

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for the 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**.
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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 EPIPHANY:

The Feast of the Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feasts — though throughout the centuries it has celebrated a variety of things. The word “Epiphany” comes from a Greek verb meaning “to reveal”, and all of the various events celebrated by the Feast of the Epiphany are revelations of Christ to humankind. Like many of the most ancient Christian feasts, Epiphany was first celebrated in the East, where it has been held from the beginning almost universally on January 6th. Among Eastern Catholics [both Roman and Orthodox], the feast is known as “Theophany” — which means “the revelation of God”.



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

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

Over the centuries, the various celebrations were further separated in the West. This year, the Baptism of Jesus is celebrated on Monday of this week [usually it is the Sunday after the Epiphany], and the wedding at Cana is commemorated on the weekend after the Baptism of the Lord.

In many parts of the world, 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.

FAITH EDUCATION:

Our Faith Education classes will resume on **January 7th**. 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.

**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,

**RUN THE RACE:**

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The ideal is not only to pass from exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things.

—*Laudato Si'*

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.

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a Registration 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.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets are located on the pillars just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the basket. Baskets will not be passed during the offertory time. Your offering will help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, you can request a printout of your offerings for the year to submit to the IRS. God bless you.

Total Offerings: Saturday [12/30/23] ----- \$ 625.00

Total Offerings: Sunday [12/31/23] ----- \$ 207.00

R.C.I.A [Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults]:

If you have been thinking about investigating the Catholic faith, or if you know someone who has been thinking about it; if you have been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider joining or having them join our RCIA program. **Please contact Father John [440-473-3560] for more information.**

**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].



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 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 Josephine Fernando, mother of Melvin [*83] and Raymond [*88] Fernando, mother-in-law of Imelda Deogracias Fernando [*88], who is ill.
- For Lincoln Nye, former Gilmour student, brother of Maddie Nye [*25], 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.
- For Sister Colette Livingston, O.S.U., who is seriously ill.
- For Pam Spicer, wife of former Gilmour coach, Bob Spicer, who is under the care of hospice.



PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Elaine Willey, sister of Father John [anniversary]
- 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]
- For Robert Baynes.
- For Brian Pochatek
- For Sister Bernadette Mulick, C.S.C.
- For Allison McMullen, granddaughter of Jim McMullen [*51]
- For Sue Ryavec, mother of Ron Ryavec [*16]
- For James Kelly, brother of Cindy Frimel.
- For Irene Sopko
- For Michael Murphy,

LIVE LIFE:

— We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. —Desmond Tutu

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, January 24th 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: Lent as the true Valentine’s Day

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 7: Epiphany	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, January 8: Baptism of Jesus	9:30 AM In Person only
Tuesday, January 9:	NO MASS
Wednesday, January 10:	NO MASS
Thursday, January 11:	NO MASS
Friday, January 12:	NO MASS
Saturday, January 13: 2nd Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, January 14: 2nd Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — JANUARY 20th:

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.

REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:

We are called to be women and men of “manifestation”. It is not so much what gifts that we have to present to Jesus, but what gifts God has given us to reveal to others some particular feature of God’s personality. We are the receivers of gifts, and yet Christ has come to make us gifts offered back to the Giver. What gift of God are we called to reveal? The Magi came with gifts, and returned to their land enriched. We come with the same kind of seeking,, and what is it that we leave with? The Magi left, realizing that Jesus does not stay a child — nor in Bethlehem nor in Nazareth. To accept our “giftedness” is to accept our being “givenhood” — and that will take much grace and time.

Secrets are exciting, and when one is shared with you, that energy changes to intimacy and a sense of being special. When the information becomes public and generally known, that specialness is dimmed. But with God, this is not true. Israel had a long history of being intimate and special through the covenants made by God. They were not exactly secrets, but the “One God” was sharing with this one nation, information or revelation of Who this “One God” was. Their history was a continuous intensification of their own image and the image of God for them. They were promised a Messiah and throughout this Christmas Season, we have heard of the miracles and fruitfulness which would accompany His arrival.

On this Feast of the Epiphany, Isaiah shares with the people of Israel — and with us — that this Messiah — this kind of secret — is going to be shared beyond the borders of Israel. The nation will still be special because people from the sea to the desert will come to visit the glory of God manifested in Jerusalem and Israel. The riches of other lands will come in recognition of the presence of a new brilliance which has shined upon this little place — this 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” [Isaiah 60:1-6].

Matthew’s Gospel for this Feast of the Epiphany is unique to him [Matthew 2:1-12]. Matthew presents Jesus as both the One Who is to come, and the One who has come for all. The Magi represent the “beyond” — or distant lands and peoples — to whom the Christ will offer His universal wisdom.

These “Wise Men” also represent the former ways of thinking, wondering, and philosophizing. They come in a sign of surrender to this new “epiphany” or display of this “One God” Who is for all and is now known as the God Who does the seeking and the finding. The Magi are the figures of the world who did the seeking for and the finding of God. The Light is initiated by God and this Light is meant for the whole world.

As with the shepherds, the visit of the wise men has definite liturgical overtones — they arrive, having wandered in faith, have an offertory procession, a time of adoration and then a sending forth. Were they totally satisfied by the whole experience of stars, warnings, and findings? They were somehow missioned by the encounter to go farther, 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 represent what has been valuable to these seekers who left them at the “house” and leave by “another way”. They have not so much found as they have been found and leave that place to begin the spreading the news of the Finder 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 as with them — so with us.

Each of us would like to arrive at our own logical, reasonable concept of God. We would love to

**KINGS OR MAGICIANS?**

“We Three Kings” certainly isn’t an appropriate hymn for the feast of the Epiphany. If Scripture scholars had their way every “kingly” crib statue would be ceremoniously smashed — immediately before the homily. Why do we encourage such a violent ritual? Because the idea of royalty visiting Joseph and Mary’s Bethlehem home completely turns the evangelist’s message upside down.

Matthew’s well-known narrative [Matthew 2:1-12] commemorates a visit not of kings, but of despised people. The confusion happened when the original Greek text was transliterated into Latin; the word “magoi” became “magi”; but the Greek “magoi” refers to “sorcerers” or “magicians”; the Latin “magi” signifies kings or high potentates.

Counter to us Latin-rite folk, Greek speaking Christians always kept the gospel’s original meaning. For instance, the famous mid-6th century Byzantine mosaic of the three Bethlehem visitors in the basilica of St. Apollinaris in Ravenna depicts the trio wearing magician outfits — not royal robes.

Once we transform sorcerers into kings, Matthew’s theology goes down the biblical tube. The evangelist includes this narrative in his Jewish/Christian gospel to point out that the most unlikely people, using the most unlikely means, can often surface Jesus in their lives more quickly than likely people following likely means.

In Jewish Hebrew thought, sorcerers are to be killed on sight [see Exodus 22:17]. Among other abominations, they follow stars and heavenly bodies to surface God’s will in their lives. Nothing could be further from biblical faith. Though few have noticed, the 1940 Academy Award winning song — and Disney mainstay — “When You Wish Upon a Star” is roundly condemned in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet these pagan magicians eventually find Jesus, while Herod — the Jew — refuses to even go down to Bethlehem. God obviously works in strange ways.

While Isaiah [60:1-6] reflects on non-Jews one day becoming Jews, he never goes as far as Paul’s conviction that Gentiles as Gentiles can become Christians [Ephesians 3:2-6]. That unexpected discovery certainly makes the faith of Jesus an exciting experience for the Apostle. Paul even goes further: “Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” In other words, “No one can predict how God’s going to work in our lives.”

That conviction was one of the original insights fueling the restoration of the catechumenate. Most of us remember the old days when possible new members simply went to a series of “convert classes.” After a couple months of having the priest fill their minds with Catholic teachings, the students took a simple true/false exam, easily passed, and were welcomed into the church either by baptism or profession of faith.

The restored catechumenate, on the other hand, begins not with the candidates receiving gobs of new information, but by encouraging them to reflect on what has already happened in their lives to bring them to this point. The presupposition is that God’s been working with and in them long before they and their sponsor walk into the parish hall. Following Matthew’s “magoi theology”, no two discovery stories are the same.

I once read an article explaining why John Henry Newman’s canonization was taking such a long time. One of the reasons for the delay came from the Vatican commission’s refusal to include anything in the process that had happened to Newman before his admission into the Catholic Church. Obviously the powers that be were convinced that God began working in the life of the author of “Lead, Kindly Light” only 12 years after he penned those famous lyrics, in 1845 when he became a Catholic.

Perhaps we should create a Scripture service to be used immediately before the first catechumenate or canonization session begins, consisting just of Matthew’s gospel reading.

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

ancestor. The leaders exhibited no interest in following in Abraham’s pilgrim footsteps toward a hope greater than anything he had known before. The Magi exemplified the poor in spirit — people open and inquisitive enough to discover a God bigger than their imagination — a God who would delight in their seeking and finding.

Matthew tells on the leaders in Jerusalem to warn us against allowing dogma to close the door on growth in faith. He portrays the wandering Magi as guides to Emmanuel — God with us. Matthew encourages us to cultivate the humility and openness necessary to discover something bigger, deeper, more mysterious than our best teachings or wildest imaginings.

Ironic isn’t it? Pagans following a star were open to the manifestation of the God of Israel while religious leaders disregarded all the signs they had at hand.

Today’s feast is called the Epiphany. “Epiphany” refers to a manifestation of God or an insight into the deep meaning of something. An epiphany is a happening — not an activity or decision. We may journey like the Magi seeking something, but epiphany is beyond our control. Epiphany happens to people willing to have their minds changed. Epiphany is an experience of grace; for those who will receive it, it is an experience of God with us until the end of the age.

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

THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI:

In 2020, we saw the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn right before Christmas — an astronomical wonder. Astronomers speculate that the Magi may have seen such a sign. They say to King Herod: “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage” [Matthew 2:1-12]. The Magi were early astronomers. They represent men of science through the ages who went from natural wonder to faith in God.

One of my favorite such astronomers is Niels Steensen — known by the Latin version of his name: Stenno. He is considered the “father of geology”. Later in life, he had a conversion to the Catholic faith and eventually became a bishop. You can read about him in a book titled: *The Seashell on the Mountaintop*.

Science can open up vistas that lead to faith. That’s what we see in Matthew’s Gospel — “And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage.”

They brought gifts for the child — wonderful gifts! While these gifts are significant in their meaning, I’d like to tell you about the three other presents. Bishop Robert Barron talks about them. Bishop Barron took the old question: If a genie appeared to you and said you could have three wishes, what would you ask for? He responded that the first and most essential gift is faith.

Here’s the logic. Without faith, one’s world would be very small — like living your life in broom closet. For example, I know about the galaxies, not because I have seen them, but because I believe the scientists. They also tell about subatomic particles — electrons and protons, bosons and six types of quarks. I’ve never seen them, but I take their word for it.

Similarly I know about Abraham Lincoln because I believe historians. And even though I’ve never travelled to China, I’m certain that country exists. How? Because I accept the converging testimony of others.

Just so, I know about Jesus because I trust the Bible and believe the testimony of his early followers. And I have the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. Faith — not an irrational faith, but a considered faith — takes a person out of a tiny, self-enclosed world.

From faith flows a second gift — hope. By hope, life has meaning — it’s not just some random process. In the morning, it’s worthwhile getting out of bed, if a person has hope. This world is a valley of tears — always was and always will be. For sure life has wonderful moments, but overall — no matter how much money and good health a person has — this earthly life is like St. Theresa of Avila describes it: a bad night in a bad inn. Ultimately only hope keeps a person moving forward.

Faith and hope open a person to the greatest gift — love. Love builds on faith and hope. Love makes life bearable. Without love, life is what Hobbes described: a war of all against all. Love, however, involves forgiveness, patience, forbearance, thoughtfulness. St. Paul says: “love hopes all things” [1 Corinthians 13:7]. Love wants the best for each person — their eternal salvation. St. Paul sums it up this way: “These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” [1 Corinthians 13:13].

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

say that we have found God. But if we determine “Who” and “What” God is, then we would seem to control God.

This is the darkness of which Isaiah speaks. The One who said “Let there be light” appeared among us as the Light of the world, but we have made ourselves “the light”. Isaiah could have been speaking about our world. Darkness covers the earth. Thick clouds cover the people. But as Isaiah says, the world may dwell in darkness “but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears his glory.” By our simple lives as believers, others can walk by our light, by our shining radiance. Each of us is like a candle shining in the darkness. We don’t curse the darkness; we light a candle, or better yet, we live in the light of Christ who is much greater than a candle.

God does not have to operate according to our limited insight. Instead he has placed his star in the heavens, lighting the way for us to overcome our darkness, and to become the light. 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 [Matthew 2:1-12].

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.

It can be assumed that, as with the shepherds before them, the Magi went back by “another way” — not merely geographically. They return to a new and different way of relating with life. Their hearts and spirits are comforted and their minds — still turning these things over in wonder — not a bad way to journey. The seeking is God’s labor; the being found is ours. For us finding is less lively than seeking. When we hear that we should seek and 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. He moved them along in their human-heart search. This too is not a bad, but rather holy way to journey. —taken from the writings of George Butterfield and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS:

As the New Year dawns, the resolutions will be as resolute as they’ll be all year. But the world won’t change all that noticeably, and the lofty ambitions will soon take a back seat. Why? Because in the quest for self-reform, we often forget who we truly are and what sustains us long-term. We fall hard for culturally acceptable resolutions that target our body and mind, but leave our soul hanging. And yet, prioritizing our soul’s growth is actually the key to success in all healthy ambitions of mind and body. So how do we get there?

In his first letter, St. John addresses three different groups — children, young people, and parents. Some scholars believe these actually refer to different levels of spiritual maturity. As “children,” we respond to the gifts of forgiveness and mercy. Once confident in the safety of His forgiveness, we’re propelled into spiritual “young adulthood” — where we grow to know the Lord and better accept His unfathomable love. As spiritual “parents,” having grown through both mercy and confidence in God’s love, we learn to effectively fight and overcome the Evil One [1 John 2:12-17].

What is important to note here is that St. John does not once mention a timeline, a dollar amount, or a guilt trip. He gives us a guide — a resolution for growth based in relationship. And indeed, that’s our ultimate goal — eternal relationship with God in heaven. Our other resolutions — and the motives behind them — should simply be a vehicle to help get us there.

This year, instead of tacking mind or body at the top of the list, what if we resolved to first focus on our souls? What if it was less about checking the box, and more about relationship? What if, instead of chastising ourselves for what we’ve failed to accomplish, we spent more time each day soaking in God’s love for us? This formula leads to guaranteed success. —edited from an article by Megan Hjelmsstad, which appeared on the internet. 5



EPIPHANY IS AN ON-GOING EVENT:

Except for Easter and Pentecost, the Feast of the Epiphany is the oldest feast on the Liturgical Calendar — Epiphany was celebrated long before even Christmas itself came to be regarded as a feast. The word Epiphany literally means “manifestation”, and it refers to the appearance or making known of Christ. Of course, in the beginning the feast was about the several manifestations of Christ — his first coming into the world, his being made known to the Shepherds, his manifestation to the Wise Men from the East, the Father announcing who Jesus was at his Baptism by John, and the power of Jesus’ first miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Only later did feasts such as Christmas, the Baptism of Jesus, and others come to be separated over time. It was at this time that the Feast of the Epiphany centered on the manifestation of Christ to the Magi — the Gentiles.

The first sections of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke about the early life of Christ; they are known as the Infancy Narratives, and they have been the subject of a lot of scholarship over the last twenty years. One of the results of all this research is that we now realize that these stories can be seen as “Gospels in Miniature” because they contain the most important elements of what comes after. They are like the overture to a great musical piece in which the various motifs are brought to our attention.

If we look at the story of the coming of the Wise Men within this context, we can clearly see a very important element of Christ’s Mission — namely, his mission to the Gentiles.

The People of Israel were rightly known as the Chosen People because they were the group to whom God chose to gradually reveal himself in various ways over the centuries. The history of their relationship with God is one of a gradual education — a slow revelation of God’s true nature over the centuries, and a growing understanding by the people of God’s expectations for them.

They were also the race among whom Christ was born — even if only to be ultimately rejected. This rejection is, of course, turned to the greatest possible advantage for the whole of humankind through the great act of salvation. This rejection of Christ by Israel becomes the opportunity for Christ to be revealed to all the nations — and so ultimately to us today.

All this is prefigured by the visit of the Wise Men who themselves are in a sense foretold in the Old Testament scriptures. The writings of the Prophet Isaiah serve as an example — “The nations come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness” [Isaiah 60:1-6].

It was always in the understanding of the People of Israel that God had chosen them to receive his special revelation, and that in due time all nations would bow down before the one true God. But this was not understood as happening right away — it was rather something that would occur when the Messiah ultimately came into his Kingdom. They were right, of course, but their timing was wrong, and they didn’t anticipate that that they as a people would reject Christ. We say this, and yet we must acknowledge, that very many individual Jews did come to believe in Christ — and not only among the poor; some notable religious leaders also accepted him. But institutionally speaking he was simply rejected.

This Feast of the Epiphany achieved great importance early on in the history of the Church because many converts from paganism saw in the story of the wise men their own story. These wise men were guided by a star. They were led by God to the stable in Bethlehem where they offered the Christ Child their gifts and paid him homage.

The early converts to Christianity — like any convert today — realized that they too were guided by God and led on a journey of faith and brought to belief in Christ. When they finally encounter him, they place all they have at his disposal and worship him as the Son of God and the one true Savior of the World. They may not be rich like those Magi, but they know that they have found the greatest treasure



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

WANDERING IN WONDER:

The Gospels tell us that, in response to various circumstances, Jesus rejoiced, wept, demonstrated anger and was impatient with his disciples. Of all the divine estimations of earthly situations, irony might be the one that most saddens or delights God. Clearly, tragedy is worse — Catastrophes, wars, plagues. God is intensely present to the sufferers in all those events, even though, like Jesus on the cross, they often cry out, feeling abandoned. But the ironic things — the things that happen in the opposite way from the expected — can be the source of profound disappointment or delight. Matthew’s story of the Magi is full of irony [Matthew 2:1-12].

Matthew structured his Gospel so that everything would illumine Jesus’ last command and final promise. After telling the disciples to spread the Gospel throughout the whole world, he promised: “Behold, I am with you, until the end of the age” [see Matthew 28:20].

Who knows from what sources Matthew drew his stories about Jesus’ birth? Matthew wasn’t about writing a history. When we study his stories, we realize that his narrative, although it’s been embellished for centuries, is surprisingly sparse. Even so, Matthew wants us to perceive something important in the events he describes.

For Matthew, Joseph, a true son of Abraham, is the chief human actor in the events leading to Jesus’ birth — the birth itself is mentioned only in passing. Matthew exhibits more interest in the star than in Mary and Jesus! The star, a symbol visible to the whole world, proclaimed that an extraordinary event had taken place — in obscurity. Who paid attention? Pagans — people who were not of the true faith of Israel. The Magi, practiced at their own kind of discernment, read the signs of the times and had enough humility and courageous curiosity to venture beyond their certainties.



Storytellers have led us to think we know the names of the people — Kings? Religious leaders? Intellectuals? — who visited Jesus in Bethlehem. In reality, the Magi could well have comprised a caravan of pilgrims who knew trade routes and studied the skies. The number three refers to the gifts — not the travelers. As diplomatic visitors, they presented themselves to the local people of rank, explaining their quest.

When the Magi asked for the newborn king, Herod turned to the religious leaders to ask what the prophecies said about where the Christ was to be born. Illustrating John’s statement that “he came to his own and his own knew him not” [see John 1:11], the leaders demonstrated that they could decipher prophecy while remaining immune to its message. Thus, pagan pilgrims replaced the scribes and priests who could have led the way to Emmanuel.

What is Matthew telling us with these details? First, he’s warning against religious certainty. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus’ enemies are convinced that they have the whole truth and that Jesus is a heretic or worse. To God’s grief, their certainty blinded them to the natural wonder of the star and the wisdom of their scriptures.

The Magi were seekers. They observed a sign and desired to understand what it meant. They displaced themselves, seeking something bigger than what they already knew. Although strangers to Israel, they acted more like Abraham than did his descendants who claimed to revere their wandering

KING HEROD AND THE WISE MEN — A CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE:

The Christmas story is surely one of the greatest stories ever told. It chronicles a birth from which the world records time as before or after. Moreover, it is written in a way that has inflamed the romantic imagination for 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.

To bless another person is to give away some of one's own life so that the other might be more resourced for his or her journey. 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 [Matthew 2:1-12].

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 — namely, by the angels, by supernatural revelation. But those outside of that faith-tradition need another way to get to know of his birth, and so his birth is announced to them through nature, astrology, and through the stars. The wise men see a special star appear in the sky and begin to follow it, not knowing exactly to where or to what it will lead.

While following the star, they meet King Herod who, upon learning that a new king has supposedly been born, has his own evil interest in matter. He asks the wise men to find the child and bring him back information so that he, too, can go and worship the newborn. We know the rest of story — the wise men follow the star, find the new king, and, upon seeing him, place their gifts at his feet.

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

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

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

anyone could possess — belief in Jesus Christ.

St Paul, in his Letter to the Ephesian Church, alludes to the well-known story of his own conversion when he says that this special revelation is what led him to preach the Good News to them [Ephesians 3:2-6].

But don't think that it is just converts who have been chosen by God; don't think that it is just those who in adult life feel drawn to the Church who are singled out by him — each one of us has been led by a star. Each one of us has been brought by God to the assent of faith. It may have been because we searched as adults and gradually found faith, but it could also be because we were brought up as Christians by our parents — that in our earliest childhood we came to a knowledge and love of God.

Make no mistake about it we were all converts once. The gradual realization by a child of what faith in Christ actually means is no less of a conversion than that of an adult in the prime of life. It is just as genuine, just as deep, just as life changing.

Sometimes it is in our childhood that we see things most clearly. As we grow older, we do not always grow wiser; quite often the preoccupations of raising children, maintaining our relationships and paying a mortgage get in the way and cloud our vision. What started off as certainly and firmness of faith can with the vicissitudes of life easily fade away into disinterest and laxity. What we need then is re-conversion; what we need to do is to look for that star once more.

Let us think today about those Wise Men, and about how wise they were. They let God lead them. And their journey was not merely a journey by land, but it was also a journey of faith. And God revealed himself to them in the person of the Child Jesus. In one way or another, the same thing has happened to each one of us. God leads us on a journey of faith and he reveals himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

But this doesn't just happen once. It happens again and again in our lives. There are a whole series of Epiphanies awaiting us if we only co-operate with God and let him lead us. Hidden under one form or another, there is always a star glittering out there in the darkness. If we constantly look for that star and follow where God leads us again and again, we will encounter Christ in all sorts of different disguises until one day we meet him face to face and the door is ultimately opened for us to live with him forever.

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

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.



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.



MANY TIMES, WE HAVE IT BACKWARDS:

It's not life's job to make me happy. It's my job to find the joy in life by observing and appreciating the small wonders and everyday miracles that are all around me, everywhere, every minute of my life.

—Paul Cotter

THREE GIFTS; THREE KINGS:

On this feast of the Epiphany, we recall the visit of the three wise men — sometimes called the three Kings — to the Christ child. But if you read very carefully Matthew’s Gospel [2:1-12], you might have discovered something rather surprising. The gospel passage — which is the only one that recounts this incident from Jesus’ life — never tells us how many wise men there were. It simply says “wise men from the East arrived one day in Jerusalem.” So, if the scriptures do not tell us how many wise men there were, why is it that we all are convinced that there were three? The answer to that question is not to be found in the scriptures, but rather in the Christian imagination. Because as subsequent believers reflected upon this passage from scripture, they tried to fill in the details not given in the text. They noticed that at the end of the gospel, the Christ child is presented with three gifts — gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Consequently, Christians drew the conclusion: if there were three gifts, there were three wise men.

Now this is not the only possible conclusion. One of the wise men could have brought all three of the gifts. Or there could have been six or ten wise men with some bringing no gift at all. But the Christian imagination was consistent and clear: three gifts meant three wise men. I think that conclusion was guided by the Holy Spirit. If we take it seriously, we can derive three lessons from today’s gospel.

The first lesson is this: **Every one of us has a gift to offer.** Christians could have imagined that there were ten wise men and many of them came without bringing any gift. But they refused to accept the possibility of an empty-handed wise man. This flowed from the faith conviction that God does not create giftless people. Every person that God has made is a gifted person. Every person has something to offer. So if you’re sitting here today and saying: “I can do this and that, but I really have nothing that is worthy of offering to God”, your thinking is lacking. This story invites you to think again. If you don’t know what your gift is, find it. It is there. If you exist, you are gifted. That is simply the way that God makes people. Find your gift and claim it.

The second lesson moves in the opposite direction: **No one of us has all the gifts.** Christians could have imagined that one wise man gave all three gifts to the Christ child. But they rejected that possibility, because Christians know that gifts are spread throughout the community. No one of us has them all. Therefore, we should not waste our time longing over other people’s gifts. How often we do that! How often do we say: “I wish that I could be as intelligent as that person, or have that person’s sense of humor, or that person’s success, or that person’s popularity”? This story tells us: “Don’t be jealous of other people’s gifts. Claim your own gift and be satisfied.” Accept the gift that was given to you. No one has all the gifts.

The third lesson is this: **Every gift is necessary; every gift is important.** The three gifts of the Wise Men were meant to describe the person of Christ. Gold indicated his kingship and authority as our Lord. Frankincense, his divinity as our God. Myrrh, his suffering as our Savior. If any one of those gifts were missing, an incomplete picture of Christ would result. Therefore, each of those gifts had a purpose, and each of those gifts was necessary. In the same way, any gift which God has given to us is necessary. Each person’s gift is something that is important. It is only when every gift is used that the fullness of God’s kingdom will emerge.

Three lessons from the three gifts of the three wise men — each person has a gift to offer; no person has all the gifts; and each gift is necessary. To these three let me add a fourth: Once you know that you are gifted, once you have located your gift and seen its importance, don’t hide it. Do not keep it for yourself. Be like the three kings and offer your gift in God’s service. Be like the three wise men and give the gift that you have received to the One who is both Messiah and Lord.

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



into union with the spiritual. Our lives have meaning and purpose and truth and beauty when they reflect His Life.

And so we do Him homage. We place our hands into His hands. We entrust our lives to Him. And we pray to Him to lead us to that place where our hearts long to go — to union with God.

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

SEEKERS OF TRUTH:

“We Three Kings of Orient are bearing gifts, we traverse afar...” — so goes the popular song we’ll likely hear this weekend at Mass. Each verse highlights one of the gifts the Magi bring. Homilies sometimes include a symbolic breakdown of each of the gifts and how they point to Christ’s kingship, priestly role, and his death. Most of us won’t see much gold in our lifetime, and we probably need to Google “frankincense” and “myrrh”. On the Feast of the Epiphany, we often focus on what the wise men brought; all too rarely, we fail to reflect on what brought them.

There is a global theme running through the Scripture readings — “Nations shall walk by your light;” “Look about; they all gather and come to you” [Isaiah 60:1-6]. “Lord, every nation on earth will adore you;” “All kings shall pay him homage” [Psalm 72]. “The Gentiles are coheirs and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” [Ephesians 3:2-6]. The Scriptures include a sense of gathering, of drawing forth and together. There’s something attractive about the glory of God.

The Magi knew it — “We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage” [Matthew 2:1-12]. We call them saints for their devotion. But, interestingly enough, they likely died before Christ died and rose from the dead. A missionary apostle never reached them, and they were never baptized. We know little about them — their background, or their specific education. Were they truly kings? Were they learned scholars? Whatever their career, we know that they were truly wise men for their pursuit of truth and their openness to the revelation of God.

When increasing amounts of time are spent on screens passively consuming information, the Magi offer us unique gifts. These gifts aren’t tangible items brought to us — they are attitudes of the heart that can bring us to the One who brought them to Bethlehem.

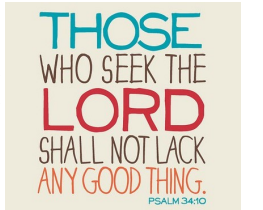
The first gift is curiosity. To know that the star was a meaningful sign, the Magi needed to be inquisitive. They needed to explore the world around them, to study it, to measure it, to grow in understanding. In many ways, our perspectives are the products of the information we take in. In an era where differences form divisions, the example of the Magi teaches us to be curious about the world — whether it’s economics, health care structures, parenting philosophies, the consumption of gluten, or *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. Curiosity should extend to our faith as well. The Catholic Church is rich in Scripture, saints, sacraments, and more. There’s always a new area to explore!

The second gift is humility. The Magi weren’t Jewish. And yet when they encountered the star, its rising, and its deeper meaning in Jesus’ birth, their desire was “to do him homage.” The beauty of the sign attracted them. We, too, are invited to be humble before truth when we find it. Everyone has teachings of the Church that lead to questions. We all find some of our behaviors contradicting the Commandments or Beatitudes. There are certain “hard facts” of our faith that must be acknowledged and embraced with humility. Our encounters with other people — their stories, their viewpoints, their challenges — should also be approached with humble respect and dignity.

The third gift is movement. The journey from Persia to Palestine was no easy trek in the first century. The Magi’s pursuit of truth meant effort and sacrifice. If we’re serious about seeking truth, it will require something of us — we cannot see Christ and remain as we are. Like the Magi, we, too, are invited to draw near to God, to walk by the light of God’s truth, and to invite others to join us in gathering around the babe in Bethlehem.

This Epiphany, consider how God might be inviting you to grow in curious seeking, humble encountering, and movement towards truth.

—taken from the writings of Anna Carter, which appears on the internet. 13



HOMAGE:

Herod was greatly troubled. Actually, that was an understatement — he was enraged. His paranoia was at record levels. And all of Jerusalem was greatly troubled along with him. The politicians there had good reason to be upset. This same Herod had killed three of his sons who he thought were trying to usurp his throne. He also killed his brother-in-law, and sent his wife and another son into exile. He would do everything to protect his position.

What got him so upset? Foreigners from the East came to see him to ask him where the newborn king of the Jews could be found [Matthew 2:1-12]. What? He thought he had gotten rid of all competition. Was there some truth that there was another king out there somewhere? The magi said that they had seen his star rising. That was a sure sign that a great person had been born. But where was he? Herod's own religious counselors told him about the prophecy of Micah that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem [see Micah 5:2]. Was all this some sort of religious babel, or was there something to it? The magi told Herod that they were looking for the newborn king to do him homage. Homage. That really must have gotten Herod infuriated. They didn't come to Jerusalem to do Herod homage. This baby king was going to be trouble.

We know the rest of the story — how Herod told the magi to get back to him when they found this king. When they didn't return, he had all the male babies two and younger in the area of Bethlehem killed. We call them the Holy Innocents. We also know that just before this horrendous event, Joseph received a message in a dream to flee with Mary and the baby. He brought them to Egypt. After Herod died, a few years later, Joseph received yet another dream telling him to return his family to Nazareth [Matthew 2:13-23].

But back to the magi. They did find the infant and they did give him homage. They recognized the superior power of this child. Later on in the feudal system, all would be required to do homage to their loyal lords. Lesser nobility would recognize their dependence on and responsibility to those who were greater than them. The magi knew that the child was greater than them. They had followed his star — the heavens were pointing to the child. He wasn't their king because others would proclaim him to be some sort of political king — He was someone the heavens had sent. So they gave him homage.

And so we give homage to the King of Kings, our Lord. We recognize that he is infinitely greater than any president or prime minister or any other ruler. We recognize that He is our Lord, the one who governs our lives. We hold our hands together in prayer, placing our hands in his and surrendering to him. We pay Him homage. The gesture of prayer with our hands together or our fingers interlocked is a gesture of homage. When we pray using this gesture we are saying: "I belong to God."

We pay homage to the Lord in more than our gesture of prayer, though. We pay homage to him in the events of our lives — be they significant events or the routine daily events. Recently, I asked one of our families what their plans were in view of a job opportunity that had opened up. Would they stay here or move. "We are not sure, yet" they said, "We are praying over it." They are giving homage to the Lord, letting him direct their lives. We do this even in the minor events of our lives. We say grace before meals. Think about that. Why do we say grace before meals? We do this because we are giving the Lord homage, thanking him for the food we are receiving. Say a prayer in the morning entrusting your day to the Lord. Do homage to him and transform your day into a prayer to the King.

The magi were wise men. They realized that this child could draw them beyond the limits that the world imposes — to that place where his life makes all life complete. That is why they did homage to him. That is why we do homage to the Lord. We do not have to be limited by the physical. We do not have to be condemned to empty lives. Jesus — the spiritual become physical — draws us, the physical,

**THE CALL TO EMBRACE:**

On this Feast of the Epiphany, when Matthew's Gospel recounts the story of the Magi from the east bringing gifts to the newborn king of the Jews [Matthew 2:1-12], we also read from Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus — probably written by a disciple of Paul in the 90's, according to most scholars.

In the first century of the Christian era, the community of believers wrestled with the question of how the Gentiles fit into God's plan of salvation. Jesus himself was a Jew who practiced the Jewish faith, and, for the most part, Jesus confined his mission to the Jewish community. He did instruct his followers to preach the Gospel to all nations, and by the middle of the first century, the apostolic leaders reached agreement that Gentiles could join the Jesus movement without following all the Jewish laws and practices. Nevertheless, tensions over this issue remained late into the first century; this is why Paul is writing his letter. The Magi story in Matthew's gospel — written in the 80's — makes the point that the Gentile outsiders recognized Jesus as the newborn king, while the Jewish insiders — represented by Herod — did not.

In the letter, Paul says that he received from God the revelation of the previously unknown mystery "that the Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body, and co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" [Ephesians 3:2-6]. God's plan of salvation is inclusive — embracing Jews and Gentiles. No one is excluded from the universal love of God.

Throughout history, Christians have known the temptation to exclude others — those who are different — from God's salvific plan — atheists, Jews, and Muslims to name a few. In various documents, the Second Vatican Council [1962-1965] taught a remarkable salvation optimism that opens up salvation even to atheists — those who have not yet learned to call God by name — providing that they follow their conscience. The council rejected all prejudice and bigotry, while recognizing the world religions as vehicles of truth and goodness.

St. Paul in his letter to the Church at Ephesus invites us to work to transform exclusive attitudes into more inclusive approaches. Most of us know persons who have done that. A man with strong anti-Semitic prejudice inherited from his family became friends with a Jewish colleague at work, and now sees Jewish people as children of God and co-heirs of heaven. A woman who assumed Islam was a religion of violence read more about it, and now sees most Muslims as allies in the war against terrorism. A father who initially rejected his gay son prayed regularly for him, and over time gradually softened his negative attitude, eventually leading to a tearful and loving reconciliation with him. A white employer with hidden racist tendencies was so impressed by the great job performance of her black employees that she recognized her prejudice and consciously rejected it. A generally open-minded Republican father was secretly upset that his daughter married a leftist Democrat, but over time came to like his son-in-law, recognizing in the process the danger of demonizing political opponents.

What are your own exclusive blind spots?

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

YOU ARE MY BELOVED:

Personally, as my struggle reveals, I don't often "feel" like a beloved child of God. But I know that that is my most primal identity, and I know that I must choose it above and beyond my hesitations. Strong emotions, self-rejection, and even self-hatred justifiably toss you about, but you are free to respond as you will. You are not what others, or even you, think about yourself. You are not what you do. You are not what you have. You are a full member of the human family, having been known before you were conceived and molded in your mother's womb. In times when you feel bad about yourself, try to choose to remain true to the truth of who you really are. Look in the mirror each day and claim your true identity. Act ahead of your feelings and trust that one day your feelings will match your convictions. Choose now and continue to choose this incredible truth. As a spiritual practice claim and reclaim your primal identity as beloved daughter or son of a personal Creator.



IDENTIFYING TRUTH IN A WORLD OF CONTERFEITS:

One day while working at a bank, I found a counterfeit \$100 bill that was so convincing it fooled my own supervisor. It was “perfect” — except for one small detail that made the false banknote stand out from a true one. With that, it dawned on me that if we knew the truth in any area of life and looked hard enough, the false would become apparent.

Today, it seems that what people “feel” is often perceived to be of greater importance than objective truth itself. In order to find true happiness, we need to be honest about how we feel, but that it doesn’t end with feelings.

I’ve had all sorts of “truths” pushed onto me throughout my faith journey — and so have you. Some of them contradicted others, so I simply rejected them all, and instead focused on trying to recognize truths that were independent of my feelings. I began to ask bigger questions, like “what comes after death?”, and it hit me like a ton of bricks — one day I will die, and when I die, my thoughts, perspectives, ideas, and opinions will die with me. And after that point, what will occur, will occur, no matter how I might feel about it today.

I realized that there is a true order of creation that I merely operate within. Because I operate within this order — and I don’t make it up myself — I knew that I needed to let go of false truths that merely “gave me permission” to live a lifestyle I wanted. I asked myself: “Who am I to judge that my own judgments about truth are correct?” That was when I realized that I needed guidance — I needed to look beyond myself.



My bank supervisor knew that truth existed because she was stung with the \$100 loss after accepting the false banknote. She only accepted that it was counterfeit after it was confirmed against the standard of truth by the police. In other words, the police merely upheld the truth that the counterfeit banknote was indeed counterfeit. That’s important to recognize because, in terms of the truths of our universe, that’s what the Church does, too — the church simply upholds what God has made true in His order of creation.

In my pursuit of truth, over and over I’ve arrived at truths, only to find out that they were already upheld by the Catholic Church. This really helped me see how my previous perspective about the Church “forcing” truth onto people was off the mark. The reality is that the Church merely invites us to accept and embrace the truths it upholds, while inviting us to dig deeper. I have found great peace in doing so, and have all the while grown in my trust in the wisdom of the Church — even though sometimes people in the church do crazy things. The peace I experience today as a result of this is more satisfying than any counterfeit — no matter how attractive it may be.

If we wouldn’t accept a counterfeit banknote as a true one, why would we accept a counterfeit “truth” as an objective truth? Furthermore, why would we accept less than the fullness of truth in place of fullness of truth?

I used to feel attacked when someone challenged my perception of truth; but now I see that was merely a reflection my deep attachment to those false — or less than fully true — perceptions. Those perceptions provided me with a safe space where my fragile self wouldn’t be revealed. But that safe-space didn’t allow me to grow. Today, I am grateful for those who, through their loving example, encouraged me to continually pursue a more profound self-honesty about everything.

Those who drew me into this journey of pursuing truth were like gentle catalysts, motivating me to enter into the greater mystery of the Church. I listened to them because I trusted them, and I knew that they truly cared about me — but most importantly because they always drew me toward greater holiness and never toward sin. That is what true accompaniment is. They seemed to prioritize the pursuit of truth above the pursuit of relationship, while still being relationally attentive. Through this, I was drawn

further into the mystery, and I saw how the pursuit of truth could lead a person to God.

Despite sinful behavior of people within the Church — including myself — the Church itself soldiers on because objective truth continues to exist. And the truths about our nature as persons are the same truths that existed before the Church was around to uphold them. Those are the truths that find their source in God and what he has written into our universe — both visibly and invisibly.

I arrived here as a matter of pursuing greater self-honesty, and through that, I experience an even greater degree of joy. The Church knows of the joy that awaits when you pursue the fullness of self-honesty about everything and wants us to arrive at that joy.

The question is this: To what degree do we prayerfully engage ourselves within this pursuit?

—taken from the writings of Hudson Byblow, a Catholic speaker, author, and consultant .

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. 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].**



LIFE TEEN

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

Monday:	Isaiah 55:1-11, 1 John 5:1-9, Mark 1:7-11
Tuesday:	1 Samuel 1:9-20, Mark 1:21-28
Wednesday:	1 Samuel 3:1-20, Mark 1:29-39
Thursday:	1 Samuel 4:1-11, Mark 1:40-45
Friday:	1 Samuel 8:4-22, Mark 2:1-12
Saturday:	1 Samuel 9:1-10:1, Mark 2:13-17

2nd Week in Ordinary Time: 1 Samuel 3:3-19, 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, John 1:35-42

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.

**GOOD ADVICE:**

If you don’t like the road you’re walking, start paving a new one.

—Dolly Parton