



# 1<sup>ST</sup> SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

January 2017

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## FOLLOW THE STAR: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE NEW YEAR

As you cross this threshold into the New Year, what star beckons you in the night? How might you own your journey more deeply in the coming year?

*By Christine Valters Paintner*

The gospel text for the Feast of Epiphany offers a powerful invitation to us as we enter a new year and cross another threshold of time. The last few lines of the Matthew text offer us a template for an archetypal journey, that is, one we are all invited to make. We find ourselves in this text if we've ever longed to follow an inkling into the long night, knowing there were gifts awaiting us.

1) Follow the star to where it leads. The story begins with the magi calling upon the grace of night vision. Navigation in ancient times was largely by stars and constellations. Travelers had to know the night sky and trust the path through darkness and unknowing. As you cross this threshold into the New Year, what star beckons you in the night? As you stand under a black sky of unknowing, which star is shimmering? The star might be a particular practice, which when you commit to following it, will guide you in a holy direction.

2) Embark on the journey, however long or difficult. Herod gathers all his chief priests and scribes to find out more about this holy birth. Instead of searching out for himself, he sends the magi on his behalf. While Herod seeks outside advice and send others, the magi make the journey for themselves. Where are you tempted to trust others to make the journey for you, perhaps in reading books about the spiritual journey but never practicing yourself? How might you own your journey more deeply in the coming year?

3) Open yourself to wonder along the way. The scriptures tell us the magi were "overjoyed at seeing the star." I like to imagine them practicing this kind of divine wonderment all along the journey there. Moments that spoke to the sacred call. When we lose our sense of wonder our hearts become hardened and cynical, and we forget to believe in magical possibilities. As you enter into a new cycle of the earth's turning, how might you embrace the gift of wonder? What practices open your heart?

4) Bow down at the holy encounters in messy places. When the magi enter the messy, earthy place of the manger, it says they bow down and prostrate themselves. Prostration is an act of humility and honor, as well as full-body connection with the earth. As you encounter the sacred in the most ordinary of places, how might you express this embodied appreciation and honor?

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# OVERVIEW FOR THE MONTH

*www.catholicculture.org*

The month of January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus, which is celebrated on January 3.

In the first part of January we continue to rejoice and celebrate Christ's coming at Bethlehem and in our hearts. We have the wonderful feasts of Mary, Mother of God, where we honor Mary's highest title, and then we follow the Magi to the crib as they bring their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh on Epiphany. Finally we reach the culmination of this season with the Baptism of

Our Lord by St. John the Baptist. With a touch of sadness we take down our decorations and enter into the liturgical period known as Ordinary Time where we will devote ourselves to the mystery of Christ in its entirety. ☐

## FEASTS FOR JANUARY

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of January are:

- 1 Mary, Mother of God, Solemnity
- 2 Basil the Great; Gregory Nazianzen, Memorial
- 3 Most Holy Name of Jesus, Opt. Mem.
- 4 Elizabeth Ann Seton (USA and CAN), Memorial
- 5 John Neumann, Memorial
- 6 Andre Bessette, Opt. Mem.
- 7 Raymond of Penafort, Opt. Mem.
- 8 Epiphany of the Lord, Solemnity
- 9 Baptism of the Lord, Feast
- 13 Hilary; Kentigern (Scotland), Opt. Mem.
- 15 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 17 Anthony, Memorial
- 20 Fabian; Sebastian, Opt. Mem.
- 21 Agnes, Memorial
- 22 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday

- 23 Vincent of Saragossa, Opt. Mem.
- 24 Francis de Sales; Our Lady of Peace, Memorial
- 25 Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, Feast
- 26 Timothy and Titus, Memorial
- 27 Angela Merici, Opt. Mem.
- 28 Thomas Aquinas, Memorial
- 29 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 31 John Bosco, Memorial

This month of January, 2017, there are no feasts that are superseded by the Sunday liturgy. ☐

### OUR CENACLE CORNER

*Seeking a deeper relationship with God  
through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures*

#### **BLESSINGS OF GOD**

BOOK OF NUMBERS 6: 22-27

#### **THE ONE WHO IS COMING**

JOHN 1 :1-18

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

## HOLY MASS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD XLVIII WORLD DAY OF PEACE

Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis  
Vatican Basilica | Thursday, 1st January 2015

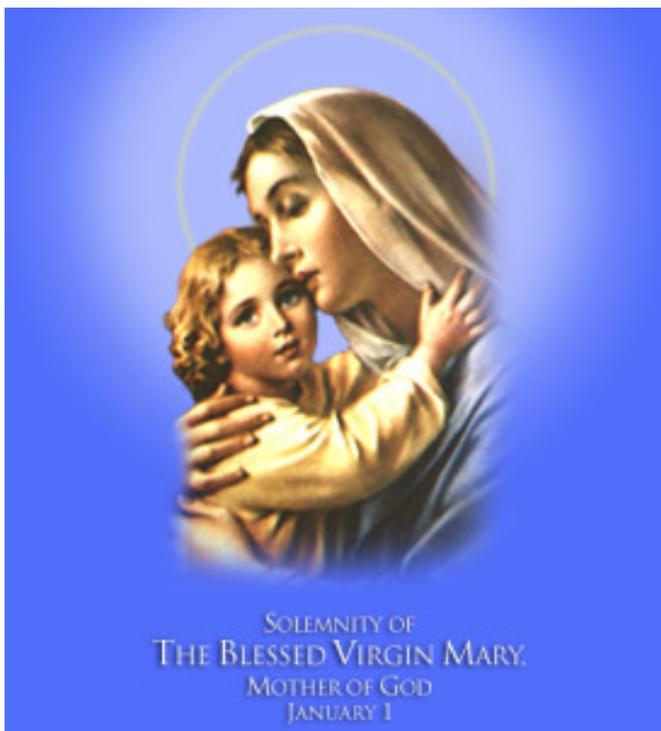
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Today we are reminded of the words of blessing which Elizabeth spoke to the Virgin Mary: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" (Lk 1:42-43).

This blessing is in continuity with the priestly blessing which God had given to Moses to be passed on to Aaron and to all the people: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Num. 6:24-26). In celebrating the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, the Holy Mother of God, the Church reminds us that Mary, more than anyone else, received this blessing. In her the blessing finds fulfilment, for no other creature has ever seen God's face shine upon it as did Mary. She gave a human face to the eternal Word, so that all of us can contemplate him.

In addition to contemplating God's face, we can also praise him and glorify him, like the shepherds who came away from Bethlehem with a song of thanksgiving after seeing the Child and his young mother (cf. Lk 2:16). The two were together, just as they were together at Calvary, because Christ and his mother are inseparable: there is a very close relationship between them, as there is between every child and his or her mother. The flesh (*caro*) of Christ – which, as Tertullian says, is the hinge (*cardo*) of our salvation – was knit together in the womb of Mary (cf. Ps 139:13). This inseparability is also clear from the fact that Mary, chosen beforehand to be the Mother of the Redeemer, shared intimately in his entire mission, remaining at her Son's side to the end on Calvary.

faith, nourished by her experience as a mother and by her close relationship with her Son. The Blessed Virgin is the woman of faith who made room for God in her heart and in her plans; she is the believer capable of perceiving in the gift of her Son the coming of that "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4) in which God, by choosing the humble path of human existence, entered personally into the history of salvation. That is why Jesus cannot be understood without his Mother.



Likewise inseparable are Christ and the Church – because the Church and Mary are always together and this is precisely the mystery of womanhood in the ecclesial community – and the salvation accomplished by Jesus cannot be understood without appreciating the motherhood of the Church. To separate Jesus from the Church would introduce an "absurd dichotomy", as Blessed Paul VI wrote (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 16). It is not possible "to love Christ but without the Church, to listen to Christ but not the Church, to belong to Christ but outside the Church" (*ibid.*). For the Church is herself God's great family,

which brings Christ to us. Our faith is not an abstract doctrine or philosophy, but a vital and full relationship with a person: Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God who became man, was put to death, rose from the dead to save us, and is now living in our midst. Where can we encounter him? We encounter him in the Church, in our hierarchical, Holy Mother Church. It is the Church which says today: "Behold the Lamb of God"; it is the Church, which proclaims him; it is in the Church that Jesus continues to accomplish his acts of grace which are the sacraments.

Mary is so closely united to Jesus because she received from him the knowledge of the heart, the knowledge of

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## EXPLANATION OF EPIPHANY, OR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD

*Excerpted from With Christ Through the Year, Rev. Bernard Strasser, O.S.B.  
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The feast of manifestation, or Epiphany, is traditionally celebrated the 12th day after Christmas, January 6th. In the dioceses of the United States this feast has been moved to the Sunday between January 2 and January 8. Here is a wonderful explanation of this beautiful feast.

The Epiphany is the feast of the manifestation of the majesty and divinity of the newborn Savior. As early as the third century, the Eastern Church, in celebrating the birth of the Redeemer, viewed it primarily as the manifestation of God to man. Hence the name Epiphany, which

means manifestation, was given to the feast. Toward the end of the fourth century, as the feast gradually came to be known and celebrated in the West, the adoration of the Christ-Child by the Magi or Wise Men was stressed. Soon these sages were looked upon as the Three Kings. In the West Christ's birthday had already been celebrated for some time on December 25. But with this feast was associated all the poverty and helplessness of the cave of Bethlehem;

Mary and Joseph watched beside the crib in poverty, and the shepherds that came to offer their humble worship were equally poor. This aspect was lost sight of in the Feast of the Epiphany. It is true that the Magi found a poor, weak child, attended by poor parents. But through their faith they recognized and acknowledged the helpless Infant as the Redeemer and King of the world, and as such they adored Him.

In the Feast of Christmas, Christ is shown as man to a few of His chosen souls; in the Feast of the Epiphany, on the other hand, He appears to the whole world as God. In order to strengthen and reinforce this divine manifestation to the Magi, the Church commemorates on this feast two other incidents, both of which strongly

testify to the divinity of Christ: His baptism in the Jordan and the first miracle at the marriage feast in Cana. In this way, the Redeemer, whose coming was known imperfectly at Christmas, is made known to the whole world. While the Mass of the feast concentrates entirely on the coming of the Magi and their adoration of their new-found King, the Breviary abounds in references to the two other "manifestations."

The antiphon for the Magnificat of second Vespers summarizes the threefold significance of the day in words

that are unmistakable: "Three miracles glorify this sacred day: today the star led the Magi to the crib; today at the wedding feast water was changed into wine; today Christ willed that John baptize Him in the Jordan so that He might become our Redeemer, Alleluia." Thus we have three supernatural interventions: the star that guided the Magi from the East, the wine miraculously brought into being from water, and the voice of the Father ringing out from the heavens, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Various interpretations have been given for the gifts which the Magi offered the Christ-

Child. In the responses at Matins the Church says that the gold represents kingly power, incense the great High Priest, and myrrh the burial of the Lord; and so she depicts the Wise Men offering their gifts to Christ is His threefold character of King, High Priest, and Man. In his homily for the third day within the octave, St. Gregory looks at the gifts from the viewpoint of the givers, and so sees in the gold, wisdom; in the incense, the power of prayer; and in the myrrh, the mortification of the flesh. Both interpretations are worthy of consideration, and some little reflection on them should prompt us to bring all the powers of our intellect to our King, the incense of our prayers to our great High Priest, and the myrrh of our sufferings and labors to our Man-God.



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# GOD TOUCHED ME

## WALKING IN THE WAY WITH GOD

*"AND YOUR EARS SHALL HEAR A WORD BEHIND YOU THAT SAY 'THIS IS THE WAY, WALK IN IT .....'*

*- ISAIAH 30:20*

*By RR*

Peace and all-good!

It is my privilege and honor to share with you my personal journey as a "walking vocation message" and how a "lost sheep" in me does make appointment with God.

I am currently a major seminarian of the Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan (Oriental Mindoro) with its theological formation house at Saint Augustine Major Seminary (SASMA) located at Tagaytay City, Philippines. Being a seminarian is not that easy. Also, to be a seminarian is to be an Alter Christus, to be Christ-like, so to speak. Every day is a calling of witnessing to Christ and to His Church, and of cultivating gentle and humble heart in the very example of the Good Shepherd.

To glean at my past, perhaps, would not favor me to continue the next level of my formation in Theology. In 2006, after obtaining my Bachelor's Degree major in Philosophy, I left the seminary almost looking and moving forward that my vocation to the priesthood was not meant for me. I ventured in a corporate world as a Human Resource staff with a corporation in Ortigas Center, Pasig City for almost a year. I took up Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education at the National Teachers College in Manila for my licentiate in teaching. I taught six years in Catholic schools in Metro Manila: the Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila School and Stella Maris College in Cubao, Quezon City. I also taught as a part-time teacher at the Eastern Mindoro College in my hometown in Oriental Mindoro. For seven long years, without knowing it, I spent my life and service in the academe.

But human as I am, I failed myself for being self-centered and for having an "all-knowing" attitude, that is, always ready to justify whatever actions I make. For many years, I spent my life at the dark, forgetting that Christ is my co-journeyer, and assuming that with my potentials, I would survive. I almost forgot where I came from and my relationships with my loved ones were deeply affected. I never gave my 100% financial and moral support to my family, not even a portion of it. But this was never too late. I started looking after my parents' and siblings' welfare after one day I visited

them in the province, discovering that their situation is of great need of my help. I would say, but then again, they are my family, and without them, I am nothing. However, I entered into an affair with a married woman and with other women, one at a time, which actually aggravated my situation more. Good thing I did not have any children. Indulging in my gloomy past, I remember St. Augustine praying before God and saying, "Lord, make me chaste, but not this time... not now" which reflected my uncharted path. In that prayer, I was taught and was able to discover the wisdom of God, until such time, I embraced a total conversion asking Him for my "second virginity". I was also engaged into lying about the truth and vices which even my family, friends and other relatives did not know anything about it.

Being able to realize all my obscure deeds in the past, I have come to feel immensely sorry for all that wrong things I have done which also include all the failures and disappointment I have caused them. Despite everything, God's providential love is at work. Without reservations, without any sort of judgment, He embraced me wholeheartedly. He accepted me like a "father to his prodigal son." For me, total conversion and genuine intention could be purified by facing the consequences of what I have done in the past and doing goodness in return. Above all, for the sake of peace and reconciliation, I started approaching people whom I have caused pain and frustration, or in other words, to have a graceful exit.

Humility is no substitute for the truth. Year 2012 was my moment of grasping the real meaning of "second chance." As I entered into a renewal and reconnection with the Supreme Being, I have begun to exercise my profound faith and generosity. God's generosity is beyond time and measure so I begin with freeing myself from sins by confession and spiritual direction. In the past, the lost sheep did not make appointment, but now, I ask God for an appointment, that is to fully allow Him to enter my life.

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# SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

## SPIRITUAL WARFARE

*From Catholic Bible 101  
By 21<sup>st</sup> Century Catholic Apologetics for Mary's Spiritual Warfare*

Spiritual Warfare! Most people today would laugh at that very term. Why? Because most "enlightened" people today don't even believe in the existence of angels and demons fighting all around us for the prize of our souls. However, spiritual combat between angels and demons for our souls is as much a reality as the existence of the Grand Canyon is. One side wants to win the battle so that they can drag us down to hell for eternal damnation, and the other side wants to win to take us up to heaven for eternal bliss and happiness. The demons are definitely an enemy to take seriously.

So what does the average person just going about their business every day do to combat the evil ones? **Humility** for starters. Humility is NOT going around saying "I'm no good". Humility is merely putting God first in every aspect of your life, everyone else in the world second, and then putting yourself third. It's kind of like baseball - If you want to go home and score, you must be on third! The devil's great sin was pride - he wanted to be God. Humility is the opposite of pride, and it counteracts the devil every time. Submitting to God's will in everything, even suffering, is humility to the max. Mary said, "Be it done to me according to thy will." Jesus said, "Not as I will, but as thou will." Remember, Heaven is full of people who said "Thy will be done", while hell is full of people who said "My will be done".

The next thing to do is to constantly be in the This means frequent confession, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and going to daily Mass as much as possible, in order to receive the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. It also means prayer, lots of prayer, every day. This can be done silently when driving or at work, or it can mean saying the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. It only takes 20 minutes to say one set of mysteries of the Rosary, and the heavenly protection it gives us is immense. By invoking the very humble Blessed Virgin Mary as your protector, the demons can't get in through our senses as easily as they could before. Whatever your particular shortcoming is, like gluttony, lust, anger, greed, envy, pride, or sloth, pray that God will send you the grace to overcome it. Then pray for the grace to accept those graces, and not throw them away! And once God realizes that you are serious in your love for Him, and not just paying him lukewarm lip service, your vice will just disappear one day, and you won't even want to go back to it!

**Almsgiving and helping the poor** are also great ways to keep the devil at bay. Anything done from the heart, especially when it's sacrificial, confounds him. Why? Because he doesn't have a heart, and he can't understand it. He has an immense intellect, and can win a battle of wits with us every time, but he always loses the battle whenever we do something for the less fortunate, from the heart.

It is also VERY helpful to **keep a lot of blessed objects** in your house, like a crucifix and a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially in your bedroom. Satan loves to come at night in the dark and scare us in our dreams, or even with sleep paralysis. Have some holy water and blessed salt in your house, and occasionally sprinkle them around your rooms. There is nothing magic about the salt and the water, but the blessing on the salt and the water has immense spiritual effects. Have a Mass said in your house, if possible, especially if you move into an old house. And always say the prayer to St. Michael, whose very name means "Who is like God". Prayers to Mary and St. Joseph are also very beneficial to fight Satan.

So get with the program! Don't let the devil play you for a sap. He will show you a good time for a while, but always, always, later on he will depress you, make your life miserable, and take you out one day. What good does it do to get away with sin 1 time, 100 times, or a 1000 times, if, in the end, he gets your soul in hell? BUT, if you latch on to the Blessed Virgin Mary TODAY, the one human he could never touch, he will be more afraid of you than you will ever be of him. He's a coward, and only goes after the prideful, weak, and ignorant. So get spiritually strong, and start saying that rosary! The first words of Gabriel to Mary - "Hail Full of Grace" - marked the changing of the Old Testament (before Jesus) to the New Testament (Jesus comes in the flesh to the world). By repeating these words, we are commemorating this momentous event in world history. And don't forget, the Hail Mary prayer not only honors Mary, but Jesus as well ("blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus").

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# SPIRITUAL ARMY NEWS DISPATCH

## THE ARMY'S 2016 IN RETROSPECT

We welcome 2017 in a spectacular fashion with fireworks, light shows and stellar performances across the globe, we also bid farewell to 2016 with a whimper as we recall and recap the past year's events and projects.

In The Spiritual Army of God the Father, we can say that we have had a fulfilling and satisfying 2016 as, once again, we came true to our mission statement through various devotional prayers, events, celebrations and projects.

This year gave us much to celebrate with the arrival of two babies, Isaac Reign Gonzalez, born to Carlos and Raina Gonzalez on August 21; and Asher Rowen Mercado, born to Bon & Ruth Mercado on December 8. However, this year was also touched by sadness with the death of some devotees: Brian Parker (January 2), Kristen Tuason (February 23), Rosario Becca Goodman (March 15), Ann Silva (August 13), Fr. Vincent Hughes (September 26) and Sr. Antoinette (December 10).

The first month of 2016 filled our hearts and minds with the preparation for the Feast day celebration of the Holy Infant Jesus on January 16 at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church followed by a procession to Msgr. Lavoy Hall where the potluck reception followed. A busload of devotees from Los Angeles was in Las Vegas to celebrate with the Las Vegas devotees.

Various feast days and religious activities were also celebrated, such as Feast of the Divine Mercy (April 3), May Crowning (May 7), Mother of Perpetual Help Feast day (June 25) and Feast Day of God the Father (August 7). Most of these celebrations were simultaneously celebrated at the Monastery of the Angels or Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master in Los Angeles, CA; St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church or St. Bridget Roman Catholic Church in Las Vegas, NV; and Chapel of the Eternal Father in Cagayan de Oro, Lapulapu City, Cebu, Philippines.

First Saturday devotion, 1st Sunday Eternal Father devotion, and 2000 Hail Mary devotion were simultaneously observed every month in Los Angeles, CA and Las Vegas, NV; while the First Friday devotion was done in Chino Hills, CA. The 800 Our Father devotion was launched in July, 2015 and it alternates with the 2000 Hail Mary devotion, thereafter. This is not just the usual Octave that we have been doing every Feast of God the Father in August, but rather a focused devotion that entails all prayers lifted from personal prayers and the prayers that Jesus taught us, The Lord's Prayer or the Our Father. The First Friday devotion and the Mother of Perpetual Help novena every Wednesday are now part of the Las Vegas' regular devotions.

With the different activities and celebrations ongoing, the ministry has announced that the celebration photos have been uploaded to You Tube. Worthy to note, too, are the changes made to the newsletter distribution process wherein devotees will get a copy via email upon request. Otherwise, they can access it from the Army's website.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### TOY DRIVE FOR THE LOS ANGELES CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

PLEASE DROP OFF  
YOUR NEW UNWRAPPED TOYS  
EVERY 1<sup>ST</sup> AND 3<sup>RD</sup> SATURDAYS AT  
THE CONVENT OF  
THE SISTER DISCIPLES OF  
THE DIVINE MASTER

### FEAST OF THE HOLY INFANT JESUS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 2017  
8:30 AM  
CONVENT OF THE  
SISTER DISCIPLES OF  
THE DIVINE MASTER  
501 N. BEAUDRY AVENUE,  
LOS ANGELES, CA

## **FOLLOW THE STAR: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE NEW YEAR**

5) Carry your treasures and give them away freely. The magi reveal the gifts they have brought of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold represents the honor brought to a King, frankincense is a connection to the divine by raising our prayers heavenward, and myrrh a holy oil of anointing. What are the treasures you carry with you into the New Year? How might you offer them even more generously to others in the months to come?

6) Listen to the wisdom of dreams. The magi are warned in a dream not to return to Herod and they listen to this night wisdom. The scriptures are filled with stories of dreams delivering important messages and facilitating discernment. Our own night dreams arrive unbidden laden with mystery and meaning. In the new year, how might you honor these stories which emerge from the darkness and surrender of sleep?

7) Go home by another way. After receiving the gift of the dream, they choose another way home. In truth, after any journey of significance, there is no going back the same way as before. We always return with new awareness if we have been paying attention. What is the usual path you have traveled which has become suffocating? How does this year call forth new directions in your own life? Is there something symbolic of the new way home that you could carry with you like a talisman?

These stories carry ancient treasures for us: guidance and wisdom along the way. Ultimately we turn inward to discover our own call, our own treasures to share, the dreams emerging in silent spaces.

I invite you to find a window of time in these next few days to ponder this story and these questions in your heart and see what insights they awaken for you. ☐

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Christine Valters Paintner, Ph.D., is a Benedictine Oblate and the online Abbess of Abbey of the Arts, a virtual monastery without walls offering online classes in contemplative practice and creative expression and pilgrimages to Ireland, Germany, and Austria. She is the author of eight books on monasticism and creativity including *The Artist's Rule: Nurturing Your Creative Soul with Monastic Wisdom* (Ave Maria Press) and her forthcoming book *The Soul of a Pilgrim: Eight Practices for the Inner Journey* (Spring 2015, Ave Maria Press). Christine lives as a monk in the world in Galway, Ireland with her husband of twenty years.

## **THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY**

This, the Church's activity and mission, is an expression of her motherhood. For she is like a mother who tenderly holds Jesus and gives him to everyone with joy and generosity. No manifestation of Christ, even the most mystical, can ever be detached from the flesh and blood of the Church, from the historical concreteness of the Body of Christ. Without the Church, Jesus Christ ends up as an idea, a moral teaching, a feeling. Without the Church, our relationship with Christ would be at the mercy of our imagination, our interpretations, our moods.

Dear brothers and sisters! Jesus Christ is the blessing for every man and woman, and for all of humanity. The Church, in giving us Jesus, offers us the fullness of the Lord's blessing. This is precisely the mission of the people of God: to spread to all peoples God's blessing made flesh in Jesus Christ. And Mary, the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus, the first and most perfect believer, the model of the pilgrim Church, is the one who opens the way to the Church's motherhood and constantly sustains her maternal mission to all mankind. Mary's tactful maternal witness has accompanied the Church from the beginning. She, the Mother of God, is also the Mother of the Church, and through the Church, the mother of all men and women, and of every people.

May this gentle and loving Mother obtain for us the Lord's blessing upon the entire human family. On this, the World Day of Peace, we especially implore her intercession that the Lord may grant peace in our day; peace in hearts, peace in families, peace among the nations. The message for the Day of Peace this year is "No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters". All of us are called to be free, all are called to be sons and daughters, and each, according to his or her own responsibilities, is called to combat modern forms of enslavement. From every people, culture and religion, let us join our forces. May he guide and sustain us, who, in order to make us all brothers and sisters, became our servant.

Let us look to Mary, let us contemplate the Holy Mother of God. I suggest that you all greet her together, just like those courageous people of Ephesus, who cried out before their pastors when they entered Church: "Holy Mother of God!" What a beautiful greeting for our Mother. There is a story – I do not know if it is true – that some among those people had clubs in their hands, perhaps to make the Bishops understand what would happen if they did not have the courage to proclaim Mary "Mother of God"! I invite all of you, without clubs, to stand up and to greet her three times with this greeting of the early Church: "Holy Mother of God!" ☐

## **EXPLANATION OF EPIPHANY**

The Epiphany is the high point of Christmas and the fulfillment of Advent. It is the ancient Feast of Christ the King. Its dignity in the liturgy is superior to that of Christmas. Because the feast commemorates the baptism of Jesus, its vigil has long been a day for solemn Baptism.

In the present division of the Church year, the baptism of our Lord in the Jordan is commemorated on the octave day of the Epiphany. If the Feast of Epiphany is to be fully understood as the Church sees it, it will have to be viewed from two aspects: that of God who manifested Himself to man, and that of man, typified in the Magi, who responded with wholehearted faith and love.

It is, therefore, a day of faith and grace on which no other prayer ought to take precedence over that petition of the Our Father, "Thy Kingdom Come!" ☐

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## **WALKING IN THE WAY WITH GOD**

Truly, I am nothing! In God's mercy and compassion, in His overflowing grace, He still loves me. I believe, I deserve to be with Him no matter where I have been in life, no matter how I am dragged into the world, and no matter I have been through in the past. Without any assurance whether the Seminary Council would accept my re-application or not, last March 2013, I took my resignation and gave up my career in the academe, believing that having this purity and sincerity of intention, God will guide me and do the rest.

Thanks be to God! Being accepted by the Seminary Council, I felt once more that I am blessed by God into a life-giving mission. I underwent one year re-entry program in our local Church. I first entered the seminary in the year 2001 and here I am, after 14 long years, all set to follow His will. In that span of time, I have realized that when a person holds the priesthood of Christ, he never knows when the moment of his calling may come. I am committing myself to the Lord, and I am willing to embrace it.

However, I am mindful that entering the priesthood vocation requires copious phase of funds and is never easy, especially with the present financial status of my family. Truthful and transparent to my intention, I believe, I cannot persist without your aid and prayers. My seminary formation, including my academic formation in theology, will last for five years. To this end, I believe that your support through prayers and financial embrace matters a lot. In this juncture, I

humbly ask your generous heart to help me in my vocation journey. Whatever blessing you can give is really a great help. I am hoping and looking forward for your favorable response. Be assured also of my prayers for the vision – mission of your community, the Spiritual Army of God the Father. May the intercession of Jesus' mother, Mama Mary, be with you always.

Above all, not our will, but HIS WILL, must always be done. AMEN. -☐

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*Continued from Page 7*

## **THE ARMY'S 2016 IN RETROSPECT**

This year, the Las Vegas chapter accepted the challenge of operating a food booth at St. Francis de Sales Parish Festival on October 23, in spite of its lack of manpower. Fortunately, our Lord God has sent His angels and provided us with manpower through a young and growing family ministry called Families in Christ Jesus Community (FCJC Las Vegas). Financial resources came from the devotees and friends in Los Angeles, CA and Las Vegas, NV.

Two anniversaries were also celebrated this year: the 8<sup>th</sup> year at our L.A. devotional home (Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master) in July, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration of the Cenacle House in November. A souvenir program for this 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary was made to honor God our Father (see [www.spiritualarmyofgod.org](http://www.spiritualarmyofgod.org)).

The highlight of the year is when The Spiritual Army of God the Father pilgrims went to the Holy Land and Jordan on December 5 thru 15, bringing back with them wonderful and spiritually exhilarating experiences as they traversed the paths of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master and the Monastery of Angels are the two places where we hold our devotionals and celebrations in Los Angeles, CA. They are direct recipients of financial contributions for 2016 from the Ministry. In addition, financial assistance to the Adopt-A-School Program of the Cathedral Chapel schools was announced in April.

The Spiritual Army of God the Father has also a lineup of various projects, which are continuations of the annual projects plus more, focusing on discipleship and evangelization through faith, prayers and deeds:

- a. Continuing efforts for our toy drive, recipient of which remains to be Children's Hospital of Los Angeles.
- b. Financial support for individual desiring to enter the religious life/priesthood. We currently have Ronald Panizares Roco, Jr. and another seminarian (name purposely

withheld at this time) whose application is still under review.

- c. Revival of the "Kitchen of Mary" feeding program by providing financial assistance and service hours to soup kitchen entities in the Los Angeles and Las Vegas areas.
- d. Ongoing distribution of our instant Care Pack to panhandlers/hungry and homeless. In the care pack are a blanket, a pair of socks, toothbrush, toothpaste, a \$5 bill and a Consecration Card to God the Father.
- e. Granting scholarship to students of indigent or poor families with good scholastic standing in the Philippines, specifically to a student named Patrick Salmasan at Jose Rizal University, Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines. One of the students was canceled from the scholarship program because the minimum grade requirement was not achieved. This scholarship will continue hopefully as our devotees become more generous in supporting this Project.
- f. Seeking God through pilgrimages to holy places. The Ministry will scour all possible means to make future pilgrimages affordable to all. Please check our website for pilgrimage announcements.
- g. Confirmation Project: Cathedral Chapel of St Vibiana. Sponsoring the outreach program of the church regarding the newly confirmed individuals for 2017. □

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*Continued from Page 7*

## **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

**NEVER FORGET** - Life here on earth is short. Hell lasts forever. The devil is trying to trick you every day into sin, so that 100 years from now he will be torturing you in the fires of hell, forever. What good is temporary pleasure when the penalty for it is eternal torment? Don't be fooled - you could die tomorrow in a car wreck and be damned forever. As long as your soul is in your body, there is an infinite amount of divine mercy flowing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to you so that you can be saved. Once you die, the divine mercy is finished, and the justice of God begins. Today is the day, now is the hour, & this is the place for you to tell the devil to take a hike and choose Jesus, even if it hurts. Even someone who is a Satanist can be saved. JUST DO IT. □

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**Editor's Notes:** Top Scriptural verses about Spiritual Warfare are: 2 Corinthians 10; Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:18.

Suggested Reading: Spiritual Warfare by Dr. David Jeremiah

*I am your Mother Mary.*

*Follow my Son, do whatever He tells you. Willing always even before His time. He knows the pathway to His kingdom. It's a road where signs may not be what you have in mind but they're there to guide, test and strengthen your faith and your resolve to be with Him in the Kingdom of His Father in Heaven.*

*SEE THE SIGNS FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD, MY CHILDREN.*

*I love you my children."*

*- Mary,  
your Lady of Guadalupe  
12122016*

# THANK YOU

*... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!*

*Psalm 106:2*

## THE 800 OUR FATHER DEVOTION

The Spiritual Army of God the Father acknowledges with thanks our generous January sponsors of the 800 Our Father Devotion. We are grateful that we have merited their partnership and support in providing a venue of spirituality and fellowship for the devotees of God the Father.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Ines Eugenio Carrington

Los Angeles, California

None in January

## FOR PRAYERS HEARD AND PETITIONS GRANTED

HOW DO WE RESPOND WHEN OUR CRY FOR MERCY RECEIVES ITS LOVING ANSWER FROM OUR MASTER?

WE NEED TO PRAISE AND THANK JESUS FOR HIS HEALING POWER, MERCY, AND GRACE.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU FELL FACE DOWN AND PRAISED JESUS?

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU PRAISED AND THANKED THE LORD

FOR ALL THAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU

WITH A GENUINE HEART AND A PROSTRATE POSTURE?

*Almighty and Eternal Father - All glory, honor, and praise to You for all the graces and blessings You have given to us and our family in 2016, especially for being able to attend the Holy Land and Jordan Pilgrimage. Words cannot express what that trip meant to our hearts and souls.*

*To Jesus Christ, thank You for fulfilling our Father's will and redeeming us and being our Savior. Thank You for your healing power and especially for healing Samar Mendoza who is now cancer free, and for healing my skin ailment.*

*O Holy Spirit, thank You for always guiding us in all our ways. Please continue to be with us in all we think, do, and say, in helping us bring ourselves and especially others closer to God.*

*- Gerrard & Denise Gier*

*Thank you Father for recreating in me a new pair of eyes! I want to serve you the rest of my life – however long or short you planned that life to be.*

*Correct me and humble me gently so I can serve you without hypocrisy!*

*- A*

*Thank you, my Lord and my God, for my father's full recovery from his stroke last year. Our family would also like to thank everyone who has offered prayers and masses for him.*

*- Cora Agudo*

*I am thankful that I have kept my current job to now, and the circumstances of obtaining it.*

*Thankful for the Christmas guests, and ability to be a Christmas guest.*

*Thankful for faith and family.*

*- Joyce Ulmer*

*I thank God for all of the people that I love and care about - my family, friends and neighbors; for all the countless joys we have on any day; for the laughter of children, the trust and affection of animals, the beauty of nature and the glory of God; for the resources they have both GIVEN to us for our use -- to keep our families warm, and to work in safety, and comfort.*

*God, You Are The Way the Truth and the Life!*

*-A Devotee*

# DEVOTION SCHEDULE



## THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER

cordially invites you to the following devotions:

### IN LOS ANGELES:

#### 1st Saturday Devotion

The Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | 501 N. Beaudry Avenue | (213) 250-7962  
Holy Mass starts at 8:30 A.M. | 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday Devotional Prayers follow.

#### Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the Month | The Monastery of the Angels | 1977 Carmen Avenue on Gower | (323) 466-2186  
12:30 P.M. - Rosary to the Father | 1:15 P.M. - Holy Mass  
2:00 P.M. - Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

#### 800 Our Father Devotion – None in January

at the Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | starting at 8:30 a.m.  
*Please call Victor at (213) 385-7798 if you wish to become a Sponsor of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion.*

### IN CHINO HILLS:

#### Sacred Heart Devotional Group for Departed Souls

Every 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the Month | 16657 Tourmaline Street | Chino Hills, CA 91709  
Devotional Prayers start at 8:30 P.M.

### IN LAS VEGAS:

#### Sacred Heart and Precious Blood of Jesus Devotion for Departed Souls

Every 1st Friday of the Month  
at The Cenacle House in The Enclave 8455 W. Sahara Avenue #172 | Las Vegas, NV 89117  
Devotional Prayers start at 2:30 P.M.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday Devotion

at Saint Frances de Sales Parish | 1111 Michael Way | Las Vegas, NV 80108 at 8:00 AM  
Devotional Prayers follow.

and

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117 at 1:00 PM  
Cenacle will be at 10:00 AM before the devotional prayers.

*Please call Evelyn at (702) 274-4315 for entry to The Enclave or for more information.*

#### Devotion to God the Father

Every 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month from 2:00 to 3:30 P.M.  
at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117

#### 800 Our Father Devotion – January 21, 2017

*Please call (702) 255-9616 or (702) 274-4315 for  
dates and venues for the coming months or for more information or if you wish to Sponsor the Devotion.*

#### Mother of Perpetual Help Novena & Rosary Prayers

Every Wednesday after the 7:30 AM Mass  
St. Francis de Sales Parish | 1111 Michael Way | Las Vegas, NV 89108

### IN THE PHILIPPINES

#### 2000 Hail Mary Devotion - Metro Manila Area

Letty Rollan has organized the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion in various areas of Metro Manila through the members of the "Mother Butler." Please call her U.S. Vonage phone (510) 779-6652, text her at Manila #916-384-9300, and/or call her Manila landline 939-4677. Mention Mila Lumba's name to be recognized.