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.

Epiphany of the Lord
January 3, 2016
Dear Parishioners,

Whew! We’ve made it through the holidays. At least I hope so, as I am writing this before Christmas but you are reading it after New Years. The weather has thrown the Christmas Spirit for a bit of a loss but I think kids, ice skaters, hockey players, snow boarders, cross country and downhill skiers, snowmobilers, snow plowers and ice sculptors are the only ones who are really complaining about it. Oh, also those who love building snow people, snow forts and having snow ball fights might be a little miffed as well. Kind of hard to be real sympathetic, isn’t it?

And now we stand at the threshold of a new calendar year, 2016. The image of the threshold is an important one for philosophers and theologians. They call it ‘liminal space’. Here is a quote I came across recently:

The word “liminal” comes from the Latin word limens, meaning literally, "threshold."

A liminal space, the place of transition, waiting, and not knowing is…

…a unique spiritual position where human beings hate to be but where the biblical God is always leading them. It is when you have left the tried and true, but have not yet been able to replace it with anything else. It is when you are finally out of the way. It is when you are between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. If you are not trained in how to hold anxiety, how to live with ambiguity, how to entrust and wait, you will run…anything to flee this terrible cloud of unknowing.

- Richard Rohr

These thresholds of waiting and not knowing our "next" are everywhere in life and they are inevitable. Each ushers in a new chapter of life, and each holds varying degrees of disruption. Whether it is graduation, a new job and career, being overwhelmed by debt, new homes, new cities, marriage, divorce, sickness, life stages (i.e., having kids), changing friendships - all will disorient us for a while, regardless of our awareness during the transition.

So the New Year inevitably brings with it the possibility of becoming ‘disoriented’ if we choose to let go of the past year(s) and open ourselves to what might be new. January 1st is an arbitrary date to mark a new year. We make resolutions so that we can begin again, set new goals, shed past failures and enter more willingly into the inevitable change that life always demands.

The Church starts the new year focused on Mary under the title of Mother of God. She is someone who faced incredible changes and was open to the movement of God in her life. Let her steady you if you feel disoriented. Let Mary encourage you if fear threatens to paralyze you. Individually, as a church and as world community we need to begin again, to set new goals, shed past failures and enter more willingly into the inevitable change that life always demands. Then the promise of peace on earth becomes a real possibility.

Happy New Year!
Fr. David

God, thank you for a new year. May everyone in our family be willing to begin anew with a clean slate. We know that you are always ready to forgive us. Help us to be willing to forgive ourselves and to forgive one another. As we begin a new year, remind us of our truest values and our deepest desires. Help us to live in the goodness that comes from doing what you want us to do. Help us to put aside anxiety about the future and the past, so that we might live in peace with you now, one day at a time.
Simple ways to share your faith with family and friends:
1. Make the sign of the cross as you pray before a meal in a restaurant.
2. Offer to help your neighbor even when it’s not convenient.
3. Invite friends to social functions of your parish.
4. Tactfully change the direction of the conversation at home or school when things take an uncharitable or gossipy turn.
5. Share a smile and a personal greeting with a stranger. Try to see Christ in everyone you encounter each day.
6. Wear a cross or other religious article. You might be surprised how many times this will start a conversation about your faith.
7. Forgive someone who has wronged you. Ask for forgiveness from someone you have wronged.
8. Devote a specific amount of time to your daily prayer life. It is impossible to maintain a relationship with anyone without communication. Prayer should be viewed as a dialogue with God, not a monologue. Make sure you allow time for quiet reflection and listen with your heart to what the Lord tells you.
9. Share your personal faith story of how God has worked in your life with a friend or family member.
10. Treat everyone you meet with dignity. No matter what they look like, how they try your patience, or how they speak, they are part of the Body of Christ.

Clothe THE NAKED

For our sake, Jesus was stripped naked when he was nailed to the cross. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. (John 19:23)

We clothe and shelter those who have become most vulnerable among us. As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

Practical Things To Do to Clothe the Naked

- Go through your drawers and closets and find good condition clothes and shoes to donate to those in need;
- Participate in programs that provide towels and linens for hospitals in distressed areas;
- Volunteer to work at a clothing drive or at a shelter where clothing is distributed to those in need;
- Donate to our parish collections:
  - New or gently used boots for men, women, and children at Sharing Connections
  - New or gently used infant, toddler and children’s winter clothing for St. Gall, our newest sharing parish

Items may be brought to the Parish Center.

"God forgives all, because if God does not forgive all, the world would not exist.”
From Pope Francis Morning Meditation 12.14.15

Taste of Alpha: Come and See What It’s About

What is Alpha? Alpha is an opportunity to explore the meaning of life in an informal, fun and friendly environment.

What Happens at Alpha? A typical evening consists of a meal, a short talk about the Christian faith, and small group discussion.

Who is Alpha For? Alpha is for everyone: no question is out of bounds and you are free to discuss as much or as little as you wish. We don’t assume any background knowledge of or belief in Christianity and everyone is welcome.

You are invited! Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2016
1:30—3:00pm or 7:00—8:30pm
Cardinal Meyer Center
3525 S Lake Park Ave, Chicago, IL 60653

Please register at 312-534-8107
Learn more about Alpha at alphausa.org/catholic

Alpha is a tool for the New Evangelization that is being used by thousands of Catholic parishes in over 70 countries around the world. Alpha creates an environment and opportunity for an encounter with Jesus. As Pope Francis likes to say, it’s a chance for “Jesus to find them.” Alpha is also used by other denominations, introducing people to the life-changing message of Jesus. More than 27 million people have experienced Alpha. It attracts many people, especially youth, who ask, "Is there more to life than this?"
**A Stranger and You Welcomed Me**

In the Gospel of Matthew (25:35) tells his disciples, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." The call to welcome the stranger plays an important role in the lives of faithful Christians and has a particularly central place for those of us who work in the migration field. The migrant, who moves from one country to another is truly a stranger in the midst. Often unfamiliar with the local tongue of the new country, not to mention its customs, the migrant needs the support of local communities so that she can better adjust to her new surroundings. National Migration Week 2016 picks up on the theme of welcome and, in doing so, calls on each of us to welcome the stranger among us.

Refugees are individuals who have fled their countries of origin and who meet the United Nations' criteria of having a "well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

Each year the President of the United States authorizes the admission of a certain number of refugees into the country. Before admission to the US, each refugee undergoes an extensive interviewing, screening and security clearance process.

Refugees, having suffered great loss, including loss of their homes, livelihoods, possessions and oftentimes families, need assistance starting over in a new country. Their initial needs are many: food, clothing, shelter, employment, English language training, and orientation to a new community and culture.

In partnership with its affiliates, MRS resettles approximately 30% of the refugees that arrive in the US each year.

The Catholic refugee resettlement network includes over 100 diocesan offices across the country and in Guam and Puerto Rico. Resettling refugees provides an extraordinary opportunity for countless Americans to take an active part in offering a caring and supportive environment for refugees as they begin new lives.

**Additional Resources on the USCCB website**

**European Refugee Crisis:** More than four million refugees have fled Syria and the surrounding region since 2010, with most taking shelter in surrounding countries. Many thousands have died in the process; countless others struggle with the daily ritual of just trying to survive. Learn more about what the bishops are doing to address this problem and how you can help. [http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis.cfm)

**Unlocking Human Dignity, Detention Report:** Please take an opportunity to read the recently released report by the USCCB and the Center for Migration Studies, which highlights the inequities at play in the migrant detention system and suggestions to make it more just and respectful of human dignity. [http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/upload/unlocking-human-dignity-report.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/upload/unlocking-human-dignity-report.pdf)
We know the refugees. They are us.

The evil visited upon Paris by Islamic State terrorists will never be fully understood. One hundred thirty innocent people lost their lives, and hundreds more were wounded. Today, their families languish in unspeakable suffering, as do the families of the 43 men and women who were also murdered by an ISIS suicide bomber in Beirut a few days earlier.

The entire world stands with the victims of these atrocities. We cannot know the pain of their loved ones. We can only pray for their healing, and that they may be comforted by God’s grace.

Still, even as we decry these heinous acts, we must guard against the temptation to give in to the fear and the panic that terrorists groups such as ISIS seek to sow. In the days since Paris, some Americans have called for us to break our promise to the global community that we would help resettle just ten thousand of the 4 million Syrian refugees who have had no choice but to flee their homes. These are mostly women and children who have risked their lives to escape unimaginable terror and persecution in the Syrian civil war and at the hands of the Islamic State.

Critics worry that some of these refugees might be ISIS agents. While the sincerity of their concern cannot be called into question, we must do our best to separate facts from fear—particularly when it could mean closing our door on thousands of innocent people who are running for their lives. America should not give ISIS the victory it wants.

Here are the facts. If you want to enter the United States, doing so as a refugee, is already the longest, most difficult process that exists. The security screening process for refugees is more stringent than the process for foreign tourists, students, businesspeople, or anyone else. It takes anywhere from 18 to 24 months or longer, and involves the FBI, Homeland Security, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Defense Department, and the State Department. Your biometric data is checked against law enforcement databases. You must pass a battery of interviews. And if you’re from Syria, the process is even more rigorous.

The United States has already found room for the nearly 800,000 refugees who have resettled here since 9/11. And since the Syrian conflict began in 2011, the United States has accepted about 2,000 Syrians. Over the entire period of refugee settlement since 2001, our security apparatus has kept us safe. Why, then, should we turn away people who pass such a rigorous process? How can we look the other way, as they huddle with their children in foreign lands with barely any shelter, clothing, or food?

We must not. These are our neighbors. They look to our nation, a city on a hill. They look to our cities, cities such as Chicago, which have been made stronger not in spite of our diversity—but precisely because of it. What would our community be without our Latino brothers and sisters, our Polish brothers and sisters, our Irish, Italian, German, Greek, Scandinavian, Filipino, Chinese, and Korean brothers and sisters? Out of many, we are one. That’s America. How many of us come from families who endured countless struggles to make a better life for their children and grandchildren? We, too, are refugees.

Catholics value our tradition of welcoming the stranger. We know what it is like to be strangers, unwelcome in this land. In 1855, for example, Chicago elected an anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic mayor. Near the end of the nineteenth century, some Chicagoans joined groups such as the American Protective Association, a secret society whose members promised never to hire Catholics who simply wanted to feed their families. This is our history, but it need not repeat itself.

On the very first trip of his papacy, Pope Francis visited refugees on the tiny island of Lampedusa, off the coast of Sicily. He spoke with and prayed for men, women, and children—Christian and Muslim alike—who had just made a dangerous journey across the sea in search of a better life. A year later, on World Refugee Day, Pope Francis said, “We believe that Jesus was a refugee, had to flee to save his life, with Saint Joseph and Mary.”

The season of Advent begins next Sunday. Christians across the globe will sing in anticipation of Jesus’ birth: O come, o come Emmanuel. “Emmanuel” is a uniquely powerful word. It means “God with us.” That was God’s choice—to be with us, to be born in a manger, down in the dust, soon to be on the run from certain death. But we, too, have a choice—and it’s not one we can run from. We can shun our neighbors in need, or we can embrace them. We can invite them to our table. And in doing so, uphold the values that founded the very nation we celebrate when we gather in thanksgiving to the God who chose to reveal himself to us as a refugee.

Used with permission. Archbishop Cupich’s op ed, “We know the refugees. They are us.” appeared in the Chicago SunTimes on Sunday, November 22, 2015.
Prayer

LOVING FATHER,

We pray that you provide your divine protection to all migrants, particularly those who are driven from their homes due to war or violence, who are uprooted due to environmental degradation and climate change, or whose material poverty pushes them to find opportunities elsewhere.

Show us how we might reach out to these vulnerable populations and help them to begin a new life in a new home.

Open our hearts, so that we may provide hospitality for all who come in search of refuge.

Give us the courage to welcome every stranger, as Christ in our midst.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Prayer for World Migration Day

“Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” Luke 6:36-38

Remembering Our Loved Ones

Lord, hold those serving our country in the military in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Sgt. Steven Foody, son of Tom & Sandra Foody
Specialist Sebastian Grabacki, son of David & Jan Grabacki
A Navy SEAL

If you have a loved one serving and would like us to include them in our prayers please call the Parish Center Office or email treyes@stjohnofthecross.org.

“Lumen requirunt lumine”. These evocative words from a liturgical hymn for the Epiphany speak of the experience of the Magi: following a light, they were searching for the Light. The star appearing in the sky kindled in their minds and in their hearts a light that moved them to seek the great Light of Christ. The Magi followed faithfully that light which filled their hearts, and they encountered the Lord.

The destiny of every person is symbolized in this journey of the Magi of the East: our life is a journey, illuminated by the lights which brighten our way, to find the fullness of truth and love which we Christians recognize in Jesus, the Light of the World.

Like the Magi, every person has two great “books” which provide the signs to guide this pilgrimage: the book of creation and the book of sacred Scripture. What is important is that we be attentive, alert, and listen to God who speaks to us, who always speaks to us. As the Psalm says in referring to the Law of the Lord: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105).

Listening to the Gospel, reading it, meditating on it and making it our spiritual nourishment especially allows us to encounter the living Jesus, to experience him and his love. Pope Francis

—Excerpted from Praying with America, Introduction by James Martin, SJ

May we faithfully follow the light God shines upon us.
May we willingly follow the Light of Christ
no matter what the personal cost.

Monday
1 John 3:22-4:6
Ps 2:7bc-8, 10-12a
Matt 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday
1 John 4:7-10
Ps 72:1-2, 3-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday
1 John 4:11-18
Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday
1 John 4:19-5:4
Ps 72:1-2, 14 and 15bc, 17
Luke 4:14-22a

Friday
1 John 5:5-13
Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday
1 John 5:14-21
Ps 149:1-2, 3-4, 5-6a and 9b
John 3:22-30

Sunday Baptism of the Lord
Isa 40:1-5, 9-11
Ps 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30
Titus 2:11-14

Background on the Gospel
The visit of the Magi occurs directly before the story of the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt. Matthew’s Gospel tells a version of Jesus’ birth that is different than the one in Luke. Of the actual birth of Jesus, Matthew tells us little more than, “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod . . .” The story of the census is found only in Luke’s Gospel, but we hear about the visit of the Magi only in Matthew’s Gospel.

We know little about the Magi. They come from the East and journey to Bethlehem, following an astrological sign, so we believe them to be astrologers. We assume that there were three Magi based upon the naming of their three gifts. The Gospel does not say how many Magi paid homage to Jesus. In Matthew’s Gospel, they represent the Gentiles’ search for a savior. Because the Magi represent the entire world, they also represent our search for Jesus.

We have come to consider the gifts they bring as a foreshadowing of Jesus’ role in salvation. We believe the meaning of the gifts to be Christological. Gold is presented as representative of Jesus’ kingship. Frankincense is a symbol of his divinity because priests burned the substance in the Temple. Myrrh, which was used to prepare the dead for burial, is offered in anticipation of Jesus’ death.

The word Epiphany means “manifestation” or “showing forth.” Historically several moments in Christ's early life and ministry have been celebrated as “epiphanies,” including his birth in Bethlehem, the visit of the Magi, his baptism by John, and his first miracle at Cana. Loyola Press

Living the Gospel
The “magi from the east” followed the light of a star. A light of heaven that guided them. A light of revelation that manifested “the newborn king of the Jews” to Gentile wise men. A light of warning that protected this Child from harm until his time had come. Like the magi, we must follow this light to the Light. Like the magi, we must offer “the child” homage—the gift of our very selves becomes the Light of his Presence. A Light that guides, reveals, warns. The light of the glory of God’s Presence is all around us. Unlike the magi, we don’t have to undertake an arduous journey. We need only to open our eyes to see through the darkness. We need only to allow God to guide us by word, sacrament, grace. We need only to heed the warning signs of those who might lead us astray, those who refuse to see the light, those who choose not to give God the humble homage of which God is worthy. The light that guides, reveals, and warns us is right among us. It is within us. We are the light that shines forth the Presence of God.

Because God’s generosity in offering us divine Presence is so lavish, our response must be just as lavish. God has given us great treasures, two of which are mystery so deep: the gift of the only-begotten Son as the divine Presence that dwells among and within us, and the gift of the own selves being members of Christ’s Body with the power to manifest that divine Presence for others. Our response can be no less than the total gift of ourselves. ©Living Liturgy
Commissioning of Communion Ministers and Ministers of Care

Living Stations of the Cross

Evening of Reflection for Lectors

“In order to be a good lector, I do believe I have to be a good listener. I aim to listen to the nuances of God’s story that are to be shared with the universal church—how remarkable that a universal message can be proclaimed in a way that perhaps touches someone personally.”

Kristen Ras
SJC Lector

Confirmation

First Communion

Children’s Liturgy of the Word

Parish Mission

Fr. Joe’s 60th Anniversary of Priesthood

2014-2015

RCIA

2015-2016
**Parish News**

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**Gluten-Free Communion Hosts**

Because Communion bread must be made of only wheat and water with "sufficient gluten to attain the confection of bread," a growing number of the Catholic faithful with celiac disease are unable to receive Communion under the species of bread alone. As such there is an accompanying sense of loss over the inability to receive the Body of Christ in the form of bread as many have done since childhood. Parents of children with celiac disorder also struggle with the reality that their children are unable to receive under both species.

St. John of the Cross Parish offers gluten-free hosts to address the needs of those affected by celiac disease or other conditions. If you wish to receive a gluten-free host, before mass begins, go to the sacristy and tell the high school sacristan that you need a gluten-free host. It is important that you tell only the sacristan, and not the priest or an usher as that causes confusion for how many may be needed. (If you are unsure who the sacristan is, by all means ask the priest or an usher to help you identify them.) The unconsecrated hosts will be brought up during the gifts procession and consecrated during the Mass. When it is time to receive communion, we ask that you go to the presiding priest and say "gluten-free" clearly and audibly for the priest to hear. Please do this every time, even when you think the priest knows who you are. If you have a child who will be receiving gluten-free please make sure that they also speak clearly as well.

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**New Year, New Job!**

Interfaith Career Network invites you to join us on Thursday, January 7 from 7-9 pm at St. Cletus. Get re-energized with speaker, Conor Cunneen, who will cover how to conduct an integrated job search, how to properly prepare for your interview, improving your state of mind and conducting company research. He will offer direction to help you stay sane, motivated and productive in your job search.

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**Minister of Care Training**

Ministers of Care bring Holy Communion to our parish homebound and those in area hospitals. The next training session at the Carmelite Center in Darien will be Saturday, January 23 & 30 from 9am to 1pm. SJC covers the cost of training. Call Steve Weigand in the Parish Center to learn more.

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**Parish Directories**

New parish directories are available in the Parish Center office.

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**SJC Mom’s Club**

Save the dates for January! We would love to see some new faces along with the familiar ones at our next gatherings. All are welcome!

- Friday, January 8th 9:15-10:30am Parish Center
- Tuesday, January 12th 7:30pm Kickoff Cocktail Party for Moms!!!
- Friday, January 22nd 9:15-10:30am (babysitting provided!) Parish Center

Sign up for more information by emailing sjcmomscub@gmail.com.

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**New Little Rock Scripture Study Begins Tomorrow 1.4.16**

**Letters from Prison**

In these letters of encouragement, correction, and instruction written from prison, Paul lovingly inspires and challenges us to greater discipleship. In Philippians, Paul calls on the community to rejoice even when difficulties and struggles abound in life. Paul offers Jesus himself as the prime model to follow in his humility and obedience. Colossians and Ephesians have a number of striking similarities, including the depiction of the Church as the body of Christ with Christ as the head. Colossians, however, contains a great hymn of praise to Christ as the image of the invisible God, while Ephesians describes the Church as the spotless bride of Christ. Materials fee $15. No advance registration. Just come. 10 sessions on Mondays at 1pm.

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**The Call of the Holy Spirit to Consider a Vocation** may sometimes be a gentle voice stirring the soul or a personal longing in our hearts. It may be the urging of friends or spouses. It can also find birth in the invitation of pastors, deacons and parish leaders to pursue such an inquiry. No matter the source of our questions, each of us needs to be affirmed and encouraged to bring a call to a vocation to prayerful discernment. The Institute for Diaconal Studies (IDS) invites all men who feel the gentle nudge of the Holy Spirit to attend an Exploring the Diaconate session. It is a time to pray, discuss, and learn more about the discernment process and the formation program that aspirants and candidates pursue. Please join us, with your wives, if married, as we explore the potential of a vocation, engage in dialogue and pray in search of the next step. All are welcome to attend any of the sessions. No registration required.

Jan. 14, 2016 University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, 7:30-8:30 pm Location: Prist Center (201P) (847) 837-4564
Jan. 26, 2016 Queen of the Rosary, Elk Grove 7:30-8:30 pm Location: Rectory (847) 437-0403
For more information contact Fr. David Dowdle or Fr. Bill Vollmer. Application Deadline for 2016-2017 Aspirancy Path is May 1, 2016.

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Kairos Retreat
Applications for Kairos 22 will be available on the Crossroads website, www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/retreats, beginning Friday, January 8. The retreat for Juniors and Seniors will be held March 10-13.

Identity Retreat
Kudos and many thanks go to our teen and adult leaders for guiding our Frosh/Soph Identity Retreat this weekend. If you know them please thank them for their leadership: Abby King, Elizabeth Januska, Michael Salina, Laura Knowles, George Zurowski, TJ Williams, Norah Scannell, Katie Wojtowitz, Aaron Bubis, and Jim Messina.

Please keep the group in your prayers as they play, pray, build friendships and reflect over this weekend!

Crossroads Leadership Team will meet next Sunday, January 10 at 10am for their update meeting. This gathering allows all of the teen and adult coordinators of our ministry to connect and grow together. We share ideas, build community and serve together to make our youth ministry happen. We have invited a few future teen leaders to join us next week to get a feel for how they may begin shadowing and then take over as leaders next school year.

If you have wondered about how you could serve with our ministry, this would be a great chance for you to hear more and see us in action. Contact Katie Hayes at 708-246-4404 if you would like to join us.

Attention All 7th & 8th Grade Students: Sign up on our parish website home page to be a Student Usher for the Annual Catholic Appeal at all Masses on the weekends of January 30-31 and February 6-7. 12 students are needed at each Mass. Attend one fifteen minute practice in church on Tuesdays, January 26 or February 2 from 3:45-4pm. Helping as a Student Usher will count as 2 Service Experiences. Attending the Practice will count as 1 Experience.
Through the wonderful generosity of a parishioner, 150 Christmas hams were delivered the week before Christmas to families at Mary Queen of Heaven, Precious Blood, St. Thaddeus, St. Gall and Midwest Workers Association.

**CSJ School and Tutors on Wheels Volunteer Training**

Volunteers are needed for ESL (English as a Second Language) one on one tutoring with adult students for one hour sessions once a week during the school year. Tutoring is done at Woodridge Resource Center, Downers Grove Library and St. Barbara’s in Brookfield on various morning and evening weekdays.

Volunteers must attend two training days from 9am to 3pm on Saturday, January 9 and January 16 at the CSJ Motherhouse at 1515 Ogden Avenue by Nazareth Academy. Volunteers must be 18 years or older. Call Kathy Haas at 630-248-9594 with questions.

Rather than compose elaborate resolutions for the year to come, simply do, in some small way, what you intend to do all year:

- Say “Thank you” to at least one person.
- Make one healthy choice about your body—food or drink or rest or motion.
- Do one generous act, big or small.
- Say “yes” to the day’s gifts.
- Get quiet for five minutes, just to be still.
- Let one person know that you appreciate him or her.
- Do one creative act, big or small.
- Allow yourself to consider what someone else is going through.
- Do one thing well and with full attention.
- Open your arms—and your heart—to God.

If you did it today, you can do it again, and again.

Vinita Hampton Wright
We all have our faults, weaknesses, places where we short-circuit morally, dark spots, secret and not-so-secret addictions. When we’re honest, we know how universally true are St. Paul’s words when he writes: “The good thing I want to do, I never do; the evil thing that I do not want to do — that is what I do.” None of us are whole, saints through and through. There’s always something we are struggling with: anger, bitterness, vengefulness, selfishness, laziness, or lack of self-control (major or minor) with sex, food, drink, or entertainment.

And for most of us, experience has taught us that the bad habits we have are very difficult to break. Indeed, many times we cannot even find the heart to want to break them, so deep have they become engrained in us. We bring the same things to our confessor year after year, just as we break the same New Year’s resolutions year after year. And each year we tell our doctor that this year will finally be the year that we lose weight, exercise more, and stick to a healthier diet. Somehow it never works because our habits, as Aristotle said, become our second nature — and nature is not easily changed.

So how do we change? How do we move beyond deeply engrained bad habits?

John of the Cross, the Spanish mystic, suggests two paths that can be helpful. Both take seriously our human weakness and the unyielding strength of a bad habit inside us.

His first advice is this: It is very hard to root out a bad habit by trying to attack it directly. When we do this we often end up unhealthily focused on the habit itself, discouraged by its intransigence, and in danger of worsening its effect in our lives. The better strategy is to “cauterize” our bad habits (his words) by focusing on what is good in our lives and growing our virtues to the point where they “burn out” our bad habits.

That’s more than a pious metaphor; it’s a strategy for health. It works this way: Imagine, for example, that you are struggling with pettiness and anger whenever you feel slighted. Every sincere resolution in the world has not been able to stop you from giving in to that inclination and your confessor or spiritual director, instead of having you focus on breaking that habit, has you focus instead on further developing one of your moral strengths; for example, your generosity. The more you grow in generosity, the more too will your heart grow in size and goodness until you reach a point in your life where there simply won’t be room in your life for pettiness and childish sulking. Your generosity will eventually cauterize your pettiness. The same strategy can be helpful for every one of our faults and addictions.

John’s second counsel is this: Try to set the instinct that lies behind your bad habit into a higher love. What’s meant by that?

We begin to set an instinct behind a bad habit into a higher love by asking ourselves the question: Why? Why, ultimately, am I drawn this way? Why, ultimately, am I feeling this vengefulness, this pettiness, this anger, this lust, this laziness, or this need to eat or drink excessively? In what, ultimately, is this propensity rooted?

The answer might surprise us. Invariably the deepest root undergirding the propensity for a bad habit is love. The instinct is almost always rooted in love. Just analyze your daydreams. There we are mostly noble, good, generous, big-hearted, whole — and loving, even when in our actual lives we are sometimes petty, bitter, selfish, self-indulgent, and nursing various addictions. We have these bad attitudes and habits not because we aren’t motivated by love but because, at this particular place, our love is disordered, wounded, bitter, undisciplined, or self-centered. But it’s still love, the best of all energies, the very fire of the image and likeness of God within us.

And so we move to uproot a bad habit in our lives by, first of all, recognizing and honoring the energy that lies beneath it and inflames it. Then we need to reset this energy into a higher framework of love, a wider, less selfish, more respectful, more-ordered perspective. And that’s a very different thing than denigration or repression of that instinct. When we denigrate or repress an instinct this only increases its power in us and, most often, allows it to wreak even a worse havoc in our lives. Moreover, when we denigrate or repress an instinct that’s undergirding a bad habit we are in fact acting against our own health and we will then struggle, perhaps only unconsciously but without exception, to even find the heart to eradicate that bad habit. Energy must be honored, even as we struggle to discipline it and set into a healthier framework.

So how do we finally break our bad habits? We do so by honoring the energies that enflame them and by reordering those energies into a higher love.

RONROLHEISER,OMI
Women's Club Annual Dine & Demo Night

Thursday January 21, 2016
7:00-9:00pm
Parish Center
Welcoming back Dee Dee Saracco of gravy*

for a another mouthwatering evening to help you host a “Piece of Cake” Dinner Party!

Dee Dee will also have containers available for purchase at this event and will be donating 10% back to the Women’s Club for anything purchased or ordered Thursday evening. Her specialties include: Vodka Sauce, Bolognese Sauce, Turkey Chili, Chicken Noodle Soup, & Sausage Bread

Wine-pairing presentation hosted

Mécénat Bistro and Wine Shop will also be donating 10% per bottle / 15% per case back to the Women’s Club for anything purchased at the event through Sunday 1/24.

It's sure to be an another enjoyable evening with GOOD FOOD, GOOD WINE & GOOD

RSVP by January 19th to the Parish Center
Cash or check payable to SJC Women’s Club
$15.00 per person

NAME: __________________________________________
NUMBER OF GUESTS:______ GLUTEN FREE?:__________
ADDRESS: ________________________________________
E-MAIL: __________________________________________
PHONE: __________________________________________
AMOUNT ENCLOSED $__________

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT DENISE SCHULLO AT DEEC7@HOTMAIL.COM OR JEANNE CONKIN AT JCONKIN1009@YAHOO.COM

SJC Trivia Night V
Saturday, January 30th
SJC Parish School Gym
Doors open at 6:00 PM
Games begin at 6:45 PM

All are invited to come to Trivia Night! It’s fun and it’s a great way to meet fellow parishioners. Here’s how it works:

Organize a group of up to 10 people (ages 21 and over only) to form your team. Name your team.

Brush up on your trivia knowledge.

Send in your table reservation with a check(s) totaling $200 for each table of ten; (note: cost per table is $200 even if there are less than ten participants on your team). Make all checks payable to St. John of the Cross. Seating is limited, so RSVP soon.

Drop an envelope with the reservation form including the name of your team, captain and team member names along with your check(s) to SJC Parish Center attention Men’s Club.

That night, bring your own appetizers, food and your favorite beverages. Alcoholic beverages are permitted.

Winning Team will receive fabulous prizes and many accolades!

Questions? Dan Montgomery @ 312.952.1435 or John Cisek @ 312.327.1295. More info on the Parish website.
Why Does Human Life Matter?

Society clearly operates on the premise that there is something special, unique and noble in being human. Indeed, we all seem to have an innate conviction that life does matter.

If you think about it, this is surprising for those who do not believe in God and believe that we are all just random accidents, whose life is not a result of thought or design, but rather of blind chance. Although the secular, humanist view has no answer for why human life matters and is unable to explain why life matters, atheists and agnostics nevertheless live their lives on the assumption that it does and that there is a reason for their being. This is surprising because one cannot have it both ways. Either God made us and assigned a special value to us, or God did not make us and human life would appear to be both worthless and meaningless.

Conversely, Christians can easily explain why life matters. We know that although humans, in terms of physical make-up, are roughly 95% identical to Chimpanzees, we are spiritually superior, because of the simple fact that God made us in His image. As a result, the value of one human soul transcends the value of the material universe. Indeed, we believe that one human soul is more valuable than all the great masterpieces, all the jewels and all the precious metals the world has ever known.

This is why we place a unique value upon all human life. This is why the humanity of every unborn child qualifies that child for love and protection. This is why every single aborted baby is a terrible tragedy.

Jesus was born into a harsh world, where Herod was doing the unthinkable: killing babies. Is there any doubt that our world today needs Jesus to come and dwell among us?

As a new year begins, let us resolve to be a more effective and dedicated instrument of Jesus. Let us do more to promote love and peace. Let us do more to help moms turn the unplanned into a loving plan that embraces innocent life. Let us do more to change our culture of death. Respect Life Office.

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous, by first recognizing honestly all the graces that I have been given in this life, including life itself.
Mass Intentions

**Monday, January 4**  St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
7:45am Thomas Albertson; Laurie Benz

**Tuesday, January 5**  St. John Neumann
7:45am Hal McReynolds; Frank Piszczor

**Wednesday, January 6**  St. André Bessette
7:45am Michael Delaney; Jack Robie

**Thursday, January 7**  St. Raymond Penyafort
7:45am Dave Woodward; Guido Guy Pertile

**Friday, January 8**  Christmas Weekday
7:45am Matthew Flood & Jorge Paez; Guido Guy Pertile

**Saturday, January 9**  Christmas Weekday
8:00am Cecelia Farmar; John McCarron
5:00pm David Bock; Robert Plechaty

**Sunday, January 10**  Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
7:30am Brigitte S. Ruby; Bob Santucci
9:00am Michael Athy; Harry W. Colmery, Jr.
10:45am Deceased members of Budreck & Hecko families; John Szczerba
12:15pm Deceased members of the Athy family; Patricia Cebula
5:00pm Sylvester Ptak; Bill Delaney

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**Pray for our Sick**

Jean Allen
Guido Arquilla
Therese Bonneau
Gloria Deizman
Mildred Fitzgerald
John Gazdacka
Don Heldmann
Karen Hult
Lynn Jeffery
Don King
JoAnn Klein
George Kojima
Carol Martin
John Martin
Bobbie Misiora
Dan Mulcahy
Alice Myers
Roberta Ohlquist
Maria Olson
Marian Pascale
Steve Pechous
Maurice Redmand
Keri Rohr
Maureen Soules
Michael Sullivan
Ron Tamer
Theresa Vana
Robert VanWhye
Don Vollmer

**Pray for Our Beloved Dead**

Ann Sostek, mother of Karen Kannry and Kenneth, grandmother of Scott, Tracy, & Laura, great grandmother of Molly

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Father in heaven, Lord of all beginnings, hear the prayers we make for ourselves and for all members of our human family.

May this new year be a new beginning for each one of us, a new opportunity for us to welcome your grace and peace into our lives.

May your gift of the new year be a time of our re-creation in your life and love.

In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.

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Archdiocesan Mass for Life

Saturday, January 9, 2016, at 5 p.m.

St. Cletus

600 W. 55th St. La Grange, IL
(708) 352-6209
www.stcletusparish.com

We remember the innocent children lost and the women, men and families hurt through abortion as we reflect on the 43rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade.

Join Archbishop Blase Cupich and priests from across the Archdiocese of Chicago for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as we petition the Lord to transform our society from a culture of death into a culture of life.

"Each of us is Willed, each of us is Loved, each of us is Necessary."
~Pope Benedict XVI

Archbishop Blase Cupich,
Principal Celebrant

Sponsored by St. Cletus Parish and the Respect Life Office.