

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 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].
e-mail: blazekj@gilmour.org

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.

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. There is no doubt that the Feast of the Epiphany plays a great part in the revelation of God to his people.

FAITH EDUCATION:

Faith Education meets next on Sunday, January 8th and then again on Sunday, January 22nd at 8:45 AM. There will be no class on Sunday, January 15 due to the school being closed for the Martin Luther King holiday. As has been our custom in the past, our Faith Education Classes are followed by our 10 AM Mass which is held in the chapel. **If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560].** Thank you.

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS:**

During this Christmas season, we again are accepting memorial donations to help deflect the cost of our Christmas Flowers. We pray that 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 Roger Mallik, Gil Plavcan, Sadie Tackla, Thomas Hughes, the Blazek and Rezabek Families.** If you would like to make a memorial offering, please place it in an envelope marked “Memorial Offering, Christmas Decorations”, along with the names of your loved ones that you would like to remember, and give to Father John or place it in the offering basket. **The collections baskets are at the center doors of the chapel.** God bless all of you.

**KNOWLEDGE vs. RECOGNITION:**

You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope.

—Thomas Merton

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For David Martin, who is recovering from triple Bypass Surgery
- For Bill McGinley, father of Chief Academic Officer, Elizabeth Edmondson, and grandfather of Mollie [‘21] and Abby [‘23] Edmondson, who is hospitalized with a serious infection
- For Brother Walter Gluhm, C,S,C, who is seriously ill.
- For Chuck Shade, father of Loren Shade, grandfather of Michael, Madeline, and Charles Shade, who is in rehab following injuries sustained in a fall.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Patricia Dailey, mother of Brother Robert Dailey, C.S.C.
- For John Rooney, uncle of Art [‘70] and Jim [‘86] Rooney
- For Pope Benedict XVI
- For Brother James Newberry, C.S.C..
- For Patricia Flaherty
- For Rose Lavelle, grandmother of Michael [‘11] and Kat [‘14] Zavagno
- For Rose Hazzard.
- For Susan Mendolera, mother of Chuck Mendolera [‘93]
- For Sister Elizabeth Loughran, C.S.C.
- For Dale Jakab, assistant principal at Benedictine HS.
- For Michael Farinacci, uncle of Mark Chiacchiarri [‘94], great uncle of Aurelia [‘28] and Olivia [‘30] Chiacchiarri
- For Steve Ciuni, father of Joe Ciuni [‘77], grandfather of Joe [‘03], Jane [‘04], Thomas [‘06], and Michael [‘08] Ciuni, and grandfather of Ryan [‘07], Robert [‘12], Joseph [‘14], Vince Catanese [‘19].
- For James Hubman [‘58], brother of Donald Hubman [‘55]
- For Lawrence Wynn, Sr., father of Strength and Conditioning Coach, Lawrence Wynn, Jr.
- For Peter Mattera, cousin of Father Joe Sideras, C.S.C.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For the Holy Cross Religious in Haiti, and for the people of that country, which is under siege because of political and civil strife.
- For a person who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For a family going through a difficult time.
- For an end to violence and racial injustice in our society.
- For an end to sexual abuse and lack of respect for human persons.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.
- For a greater awareness of our call to create a more humane and just society.

BEAUTIFUL and TRUE:

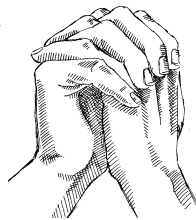
Jesus is the lover of our souls. Every burden, every weary sigh, every tear, every cry from the depths of our hearts is seen and heard. We are fully known by Him.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Gary Russell , who is seriously ill with heart issues.
- For Kim Clark, who is undergoing treatment for an aggressive form of cancer.
- For James Routhier, husband of Grace O'Rourke Routhier ['08], who is recovering from brain surgery.
- For Beverly Jacklitch, mother of Kitchen Associate, Susan Jacklitch, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Paula Smith, mother of Tyler ['10] and Alec ['13] Smith, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jacqueline Schmidt, ['13], Lower School toddler instructor, who is recovering from foot surgery.
- For Findley Stay, husband of former Gilmour Instructor, Emily Stay, father of Allen Stay ['87], who is undergoing treatment for a serious blood disorder.
- For Andy Andino, Sr., father of Music Director, Andy Andino, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jill Shemory, mother of Adam ['08], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Ethel Nagy, mother of Lazlo Nagy, grandmother of Rich ['16] and Josh Nagy, who is seriously ill.
- For Carol Lowen, mother of Denise Shade, grandmother of Madeline, Michael, and Charles Shade, who is undergoing treatment for Breast Cancer.
- For Sue Elliott, who is critically ill with complications of Parkinson's Disease.
- For Cameron Monesmith, who is recovering from Brain surgery
- For Baylea O'Brian, friend of former Gilmour Teacher, Erin Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkins Lymphoma
- For Walter Carey, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.
- For Pat Malak, who is seriously ill.
- For Carol Triplett, sister of Linda McGraw, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Judy Collins, aunt of Chief Academic Officer, Elizabeth Edmondson, great-aunt of Mollie ['21] and Abbie ['23] Edmondson, who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.
- For Marina McCarter, grandmother of Aaron ['25] and Mason ['28] McCarter, who is ill
- For Michael Bares, brother of James ['80] Bares and Religion Instructor, Eileen Pryatel, uncle of Michael ['08, Meghan ['13] , and Kevin ['15] Pryatel, who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Susan Plavcan, sister-in-law of Linda McGraw, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For James Law, husband of LS resource associate, Elana Law, who is undergoing treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- For Fletcher Linsz, brother of Logan Linsz ['26], who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkin Lymphoma.
- For Michael Nestor ['98], who is undergoing treatment for a rare form of cancer.
- For Bernice Girgash, aunt of Basketball Coach and Counselor, Dan DeCrane, and great-aunt of Mackenzie DeCrane ['36], who is undergoing treatment for cancer..
- For Karuna Singla, Sister-in-law of Science teacher, Neena Goel, aunt of Nikhil ['13] and Nupur ['17] Goel, who is undergoing treatment for bone cancer.
- For Melita Chiacchiar, mother of Mark ['94], mother-in-law of Michelle DeBacco ['96], grandmother of Aurelia ['28], and Olivia ['30] Chiacchiar, who is undergoing further treatment for cancer.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Tom Podnar, father of Lower School art teacher, Eileen Sheehan, who is awaiting a heart transplant.



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18th:



Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, January 18th at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God's word. It's a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can't come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God's word.

Our topic: How Jesus unfolds the mystery of "God with us"

We also need your help — we need future topics. **So, if you have a topic that you would like us to discuss, please let Father John know.** Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. **We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting.** Join us. You'll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, January 8: Epiphany	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, January 9: Baptism of Jesus	Check with Office for time
Tuesday, January 10: 1st Week in Ordinary Time	Check with Office for time
Wednesday, January 11:	Check with Office for time
Thursday, January 12:	Check with Office for time
Friday, January 13:	Check with Office for time
Saturday, January 14: 2nd Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, January 15: 2nd Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

ANCHOR YOURSELF IN GOD'S LOVE:

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, he heard a voice from heaven saying: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" [Matthew 3:17]. These words revealed the true identity of Jesus as the beloved. Jesus truly heard that voice, and all of his thoughts, words, and actions came forth from his deep knowledge that he was infinitely loved by God. Jesus lived his life from that inner place of love. Although human rejections, jealousies, resentments, and hatred did hurt him deeply, he remained anchored in the love of the Father. At the end of his life, Jesus said to his disciples: "Listen: the time will come — indeed has come already — when you are going to be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" [John 16:32].

I know now that the words spoken to Jesus when he was baptized are words spoken also to me and to all who are brothers and sisters of Jesus. My tendencies toward self-rejection and self-deprecation make it hard to hear these words truly and let them descend into the center of my heart. But once I have received these words fully, I am set free from my compulsion to prove myself to the world and can live in it without belonging to it. Once I have accepted the truth that I am God's beloved child, unconditionally loved, I can be sent into the world to speak and to act as Jesus did. —Henri Nouwen

A REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

The term “epiphany” comes from the Greek *epipháneia* and means “manifestation.” The festal ritual refers to the event of the newborn Jesus revealed as the manifestation of the long hoped-for Messiah of the Jewish people and the Son of God incarnate — and thereby the light of all nations as the prophet Isaiah claimed [Isaiah 60:1-6]. Christians, thus, celebrate the manifestation of Jesus as Christ and Son of God to the whole world.

The Feast of the Epiphany invites us to be women and men of “manifestation” ourselves. It is not so much what gifts do we have to present to Jesus; rather it is more about what gifts has God given us to reveal to others, some particular feature of God’s personality. In Eucharist Prayer III, we as Jesus to make us “an eternal offering to God” — isn’t that awesome? We are the receivers, and yet Christ has come to make us gifts offered back to the Giver. What kind of God do we reveal?

When the Magi returned to their land following their visit to the Child Jesus, what kind of mission-sense did they return with? This question is important because it is the same mission-sense that we are sent to share with others. Jesus does not stay a child, nor in Bethlehem, nor Nazareth. To accept our “gifthood” is to accept our being “givenhood” — and that will take much grace and time.

But this is what the covenant is all about. All humankind is now invited into intimate covenantal relationship with God based upon believing that this is precisely what God has done in and through Jesus. The Magi lead all peoples of the earth into the eternal covenantal relationship with God through Jesus as Christ and Son. The Epiphany is, therefore, an affirmation of the universal possibility of salvation for each and every person in God’s creation.

Our reading from Isaiah comes from what scholars call “Third Isaiah” — a prophet from Israel’s post-exilic period. This later prophet, writing in the name of his forebear, lived after the Israelites — who were exiled from their homeland into the Babylonian Empire and then were allowed to return by the succeeding Persian Empire and the edict of King Cyrus in 538 BCE. As the people resume autonomous worship of God and their ensuing way of life, Third Isaiah summons God’s people to look to God’s light that is shining upon them, whose glory is radiating around them. The hope is that one day all nations will walk through this light with which God blesses his people. God’s beacon will, thus, gather all the peoples of the earth into the relationship between God and his chosen people, the Jews, which is a model for all humankind to live in right relationship with God.

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. They knew that they were “God’s people”. Their history was a continuous intensification of their own image and the image of God for them. They were promised a Messiah, and throughout these the past weeks, we have heard of the miracles and fruitfulness which would accompany His arrival.

But now all that is about to change. It begins with the words of the prophet Isaiah [60:1-6]. 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 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 is unique in that it not only presents Jesus as the One Who is to come — Jesus is also 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’ve come this far — resulting from their openness to how God is acting in the world — and have used their political connections to pursue their vocation. Now that they encounter the truth of how God is manifesting in the world — in intimate communion with each

THE MESSIAH — WHOSE VERSION?

The future rarely turns out the way we plan it. This is especially true with Jewish expectations of the Messiah. Years ago, the late Raymond Brown remarked that the Messiah which the first century CE Jews were expecting has yet to come — “Jesus of Nazareth was not that Messiah.” Many Christians think the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures had just one task — to foretell the coming of Jesus as Messiah. They overlook the fact that scholars tell us biblical concepts of the Messiah varied according to the peoples’ needs in the day and age in which the various authors wrote. Messianic predictions, for instance, in 9th century BC Israel were quite different from those in the 6th century. Over the centuries the Chosen People went from presuming one of their next kings would be the Messiah to believing that God would eventually send just one non-royal, unique individual to fill that role.

Since Rome occupied Palestine during Jesus’ historical ministry, most Jews were convinced that God would send a military Messiah who would throw the foreigners out. In the first third of the 1st century, pious Israelites were expecting the epiphany — the public “coming out” — of that kind of savior. For most, the biblical Jesus’ epiphany as the Christ — the Messiah — was a total surprise.

As Isaiah announces [60:1-6], there always was hope in Judaism that Gentiles would eventually “gather and come” to Israel in ways that would enrich the country and its people — the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.” Many even believed that besides “bearing gold and frankincense,” these non-Jews would also proclaim “the praises of the Lord.” In other words, they would actually convert to Judaism.

No Jew would object to their anticipated Messiah bringing Gentiles “into the fold.” The main problem they encountered with Jesus of Nazareth revolved around some of his followers bringing these Gentiles into their faith communities without first converting them to Judaism. Paul — or his disciple who penned this letter — succinctly states this “heretical” belief — “Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” [Ephesians 3:2-6]. This certainly wouldn’t be the teaching of the Christ whom the vast majority of Jews were expecting.

That seems to be one of the reasons why Matthew — writing for a Jewish-Christian community — includes the story of the magi. Throughout his gospel he brings up instances in which non-Jews are better at living the faith of Jesus than Jews. Nowhere is this more sharply demonstrated at the beginning of Jesus’ life than having not just Gentiles, but Gentile astrologers travel hundreds of miles “to do homage to the newborn king of the Jews,” while Herod, the Jew, refuses to go the few miles between Jerusalem and Bethlehem to even check on the accuracy of biblical prophecies about the Messiah’s birth [Matthew 2:1-12].

Yet perhaps the strongest drawback to wide acceptance of Jesus as Messiah is contained in one small addition that Matthew makes to Isaiah’s Gentile gift list — besides gold and frankincense, the magi also bring myrrh. The late Dr. Irvin Arkin once asked: “How would you feel if someone gave you a bottle of embalming fluid as a birthday gift?” At the time of Jesus, myrrh was normally used to anoint dead bodies before they were entombed or buried.

Even in this glorious epiphany event, Matthew reminds his readers that if they accept Jesus as Messiah, they’re also accepting their responsibility to suffer and die with him. You don’t have to be Jewish to have problems with the epiphany of that kind of Messiah.

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

FREEDOM TO LIVE:

There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide, and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place. This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful!



LOOKING FOR LOVE:

“I spent a lifetime looking for you.” So begins Johnny Lee’s country western song: *Lookin’ for Love*. Country music, like folktales and the Gospel infancy narratives, philosophizes with homespun wisdom about the most basic human events and emotions. Might the Magi have enjoyed this song along their desert route?

Imaginative versions of the story of the pilgrims who sought the Christ child are generally fairly romantic and formulaic. Matthew’s description of their gifts has solidified the idea that they were three wealthy fellows. Their identity morphed into royalty because people identified them with Isaiah’s description of the nations who would seek Israel’s wisdom and relationship with God [see Isaiah 60:1-6].

Realistically, a desert-crossing caravan “from the east” surely included more than three people — not only servants, but different generations of pilgrims representing one or more clans. Perhaps it’s because we know almost nothing about them that they can take hold of our imagination and become the carriers of our own search for meaning.

When we let the Magi camp out in our imagination, they appear as meaningful today as they did centuries ago. First of all, in line with what Pope Francis suggests in *Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home*, they followed their star, seeing it as a natural gift from God, symbolizing the love that draws creation toward universal communion. The Magi’s first discovery was that the leaders of the very people best prepared to have welcomed that love had gotten caught up in the rhythm of preserving petty power. When the pilgrims sought the wisdom of Israel, the religious leaders cited prophecies while remaining tragically incurious about their implications for their own time.

Unlike the lackeys who theologized for Herod, the Magi were genuine religious pilgrims, people willing to cross physical and intellectual borders. Something we would call grace enticed them, leading them to believe that nature itself was communicating a message of earthshaking importance. Surely, the Magi were wealthy and therefore socially significant in their own right. Yet, like Abraham, they were willing to risk name and fame, to seek more than the comfort and power they knew at home. It takes a particular combination of courage and confidence to do what they did. In a very real sense, they were the precursors of the disciples who abandoned their occupations and even their reputations for the sake of the Gospel.

In the contrast between the Magi and Herod’s theologians, Matthew’s Gospel depicts the difference between people who can receive a revelation and those who protect themselves from it [Matthew 2:1-12]. Theologian Silvano Fausti describes those open to revelation with the paradoxical statement: “The person who seeks is the person who knows.”

What did the Magi know? They knew that their stores of wisdom, knowledge and certainties were smaller than the truth. They knew that growth requires displacement, the uncomfortable process of venturing into an unknown that stretches and questions assumptions, all for the sake of a greater depth of being.

The Magi had more faith in God than in their own ideas and understanding. They were willing to sing a line from Johnny Lee’s Song — “I spent a lifetime looking for you” — for the rest of their lives. We might look to them as the patron saints of evolution — reminders that no matter how much we accomplish, learn or love, God keeps offering more to those who are willing to seek and find it.

The feast of the Epiphany invites us to holy disquiet — a way of living that has nothing to do with grumbling or complaint. We can make holy disquiet a lifelong posture by nurturing it with wonder, gratitude and hope — all of which require humility. Holy disquiet leads us to appreciate the good of every moment not as something to be grasped, but as a promise of more.

Surely, we will sometimes end up in the wrong places, but, like the Magi who could leave Herod to his own devices, it’s always possible to reorient ourselves. Our journey will not end on this Earth, but we cannot do better than spend our lifetime seeking.

—taken from the writings of Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.J., which appears on the internet

and every human being — they forsake their political connections with Herod and follow their consciences. Now they must face this world that God has created anew, having encountered the manifestation of God incarnate.

They come as 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.

The visit of the Wise men — very much like the visit of the shepherds — is presented in a liturgical context. 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 in their eyes about the One whom they were seeking — they have found their God and Savior. But the truth is that 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 the same is true for us.

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 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 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. This is not a bad way to journey. While the seeking is God’s labor, the being found is ours. For us finding is less exciting 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. This too is not a bad, but rather holy way to journey.

God’s question for us, on this Epiphany 2023, is how we might let go of worldly affiliations, political and otherwise, to pursue God’s vocation for us in this new year based upon our openness to God and his sustaining covenantal relationship with us through Jesus, Christ and Son, who calls us to ever deepening relationship and openness to God’s plan for the world. Paul believes that God’s grace gave him a new vocation. And God does the same for all of us all of the time [see Ephesians 3:2-6]. Our only task is to respond. —taken from the writings of Sherri Brown and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet



AN ONGOING MANIFESTATION OF LOVE AND LIFE:

The Feast of the Epiphany was celebrated in Eastern Churches before being observed in Rome. It seems originally to have been a feast of the nativity of our Lord. Originally, it was observed on January 6th, but was more recently moved to a Sunday so that more people could observe its importance.

The Epiphany, as you know, celebrates the manifestation of our Lord to the whole world — the shining forth of the Light of the World, the manifestation of the Incarnation to the entire world beyond the Jewish world. The three kings symbolize the coming of God to the Gentiles, and the entrance of God into all of the world in all of its history. The Feast of the Epiphany is surrounded with other epiphanies in Scripture — the manifestation of God’s marriage to us symbolized in the wedding feast at Cana [see John 2], the manifestation of Christ’s Sonship in His baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan [see John 1], and finally His Presentation in the Temple [see Luke 2]. This latter celebration marks the closing of the various manifestations of God’s incarnation for us in our world, beginning with Christmas and ending with His presentation in the Temple, which liturgically is celebrated on February 2nd.

The essential reality of the Christian religion is that God reveals Himself to us. God comes to us; He makes Himself known to us at our own level, in our humanity. It is fundamental to Christian belief that God entered our human condition in order to enter into communion and close communication with us. From Adam and Eve until now, it is God who comes to search us out — it is not we who search God out.

Materiality carries within it spirituality. The meaning of having a body is to allow for communion of spirits. This fact flies in the face of any sort of “other world” spirituality. It undercuts the spiritualities that tell us flesh is evil, that the world is totally corrupt, that materiality is a bad thing because it imprisons the human spirit. Catholicism celebrates the holiness of material things in order to show the sacredness of things created by God. The Catholic vision is to see what is inside — to manifest the Spirit Who moves within them because God has entered into our material world. Hence bread, wine, fire, incense, water, oil, candles, and all of the other things we find in Catholic churches, are seen to be conveyors of God’s Holy Spirit. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh are therefore apt symbols to be presented to the God Incarnate now manifesting Himself to us in His creations — particularly His crowning creation, the humanity of men and women.

The Star over Bethlehem is a light that recalls the lights, the fire, and the warmth of God’s love. The star points backward through history to the God who revealed Himself to Moses in a burning bush, the God who manifested Himself in the fire and lightning that surrounded Mt. Sinai, the pillar of fire that lead the Jews through the desert to the Promised Land, and the Star of David, their greatest king. That same Bethlehem star points ahead to the tongues of fire that will come on Pentecost which the Jews observed on the fiftieth day after Passover and which also commemorated the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai.

Epiphany tells us that God has decided to come to us where we are. In amazement St. John writes his 1st Letter: “That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands was made manifest. And we saw it” [see 1 John 1:1]. This is the permanent amazement, the awe, the wonder, and the mystery the Church celebrates continually in the epiphanies of her Sacraments.

What we are therefore concerned with today is our vision. What the Church wants us to do is to see the Light of the World, to see things in God’s Light as He presents Himself to us in our lives. That Light has come into our world and the darkness will not overcome it. Christ’s cure of the man born blind is our own cure. It is the call of God to us. It is His urging to see things as He sees them.

God continues to reveal Himself to us. God’s Light comes to us in the beautiful insights of people

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.

WE ARE THE BELOVED:

We are nearly through our Christmas Liturgical Journey. Let’s make sure that we don’t miss this one very important point: Christmas is about an intimacy with God. For Christians who have gone to their own depths, there is the uncovering of an indwelling Presence — a deep, loving “yes” inherent within us. In Christian theology, this inner Presence would be described as the Holy Spirit, which is precisely God as immanent, within, and even our deepest, truest self. God is the very ground of our Being.

Some mystics have described this Presence as “closer to me than I am to myself” or “more me than I am myself.” Many of us would also describe this, as Thomas Merton did, as the True Self. Yet it still must be awakened and chosen. The Holy Spirit is totally given and given equally to all, but must be consciously received, too. The Presence needs to be recognized, honored, and drawn upon to become a living Presence within us.

From this more spacious and grounded place, one naturally connects, empathizes, forgives, and loves just about everything. We were made in love, for love, and unto love, and it is out of this love that we act. This deep inner “yes” that is God in me, is already loving God through me.

Author and spiritual teacher Henri Nouwen invites us to our own prayerful experience as beloved by God: “We are the Beloved. We are intimately loved long before our parents, teachers, spouses, children and friends loved or wounded us. That’s the truth of our lives. That’s the truth I want you to claim for yourself. That’s the truth spoken by the voice that says: ‘You are my Beloved’ [see Mark 1:9–11]”.

Listening to that voice with great inner attentiveness, I hear at my center words that say: “I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths of the earth and knitted you together in your mother’s womb. I have carved you in the palms of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with a care more intimate than that of a mother for her child. I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at every step. Wherever you go, I go with you, and wherever you rest, I keep watch. I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and drink that will quench all your thirst. I will not hide my face from you. You know me as your own as I know you as my own. You belong to me. I am your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your lover and your spouse — yes, even your child — wherever you are I will be. Nothing will ever separate us. We are one.”

—taken from the writings of Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M., which appears on the internet

CHAPEL ENVELOPES:

There are many ways that you can support our Holy Cross Mission and support Our Lady Chapel. You can place your offering at the door of the chapel as you enter; you can use our on-line donation link; or you can mail in your offerings to the Chapel itself — whatever best serves your needs. If you need a supply of envelopes, please pick them up off the table in the Narthex of the Chapel when you come to Mass. Or you can call the office or stop in to request them. **If you would like us to send you a supply of**

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Thank you to those who have begun to send in weekly offerings. We really appreciate it. Thanks for not forgetting about us.

Offerings-----[Saturday, December 31]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]----- \$ 3,345.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, January 1]----- \$ 287.00

A CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE:

The Christmas story is surely one of the greatest stories ever told. It chronicles a birth from which the world has recorded time as before or after. Moreover, it is written in a way that has inflamed the romantic imagination for 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 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, and his birth is announced to that faith-community in a manner that befits religion by supernatural revelation — namely, by the angels. 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 through nature, astrology, through the stars. The wise men see a special star appear in the sky and begin to follow it, not knowing exactly where or to what it will lead.

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

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! 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 the 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 bless it; the latter sees new life as threat and curses it.

This is a rich story with a powerful challenge: 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 such a life as threat and 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



we meet who give us a way of seeing things in truly striking ways. You and I have all met such people. They move us to feel that God is near. Those are grace filled moments in our lives. God continues to give us epiphanies in those moments.

Or perhaps God's Light comes to us in moments of silence and reflection when we are trying to pray. Perhaps we feel dry — that the words just do not come. Yet there are moments when God will come to us in our attempts at prayer, when He is very near, when He is trying to manifest Himself to us, when His Spirit is moving within us. Or it may come in a particularly beautiful or moving celebration of the Mass, or in a reading from an Epistle or Gospel account. These, too, are epiphanies of God. These, too, are moments when we can bring our own personal gifts to Him — the gold that is the richness of our lives, the frankincense of our love for Him, the myrrh of the bitterness and suffering we carry within us. These are moments when God looks upon us as kings and queens, not as cringing and bootlicking slaves, but as beloved friends. Didn't He tell us that when He declared: "I no longer call you slaves, but I call you friends"? [John 15:15]. That was truly an amazing statement by God. He calls you and me His friends! Truly we are kings and queens.

And so let us resolve here once again to renew our vision. May you and I try harder to push the darkness of our vision aside. Are we bitter and resentful like Herod was? Do we feel upset with the Catholic Church? With having to go to Mass? Are we upset with priests, with the bishop, with the pope? Do we carry animosities in our hearts toward those with whom we live? Toward our associates or our neighbors? Let us therefore cast aside the darkness that keeps us from seeing each other as God sees us. Let us try once more during this coming year to see the epiphanies of God in our lives — especially those manifestations of Him that come to us through other persons. Let us turn our hearts to renewed prayer, to thought-filled contemplation of our lives, to meditation on the meanings that we find in our selves. Let us become the Kings who followed Bethlehem's star to the birthplace of the Son of David. Let us renew once again our commitment to see God's Light in our lives. For He comes, He comes to tell you and me that He loves us, that He loves us as a lover loves his beloved, that He wants to share His very self with us, that He wants to have a total communion — a whole communion, a Holy Communion with you and with me — together in His beloved Son born as one of us to become one with us.

—taken from the writings of Father Charles Irvin, which appear on the internet

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — JANUARY 21st:

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. If you want to volunteer, they have instituted some **new procedures** because of the Coronavirus. **Thus they help pre-pack nonperishables in bags on Thursday evening beginning at 5 PM.** They continue this prepacking on Friday if needed. Check with Elina Gurney on this. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help putting items from the foodbank into the prepacked bags.** Only volunteers will be allowed in the Church building, so you will be protected against the virus. Clients will remain outside in their cars. **The food pantry is then open from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



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.

Please let Elina Gurney know if you would like to help. You can do this through the chapel office [440-473-3560] or by emailing Elina Gurney at gurney.oh@gmail.com. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

OLD GRANDMA BABUSHKA:

Old grandmother Babushka was a holy woman. She read the scriptures, and she knew that the long awaited Savior was to be born in Bethlehem. So, she gathered together all of her possessions and moved to David's city. There she lived in a simple house and prayed each day that God would let her know when the Savior was born. She intended to offer her possessions as a gift to the newborn king. One night after a simple supper, she turned out the light and went to bed. But before she fell asleep there was a knock. "Who could it be at this hour?" she thought. She lit the lamp and opened the door.

There she saw three strangers with camels standing before her. "The Savior is born," they announced, "and we have come from the east to worship him. We were told in a dream to stop here and to bring you along with us. We have gifts to offer and we know that you do also." Old grandmother Babushka rejoiced. "The time has come, the Savior is born," she thought. But it was late, and the night was cold, and so she decided that she would go and present her gifts tomorrow. She ascertained from the strangers the exact directions to the stable and wrote them carefully down. Then she sent them on their way. The next morning, she arose with the sun and gathered together all of her gifts — food, clothing, and money. She followed the directions directly to the stable. When she entered, it was empty. The holy family had already departed. Old grandmother Babushka stomped her foot: "I've missed them," she said, "I should have come last night!"

But she was a determined woman. "I'll keep looking for them," she decided, "they cannot have gone too far." And so old grandmother Babushka began to look. She asked everyone she met. Did they know of a child, of a poor child, perhaps to be found in a manager, perhaps even living on the street. She wanted them to tell her all that they knew. And they did. Some people knew of a poor family who lived on the outskirts of the city. Other people knew of a young child who was sick. Others heard of strangers who were in town with no place to stay. Old grandmother Babushka visited them all. But she could never be certain whether this child and this family was the child and the family that the strangers had told her about.

So she continued to look, week after week, month after month. She found many children — poor children — everywhere. She found many a cradle, many a manger, and many a mother nursing her child. In each place, she left a part of the gift that she was going to give to the Christ child — here some food, to this family some money, to this child some clothes. In time, all that she had was gone. She returned to her own home empty handed.

That night, Jesus appeared to her in a dream. "There you are!" she exclaimed, "I have looked everywhere for you and have not been able to find you. I had gifts to give you but now they are gone." "I know," said Jesus, "and I have received every one. For whatever you gave to the least of my brothers or sisters you gave to me" [see Matthew 25]. Old grandmother Babushka smiled. She was satisfied. She had not seen the Christ child in the manger, but she had lived his gospel.

Few of us here today have ever been to Bethlehem. Those who visited that holy place found that the manger was empty. But being a disciple of Jesus is not seeing him in the stable — it is living his gospel. Whenever we feed the poor, whenever we visit the sick or imprisoned, whenever we welcome the stranger, we are ministering to Christ himself. When we are patient with a relative who irritates us, when we are kind to the kid at school that everyone else mocks, when we listen to the person who is grieving or are generous with those who struggle, we are not only serving them. We are serving Jesus.

We cannot go with the Magi to Bethlehem, but we can offer Christ our gifts. Not gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, but gifts of respect, compassion, and love.

—taken from the writings of Father George Smiga., which appear on the internet.



would rather deny children, the poor, and the infirm the help they need than recognize the good that is being done by those who don't follow the totality of Catholic teaching throughout the world. Although good intentioned, the fact is that some Catholics are saying that the magi had no business receiving the Grace of God because, after all, they were probably pagans. We cannot bring people the Good News of Jesus Christ if we exclude them from the charity of the Lord with which we have been entrusted. Jesus did not come for a select group of people — He came for all people. This is a truth of the Church and a great mystery to those who see themselves as the sole benefactors of God's Grace.

When we gather at Mass, we must realize that the word "Mass" means "to send". We come to Church to receive the gifts of God and are sent to bring these gifts to all of the people of the world. We are sent to bring the good news of the joy of the Gospel to those who have been marginalized by society. We are sent to heal those who are hurting — whether they believe in Christ or not. We are sent to aid those who are caring for the needy — whether they follow the totality of Catholic morality or not. People who are excluded will never find Christ. People who experience his presence in the charity of other Christians will be attracted to worship the One who is the source of charity. Pope Francis reaffirmed that no one has ever been converted by an argument. People are converted by the presence of Christ they experience in sincere Christians. What are those magi doing bringing gifts to the King of the Jews? What are those gays doing seeking a Church that welcomes them into the Presence of God? What are those non-Catholic organizations doing caring for the needy? They are all doing exactly what they should be doing — worshiping the One who came for all people.

An Opening Song that we Catholics sing at Mass is entitled: *All are Welcome*. Do we mean this? Or are there some who are not as welcome as others — be that at Mass or outside our doors looking to care for others? As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany, let us ask the Lord to free us from our prejudices. We ask Jesus to allow us to be what we call ourselves, Catholics — people of a universal Church.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Isaiah 42:1-7, Acts 10:34-38, Matthew 3:13-17

Tuesday: Hebrews 2:5-12, Matthew 1:21-28

Wednesday: Hebrews 2:14-18, Mark 1:29-39

Thursday: Hebrews 3:7-14, Mark 1:40-45

Friday: Hebrews 4:1-11, Mark 2:1-12

Saturday: Hebrews 4:12-16, Mark 2:13-17

2nd Week in Ordinary Time: Isaiah 49:3-6, 1 Corinthians 1:1-3, John 1:29-34

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you.

Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord's invitation: "I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart" [Jeremiah 24:7].

**WISDOM:**

8 Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.

—Albert Einstein

ALL ARE WELCOME:

The Solemnity of the Epiphany is one of the oldest feasts in the Church Calendar — probably even older than the Feast of Christmas. There are really three epiphanies recognized by the Church — the manifestation of the Lord to the magi, the baptism of the Lord by John the Baptist, and the first public miracle which took place at the wedding in Cana where Jesus changed water into wine the changing of water into wine. The Eastern Catholic Churches and the Orthodox Churches celebrate all three Epiphanies together. The Western Catholic Church — the Roman Catholic Church — divides up these celebrations. Our focus this weekend is on the magi. Who were these people — sometimes called kings? We don't know a whole lot about them.

The main thing we know is that they were not Jewish. And this is significant. A few days after the birth of the Lord, Gentiles — pagans — were summoned to follow a star to Israel where the One the ages waited for was born. They followed the star because they were good men, honestly seeking God's will. It must have been quite a sight when they arrived in Israel. They were foreigners — but not just any foreigners. They held positions powerful enough for them to merit an audience with Herod. Herod was troubled by their visit, and with him all of Jerusalem [Matthew 2:1-12]. Who were these people, and what did they want from the king? They asked to give homage to the newborn king of the Jews. Was there a baby out there somewhere who would replace Herod? The chief priests and scribes could only tell Herod about an ancient prophecy that a ruler would come from Bethlehem. If these three magi — in their own time considered kings — could create such a stir in Jerusalem, imagine what it had to be like when they arrived in Bethlehem and went to the place — a house by now — where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were staying. Even more amazing, these rich pagans prostrated themselves before the child and gave him gifts — gold, frankincense and myrrh. Why would rich pagans be interested in the Jewish Messiah?

That the Gentiles could be part of God's plan for His people was beyond the consideration of the Jews. But the mystery, hidden for generations was now revealed — the Gentiles were to be co-heirs with the Jews, members of the same body, co-partners in the promise of Jesus Christ [Ephesians 3:2-6]. Jesus Christ came for all people. None were to be excluded from the Grace of God that He would bring. We, Catholics — people whose very name means universal — must be careful that we recognize that all people are called to the Grace of God given by Jesus Christ. It is so easy for us to exclude people. In fact, we have been trained by our society to compartmentalize people into various groups. We are told that Jews behave this way, Italians that way, the Irish another way, and the French don't behave at all. We can easily decide who belongs worshipping the Lord and who really shouldn't be there. We decide that whole groups of people — for example gay people — must be immoral and shouldn't enjoy the gifts of the Church. When asked about gays, Pope Francis said: "Who am I to judge?" He was making the humble statement that it was not up to him to say that a person was immoral just because he or she is gay. There are many moral gay people and many immoral people who are not gay. We don't have the right to exclude people from worshipping the One who is Gift of Bethlehem. In a similar way, we don't have the right to exclude people from receiving the charity of the Church.

There are some who feel that Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development should not be supporting organizations that care for needy people unless these organizations adhere to Church teachings on morality. So, they would object to CRS helping an organization that wishes to build an eye clinic for children in Africa because that same organization might not follow Catholic moral teaching in another clinics it may run there or in other parts of the world. Similar objections are often raised regarding the poor people supported by CCHD. "Better-Than-Thou-Catholics"

**FOLLOWING THE STARS:**

This weekend, we celebrate the great feast of the Epiphany. It is an event that is only recorded in the Gospel of Matthew [2:1-12]. Guided by a star which intrigued and delighted them, wise men from the East found their way to Bethlehem. When the star halted over the place where Jesus was, they entered the house, fell to their knees and offered gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the infant destined to be the messiah king. The gospel reminds us that Christ came to save all people — Gentiles as well as Jews.

Matthew's story has caught the imagination of Christians both in the eastern Churches — where Epiphany is the major celebration of the birth of Jesus — and in our western Church, where the Wise Men have acquired the names Balthazar, Caspar and Melchior. In the popular imagination, Matthew's Magi reside comfortably alongside Luke's shepherds.

To enrich our celebration of the Epiphany, let us reflect on ways the beauty and power of the stars can deepen and expand our own spiritual journey. According to respected astronomers, our universe began over 13 billion years ago, and consists of at least two trillion galaxies — some with trillions of stars and others like our smaller Milky Way galaxy with around 400 billion stars including our sun. With the recent deployment of the James Webb Space Telescope, we are learning even more about our vast expanding universe. For example, it has revealed thousands of previously unknown galaxies.

Eyes of faith can detect in these scientific discoveries the handiwork of God the Creator of all that exists. The Apostle Paul puts us on alert: "Ever since God created the world, his everlasting power and deity, however invisible, have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made" [Romans 1:20]. The immensity of our visible star-studded universe points to an invisible God who is essentially unimaginable, incomprehensible and inexhaustible. The stars warn us against making God in our image or trying to manipulate the Lord of the universe to our own ends. They can also inspire a deep sense of wonderment and awe that opens our hearts and expands our imagination to greater appreciation of the ultimately mysterious nature of our world.

Furthermore, contemplating the beauty of a starry night can direct us to God, the Supreme Artist, the Source of all the beauty in our world that attracts us. The world is indeed "charged with the grandeur of God," as the Jesuit poet Hopkins so eloquently put it. For believers, all things on earth and in the heavens can reveal the infinite God. As Christians, we believe that Christ is God's greatest work of art, the icon of the Father, the full splendor of divine glory and the true light of the world.

We can think of Epiphany as a call to stay more alert, during the coming year, to the Holy Spirit, who guides our earthly journey. In addition to our regular prayer regimen, we could periodically contemplate the stars. Gazing into the starry night sky and reflecting on the immensity of the universe challenges all our personal delusions of grandeur and raises our minds and hearts in prayer to the God who created and sustains the whole evolving world. Periodic reflection on the stars can also sharpen our appreciation of all that is beautiful in our world and prompt prayers of gratitude to God, the Creator of all things beautiful.

How can you practice an Epiphany spirituality during the coming year?

—taken from the writings of Father Jim Bacik which appear on the internet

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.



THE EPIPHANY HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS:

Like a rising star, Jesus comes to enlighten all peoples and to brighten the nights of humanity. Today, with the Magi, let us lift our eyes to heaven and ask: “Where is the child who has been born?” [Matthew 2:1-12]. Where can we find and encounter our Lord?

From the experience of the Magi, we learn that the first “place” where he loves to be sought is in restless questioning. The exciting adventure of these Wise Men from the East teaches us that faith is not born of our own merits, thoughts, and theories. Rather, it is God’s gift. His grace helps us to shake off our apathy and opens our minds to ask the important questions in life — questions that challenge us to leave behind our presumption that everything is fine, questions that open us to what is beyond us. For the Magi, that was the beginning — the restlessness of those willing to ask questions. Filled with yearning for the infinite, they scan the heavens, find themselves marveling at the brilliance of a star, and experience the quest for the transcendent that inspires the progress of civilizations and the tireless seeking of the human heart. The star left them with a question: Where is the child who has been born?

Brothers and sisters, the journey of faith begins whenever, by God’s grace, we make room for the restlessness that keeps us awake and alert. It begins when we are willing to ask questions, when we are dissatisfied with our daily routine and take seriously the challenges of each new day. When we step out of our comfort zone and decide to confront the uncomfortable aspects of life — our relationships with others, unexpected events, projects needing to be undertaken, dreams to be realized, fears to be faced, physical and mental sufferings. At such times, deep in our hearts, we find ourselves before the irrepressible questions that lead us to seek the Lord — where do I find happiness? Where do I find that fullness of life to which I aspire? Where do I find a love that does not fade away, a love that endures even in the face of frailty, failure and betrayal? What hidden opportunities are present in the midst of my crises and my sufferings?

Yet each day, the very air we breathe is full of “tranquilizers of the soul,” surrogates meant to sedate our inner restlessness and to suppress those very questions — new items to consume, empty promises of pleasure and nonstop media controversies, the idolatry of fitness. Everything seems to tell us: don’t overthink things; let go and enjoy life! Often we try to soothe our hearts with creature comforts. If the Magi had done that, they would never have encountered the Lord. The danger is that we sedate our hearts, sedate our souls in order to quell our inner restlessness. God, however, is always there, there within our restless questioning. In that questioning, we “seek him as the night seeks the dawn. He is present in the silence that troubles us in the face of death and the end of all human grandeur. He is present in the longing for justice and love deep within our hearts. He is the holy mystery that responds to our yearning for the Totally Other — a yearning for perfect and consummate justice, reconciliation and peace. That, then, is the first place where we can encounter the Lord — in restless questioning. Do not be afraid to enter into this restless questioning, for that is the path that lead us to Jesus.

The second place is in the risk of journeying. Questioning, including spiritual questioning, can lead to frustrations and desolations unless we embark upon a journey, unless we turn ourselves, in the depths of our being, to the face of God and the beauty of his word. Benedict XVI said of the Magi: “Their outward pilgrimage was the expression of their inward journey, the inner pilgrimage of their hearts”. The Magi in fact did not simply study the heavens and contemplate the light of the star; they set out on a journey full of risks, without safe roads and clear maps. They wanted to discover this King of the Jews, to learn where he was born, where they could find him. And so, they asked Herod, who in turn summoned the leaders of the people and the scribes who pore over the Scriptures. The Magi were on a journey; most of the verbs used to describe them are verbs of movement.

The same is true of our faith. Without a continuous journey in constant dialogue with the Lord,

without attentive listening to his word, without perseverance, faith cannot grow. It is not enough to entertain some vague idea about God, to say some prayer that salves our consciences. We need to become disciples — following Jesus and his Gospel, bringing everything to him in prayer, seeking him in the events of our daily lives and in the faces of our brothers and sisters. From Abraham, who set out for an unknown land, to the Magi, who set out behind the star, faith has always been a journey, a pilgrimage, a history of starts and restarts. Let us remind ourselves that a static faith does not grow; we cannot enclose faith in some personal devotion or confine it within the four walls of our churches; we need to bring it outside and to live it in a constant journey towards God and towards our brothers and sisters. Today, let us ask ourselves: Am I journeying towards the Lord of life, to make him the Lord of my life? Jesus, who are you for me? Where are you calling me to go, and what are you asking of my life? What decisions are you inviting me to make for the sake of others?

Finally, after restless questioning and the risk of journeying, the third place where we encounter the Lord is in the wonder of worship. At the end of their long journey and tiring quest, the Magi entered the house, where “they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage”. This is what really matters: our restlessness, our questioning, our spiritual journeys and the practice of our faith must all converge in worship of the Lord. There they find their center and source, for there everything begins, for the Lord himself enables us to feel and act. Everything starts and ends there, because the purpose of everything is not to achieve a personal goal or to receive glory for ourselves, but to encounter God. To let ourselves be enveloped by his love, which is the basis of our hope, which sets us free from evil, opens our hearts to love others, and makes us a people capable of building a more just and fraternal world. Our pastoral activities will be fruitless unless we put Jesus at their center and fall down in worship before him. The wonder of worship. Then we will learn to stand before God, not to ask for something or to do something, but simply to halt in silence and abandon ourselves to his love, letting him take us by the hand and restoring us by his mercy. We pray often, asking for things or in reflection, but usually we forget the prayer of adoration. We have lost the sense of worship because we have lost our restless questioning and have lost the courage to continue on our journey with all its risks. Today, the Lord calls us to imitate the Magi. Like the Magi, let us fall down and entrust ourselves to God in the wonder of worship. Let us worship God, not ourselves; let us worship God and not the false idols that seduce by the allure of prestige or power, or the allure of false news; let us love God and not bow down before passing things and evil thoughts, seductive yet hollow and empty.

Brothers and sisters, let us open our hearts to restlessness, let us ask for the courage to continue our journey, and let us finish in worship! Let us not be afraid, for this is the path of the Magi, and the path of all the saints throughout history — to welcome our restlessness, to set out and to worship. Brothers and sisters, may we never stop our restless questioning; may we never interrupt our journey by yielding to apathy or convenience; and in our encounter with the Lord, may we abandon ourselves to the wonder of worship. Then we will discover that a light shines even in the darkest nights — the light of Jesus, the radiant morning star, the sun of justice the merciful splendor of God, who loves every man and woman, and all the peoples of the earth.

—Francis

**LIFE TEEN and EDGE:**

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Lennon Board Room. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — lifeteen.com. There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass. And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].

