

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ A Prayer for the Family ~**

**Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,  
in you we contemplate  
the splendor of true love,  
to you we turn with trust.**

**Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that our families, too,  
may be places of communion and prayer,  
authentic schools of the Gospel  
and small domestic Churches.**

**Holy Family of Nazareth,  
may families never again  
experience violence, rejection, and division.  
May all who have been hurt or scandalized  
find ready comfort and healing.**

**Holy family of Nazareth,  
make us once again  
more mindful of the sacredness  
and inviolability of the family,  
and its beauty in God's plan.**

**Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,  
graciously hear our prayer.  
Amen.**

—Pope Francis

**CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:**

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.  
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# 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 HOLY FAMILY:**

Every year right after Christmas, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. There is a reason for this. It’s easy to think that the “incarnation” means God took on a human body. But there is much more to it than that. In Jesus, God unites himself to our entire human nature. He fully enters into human experience, with all its peaks and valleys. And a part of that human experience — peaks and valleys included — is family. We forget that Jesus spent over 90% of his years in the obscure nitty-gritty of family life. Though little of those years are recorded, what we do know is significant. First of all, despite the cuddly image of our nativity scenes, the original Christmas was anything but cozy. A woman nine months pregnant rides 75 miles on the back of a donkey over bumpy, dusty roads so she can have her baby in a stable full of dirty, smelly animals. Quickly after the birth they have to pick up and flee for their lives, seeking asylum in a foreign land. A few years later, the now adolescent son goes missing for several days, and there ensues a conversation characterized by no little emotion. Joseph is a saint; Mary is without sin; Jesus is God incarnate — yet there are still challenges, difficulties, tense moments, and opportunities for misunderstanding. Welcome to real family life.



**NO MASS ON MONDAY:**

While it has been a long-standing tradition to have Mass on New Year’s Eve, we will not be doing so this year because New Year’s Eve falls on a Sunday, and **the Bishop has dispensed the Holy Day obligation for this year. We will resume having New Year’s Eve Mass next year.**



**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:**

During this Christmas season, we would like to thank all those who have helped us by making memorial offerings. May our floral decorations and this season remind all of us of those special relationships which we hold close to our heart. Please keep the following people in your prayers: **In memory of Thomas Hughes, Dolores Domoraski and the Blazek and Rezabek Families.** If you would like to make a memorial offering, please place it in an envelope marked “Memorial Offering,



**FAITH EDUCATION:**

Our Faith Education classes will resume on **January 7<sup>th</sup>**. Our Faith Education classes meet on **Sundays from 8:45—9:45 AM. This is followed by Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 10 AM.** Please join us as we come together to begin our faith journey for this year by entering into prayer and worship together. If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [[440-473-3560]. **Upcoming class dates: January 7-21-28.** Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.



**2024 CALENDARS:**

Calendars for the year 2024 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 2024 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.



**LOOKING FOR PEACE:**

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

—St. Teresa of Calcut-

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For a couple experiencing difficulty in becoming pregnant
- For an end to violence as a means to resolve differences.
- 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.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Chuck Shade, father of Loren Shade, grandfather of Michael, Madeline, and Charles Shade
- For Josephine Donia, cousin of AVI associate Director, Rob Fleeman.
- For Helene Chambers, mother of Dennis [‘72], Thomas [‘73], and Rosemary [‘86] Chambers, and brother-in-law of Father Thomas Chambers, C.S.C.
- For Earl Stiver
- For Robert Rhode II, son of Robert Rhode [‘51], and nephew of Ray Rhode [‘51], cousin of Patrick [‘88], Chris [‘93] and Matt [‘96] Rhode
- For Megan Schaefer Wenker [‘09]

**ATTENDANCE:**

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

**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.

**GOOD ADVICE:**

Since it is the most perfect act of charity and the most pleasing and acceptable sacrifice that is given by us to God, there can be no doubt that whoever practices entire submission to God’s will lays up inestimable treasures at every moment. To remain indifferent to good fortune or to adversity by accepting it all from the hand of God without questioning, not to ask for things to be done as we would like them but as God wishes, to make the intention of all our prayers that God’s will should be perfectly accomplished in ourselves and in all creatures is to find the secret of happiness and content.



PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Father Larry Jerge, C.S.C., who is under the care of Hospice.
- For Loretta Seidl, sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is critically ill.
- For Sister Mary Ann Lavelle, C.S.J., sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is in hospice care.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Nora Beach, wife of former Gilmour Religion Instructor, Bob Beach, mother of Hannah [‘98] and Miriam [‘99] Beach, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jennifer Burger [‘06], sister of Rachel [‘10] and Paul [‘16] Burger, who is undergoing treatment for rare form of breast cancer.
- For Maria Ruiz, mother of Elina Gurney, grandmother of Joseph and Christina Gurney, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Chuck Campanella, father of Anthony Campanella, who continues in rehab following serious surgery.
- 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 Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [‘09], Rosa [‘12] and Edwin [‘17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For John Roddy, brother of Tim Roddy [‘87], and brother of Gilmour Marketing associate, Mary Roddy Stretar, uncle of Katie Stretar [‘29], and cousin of Daniel [‘83], Mike [‘85], and Matt [‘86] Roddy, who is undergoing treatment for a recurrence of cancer.
- For Robert O’Neill, grandfather of Bobby O’Neill [‘33], who is undergoing treatment for bladder cancer.
- For Debbie Marcum, former assistant in the Lower School, who is recovering from a severe heart attack.
- For Josephine Fernando, mother of Melvin [‘83] and Raymond [‘88] Fernando, mother-in-law of Imelda Deogracias Fernando [‘88], who is ill.
- For Lincoln Nye, brother of Maddie Nye [‘25], and former Gilmour student, who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For JoAnne Fisher, wife of Jim, mother of Bill [‘10] and PJ, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Brother Roy Smith, C.S.C., who is recovering from surgery.



SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — JANUARY 20<sup>th</sup>:

Our Savior Lutheran Church — across the street from the Chapel — has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help unloading the trailers and setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry serves clients 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.

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3<sup>rd</sup>:

**Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 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: Epiphany**

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, December 31: <b>The Holy Family</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In Person & Live Stream
Monday, January 1: <b>Motherhood of God</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Tuesday, January 2 <b>Basil the Great</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Wednesday, January 3:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Thursday, January 4: <b>Elizabeth Ann Seton</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Friday, January 5: <b>John Neumann</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Saturday, January 6: <b>Epiphany</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b> In Person only
Sunday, January 7: <b>Epiphany</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In Person & Live Stream

WE ARE NOT ALONE:

God came to us because he wanted to join us on the road, to listen to our story, and to help us realize that we are not walking in circles, but moving toward the house of peace and joy. This is the great mystery of Christmas that continues to give us comfort and consolation — we are not alone on our journey. The God of love who gave us life sent his only Son to be with us at all times and in all places, so that we never have to feel lost in our struggles but always can trust that he walks with us.

The challenge is to let God be who he wants to be. A part of us clings to our aloneness, and does not allow God to touch us where we are most in pain. Often we hide from him precisely those places in ourselves where we feel guilty, ashamed, confused, and lost. Thus we do not give him a chance to be with us where we feel most alone.

Christmas is the renewed invitation not to be afraid and to let him — whose love is greater than our own hearts and minds can comprehend—be our companion.

—Henri Nouwen



**REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:**

We have all been caught up in the spirit of Christmas throughout this past week, so many may feel that there is little need to prepare for this-weekend’s liturgy — the Feast of the Holy Family. Some might be saying under their voices: “Do we have to go to church again? We just went!” It is not so much fun to do the “have-tos”, and preparing for them is a dutiful process. In family life, the business world — and even in the social-relationships of our lives — there are many “have-tos”. We do them, even when we “just did them” recently. The Season of Christmas calls us to reflect on the spirit with which we do the dutiful, the required, and the expected. We may even ponder how we experienced the “have-tos” of Christmas. God “has-to” because God cannot not be God. We do not “have-to” — and that is what changes “dutiful” to “beautiful”.

Why is this Feast in the middle of Christmas? The answer is simple — Christmas is all about relationship, and so is family. God, in his infinite wisdom, saw that a family that respected and honored one another was essential to his plan. A family would be the source of not only a sense of belonging and a home, but where honor, duty, justice, and compassion were taught, and comfort and love were found. A family would be the wellspring of strength in times of need and would be there to celebrate the joyous occasions of life.

Being part of a loving, caring family is truly a gift from God and is one that we deeply cherish. So, why not share this gift with others? Why do we so often withhold our love and caring from those who are not members of our biological family, but who need the love, comfort, and support we find in our family just as much, if not more, than we do? Just think what the world might have missed, had Jesus decided that his love and compassion were limited only to Mary and Joseph. If he had not willingly laid down his life for those outside of his family — people he did not know — we would have no hope of salvation. It is as simple as that!

The Liturgy of the Word for this Feast of the Holy Family opens with an instruction from a “Wisdom Figure” speaking to his child concerning his child’s relationship with God — not directly about the child’s relationship with his/her parents. The author of the Book of Sirach is discussing reverencing God through reverencing parents [Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14]. This is central to the spirituality of ancient Israel. Begetting human life is experienced as a participation in Divinity from Whom all life ultimately flows and returns. Mothers and fathers are revered for their being instruments of sharing God’s Life by bringing forth life.

Children are encouraged to relate with God in many earthly ways, but prime among them is honoring, not shaming, their parents. The solidity of family life will assure the religio-social life of the nation. The duty of the parents is to acclimate their children into this way of relating with God. The duty of the children is to incarnate these teachings as a spirituality lived way of life, leading to they themselves become parents some day and givers of life.

Luke’s Gospel [Luke 2:22-40] is centered around the holiness of the “New Family” — a holiness founded in their exact compliance with the Law and traditions of their faith. To better understand the presenting of Jesus in the temple and the offerings of little birds, one must be familiar with the Book of Leviticus [see chapters 12-15]. These chapters might give the impression of being up-tight about sexuality, but the contrary is true. A couple becoming pregnant, and their giving birth is so related to God’s promise of fertility and to the divine power of giving life, that there is a mysterious human experience of humanly being that close to God.

The divine is so ultimate, transcendent, other-than-ugly that sexual activity is not unclean; rather the human, who by entering into the birth-adventure, is experienced as unclean compared with God. Proper sexual activities of the body and within human relations are sacred, because it participates and continues



**THE HOLY FAMILY IS NO DIFFERENT:**

While Christian biblical authors seems to argue that the “contemplative life” is the ideal way to live one’s faith, that doesn’t prove that such a life style is valid — electric lights aren’t in the Bible either. Perhaps that’s why we should carefully listen to the Scripture Readings for this Feast of the Holy Family.

In both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, true faith revolves around how we relate with others. Though we’re to have a correct relationship with God — or the risen Jesus — the first step in forming that relationship is to connect correctly with the people around us — especially those closest to us — our family.

Like you, I grew up with ridiculous holy card pictures of the Holy Family — usually depicting Joseph sawing a piece of wood, Mary spinning wool, and the boy Jesus playing on the floor with miniature crosses. I presume the parents of any child engaging in similar behavior today would immediately make an appointment with the nearest child psychologist! The image is as far from real life as it would’ve been had the artist included zombies in the room.

If, as Luke states [2:22-40], the newly born Jesus eventually “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him,” his maturing must have paralleled our maturing. During that formative period, some “things” work; some don’t. There’s probably as much hit and miss in the holy trio’s relationship as there are in our relationships. Everything Joseph and Mary — and perhaps even Jesus — later learned about their special bond wasn’t known by them at the beginning of that relationship.

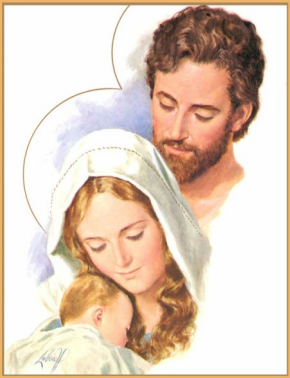
We are especially grateful for the nitty-grittiness of the other Scripture readings for this Feast. Sirach, for instance, probably speaks from personal experience when he counsels his readers: “Even if your parent’s minds fail, be considerate of them; revile them not all the days of their lives” [Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14]. Nothing is more frustrating than trying to communicate with a loved one experiencing dementia. Were it an option, I imagine some caretakers would gladly volunteer to spend a few months in a cloistered convent or monastery. Yet our sacred author leaves no wiggle room. How we relate to one another is an essential part of our faith.

After 2,000 years of “hit and miss”, most married couples — especially the wives — would challenge the advice of the writer of the letter to the Church at Colossae, as it appeared in its original form: “Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord” [Colossians 3:12-21]. The Pauline disciple responsible for this letter is certainly coming from a different environment than the one modern Christians normally encounter. After reflecting on human relations over the centuries, most followers of Jesus would honestly testify that basing a husband/wife relationship on subordination isn’t the best way to imitate the risen Jesus. Some things work; some don’t. But respect and dignity are central to this relationship.

It’s important in all relationships to have hope. Scholars presume that Simeon and Anna were constant fixtures in the Jerusalem temple. They probably asked for parental permission to hold each child that came in for the purification rituals. Both spoke about what this child could one day become. They believed every newborn had the possibility of developing into someone who’ll give “glory” to Israel.

Of course, that will only happen if the child’s parents are willing to endure the pain — the sword — which comes from forming deep relationships with one another and their child. No matter how high our hopes, eventually every family must “return to Galilee.”

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



**REMEMBER:**

Just because you may not see the harvest don’t let that stop you from planting the seeds. —Jon Gordon 17

**OUR FAMILIES — BLESSED AND BROKEN:**

Does the “typical” family really exist? Families come in so many shapes and sizes, and there is nothing “typical” about them. Our family of origin, our family of association, the family of our church, the family of humanity, and the family of creation are all different types of families. Even our work and school associations are often referred to as “families.” They vary in expression and style as much as human beings vary one to the other. As much as we are different, our families are different. All require tolerance, patience, and freedom of expression. We are more connected to each other and to all of creation than we think. We are hard-wired to be connected with God, one another, and our world. We cannot be our best selves in isolation.

The Holy Family was not typical either. They were much different than many of the families of the day and certainly unique in its expression and makeup as well. They faced challenges and struggles as we face challenges and struggles. God never promised an easy life. As we ponder the Holy Family today, they can point to some valuable lessons we often forget. They teach us to look for God in our families as they are — not seeking to change them or mold them into what we want or need them to be, but to accept them — graces, imperfections, and all. God is present to the often messy expressions of our families.

Our familiar relationships are not just “about us” and what we can get from them. Rather, they are more about what we can do for them. Sometimes it is easy to see God in clear and obvious ways, but most often we have to look a little harder. There is always the thread and call of Love weaving in and out of whatever relationship captivates us. Sometimes that call leads us to leave that which is hurtful, unjust, or dysfunctional, and walk a different path.

If the Holy Family did not keep their eyes focused on God, they never would have persevered or fulfilled God’s vision. They would have been without purpose and hope. Our families are ways in which God leads us. Even when our families are broken, hurting, and hurtful, God is leading us to wholeness and guiding us.

The example of the Holy Family also shows us to trust in what our families can be and what God can make them. There is always promise and hope. There is always tomorrow. As the Holy Family kept God’s vision before them, so can we. How can the unique gifts and blessings I bring to my familiar relationships serve to build them up and make them better? God promises to be with us. Therefore, we can strive to be our best selves. Our families — those close and those extended — will reap the benefits.

Everyone deserves a respected place in our closer more intimate families, in the family of humanity, and in the family of creation. Pope Francis tells us in his encyclical *Laudato Si*: “When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities — to offer just a few examples — it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself. Everything is connected.”

Do we appreciate that we are connected to all people and to all things? God designed it this way. Sadly, there are so many relationships that are broken. The sad consequences of imperfection and sin can derail us and disconnect us from one another. There are so many places in society where basic human needs are ignored. People who are poor do not get the care they deserve. Yet, even in the face of injustice the voice of Love cries out. Can we hear it?

The Holy Family calls us back to our roots — to a simple childlike trust in God. Joseph and Mary knew that they were entrusted with a gift — the very light of God. It is this light who is Christ who reveals to us how our family relationships — whatever form they take — are to work. He alone can bring healing to division and peace where there is discord. All we have to do is listen and find Christ. Hope and courage are often difficult to come by. The Holy Family demonstrates very clearly that all is possible with God when one puts faith in him.

—taken from the writings of Father Mark Suslenko, which appear on the internet.

the experience of God’s fidelity to the Covenants. The Laws protect the sacredness of living within the covenanted community of Israel.

Luke presents Joseph and Mary as being faithful Jews. Mary has no physical reason to present herself for purification. A lamb is to be offered for the ritual sacrifice of atonement, but in the case of a poor couple, two turtledoves and two pigeons would do. The first child to be born is sacred and presented to the Lord because that child opened the womb so that other children may also take their turn in being born. The ritual is complete, but two elders of the temple become witnesses, and like the Magi and shepherds, they become early prophetic figures in accepting and proclaiming that Jesus — the One-Waited-For — has come.

Simeon and Anna say some powerful words to Mary and Joseph about their Child. For Mary some are becoming familiar. The angel Gabriel, the shepherds, the Magi had all indicated “the something special” about the birth and the life He would live. Mary also heard for the first time that suffering was going to be a part of her life as well. But is it just about the suffering of Jesus on the cross? Is it not also about the surrender of her life to living the plan of God for her? She took this all in and it matured in her heart and soul as Jesus matured in Galilee. Pondering is not the same as worrying; pondering leads to maturing, worrying leads to more worrying.

The Holy Family was a law-abiding group. This is a good model for Catholic and Christian families. We do not observe all the Jewish rituals, but we are invited to experience sexuality, birth, life, family-relations in the same spirit of sacredness. Original sin did not have its origin in our families-of-origin — though it was the place of our first experiencing its effects in the lives of others in our families.

In my family, we never prayed Grace before meals. We seldom went to Sunday mass together — though we all went faithfully. My parents never attended “devotions” or special parish activities — except “Sports nights”. We did not say a prayer upon beginning a long trip — though I think I heard my father mention the Lord’s Name during the trip now and then. I learned night-prayers kneeling as a child at my mother’s chair, but faith and love were lived by my parents and that is how we learned about God and church and Jesus.

But what we learned could not end here. We learned that the love of our “intimate” family needed to also embrace the wider human family. We learned that we needed to be more inclusive in our definition of family. Let us include the disenfranchised, the infirm, whose lives are confined to nursing homes, our neighbors and office mates who sometimes annoy us, and those whose political persuasions are not the same as ours. If we can be more Christlike in expanding our definition of family, then we, too, can make the world a better place not only for those we interact with, but for the good it does for our own well-being.

And in so doing find joy in extending our love to all of God’s children.

—taken from the writings of Steve Scholer and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., 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 PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE — A MODEL FOR OUR LIVES:**

The Sunday after Christmas is always dedicated to the Holy Family. The fact that this Feast is celebrated during the Christmas season speaks volumes about the link between the two celebrations. This Feast of the Holy Family is uniquely Catholic and is not usually kept by the Protestant Churches. The reason has nothing to do with the Protestant Reformation; in reality, the Feast of the Holy Family actually is a latecomer onto the liturgical scene. Although it has its origins in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century — when devotion to the Holy Family was apparently quite strong, it wasn't formally established until 1893, and didn't actually get into the universal calendar till 1921. Despite its late arrival, it is a lovely feast day, and helps us to keep the focus on family life which is so important — especially at this time of the year.

Luke's Gospel for this Feast of the Holy Family gives us part of the only story in the Gospels from the boyhood of Christ — His presentation in the Temple [Luke 2:22-40]. The second boyhood story — which is not part of the Feast this year — is the Finding of Jesus in the Temple [Luke 2:41-52]. In the Gospel of Luke, these passages act as a kind of a bridge from the story of Christ's birth — the Infancy narratives. They become sort of an "overture" before moving to the main theme which is Christ's public ministry.

In these stories, we can see reflections of many of Luke's favorite themes — the journey, the temple, loving submission, etc. We celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. But the fact is that we know so very little about the life of the Holy Family. Yes, we have the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke, and we have this little account of his Presentation [and then his Finding in the Temple] — but that is all that we have. What conclusions are we meant to draw from all of this?

If we look at them as an ideal family then they fall wide of the mark — Mary was pregnant before marriage which somewhat falls short of the ideal; they lived together in perpetual chastity which would be very much less than ideal for most; and to cap it all, they had only one child — and he was the Son of God, which sounds like most people's worst nightmare! There just doesn't seem much there that we would want to — or even could — model ourselves on.

What is there here for us? Let us look first at the Prophet Simeon. Here in his prophecy, we have one of the most beautiful prayers of the Bible — "Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation." Here is a prayer that we can all relate to — a prayer which can really grow in us over the years until it reaches its prophetic culmination at the point of our death, when we all will really say with all our hearts: "Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation."

Simeon was a devout and holy man. He had received a revelation that he would see the Christ — and he longed for that day. This yearning is an important lesson for us in prayer. Prayer is not just about rattling-off rosaries, or constantly asking for things. Prayer often does not need words. A simple longing — a yearning for the coming of the Kingdom — is an authentic expression of the Christian virtue of hope. It is a deep and important form of prayer.

Simeon makes a prophecy about Christ's destiny; and as it says: "the child's father and mother stood there wondering about him." Every parent wonders about their children. Every parent is full of hope for their children. Over a period of time, this hope might turn into fear and anxiety, but the fundamental feeling of hope is still there. We hope that everything will turn out well for them; we hope that they will make a success of life; we hope that they will be safe and keep out of trouble; we hope that they will be happy.

If we were to take these perfectly ordinary aspirations and express them in a Christian way, we

participate healthily in a family is to be part of a church. The family is not secular while the church is divine, mundane while the church is holy, and the place of ordinary life while the church is the place of worship. To be in a family is to be in a church — perhaps the most important church many of us will ever experience. Every family is meant to be a religious community and is meant to do for us exactly what a religious community or church does for its members.

And what is that? By abiding in family — by sitting down with each other around a kitchen table, by sharing the frustration of balancing a common checkbook, by celebrating each other's joys and sorrows and everyday life, by offering each other consolation and correction, and by putting up with each other's coughs, phobias, and sins — we experience church. In both, family life and church, our lives break open beyond ourselves and God can enter.

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

**YOUNG PEOPLE WANT FAMILY:**

This weekend, we celebrate Holy Family Sunday. By a nice coincidence, this year the Feast of the Holy Family falls on the very last day of the year — a good moment to take stock and look forward. Like many of you, I have been praying for our families and particularly for our children. We live in a world of paradox — that even though our children have more abundance than any previous generation, they also experience greater depression and sadness. They have devices like computers and cell phones that can instantaneously retrieve information and connect with people anywhere, yet they experience more disconnectedness. And by dramatically increased numbers they have become alienated not only from the practice of the faith, but even from faith itself.

Many of our moms and dads feel like Mary in Luke's Gospel. A sword pierces their heart [see Luke 2:22-40]. We all feel it. There's no easy answer. Plenty of advice out there — and we should not ignore it — but no quick solution. I certainly don't have an answer — but Jesus does. It all goes back to being in relationship with him — allow him to become one with us again.

I mentioned some of the disturbing things happening to our children. But there are hopeful, positive signs. Besides revealing depression, disconnectedness, and loss of faith, the studies show that our young people have a longing for family. Some of their dreams about family are amazingly traditional. For example, studies asked young adults ages 18-24 if they agree with this statement: "It is best for the man to achieve outside the home and the woman to take care of home and family." 73% of the respondents said "yes". That is, almost three quarters of our young people want the man to work hard for his family and the wife to be able to devote herself to caring for the children and home. This is not so easy in today's world. It would mean doing without a lot of things, but that's what young people say they dream about.

Young people want family. They even want a traditional family. Here's an even more surprising result. They asked young adults — once again 18 to 24 — if "the husband should make all the important decisions in the family." Brace yourself — only 39% agreed. In marriage, a husband and a wife become one.

We know that dreams and reality are often very different. Still the Bible says: "Your sons and daughters shall prophesy and young men shall have visions" [see Joel 2:28]. We want to encourage those visions and help young people realize those dreams. For sure, we face a great challenge today, but not without hope. God will intervene if we empty ourselves before him. In the words of Psalm 128: "The Lord remembers his covenant forever."

—taken from the writings of Father Phil Bloom which appear on the internet

**WISE WORDS:**

Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.

—Ruth Ginsburg



## THE FAMILY AS CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY:

“God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him or her” [1John 4:16]. If that is true — and it is — then we can say the same thing about family — “God is family and whoever abides in family abides in God and God abides in that person.” The theology of family roots itself here. Among other things, this means that a family is really a religious community — a church, the place where we participate in God’s own life. What is meant by this? It is easy to misunderstand this because we tend to romanticize it. To define God as love is not to say that God is romantic love and that we abide in God only at those times when we feel in love. Rather what is affirmed is that God is a community — a trinity — a flow of giving and receiving between three persons. God is a family and when we participate in a family we experience the very flow of God’s life. Family life then is church life. To participate in a healthy way within a family is, in a manner of speaking, to go to church. But this too is often misunderstood.

What does it mean to live within a family? Too often we think of family mainly in terms of emotional intimacy. We imagine family — real family, not like our family! — as romance, warmth, like-mindedness, continual affirmation, deep mutual revelation, and constant support. In essence, we conceive of it in terms of our emotional and romantic needs. But those things — good as they are — are not ultimately what makes for family. What does make for family?

Someone once said that love is not two persons facing each other, but two persons facing in the same direction and living in the same spirit. Ultimately that is what makes family — both anthropologically and ecclesially. Ecclesially, this is easy enough to explain. What makes for church is not, first of all, emotional intimacy — good as that is — but a gathering around the person of Christ and a common sharing of one Spirit — the spirit of charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, long-suffering, fidelity, gentleness, faith, and chastity.

Similarly, in terms of ordinary family — a marriage and the family it produces is not so much grounded on a man and a woman coming together sexually and emotionally as it is in a man and a woman coming together morally — that is, at a level that precisely has them facing in a common direction rather than narcissistically fixated on each other. Moral intimacy, more so than sexual intimacy, is the foundation of family, just as it is the foundation of church. What are the component parts of it?

This too shouldn’t be falsely-romanticized. Moral intimacy is not, at its most important level, being kissed in the soul by that delicious feeling we sometimes get when we sense that another person holds as precious all the same things we do. There is value in this, of course. To sense another person as a soul-mate is to have family in a real sense because to be in family is to be at home, and we are at home precisely when we are with another person who shares our deepest values.

However, family and home, as we well know, generally have more of an everyday than a romantic face to them. Home and family are more than romance — they are the everyday, sometimes dram, business of staying together, eating together, praying together, sharing money and material things together, celebrating occasions together, being mutually accountable to each other, challenging and correcting each other, and carrying each other’s pathologies and weaknesses. Such are the functions of home and family. Such too is the function of church.

In the end, family life and church life are part of the same thing — in both we participate in God’s life. Among other things, this means that family life is not like church life — it is part of it. To



## SIMEON’S BUCKET LIST:

It’s become commonplace nowadays for people to put together a bucket list. This is a list of things that they wish to experience or accomplish before they die. Even people in their thirties and forties are putting together bucket lists. Each person is able to choose what will be on his or her list. One person might desire to travel to Europe. Another to learn how to play the piano. Someone else might decide that they want to read all 37 of Shakespeare’s plays. Whatever is on your list, the intent is to check off each item one by one as you are able to fulfill it.

In Luke’s gospel, Simeon has a bucket list — and there’s only one thing on it. He wants to see the Messiah of God before he dies. When Joseph and Mary bring the child Jesus to the temple, his wish is fulfilled [Luke 2:22-40]. Simeon’s bucket list is instructive to us because it includes two characteristics that are important. Simeon wishes big, and Simeon wishes selflessly.

Simeon is not afraid to think big. What he wants is nothing less than to see the Messiah of God with his own eyes. This is the desire that generation after generation wished for without success. People who were much more important than Simeon died without seeing God’s anointed — Moses, King David, and Isaiah all went to their graves without a glimpse. But Simeon was not afraid of size. He knew what he wanted, and he dared to ask God for it.

The second characteristic of Simeon’s approach is selflessness. Simeon’s desire is not primarily for himself, but for the entire world. He knows that he will not live long enough to see Jesus teach, heal, and win our salvation. But he takes his joy in knowing that others will benefit from Jesus’s ministry and sacrifice.

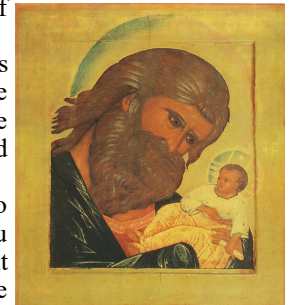
So, when we look around our lives for what we want, it is important to remember Simeon and to wish for things that are big and selfless. Perhaps you might wish that someone in your family — a grandchild or sibling — might decide to commit themselves to a life of service. The service might be to the church or some international agency addressing world hunger or poverty. That’s not a choice that many young people make. But Simeon would say to us: “Don’t be afraid to think big. Ask what you want from God. Then place your wish in God’s hands.”

Perhaps we might wish for a country that was healed, a country in which Americans would once again trust one another, where Democrats and Republicans would work together for the common good. Simeon would say: “Well, that’s thinking big alright. But go for it. A lot of things would have to change before that could happen. But you might be able to see at least the first steps towards healing.”

Maybe we would like to see a world-wide commitment to our environment — an international agreement to protect our air, our water, and our earth. Simeon would say: “That’s a work for many generations, but choose it. You might be able to see a beginning.”

As we put our bucket lists together, it is important to remember Simeon. We should wish big and selflessly, and then place our list in God’s hands. If we’re lucky, we, like Simeon, might see the fulfillment of our desires. But even if we don’t — even if we die before God can give that gift to us — at least we will know that we wished for something significant that will benefit the entire world.

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



## 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].





might express them as: “we hope that they will realize God’s will for them; we hope they will be true to their faith; we hope that they will be good and holy; we hope that they will be effective witnesses to Christ; we hope that they will, after a long and happy life, be welcomed into God’s Kingdom.

These aspirations are our prayers for our children. We know that our children, from time to time, will also bring us pain and sorrow. The same went for the Holy Family. Look at the second part of Simeon’s prophecy: “a sword will pierce your own soul too.” How often have mothers and fathers experienced this sword of pain and sorrow? But it does not stop them from loving — rather it frequently causes them to love more deeply, and to pray more earnestly.

And what of the children? There is no word from Jesus here — after all, he is an infant. We know that Jesus fulfilled all that was promised. You might say he had to — after all, he was the Son of God. But what of us? How are we to fulfil the expectations of our parents? The answer is simple — you cannot, and you probably should not. You are most likely to experience these expectations as a burden, even though your parents have the best of intentions.

But there are other expectations that you can and indeed you should fulfil. These are the expectations of God himself. God has set us on a course through life, he has given us gifts and talents and all the quirks of our unique personality. He has put us in the way of all sorts of experiences — each of which has presented us with a whole series of choices, and as a result of our reactions to them we have become the person we are today.

However, God also has expectations and hopes for us. His desire for us is simple — that we should love him with our whole heart and mind and soul. This might seem a tall order, and it might not sound like much fun. But really, it not just possible it is actually the most fulfilling thing we could ever do. We are all called to live in relationship with our maker? What about realizing the consequences of upsetting our relationship with him? God has a plan for us — It is to live in accordance with his will; it is to take Jesus for our model; it is to be at one with our fellow humans; it is to live a life of sacrifice; it is to be united with the Father in prayer.

That prayer of Simeon is a powerful one — “Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation.” Simeon saw Christ in the flesh. But he only recognized him because he had spent his whole life in his service. He had totally dedicated himself to prayer and to the service of God, just as the Prophetess Anna had also done. They were both rewarded and saw the face of God.

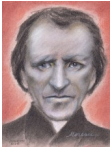
Both Simeon and Anna prayed that they would see God’s salvation, but their prayers had in a real way brought about that salvation. This is the same with us. Christ has won the victory, but the work of salvation goes on. We are his co-workers. We help to make his salvation present to the world of today. This is how we play our part in the redemption of the world. And by doing so, we win our own redemption.

We are also part of the Holy Family; Simeon and Anna are our brother and sister. Our task is to be like the Christ Child, and as it says in Luke’s Gospel, “to grow to maturity”. Then we will be filled with wisdom, and God’s favor will be with us.

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister, S.D.S., which appear on the internet

**NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:**

Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family . Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.



patient with each other, to forgive each other continually — not to let out pride determine what we say and do to each other [Colossians 3:12-21]. If we strive to live this way, then as a family we can pray together not just in Church, but in every aspect of our lives — “Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord.”

Paul goes on to mention the roles of a family in his time. At that time, the equality of women was not recognized. In the Roman empire, women were seen as property that needed to be protected by their fathers or their

husbands. The respect given to a woman was different from that given to a man. That’s why we have that phrase, “wives be submissive to your husbands”... closely followed by “husbands love your wives.” The heart of what Paul is saying is that that husbands and wives must respect each other. This same line of thought continues with children being told to respect their parents, and parents being told not to nag, to continually find fault, with their children.

A few years ago one of the finest men I have ever met died of a massive heart attack on Christmas day. One day about ten years before this, he spoke to me about his daughters who were in their early twenties at the time. He said to me: “My girls are really good kids. Yeah, they both made mistakes and had babies before they married, but that doesn’t change the fact that they are both good kids.” Those are the words of a father who was disappointed, true, but not to the degree that it changed the deep respect he had for his children. My thought is that the reason why the girls were such good kids, and why they both went on to be good mothers and wives, was because they were treated with respect by their father — and mother for that matter — and they returned this with respect and deep love. God bless him, and God bless all parents who never let anything diminish their respect for their children. And God bless children who receive and return their parents’ love. That is what Paul’s letter is about.

Luke’s Gospel is acted out almost every Sunday in every parish. Mary and Joseph went to the temple holding Jesus. Simeon and Anna made a fuss. This happens in all parishes also. Couples come in to the church holding their newborn child. Their joy is indescribable. “Look who we have with us,” they say before they ever open their mouths.

Most priests, like me, make believe they are surprised even though they may have seen the expectant Mom every week. I love seeing the babies, and I enjoy making a fuss. And I love seeing the huge change in the parents who present their first child. One young couple told me something that I know all of you realized when he came home from the hospital with that first child. They said: “You know, we can’t come and go and do the things we did before we had the baby, but we have so much more now. Life was great before, but much better now.”

Parents, we all love seeing how much you love your children. We love the fact that you all are determined to provide the best for your children. Please remember to be the best parents you can be, and remain grounded in the Lord. Make prayer a part of your home life. Pray with your children at bedtime, and pray for them after they fall asleep. Teach your children respect. Let them witness your respect for them and for each other. And demand that they respect others — including you. Do your best, and trust God to do the rest.

May all our families be Holy Families.

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

**BECOME LIKE A CHILD:**

The great temptation is to use our obvious failures and disappointments in our lives to convince ourselves that we are really not worth being loved. Because what do we have to show for ourselves? But for a person of faith the opposite is true. The many failures may open that place in us where we have nothing to brag about but everything to be loved for. It is becoming a child again — a child who is loved simply for being, simply for smiling, simply for reaching out. This is the way to spiritual maturity — to receive love as a pure, free gift.

—Henri Nouwen



BEING A HOLY FAMILY:

We Americans are a competitive people. We have this drive to always want to be better than someone else. As a result, we spend a lot of energy comparing ourselves, or our situations with those with whom we work, live near, etc. In many ways this is healthy. I want a doctor who does everything she or he can to be better than every other doctor. The same can be applied to every service orientated position, or even to any person we work with or for.

However, we would be wrong if we were to apply this natural competitive attitude to our families. It is neither just nor wise for us to compare our families to our neighbors. Yet, so many of us do this — “I wish my marriage was as happy as theirs;” “I wish my children got along as well as theirs;” “I wish our family was as strong as theirs.” This is wrong because, first, every family is a unique relationship of singular individuals. It is impossible for two families to be identical. Second, every family has challenges which usually are not apparent to the eye of the envious neighbors.

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. In our natural competitive attitude, we are tempted to look at the Holy Family as an ideal that we cannot realize in our families. But, Jesus, Mary and Joseph had their share of struggles. The trust which is fundamental to a marriage was challenged by the pregnancy. Joseph must have felt terrible when he had to bring his wife to a stable to have the child. Living in a foreign land — Egypt — away from family and traditions, was far from ideal. Still, the Holy Family made it through the difficulties of their family life for one reason only — they had great faith.

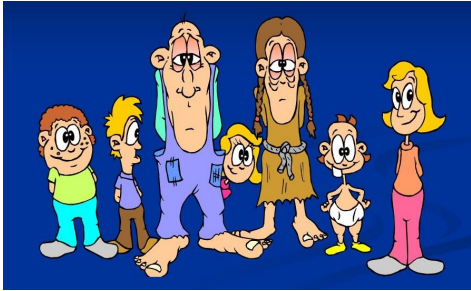
Joseph had faith in the angel of his dreams and treated the pregnant Mary in an honorable way. He had faith that God would help him protect the child, and he moved the family to Egypt. Mary had faith both in the angel and in God’s working through Joseph. Jesus, having emptied himself of his divinity, had faith in his parents to care for him. Some of the pious Christian works of the second and third centuries didn’t understand this. The apocryphal gospels, which have never even remotely been considered Sacred Scripture, would present the child Jesus performing miracles to help his family even in everyday chores — like changing rocks to bread so Mary would not have to bake.

The child Jesus didn’t need to perform miracles. He had all the miracles he needed in parents who cared for him. The Holy Family conquered their struggles through their faith-life. This must be the primary concern of our families.

For example, so many single parents waste energy wishing that their marriage had worked out and their children could be with both their parents. It does no good to long for that which is not probable. Instead, the single parent should focus on establishing a strong Christian home. Or so many parents wish they had the financial resources of their neighbors to be able to provide so much more for their children. What children need is a Christian home — not the things that the neighbor’s kids have.

The Scripture Readings for this Feast of the Holy Family present some aspects of a Christian home. Sirach says that children need to respect their parents [Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14]. At first it refers to young children as it notes that mothers and fathers have their authority from God. Then it refers to older children when it says that children should take care of their parents when they age. Little children learn respect for their parents from the respect they see their parents giving each other and the respect their parents have for their grandparents. I have always believed that the way you treat your parents will be the way your children will treat you. If your relations with your parents are motivated by respect and love, and are evident in your kindness to them, your children will have learned this aspect of Christianity and will treat you the same way as your years mount.

The his letter to the Church at Colossae, Paul tells us to deal with each other out of kindness, to be



FAMILY — THE DOMESTIC CHURCH:

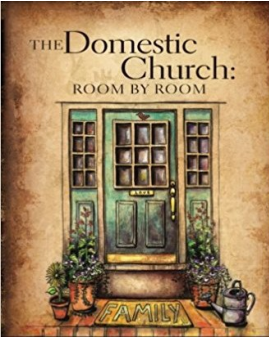
On this feast of the Holy Family, Paul writes to the Church at Colossae and offers some good advice that can enrich family life [Colossians 3:12-21]. Using the image of putting on clothing, Paul — or one of his followers as many reputable scholars claim — writes: “Put on, as Gods’ chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.” Extending the dressing image, Paul continues: “And over all those put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.” Stressing the importance of gratitude, Paul adds: “And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,” and “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” preparing you to teach and admonish one another wisely and to pray together joyfully.

Historically, Christian teaching and preaching challenged the patriarchal patterns of family life that totally dominated the Greco-Roman world at the beginning of the Christian era. Over the centuries, progress has been made, but problems remain. Domestic violence of various types is all too prevalent, and the divorce rate is still too high — even according to the most conservative estimates. For many families today, the challenge is not just to avoid violence and divorce, but to become a true “domestic church,” that fosters spiritual growth of its members and contributes to the common good of society.

We can imagine individuals enriching their family life by practicing the virtues advocated in Paul’s letter. A husband who resents the presence of his mother-in-law in his home could become more welcoming by developing the virtue of compassion, inclining him to be more concerned about her physical ailments. An older brother who regularly ignores his younger sister, could start practicing the virtue of kindness by listening to her when she wants to talk about her troubles. A wife who considers her husband spiritually inferior to herself could acquire over time the virtue of humility, opening her eyes to his unsuspected spiritual depth. A father, who often speaks harshly to his collegiate daughter, could grow in the virtue of gentleness, facilitating better communications with her. A son who chafes at his elderly father’s dementia could work at developing the virtue of patience, enabling him to interact with his forgetful father without getting terribly upset.

What virtue should you develop to be a better family member?

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



READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

- Monday:** Numbers 6:22-27, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:16-21
- Tuesday:** 1 John 2:22-28, John 1:19-28
- Wednesday:** 1 John 2:29-3:6, John 1:29-34
- Thursday:** 1 John 3:7-10, John 1:35-42
- Friday:** 1 John 3:11-21, John 1:43-41
- Saturday:** 1 John 5:5-13, Mark 1:7-11

**Feast of the /Epiphany:** Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:2-6, Matthew 2:1-12

CAN YOU DO THIS?

True gratefulness is courage to give thanks for a gift before unwrapping it.

—Brother David Steindl-Rast

**20 NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS THAT AREN’T LOSING WEIGHT:**

**“Love the Lord your God with all your heart.”** You’ve probably heard it before — most New Year’s resolutions are bound to fail. Only about 8% of people will accomplish their resolution. There are a lot of reasons why this happens — not being specific in the goal or how it’ll be achieved, setting goals that are unrealistic, or just getting discouraged — but I think it goes even deeper. Many people set goals because they dislike some part of themselves — they are trying to fix their body image or lifestyle habits from a place of self-loathing. But, as with most things, it is love that endures.

Before setting your resolution for the year, examine your heart. Are you trying to fix something because you dislike yourself, or are you trying to improve because you love yourself and want to glorify God in all that you do? Invite the Lord into your intentions!

Here’s a list of resolutions that can help you love the person God created you to be.

**“Love the Lord your God....”**

**“...with all your soul.”**

1. Read the four Gospels. Just one section a day can give you great insight into the person of Jesus Christ.
2. Begin a prayer journal. Writing and reflecting are a great way of building your relationship with God.
3. Go to Confession once a month. Confession is nothing to be afraid of, and regular Confession makes it even less daunting.
4. Sign up for a weekly adoration hour. Bonus points if you convince your family or a friend to come with you.
5. Take up spiritual reading. Saints and spiritual writers are an absolute treasure. Learn from them.



**“...with all your strength.”**

6. Sleeping. You really do need those eight to ten hours of shut-eye. Seriously.
7. Invite your family to take a family walk once a week. It’s great exercise, and a great time for conversation.
8. Add one serving of fruit and vegetables each to your day. Let’s face it: very few of us eat enough fruits and veggies. Replace less-healthy snacks and meals with some produce.
9. Wear sunscreen. Become your mother and lather that stuff on before spending time outside.
10. Find a soda alternative. Try flavored sparkling water. La Croix, anyone?

**“...with all your mind..”**

11. Put your phone away before bed. Replace late-night scrolling with pre-sleep reading [see next point].
12. Make a book list and read books from it — even if it’s your school book list. Reading increases your concentration and enriches your understanding of the world. No, *Sparknotes* don’t count. If you’re not sure where to start, check out the books in the Life Teen store!
13. Ask for help if you need it. Your mental health matters. Make this year the year that you talk to a counselor about depression, anxiety, or any other conditions affecting you.
14. Replace music with interesting podcasts once a week. They’re the easiest way to learn something new!
15. Pick up a new hobby and dedicate a specific amount of time to it each week.

**“...and love your neighbor as yourself.”**

16. Volunteer. Find an activity that aligns with your skills and serves your local community.
17. Cook for your parents. They’ll appreciate it, and you’ll learn something new. Two birds, one stone.

18. Write letters for friends’ birthdays. *Instagram* shout-outs are good, but taking the time to hand-write your sentiments is irreplaceable.
19. Call your extended family to say “hello”. Keep up with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. It’ll make family gatherings so much more enjoyable!
20. Forgive someone. Whether that’s through conversation, prayer, or simply changing your mindset, show mercy to the person it’s hardest to show mercy to.

**Bonus!**

21. Find a Bible verse that reflects your overall intention for the year. Luke 10:27 will be my “theme verse,” reminding me that any improvements in my spiritual life — bodily health, mental health, or relationships should be actions fueled by love of God.

Let’s live fully alive in 2023!

—taken from the writings of Courtney Kiolbassa, a LifeTeen associate.

**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 Chapel. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — [lifeteen.com](https://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].**



**A GIFT THAT COUNTED:**

It was Christmas Eve, 1945. I was 9 years old. Truth be told, it was a dark time for a child. My stepfather — “a good man when he wasn’t drinking,” my mother said — had given in to long days at the bar that ended in even longer nights of raging at home. Within six months, without a job to go to or a dollar in her pocket, my mother would take me and every stick of furniture we owned a hundred miles away. But tonight was the night before Christmas.



When she handed me the tiny box — hardly more than an inch square — I could taste my disappointment. Children don’t want tiny presents. Children want big presents — a pair of skates, a bright red bike. I opened it slowly, my eyes averted, my fingers timid.

And suddenly there it was: a shining delicate gold chain on which hung a little flower with copper leaves and a bright blue stone in the center. It was my first piece of jewelry — and a declaration of adulthood. I knew my mother must have been skimming grocery money for weeks to get me something so grand. I threw my arms around her neck and burst into tears.

A few months ago, I found that necklace again in a box of old memorabilia. The chain was dull and brown. The flower’s leaves had faded. But the blue glass that I had been sure was my birthstone glowed on.

When I picked up the treasure I’d received amid the chaos of a collapsing world, I knew I was holding sacrifice, beauty, and an invitation to be strong in the days to come. I consider it the gift of my life — even now. Maybe especially now.

—taken from the writings of Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B., which appears on the internet

**RUN THE RACE:**

If we want our children to serve the Lord, they must hear about him from us. It is not enough to rely on the church or those with more knowledge to provide all their Christian education. We must reinforce the lessons of the Bible in our homes.