



by Br. John M. Samaha

the “Twelve Days of Christmas” is a catechetical song in disguise.

This popular English Christmas carol, one which is known and sung around the world, embodies much more than a catchy and repetitious melody with picturesque phrases describing unusual gifts. “The Twelve Days of Christmas” is a carol that is more hymn than ordinary song; it includes layers of meaning.

Recall that during the severe persecution of the Catholic Church in England over three centuries, Catholics were forbidden to practice their faith openly. From 1558 to 1829 the faithful lived a clandestine life. During this period Catholic teachers composed “The Twelve Days of Christmas” to be a catechetical song for youngsters. The disguised meanings of the song’s gifts were a mini-catechism to help children

remember the basic lessons of their faith.

The “true love” is not a human suitor wooing his lady but God Himself, who loves us and redeemed us. Every baptized person is the “me” who receives the presents. Jesus Christ is “the partridge in a pear tree,” symbolically represented as a mother partridge who feigns injury to deter predators from her helpless nestlings.

The other symbols have these religious meanings:

Two turtle doves refer to the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens recall faith, hope, and charity.

Four calling birds are the four Gospels.

Five golden rings are the first five books of the Old Testament, which give the story of the human race’s creation, fall from grace, and promise of redemption.

Six geese a-laying recall the six days of creation.

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December 2004
Volume 11 Number 12

High Tea With Eli by Fr. Joe Landi

The Sacramento Delta was bursting out all over with Autumn colors, and as I headed up the river road to Rio Vista and Eli’s, poignant childhood memories filled my thoughts of people and things that helped lay the foundation to formulate the person I am in the process of becoming.

Childhood contains too many firsts to remember them all. Some, like the first-kiss, first-date, or first childhood crush, puppy love as mom would say, are hard to forget. When they happen in a small town, there is always someone around to

remember. Sometimes more often than I’d like.

Eli is a woman whom I’ve known since the fifth grade. She married Vince, one of my all-time favorite people, and settled down to raise a family and evolve.

Unfortunately, Vince has gone on before us and with the kids grown, Eli has moved from the family home into a spacious home at Trilogy at Rio Vista, an active adult community. The occasion for High Tea was the house warming and blessing of her new digs.

Many people attended that I have known since the earth was cooling and some new faces that I had not met before, or, if I did, have forgotten during the past few years of protracted senior moments.

As if I needed anything to really make me feel old, several children and grand children (in their 20’s) of people I’ve known since high school added to the celebration.

Socializing with friends known since childhood is a relaxing experience

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At Christmas time we are called upon to fall on our knees before the mystery of God's love, which passes human understanding. That God should love us, we can understand. But that his love should have gone to such lengths, even to the crib, that is amazing. A love which crosses barriers like that is out of this world. Faced with love like that, there is only one attitude to take, the attitude of Mary and Joseph, the shepherds on Christmas Day and the three kings later on, the attitude of Christian people throughout the ages—adoration. Such depths of love, such folly—God becoming incarnate, baffle man's understanding. "Anything else, but not that," the unbeliever will say. Faced by the crib, man finds himself at the crossroads. Either he ac-

The earth does not contain within itself the reason for its own existence. Each part of it may cease to exist. To try and account for it by the simple juxtaposition of each of its parts is to choose nonsense.

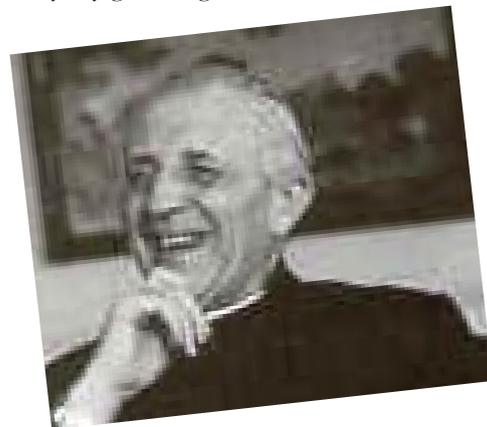
God, or a vacuum; the mystery of God, or chaos. There is only one choice open to us. The only thing to do, if we want to be fully reasonable and clear-headed is to fall on our knees.

The duty of adoration

Christmas is first and foremost the feast of adoration. It is so seldom that men really adore God. When they pray, it is usually to beg for something or to pour out their complaints to God. Prayer is too often an activity which makes them concentrate on themselves instead of opening their hearts. If we had invented the Our Father, we

side?

It is a great sight and a lovely one—to see a family at prayer; a home where, at evening time, when the day's work is done, they get together, before they say good night, and



say their prayers together. Those voices which blend together, from the faltering tones of the youngest to father's deeper and more serious voice, are a sign of hearts and minds blended into one, the secret of the happy home. Father Peyton's magnificent campaign for the family rosary and the slogan he has blazoned throughout the five continents—the family that prays together stays together—are well known. It is so true. Prayer is the cement that binds the members of the family one to another. It gives birth to affection, loyalty and love.

The "Gloria in Excelsis"

We ought to pray together. And why not sing together? And isn't singing a part of Christmas? It was the song the angels sang that told the shepherds that something incredible was going to happen. This song Christendom has made its hymn, its own: Glory be to God, to God on high and on earth. Peace to men of good will, and it has been repeated from age to age.

How can we help thinking of her who handed them down to us? For how do we know that these words greeted our Saviour's birth? It was not the shepherds who told the evangelists about them, for they had no contact with them. It was not St. Joseph, for he was dead by the time the Master chose his apostles.

These words, like the other wonderful things St. Luke tells us about, lay hidden in the heart of Mary, who "kept in her heart the memory of all this" (Luke 2:51). The Gloria was the

Christmas Is Adoration

by Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens

cepts God and the mystery of his love, or he denies it.

Mystery or absurdity?

If he chooses God, he accepts the mystery at the same time. It is natural that God should be infinitely above man. It is normal that his ways should be shrouded in mystery. If man understood God, He would cease to be God, since to understand is to be equal, and man would cease to be man. It is natural for man, in his state, to kneel before something greater than himself. If on the other hand he denies God, he chooses absurdity and chaos. Life is no more than a flash of light between two voids. And putting the relative end to end or multiplying the contingent by the contingent will not lead to the discovery of the absolute and the necessary.

should have reversed the petitions, and we should have started like this: "Our Father, who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread and deliver us from evil." And then, perhaps, we might have prayed that God's will should be done and his kingdom come: but that is not so certain.

Man's first duty to God is to acknowledge him for what he is, to treat him as he deserves to be treated, as God, as infinite.

It is a great thing to see a man on his knees before God. Such a man, adoring God, is in his proper place. He has a sense of balance and proportion. He is affirming that he is nothing and that God is everything. That is the simple truth; it is only just. Adoration is the first step to all real prayer.

The family at prayer

But we should not be alone in our adoration. "Come," the shepherds said to each other, "let us adore the Lord." The liturgy repeats the invitation. We must kneel round the crib together. The family circle is the place where we should perform this solemn duty.

Does family prayer have a place at your fire-

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because they don't take me too seriously. My Roman collar doesn't intimidate them from giving me advice. Since ordination, their input helps to keep me grounded. Eli's husband, Vince, eloquently summed up our longtime relationships one day when a number of us were whooping it up in a party mode during lunch at the Point Restaurant. "What's the occasion?" the waitress asked. "Is it someone's birthday?" Vince replied, "No. Do you know Father Joseph Landi, Junior?" he replied pointing to me while stressing the word, "Junior". "We all went to high school together. Whenever "Junior" (stressing again my nickname from grammar school) begins to think he can walk on water, we invite him home to lunch!"

What I've noticed about people who I have matured with is that some of the same characteristics that drew us together in childhood, keep us in touch now. Even though weeks, months or years may have passed since last we last met, we seem to take up where we left off. Isn't that the mark of true friendships?

Most of us grew up as "cradle Catholics" in the Church and the youth group. Annual youth trips for a week at Hoberg's near Clear Lake in the summer and Dodge Ridge in the winter were bonding experiences.

Some of us began a bonding experience with Jesus during high school; some, later in life and unfortunately some are still looking while "putting out the fleece." They are believers but uncertain about where God is leading them or asking them to do in this life. "Putting on the fleece" (Isaiah 7:10:14) is an expression derived from the story of Gideon, who was promised by God in a dream that his meager band of three hundred warriors would put the vast marauding army of the Midianites to flight.

To convince Gideon that the dreams were real, he instructed him to put fleece on the threshing room floor overnight. In the morning the floor was wet with dew and the fleece dry. Still not convinced, Gideon covered himself with fleece the next night and in the morning the floor was dry and he was covered with wet fleece. He believed then that God was going to help him.

Since that time believers have been "putting on the fleece" when they were uncertain about what God was asking them to do. However, some people might say that doing so is putting one's life and future in the hands of God. Others might say it was a denial of faith by asking for a

sign or imposing on God when we should do our best and expect that God will do the rest.

For Christians looking for direction, the best way to find it is in the Scriptures. However, some people go to the extreme when looking for direction from the Scriptures. For example, the First Letter of John is a wake-up call for Christians to separate themselves from the world. Some Christians take this challenge of separation literally, separating themselves from the world physically to starve out the lust of the flesh. Some are called to separate themselves socially by joining religious orders and devoting themselves to spiritual disciplines, as have many of our great saints.

But the separation for which most Christians are called is to an inner rather than an outer separation. We are called to separate ourselves from carnal allurements whether they be the seductions of lust on the internet offered by the evil one or enticements of the "evil eye", materialism and greed.



High Tea From Page 1

As we celebrate this season of the anniversary of Jesus' birth, let us take time to reevaluate our relationship with Him. He calls us to be the new world order working together to transform our world with our love and compassionate concern for others. We are called to continue the his miracles and be visible signs of hope, love and charity not only to our friends and family, but to those whom God places in our path.

A Message from John Paul II

As members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, let us keep in mind as we celebrate the joys of Christmas that John Paul II on October 31, 2004, expressed his appreciation for the charismatic renewal communities and encouraged us to promote the Eucharist as a bond of unity in a troubled world. The Pope disclosed his hopes in a message read by Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, president to the Pontifical Council for the Laity. The Holy Father's message asks us "to be committed in this Eucharistic Year to take initiatives so that the Eucharist will become increasingly a factor of union and cohesion in the People of God, in this world marked by violence and division."

A book Review

What Does God Want?

A Practical Guide to Making Decisions

by Michael Scanlan, T.O.R.

Will you give me your life? These words stopped me in my tracks one March morning in 1954 as I was returning home from Mass in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I stood paralyzed on the path I was taking across Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's estate. I knew God was speaking to me. I had never heard God speak to me that way before, but I knew it was Him.

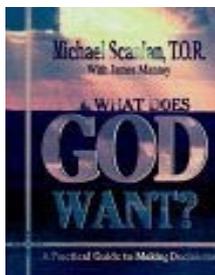
I didn't answer immediately. I knew why. I was asking myself, "If I say 'Yes,' what will He do with my life?" I didn't want to answer this way because I did not want to refuse God or be ungrateful to Him. I also thought this a moment of grace; I didn't want to lose an opportunity that might pass and not return.

Saying "Yes" Is Hard

Finally, I struggled out a "Yes." But I cautiously added, "Can I wait to give you my life until I finish law school and pass the bar?" This seemed to be acceptable to God.

That short exchange changed my life. From then on I was committed to seeking God's will for my life. It was to be His life, not mine. Yet I had to make the decisions. From that day on, I began a struggle to order my life according to God's plan.

When I passed the bar, God let me know that he wanted me to be



a priest. There followed eight difficult months of discerning where and when I should study for the priesthood. I knew the goal. But I had to decide how to get there.

Father Avery Dulles, S.J., my spiritual director through this time of struggle, gave me a principle that ultimately led to the peace and security of fording God's will for my life. He said the call was a restless spirit. When I found the place where the spirit could be poured out, leaving me at peace, I would have found the place where I should commit my life.

I found a place to pour out my restless spirit when I visited the Franciscan T.O.R. friars in Loretto, Pennsylvania. I entered that community in September, 1957. Now, nearly forty years later, I am still at peace, certain that I am living God's call for my life.

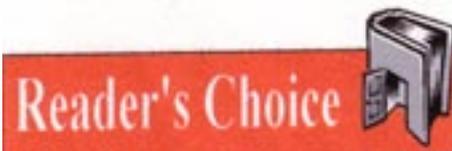
Guidance in Making Decisions

In those years, thousands of people—men and women, young and old, married, single, and religious—have asked me for guidance in making decisions. Some of the decisions are basic life vocations, such as my own call to the priesthood. Many more are decisions people make in the course of living out their vocation.

This book distills what I have learned in those years of making decisions and helping others make them. I hope it will help you find the true path of freedom and peace, which is to discern God's will—and to do it.

These are some scripture passages that have inspired me in making decisions in my life. I often return to them.

Make **See Page 11**



Behold, He Comes—Meditations on the Incarnation

By Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R.

The coming of Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, is the central truth of the Christian faith. Everything in the Christian life depends on it and revolves around it. Against the backdrop of Scripture and the ancient Fathers of the Church, for each day of the Advent and Christmas seasons, the author offers insightful reflections.

\$8.99—Servant Books

Advent and Christmas with the Saints—Compiled by Anthony F. Chiffolo

Beginning with the first day of Advent and continuing through the twelve days of Christmas to Epiphany, daily readings are provided from the writings and teachings of the saints. Readers walk day-by-day with the saints, recalling the Scriptures they read, meditating on the thoughts they had, praying as they might have prayed.

\$9.95—Liguori Publications

Advent and Christmas—Activities for Families with Young Children

By Colleen D. Rainone

This page-a-day booklet is ideal for busy families to convey the real meaning of Advent and Christmas to their young children. In addition to the simple activities parents and caregivers can do with children, this booklet contains brief thoughts for the day, rituals, meal prayers, bedtime blessings, and more.

\$5.95—Twenty-Third Publications

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When Wangari Maathai won this year's Nobel Peace Prize, some critics objected that honoring an environmentalist distracted from traditional peace work. In 1977 Maathai, a 64-year-old biologist founded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya that empowered poor women by paying them to plant over 30 million tree seedlings in their communities. Her movement promotes sustainable development while recognizing the intertwined problems of war, environmental degradation, poverty and the low status of women.

In awarding the prize to Maathai the Nobel committee noted, "Peace on earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment." Just weeks before, a United Nations report cited deforestation and the scarcity of water--both exacerbated by global warming--as repeated causes of armed conflict in Africa.



Awareness among academics, scientists and recently the business community has begun linking peace on earth with saving the earth. In both Business Week (Aug. 16, 2004) and National Geographic (Sept., 2004) writers and editors draw attention to global warming and its dire consequences. They cite dramatic changes in climate that indicate human impact on the environment.

Forexample, geochemical records of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, show the current level (378 parts per million) at the highest-known carbon dioxide level in the last 40 million years. In Peru the Quelccaya ice cap is shrinking at the rate of 600 feet per year, 40 times faster than in 1978. And, scientists

recognize that hurricane strength, related responsible to temperature, is strongly connected to for most of the past century's warming. global carbon dioxide levels. The result of They quote Professor George Philander, rapid climate change means more floods, a climate expert at Princeton University, uncertain agricultural production and who says in a negative and alarming way: altered patterns of living for humanity "We're now geological agents, capable of and the rest of creation on earth. affecting the processes that determine climate."

Yet, not everyone agrees with For people of faith, "the the findings and projected scenarios ecological crisis is a moral issue," of these scientists. Some argue the according to John Paul II. His statement, scientific observations could fit nature's "The Ecological Crisis: A Common acceptable pattern of change with little Responsibility," emphasizes that "respect for humanity to do about global warming. for life and for the dignity of the human They fear the rollbacks demanded by the person extends also to the rest of Kyoto agreement would cripple the U.S. creation." He encourages converting from economy, create a carbon-constrained a life style of consumption, addressing world and challenge the free-the structures of poverty, rejecting war flowing lifestyle of many with its inherent ecological destruction, Americans. Their solution: promoting ecological responsibility and live with a warmer world appreciating the beauty of nature. and trust science will eventually engineer With Wangari Maathai, John Paul schemes to create a II shares a more holistic vision for the

Peace On Earth by Saving It

by Fr. John S. Rausch

desirable environment.

For National Geographic global on January 1, 1990, the World Day of climate change is real and human activity Peace, thus, like Maathai, linking ecology using fossil fuels is exacerbating, if not and peace for a world that respects the causing, the problem: "Ice is melting, common good.

rivers are running dry, and coasts are --Fr. Rausch is a Glenmary priest, teaches, writes and eroding. Flora and fauna are feeling the organizes from Stanton, Kentucky, in central Appalachia heat too. These aren't projections; they are facts on the ground." The editors reference a report from the United Nations Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change stating that human activity is almost certainly

world than either economics or science can provide. His statement was issued



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Today there is a wide audience for magazines and journals dealing with liturgy.

One of the most popular is *Worship*. The focus of liturgists is exemplified by articles such as "The Eucharist as Sacrifice," "Form and Function in the Early Synagogue and Church," "The Role of Music as Ritual Symbol in Roman Catholic Liturgy," "Performance, Practice, and Meaning in Christian Baptism," "Gender Analysis and Christian Initiation," and "Liturgical Reform and the Ambrosian and Mozarabic Rites." Mention of private prayer is rare.

This is the world of liturgy today. It is a big establishment. In universities there are departments of liturgy whose professors produce books on the history

Liturgy & Spirituality. Are they Related?

by Paul L. Cioffi, S.J.

of the liturgy and its theology. Parishes have full-time directors of liturgy and many people involved in this ministry.

There is also a wide audience today for magazines and journals dealing with spirituality, one of the most popular of which is **Review for Religious**. Some typical articles are "Feeling and Pain and Prayer," "The Desert and the Cell," and "Where Is God in Suffering?" Liturgy is mentioned only rarely.

Spirituality institutes offer courses on topics such as "Making Good Decisions," "Sexuality and Spirituality," "Prayer and Spiritual Direction," "Working with Our Dreams," and "Evil as a Psychological-Spiritual Necessity."

Like the world of liturgy, the world of spirituality is also a big establishment. In the universities students take courses in the history

and theology of spirituality covering the desert fathers, individual mystics as well as the schools of mysticism, and the varied spiritualities of world religion today. Retreat houses provide spiritual direction for tens of thousands of people each year: retreats, weekends or days of prayer, and workshops. Full-time spiritual directors, many of them lay people, abound.

Translation Needed?

The two worlds use two different vocabularies. Spirituality speaks of the Dark Night, discernment, mental prayer, the Love Command, methods of prayer, feelings, and repression, locating where one is in terms of emotions, consolation, and desolation. It's all about the spiritual life and the problems of private prayer. Liturgists, on the other hand, talk about active participation, sacrifice, initiation, priesthood, sacrament, rubrics, the liturgical year, the vernacular, and

inculturation.

Thus today two vast influential worlds exist with large followings, resources, scholars, and popularizers. They travel along parallel paths, with different vocabularies. They don't interact except peripherally.

Yet the two are essentially related. Both try to answer the same questions: how to respond to God's initiative; how the gospel sheds light on human existence; how to grow in holiness; how to have an enlarged experience of God. How is it then that each camp almost totally ignores the other?

This is especially odd since both fields have experienced major renewals. During the first forty years of the twentieth century, because of the revival of biblical and patristic studies, there was a growing interest in the doctrine of the church as the Mystical Body of Christ, which contrasted sharply with the post-Tridentine way of viewing the church in more rational and juridical terms.

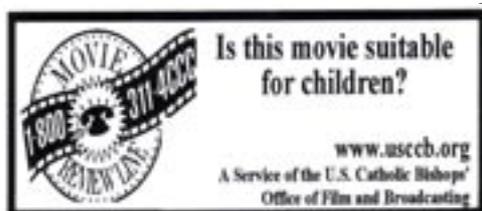
The new ecclesiology, which

affirmed an organic and mysterious but real unity between Head and members and among the members themselves, rested solidly on scripture and the church fathers. However, this new concept of the church highlighted problems in parish congregations. The faithful were passive inside and outside the liturgy—they were imbued with individualistic piety and devotions. They brought this piety and these devotions to Mass, but the liturgical rites did not command their attention or invite their collaboration. There was a vast chasm between the sanctuary and the nave.

The recovery of the doctrine of the church as the Body of Christ set the stage for a renewal of the liturgy and of liturgical practice. As the church expressed the new ecclesiology in official documents, it was apparent to some liturgists that this dynamic vision of the church was not reflected in the liturgy: congregations were not joyfully involved in the corporate piety of a redeemed people at worship. Steeped in private devotional piety, they were not involved in the ritual—they were not praying the Mass.

What It Means

The liturgical movement came into being to help the baptized reflect the recovered theology of the church and recognize more fully their identity, privileges, and responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ—and to express all this in their liturgical worship, a thing that had not been happening. The spirituality renewal began after the liturgical reforms and long after the theological and liturgical discussions that preceded them. For many the directed retreat was their introduction to a spirituality that delighted and challenged them and awakened in them a thirst for prayer. The focus of the renewal was primarily on one's private prayer life. With its emphasis on decision making and discernment, it helped many people find God's will for them. This renewal of spirituality produced tremendous good for the church and individual Christians. --Condensed from *Gospel Spirituality and Catholic Worship* by Paul L. Cioffi, S.J. and William P. Sampson, S.J. © 2001 Paul L. Cioffi, S.J. Paulist Press, New York.



We are all very familiar with the scripture that encourages us to "be holy."

The call to holiness is very clear, but what exactly does it mean to be holy? I am sure that we all have our favorite saints; those who have gone before us modeling saintly and holy lives. However, the call to holiness isn't just for special people, those saints who are capable of living extraordinarily godly lives.

The call to holiness is a call to every Christian. The Catechism reminds us: "all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness: 'be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect'" (CCC 2013).

It would be wrong to equate holiness with other worldliness. Through the incarnation, God has opened for us the way of holiness. Jesus showed us how to live in obedience to the father. He modeled the holy life perfectly and was never afraid to get involved in the social, political or relational issues of the day.

In the account of the Ascension (Acts 1:9-10) the disciples are faced with a question, "Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky?" They are then reassured that Jesus will return at the end of time. Meanwhile they have a task to do; something that could only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit; who would be poured out upon them at Pentecost.

It is important for us to cultivate a heavenly perspective; otherwise we will become too entangled in the affairs of the world. However, as well as looking to the Lord who has gone before us, we incarnational Christians are called to be Christ to those around us. The truly holy person is thus the one who has his

head above the clouds and his feet firmly on the ground.

In the Old Testament certain people, such as the Levites, were decreed to be more holy than others and they were given special responsibilities. One of their duties was to offer countless sin offerings on behalf of the people, who were constantly trying to purify themselves.

Christ has, however, offered "one single sacrifice for our sins and by virtue of that one single offering, he has achieved the eternal perfection (holiness) of all whom he is sanctifying" (Heb 10:12-14). Christ has therefore opened up the gates of holiness to all people. We have to be ready to appropriate what Christ has won for us.

Holiness: Requires Battle

Recently, Father Raniero Cantalamessa encouraged us to do this by praying to Jesus using the following words: "I am your sin; you are my holiness". Praying like this we should see our dirty garments being transformed into the robes of righteousness. So, holiness is a gift that we are given by Jesus through the power of the Holy

letters that there is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Indeed, many of the classical spiritual works highlight asceticism and mortification as pathways to holiness. If we are to follow Christ by imitating him, then we have to pray for the grace to fight the vices in our lives and allow the Holy Spirit to build up our virtues.

Holiness: Our Responsibility

As we have seen, every Christian is called to be holy. This holiness should be evident in the way in which we live our ordinary everyday lives. It should be seen in our family, our wider relationships, and our workplaces and in the general way in which we conduct our affairs. I remember speaking about holiness to an elderly religious sister who was radiant with the love of God. She said that truly holy people are usually unaware of their holiness because they are so acutely aware of their imperfections. So don't worry if you don't feel holy; this is the first step to sanctity!

St. Paul tells us that, as we embrace the call to holiness, we "will shine in the world like bright stars" (Ph 2:15). We are called then to live distinctive



The Universal Call to Holiness

by Michelle Moran

Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the principal agent in our sanctification. As children of God we have the source of divine holiness within us and we need to remain constantly open to the action of the Holy Spirit so that we may become, more fully, "temples of the Holy Spirit".

Do Not become Complacent

Having said that holiness is a gift, we must not become complacent. The Church tells us that we must "hold on to and perfect in our lives the sanctification which we have received from God" (LG 40).

A saint does not become a saint overnight. The way of perfection embraces the way of the cross. We are constantly reminded by St. Paul in his

lives, witnessing to the Gospel through our words and actions. In this way we will participate fully in the Church's apostolic goals.

Christifideles Laici encourages lay people in the two-fold task of "the evangelization and sanctification of humanity" (*Christifideles Laici* 30). We must never lose sight of the fundamental lay vocation, which is to "sanctify the temporal". Our apostolate is therefore in the world as well as in the Church (Vat II: AA, 5).

Thus, holiness is not only about personal sanctification. The call is to wholeheartedly devote ourselves to the glory of God and to the service of our neighbor.

--Courtesy of the ICCRS Newsletter,, Vatican City

Catholic Radio Hour



KEST 1450AM
7:00 pm

It's the time of year when we are repeatedly put in mind of joy, but also of want.

Salvation Army bell ringers seek our attention, pleas for and by the homeless reach our eyes and ears, mourners shed an extra measure of tears in memory of their loved ones. Yet strangely enough, it is a time that the most impoverished and needy of all are those who seem to have everything.

Several weeks ago, after spending an afternoon helping a friend return home after her knee surgery, I was once again reminded of this. Rather unimaginatively we decided on a seriously overloaded delivery pizza for dinner.

Channel-surfing while feasting on the pizza, we stumbled across a retrospective recalling Hollywood's "golden era" of the 40's and '50s just as an interviewee shared a recollection about the premier Christmas party of those days, attended by the moneyed and admired Hollywood elite.

It seems that in December the brightest stars of stage and screen would gather and dine, dance—and especially, drink—the night away. The party was a gaudy, melancholy affair; many of the celebrities had ghastly drug and alcohol problems; many were trying to flee their troubles by tumbling in and out of each others' beds, with little regard for marital status or gender. The high point of the evening, the interviewee offered sweetly, was when everyone gathered around the legendary Judy Garland, known as much for her struggles with massive personal problems as for her prodigious talent;

she would then sing the doleful "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" to her celebrated, intoxicated, adulterous, overwrought audience: "Through the years / We all will be together / If the fates allow / Hang a shining star upon the highest bough / And have yourself a merry little Christmas now. The interviewee sniffed and dabbed at her eyes.

The Fates?

This woeful little Hollywood anecdote vividly demonstrates in the extreme the impoverished nature of the Christ-less Christmas anytime and anywhere, not just mid-20th century Los Angeles. Without joyful recognition that "today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and

Lord," (Lk 2:11) Christmas will be bleak and poor, regardless of how many cookies baked and how many cards sent out, how much spiked eggnog imbibed and how much mistletoe hung. It will be bleak because without Jesus, Christmas cannot deliver what it promises: "good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Lk 2:10). You cannot give yourself a "Merry Little Christmas" because you cannot give yourself the peace that is God's to give "to those on whom His favor rests" (Lk 2:14). Groping for happiness by groping at symbols of Christmas, rich as those symbols may be (such as the song's "shining star," ultimately emblematic of Bethlehem's shining star) will be pointless if one relies on mysterious "fates" in hopes of future happiness. Instead, one must seek that happiness by perseveringly following those Christmas symbols, as did the magi from the east, (Mt 2:1-2) to the place where the symbols are intended

to lead: the crib of the newborn King. "Christmas" as a winter holiday concept takes over every year. Department store windows display animated caroler mannequins alongside jolly snowmen. TV schedules are glutted with generic Christmas specials, several pushing insistently towards quick and merciful oblivion. Radio play lists feature renditions of holiday songs by performers not normally associated with wholesome winter cheer. (Sort of the modern audio equivalent of the slightly debauched 1940's Hollywood party.)

But our Christmas is not "Christmas" the winter holiday concept. Our Christmas, the birthday of Christ the Lord, has a meaning infinitely deeper and richer than the enjoyable but superficial pleasures of a winter holiday represented by store window and media displays (although there is no harm—only a good deal of simple fun—in the snowmen in the store windows or the chatty red-nosed reindeer on TV. They are ours to smile over and enjoy as long as they are understood in the proper Christian context).

Christ is Coming!

The way to a Christ-filled Christmas lies in preparing properly for the great feast. Such preparation means taking Advent seriously—not only as a symbolic replay of the Lord's birth in Bethlehem, thousands of years ago, but, more importantly, as a time to get ready for His Second Coming, at the end of time and at the end of our lives. How ready are we for either coming? What does our conscience tell us when we examine it honestly and thoroughly in light of the Lord's commandments?

There is no better way to prepare for the Lord's coming in time, at the end of time, or at the end of our lives than by sincere and thoughtful Advent participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation. By purposefully adhering to the sense of amendment required by the sacrament, that is, doing our human best to observe the Lord's words, "Do not sin any more," (Jn 8:11) we can truly say that we are ready for Christmas, we are ready for Christ. He is always ready for us. Come, let us adore Him!

—Mary Chang Flynn is a member of St. Cecilia Parish, San Francisco and does Layout and Design for the Charismatics.

Come, Let Us Adore Him!

By Mary Chang Flynn

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When Sister asked the class, "Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem?" A boy raised his hand and replied, "Because his mother was there."

A San Francisco Story



A cabbie picks up a nun and the cab driver won't stop staring at her. She asks him why he is staring. He replies: "I have a question to ask you, but I don't want to offend you".

She answers, "My son, you cannot offend me. When you're as old as I am and have been a nun as long as I have, you get a chance to see and hear just about everything. I'm sure that there's nothing you could say or ask that I would find offensive."

"Well, I've always had a fantasy to have a nun kiss me." She responds, "Well, let's see what we can do about that: #1, you have to be single and #2, you must be Catholic."

The cab driver is very excited and says, "Yes, I'm single and Catholic!" "OK" the nun says. "Pull into the next alley."

The nun fulfills his fantasy with a kiss that would make a hooker blush. But when they get back on the road, the cab driver starts crying.

"My dear child," said the nun, why are you crying?"

"Forgive me but I've sinned. I lied. I must confess, I'm married and I'm Jewish."

The nun says, "That's OK, my name is Kevin and I'm going to a costume party."

What is Peace Like?

There once was a King who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The King looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them. One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell, and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all. But when the King looked, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The King chose the second picture. Why? "Because," explained the King, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart because God is there."

Christmas is love in action. Every time we love, it's Christmas. So when you toss out the Christmas tree, be careful you don't throw out the Christmas spirit with it.



**"It is possible to live for the next life and be merry in this."
Thomas More**

A woman went to the Post Office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards. "What denomination?" asked the clerk. "Oh, good heavens. Have we come to this?" said the woman. "Well, give me 50 of the Catholic, 25 Baptist, 25 Methodist, and 25 Episcopalian ones."

Umbert the Unborn

by Gary Cangemi

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Hark the herald angels sing, newborn babies do we bring...

Peace on earth and mency mild, especially for the unborn child...

Joyful all ye babies know, God made us to live and grow...

Hear our Christmas prayer above, for all the unborn Peace and Love.

An Example of Hospitality

Once I was driving from Northern to Southern California to visit my parents. It was a long drive and I decided to stop overnight in the town of Santa Barbara. I hoped to find a prayer meeting, stay in a motel, and continue the next morning.

Checking the local phone directory I called a Christian businessmen's organization to inquire about a Catholic charismatic prayer meeting. The person on the phone referred me to a man named Tom. His wife Sue answered the phone. When I explained that I was a stranger passing through and looking for a prayer meeting, she apologized and explained



that the meeting had been held the night before. After a

Catholic faith, and both loved the Lord. I was a stranger and she welcomed me (see Mt 25:35). We are both widows now, in a new season of our lives. Yet when I think of 'welcome' she will remain at the top of my list of examples. Sue has a true gift of hospitality.

A Scripture Reflection

Jesus welcomed friends and strangers, young and old, rich and poor. Consider blind Bartimaeus along the road. "As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' He called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.' Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me.' Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to Him.

When he came near, Jesus asked

Practice Hospitality

by Linda Schubert

moment of silence she asked me if I had a place to stay. When I said no, she invited me to stay with her.

But it was not an ordinary night with Sue and Tom. At her request I met her in a bank parking lot in downtown Santa Barbara, and followed her upstairs to her husband's upscale office. That very evening, in deep financial crisis, they were dismantling his office and moving everything to their home, which was soon to be on the market, along with their yacht.

That night Sue and I talked for hours. We had similar backgrounds, both raising stepchildren, both converts to the

him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied. Jesus said to him, "receive your sight, your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God" (Lk 18:35-43).

Jesus not only welcomed Bartimaeus, He listened to and empowered him with health and the desire to follow Him. As with Bartimaeus, we have to receive the welcome, receive the empowerment. Every time we receive (permit to enter, accept, welcome) it makes a difference in our lives. In many different ways Jesus welcomed, listened

to and empowered Zacchaeus, the thief on the cross, Mary Magdalene, the

Centurion, the Apostles and more.

When I asked some people what welcome felt like, they responded:

Cared for; secure; like I was at home; I belonged; gratitude; awe that strangers would be kind to me; accepted; valuable; loved; needed.

When I asked what unwelcome felt like, they responded:

Humiliated; small; like hiding; ashamed; angry; unsure of myself; unworthy; withdrawn; unsafe; lonely; afraid; isolated. (If Jesus had ignored Bartimaeus, would he have felt like this too?)

A Personal Reflection

Take a moment and think about times when you felt welcome, and times when you felt unwelcome. How did it feel to be welcomed? To be unwelcome? Feeling welcome is a sensitive thing. Once I heard a story about a woman who rejected a nondenominational church in favor of the Catholic Church simply because 'the Catholics would leave her alone.' This challenges us to be sensitive in the way we welcome, respecting the needs of the individual. Another time I heard a story about a woman sitting alone in church praying. A woman came and sat nearby in silence. After a while the second woman turned to the first and said, "I've been so unforgiving." She didn't know the woman, but there was a presence of the Holy Spirit that welcomed her in the silence, and she began to open up. They prayed together quietly.

Talk to the Lord

Lord Jesus I bring You the times I have felt unwelcome. Please show me a deep memory of feeling this way. Speak to me about that event and reveal the truth of Your welcome. If I shut down and made a vow to close my heart, I'm sorry. I reverse it. Please release me from all unhealthy patterns and effects of that decision. I repent of any rudeness, indifference, cold greetings, closed

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What God Wants From Page 4

known to me your ways,

Lord teach me your paths.

Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. For you I wait all the long day. Ps 25:4-5

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me." Jn 4:34

No disciple is above his teacher....Mt 10:24

Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Mt 6:10

I hope these passages guide you in your decisions. They guide the pages that follow, as I set out an approach to making decisions. Ultimately, a point comes when all those who persevere are able to let go of their lives and fall into God's will. I hope this book will help you reach that point in His grace.

—Condensed from **What Does God Want? A Practical Guide to Making Decisions**, by Michael Scanlan, T.O.R.© 1996 Our Sunday Visitor. Available at www.osv.com

Hospitality From Page 10

doors, any mistreatment of others, withholding welcome, or holding back.

Lord, please teach me how to bring people closer to You through my welcome. It is Your welcome that they need most. Let my welcome be a doorway to You, that they, like Bartimaeus, might receive their 'sight' and follow You.

Refresh
my heart in
CHRIST
PHILEMON 1:20

Listen to What the Lord Might Say

Listen to what the Lord might say: "Beloved, I can change the pattern and heal you of the roots of unwelcome. This is a new season for you. As you stay open to Me I will give you understanding of your needs and the needs of others. I will teach you how to welcome, whether you know them or even like them. I will enable you to choose to love with My love so that they will feel the welcome of the Father, no matter what the situation. You may not be able to change your feelings, but you can make a decision to allow My feelings to come to them."

Pray for Others

Lord Jesus, I bring you the people who have been hurt by not being welcomed. Pour Your love into the places that feel belittled, abandoned and ashamed. Help them, Jesus, as You are helping me. (Bring Him specific people by name.)

Prayer of Gratitude

Thank You, Lord, for all the times I have been welcomed in my life. Thank You for the people You sent just when I needed them. Thank You for my parents, spouse, children, and friends. Amen!

—Condensed from *Precious Power* by Linda Schubert. © 2004 Linda Schubert.

12 Days From Page 1

Seven swans a-swimming is for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Eight maids a-milking represent the eight Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit; Ten lords a-leaping, the Ten Commandments.

Eleven pipers piping are the 11 faithful apostles. Twelve drummers drumming refer to the 12 articles of faith in the Apostles' Creed.

When you hear or sing this carol again, make it an act of faith and a review of our basic beliefs. Merry Christmas!

—**Maranist Brother John Samaha**, a former high school and adult education teacher in the U.S., including the Oakland Diocese and Lebanon, is now retired and residing at Villa St. Joseph in Cupertino, Ca.

Adoration From Page 2

song of the angels, and Mary's secret song, before it was ours. We ought to recapture its joy and magnificence in company with them and her.

We don't sing the old carols often enough nowadays, or the modern ones either. It would be a good thing if we had some records at home to play according to the season of the liturgical year, so that we could live the great joyful festivals of the Church together in unison. The liturgy should be extended into the bosom of the family. The song of the Church ought to go on resounding in the atmosphere of our homes; the lights on the altar will burn less brightly, no doubt, but just as truly, in the home, and everybody should feel that it's Christmas everywhere and be able to see the joy of it on everybody's face.

What a holy feast Christmas is! May it mark for each one of us a renewal of our inmost, holy Christian life.

May it bring to all the realization of the link between the two phrases: glory to God and peace to men of good will. Peace will grow among men with the glory they give to God. The glory of God is the very peace of men. By kneeling together on this Christmas night before God who became one of us, we perform the most direct, the most constructive and the most creative act of human brotherhood.

—Condensed from *Christian Life, Day by Day* by Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens. English Translation © Burns & Oates Ltd., 1963. The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland.



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Contact Judy 415/826-7827

Nov 29 FCCC GENERAL MEETING & ELECTIONS,
7:00 PM, St. Veronica Parish Cafe, Alida at Ponderosa,
So. San Francisco

Dec 3 FIRST FRIDAY MASS of the Sacred Heart
St. Veronica Church,
Alida Way at Ponderosa, So. SF
Fr. John Bohnert, Principal Celebrant

Dec 15 ANGLO BOARD MEETING, 7:30 PM,
Lower Church Serra Room,
St.. Cecilia Church, 17th Ave at Vicente St., SF

Dec 27 FCCC GENERAL MEETING, COMMISSIONING & PARTY, 7:00 PM,
St. Patrick's Church Hall,
756 Mission St. (between 3rd & 4th Sts.) SF

Jan 7 FIRST FRIDAY MASS of the Sacred Heart
St. Charles Borromeo Church
713 South Van Ness Ave at 18th St., SF
Fr. Nestor Alterado, Principal Celebrant



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8:00 PM Vigil Mass with Children's Choir, Fr. Joe Landi
11:45 PM, Caroling & Blessing of the Creche
12:00 PM, Mass at Midnight, with Choir & Orchestra.
Msgr. Mike Harriman, Principal Celebrant

Christmas Day, December 25

7:30 AM Mass During the Day, Fr. Vito Perrone
9:30 AM, Family Christmas Mass, Msgr. Mike Harriman
11:00 AM, Mass During the Day (Sung) with Choir & Orchestra, Fr. Joe Landi
12:30 PM, Mass During the Day, with the Gospel Jubilation Singers, Fr. Joe Landi

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HOW TO EXPAND CHRISTMAS JOY YEAR 'ROUND

"If joy is our Christian birthright, why are we so lackadaisical in cultivating it?" asks Edward R. Walsh of Westbury, NY. "How can we enlarge our capacity for joy?" Here are Walsh's suggestions:

- Pray daily that the Holy Spirit will bless you with joy.
 - Select religious reading that emphasizes joyful aspects of our faith. A diet of doom-and-gloom forced feedings won't elevate your mood.
 - Act joyfully, even if your mood is otherwise. And as sure as day follows night, the darkness in your soul will yield to the dawn of a brighter outlook.
 - Share your good mood.
 - Share joyful news. Joy is contagious. Write upbeat letters. Make upbeat phone calls. Speak well of others in their presence.
 - Cultivate friends who share your philosophy. Avoid the nay-sayers, the put-down artists, and people-knockers. Seek out the joy-givers and let them refresh your battered spirit.
 - Imagine yourself in joyful company. The people you admire can cheer you up. Do you have heroes or heroines? Stand mentally in their presence, and absorb the joyful glow of their personalities.
 - Join the Fellowship of Merry Christians, or make a needy person a Merry Christian.
- Adapted from **Holy Humor** compiled by Cal & Rose Samra.,
(c) 1996 by the Fellowship of Merry Christmas, Inc.

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We are not going to be able to spend as much as we normally do on Christmas gifts for our children this year. They will be disappointed. How can I help them understand what Christmas is truly about?

Your situation is one that I am certain many parents go through every Christmas season. I believe, though, that you are being presented with a possibly unforgettable opportunity. Giving and receiving gifts at Christmas is a wonderful tradition. The problem comes, however, when we focus too much on the gifts and not enough on the “Giver.”

A gift is defined as something given to show friendship and affection. Christmas is most definitely about giving – the giving of love. The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest gift ever bestowed on mankind. God, who is love, gave Himself. He willingly took on a human nature in order to suffer and die so that we might live.

Make Christmas Meaningful Through Love

If you want to make Christmas meaningful and different this year for the people around you, make it one of love. I guarantee you that if you stop and consider everyone in your life, and look deeply, you will see that each one is in need of love – we all are in one way or another. It may sound too easy to say, “Give people love this Christmas.”

But do you know what? One cannot give what one does not have.

In order to give true love, we must first be filled with true love. And that, my friends, is to be filled with love for God. How do we do that? One of the best ways is so simple. Read His story. Read it to your children. I am convinced that no one who reads the story of Jesus Christ found in the four Gospels of the New Testament in a prayerful way can come away without falling in love with Him. And when you fall in love with Him and stay in love with Him, your life will change. Your



Christmases will be different.

The celebration of the birth of our Savior is fast approaching. Will we be ready, or

love can do that.

Often we think we are too busy to do these things, and perhaps we are. A priest once told Mother Teresa that he was so busy he hardly had time to pray. Her response to him was, “Father, if you are too busy to pray, then you are too busy!”

I myself grew up in a poverty-stricken family of eight children, all girls. Our mother raised us by herself. As little as she had, it was always a miracle that every Christmas there was a tree and a little doll and toy dishes for each of us. We never really knew how she did it. But do you know what the warmest memory from my childhood is? It is not those toys we received. It is the memory of a time when I was very sick, and my mother was rocking me and holding me with so much tenderness. I wanted that moment to last forever.

Dear Grace... by Grace MacKinnon

will we be too busy with material things? The gift so badly needed is the one the “Giver” gave. In a family, children need to be hugged and told that they are precious to us. Wives need a husband to listen to their heart and make them feel cherished. Husbands need a wife to look up to them with respect and appreciation for all they do. These are only some of the gifts we profoundly long for and are in need of.

Material Goods Do Not Bring Intimacy with God

Material gifts do not bring intimacy with God. Only the gift of

Surprise your family this year. Don't spend your last few days of preparation in shopping. Spend them instead in finding ways in which to lead them closer to the “Giver” in the things you do. Give your children something valuable to model. This does not mean that their attention will suddenly not be on the material gifts, but it will be a beginning. And it will be memorable.

—Grace holds an MA in Theology and is a syndicated columnist and speaker on Catholic Doctrine. ©Grace MacKinnon, 2004. Contact Grace at www.deargrace.com



Vision Statement of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (Adopted January 2004)

The Lord is calling the Charismatic Renewal to be bold in a united voice to make an impact on the Church and society by proclaiming:

- 1. the priority of the Lordship of Jesus**
- 2. the Father's love for all**
- 3. the power of the Spirit in all we do**
- 4. the radical call to a witness of holiness.**

Estamos

todos muy familiarizados con la Escritura que nos alienta a “ser santos en todo lo que hacen, ya que es el Santo el que los ha llamado... Sean santos porque Yo Soy santo”. La llamada a la santidad es muy clara, ¿pero qué significa exactamente ser santo? Estoy seguro de que todos tenemos nuestros santos favoritos; aquellos que nos han precedido llevando vidas santas y piadosas. Sin embargo, la llamada a la santidad no es sólo para personas especiales, aquellos que son capaces de vivir vidas extraordinariamente piadosas.

La llamada a la santidad es una llamada a cada cristiano. El Catecismo nos recuerda: “todos los cristianos de todo estado o condición están llamados a la plenitud de la vida cristiana y a la perfección de la caridad. Todos están llamados a la santidad: ‘sean perfectos como Su Padre celestial es perfecto’ “ (CIC 2013).

tempo.

En el relato de la Ascensión (Hch 1, 9 -10) los discípulos se enfrentan a una pregunta “Galileos, ¿qué hacéis ahí mirando al cielo?” Luego se ven tranquilizados porque Jesús volverá al final de los tiempos. Mientras tanto tienen una tarea que hacer. Algo que sólo se podía hacer en el poder del Espíritu Santo, que será derramado sobre ellos en Pentecostés. Podemos aprender mucho de este texto. Si queremos ser santos, debemos mantener nuestra mirada en Cristo que está sentado en el lugar celestial a la derecha del Padre.

Es importante para nosotros cultivar una perspectiva celestial; de otro modo nos enredaríamos demasiado en los asuntos del mundo. Sin embargo, así como mirar al Señor que nos ha precedido, nosotros cristianos encarnados estamos llamados a ser Cristo para aquellos a nuestro alrededor. La persona verdaderamente santa es así aquella que tiene su cabeza sobre las nubes y sus pies firmemente sobre la tierra.

constantemente tratando de purificarse. Cristo sin embargo ha ofrecido “por los pecados un solo sacrificio... mediante una sola oblation ha llevado a la perfección (santidad) para siempre a los santificados” (Hb 10, 12-14). Cristo, por lo tanto, ha abierto las puertas de la santidad para todas las personas. Tenemos que estar preparados para apropiarnos de lo que Cristo ha ganado para nosotros. Recientemente el P. Raniero Cantalamessa nos alienta a hacer esto orando a Jesús utilizando las siguientes palabras: “Yo soy tu pecado; tu eres mi santidad”. Orando así deberíamos ver nuestras prendas sucias transformadas en los ropajes de la rectitud. Así que la santidad es un don que nos da Jesús a través del poder del Espíritu Santo. El Espíritu Santo es el agente principal en nuestra santificación. Como hijos de Dios tenemos la fuente de la santidad divina dentro de nosotros y necesitamos permanecer constantemente abiertos a la acción del Espíritu Santo para que podamos convertirnos, mas plenamente en “templos del Espíritu Santo”.

Habiendo dicho que la santidad es un don, no debemos hacernos complacientes. La Iglesia nos dice que debemos “conservar y perfeccionar en nuestra vida esa santidad que recibimos” (LG 40). Un santo no se hace santo de la noche a la mañana. El camino de la perfección abraza el camino de la cruz. San Pablo constantemente nos recuerda en sus cartas que no hay santidad sin renuncia y sin combate espiritual. De hecho, muchas de las obras espirituales clásicas destacan el ascetismo y la mortificación como caminos de santidad. Si vamos a seguir a Cristo imitándole, entonces tenemos que orar por la gracia de combatir los vicios en nuestras vidas y permitir que el Espíritu Santo aumente nuestras virtudes. San Gregorio de Nicea nos recuerda que la perfección cristiana tiene un solo límite: el de no tener ninguno. (CIC 2028).

La santidad: responsabilidad de los laicos

Como hemos visto, cada cristiano está llamado a ser santo. Esta



La Llamada de la Santidad

por Michelle Moran

Recuerdo a un párroco que comentó una vez que alguien era “de mentalidad tan celestial que era terrenalmente inútil” pare la tarea particular que estaban emprendiendo. Así que sería un error igualar la santidad con el más allá. A través de la Encarnación, Dios nos ha abierto el camino de la santidad. Jesús nos mostró cómo vivir en obediencia al Padre. Llevó una vida santa perfectamente, y nunca tuvo miedo de implicarse en los temas sociales, políticos o relacionales de su

Dios santifica: comunica santidad

Has intentado alguna vez ser santo? Cuanto tiempo duro? Hablando humanamente, la santidad es imposible. No es algo que podamos conseguir por medio de nuestros propios meritos o esfuerzos.

En el Antiguo Testamento se decreto que ciertas personas, como los levitas, eran mas santas que otras y se les dieron responsabilidades especiales. Uno de sus deberes era ofrecer incontables

ofrendas de pecado de parte de las personas, que estaban



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2:00-6:00pm, 11 Diciembre 2004
Iglesia Corpus Christi
Santa Rosa y Alemany, SF
(Intercambio de Regalos)

Bienvenidos a Casa

Sábado
7:00 am to 7:30 am
Radio Única 10.10 AM



la Santidad

santidad debería ser evidente en el modo en que vivimos nuestras vidas cotidianas corrientes. Se debería ver en nuestra familia, en nuestras relaciones mas amplias, y en nuestros trabajos y en el modo general en que llevamos nuestros asuntos. Recuerdo haber hablado sobre la santidad con una hermana religiosa anciana que estaba radiante de amor de Dios. Dijo que las personas verdaderamente santas no se dan cuenta normalmente de su santidad porque se dan cuenta de sus imperfecciones. Así que no te preocupes si no te sientes santo, este es el primer paso hacia la santidad.

San Pablo nos dice que, al ir abrazando la llamada a la santidad, “brillas como antorcha en el mundo” (Flp 2, 15). Estamos llamados entonces a vivir vidas distintivas, dando testimonio del Evangelio a traves de nuestras palabras y acciones. De este modo participaremos plenamente en las metas apostolicas de la Iglesia. Christifideles Laici alienta a los fieles laicos a la doble tarea de “la evangelizacion y santificacion de la humanidad” (Christifideles Laici 30). No debemos perder de vista nunca la vocacion fundamental del laico, que es “santificar lo temporal”. Nuestro apostolado esta por lo tanto en el mundo asi como en la iglesia. (Vat II: AA, 5).

Creo que esto es lo que Cristo estaba defendiendo cuando dijo “Ustedes son la sal de la tierra” y “ustedes son la luz del mundo” (Mt 5,13.14). Una vez vi un cartel divertido que decia “si los cristianos fueran mas salados, el mundo seria un lugar mas sabroso.” Así, la santidad no se trata solo de la santificacion personal. La llamada es a dedicarnos al cien por ciento a la gloria de Dios y al servicio de nuestro proximo.

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Querida Gracia, Yo soy Católico, pero quiero ser “más” Católico. ¿Qué necesito hacer?



El volverse “más” Católico es esencialmente ser más Cristiano y el ser más Cristiano es ser más como Jesús. Es muy fácil decir que lo amamos, pero ¿nos damos cuenta de lo que eso significa? Con frecuencia les hablo a mis estudiantes sobre esto. Si decimos que amamos a Cristo, esto implica que lo conocemos, ¿no es verdad? Porque, ¿cómo podemos amar a alguien a quien no conocemos? Sí, supongo que alguno podría decir que se ha enamorado “a primera vista”, pero incluso entonces, el amor verdadero y profundo usualmente proviene de conocer al amado.

Cuando una persona se enamora, acaso pregunta, “¿Significa esto que ahora tengo que conocerlo? ¿Tendré que pasar tiempo contigo?” ¡Desde luego que no lo pregunta! Todo lo contrario. Cuando nos estamos enamorando, no podemos esperar para llegar a conocer a la persona. Y no aguantamos la espera para verlo y pasar tiempo junto a él o ella. ¿Hacemos esto con Dios?

Yo he llegado a creer profundamente que una de las principales razones por la que muchos Cristianos

no hacen un mayor esfuerzo para conocer a Dios, es porque les falta lo que el finado filósofo Católico Dietrich von Hildebrand llamó “la disponibilidad al cambio.” Basándose en la carta de San Pablo a los Efesios, von Hildebrand escribió: “Toda verdadera vida Cristiana debe iniciar con un profundo anhelo de llegar a ser un hombre nuevo en Cristo, y con una disponibilidad interior de ‘retirar al hombre viejo’ – una disponibilidad para llegar a ser algo fundamentalmente diferente.” (Transformación en Cristo, p.3)

Por tanto, a efecto de volvernos más Católicos – más Cristianos – primero debemos estar listos y dispuestos a morir a nuestro viejo yo para convertirnos en una nueva persona. ¿Y cuál será nuestra motivación? Para algunos, al principio será el temor a Dios y a la condenación eterna, pero quédate tranquilo, esto pronto se cambiará en gozo y amor, porque mientras más lo conozcas a Él, más lo amarás. Y al llegar a conocer el inacabable amor de Él por ti, desearás complacerlo en cada aspecto de tu vida. Esto es lo que sucede cuando verdaderamente nos enamoram.

¿Qué necesitas hacer? Aprender lo que Jesús enseñó. Así es como podrás conocerlo y amarlo. Estudia la fe mediante las Escrituras y la Tradición de la Iglesia. La Iglesia enseña a Cristo y en el nombre de Cristo. Consigue una copia del Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica. Aprende bien la fe.

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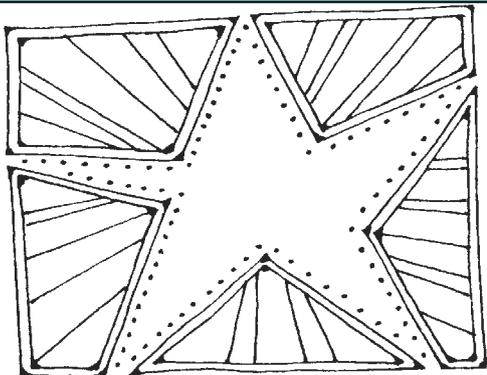
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THE S·T·A·R

First Friday Mass of The Sacred Heart

December 3, 2004

7:00 p.m. Rosary, 7:30 p.m. Mass

St. Veronica Church

Alida at Ponderosa Way, So. San Francisco

Fr. Ed Bohnert, Principal Celebrant

Music by the Gospel Jubilation Singers

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