thomas became an altar boy. The first Mass that he served was the funeral Mass for the death of the pastor of the local church.

At that time, nobody except the priest touched the chalice. The altar boy could only touch the chalice when it was covered by a veil. Unfortunately, however, Thomas was very nervous and accidentally touched it. He then panicked, convinced he had committed a mortal sin, and wondered whether or not he should confess. (Two years later, as a seminarian, he had the opportunity to ask whether touching the chalice was indeed a terrible sin. Much to his relief, he discovered it was not.)

During daily Mass at St. Henry's, Thomas continued to ponder Father Lukasik's straightforward, yet profound, question. **He began to have a deep appreciation for the Eucharist and all the prayers.** After much reflection, he discerned that he wanted to become a diocesan priest. Father Lukasik then arranged for him to meet with the diocesan vocational director, who asked him where he wanted to go to school.

Thomas replied, "I'd like to go to a school as close to home as possible, and my cousin is at St. Fidelis."

**St. Fidelis Seminary**, about an hour's drive north of Pittsburgh, was run by the **Capuchins**. Each year they admitted up to ten diocesan students. In the spring of his eighth-grade year, Thomas was accepted for enrollment in the fall semester. His cousin was entering his senior year as Thomas was beginning life as a freshman.

That summer before seminary was a typical one. Thomas spent time with friends and participated in Boy Scout activities. **Then, on Labor Day weekend in 1957, the Seethaler station wagon navigated the gentle rolling hills of western Pennsylvania, carrying fourteen-year-old Thomas to his date with destiny.** As they continued north along Route 8, he felt no doubt or trepidation—just a sensation of excitement. He had always been independent, and he had no fear about taking this giant new step.

There had been no prior campus tour, nor any type of freshman orientation. As the station wagon descended

the last hill, the large water tower in Herman came into view. To the left was the church, and right beside it was the seminary. **Seeing the campus for the first time, Thomas was impressed.**

The students welcomed young Thomas while his parents discussed finances with the administrator.

During their stoic goodbyes in the parking lot, he and his parents showed little emotion. His parents were not the affectionate types. And on his part, Thomas felt no homesickness. **He embraced his new situation.** Only years later did he learn that his parents had to pull over when they were driving away because they were crying so hard.

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Father Scott has reflected on why Father Lukasik, the assistant pastor at St. Henry's Catholic School, had singled him out for the priesthood that fateful afternoon in 1956.

"I was a big extrovert, a jokester, but never a troublemaker. I was always respectful. And back then, they were pushing vocations. Altogether, five students from my eighth-grade class were sent to the seminary that year."

If Father Lukasik hadn't planted the seed of a vocation in his mind, Father Scott would probably not have set out on that path.

God love you.

Charley Gates, MD
Board President, TASH

Joyful Reflections: Witness

At the beginning of July, Dr. Charley Gates traveled to Oaxaca to meet with our partners and spend some time with the staff of La Clínica. Upon returning, he received an email that he shared with the Board from one of our partners, Hermano Justino Sánchez Durá. **Hermano Justino is a Capuchin friar who leads an organization called SERCADE in Chalcatongo de Hidalgo.** TASH feels very strongly about SERCADE's mission and impact. Hermano Justino was unable to meet with Charley because he was in Cuba, conducting work on behalf of SERCADE.

TASH's sole focus is on the poor in Oaxaca, so I was hesitant to share this communication from Hermano Justino. However, after talking it over with Charley, we both agreed it would be appropriate to do so as we were so moved by Hermano Justino's witness to the conditions on the ground in a country that is closer to Florida than Cleveland is to Pittsburgh.

In our daily lives, we often find ourselves searching for ways to navigate a world that feels increasingly complex and fractured. Father Scott has always



La Clínica staff conduct a home visit to ensure that this patient's recovery continues unabated.

reminded us of where our journey must begin: in quiet, steadfast prayer. **Father Scott teaches us that prayer is not a passive escape, but an active, transformative force.** When we pray, we align our hearts with God's grace, opening ourselves up to become instruments of His peace.

Father Scott has always had a deep affinity for Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whose life was a living testament to the power of love in action. **Mother Teresa famously said, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."** This beautiful philosophy reminds us that we don't need global platforms to make a difference. By doing small, intentional acts within our own

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Joyful Reflections, continued

communities—a kind word, a shared meal, or a moment of listening—we set off ripples of hope that can literally change the world.

Sometimes, however, our faith calls us to look beyond our immediate surroundings and bear witness to the profound struggles of our global family. **Hermano Justino's report from his trip to Cuba is a sobering reminder of how desperately our prayers and small acts of love are needed.**

Hermano Justino shared that his visit was filled with immense suffering. The reality in Cuba today is heartbreaking. Due to a severe lack of fuel, the streets are empty, hotels are closed, and there is virtually no work. **Daily life has ground to a halt owing to some catastrophic power outages; electricity is only available for a few hours a day, and not even every day.** Without refrigeration, preserving food that's already scarce has become almost impossible. **The sweltering temperatures mean sleepless nights, and because there is no gas, families must cook with charcoal.** In a devastating display of inflation, a single sack of charcoal now costs 2,900 Cuban pesos—nearly the entire monthly salary of a cook, which is just 3,000 pesos.

And the hardship is visible everywhere. People flock to convents begging for food and medicine. **Medications are so scarce that they are sold by individual pills rather than boxes, and some are forced to sell their own medicine just to buy food.** Yet, from fear of the government, the people suffer in silence.

Hearing of such extreme deprivation can leave us feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Yet, Hermano Justino also witnessed something else: a powerful experience of grace. **Amidst their poverty, the Cuban people continue to share what little they have with unmatched generosity.** God's comfort remains present in their resilience.

We may not be able to change the political landscape of Cuba overnight, but we can bear witness to the pain of those who reside there. We can lift them up in our prayers, just as Father Scott guides us to do, **and we can commit to carrying out small acts of love in our own neighborhoods, keeping the flame of hope alive for the entire world.**

Charlie Baker
Board Vice President, TASH



Left: Charley discusses current challenges and opportunities with La Clínica staff members.

Right: The staff of La Clínica recently conducted a team-building and goals workshop.



FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES



The Olé 5k will take place on **October 3, 2026**. A private Mass, followed by brunch, will be held for Olé 5k sponsors on **October 4** at the **St. Augustine Friary in Lawrenceville**. For more information, or to become a sponsor and volunteer, please visit <https://tashinc.org/ole-5k/>



To make a donation, please make a check out to "Tash, Inc." and use the included donation envelope.

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