

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for Epiphany ~

**O God
Maker of all,
and lover of what you have made,
you have sent Jesus
into my life,
born of Mary,
to share my humanity.
And you send his spirit
so that I might share his divinity.
Help me to find Jesus,
your son.**

**I need people
who make his presence real to me,
through their lives.
They are the star for me today,
They are the light
leading to you.
Help me to become a sign of faith —
one who has found the Christ.**

**I bring not the richness of the sea
nor the wealth of nations.
But I bring myself,
the life that I live,
as I stand before you this day.
Amen.**

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:
The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560. e-mail: jbscc@ix.netcom.com

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY:

The Feast of the Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feasts, though throughout the centuries it has celebrated a variety of things. The word “Epiphany” comes from a Greek verb meaning “to reveal”, and all of the various events celebrated by the Feast of the Epiphany are revelations of Christ to humankind.

Like many of the most ancient Christian feasts, Epiphany was first celebrated in the East, where it has been held from the beginning almost universally on January 6th. Among Eastern Catholics [both Roman and Orthodox], the feast is known as “Theophany” — which means “the revelation of God”.

The Feast of the Epiphany originally celebrated four different events — The birth of Jesus, the visitation of the Magi, the Baptism of Jesus, and the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Each of these is a revelation of God to humankind — at Christ’s Baptism, the Holy Spirit descends and the voice of God the Father is heard declaring that Jesus is His Son; at the wedding in Cana, the miracle reveals that God transforms ordinary things into divine experiences; at the Nativity, the angels bear witness to Christ, and the shepherds — representing the people of Israel — bow down before Him; and at the visitation of the Magi, Christ’s divinity is revealed to the Gentiles — the other nations of the earth.

Eventually, the celebration of the Nativity [Christmas] became separate among Western Christians, but the Feast of the Epiphany still commemorated the Baptism, the first miracle, and the visit from the Wise Men. Thus, The Feast of the Epiphany came to mark the end of Christmastide — or the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Over the centuries, the various celebrations were further separated in the West, and now the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on the weekend following the Feast of the Epiphany, and the wedding at Cana is commemorated on the weekend after the Baptism of the Lord.

In many parts of the world [outside the West], the celebration of Epiphany is even more important than the celebration of Christmas. In many places in the world, Christians still exchange gifts on the Epiphany — the day on which the Wise Men brought their gifts to the Christ Child.

**CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS:**

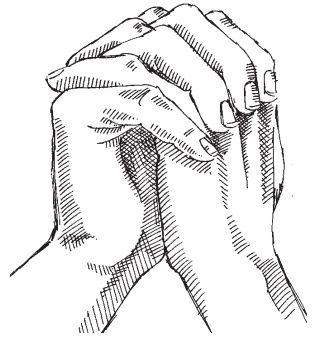
During this Christmas season, we would like to thank all those who have helped us by making memorial offerings. May our floral decorations and this season remind all of us of those special relationships which we hold close to our heart. Please keep the following people in your prayers: **In memory of Rita & Chuck Vaughn, Shirley Riley, Ronald Rasoletti, Robert Rasoletti, William Rasoletti, Julius Rasoletti, Susan Chorich, Carmello & Theresa Pastore, Joe & Mary Pastore, Sebastain & Barbara Pastore, Frances Judson, Joe DePilla, Mr. Pete, Sam Poliafico, Thomas Anthony, Louis & Louise De Santo, Joe Amato, Anthony Herbst, Joe & Josie Polo, Sandy & Maxine Moss, Michael & Frances Fiedor, Stanley Fiedor, Joseph Fiedor, Angeline Fiedor, Victoria Fiedor, Helen Fiedor, Sister Euphrasia, Joseph & Bridget Hostoffer, Margaret Hostoffer, Gertrude Hostoffer, John Hostoffer, Frank Hostoffer, Joseph Hostoffer Jr., Eleanor & Curtiss DeMarco, Helen & John Blazek, Antoinette & Frank Rezabek, John & Mary Blazek.** If you would like to make a memorial offering, please place it in an envelope marked “Memorial Offering, Christmas Decorations” and give to Father John or place it in the offering basket. God bless all of you.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Ken Kotner who has been diagnosed with bone cancer.
- For Mary Branton who is ill.
- For Maria Straubhaar, grandmother of Timothy Fiorta [‘02], who is critically ill with cancer.
- For Daniel Melaragno, grandson of College Guidance associate, Kathy Lynch, who is recovering from surgery.
- For William Velotta, grandfather of William [‘15], Kylie [‘16] and Gianna [‘20] who is ill.
- For Louis Kibling, who has been diagnosed with brain cancer.
- For Frank Fusaro, who is critically ill with cancer.
- For Ursula Wyras, mother of Janet Heryak, and Grandmother of Lillian [‘09], Rosa [‘12], and Edwin [‘17], who is recovering from surgery.
- For Patrick Hurst, who is experiencing complications with blood clots following surgery.
- For Joseph Morgan, who has been diagnosed with cancer.
- For Thomas Lanese [‘59], who is critically ill with cancer.
- For Bill Collins who suffered a major stroke.
- For Marlene Zepkin who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Francis Bellitto who has cancer.
- For Jonathan Cooney who has cancer.
- For Margaret Keller, sister-in-law of Brother Richard, who is ill.
- For Ida Urbancic, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Evelyn Catanese, great-aunt of Alyssa Solano [‘15] who is critically ill.
- For Katie Bloom [‘11] who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkin’s Lymphoma.
- For James Keller, nephew of Brother Richard, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Tracy Stokes who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.
- For Betty Herten, aunt of Hope [‘13] and James [‘15] Herten, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.
- For Roe Teisl, wife of Director of Student Life, Tiho Teisl, mother of James [‘93], Michael [‘95], and Stephen [‘00] Teisl, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jenny Hammond, daughter of Librarian, Lynn Hammond, who is ill.
- For Donald Bibbo who is ill.
- For Greg Sazima [‘79] who is undergoing treatment and surgery for bone cancer.
- For Frank Furlong, grandfather of Jennifer [‘13], Craig [‘17] and Sean [‘19] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Ann Raymond, grandmother of Upper School Teacher, Adam Lesko [‘05] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Mary Hovanscek, aunt of Benjamin [‘24], Nathan [‘26], and Evan [‘27] Lindley, who has been diagnosed with colon cancer.
- For Kathy Katona, who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Clara Joczzyk, friend of Brother Richard, who is seriously ill.
- For Eileen Belak, sister of Maintenance Director, Dan Kohn, and aunt of Matt [‘07], who is seriously ill with acute leukemia.
- For Dan Houlahan who is in rehabilitation following a brain aneurysm.
- For Nicholas Zanella, who is undergoing treatment for a rare medical condition.
- For Sister Barbara Johns, I.H.M., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.




PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For the grandmother of Adyson Cohen [‘16] who is critically ill.
- For Ted Welles, husband of Judy Morgan, who is undergoing medical testing.
- For Courtney Jacobs Polcar [‘96] who is recovering from kidney transplant surgery, and for her brother Nick [‘93] who was the donor.
- For Nick Merkel, husband of Math instructor, Mary, and father of Bart [‘10], who injured in an accident.
- For Louise Alexander, sister of Queeny Healey, mother of Martha [‘75], Mary [‘75], Therese [‘77], Patrick [‘79] and Lee [‘85], grandmother of MacKenzie [‘11] and Brynn [‘14] Alexander, and Genevive [‘04], Colin [‘05], and Mary Madeleine [‘09] Ray, who is seriously ill.
- For David Black, father of Davey [‘24], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Emily Evans who is ill.
- For Sister Angela Plata, I.H.M., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Dee Zechman who is undergoing treatment for bone cancer.
- For Ken Gabele, nephew of Brother Richard, who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Judith Moran, mother of Peter [‘88] and Kelly [‘90] Moran, who is seriously ill.
- For Sister Jean Hoelke, S.N.D., aunt of chapel associate, Patty Szaniszlo, who is recovering from eye surgery.
- For Antoinette Daquila, grandmother of Alyssa Solano [‘15], who is battling cancer.
- For Tim Keller, nephew of Brother Richard, who is recovering from back surgery.
- For people who have MS.
- For Roger Schaefer who was seriously injured in a fall.
- For Margaret Carlin, former kitchen staff person, who is undergoing treatment for colon cancer.
- For Gil Lowry Sr., father of upper school instructor, Cyndi Lowry, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Peter Settlemire, brother of Bill [‘79], Ted [‘81], and Bob [‘88] Settlemire, who is critically ill following a brain aneurism.
- For Janine Yardy, daughter of Geraldine Mockler, who is seriously ill.
- For Father Denis St. Marie, who is undergoing treatment for a heart condition and for cancer.
- For Marie Lynch Julius who is seriously ill with cancer.
- For Don Zack, maintenance associate, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Brother Richard Keller, C.S.C. who is undergoing treatment for prostate cancer.
- For Mary McMullen, wife of Tom McMullen [‘52], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For those who have emotional illnesses.

ALTAR SERVERS and LECTORS:

 We continue to be in need of servers and lectors. **Any student who is in the 3rd [and up] grade is invited to become an altar server; any student who is in the 5th [and up] grade is invited to become a lector.** These are both wonderful ministries — a great way to serve God and the faith community. If you would like to take advantage of these opportunities, **please give your name to Father John.** You do not have to attend Gilmour to be an altar server, lector, or to be involved in any other ministry at Our Lady Chapel. **Please call the chapel office [440-473-3560].**



FAITH EDUCATION:

To help you plan ahead, here are January dates from Faith Education — **January 6th, 13th and 27th** Our Sessions go from 8:45—9:45 AM each time we meet, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass.** We have a number of families who attend the chapel regularly who have children who attend non-Catholic schools. **If you have not registered your child for Faith Education, please do so as soon as possible.** Our Faith Education Program will help to fulfill your on-going religious education. Our program runs from grades K-8. Students in grades 9-12 are encouraged to participate in our Life Teen Program. Thank you for taking care of this important task.



SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, January 6: Epiphany	10:00 AM
Monday, January 7: St. André Bessette	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Tuesday, January 8:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Wednesday, January 9:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Thursday, January 10:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Friday, January 11:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Saturday, January 12 Baptism of Jesus	5:00 PM
Sunday, January 13: Baptism of Jesus	10:00 AM

SUPPORT OUR LIFETEEN PROJECT — JANUARY 19-20:

Our Teens have undertaken a project to keep the pantry filled with wholesome foods at the Ronald McDonald House. As you know, the Ronald McDonald House is the residential facility in University Circle for families with children in the hospital, or who reside at Ronald McDonald House while their child is receiving outpatient treatment. Very often, a family can miss meals because of the hospital schedule. We will keep the pantry filled with foods that will enable them to “have a meal on the run” when they return. **Every 3rd Weekend of the month, we will collect food items for the pantry, which our teens will then take down to Ronald McDonald House and place in their pantry.** Here is what we need: **Cereal, Jelly, Peanut Butter, Spaghetti Sauce, Mayonnaise, Canned tuna and chicken, Paper Plates** [no Styrofoam, please], **and Paper Bowls.** **We do not need commercial size products — just the regular sizes that you buy for your family.** Just place the items in the narthex of the chapel — right by the “registration table”, and we will take them from there. We hope you will join us in this wonderful outreach to families who are going through tough times.



REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

As we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany this weekend, we are invited — on this Day of Revelation — to be women and men of “manifestation” ourselves. It is not so much about the gifts that we have to present to Jesus; rather, it is about the gifts that God has given us for the purpose of revealing to others some particular feature of God’s personality.

In the 3rd Eucharistic Prayer we ask that Jesus might make of us “an eternal offering” to God — isn’t that thrilling? We are the receivers, and yet Christ has come to make us gifts offered back to the Giver! What of God do we reveal?

At the end of their visit to the Christ-child [Matthew 2:1-12], the Magi went off with a mission — to share what they had received in this “marvelous exchange”. We took need to live our lives with the same sense of mission. Jesus does not stay a child, nor does he remain in Bethlehem or Nazareth. To accept our “gifthood” is to accept our being “givenhood” — and that will take much grace and time.

Secrets are exciting, and when one is shared with us that energy changes to intimacy and a sense of being special. When the information becomes public and generally known, that specialness is dimmed.

Israel had a long history of being intimate and special through the covenants made by God. They were not exactly secrets, but the “One God” was sharing with this one nation information or revelation of Who this “One God” was. Their history was a continuous intensification of their own image and the image of God for them. They were promised a Messiah, and in the past weeks, we have heard of the miracles and fruitfulness which would accompany His arrival.

The prophet Isaiah [60:1-6] foretells that this Messiah — this kind of secret — is going to be shared beyond the borders of Israel. The nation will still be special because people from the sea to the desert will come to visit the glory of God manifested in Jerusalem and Israel. The riches of other lands will come in recognition of the presence of a new brilliance which has shined upon this little place — this little spot — on the earth. This, along with other prophecies, moves the secret more outward making the whole world bright, and enlightened by the Light of this new revelation. God claims all people as special — as belonging to this “One God”.

The story of the Magi is unique to Matthew’s Gospel [2:1-12]. The story presents Jesus as both the One Who is to come, and the One who has come for all. The Magi represent the “beyond” or distant lands, and peoples to whom the Christ will offer His universal wisdom. These “Wise Men” also represent the former ways of thinking, wondering, and philosophizing. They come in a sign of surrender to this new “epiphany” — or display of this “One God” Who is for all, and is now known as the God Who does the seeking and the finding. The Magi are the figures of the world who did the seeking for — and the finding of — God. The Light is initiated by God, and this Light is meant for the whole world.

As with the shepherds, these wise men continue in a liturgical manner. They arrive, having wandered in faith, have an offertory procession, a time of adoration, and then a sending. Were they totally satisfied by the whole experience of stars, warnings, findings? They were somehow missioned by the encounter to go farther and further and deeper. Like the shepherds they were changed, and then sent

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Thomas Cox, father of Patrick Cox [‘83]
- For John Mehill
- For Ralph Young, uncle of Kris Rogers, great-uncle of Harry [‘22]
- For Donald Dileno, father of Brian Dileno [‘73]
- For Charlotte Dadzie, mother of Brother Anthony Dadzie, C.S.C.
- For Annette Pecsok
- For John Cawley
- For Anne Nymann
- For Anthony Costa, father of Brother Kajol Costa, C.S.C.
- For Anne Poklar, mother of Gilmour Trustee, Michael Poklar and Robert [‘71], grandmother of Michelle [‘91], Katherine [‘01], Aaron [‘02], and Amy [‘05] Poklar.
- For Michael Minnaugh, father of Erin Minnaugh [‘06]
- For William DeFlorio.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to violence in our society.
- For those who struggle with family relationships.
- For all those looking for employment.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For a family going through a difficult time.
- For all caregivers.
- For a special intention.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.

XLT AT CENTER FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP:

The next XLT will be held at the Center for Pastoral Leadership — where the FEST occurred — on **Tuesday, January 15th at 7:00 PM.** Join with many teens and families from across the diocese for this special evening of Prayer, Praise, and Adoration. If you have never been to XLT before, you are in for a marvelous spiritual experience. Spend a renewing evening with Jesus. Make plans to attend.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:**

Father John will be available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you on **every Saturday** between **3:30 – 4:00 PM.** Confessions are also available “by appointment.” The Reconciliation Room is located in the small chapel directly across from Father

**LIVE LIFE:**

Act as if what you do makes a difference — it does!

—William James

THE BEST IS YET TO COME:

Our ancestors in the faith celebrated the feast of Epiphany long before they celebrated Christmas. Originally it was a three part celebration — each segment having something to do with “discovering” Jesus. The first revolved around the magi; the second, Jesus’ baptism; and the third, the wedding feast at Cana. In each instance, Jesus is revealed as being someone out of the ordinary.

Those who put statues of the “three kings” in front of a Bethlehem stable crib set haven’t read Matthew’s narrative of the event [Matthew 2:1-12]. There is no stable in his infancy passages — no angels, no shepherds. We’re to presume Bethlehem is Joseph and Mary’s hometown. They didn’t travel there from Nazareth because of a Roman census. And the magi didn’t arrive within 12 days of his birth. According to Matthew’s account, the encounter of the magi with Jesus could have happened when he was a couple of years old.

But more to the theological point. Without knowing it, many of us through the years, have bought into St. Bonaventure’s theological principle of “potuit, deuit, ergo fecit” [“he could do it, it would make sense if he did it, therefore he did it”]. The “he” is God. I remember as a child hearing that kind of argument used to prove the Blessed Virgin Mary was the most physically beautiful woman who ever lived. Isn’t God able to create such a woman? Doesn’t it make sense that he’d give that exceptional beauty to his son’s mother? Therefore Mary was the world’s most beautiful woman.



One of the reasons that the bible is so thick is that its writers never followed that type of theologizing. Our sacred authors’ reasoning went: “He could do it, it would make sense if he did it, but he almost never does it that way.” Nowhere is this more evident than in Matthew’s story of the magi.

It would certainly make sense that Jesus would be initially “discovered” by a group of holy, pious, bible-savvy Jews. But that’s not the way that God engineered Jesus’ “coming out”. Not only aren’t the magi Jewish, they’re practicing a type of pagan religion which, according to Exodus, should get them stoned the instant they cross into the Holy Land. They’re astrologers — people who look to the stars and planets to determine God’s will in their lives. Jews were absolutely forbidden — under the same pain of death — to engage in such endeavors.

We also see that same pattern of unpredictable God-ordered events in other parts of the Bible. Though one of Isaiah’s prophetic goals is to get his fellow Jews to return to Israel after the Babylonian Exile, he’s convinced that, even if they don’t come back, non-Jews will still make Jerusalem a place of pilgrimage — “The wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the Lord” [Isaiah 60:1-6].

In the same vein, the Paul’s letter to the Church at Ephesus reflects on one of earliest Christianity’s most surprising events — “Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” [Ephesians 3:2-6]. No one could have predicted that a Jewish reform movement would eventually be the driving force behind a non-Jewish faith.

Maybe we Christians should make Al Jolson’s famous line — “You ain’t seen nothin yet!” — a mantra for our faith — especially after reading what the scriptures say about this feast.

—taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet

back into the mundane of usual life.

The gifts which the Magi had presented represent what had been valuable to these seekers; they leave these gifts at the “house” and then leave by “another way” — things have changed. They have not so much found as they have been found, and they leave that place to begin spreading the news of the Finder whom they found.

This is all a grand ending and beginning. The Magi-story is the revelation that mere human wisdom searches for more than it can understand. The Wanderers, who have come from afar in distance and time, arrive not at an idea or principle, but at the mystery of a Person. And so must we as well. We like to think of God, arrive at our own logical, reasonable concept of God, and we love to say that we have found God. If we determine Who and What God is, then we would seem to control God. God would have to act accordingly. In prostrating themselves, the Magi admit their former human arrogance and surrender to the truth that until then, they had not been satisfied with the conclusions of their personal ponderings.

The Epiphany is a grand revelation that God will not be found to satisfy human thinking. This seeking of us by God encourages us to live with the dissatisfactions of our hearts. Jesus has come among us — and within us — to accompany our spirits, and not merely slake the thirsts of thought. We are invited to lay down our intellects, as precious gold — which they are. We — like the Magi — pick up our lives which have been met, found, and sent off — the better for the finding.

It can be assumed that, as with the shepherds before them, the Magi went back by “another way” — not merely geographically. They return to a new and different way of relating with life. Their hearts and spirits are comforted, and their minds still turning these things over in wonder — not a bad way to journey. The seeking is God’s labor; the being found is ours. For us finding is less lively than seeking. When we hear that we should seek and find, what Jesus and the Magi teach us is that human finding will always lead to some kind of dissatisfaction — and so the seeking re-begins.

The Magi did not stay at the place to which the star guided them. Nobody who came to find Jesus — from the shepherds to those seeking Him within the tomb — were ever allowed just to stay nice and close to Him, the finder. He moved them along in their human-heart search. This too is not a bad, but rather holy way to journey.

I have on my desk a humorous Christmas card with the Three Wise Men walking with their gifts in their arms. The caption reads: “You brought gold! I thought there was a fifteen-dollar limit.” I wonder what kind of ego-involvement there was within these three wanderers/wonderers. What was in it for them personally? Did they love the finding of truths purely for the finding? Were they searching for a wisdom that would satisfy them so that they would never have to leave home again or never have to ponder stars?

Jesus is not the reward for those who can figure Him out by deep thinking. There are those whose deep thinking stumbles over the manger and all that it means. They are humbled by their not being able to figure it all out, and so they go back by the same way they came. When they find something which satisfies their intellects, they will feel good egotistically about themselves — even if what they find is that there never was a manger, stars, a Baby wrapped in the love of the Creator of mangers.

We do not satisfy our egos by ultimately finding Jesus as an answer, but we find ourselves humbled by being found not as an answer, but a way to live with our wonderings. There is no fifteen dollar limit to our surrendering the total control of the wealth of our minds, imaginations, and egos.

—taken from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

GO FOR IT:

“A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.”

—Albert Einstein

A BABY CHANGES EVERYTHING:

A lifetime of bathrobe dramas known as “Christmas pageants” — not to mention outdoor “living nativities” — have willy-nilly shaped our pictures of the events surrounding Jesus’ birth. It may seem, at times, that our Christmas “remembrance” is more shaped by culture than the actual scriptures themselves. In our mind’s eye we see Mary and Joseph — not the newborn baby Jesus in the manger. Gathered around are the curious shepherds and their sheep, oxen, and donkey, the three “kings” bearing their gifts, and an angel choir singing overhead. Such a scene is only possible, however, if the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke are whirled together in a blender along with some artificial sweeteners.

Matthew’s gospel steeps the events of Jesus’ birth in scriptural traditions, proving how Jesus perfectly fit the mold for the expected Messiah. Having offered an extensive genealogy to trace the Davidic roots [see Matthew 1], Matthew turns from the question of “who” Jesus was to “where” he came from. Matthew is primarily concerned with informing his first century Jewish audience that the Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee was born in Bethlehem — the scripturally predicted site of the Messiah’s birth [see Micah 5]. Matthew also invokes the cast of the mysterious “Magi” to further authenticate the messianic portents that accompanied Jesus’ birth [Matthew 2:1-12].

For all his genealogical build-up, Matthew gives surprisingly short-shrift to the actual event of Jesus’ birth. As the gospel writer turns his attention to “where” Jesus was born — where he came from — Matthew merely states that the events he is about to describe took place “after Jesus was born in Bethlehem.” He does, however, specify that these events took place “in the time of King Herod” — or Herod the Great — who ruled as “king of the Jews” under Roman rule from 37-4 BCE. Herod was Idumean by birth — tribes who had been forcibly converted to Judaism by the early Israelite kings. As a result many Jews would have considered Herod only “half-Jewish.”

Little wonder, then, that when an entourage of “wise men from the East” appear in Jerusalem asking where they may find the newborn “king of the Jews,” they get Herod’s full attention. These “magi” — from which our word “magic” is derived — were likely Persian or Babylonian scholars who became a priestly caste attached to the royal courts of Babylonia and Persia — and perhaps even India and Arabia. They were trained in astrology and practiced dream interpretation and herbal curatives. Such “magi” had long served as advisor to kings, but were not themselves royalty. So there goes *We Three Kings of Orient Are* — or most precisely: “We Three Kings of Orient” weren’t.

What is surprising is that given the condemnation of astrology and other forms of “magical” divination throughout the Old Testament, Matthew takes such pains to document their positive role in the story of Jesus’ birth. Their observation of the “rising star” puts them on the road to find and pay honor to this new “king of the Jews.”

Undefined here by Matthew is how long these magi have been on their journey, and how many others like them they may have picked up on their way. Herod’s order to kill all Jewish male children aged two and under — the Massacre of the Innocents — suggests that the magi must have first sighted the “rising star” a year or two previous to their arrival in Jerusalem. The Magi’s inquiry was evidently made known to more than just Herod, for Matthew notes that not only Herod, but “all Jerusalem” reacted in fear to this news. While “all Jerusalem” is not a literal headcount, Matthew uses such a reference to personify the city’s and its leaders’ first reaction to the news of the long awaited Messiah.

Whether this news got around to the general populace or not, clearly it was talked about within the circles of Jewish authorities — political and religious. To get more detailed Messianic information, Herod called together the “chief priests and scribes” — those whose professional lives and livelihoods

and selfishness in us. That’s why Jesus could cast out certain demons that others could not.

And that’s how God’s power forever lies within our world and within our lives, asking for our patience. Christ, as Annie Dillard says, is always found in our lives just as he was originally found — a helpless baby in the straw who must be picked up and nurtured into maturity. But we are forever wanting something else — namely, a God who would come and clean up the world and satisfy our thirst for justice by showing some raw muscle power and banging some heads here and now. We are impatient with quiet, moral power that demands infinite patience and a long-term perspective. We want a hero — someone with the blazing guns of a Hollywood superhero, but the heart of a Mother Theresa. The guns of the world blasting away evil — that’s what we want from our God — not the power of a baby lying mute and helpless against the cruel powers of our time. Like the Israelites facing the Philistines, we are reluctant to send a shepherd boy against an ironclad giant [see 1 Samuel 17]. We want divine power in iron, muscles, guns, and charisma.

But that’s not the way intimacy, peace, and God are found.

—taken from the writings of Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: 1 John 3:22-4:6, Matthew 4:12-25

Tuesday: 1 John 4:7-10, Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday: 1 John 4:11-18, Mark 6:34-44

Thursday: 1 John 4:19-5:4, Luke 4:14-22

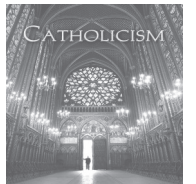
Friday: 1 John 5:5-13, Luke 5:12-16

Saturday: 1 John 5:14-21, John 3:22-30

Feast of the Baptism of Jesus: Isaiah 42:1-7, Acts 10:34-38, Luke 3:15-22

CATHOLICISM — A JOURNEY DEEP INTO FAITH:

Catholicism is a series of presentations/videos that has received rave reviews by all who have seen them. **Our series will meet next on Wednesday, January 9th, at 6:30 PM** when we will discuss the **mystical union of Christ and the Church**. We will continue to view various parts of the series on a monthly basis. **Each video will be followed by a group discussion and question period.** *Catholicism* presents a strong ecclesial dimension of the Catholic Faith — God’s revelation through Jesus Christ and His Church. **You do not have to see previous parts in order to join in this experience — each presentation is unique onto itself.** The series has been put together by Father Robert Barron, a priest in the archdiocese of Chicago. Each presentation centers on what Catholics believe and why, so all Catholics can come to a deeper understanding of the Catholic Faith. Not a video lecture, Church history or scripture study, this engaging and interesting formational program uses the art, architecture, literature, music and all the treasures of the Catholic tradition to illuminate the timeless teachings of the Church. *Catholicism* has received rave reviews by all who have seen it. **Light refreshments will be served at each of our sessions.** Please plan on joining us. Contact the chapel office if you have any questions.



THE POWER OF POWERLESSNESS:

There are different kinds of power and different kinds of authority — there is military power, muscle power, political power, economic power, moral power, charismatic power, and psychological power, among other things. There are different kinds of authority too — we can be bitterly forced into acquiescing to certain demands, or we can be gently persuaded into accepting them. Power and authority are not all of a kind.

Imagine four persons in a room. The first is a powerful dictator who rules a country. His word commands armies, and his shifting moods intimidate subordinates. He wields a brutal power. Next to him sits a gifted athlete at the peak of his physical prowess — a man whose quickness and strength have few equals. His skills are a graceful power for which he is much admired and envied. The third person is a rock star whose music and charisma can electrify an audience and fill a room with a soulful energy. Her face is on billboards, and she is a household name. That's still another kind of power. Finally, we have too in the room a newborn — a baby, lying in its crib, seemingly without any power or strength whatsoever, unable to even ask for what it needs. Which of these is ultimately the most powerful?

The irony is that the baby ultimately wields the greatest power. The athlete could crush it, the dictator could kill it, and the rock star could out-glow it in sheer dynamism, but the baby has a different kind of power. It can touch hearts in a way that a dictator, an athlete, or a rock star cannot. Its innocent, wordless presence, without physical strength, can transform a room and a heart in a way that guns, muscle, and charisma cannot. We watch our language and actions around a baby — less so around athletes and rock stars. The powerlessness of a baby touches us at a deeper moral place.

And this is the way we find and experience God's power here on earth — sometimes to our great frustration — and this is the way that Jesus was deemed powerful during his lifetime. The entire Gospels make this clear from beginning to end. Jesus was born as a baby — powerless — and he died hanging helplessly on a cross with bystanders mocking his powerlessness. Yet both his birth and his death manifest the kind of power upon which we can ultimately build our lives.

The Gospels describe Jesus' power and authority in exactly this way. In Greek — the original language of the Gospels — we find three words for power or authority. We easily recognize the first two — energy and dynamic. There is a power in energy — in physical health and muscle — just as there is a power in being dynamic — in dynamite, in having the power to generate energy. But when the Gospels speak of Jesus as “having great power” and as having a power beyond that of other religious figures, they do not use the words energetic or dynamic. They use a third word — *exousia*, which might be best rendered as vulnerability. Jesus' real power was rooted in a certain vulnerability — like the powerlessness of a child.

This isn't an easy concept to grasp since our idea of power is normally rooted in the opposite — namely, the notion that power lies in the ability to overwhelm, not underwhelm, others. And yet we understand this — at least somewhat, in our experience of babies, who can overpower us precisely by their powerlessness. Around a baby, as most every mother and father has learned, we not only watch our language and try not to have bitter arguments; we also try to be better, more loving persons. Metaphorically, a baby has the power to do an exorcism. It can cast out the demons of self-absorption



centered around the Temple and the Torah. While Herod's blood status as a Jew may have been questionable, his patronage of the Temple — expanding and aggrandizing it through continual building projects — is well documented. Herod could be cruel, vindictive, and dangerous. But he could also be a powerful ally and patron. Witness the Herodian Temple, which he built somewhere on Jerusalem's majestic Temple Mount — the largest man-made platform in the ancient world. It was the size of 24 football fields — nearly 145 acres. The priests and scribes came when called.

Those assembled know precisely where the magi should go looking for the “Messiah” — or as the Gentiles referred to him: the “king of the Jews.” The citation Matthew offers as their answer combines Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2, and adds as an extra flashing “You are here” light — the specification that the location is Bethlehem in “the land of Judah” [replacing the less familiar “Ephratha”]. Jesus' birth-place — the birth-place of the long-awaited Messiah — is clearly in the Judean Bethlehem.

Despite their knowledge of the magi and their mission, despite the biblical portents that have been proclaimed which now appear to be coming to pass, despite the fact that every Shabbat was an expectation of the coming of the messiah — yet these “chief priests and scribes” are apparently content to report to Herod, and then continue on with “life as usual.” Not only are they not curious about their own discovery; as part of “all Jerusalem,” they are “frightened” by the appearance of the magi and their messianic message.

These religious leaders and Torah scholars know that Bethlehem is the place to be — it is the “ground zero” for finding the messiah. Yet none go to Bethlehem. None join the magi in their journey. None bother to move a muscle to see if the prophecy is coming true. The religious establishment simply stay put in Jerusalem and return to their normal lives.

Herod is much more prescient and pro-active. He swiftly summons the magi “in secret.” He sends them on their way to Bethlehem — but not before extracting from them a “time frame” for the birth of the infant Messiah. The constantly plotting and scheming Herod obviously already had something else in mind besides paying “homage” to this rival “king.”

Attempts at certifying the “rising star” that had guided the Magi thus far are now quashed by the spectacular guidance of that celestial beacon — as Matthew describes it — specifically guiding the magi to “where the child was.” Like the pillar of smoke and pillar of fire that guided the Hebrews in the wilderness [see Exodus 13], Matthew describes a supernatural event — not a quantifiable, astronomically identifiable event.

In stark contrast to the fearfulness expressed by Herod and the Jerusalem religious authorities, the reaction of the magi is to be “overwhelmed with joy” when at last they find the child they have searched for so long. Our assumption of “three wise men” is informed by the three gifts they offer, but clearly there could have been any number of these persistent priests present in Bethlehem — and most likely much more than three than less. Their gifts and the homage they offer to Jesus do not suggest that they understood the child to be anything other than a human “king” to be honored. Later Christian tradition would tie the gold to “kingship”, the frankincense to “divinity,” and the myrrh to “death” — all the elements of Jesus' messianic mission.

The magi astrologers, dream interpreters and healers have no problem with ditching Herod's command that they “return” to him, in favor of a dream message that warns them against that action. The magi read and respond to all the signs they are given — the star, the child, the dream with total trust and confidence.

How about you?

—taken from the writings of Leonard Sweet, which appear on the internet.

UNFINISHED:

As we celebrate this Feast of the Epiphany, we can easily think of nativity scenes which show the Magi crowded into the stable of Jesus' birth — along with the shepherds, animals, an angel, Mary, Joseph and the baby. But the Magi were almost certainly later visitors — coming perhaps as long as two years after Jesus' birth. By then, Joseph had no doubt found better lodging for his family — which is probably why Matthew says the wise men entered “the house” to find Jesus. But whatever the time and place, these Gentile visitors from the East “knelt down and paid him homage.” In older vocabulary, they “adored” him. They finished what they came to do.

But Leonardo da Vinci didn't. Over the centuries, various painters have portrayed this visit, but one of the most famous — despite its being unfinished — is da Vinci's *Adoration of the Magi*. The artist had been commissioned in 1480 to paint this 8-by-9-foot work for the main altar of the monastery of San Donato a Scopeto, near Florence. He was 29 at the time, and he worked on it for quite a while, getting the piece to its brown ink and yellow ocher groundwork stage. But then he moved to Milan and left it behind, never to work on it again. Eventually the assignment was given to another artist who provided the requested painting to the monastery in 1496. Da Vinci's unfinished work still exists and is on display in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Though uncompleted, it is recognized in the art world as one of his most important works.

Wouldn't it be great if all our unfinished projects were also considered very important in their uncompleted states? Imagine all the stuff you could let go of, saying: “It's not finished and now, it never will be, but it's got high value nonetheless.” To start with, not many of us can rival da Vinci in terms of genius and artistry. But even if we could, do we really want our contributions to the world to be in the form of stuff we started but never got around to completing?

Da Vinci himself had a reputation as being unreliable at completing commissioned works. While he would devote months to the concept and composition of the work, he had no appetite for the actual labor of carrying out the painting itself. And there may have been a problem with getting paid. Point is, for whatever reasons, da Vinci never finished the portrayal of the Magi adoring Jesus. The Magi finished their work of adoration; da Vinci didn't. How about us?

Usually, it's not that we don't plan to finish, or even that once into a project, we make a reasoned decision to let the thing go, which sometimes is the better part of wisdom. Rather, with those things we think important to finish, we still have to deal with flagging energy and/or unexpected hurdles. Sometimes it's almost as if some chaotic force is triggered when we're within sight of the finish line — something like the Allstate Insurance “mayhem” commercials which delights in sidetracking our plans. Whether it be working on a community service project, or finishing a home remodeling project, or your resolve to be more intentional about your prayer life, we have all left unfinished paintings behind.

This is not the time for guilt; but the truth is that if we want to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, that means following through on intended growth in prayer life, good deeds, missions to which we are called, and resolutions to let go of prejudices and hatreds must begin — or be resumed. It is part of the journey. It means doing the right thing long-term and following Jesus as consistently as we can in the situations of daily living.

In these things, it's not uncommon for us to make a good start — and, in some cases, even make a lot of headway toward where we think God is pointing us. Nonetheless, we shouldn't be surprised if that's when a fresh wave of problems and hindrances hits us. We shouldn't be surprised if things that have never gone wrong before, go wrong. We also shouldn't be surprised if our passion for the endeavor suddenly evaporates. Life is like that.

And the Christian community — our Church community — helps us complete the journey. What is it that we will find when the journey is over? Will it be a baby? Will it be the summit of a mountain? We don't know, other than whatever we come to — it will be beautiful. You see, **we are journeying with Christ to the Father**. We are journeying to the One whom the philosophers called the culmination of All Truth, All Goodness, and All Beauty. We are journeying with Christ to heaven.

The journey itself is wonderful. For during the journey of our lives, we continually come upon new experiences of God. Sometimes we experience Him in the wonders of His Creation — in the woods, the mountains, the oceans, the lakes. Sometimes we experience Him in the wonders of His people — those who care for others, those who radiate the Kindness of the Kind One, those who are on fire with His Love. And sometimes we experience Him within ourselves — “Were not our hearts on burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?” the disciples on the road to Emmaus exclaimed they realized they were walking with Jesus [Luke 24:52]. “Were not our hearts on fire when we knelt before the Blessed Sacrament during the retreat, during the Mass, during Adoration?” many of us could add.

The goal is wonderful — whether it be a newborn King, the summit of a mountain, or the glory of heaven. But the journey itself is amazing.

We walk together with the Lord as our guide. One of us here, another one there, gasps: “I can't make it.” But we won't let them quit. And we have absolute trust that they wouldn't let us quit either, for the Christian community demands our care for each other. We need to complete the journey as the One Body of Christ. And we care for all we meet on the road of our lives. This Teen reaching out for help, that elderly man needing company, that poor man needing food, those children in Africa needing medicine, all are on the journey of life with us. The Lord places many people in our company. Caring for them is essential if we are to complete the Journey He has set for us.

May I walk with you? Will you walk with me? We need each other. We have to begin now — our guide is calling us to follow Him up the path.

In 1857, John Henry Hopkins wrote a Christmas carol for the Epiphany. Perhaps he was only writing about the magi. Or perhaps he was writing about our journey: “Star of wonder, star of night! Star of royal beauty bright; westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy Perfect Light.”

—taken from the writings for Father Joseph Pellegrino, which appear on the internet.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets will be passed during the “Preparation Rite” and will be brought to the altar as part of the Offerings to help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, your donations to Our Lady Chapel will be acknowledged so that you have a record for the IRS.

Total Offerings: Saturday [12/29/12] ----- \$ 748.00

Total Offerings: Sunday [12/30/12] ----- \$ 510.00

Total Offerings: Monday [12/31/12] ----- \$ 597.00

THE JOURNEY:

Something monumental was taking place. Pagans — magi — who studied stars and were convinced that stars told a story to human beings, saw a new star. They had never seen a new star before. Stars told them about the world. This new star was telling them that the world was being renewed. Great heroes and great people had stars or were stars; they were like constellations looking down on the rest of humanity. This new star had to belong to the greatest of people. It was looking down on anyone who would be willing to learn its message. The star was moving towards the west. So the magi set off from their lands in the East on a journey. Did any of them wonder if they would be able to complete the journey? We don't know, but we do know that they and their retinues traveled together. Perhaps they were supporting each other in their determination to complete the journey. They were convinced that the star they saw was announcing a new king who would be the King of Kings. This new King had been born somewhere in the land of the Hebrews. So they went to Herod's Court. They did not find the King there, but they did learn that the Jews once had a prophet named Micah who said that the ruler of the people would come from Bethlehem. Sure enough, the star was going in the direction of Bethlehem, leading them to the place — “the house” scripture says — where Mary, Joseph, and the baby were. When they left the Holy Family, they were pleased not just that they had found the King, but that they made the journey.

Twenty hikers gathered early in the morning at the trail head outside of Breckenridge, Colorado, waiting for the guide. On their way they had seen the top of the mountain — Mt Quandary — but now they were too close to see anything other than the trail and the forest. The hikers were between 16 and 55 — all in fairly good shape. They were from the East — New York, to be exact — and they knew very little about hiking up a 14,000 foot mountain in Colorado. So they hired a park ranger on his day off to guide them. At first they started off with a brisk pace, full of enthusiasm; but after an hour into the hike, most of them were panting from the effort as well as the altitude. Some weren't sure they could make it to the top, but they supported each other, encouraged each other,

and kept following the guide. Then they crossed the tree line and could see the bald head of the Quandary summit. More encouragement was needed for even the strongest of them, but they continued the journey to its conclusion. They stood on the peak, and could see most of the Eastern Colorado Rockies. There was Mount Evans. And when they looked carefully to the south, they saw Pike's Peak. It was beautiful. They left very happy — not just from what they saw, but for how they completed the journey. Sure, they could have paid a lot of money and hired a small plane or a helicopter to take them through the Rockies. But that wouldn't have been the same. They would never have appreciated the peaks if they had not undertaken the hike — the journey.

We are all on the journey of life. Like the magi, we have a sense of where we need to go, but we cannot see the destination. Like the hikers, we know the peak is up there somewhere, but we cannot see it.

We have a guide. It is not a star. It is not a Park Ranger. Our guide is Jesus who leads us in the direction our lives need to travel. But the journey is difficult. Sometimes we want to quit. Sometimes we are exhausted. But like the hikers in Colorado, we encourage each other, we support each other.



Thus, our prayer for ongoing discipleship might be: “Help me, O God, while my enthusiasm is leaking away and my energy is failing and problems are multiplying, to continue to do your will.”

One of the signs that we are maturing in faith, however, is when we realize and accept that the Christian life is not only a matter of initial repentance and commitment, but also a matter of perseverance. As Paul told the Galatians: “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up” [Galatians 6:9]. Eugene Peterson, borrowing a phrase from the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, describes the Christian life as “a long obedience in the same direction.” Peterson writes: “One aspect of the world that I have been able to identify as harmful to Christians is the assumption that anything worthwhile can be acquired at once. We assume that if something can be done at all, it can be done quickly and efficiently. Our attention spans have been conditioned by 30-second commercials. Our sense of reality has been flattened by 30-page abridgments. There is a great market for religious experience in the world — there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.”

Simeon and Anna — the two people in the temple who recognize the presence of God in the infant Jesus — are good examples. Simeon had been “looking forward to the consolation of Israel” [Luke 2:25]. That phrase implies patient waiting. Anna, 84 years old, “never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day” [Luke 2:37]. Both signed up for the long haul and both were faithful until the end.

Likewise, the apostle Paul modeled such perseverance, writing as he drew near death: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” [2 Timothy 4:7]. His words, of course, refer to more than simply completing a mission project or seeking more holiness in living; they refer to the completion of a whole life of discipleship. But how do we attain a life of discipleship other than by completing the “faith projects” along the way? The life of faith is not a 100-yard dash — it's a marathon. It's not a tourist jaunt — it's an ongoing pilgrimage. Nonetheless, there are some shorter races that need to be run en route — such as sticking with the not-so-easy task we feel God has called us to do, such as continuing to root out our unrighteous attitudes and behaviors that impede our spiritual growth, such as continuing to work at loving our difficult neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

And so on this feast of journey — the manifestation of God into our lives, and the life of the world — where are you on your journey of faith? What do you struggle with? What is the next step? What is holding you back? And ask the Lord to journey with you...to guide you by the star which is his Son, Jesus Christ.

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP — THE EDGE:

Our Middle School Youth Group — THE EDGE — meets next on Sunday, January 13th from 11:30 AM — 3:00 PM. There is always food, friendship, and fun. Following a light lunch, we are going **BOWLING**. **If you haven't come in a while, or if you have never “tried us out”, this would be a good time to join us. All who are in grades 6-8 are invited to join us.** Come and find out what **the EDGE** is all about. If you have not joined us before, that's OK. **Just call the office and let us know that you are going to be coming.** We ask you to do this because there will be food involved. Our EDGE Youth Group has a Faith-Service-Social component, and we need your help. Join in on an exciting happening. **Call the Chapel Office at 440-473-3560.** Come to learn what the EDGE is all about. Join us for a fun filled faith experience. All are welcome. If you cannot make our meeting on January 13th, plan on joining us on Sunday, January 27th when we will meet again.



THE CROSS OF CHRISTMAS:

Several years ago, my then fiancé and I made our way through the frigid streets of Rome one dark January morning. Hoping to beat the crowds, our deepest desire was to have some quiet time to pray together in St. Peter's Basilica the day before our wedding. Upon entering this glorious Sanctuary for the first time, we were immediately rendered speechless by the beauty surrounding us. We weren't even ten feet in the door before seeing one of the history's most famous works of art — *The Pieta* by Michelangelo.

The statue had always fascinated me. Beyond the incredible artistry and exquisite detail, for me *The Pieta* was an invitation into the heart and mind of God — and Mary. The faithful yet sorrowful Mother holding her heroic yet lifeless Son — what a tragic “end” to a miraculous life! How often have we not thought about that on an eerie Good Friday afternoon? Of course, as Christians we have the advantage of looking at Good Friday in retrospect. Twenty centuries later, we know that the miraculous end to Good Friday would be revealed on Easter Sunday morning.

As it is with the Christian life, if we want to see clearly — as God sees — we have to look at the “big picture” of salvation. If we want to understand Jesus' death, for instance, we need to begin with His birth, and when we do, we will undoubtedly learn something very interesting — that He was born to die. If you want to get technical, that “pieta” moment first occurred not on Calvary, but in Bethlehem. The manger's wood was a foreshadowing — it is the “cross” of Christmas. There is far more going on at Jesus' birth than many of us realize upon first glance.

Christmas is one of the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary. But at first glance, the Joyful Mysteries might not appear that joyful. Consider these moments from the Gospel — a teenage virgin is pregnant, but not with her husband's child. The girl then leaves home for three months and later travels 90 miles by donkey in her third trimester of pregnancy. She then gives birth in a cave surrounded by animals, hears from a prophet that both she and her child will suffer greatly, and then, to top it all off, she and her husband have their pre-teen son — the son of God — go missing for three days.

Most would not consider these moments very joyful. Upon further reflection on these mysterious events, however, you begin to see that they are actually a cause for intense joy. God was on a rescue mission to save us — you and me — and that mission included some courageous souls fighting through some incredibly challenging and painful situations. Not only do the Joyful Mysteries walk us more deeply into the conception, birth, and childhood of our Lord Jesus, they reveal to us a God who is madly in love with us — a God who will stop at nothing to save all of us from death.

There's a famous saying — “in order to be successful, you should begin with the end in mind.” If that is the case, there is no better example of “success” than the Gospels. God, quite obviously, had a detailed plan to save us — as the birth and the death of Jesus have striking similarities. **Consider just these few parallels between Bethlehem and Calvary:**

- Angels are present during Jesus' birth, death, and Resurrection [Luke 2:13; Matthew 26:53; John 20:12].
- Mary, our Mother, is present in both accounts [Matthew 2:11-13; John 19:26-27].
- In both scenes, Jesus was draped in swaddling clothes [Luke 2:7; Luke 23:53]
- Each event was accompanied by a celestial act/sign [Matthew 2:2; Matthew 27:45]



- The wooden manger lies between two animals, the wooden cross between two thieves [Isaiah 1:3; Luke 2:12; Luke 23:33]
- A righteous man named Joseph was present at both his birth and his death [Luke 2:16; Luke 19:38]
- Jesus was pronounced “King of the Jews” at each [Matthew 2:2; John 19:19]

Both events took place on a hill, on the outskirts of Jerusalem — Bethlehem and Calvary are both set within many hills. Both Jesus' birth and death/Resurrection were foretold in advance [prophecy]; both were miraculous; and both involved God “emptying” Himself for us; and both events ultimately lead to our salvation.

How divine that the same eyes which welled with joyful tears one starry night in Bethlehem also shed the broken tears of a widowed mother holding the same blessed Body years later. The only thing separating the Nativity from *The Pieta* is time and perspective. The wooden manger lay in the shadow of a wooden cross. Joseph held and wiped the blood off his new baby boy that night in Bethlehem, and Joseph of Arimathea would share a similar honor three decades later.

Furthermore, Biblical scholars affirm that it was not a barn, but a cave hewn out of rock that served as the first Christmas tabernacle, which is a perfect mirror image to the Easter tabernacle of the rock-hewn tomb. It was out of a cave that the Word became flesh, and out of a cave that the Word breathed life once again. Both caves acted as a starting point for heaven — although both were “ending points” in the eyes of earth.

Now, some people like to look upon these consistencies as “proof” that the stories must be false or deemed pure myth. However, that point of view is painfully short-sighted; not only does this way of thinking fail to respect God's providence, it also goes against the written prophecies penned centuries earlier by distinctly different authors who were not contemporaries. These guys didn't compare “notes.” No, these similarities were part of God's divinely inspired design, showing us all the inseparability of the two events. Christmas and Easter are like two sides of the same coin.

God is not “ironic”; He is, however, omnipotent, providential, and sovereign — big ways of saying all-knowing, all-directing, and all-powerful. His plan, from the beginning, was to save us. That is why we say that Jesus “was born to die.” When God emptied Himself and took flesh [Philippians 2:7-9], He was on a mission. Christ came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. In both of these events, history and the future were both irreversibly changed forever. How fitting that the two most important events in the drama that we call history would be linked by the same cast of “characters.”

Bethlehem and Calvary are less than seven miles apart geographically — they are even closer in the heart of God.

Contemplate these things in your heart as we live through this Christmas season. In Jesus' birth, we celebrate His life, which resulted in His death, which offered us all new life — in Him.

How's that for a Christmas gift?

—The Bible Geek

LIFE TEEN:

Life Teen Youth Group meets EVERY SUNDAY at 11:30 AM. All who are in grades 9--12 are invited to join us and get to know what the Life Teen is all about. The meetings will take place in the **Lennon Board Room** following **the 10:00 AM Mass**. [Of course, we stop to get our donuts first]. Life Teen is open to **all high school aged young people**. Come and try us out. We have a great deal of fun together and we grow in our faith at the same time. **Come even if you are unable to make the Mass.** Please continue to remember all our teens and young people in your prayers.

