

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Christmas Prayer~

Loving Father,
Help us remember
the birth of Jesus,
that we may share
in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love
all over the world.
Let kindness come
with every gift
and good desires
with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil
by the blessing which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry
with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy
to be your children,
and Christmas evening
bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving
and forgiven.
Amen.

—Robert Louis Stevenson

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].

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.

CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR — BEGIN WITH MASS:

It has been a long-standing tradition here at Our Lady Chapel that we begin our New Year’s Eve celebration by first coming to Mass before going out for the evening. This affords us a great opportunity to begin the New Year with a time of prayer and worship of God. It is also the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God. As noted in the Mass schedule of the Christmas Season, **there will be a vigil Mass on Monday, December 31st at 5:30 PM.** Please plan on joining us.



THE JUBILEE YEAR HAS BEGUN:

Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica before Mass on Christmas Eve, officially launching the Jubilee Year 2025. “O Christ, bright star of the morning, incarnation of infinite love, long awaited salvation, sole hope of the world, illumine our hearts with your radiant splendor,” the pope prayed during the rite of opening of the Holy Door, which was preceded by readings from the Old and New Testaments, the singing of the O Antiphons, and the proclamation of Christmas.



“In this season of grace and reconciliation grant that we may put our trust in your mercy alone and discover once more the way that leads to the Father,” Pope Francis prayed. “Open our souls to the working of the Holy Spirit, that he may soften the hardness of our hearts, that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries may join hands, and peoples seek to meet together.”

The rite to open the Holy Door — sealed since the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2016 — included the proclamation of a passage from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus says: “I am the door [gate]. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” [John 10:7-10].

Seated in his wheelchair, the 88-year-old Pope Francis leaned forward to knock on the gold Holy Door. As assistants opened the two sides of the door, the choir sang in Latin: “This is the Lord’s own gate. Where the upright enter. I enter your house, O Lord” [see Psalm 5]. After breaking open the special door, Francis stopped at the threshold to pray briefly in silence as the bells of St. Peter’s Basilica pealed out into the cool Rome night.

The first ordinary jubilee since the Great Jubilee of 2000, the theme of the Jubilee 2025 is hope — a virtue that does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God’s love. “For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the ‘door’ of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as ‘our hope,’ ” the Pope said.

The Jubilee — a year filled with special spiritual, artistic, and cultural events in Rome — will conclude during the Christmas season 2025.

“THANK YOU” FROM FATHER JOHN:

A very special “thanks” to all who sent cards, gifts, remembrances and “goodies” during this Christmas season. Your prayers, kindness and special messages were truly appreciated. Also, a big thank you to all who contributed their time and talents to make our Christmas liturgies so special — All those who helped to decorate the chapel last weekend; our Council Members, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Altar Servers; Andy, and all the musicians and cantors; Ushers and Greeters; Patty Szaniszló, and all our student and adult helpers — and especially each of you. Your presence brought a rich treasure to our lives. Thank you so much for your goodness. I continue to keep all of you in my prayers and Masses.

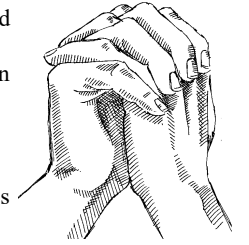


PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is seriously ill.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [‘09], Rosa [‘12] and Edwin [‘17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Debbie Langer, friend of Cindy Frimel, who was diagnosed with brain cancer.
- For Nada Kucmanic, who is seriously ill.
- For Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Father Ray Sutter, pastor emeritus of St. Matthias Parish, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nick Chiacchiarri, father of Mark Mark Chiacchiarri [‘94], father-in-law of Michelle Chiacchiarri [‘96], and grandfather of Aurelia [‘28], and Olivia [‘30] Chiacchiarri, who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Sabrina Kumar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Margaret Thompson, friend of Joyce Toth, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Father Larry Jerge, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice



PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For John Blazek, Sr., father of Father John [‘anniversary]
- For Dennis Wibbemayer.
- For Jack McLeod [‘54], father of John [‘85], brother of Norm [‘50], William [‘60], cousin of Michael [‘75] and John [‘77] McLeod, and great-uncle of JD [‘21], Teddy [‘21], JD ‘21, Sebby [‘24] Fitzgerald.
- For Joan Houlahan.
- For Brother Joe LeBon, C.S.C., long-time member of the faculty of Archbishop Hoban
- For Marian Matlock, sister of Fr. Jim Martin, C.S.C.
- For Judith Lazuka, mother of Walter [‘86], Christopher [‘88], Joseph [‘89], Stephen [‘91], Scott [‘93] and current parent, Paul Lazuka, father-in-law of Maureen Eville [‘90], grandmother of Alex [‘27], Sophia [‘28], and Maeve [‘36] Lazuka..

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 greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For an end to violence in our society in all of its forms.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.

GRATITUDE:

Gratitude can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. It makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. —Melody Beattie

THE FAMILY OF TODAY:

It's ironic that every third year, the gospel on the feast of the Holy Family is one of those rare infancy narrative passages [Luke 2:41-52] which presumes neither Joseph or Mary was privy to a special annunciation which explained to them exactly just who their son really was. As the late Raymond Brown mentions in his classic book *Birth of the Messiah*, this story is included in a gospel which has an annunciation; but the community which originally passed on this story about the lost Jesus seems to have known nothing about it. Luke simply included this source in his overall narrative to emphasize Jesus' gospel focus on Jerusalem.

Even as a child, I had difficulty taking this passage on face value. If Joseph and Mary know their son is God, why are they uptight about "losing" him? How exactly does one lose God? And besides, I couldn't imagine, after three days of being lost, asking my father: "Why were you looking for me?" I can only suspect what kind of sharp response he would have given me.

Brown always reminded his students that biblical annunciations are for us — the readers — not the actual participants. An annunciation is a literary device employed to inform readers about the real or deeper meaning of specific events — a meaning we usually don't uncover in our own lives until long after those original events have taken place. Historically, it's very possible that Jesus' parents didn't understand what their annunciations conveyed until after Jesus' death and resurrection. It was only then that the pieces of the Jesus puzzle finally came together. That means that they — like us — only discover the real personality of those around us — even our children — by constantly relating to them. There are no annunciation shortcuts.

That's why it's important to listen carefully to what the author of the Book of Sirach [3:2-14], as well as St. Paul [Colossians 3:12-21] have to say. Both authors are very concerned with how we actually relate to others. Each provides us with some "helpful hints" on how to bring this about.

Sirach especially zeroes in on how a child relates to his or her parents — especially when those parents become dependent on that child — "Take care of your parents when they are old, grieve them not as long as they live. Even if their mind fail, be considerate of them; revile them not all the days of their lives." The literal Hebrew reads: "Do not confront him in the fullness of your strength." In other words, though you're now more powerful than he is, still relate to him in a gentle way. Constantly reminding your parents about their weaknesses will accomplish little. It's interesting what we can still learn from and about our parents — even after dementia sets in. But patience is a prerequisite for such proper relating.

The disciple of Paul who wrote to the Church at Colossae couldn't agree more — though the author adds a lot of other important relationship characteristics — "heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, and over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection." As any parent or married couple can testify, relating is hard work.

Perhaps we should do more than just honor Joseph, Mary, and Jesus as we celebrate this feast. There are ways we can imitate them. Modern biblical scholarship has provided us with tools which better help us understand their historical situation. They succeeded as a family not because they were favored with special privileges, but because, amid all the normal uncertainties of life, they worked at being the people God expected them to be. Something we can also do — even if our mother isn't a virgin and our son, God.

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

A SMILE:

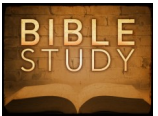
Every time you smile at someone, it's an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing

—Mother Teresa



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — THURSDAY, January 23rd:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Thursday, January 23rd 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: What is the Jubilee Year

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 29: Feast of the Holy Family	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 30	NO MASS
Tuesday, December 31: New Year's Eve	5:00 PM In Person & Live Stream
Wednesday, January 1: Motherhood of God	NO MASS
Thursday, January 2: St. Basil	NO MASS
Friday, January 3:	NO MASS
Saturday, January 4: Epiphany	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, January 5: Epiphany	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

FAITH EDUCATION — JANUARY DATES:

Faith Education is an important part of every person's formation. Please make sure that you have not forgotten this important responsibility. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM, on Sunday mornings**, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass**. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility. **Meeting dates for January: 12 & 26.**



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:

Again this year we will accept memorial donations to help defray the cost of flowers and decorations which we use in our chapel for the Christmas season. If you are interested in making a donation **in memory of loved ones**, please put the names of the loved ones along with your donation in an envelope, mark it "Christmas Flowers," and either give it to Father John or drop it in the offering basket. **Please keep the following people in your prayers: In memory of Pat Redmond, and the Blazek, Rezabek, Heryak, Orehek, Tran, and Wyrwas families.** We will publish the names of your loved ones in the Bulletin as a memorial throughout the Christmas season.



REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, remembering how Jesus grew up in the normal busyness of family life, how he was shaped as a person by both Mary and Joseph. Pope Francis wrote in his recent exhortation that the family is “where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another.” That very belonging to each other is what this Feast is really all about.

The leap of marital commitment is a leap only to the starting line of a long-leap race together. The leaping is not over, but it is only an invitation to self-awareness and mutual acceptance. Faith is what invites the leap. We have enough data to say “yes”, and enough to doubt it all. Faith, as with love, is not a notion only, nor is it an emotion — it is a motion, a living of leaping from the “known” through the ever-present “now” toward the mysterious “then”.

This weekend, as celebrate the festival of the family, the Scripture Readings teach us that it is within family that the real birth of Jesus needs to occur. We are offered thoughts about being virtuous daughters and sons who honor God by honoring parents and siblings. Today, we hear of putting on the virtues of love and humility. We hear of our being “Children of God”. In the Gospel [Luke 2:41-52], we will hear of parental love and concern and of childlike obedience. All this speaks of the Church’s reverence for the sacrament of family and the Sacrament of Marriage. There are some high ideals and virtues for the experience of the Christian family — for parents and children.

Sirach entreats parents and children to love and honor each other. When one generation can no longer care for the other, Sirach calls us to “take care of your father when he is old; even if his mind fails, be considerate of him” [Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14]. He adds the care we give for the elderly “will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt” of our own failings.

Our lives are complicated, and families don’t always consist of two parents. But Paul’s letter to the Church at Colossae offers all of us the tools we need to care for each other — heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another [Colossians 3:12-21]. While we don’t know much of Paul’s background, it is pretty clear that he was intimately connected with family as he notes other important family skills, like “bearing with one another” which seems like an apt phrase on the harder days. When we share a home, we not only have to forgive each other, but to be aware that we need forgiveness from each other, prompted by the example of God’s deeply loving forgiveness for us all.

There is an incident in Matthew’s Gospel, where the Holy Family flees to Egypt in fear of Herod, who was searching for their son. The left their homeland and lived in a country they did not know, with languages and customs not their own, separated from their family. When they could finally return to Israel, fear of Herod’s successor forced them to go not home, but to Galilee, where they would be less likely to be found [see Matthew 2:13-23]. But despite the stress of their situation, it was family relationship that held them to each other even more closely. That seems to be our human reaction to tragedy — we want to gather our loved ones together and hold onto each other.

Even with the people who drive us crazy, we quickly learn that family is not about perfection, but fidelity. As Pope Francis says about families: “We remain steadfast in our intention to respect others, to heal wounds, to build bridges, to strengthen relationships and to ‘bear one another’s burdens.’” He says when a parent speaks to a child, the parent “becomes small,” crouching down to eye level and speaking in



impossible to be good without love. In fact, goodness overflows into love for those around us. We know that our creation was an act of love on God’s part; therefore love is at the very center of our being, and the way to live our lives in a truly authentic way. And the best place to learn how to love is in the family — the child sees the love and devotion and the many sacrifices of the parents, and they form the model for their own parenting later in life.

Luke’s Gospel [2:41-52] is most interesting. It only comes around once every three years, so we ought to pay it some attention. Luke is unique among the Evangelists in giving this story of Christ at the age of twelve. One could regard it as a Gospel-in-miniature. “Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover”. That is what the story is about — going up to Jerusalem for the Passover. It is clear that this was a frequent event — something that Jesus did with his family every year.

But yet, that is precisely what he did with his life — his whole life was a movement from Galilee to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. In that thirty-third year of his life, he went up to Jerusalem and made the Passover a definitive event for the whole world. He took the old Jewish feast which commemorated their salvation as a people through their rescue by God from Egypt, and he made it into a New Passover — the most definitive act of salvation of all time.

“Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors”. When Jesus is lost, his parents eventually find him in the Temple sitting among the doctors of the law. The Temple is his natural home — for he is the Eternal High Priest. Jesus is both the priest and the victim — he is the culmination of everything the Temple stood for. And shortly after his death on the cross, the Temple was destroyed never to be rebuilt.

And the three days that Jesus was lost has a relevance also — it prefigures the three days in the tomb — the three days between death and resurrection when Jesus was apparently lost only to rise in glory.

Jesus is found discussing the finer points of the law with the doctors in the Temple — something he was to spend a lot of time doing during his public ministry when they were also frequently amazed at his wisdom. Of course, it was precisely these disputations which were to cause the plotting against him.

“Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father’s affairs?” — here we have Jesus’ first spoken words in the Gospel of Luke. They are a direct and very clear statement by Jesus that he is the Son of God. These words effectively bring the infancy narrative in Luke’s Gospel to a conclusion. This account of the events of the birth and childhood of Christ lead up to the statement that he is the Son of God and that he must be busy about his Father’s affairs — he must implement the will of his Father. He has a task to perform, and it is to bring salvation to the world.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and others” — Jesus returns to Nazareth to live under the authority of his parents. Although, as it says, “they did not understand what he meant”, he lived his life in such a way that he won the admiration of all.

As Jesus spent these hidden years with his family in Nazareth Jesus grew in stature — by this we mean maturity — and in wisdom. In this way Jesus was prepared for his future ministry. Even the villagers who did not accept him when he took the scroll in the synagogue and effectively proclaimed himself the Messiah still were forced to acknowledge his graciousness — “they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips”.

And on this Feast of the Holy Family, we are drawn to conclude that what applies to Jesus also applies to us — that the family is the ideal place to grow into maturity, the ideal place to acquire wisdom and graciousness, the ideal place to prepare for our vocation in life.

Long may this be so! —taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister, S.D.S., which appear on the internet.

LIVE LIFE:

—“The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” —Thomas Edison

THE DIGNITY OF FAMILY:

Families are under threat today. And amid Western Society, the family's treat is even greater than anywhere else. This weekend, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are called the Holy Family for two very good reasons — [1] because they followed God's will in every particular way, and [2] because they strove at all times to love God, each other, and the people among whom they lived.

Families are under threat from within and without. Families frequently fall apart because of strong tensions between the members, but also from stress that comes from social pressures and changing norms within society. Make no mistake about it, if families are destroyed, then society itself will inevitably perish. A glance at history will tell you that this is so — most famously in the case of the Roman Empire.

The changes that have taken place in our society in the last thirty years do pose a great threat to the family. For example, many young people — and many older ones also — do not see the need for marriage; living together has become the norm — marriage is not even considered as an option. Also, marriage has become devalued by widespread divorce. One has to wonder if marriage is even the norm within our society.

Yes, we as Christians are all called to respect the rights of others. Prejudice of any kind has no place — whether it be on grounds of race, religion, or sexual orientation. But in all cases, the dignity of family life needs to be upheld.

This is not to downgrade the single parent when we speak in favor of a two-parent family unit — in fact, it is important to recognize the difficulties that any single parent has. And within our community — and in society at large — we must do all we can to support them and give them the help that they need. This is a duty that all of us share.

The family is a unit based on love and mutual respect. It is not easy to live in a family, but it is primarily in the family that we grow as fully human beings.

In some families, there are great tensions which can be very destructive; sometimes there are abusive parents or siblings. And there are certainly sometimes circumstances in which it is surely better for parents to separate for the good of the family. No family is exempt from moments of tension, but it is regrettable that not all family environments are healthy. Domestic violence is a huge concern in today's society.

Yet despite these difficulties, we must remember and appreciate that the family is the most important social unit within society. Living in a family requires a high degree of self-sacrifice — especially from the parents. But we know that it is precisely this self-giving love that makes us fully human. Living for others is what being a Christian is all about. It is the way that Jesus showed us in the manner of his life, but most especially in the manner of his death.

In this Feast of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are set before us as an example worth following. They are worth following because they loved God and their neighbor — and by neighbor we mean first and foremost each other. They carried out God's wishes in every particular way.

Each of us knows in our hearts what God wants us to do. If we are unsure, then we only have to read the Gospels, the Ten Commandments, or the Beatitudes to find out. Jesus made it very clear what behavior is acceptable in God's eyes, and he did this for our own good. Sinful behavior is destructive — it destroys our very humanity. Trying to live the way God wants us to live is not at all easy, but it is the only sure way to happiness — it will not make us rich, but it will make us good.

And love — loving each other, loving our neighbors, loving ourselves — is all about goodness. It is



a softer, different voice. Pope Francis says: “Someone looking in from the outside might think: ‘This is ridiculous!’ ” and yet parents do it “because the love of a father and mother needs to be close.” He says God comes to us in the same “small” way of a parent, speaking to our fears with gentle love, “Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid, I’m here.”

This year’s Gospel, however, comes from St. Luke. It is the story of Jesus being lost in the temple [Luke 2:41-52]. Mary, so full of grace, fretted and worried in search for her lost little boy. Where was her faith and trust then? Jesus, on the other hand — so compassionate in His later years — seems to be disrespectful toward His parents. It can seem that mere survival of and within families is worth the name “holy”.

Many novels and biographies have been written about family life with its joys, tears, triumphs — and usually ending in gratitude for the struggle. Those struggles which seemed “unjust” and “not fair!” at the time, now seemed just right!

“It is not good for man to be alone” — The Book of Genesis begins the institution of the union of man and woman with these words of God [see Genesis 1]. Since that time, the covenant of man and woman has continued — a man and a woman being an instrument of God’s continuing the creation of the spouse. The husband vows to God that he will assist God in bringing out all that will be the woman of his heart. He says to his wife that he will love her into more life, honor who she will become through life’s journey of sickness, health, good and bad times, and ultimately present her to God in a sacred act of surrender in gratitude.

The wife commits herself to this same vocational ordination. Her husband will be more than he ever could be without God’s gracing him through her. She will give her husband life, encouragement — and taming too — so that he will love himself more as his love for her will free her for grateful acceptance of herself in love.

Parenting in the holy family begins with “holy-Spousing”. This creational covenant is initiated by God and follows God’s pattern. It begins with awareness. The husband and wife assist each other in the process of finding out who they really are, and what is their truth. This process can take time, but we cannot accept what we do not know. God asks human beings to look around and become aware of creation and of themselves. Spouses do the same, but just as patiently and caringly as does God.


Acceptance will follow from awareness, and when the spouses assist God in self-acceptance, then generosity, generatively, and the holy family begin. There can be children before self-awareness and acceptance, and hopefully these children will facilitate the process.

It is not good for man or woman to live alone, but rather in relationships which will increase awareness, acceptance, and so deepen relationships as a result. Those getting married cannot give themselves totally to their spouses because they do not totally possess themselves. One cannot give what one does not have. They can vow to give the other more of the other, and when the other has enough of him/herself, generosity and holiness will flourish.

Living in family reflects the love of God in Christ. Jesus came to give us life, and when we become aware of and accepting of this love, then what was handed on to us will be handed on within our individual families, and the human family as well. Being part of a family means being faithful to our everyday lives, to loving each other on our best and worst days, and to remembering the sacredness of even the pile of socks, overflowing in the laundry room.

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

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

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

LIVING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN TODAY’S WORLD:

What it means to be a family is undergoing a redefinition in our culture. No longer is the term “family” applied strictly to a household with mom, dad and the children all living together in the same home at the same time. As a matter of fact, what is known as the nuclear family is now in the minority. We have now various arrangements found in single parent families, in families in which the parents are of the same gender, and in families in which one parent is simply living with a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

One major consequence is that children now must relate to multiple sets of parents, multiple sets of grandparents, aunts and uncles, or other adults who are not related to them by birth or blood. The Fourth Commandment — “Honor your father and mother” — is now strained, to say the least. How is that divine commandment, handed down on Mt. Sinai to Moses and the Israelites, to be applied in such diverse and modern household living arrangements?

Another major force at work upon the family of today is the fact that adult moms and dads must relate not only to their children, but also to their own parents as well. Adults in their fifties and sixties must now relate to their own children as well as to their own parents who are in their seventies, eighties and nineties. This latter factor is something that will increase during the years ahead of us. We are facing multiple strains on our family relationships.

It’s hard to relate to our children when they don’t behave as we would wish and do not believe in what we believe. Added to that we have parents whose own aged parents cause them impatience, resentment, frustration, and draining exhaustion. What does the phrase “shared values” mean in such situations?

It is in this cultural context that our Church today bids us give attention to the Holy Family, asking us in that context to examine what is wholesome and holistic in our families. Our response is not optional. Our response is necessary. Do we simply reject our religious heritage outright, claiming that it is now irrelevant, or do we take the wisdom that comes to us from our religious tradition and apply it afresh to the living situations in which we find ourselves today?



It is no secret that other cultures — cultures that are not derived from our Judeo-Christian culture — revere their elders. The aged are held in great esteem and respect. What is understood by the word “tradition” is regarded with great honor. Can we say the same for our American culture? Indeed, when it comes to “being an American”, what part of tradition shapes and forms us as so-called “Americans”? Sadly, we even watch what was given us by our nation’s founders being stripped away from public observance. The “Almighty Now” seems to be totally in control of what we think, say and do.

Much needs to be done to build up and buttress our present-day American families. Indeed, we find a number of social movements and organizations appearing on the scene in the last few decades that are designed to do just that. So, with this as a backdrop, I would like to focus on the role our aged parents can play in our present-day household and family arrangements.

Think for a moment now on the memories being carried in the minds and hearts of our aged parents and grandparents. What was life like for them in their families when they were young? What was America like for them those many decades ago? What did it mean to be “an American”, to be a Christian, to be a Catholic? What did their religious heritage mean to them, and what did it give to them? How did it shape and form their characters and their souls? There is a huge and rich mother lode of wisdom and insight contained in them — one that should be shared with us all, one that should certainly be shared with their grandchildren and even their great-grandchildren.

What sort of instruction are our children receiving in their school classrooms? Does that instruction

children about God. They forget that God makes them worthy. Just as your authority as moms and dads gives you the grace to impart God’s blessing on your children — would that more people did this every night — so also your authority as moms and dads gives you the grace to impart God’s knowledge to your children. You do not have to be theologians to teach the faith. You just need to be united to God.

Many of you have raised your children. Some of these now have their own families. You are the matriarchs and patriarchs. You still need to point your children and grandchildren to the Lord. You can no longer determine what they are exposed to in their homes, but you can — and must — give them the example of union with God. Your children and your grandchildren still look to you to be holy families.

Many of you are married, but do not have children; others of us are called to the single life. We must center our spirituality in our homes. This is true for the priests and religious also. If we are united to God in our homes, then we will not be hypocrites when we fulfill the call of evangelization, bringing God’s Presence to all around us.

Whether there are children at home or not, the center of our spiritual life must be our homes. That is why we need to give God our day when we wake up by praying morning prayer, and thank Him for our day when we go to bed in our night prayer. We need to keep our minds pure so we can speak to the Lord all day.

The heart of any parish is not this or that church. The heart of the universal church is not the Vatican. The heart of the church is the family.

Pray that your family — and all families — might be holy families.

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

LancerSGO — Back in 2024!

Gilmour Academy is once again participating in the State of Ohio *Scholarship Granting Organization* program. Ohio taxpayers who donate to the *LancerSGO* program may be eligible for a 100% tax credit on their State of Ohio income tax return for the year the contribution is made. *LancerSGO* donations are awarded as tuition assistance to Gilmour students.



Here’s how it works: The maximum credit amount is \$750 per individual; married couples that file a joint return can each claim this credit if both spouses make eligible donations [\$1,500 total]. Please note this is a non-refundable credit, which means that the amount of the credit cannot exceed the amount owed in state taxes. Just follow these three steps:

- STEP 1- Estimate your 2024 Ohio state tax liability.
- STEP 2- Make your donation to gilmour.org/sgo [designate GILMOUR ACADEMY].
- STEP 3- Claim your scholarship tax credit when you file your 2024 State of Ohio taxes.

Please visit gilmour.org/sgo to make an online contribution.

[PLEASE NOTE: This does not constitute income tax advice. Always consult with a tax professional for information on the impact of any charitable donation].

For more information, contact Ryan Ryzner at ryznerr@gilmour.org or (440) 473-8000 x4556.

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.



THE HEART OF THE CHURCH:

On the Sunday after Christmas, the Church always pauses to reflect upon the family. Most people, when they hear the title of the celebration — the Feast of the Holy Family — are inclined to just dismiss the possibility that their family could ever be like the Holy Family. We forget that Jesus' family was holy because they lived united to God. Still, many of you may be thinking that your own families are far from the ideal. Well, join the crowd.

Every family is far from the ideal because every family is made of unique individuals with their positive qualities and their negative quirks — or to put it simply, if you think your family is strange, you're right. You have crazy Uncle Fred whose behavior has to be interpreted to the younger children. And then there is nasty old Aunt Martha, who you would like to have sat next to the priest at your daughter's wedding reception, but the priest was smart enough to decline the invitation.

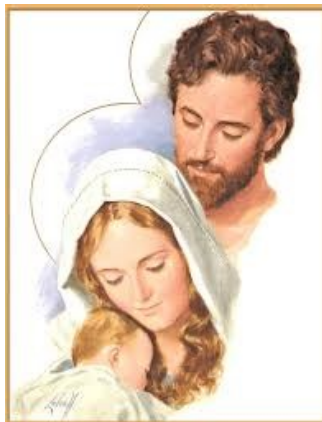
My family is strange too. I have a 30 year old cousin who after graduating college is still looking for work to use her special talent — she's a fire eater and flame thrower. Good old, cousin Patty — the Dragon Lady. Hey, at least she comes in handy at the family re-unions. She's in charge of lighting the charcoal!

If you think your family is strange, but so are you. My family is strange, and so am I. All families have their positive and negative aspects. The fact is that the very negatives become the opportunities of grace leading the rest of the family to God. This is what St. Paul is referring to in his letter to the Church at Colossae, when he tells them — and us — to “put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection” [Colossians 3:12-21]. The compassion that we have for the weakest member of the family — whether that be physically weak, psychologically weak, or morally weak — becomes our means to grow in union with God. The efforts that we make to accept each other's quirks are themselves acts of virtue.

Being a holy family means being a family separate for the Lord. To be holy means to be set distinct from all that is not holy. So for our families to be holy, we have to choose that which is often contrary to the choices made by other families. For example, we keep immoral material — TV programs, movies, video games, computer sites — out of our homes because we ask God to dwell there. At the same time we — actually you — have to be very careful of where your children are visiting or staying overnight because other families might allow immorality into their homes — or, simply, not supervise their own children. This could earn you a lot of criticism from others, but the integrity of your family is an infinitely greater value than its popularity.

Being a holy family demands that our homes be places of prayer. The Church — at least in our country — is still suffering from the misconception that worship takes place only on Saturdays or Sundays in the churches, and that religious instruction is the exclusive realm of parish programs. This is all wrong. We come to Church on Saturdays or Sundays to be united to Christ in Word and Sacrament, so that we can strengthen the union that takes place in our homes. Some families do this through the family rosary. Others have family prayer at bedtime. Most make it a point to have family prayer before meals.

You send your children to religious education for the basic outline of what you need to communicate to your children every day. Parents — not parishes — are the first teachers of their children in the ways of the faith. Some parents hold themselves back in this area because they feel unworthy to teach their



accurately and faithfully transmit to them our American traditions and values? Our Judeo-Christian traditions and values? This is not to imply that our children cannot or should not be exposed to our Native Americans' beliefs and morals. Nor does it imply that we should be kept in the dark about African values, traditions and beliefs, or Chinese, or Mexican, or Japanese, or Arab. All I am suggesting here is that our children not be kept away from our own American philosophies, morals and beliefs. How willing are we to pay for qualified teachers in our public schools, teachers who support, buttress and build up all that we mean by the term “family”?

Granted that we live in a society that separates Church and State, does that mean we should be living in a society in which religion plays no part? And granted all of that, what are we doing within our own families, in our own households — however they are constituted — to transmit the wisdom of our elders to our children and their grandchildren?

A holistic and holy family is integrated, not fractured; other-centered, not self-centered; lives in forgiveness, affirms the uniqueness of each of its members; builds up instead of tears down; is mindful of God and not neglectful of His Presence and love. The thoughts of St. Paul which he wrote in his letter to the Church at Colossae, apply to us just as urgently now as they did back then — perhaps more so: “because you are God's chosen ones — holy and beloved — clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Above all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Let Christ's peace rule in your hearts, since as members of the one body, you have been called to that peace. Be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you. Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do everything in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, our Father, through him” [Colossians 3:12-21].

May you live with Christ in a happy and holy family.

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

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — JANUARY 18th:

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. Please join us for a great experience.

Please let us know in the Chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

2025 CALENDARS:

Calendars for the year 2025 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 2025 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.

2025

HOLY DOES NOT MEAN PERFECT:

Two thirds of families in the United States do not eat their meals together. Of the third who do, 50% are watching TV during the meal. The average child over 8 watches three and a half hours of TV daily — largely because the tired parents use the TV as a baby sitter at the end of a long day. “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed on the world.” When poet WB Yeats penned these lines, he might have been speaking of contemporary family life. The Feast of the Holy Family is not as old as one might think. Its origins are found only in the seventeenth century. In a Church, whose bloodline runs back two thousand years, three or four centuries are not a long time.

In the first sixteen centuries of our Church, solemn veneration of Mary, her husband, and her Son was a non-event. There was little need to offer the Holy Family as a model, for family life was largely in a healthy condition. But then came the Industrial Age, and the birth of cities. Serious problems appeared on the family horizon. Strategist that she is, the Church looked about for a counterforce. Cleverly she hit upon devotion to the Holy Family. Yet Mary, her husband, and her Son had to wait until 1921 before an official feast was created. It was then the threesome of Nazareth officially became the First Family of Christendom — west and east.

Family life today is a most difficult pursuit. One thinks of divorce, the scourge of alcohol and narcotics, the breakdown of discipline, and all the rest of the unhappy lot. We should pay attention to St. Paul’s letter to the Church at Colossae [3:12-21] in Asia Minor. Apparently word had reached Paul that Christian families in Colossae were falling apart. And so he notes the qualities that must be in a Christian home. Sit back and allow Paul’s magnificent words to seep into your spirit — “Bear with one another. Forgive one another. Over all these put on love. Christ’s peace must reign in your hearts. Be thankful. Wives, cherish your husbands. Husbands, love your wives. Children, obey your parents in everything.” What a home it would be were one to find all the qualities Paul enumerates! — they would be Hall of Fame material. People would fight to visit, and just hope that the family magic would rub off on them and their families. Why not allow it to be your home?

Arthur Tonne illustrates my point with a wonderful tale. George was becoming old and infirm. He had been a bachelor sailor most of his life. His nephew Bill invited him to move in with his family. George gladly accepted. Now Bill, who had never traveled, did so by listening to the many journeys of his uncle. George noticed there were times that Bill was fed up with family life — arguments with his wife, bills, kids’ sickness, etc. He told his uncle more than once: “I wish I was free to roam the world as you did.”



One evening over supper, the old sailor told the family of a map of buried treasure in his possession. Bill stored the information away. A year after that, George died. The nephew looked through his uncle’s few possessions for the map. Sure enough he found an envelope addressed to himself. It was the hoped for map. It took him but a moment to read it. It led to the very house in which he stood. The dead salt was telling him: “Your own home and your own family are your treasure. Don’t blow it. Enjoy them.”

Some of you may be saying: “Come out of the clouds, padre. How can we relate to the Holy Family? Joseph was a celibate. Mary was a virgin. Jesus is the Son of God.” We do Mary, Joseph, and Jesus a wrong if we fantasize their lives. Take the Christmas stable for openers. We picture it as something out of a glossy *House Beautiful* magazine. But be real. Stables are constructed not for families, but for livestock. That Christmas stable was crawling with dangerous vermin and foul odors. There were no pampers nor fresh water. Imagine the drafts. Mary and Joseph had to be sick with worry for the Infant’s health. And where would the next meal for the Baby come from?

Consider, too, the teen years of Jesus. Most teens believe they know everything. Can you even

ized families of literature and movies — where people are still attractive, interesting, and worthy of our understanding and sympathy even when they are petty, selfish, jealous, unfaithful, and sinful. As we know, understanding and sympathy in the midst of the muck and grime of real family life is considerably harder to crank up. All of that notwithstanding, however, unless there is present the kind of abuse that violates the soul, family life remains a sacrament — sometimes indeed because of its imperfections rather than simply in spite of them.

It is in forming hearts that are big enough to love and forgive within imperfection that we ready ourselves for heaven.

For many of us, coming home from the hospital to join a family will be our first baptism, our family dwelling will be our primary church, our family table our primary place of Eucharist, our living room our first sanctuary, our marriage bed our deepest experience of Eucharist, and our reconciliation with each other after the pettiness and hurts of family life our ongoing sacrament of reconciliation. It is there that the flow of the life that originates within God, and finds its perfection there, will flow through us.

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

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 [12/21/24]	_____	\$ 500.25
Total Offerings: Saturday [12/22/24]	_____	\$ 925.00
Total Offerings: Tuesday [12/24/24]	_____ [Christmas Eve]	\$ 3,316.00
Total Offerings: Wednesday [12/25/24]	_____ [Christmas Day]	\$ 5,857.00

EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

We will soon be discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training in the spring months. 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.**



ARE YOU A SEEKER?

God comes into the world in always-surprising ways so that the sincere seeker will always find evidence. Is sincere seeking perhaps the real meaning of walking in faith?

—Richard Rohr

FAMILY LIFE AS SACRAMENT:

The catechism from which I drew my religious instruction as a child stated that a Christian sacrament was an “outward sign instituted by Jesus Christ to give us grace.” Later on, Father Edward Schillebeeckx, in his book entitled: *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, defined a sacrament in words to this effect: “A sacrament is anything that visibly or tangibly makes present or prolongs a saving action of God.” While both of those definitions are theologically very good, they are too abstract to, at times, give us a real sense of what precisely a sacrament is, and where a sacrament is sometimes found. Here is a more colloquial definition — one that simply defines a sacrament as “anything that gives skin to God.” What is meant by this?

There is a marvelous story told of a four year old girl who woke up one night frightened, convinced that there were monsters and spooks in her room. So she ran to her parents’ bedroom. Her mother, however, brought her back to her own room, put on a number of lights, showed the child that there was nothing to be afraid of, put her back to bed, calmed her, and finally left her with the words: “There is nothing to be afraid of. When I leave, you won’t be alone in the room. God will be here with you.” But the young girl replied: “I know that God will be here with me, but I need someone in the room who has some skin!”

There is wisdom, and theology, to her response. As human beings, we are creatures of the senses. We need something we can grasp tangibly — physically. Thus, a God who is everywhere is, at a certain point, nowhere. God, of course, already knows this, and that is why we have been given God’s presence physically in sacrament. Understood in this sense then, there are more than seven sacraments. Family life is — or at least it can be — a sacrament. Like the Eucharist, or any other sacrament, it too can give concrete flesh to God. How so?

Partly this can be understood by contrast. Jean-Paul Sartre once said: “the other is hell.” That, for a Christian and for every other major world religion, is the exact opposite of the truth. Hell is alienation, arrogant self-willed aloneness, the opposite of community, non-family. As John Shea so aptly puts it, hell is never a surprise waiting for a happy person, but the full-flowering of a life of arrogant alienation. Heaven is union with others, and thus, as long as we are somehow linked to a community and a family, we cannot go to hell.

Buckminster Fuller once said that God is not just a noun, but also a verb. That is true. God is not just a person, but also a certain flow of life — a flow of receptivity and gratitude between three persons. Inside of God there is a kind of family life going on, and Jesus has assured us that when we give and receive from each other within a family — when we break open our lives and hearts and joys and frustrations and egos and agendas and finances, and share these with each other, we are letting the life of God flow through us, and we are giving skin to the inner life of the Trinity. In that sense, **family life is a sacrament**, and, for many of us, **the most important sacrament of all** because it is the one that in fact touches our lives and transforms us the most deeply.

But all of this should not be unduly romanticized. To say that family life is a sacrament is not to say that it will not be fraught with pettiness, frustration, anger, jealousies, selfish concern, pathology — and even, at times, real sin. Our families are never the holy family!

I remember my mother — a truly pious and good woman — occasionally lamenting how in her idealism, she dreamed of being the mother of the holy family — and she ended up getting stuck with us! Our families are never the romanticized stuff of our adolescent or pious dreams. Nor are they ever the ideal-



speculate how difficult it had to be to raise one who did?

We celebrate today not the feast of the Perfect Family, but the feast of the Holy Family. Do you still find it difficult to relate with such a family?

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

A REENVISIONING OF FAMILY:

This feast of the Holy Family invites us to think about our understanding of family. The first reading from the Book of Sirach — a text that is part of the wisdom writings and tradition — is classically read as a father’s address to his son. The father instructs on how a son is to behave toward his father and essentially, how all children are to “revere” their parents [Sirach 3:2-6,12-14]. This selection from Sirach is supposed to offer us wisdom about family. But does it? The biblical text presumes a heteronormative, patriarchal family structure that includes male and female parents — and probably both male and female children, too. Twenty-first century families are often very different from the one portrayed in Sirach. Today’s families might consist of single parents, same-sex parents, foster or adoptive parents, stepparents, grandparents with custody or various other expressions.

Additionally, time and growing consciousness have raised the question: Should all parents be respected and honored? What if they caused great suffering? This reading from Sirach speaks to an idealized family situation. How are children suffering within harmful family units to make sense of this reading when they hear it proclaimed in church? What is the wisdom to be gained?

The question challenges us to expand our notion of “family” — to see ourselves as part of the family of the Divine One who brought us all into being. With this new framework, family becomes a series of interrelated, interpersonal and intergenerational relationships. For these relationships to grow and flourish in meaningful ways, mutual respect needs to be one of the starting points — not authority, fear, dominance or paternalism.

The other starting point needs to be love — the central theme of Paul’s letter to the Church at Colossae [3:12-21]. As members of the Divine One’s family, we are called to learn the way of love. Within this household are “elders” and those younger. The way of love beckons the elders to act responsibly — to share with younger members the wisdom gained from experience and to be open to the wisdom learned from younger members as well. The way of love also calls for the exercise of heartfelt compassion. In this household, younger members and elders alike are called upon to bear with one another and be patient. Both elders and younger members will struggle, make mistakes, disappoint and falter. The way of love entails forgiveness when expectations are not met and when feelings are hurt.

This way of love between elders and children is palpable in the Gospel reading from Luke. In pondering this passage, one might say that 12-year old Jesus was not a model son. After participating in a family outing to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover, the young boy goes his own way and becomes separated from his parents and their traveling caravan. This separation leads to devastation and worry on the part of his parents, who eventually find him after three days. The parents confront the child, expressing their feelings of consternation. Clearly Jesus had displeased them, caused them worry, suffering, pain and grief [Luke 2:41-52].

The young Jesus asks a rather glib question in response. These parents would have to bear with, try to understand and forgive their young son when he made a stunning decision to stay back and dialogue with the teachers in the temple. Here we have an example of parents — wise “elders” — allowing their child, a younger member in the household of the Divine, to do what he needs to do. And their love for him never wavered.

Collectively, the Scripture Readings for this Feast of the Holy Family offer us much wisdom. Family needs to be re-envisioned, and mutual love and respect must be the foundation for all relationships.

—taken from the writings of Sister Carol Dempsey, C.S.J., which appears on the internet 9

A TEENAGER IN THE HOLY FAMILY:

As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family this year, we find that Jesus has become a teen, and the Holy Family is setting out on Pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem [Luke 2:41-52]. This is only place in the New Testament where we see Jesus as a teenager. It should not surprise us, then, that we find the holy family in turmoil. Now, I am not picking on teenagers. Teenagers deserve our respect. It is hard being a teenager. So many things are changing. There are new expectations, new fears, new feelings, and oh so many hormones! Many of us here wish that we were younger, but few of us wish that we were fifteen. It is hard being a teenager, and that is why the teenagers in our community deserve our support and our love. Now having said that, living in a house with a teenager can be challenging — challenging for both parent and child. On both sides it is difficult to communicate. It is difficult to understand. On both sides, emotions can explode and feelings can be hurt.

All of this is reflected in Luke’s gospel, as Mary and Joseph attempt to relate to their teenage son. There is poor communication. Mary and Joseph do not even know that Jesus was staying in Jerusalem. There is hurt and anxiety. Mary says to her son: “How could you have done this to us?” And, of course, there is the confident belief that it is never my fault. Jesus says: “Why were you looking for me. I was in my father’s house.” It’s not my problem.

We see in this passage something very important — the stresses in family life should not be considered sinful. How can they be? Jesus was the Son of God. Mary was born without sin. Yet they still misunderstood one another and ended up hurting one another. This Gospel is telling us it does us no good to tear ourselves apart because of family stress. Our failure to connect with one another is less a sin and more the price we pay for living with one another.

Having said that, all of us want to hurt one another less. How do we do that? The author of the Book of Sirach shows us a way. Sirach says that families need to relate to one another with honor and kindness. This is especially true when things become difficult.

A number of years ago there was a television special about the Babemba tribe in South Africa. This tribe had a particular way of dealing with people who were out of order. When someone did something wrong or was antisocial, the tribe would place that member in the middle of the village and form a circle around him or her. Then one by one each member of the tribe would shout out something that was good about the person, some way in which the person brought honor to the tribe. Each person took their turn, and no one said anything negative or even referred to the negative behavior. This process would take several hours. But, when everyone had spoken their piece, they considered the person in the middle of the circle to be “corrected,” and they began a celebration. The African tribe was convinced that when someone is out of order, it is more useful to treat that person with honor and kindness than with anger and criticism. There must be some truth to this practice, because it is said that they needed to use this “correction” very seldom.

Now I do not know if we could take this ritual from Africa and apply it to twenty-first century America. But if we tried, it might look something like this. Your teenage son has been sitting in front of the computer screen for two hours. You’ve asked him four times to take out the garbage and as of yet there is no movement. Now you could go into his room and explode. Or you could go into his room and say this: “Dominic, here are a few things I know to be true about you. You are a good student. You work hard for your grades. You are a good athlete. Other people look up to you. You are a loyal friend, generous and caring. I remember last month when your friend Mary’s uncle died how you found the time to be with her and to support her. You bring honor to this family, and I am proud of you.” You could say that



and then walk out.

Now, would this work? Is it practical? Would “Dominic” make the connection between what was said and the garbage needing to be taken out? I am not sure. But I am sure of this. What holds a family together is love and respect. Therefore, we should not abandon those qualities when things become difficult. We cannot go far wrong by telling the other members of our family what is best about them. It is always good to speak to one another with honor and with kindness. And — if we are lucky — it might even move someone to take out the garbage.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

- Monday:** 1 John 2:12-17, Luke 2:36-40
- Tuesday:** 1 John 2:18-21, John 1:1-18
- Wednesday:** Numbers 6:22-27, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:16-21
- Thursday:** 1 John 2:22-28, John 1:19-28
- Friday:** 1 John 2:29-3:6, John 1:29-34
- Saturday:** 1 John 3:7-10, John 1:35-42

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

A YOUNG ADULT GROUP:

The Young Adult group will be holding their **next meeting at 11:45 AM on Sunday, January 12th**. We will be discussing what it means to be a “Wise Man” in today’s world. Location TBD, because the Chapel & the Lennon Boardroom will be used for taking down the Christmas decorations. Here is an opportunity to get together, share some time in faith, and also to support each other in life’s journey, as we continue to grow and become the people that God wants us to be. If you are interested and would like to be part of this new adventure, please join us at our next meeting, or contact Richard Jones, Stephanie Leonor, Joe Gurney, or Edwin Heryak. Of course, you can also contact Father John at the chapel if that would be easier for you. God bless you.



THANK YOU:

A special note of “thanks” goes out to all of you who participated in our **Giving Tree** and our **Adopt a Family** programs. Many families, in addition to literally hundreds of gifts for children from the Giving Tree were gathered again this year. Thank you and God bless each of you for sharing your life with someone else. A special thank you to **Patty Szaniszlo, Tina Newton and Sharon Fedele** for all their hard work in coordinating these projects. Again, thanks to all who participated. As usual, your generosity in reaching out to others has been marvelous. Thank you. You are special.



HOPE:

Hope locates itself in the premises that we don’t know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act.

—Rebecca Solnit