

**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: [jbcsc@ix.netcom.com](mailto:jbcsc@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 6<sup>th</sup>. 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.

**2016 CALENDARS:**

Calendars for the year 2016 are available for your taking. Besides having space for you to write your family appointments, the calendar also contains information about Mass and Reconciliation times here at Our Lady Chapel. We wish to thank the Schulte-Mahon-Murphy Funeral Homes for their generous donation of these 2016 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.

**FAITH EDUCATION — JANUARY 10:**

Faith Education for this year continues. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM**, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass**. **Register your family for classes by contacting Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560]**. If you have any questions, please call Patty in the chapel office. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility. **Dates for January and February: January 10-24-31 and February 7-21-28.**

**BE ALIVE:**

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”  
—Howard Thurman

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Stephen Ungrady, father of Emily [\*19], who is recovering from a stroke
- For Julius Sekas who is recovering from injuries sustained in an accident.
- For Jurgi Stuopys who is recovering from surgery.
- For Toni Balcuina who is recovering from surgery.
- For Brother James Kane, C.S.C., who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Christina Parrilla, sister of Brother Carlos Parrilla, C.S.C., who is recovering from kidney transplant surgery
- For Brother Francis Affeletey, C.S.C., who is recovering from surgery following an accident.
- For Carol Yost who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Vickie Norris, kitchen employee, who is recovering from emergency heart surgery.
- For Kate Wilson, Niece of Brother Ken Kane, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Justin Tarr who is critically ill with brain cancer.
- For Bun Riley, who is preparing for surgery.
- For Joseph Frantz [\*75], brother of Mark [\*65], David [\*66], Roger [\*69], and Peter [\*78] Frantz, who is critically ill.
- For Cindy Bernet who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Jim Spicer who is undergoing treatment for brain and lung cancer.
- For John O’Brian who has been diagnosed with a serious form of cancer.
- For Andy Sims who is recovering from spinal surgery.
- For Bill Slattery [\*77] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For John Burkey, uncle of Rachel Burkey, member of music ministry, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Annie Trivassos who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nicholas Zanella., who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Jan Botek, wife of Fred, mother of Fred [\*85], grandmother of Matthew [\*14], Jonathan [\*17] and Daniel [\*21] Botek, who is undergoing treatment for dementia.
- For Teddy Prusock, nephew of Lower School associate, Nina Prusock, who is undergoing neurological testing.
- For Jimmy Vickers, father of Lower School teacher, Caroline Holtz, who is seriously ill.
- For Kay Yunker, aunt of Mary Schmidt, great-aunt of Maggie [\*12] Schmidt who is under the care of hospice.

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR:**

For the past year, our teens have been volunteering at **Our Savior Lutheran Church Food Pantry** [located right across the street from the chapel]. The Pantry is open on the **third Saturday of every month from 11:00 AM – 1:30 or 2:00 PM**. Our Savior Lutheran’s Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. During the course of the past year, the food pantry at Our Savior Lutheran Church served an average of 141 households each time. Our teens have loved this ministry and have been very faithful to it. **We would now like to open this ministry up to our entire Chapel Community. If you would like to help on any given third Saturday, please call Patty at the chapel office [440-473-3560] to let us know that you are going to volunteer, or email Elina Gurney at [gurney.oh@gmail.com](mailto:gurney.oh@gmail.com).** Come as a family or by yourself.



**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Vic Napiorkowski, husband of Carrie Warburton [\*83] who is recovering from multiple surgeries.
- For Dorothy Kazel, mother of Daniel [\*86] and Gilmour counselor, Jamie, who is recovering from surgery.
- For David Carr, Jr. [\*79], son of Gilmour trustees David and Carole Carr, who is undergoing treatment for injuries sustained in a skiing accident.
- For Mark LaCasse, brother of Upper School Associate, Linda Wheeler, uncle of Molly [\*06] Wheeler, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Molly McKenna who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Charles Babbush, father of Jeffrey [\*83] who is critically ill.
- For Ali Priest, who is undergoing treatment for a rare muscular disease.
- For Thelma Bingaman, who is recovering from injuries sustained in a fall.
- For Peggy Hurley, relative of James [\*10] and Connor [\*13] Hurley, who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Sue Nyberg, godmother of Katie Leavitt, who is seriously ill with cancer.
- For Andrea Trivisonno who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Ryan Berger [\*15], brother of Cameron [\*17] who is recovering from injuries sustained in an accident.
- For Drew Franco, son of Brian [\*90], nephew of Jeff [\*88] and Kristin [\*94] Kirkpatrick, who is struggling with a seizure disorder.
- For Michael Palumbo, father of Michael [\*14], Marisa [\*15], and former Gilmour student, Christian, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Todd Deranek, relative of Hayden [\*28] and Hadley [\*29] Bashein, who was seriously injured in an accident.
- For Maureen Kenner, aunt of Katherine [\*09] and David Hasler [\*13], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Colleen Lowman, grandmother of Religion instructor, Rachel Burke, who is seriously ill.
- For Dennis Kavran, father of Dennis [\*86] and Jennifer [\*95], grandfather of Adam [\*14] and Madeleine [\*16] Miller, who is undergoing further treatment for cancer.
- For Donna Farkas who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Lexi Pappadakes, who is undergoing treatment for complications from surgery..
- For Rosemarie Lemieux who is ill.
- For Robert Heltzel [\*65], father of Jennifer [\*91] and Kathleen [\*93] Heltzel, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Matt Barry [\*13], brother of Tim [\*12], who continues treatment for cancer.
- For Maria Ricci, friend of Linda McGraw, who is ill.
- For Jeff Warner, brother of Denise Calabrese, who is undergoing treatment resulting from a stroke and seizure.
- For Janice Feenstra, sister of Lisa Habe, aunt of Jack [\*19] and Will [\*20] Habe who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Phylis McGinley, grandmother of Middle school Head of School, Elizabeth Edmondson, great-grandmother of Mollie [\*21] and Abigail [\*23] Edmondson, who is seriously ill.
- For Mary Kampman, mother of Mark [\*81], Matthew [\*85], Dean [\*86], and Douglas [\*88] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Karen Wanders, mother of upper school Head of School, Jonathan Wanders, who continues in treatment and rehabilitation
- For Betty Herten, aunt of Hope [\*13] and James [\*15] Herten, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.



**SPECIAL THANKS:**

A very special thank you to all who helped decorate the Chapel for the Christmas Season — Michael, Janet, and Edwin Heryak, Michael Hughes, Dennis and Charlene Kavran, Sue and Ron Ryavec, Tina Newton, Sharon Greg, Devin and Reese Fedele, Sue Leonore, Elina Gurney, Judy Lalli, Norma Rasoletti, Joanne Fisher, Chris and Ken Bowman, Rob Rogers, Patsy Schauer, Carol Jones, Members of EDGE and Life Teen, Gilmour Academy Maintenance and, of course, Patty Szaniszlo. Thanks, also, to our Council Members, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Altar Servers; Matt Fafrak, Angeline Monitello, Brother Ken, Rachel Burkey, Jaret Ross, David Mirando, Willy Cleary, Walter Cerniak, Jimmy Washabaugh, Gil Plavcan, and Miklus Florist. Above all, a very special thank you to Maha and Astar Abboud, who designed and put together the magnificent Crèche display. If you haven't had a chance to see this and pray before it, please do yourself a favor and visit it. Thanks also to all who have sent special Christmas greetings and gifts to the Chapel and to Father John — your kindness is truly a blessing.



**SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:**

Sunday, January 3: <b>Feast of the Epiphany</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>
Monday, January 4: <b>Elizabeth Ann Seton</b>	<b>5:30 PM</b> [Eucharistic Chapel]
Tuesday, January 5: <b>John Neumann</b>	<b>5:30 PM</b> [Eucharistic Chapel]
Wednesday, January 6: <b>André Bessette, C.S.C.</b>	<b>5:30 PM</b> [Eucharistic Chapel]
Thursday, January 7:	<b>5:30 PM</b> [Eucharistic Chapel]
Friday, January 8:	<b>5:30 PM</b> [Eucharistic Chapel]
Saturday, January 9: <b>Feast of the Epiphany</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b>
Sunday, January 10: <b>Feast of the Epiphany</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>

**UPCOMING CHAPEL ACTIVITIES:**

January 7 -----	Lower School Mass LS Parent Reception in LBR	9:30 AM Following Mass
January 9 -----	Life Teen Game Night	6:30 PM—8:30 PM
January 10 -----	Faith Education Session #13 Chapel Christmas decorations removed EDGE Meeting	8:45 AM - 9:45 AM 11:30 AM 11:30 am—1:00 PM
January 14 -----	Freshman Class Mass	9:45 AM
January 17 -----	Holy Cross Brother's Gathering	3:00 PM
January 19 -----	Our Lady Chapel Council Meeting	6:15 PM

**REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:**

The message of this Feast of the Epiphany is the revelation to people of all ages that each of us is a “manifestation” of the Christ ourselves. It is not so much what gifts we have to present to Jesus; rather, the question is: what gifts has God given us to reveal to others — some particular feature of God’s personality?

In the third Eucharistic Prayer, we ask God to allow Jesus to make us “an everlasting gift” to Him. Think about this — we are the receivers; yet Christ has come to make us gifts offered back to the Giver. What of God do we reveal? The Magi who visited Jesus [Matthew 2:1-12] left Jesus with this mission-sense. Jesus does not stay a child; nor in Bethlehem or Nazareth. To accept our “gift-hood” is to accept our being-“givenhood” — and that will take much grace and time.

Secrets are exciting, and when one is shared with you, 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 their covenants made with God. While the covenants were not exactly secrets, the fact is that 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.

This secret is brought to light by the prophet Isaiah [60:1-6] when he foretells that this Messiah 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 or spot of 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 and as belonging to this “One God”.



Matthew’s Gospel 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 yet returned to the desert-usual of life.

The gifts which the Magi had presented represented what had been valuable to these seekers who left them at the “house” and leave by “another way”. They have not so much found as they have been found and leave that place to begin the 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. The Magi represent us as well.

We would like to think of God, arrive at our own logical, reasonable concept of God. We would love to say that we have found God. If we determine Who and What God is, then we would seem to

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Robert Kruse, C.S.C.
- For Sister Jane Ann Rochford, C.S.C.
- For Vince Bernardo
- For Father William Bichl, S.J.
- For Carol Plowman, niece of Brother James Spooner, C.S.C.
- For Joseph Jarc.

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For an end to violence in our society.
- For the families who are grieving the loss of loved ones.
- For an end to human trafficking..
- For the unemployed.
- For those who struggle with family relationships.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For a special intention.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.

**PRAY THE ROSARY:**

Please join us as we **pray the Rosary every Saturday at 4:25 PM** in the Eucharistic Chapel. In the words of Pope John Paul II: “The Rosary of the Virgin Mary is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of the third millennium, a prayer of great significance. It has the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety. Through the Rosary, the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.” Please join us.

**DRESSES FOR HONDURAS:**

One of the nurses in our Gilmour Clinic is involved in a **dressmaking project** for the children of Honduras. They have devised a method of making sundresses out of common pillowcases, and then adorning them with other items for decoration. And that is where you come in. **If you have any old buttons, ribbon, ric-rac, lace or other sewing trim,** please bring them in. The group would like to collect these items to help decorate the dresses they are working on. This is an on-going project; the dresses will be sent to Honduras every time there is a mission trip. The next trip is scheduled for March of 2016. There is a **basket in the narthex of the Chapel** to collect any donations you may have. Thank you for your help!

**LIVING THE MYSTERY:**

Divinity came to earthly life in the form of a helpless Babe and left it in the form of a helpless Man. If God, therefore, is to be found by us, He must be sought in weakness and defeat, but a weakness under which there is power, and a defeat after which there is victory.

—Archbishop Fulton Sheen

**THE MYSTERY OF THE EPHIPHANY:**

In our reading of Scripture, it's easy to forget that each of our writings was originally directed to a specific community at a specific time and place. Technically none of our sacred authors wrote anything for us — or else they would have written in modern English. That's why, among other things, to properly understand Matthew's gospel, we must understand the community for whom Matthew is writing. It's no accident that our well-known narrative of the magi is found only in Matthew.

The reason is simple — he's the only evangelist who writes for a Jewish/Christian church; the other three compose their gospels for Gentile Christians. Matthew's original readers could be compared to modern Seventh Day Adventists — Christians who believe they're still obligated to carry out many of the 613 Laws of Moses. For instance, they don't eat pork and still regard Saturday, not Sunday, as their weekday holy day. Matthew's community would have regarded themselves as Jews, but unlike the majority of their friends and relatives, Jews who bought into the reform Jesus of Nazareth taught and lived.

One of the most important messages Matthew directs to these Jewish Christians is that non-Jewish Christians can be just as good followers of Jesus as they are. As a matter of fact, the evangelist tells his readers that the first people to recognize the exceptionalism of the child Jesus were not only Gentiles, but Gentiles who were also devotees of astronomy — something totally forbidden for Jews to practice under penalty of death. Though Herod, the Jew, finds out from his Scripture scholars the name of the town in which the new king of the Jews is to be born, only non-Jews actually travel down from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to check out what these biblical experts promised they would find.

We know from the classic prophets like Isaiah [60:1-6] that centuries before the birth of Jesus, Jews had to deal with the part non-Jews would play in the history of salvation. But in most cases, God was simply expected to use these Gentiles to support Jews in their faith. Either they would convert to Judaism — and therefore cease being non-Jews — or enrich Jews by “bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the Lord.”

That's quite different from what Gentile/Christians did. Without converting to Judaism, they became part of God's new Chosen People on an equal level with Jews. The disciple of Paul responsible for the letter to the at Ephesus [3:2-6] expresses this belief in black and white terms — “The Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body, and co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” In the eyes of God, there's absolutely no difference between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Matthew was convinced that his community needed to hear this from various angles — even magi angles. Many in the evangelist's church still had to die to themselves in order to fully accept this truth. Perhaps that's why the magi's third gift to Jesus is myrrh. We can understand why they offer this new-born king gold and frankincense. But what's with the myrrh?

My old Scripture professor, Dr. Irvin Arkin, frequently asked what we would think if we opened a birthday gift and found a bottle of embalming fluid! That no doubt would put a damper on the celebration. Yet Arkin hit the nail on the head — at the time of Jesus myrrh was frequently used to anoint dead bodies. Matthew is telling us that dying is always part of our experience of the risen Jesus — especially when we're called upon to accept others as equal to ourselves — others whom we've traditionally looked upon as being inferior.

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

**FINDING MEANING:**

“When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you — a joy.”

—Rumi



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 to quench 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, continue the journey of exploring the possibilities. 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 we shall 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. What a r holy way to journey.

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

**COUPLE'S RETREAT:**

Join us on **Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>** and share in this evening of prayer and reflection at Our Lady Chapel's annual **Couple's Retreat**. Most married couples with a family do not take enough time for themselves — their lives are focused on their children. Do yourself a favor, and take time for this evening together. The retreat is open to all married couples of the Chapel and Gilmour Communities. **The retreat will begin with Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 5 PM followed by dinner and discussion led by Fr. John in the Lennon Board Room, concluding no later than 9 PM.** Come even if you cannot make it in time for Mass; we would be glad to have you join us. **Cost for the evening is \$40 a couple.** If cost for the evening is a concern, please let Father John know. **So mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord. Please RSVP to Patty at the Chapel Office at (440) 473-3560 or at [szaniszlop@gilmour.org](mailto:szaniszlop@gilmour.org).**

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS:**

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 Jean Sulowski, Rasoletti Family, Eleanor & Curtiss DeMarco, Blazek and Rezabek Families, Loy and Polack Families, Trzaska, Wieslaw and Sokolowski Families.** 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.

**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 John's Office



**RISK ENTERING INTO THE JOURNEY:**

The seventeenth century painter Guido Reni has left us a magnificent painting of Matthew — an angel is whispering to him various events in the life of Jesus. The attentive Evangelist is frantically writing down all that he is told. The tale will become his Gospel. A portion of those whispers is the story of the Epiphany [Matthew 2:1-12]. It is only Matthew who tells us this tale filled with wonder. Why the other Evangelists ignored this magical story, we will never know — at least this side of the grave. But how fortunate we are to have the poetical story at all! — its charm is eternal, and it has inspired millions!

It has taught countless others! For example, it was an excited little girl who told me this story. The first two wise men offered their precious gifts to the Babe. He declined them. When He did so with the third, the exasperated savant asked: “Then what do you want?” The Child answered quickly and with a warm smile: “Your camel!”

A confessed feminist asked me why God gave the star to the wise men. I professed ignorance. She told me with glee: “God knows men are too proud to ask directions.” I read recently of the traditions the wise men have inspired in various countries. In Latin countries, boys and girls leave hay in their shoes for the camels on the eve of the Epiphany. They hope the camels will reciprocate by leaving gifts. In France, cakes are baked and coins placed in each. He or she who gets the coin is king or queen for the day. In Greece, a cross is thrown into the water. Whoever retrieves it receives presents.

It is silly — perhaps spiritually suicidal — to turn one’s back on this account as so much child’s play. We do so only at our own risk. The shrewd Matthew has much to teach his readers. As their journey began, the three pilgrims left behind them the warmth of their own fires and the love of their families. Alone and undaunted, they went searching for God. Eagerly they responded to the invitation of the Spirit. They abandoned their own country with its familiar tongue and culture. They came into a foreign land among an alien people. The record shows that they nearly lost their lives. Yet, for them the search for the God was worth all risks and dangers. At last their quest was done — they found their God. He lived not in a palace surrounded with retainers and ministers. Rather, He was born in poverty, while most people were indifferent to his birth.

Matthew does not record any disappointment on their part. Rather, they humbly fell to their knees and placed their finest gifts at His disposal. Then, and only then, they returned to their homes, wives, and children. They were energized. They were new people. They had become the first Gentiles to worship the Christ. They had become the first Christians. They also had walked into history. Wherever the Christmas story is told, they will be remembered. These men had proved wise indeed. They had risked all for God and they had become big winners. Is there anyone who still doubts that the equally wise Matthew is attempting to teach us something? Each of us too must gamble if we too are to find God. If we play cautious and afraid, we will come up with hands groping frantically at empty air. We will not be energized. We will not become an Epiphany people.

We will not enjoy our own epiphany. How unlike the Temple priests, who surrounded King Herod, the wise men were! These priests knew the Scriptures. They knew the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. As a matter of fact, Bethlehem was but a short jaunt from Herod’s home. Yet, the priests declined to join the wise men in their search. They would not leave their libraries and creature comforts. History passed them by. Now we only shake our heads in wonder at their blindness and pity them. Hopefully we will be wise enough to learn from their obtuseness. The wise men of Matthew’s Gospel would applaud the Epiphany wisdom of another finally successful pilgrim — Malcolm Muggeridge. It was he who wrote the following: “God signifies an alternative impulse — to sacrifice rather than to grab,



nature, astrology, and through the stars. The wise men see a special star appear in the sky and begin to follow it, not knowing exactly to where or to what it will lead.

While following the star, they meet King Herod who, upon learning that a new king has supposedly been born, has his own evil interest in matter. He asks the wise men to find the child and bring him back information so that he, too, can go and worship the newborn.

We know the rest of story — the wise men follow the star, find the new king, and, upon seeing him, place their gifts at his feet. What happens to them afterwards? We have all kinds of apocryphal stories about their journey back home, but these, while interesting, are not helpful. We do not know what happened to them afterwards — and that is exactly the point. Their slipping away into anonymity is a crucial part of their gift. The idea is that they now disappear because they can now disappear. They have placed their gifts at the feet of the young king, and can now leave everything safely in his hands. His star has eclipsed theirs. Far from fighting for their former place, they now happily cede it to him. Like old Simeon, they can happily exit the stage singing: “Now, Lord, you can dismiss your servants” [see Luke 2]! We can die! We’re in safe hands!

And Herod, how much to the contrary! The news that a new king has been born threatens him at his core since he is himself a king. The glory and light that will now shine upon the new king will no longer shine on him. So what is his reaction? Far from laying his resources at the feet of the new king, he sets out to kill him. Moreover, to ensure that his murderers find him, he kills all the male babies in the entire area. An entire book on anthropology might be written about this last line. Fish are not the only species that eats its young! But the real point is the contrast between the wise men and Herod — the former see new life as promise and they bless it; the latter sees new life as threat and he curses it.

This is a rich story with a powerful challenge. Each of us must ask: “what is my own reaction to new life” — especially to life that threatens me, that will take away some of my own popularity, sunshine, and adulation? Can I, like the wise men, lay my gifts at the feet of the young and move towards anonymity and eventual death, content that the world is in good hands, even though those hands are not my hands? Or, like Herod, will I feel that life as a threat and I try somehow to kill it, lest its star somehow diminish my own?

To bless another person is to give away some of one’s own life so that the other might be more resourced for his or her journey. Good parents do that for their children. Good teachers do that for their students; good mentors do that for their protégés; good pastors do that for their parishioners; good politicians do that for their countries; and good elders do that for the young. They give away some of their own lives to resource the other. The wise men did that for Jesus.

How do we react when a young star’s rising begins to eclipse our own light?

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

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Please remember that when you want to buy something from Amazon.com, you need to first go to [www.ourladychapel.org](http://www.ourladychapel.org) and click on the Amazon logo at the bottom of the home page! Because of this simple step — and at no cost to the purchaser — Our Lady Chapel receives a percentage of all purchases that are made from Amazon.com. Ever since we have begun this program, we have consistently been receiving significant checks from Amazon that are being credited to help pay for chapel expenses. This affinity program remains in effect throughout the year, so we ask everyone to continue to remember to start your purchases at Amazon on the Our Lady Chapel home page! Thank you.



and pain in all the hospitals in the world; take the suffering of the abandoned, the loneliness of the refugees; the anxiety and terror of those who have been torn from their families. Take the helplessness of parents caring for their chronically ill child. Take the tiredness of the elderly wife caring for her dying husband. Take the tears of the man who just buried his wife. Take the sadness of those whose marriages fell apart, and the suffering of those who are alone in life. Accept them all,” he prayed.

And so the three wise men came with their gold, frankincense and myrrh. And the child accepted everything they gave Him — the power, the praise and the suffering. His mother laid up their words in her heart. We also need to give the Lord gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Gold is that which carries with it the promise of lasting wealth. “Invest in gold and don’t worry about the fluctuations of the market,” the advertisements tell us. What is it that we have that is our gold? What can we give Him that is permanent? It is our love. Love, true love, sacrificial love, never dies. When our bodies die, our love remains united to our spirits, united to the Source of our spirits and our love, God Himself. God gave us love and calls us to return it to Him. We can do this by loving God in all his wonderful gifts — the gifts of nature, the gifts of family, the gifts of His Presence in others. Our lives can and must be love songs to our God. This is our gold.

We can give the Lord frankincense. In the story this was the musician’s talent. How about our talents? We each have talents, talents that are unique. These are our reflections of the wonders of our God. Every one of us shares in some way the creativity of the Lord. This creativity was given to us to praise God. We need to give it back to him. Talents are not meant to be hoarded. They are meant to praise God. This our frankincense.

We can and need to give the Lord our myrrh. No one can escape suffering. It is the price of sin that all must pay, guilty and innocent. But for the follower of Christ all suffering has value when it is united to the suffering of the Lord. Our pains, sorrows, and even our deaths can become prayers for others, and ways of praising our King. It takes faith — tremendous faith, wonderful faith — to suffer with Christ for others. We can give Him this gift. We can give Him our myrrh.

Christmas we celebrate the greatest gift the world has ever received — the very presence of our God as one of us. This presence is manifested to the world at the Epiphany. Now, like the magi, we are called to bring gifts to our King: gold, frankincense and myrrh, our riches, our talents, and our pain. They are all His. They are His because we are His. —taken from the writings of Father Joseph Pellegrino which appear on the internet

### **KING HEROD AND THE WISE MEN — A CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE:**

The Christmas story is surely one of the greatest stories ever told. It chronicles a birth from which the world records time as before or after. Moreover, it is written in a way that has inflamed the romantic imagination for over 2000 years. This hasn’t always been for the good. Beyond spawning every kind of legend imaginable, the story of Christmas has, in the Christian imagination, too often taken on a centrality not accorded to it in the Gospels themselves. This is not surprising, given its richness. Inside its great narrative, there are multiple mini-narratives — each of which comes laden with its own archetypal symbols. One of these mini-narratives, rich in archetypal imagery, is the story King Herod and the wise men.

We see this in the Gospel of Matthew [2:1-12] when he tells us how various people reacted to the announcement of Jesus’ birth. Matthew sets up a powerful archetypal contrast — blessing and curse, between the reaction of the wise men, who bring their gifts and place them at the feet of the new king, and King Herod, who tries to kill him.

We are all familiar with this story since it has been much celebrated in song, icon, and legend. Jesus is born inside of a religious tradition — Judaism. His birth is announced to that faith-community in a manner that befits religion — namely, by the angels, by supernatural revelation. But those outside of that faith-tradition need another way to get to know of his birth, and so his birth is announced to them though

to love rather than lust, to give rather than take, to pursue truth rather than promote lies, to humble oneself rather than inflate the ego.”

—taken from the writings of Father James Gilhooly, which appear on the internet.

### **SURPRISED BY GOD’S MERCY — A MOVING CHRISTMAS STORY:**

In November of 1987, I decided I would not be celebrating Christmas. I told my friends and family that I would not be hosting my annual Christmas party, nor would I be putting up any decorations or making my favorite Christmas treats. I was not in the mood for *O Holy Night*, and doubted I’d go to midnight Mass, which I had done since I was a child.

I was mourning the death of my father, who had passed away after a brief fight with liver cancer that summer. My heart was heavy, broken, and sad over his loss. I was in the midst of grief as the world started to prepare for the birth of Christ once again. I decided it was best to ignore the Incarnation that year. Who needs it anyway?

I couldn’t imagine facing our favorite family holiday without the head of our family. I told God that I was taking a pass on Jesus’ birthday that year, and depending on how things go, maybe — just maybe — I’d be ready to party with him and the rest of Christianity the following year.

All along, I kept telling myself that I knew best what I needed during this time of grief. As December 25, 1987 crept closer, the invites to holiday gatherings and celebrations kept coming. I denied every single one of them. My friends and family knew this was not like me, but they were patient as they kindly tried to support me through this time of darkness. I continued ignoring all the sights, sounds, and smells that mark the sacred during this season. I began living for December 26, when it would all be over.

It was a week before Christmas. I had gone away for the weekend. I arrived back late Sunday evening to my little, one-bedroom apartment. As I unlocked the door and prepared myself to escape back into my “no-Christmas zone,” I was greeted by one of the most heavenly sights I have ever seen. In the corner of my living room was the most beautifully decorated Christmas tree! Its bright white lights filled my whole apartment. Its ribbons and ornaments were glorious. A card rested in the middle of it. I opened it and read: “Tami, now is when you need Christ. Merry Christmas!” I cried.

God surprised me with love and mercy through secret angels. They brought the light of Christ to me in the midst of one of the darkest periods of my life. Christmas 1987 ended up being the best of my life.

It’s been 28 years, but every year, I pull out those same ribbons and place them on my tree. They remind me of the depth and breadth of God’s love and mercy for each and every one of us.

Who needs the Incarnation anyway? We do!

—written by Tami Schmitz, associate director of Student Ministry at the University of Notre Dame

### **BRINGING UP THE OFFERTORY GIFTS:**

Would you and your family or group like to bring up the gifts at the offertory at Mass? In the past, our Council people have invited people to bring up the gifts, and we have found that many — if not most — of you like to be asked. But in using this method, we may be leaving people out, especially if it is done as a “last minute item”. So, we are posting a sign-up sheet on the Easel in the narthex of the chapel. **If you or your family or group would like to bring up the gifts on a certain Saturday or Sunday — or if you are open to doing this at any time — please call the chapel office [440-473-3560].** We look forward to opening this beautiful experience to all in our community.



**ALL ARE CALLED TO HEAR THE “GOOD NEWS”:**

The word “Epiphany” is Greek — it literally means “manifestation”. In the Roman Church, a distinction had gradually come to be drawn between the actual birth of Christ and the occasion on which his coming was made known to the world. The date chosen for the Epiphany was January 6<sup>th</sup> — which appropriately coincided with the Jewish Feast of Lights.

The story of the Epiphany — which is only recounted by Matthew [2:1-12] — is most curious. Who are these Magi? And what is this star that guides them first to Jerusalem, and then to Bethlehem? There are all sorts of interesting allusions here, and many connections to be made. By “Magi” we understand that they were probably Zoroastrian astrologers from Persia. But while Christians were strongly warned elsewhere in the New Testament against dabbling in astrology, these Magi are presented by Matthew as truly commendable. Most scholars say that this incident shows that even the pagan world had some understanding of the importance of Christ’s role and had inklings of his birth.

There is the curiosity of the star — what was it? One theory suggests that it was a “supernova”; others are of the opinion that it was a comet or a conjunction of planets. Or is Matthew simply using a literary device to explain how these astrologers were guided to the stable at Bethlehem? But what is most important here is that we look at all these things in the light of the title given to the feast — it is an “epiphany”, a “manifestation”. God makes himself known to the world and to specific individuals.

Ironically the people who should have been most sensitive to the things of God are totally unaware of what is happening in their midst, while these strangers from afar show a remarkable awareness of the great intervention of God that had occurred in Bethlehem.

God makes himself known — he leads and guides people on their journey through life. We believe that God continually draws all people to himself — and often he does so in the most unobtrusive ways. He chooses to act in all sorts of hidden and subtle ways out of respect for our free will. He invites, but he never imposes himself upon us. Many ignore him and others reject his advances but this does not stop him from showing us the way.

In analyzing the story of the Epiphany we have to remember that its intention is to include the Gentiles. This is interesting in light of the fact that Matthew writes his Gospel for the Jewish community — those who were converts from Judaism. Maybe Matthew was unknowingly looking forward to the fact that within a few decades, the vast majority of Christians were converted Gentiles. Gentiles would have been especially attracted to these Magi because they could see their own story reflected in the story of the Epiphany. Each one of them — just like each one of us — saw themselves as drawn by God, often in mysterious ways, to come to recognize Christ, to accept his teaching and to do him homage.

It is therefore easy to see why the Epiphany became such an important feast quite early on in the life of the Church. God has brought each one of us to faith. We look back on our lives and see his hand at work in all sorts of curious incidents and apparent coincidences over the years, and we recognize his influence on our journey of faith.

At the dinner table a few nights ago some people were saying that the only reason that they were Catholic was because they just happened to be born into a Catholic family. They implied that this was just a chance occurrence, and therefore being a Catholic was not something they had any choice over. They then went on to imply that because they could just as easily have been born into an Anglican or a Moslem family then all religions and denominations were the same and so it didn’t matter what you were.

But our birth was no accident. And our faith is not the same as all others. God doesn’t randomly allocate us to this or that family. We need to see our birth, not as an accident, but as just the first of a whole series of signs of God’s love and care for us.



One who would bring Truth to the world. They were looking for the King of Kings. They had each followed the star to the outskirts of Bethlehem. Now together they followed it into the town. Along the rough track, past a sprawling farm, over a bridge, past the first neat white cottages. They followed and looked around.

There was the general store, the post office, a small row of dilapidated hovels of houses, and a little apart, another smaller cottage. When they looked at the cottage and then looked up at the sky, they saw the star fade away. They would never see it again. They did not need to see it again. Here, then, was the king to be found. They walked up to the front door. Strangely enough, the door was not fastened. The poor man opened it gently and the others gazed in over his shoulders. It was an absurdly common place for the king they had traveled across the world to see. The woman was standing there, laughing with a baby who sat in a high chair. A blue plate rested on the tray of the chair, and she was feeding Him with a small spoon. As they entered, the woman looked up quickly, but without surprise; she must have been expecting them. The child stared, immediately forgetful of His dinner. His eyes followed Mary as she took the blue plate and laid it on the kitchen table. Then she quietly untied the bib from the child’s neck, smoothed His hair, and left Him sitting in the high chair. She said not a single word to the wise men. She simply knelt before the chair. The men fell on their knees with her.



The rich man fumbled in his pocket and dragged out a large cloth sack of coins. “Lord,” he said, “what I bring you is only what you have lent me — gold. But you made it, you put it in the earth for us; you allowed us to discover it. You have lent me so much, Lord — money and influence and power. You have let me use all the resources of the earth — timber, coal and oil, wheat, silver and iron. The gold that I give you speaks for all those things.” As he spoke he emptied the bag on to the tray of the chair — rare coins, gold and silver, from every land under heaven lay heaped there. Attracted by the glimmer of the gold, the child clasped His fingers round the largest coin and, laughing, dropped it on to the floor. It rolled over the floor and hid itself under the dresser. The rich man put his hands over the coins and said to the child: “All these I give back to you, for they were yours in the beginning. My job is to see that they will be used in your honor.”

“Lord,” cried the singer, unrolling his music, “my only gift is to praise you with the gifts you have given me.” And his voice fell softly on the ears of Mary and the child. “Lift your hidden faces. Ye who wept and prayed; Leave your covert places, Ye who were afraid. Joyfully gather. Sorrow now is done. We have found a Father, We have found a Son. You have given me gifts, Lord,” he said, “and I bring them back to you; help me to use them; help me to increase them, for they are not things of my own. They are only lent me to use in your service.” And as he spoke Mary saw all the praise that was meant for the child. She also saw that which would never be used for Him — the talents that would be turned against Him — the music, the singing, the writing, the acting, the eloquence that would be abused by the godless.

The third man had risen to his feet. He looked like a scarecrow — his clothes in rags, his feet gaping through the holes in his boots, his hair hanging over the collar of his threadbare coat. “Dear Lord,” he said softly, “I have nothing to give you — only poverty and suffering. I’ve walked over half the world to give it to you. I don’t come alone — I’m one of an army who send you the same gift. I’m their ambassador,” he said quietly, falling on his knees again and grasping the arm of the baby’s chair in his hands. “I’m here for everyone who suffers, for the persecuted, for those in the broken cities, for those dying on the battlefields.” He clasped his hands together; they were black and their nails broken. “It was wrong to say that I had nothing to give you. Take the poverty of the homeless and the starving; the agony



**THE GIFTS WE BRING:**

The Feast of the Epiphany is not the conclusion of the Christmas Season — that comes next weekend — but it is one of the most beautiful of the celebrations of the Christmas Season. The word Epiphany means “manifestation of the Lord”. The Church sees three initial manifestations of his presence to the world — the visit of the magi, the Baptism of the Lord, and the Wedding Feast of Cana. Our Greek Orthodox neighbors consider all three manifestations in their one celebration of January 6<sup>th</sup>; but in the Roman Catholic Church, we divide these over the next week or so. Of all the celebrations of the Christmas season, the Epiphany with its visit of the three wise men has captured the imagination of many creative writers and deep thinkers.

Have you ever read Henry Van Dyke’s story of *The Fourth Wise Man*, or O Henry’s story of *The Gift of the Magi*, and G. K. Chesterton’s story of *The Modern Wise Men*? If we focus on the gifts the wise men brought, we will discover a part of the Epiphany story that we have not heard before. While we all know this part of the story, I decided to rewrite it and share it with you today. The story as I’ll tell it takes place a two hundred years ago in what at that time was the small rural Pennsylvania town of Bethlehem. These were the days before steel turned Bethlehem PA into a thriving city.



In the Bethlehem of this story, there was a cottage of a hardworking, but poor, carpenter named Joseph, his wife Mary, and the child who was the center of their lives. Joseph’s workshop was built onto the back of the cottage. The sawdust used to blow under the door of the kitchen, no matter how often Mary swept it. In the winter, Joseph was always busy with the chairs he made for a local firm. He was paid scandalously little for them. He did more than make chairs, though. He was both the town carpenter and the town handyman. When the scales in Mrs. Evans shop were broken, it was Joseph who fixed them. It was Joseph who repaired door hinges and the table legs. It was Joseph who mended fences and farm wagons. It was Joseph who could put new handles on spades and hoes quicker than any other man in the neighborhood. The cottage used to resound with the hammering of the nails and the drone of the sawing. Mary had long ceased to notice it, and the child — now nine months — had apparently grown used to it as well. Life was as uneventful for them as for the rest of the people.

There was work. There were petty worries — like the smoking chimney that couldn’t be cleaned because it cost money, or the speed with which Joseph’s boots wore out. And, more ominous, the ever recurring fear that Mrs. Evans would suddenly refuse to give things on credit. And there was joy. There was their family. There was the child.

While this life was going on, three wise men from various parts of the world had met on one of the hills that surrounded the little town and were now making their way there together. They were very different from each other. What they had in common was that they saw hope in a star that led them all to that hill, and to the little town. One of them was rich, judged by the world’s standards. He had begun his journey in the comfort of a first-class compartment in the train out of Saint Louis. He had traveled in luxury, in search of the child.

The second had followed the star from the concert hall and the cathedral in Capetown, South Africa. He was a vocalist — actually the first native African vocalist to perform in South Africa. He had traveled carefully, frugally, with one eye anxiously on his money, for a growing reputation and wealth do not always go hand in hand.

The third wise man was penniless. He had tramped and begged his way from his home in Asia, through Europe, and finally across the ocean to New York, and so to this town in the hills of Pennsylvania. When they met on that hill, the three wise men immediately recognized each other’s hearts. They were all looking for the One who would bring hope to the world. They were looking for the

It is also important to understand that in Catholicism we hold the fullness of the teaching of Christ, and that this deposit of faith has been kept free from error by the successors of the Apostles down through the ages. It is a privilege to be born a Catholic, to grow up in a Catholic family, to have access to the full message of Christ and the life of the sacraments. It is a privilege, but it is also a responsibility. It is our duty to pass the baton to the next generation — to hand on the faith to our children. So the acquiring of our faith is no mere accident of birth, but part of the deliberate unfolding of God’s plan.

Now our children may not all want to receive what we give them, but to water the faith down or to deprive them of it would be a serious failing indeed. God works in the world; he draws everyone to himself; but the principal means he uses are not stars in the sky but you and me. The Magi were drawn to Christ by a star; but the stars of today — the guiding lights of this present age — are you and me. It is our mission and task in the world to make Christ manifest to those around us, especially to our own families.

It is our task to enable the people around us to come to their own unique Epiphany. It might happen in a moment of insight or it might take them a whole lifetime to achieve it, but it is our prayer that at a certain point they will come to make the decision to bend their knee in homage to Christ, to the Messiah, to the one, true Savior of the World.

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister, S.D.S., 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 6:45-52
- 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

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

**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.

<b>Total Offerings:</b>	<b>Thursday [12/24/15] ---[4:45 PM]</b>	<b>----- \$ 5,563.00</b>
<b>Total Offerings:</b>	<b>Thursday [12/24/15] ----[10:00 PM]</b>	<b>----- \$ 792.00</b>
<b>Total Offerings:</b>	<b>Friday [12/25/15]</b>	<b>----- \$ 1,010.00</b>
<b>Total Offerings:</b>	<b>Saturday [12/26/15]</b>	<b>----- \$ 410.00</b>
<b>Total Offerings:</b>	<b>Sunday [12/27/15]</b>	<b>----- \$ 1,240.00</b>

**THE PERMANENT WOUNDS OF MERCY:**

I was sitting in an uncomfortable wooden pew with no cushions. The cold I had felt coming in was suddenly gone, replaced by burning heat and sweat dripping down my arms. I repeated those words over and over in my head like a mantra, telling myself that if I could just make it through Reconciliation that it would be like my mistakes had never even happened. But something about those words bothered me — how could God forget something? Didn't He know everything?

Those words might have been the easiest way to explain forgiveness to someone receiving the sacrament for the first time, but the more times I go through the old cycle of sinning and confessing and sinning and confessing, the more fault I find in them. I know and believe that when I confess my sins they are truly and permanently forgiven. I am washed and made clean. I am reconciled with my Creator. But every time I go to Him, expecting my past to disappear before my eyes, I am utterly disappointed.

We all know what happens after Jesus's passion and death — the Resurrection. But when Jesus appears to His disciples and afterwards Thomas, who wasn't there for that, doubts, something truly shocking happens — “Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said: ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas: ‘Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it in my side, and do not be unbelieving but believe.’ Thomas answered and said to Him: ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” [John 20: 26-28].

It is by putting his fingers to His wounds that Thomas knows that Christ lives.

I don't know about you, but, if it were me, I think I would have preferred to miraculously heal my own wounds and flaunt it right in front of those Romans, proving that they can't hurt me — that they have no power! Even in front of my own friends, I don't think I would have been gung-ho about presenting my wounds to them. If I wanted to persuade them that I was alive and victorious, I would have healed myself. But that's not what Jesus did. Jesus presents His wounds as evidence of life — and they are, indeed, evidence of life because they glorify God. He wants to give us the same gift in our wounds.

Everyone's recovering from something — everyone needs healing in some way. Whether it's sin or self-contempt or addiction or a time when someone else hurt us, we all have some part of us that desperately is in need of God's grace. But sometimes it feels like God doesn't want to give it — our past and our mistakes still haunt us. We still go over the situation in our heads, kicking ourselves for not doing something differently, wondering why we didn't. Maybe the problem is that we're asking for the wrong thing.

We think that when God's mercy heals us the past will be erased and we'll never have to think about it or deal with it again — it will simply be over. But even God Himself let His wounds remain. He left the evidence of the atrocious, shameful things done to Him on His body even though He didn't need to. Maybe those permanent wounds are there to tell us something.

They tell us that, through God's mercy, our scars are signs of life, too. They tell us that our past can enlighten our future. They tell us that the holes in our hearts are really channels for God's grace to sink deeper. They tell us that healing requires being humble enough to accept God's glory into our wounds, and to let them show because now they praise our Savior.

God doesn't want us to forget our scars because He is waiting for us there. We need to ask Him to reveal Himself. When we accept His healing, we can stop wishing for things to be different. We can stop kicking ourselves over our mistakes. We know that our wounds are part of the story of salvation.

We have begun the Year of Mercy — let's try to look at mercy in a new way. It's a word we use a



lot as Catholics, but it's a much deeper truth than we might recognize. Christ's plan for mercy isn't always easy or simple — but it is always powerful. Christ's healing is an attack on Satan's kingdom — every time.

Right before He ascends into heaven, Jesus raises His nail-pierced hands toward heaven, over His disciples' heads — the disciples that loved Him, that left Him, that denied Him — and Jesus blesses them. He blesses them with wounds out in the open as a prayer of praise and as a consolation that His mercy is everlasting. By His permanent wounds, we know that His mercy is permanent. Jesus raises His hands over us in love to bless us, and when we look up, we see through those holes in His hands the glory that God desires to give us in our own wounds — the glory of forgiveness and of hope and of virtue.

Walking into Reconciliation my face still burns and my hands still shake sometimes. But, walking out, I feel freer and more whole than any other time in my life. I still remember the mistakes and the hurts, but I wouldn't have it any other way. **I look back on those wounds and watch God's grace seep through every crevice, and they remind me of His Goodness and His Wisdom and His Mercy every day and in every doubt.** They point me back to Him. And I would choose such a roadmap over an untouched, unwounded heart any day.

As Pope Benedict said: “The Lord took his wounds with him to eternity. He is a wounded God — he let himself be injured from his love for us. What certainty of his mercy, what consolation do his wounds mean for us! And what a duty they are for us — the duty to allow ourselves in turn to be wounded for him.”

—taken from the writings of Sophia Swinford, a college student

**LIFE TEEN:**

**LifeTeen is taking a Christmas break. But please join us on Saturday evening, January 9<sup>th</sup> — our famous “game night”. Festivities begin at 6:30 PM.** Food will be provided, but bring snacks and/or a desert. Come and try us out. Life Teen generally meets right after Sunday Mass — from 11:30 AM—1:00 PM in the **Lennon Board Room**. Life Teen is open to **all high school aged young people**. **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. We have a great deal of fun together and we grow in our faith at the same time. **Respond to your texts and/or emails, or call the chapel office [440-473-3560] to be notified.** We will be taking a break until after the New Year. **If you can't join us on January 9<sup>th</sup>, our next meeting will be on Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup>.** Please join us for a wonderful experience. Also please continue to remember all our teens and young people in your prayers.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP — THE EDGE:**

**EDGE is taking a Christmas break. But please join us on Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup> when we will be sharing meaningful Christmas experiences.** Lunch will be provided. Come and try us out. 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 look forward to your participation. All are welcome. **If you can't join us on January 10<sup>th</sup>, our next meeting will be on Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup> when we will have the EDGE version of “game night” — it's a blast.** Please join us for a wonderful experience.

**CHILDREN'S BULLETINS:**

Each week, we are making available a **Children's Worship Bulletin**. There are **two editions:** [3-6] and [7-12]. They are available on the table as you leave. The Bulletin focuses on the readings for the week. These are wonderful tools for your children to learn more about the scripture readings for the week. We hope you will take them for your families or your grandchildren. Thanks.

