

# May Jesus Christ Be Praised Newsletter

January 8, 2017



## Breaking Open the Word

**JANUARY 8, 2017** The Epiphany of the Lord Lectionary: 20  
Gospel **MT 2:1-12**

**Spiritual Reflection:** I wonder how was it that the people so close to Bethlehem in Jerusalem, who knew where the newborn King of the Jews was to be born, missed the star. Maybe they were just too busy about their daily lives to take a moment and to marvel at the sky. They were probably too consumed with power, greed, and fame to take the time to enjoy God's creation and thus they missed the coming of the Messiah. We can become too busy and we can miss God coming to us in the Mass, others, and in the poor.

### **Spiritual Questions**

1. Why do you think the people of Jerusalem did not see the star? 2. What would you offer to God at this moment, if He was standing before you? 3. The magi's life was changed because they encountered Christ. How has your life changed by going to Mass? 4. If your life has not changed why? What prevents you from changing? 5. Would you be joyful if God returned today?



## PRAYER OF THE WEEK

### **Epiphany Door Blessing**

A traditional way of doing this is to use chalk to write above the home's entrance, 20 + C + M + B + 17. The letters C, M, B have two meanings. They are the initials of the traditional names of the three magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They also abbreviate the Latin words *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house." The "+" signs represent the cross and 2016 is the year.

### **Blessing the Chalk**

V. Our help is the name of the Lord:  
R. The maker of heaven and earth.  
V. The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in:  
R. From this time forth for evermore.  
Let us pray.  
Loving God, bless this chalk which you have created, that it may be helpful to your people; and grant that through the invocation of your most Holy Name that we who use it in faith to write upon the door of our home the names of your holy ones Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, may receive health of body and protection of soul for all who dwell in or visit our home; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Instructions for Blessing the Home**

Using the blessed chalk mark the lintel of your front door (or front porch step) as follows:

20 + C + M + B + 17 while saying:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star of God's Son who became human two thousand and sixteen years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the new year. Amen.

Then offer the following prayer: Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live or visit here with the gift of your love; and grant that we may manifest your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen

"Chalking the door" is a way to celebrate and literally mark the occasion of the Epiphany and God's blessing of our lives and home. With time the chalk will fade. As it does we let the meaning of the symbols written sink into the depths of our heart and be manifest in our words and actions the Latin words, *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house."



## Spiritual Ponderings:

January 8th

As I continue to share with you from my reflection called "Where is the Faith?" I invite you to examine your hearts to find the areas of faith that you need to strengthen. May we all be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

### **2. Half-Hearted Secularism**

"Secularism" is a word that we often hear when talking about religion but for me it was a word that for much of my life was vaguely defined. Finally, I heard someone define it as "treating religion as recreational." When a person treats his or her faith recreational then it is not a priority in their life. It is something they do if they have the extra time in the week or they feel like it. People who practice secularism do not go to Mass when they are on vacation, fail to attend holy days of Obligation and finally only practice their faith when they feel it will make them look good before others.

One day I was listening to a secular radio program in which the disc jockeys were discussing whether or not they could have the thing that they had given up for Lent on Sunday. I found this conversation so confusing and amusing because two of the disc jockeys have confessed in the past that they were Catholics. One of the two was

living with her boyfriend and was avid about the fact that she never planned to get married and both of the Catholic disc jockeys made it clear that they did not go to Church on Sunday. I found it fascinating and sad that they were worried about what they had given up for Lent instead of trying to address the more important issues that were keeping them from developing a deeper personal relationship with the Lord.

### 3. **Ego Based Faith**

I have been known many good people over the years that practice their faith with great fervor only to walk away from their faith later on because they never allowed their faith to take root in their heart. People who were once active members of the Parish Council, Parish Home and School Association, and even liturgical ministers, can end up walking away from their faith if they do not take the time for prayer and study.

Most people who practice their faith without devoting themselves to prayer and study are doing so because they enjoy the attention they receive from others. This was pretty much me for many of my high school years. I practiced my faith, went to Mass in order to make my mother happy and receive the bonus of others telling me what a great guy I was for still attending Mass when so many of my classmates did not.

The problem with Ego Based faith is that the roots do not go very deep because Jesus himself promises that will we will experience persecution if we follow Him because like Him we are not made for this world. People who practice their faith for show and attention often fall quickly away during times of persecution. Going back to the baseball analogy it is easy to be a St. Louis Cardinals fan in St. Louis than in Chicago or New York.

### 4. **Wanting a Perfect Church**

When I was still an associate pastor, I would sometimes be invited to sit in on interviews my pastor was holding to find a new staff person. Somewhere within the many questions he would ask the applicant if his or her faith was strong enough to work for the Church. One of the great mysteries in our faith is that God chose twelve very flawed men and a few women to begin his Church. The God who has literally an army of angels at His beck and call chose not to use them but rather to use human beings as his ministers. As I ponder this great mystery, I cannot help but think that part of God's reasoning behind this decision is because one gets to know another person better when they work alongside that person.

As a priest, I will often hear someone tell me that they don't go to Church anymore because another person in the Church was mean to them or said something that they did not like and part of me wants to respond with "what did you expect?" The Church is made up of human

beings and human beings by their very definitions are flawed creatures who make mistakes.

The first demoniac Jesus encounters in Mark Gospel was found in a synagogue - a church. A close reading of this passage allows us to assume that the man possessed by the unclean spirit could be anyone in the synagogue including the cantor or rabbi. Jesus of course heals the man by driving out the spirit. How many times did the apostles argue about who was the greatest? We come to Church not because we are perfect but rather because we are in need of a savior.



## Catholic Trivia

### **Last Week's Trivia Question & Answer**

Which of the four do not belong?

1. Pope - Holy Father - Bishop of Rome - **Magisterium**  
All the above titles are titles of the Pope but the pope is a part of the magisterium.
2. Ordinary – Bishop – Administrator - **Pontiff**  
Pontiff is another title for pope
3. Christ – **August** – Messiah – Anointed  
August – means great one the other 3 mean anointed one.

### **This Week's Trivia Questions**

True or False

1. Seth was a child of Adam and Eve.
2. The thing placed on the chalice to keep flies out has the same name as the large blanket placed over a casket during a funeral.
3. Archbishop and Metropolitan are the same rank



## Catholic Humor

### **MEDITATING MONKS**

One Buddhist monk leaned over to another and quietly asked, "Are you not thinking what I'm not thinking?"

### **OLD MONK TO YOUNG MONK**

On the terrace of a monastery high in the mountains, an old Zen Buddhist monk stood next to a much younger monk while they both contemplated the great Void of misty space out yonder. The old monk at one point gently declared: "Ah, my son, one day all of this (Void) will be yours."



## Quote(s) of the Week

Look for Christ and you will find Him. And with Him, everything else. – C.S. Lewis

"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God." – C.S. Lewis