

*Transforming
Lives Through
Jesus Christ*

SWORD POINTS

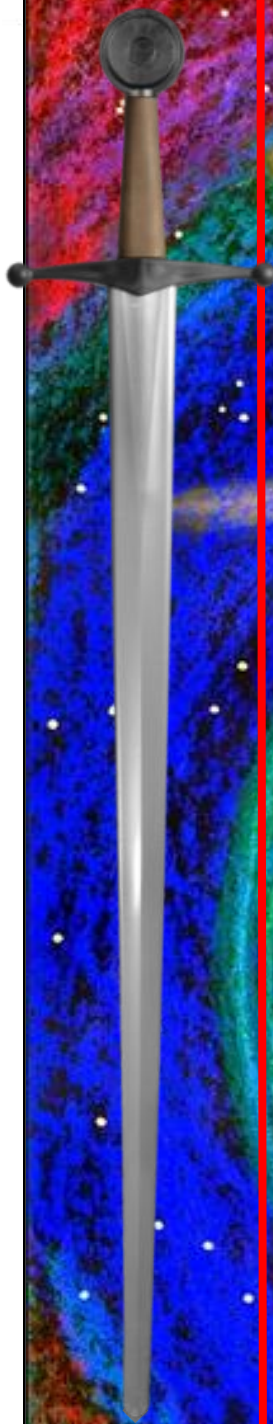
December 31, 2025

www.SaintPaulsBrookfield.com

(203) 775-9587



FINDING THE EPIPHANY



† Find and Seek!

Although technically this Sunday is the 2nd Sunday of Christmas, because of its close proximity - 2 days - to the feast of The Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6, The Epiphany will be celebrated by many non-Orthodox Christian denominations on this Sunday. The Orthodox Christians around the world, however, will celebrate Christmas either on January 6th, while Orthodox Epiphany is also celebrated later, as the celebration of the Baptism of Jesus. With its depiction of the Magi, or Three Wise Men, in many Nativity scenes on Christmas, it's just become a non-event with all the hype for Christmas shopping stealing the scene as early as September.

The Epiphany is meant to be a bright shiny and HOLY Revelation. It IS the continuing and the expanding of the celebration of the birth of our Messiah, and His importance to us all! But perhaps we are worn down after the four weeks of anticipation in Advent, the hustle and bustle of preparation for gifts and food and gatherings, the familiar rush of the time of year, followed by the pageantry and the glorious music, and then the usual "let down." Perhaps Epiphany, the 12th Day of Christmas, has become an anti-climax, the end of the story, yet it is meant as a beginning.

We open new chapters of the swiftly moving Lectionary Story that will take us from Jesus the Baby, to Christ our Redeemer. While we celebrate the birthday with great fanfare, the Epiphany moves us into the reason for which this Child was born of a woman, the revelation of God's eternal purpose is upon us. A "theophany" - the manifestation of God visible to humans - a re-discovery now. One definition of "epiphany" is "a sudden insight or intuitive understanding."

While dates are relative to a given denomination or organization, at the Nativity of Jesus, Luke tells us that the angels appeared to the shepherds who received the good news of great joy, but Luke never mentions the Three Kings. Matthew never mentions the shepherds or even the birth itself except for a brief phrase: "...until she had borne a son; and he [Joseph] named him Jesus." But Matthew did tell us of the "...wise men from the East..." They saw a great star revealing to them the need for a journey to pay homage to a new born king of the Jews. Herod gets involved and we begin to see the ominous cloud moving in to shadow the glorious star. But having heard this story so very many times perhaps we've tuned it out. Generally arriving on a week day rather than a Sunday, when Christmas is over and the work and school weeks are back in swing, Epiphany is not what it has meant in the past. It's time, as a new year begins, to be re-awakened to the wonder and to ponder what it might mean for each of us in our own time? What sudden insight or understanding might come?

These three "Kings" weren't likely kings at all but rather astrologers and astronomers. Possibly, as they have been called, they were Magi, priests of Zoroastrianism from ancient Persia, who saw a sign to follow in the famous star. Traveling as many as a thousand or more miles, their journey would likely have taken months, not days, and they would have had an entourage carrying food, tents, supplies, etc. At last they found King Herod to tell him, and us all, of the significance, power, and majesty this Child brings. And as the Magi left by another road to avoid Herod, we learn in later verses, that Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus fled to Egypt. Emigrants being warned of the acts of Herod murdering male children trying to kill the One. They didn't return until after Herod's death.

Today, it is a new dawn, another chance to read these Scriptures, not only on this day, but each Sunday (and weekdays, too!), especially the Gospel, and to hear, feel, and know the message deeply within. In the compression of time given in the Gospels and the Church calendar, it is a short season indeed before we begin the unfolding of the ministry, miracles, teaching, sacrificial execution, and resurrection of Jesus. It is time again to rediscover the astonishment, the amazement, the true adoration in this event.

Hear the story as if for the very first time - know that we have been given an extraordinary gift in Jesus, our Christ, Our Lord, who has been born to us! Let us be overwhelmed with joy! Let us search diligently for the Child within us and around us. Epiphany is a time to seek the Magi-cal gifts in our own life that call us to pay homage, follow, and live into the light and life of Christ in boldness and confidence through faith in him. Isaiah seems almost to be shouting: Arise, shine; for your light has come! It is time for each of us to experience finding The Epiphany again or for the first time.



† Transforming Stewardship

"Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

MATTHEW 2:11

The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their treasure chests for Him is an image that we should all try to follow each day. In gratitude for all that we have been given, we are called to generously share all of our gifts, not just the ones we pick and choose. God wants us to be generous with everything, but especially that one thing that means the most to us.



† This Week at St. Paul's

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Thu, Jan 1 | | Holy Name |
| | 12 noon | - 12 Days: Williams Park Hike |
| Fri, Jan 2 | -10:00 am | - Friday Walking Group, Richter Park, Danbury |
| | 5:00 pm | - 12 Days: Duck Pin Bowling, Danbury |
| Sat, Jan 3 | - 7:30 am | - John 21:12 Group, Theo's Downtown Diner, New Milford |
| | 8:00 am | - Men's Prayer Breakfast, Guild Room |
| | 10:00 am | - PraiseMoves, Zoom |
| | 6:00 pm | - 12 Days: Cooking with Tim - Soldout |
| Sun, Jan 4 | | The Second Sunday after Christmas Day |
| | - 8:00 am | - Traditional Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |
| | 10:30 am | - Sunday School, Classrooms |
| | 10:30 am | - Contemporary Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |
| Mon, Jan 5 | - 7:00 pm | - Men's Bible Study, Crocker Hall (YouTube Live) |
| | 7:00 pm | - 12 Days: Home Eucharist at Andrea/Brian White's Home |
| Tues, Jan 6 | | The Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ |
| | - 9:30 am | - Ladies Tuesday AM Bible Study, Guild Room |
| | 7:00 pm | - Boy Scout Troop #5 |
| Wed, Jan 7 | -10:00 am | - Holy Communion & Healing (YouTube Live) |
| | 11 to Noon | - Drive-Thru Food Collection #150 |
| Thu, Jan 8 | - 9:30 am | - Iron Sharpens Iron Discussion Group, Guild Room |
| | 11:30 am | - Chronic Pain Group, Guild Room |
| | 7:30 pm | - Property Committee, Guild Room |
| | 7:30 pm | - Choir Practice, Sanctuar |
| Fri, Jan 9 | -10:00 am | - Friday Walking Group, Shepaug River Trail, Roxbury |
| Sat, Jan 10 | - 7:30 am | - John 21:12 Group, Theo's Downtown Diner, New Milford |
| | 8:00 am | - Men's Prayer Breakfast, Guild Room |
| | 10:00 am | - PraiseMoves, Zoom |
| Sun, Jan 11 | | The First Sunday after Epiphany |
| | - 8:00 am | - Traditional Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |
| | 9:30 am | - Adult Class, Guild Room |
| | 10:30 am | - Sunday School, Classrooms |
| | 10:30 am | - Contemporary Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |



2nd Sunday
of
Christmas

Check our website daily for schedule updates.



The Priest-in-Charge **WEEKLY**

Fr. Nate, our Priest-in-Charge is distributing a weekly e-mail to communicate things directly from his desk to yours. **Connection, communication, and care** are among the highest priorities of his new ministry, and he wants to make sure there are regular touch points between us. If you would like to receive "*The Priest-in-Charge Weekly*" and **already receive weekly e-mails from St. Paul's**, you don't have to do anything - you're already included on the list! If you would like to receive "*The Priest-in-Charge Weekly*" and **DO NOT receive weekly e-mails from St. Paul's**, or if you want to opt out, write Fr. Nate at priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com and let him know.

† **This Date on the Church Calendar**

Tuesday, January 6th

The Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ

The name "Epiphany" is derived from a Greek word meaning "manifestation" or "appearing." Anglican Prayer Books interpret the word with an alternative title, "The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles." The last phrase, of course, is a reference to the story of the Wise Men from the East.

A Christian observance on January 6 is found as early as the end of the second century in Egypt. The feast combined commemorations of the visit of the Magi, led by the star of Bethlehem; the Baptism of Jesus in the waters of the River Jordan; and Jesus' first recorded miracle, the changing of water into wine at the marriage of Cana of Galilee - all thought of as manifestations of the incarnate Lord.

The Epiphany is still the primary Feast of the Incarnation in Eastern Churches, and the three-fold emphasis is still prominent. In the West, however, including Anglican Churches, the story of the Wise Men has tended to overshadow the other two events. Modern lectionary reform, reflected in the 1979 Prayer Book, has recovered the primitive trilogy, by setting the event of the Baptism as the theme of the First Sunday after the Epiphany in all three years, and by providing the story of the Miracle at Cana as the Gospel for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany in Year C.



† “Away in a Manger, No Crib for His Bed”

Mangers are odd little things. They're feeding troughs, of course. In ancient Israel, they were made of stone. They're not super-comfortable, but you know what? In a pinch, they can be kind of protective.

That's why experts -priests who lived near Bethlehem, near a hill known for raising sacrificial lambs - would put lambs in them.

Not all the lambs; just the ones they thought were without blemish and suitable for the blood sacrifices that took place twice a day. Sacrifices to cover sin.

These were the lambs Bethlehem was famous for. There was a hill there with a tower, "Migdal Eder," and the flocks nearby were the ones that yielded lambs for sacrifice.

The priests wanted to keep the lambs without bumps and bruises. So they'd wrap them up tightly. They'd swaddle them, wrapping them in cloths, like precious and terribly fragile bottles of wine.

And they'd lay them in a manger.

"Manger" is only mentioned in one account of Jesus' birth. (It's in Luke.) And it makes sense. There's really only a small group of people who would understand it's significance. And they are the very ones who hear the words:



"You will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger."

Shepherds! The shepherds of the sacrificial flock.

They knew what the cloths and the manger meant.

"This will be a sign to you," the angel said. And it was. It wouldn't have been a sign to many. But to them? Most definitely. And this sign was staggering.

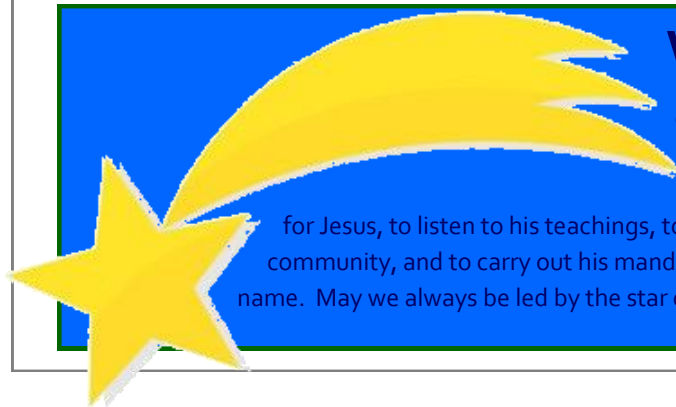
The long-expected King wasn't headed to a palace. No, this was going to be different.

He was going to be sacrificed.

They knew where the Messiah was born... but they also knew where He was headed.



"Peace on earth
and mercy mild
God and sinners, reconciled."



We hear about Herod's command to the Magi "to go and seek diligently for the child..." As grateful disciples and followers, we need also to search for Jesus, to listen to his teachings, to worship together as a supporting community, and to carry out his mandate to love and serve others in his name. May we always be led by the star of his generous and eternal love!

† **The Familiar Story**

[Jeremiah 31:7-14](#) - [Psalm 84](#) - [Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a](#) - [Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23](#)

God has a plan to redeem human beings from their slavery to disobedience and sin. His will has been revealed to us at various times, in various ways, through the history of his working in the world. This has been done in human story so that we might see and understand. Through the narrative we are given concrete acts, as in a play, that all lead us to a climax. Like a classical comedy, all the acts prepare us for a positive resolution that comes before the final curtain falls. It is Jesus Christ who is that resolution that makes sense of both the Old and the New Testaments.

In the Old Testament, Israel was God's son. Through Israel, humankind would see how we were meant to live as individuals and a community. God gave Israel the Commandments as a blueprint for living as his son. When Israel disobeyed God the Father, the nation was disciplined but not disowned. God also gave Israel an important role in his plan for humanity. Through the Israelites' obedience, the reality of his existence and nature was to be revealed to the rest of the world. It was a plan whose success was to be found not in its perfection, but rather in its prophetic nature. Through Israel we would know the eternal Son

when he dwelt among us as the Incarnate Word.

This world's powers tried to kill both Jesus and Moses, but they were spared. Jesus, like Moses, was to deliver God's people from bondage and slavery. Moses led the people of God throughout the Exodus and Jesus is the pioneer of our salvation. As Moses gave the Law to Israel, Jesus would be the Word of God to the people of God. Jesus was protected by the



*O Adonai |
Fr. Lawrence Lew,
O.P./Flickr*

disdain of the Jews of Judea for Nazareth ("Galilee of the Gentiles"), just as Moses was protected from the Pharaoh by the Egyptian disdain for shepherds.

It is important for St. Matthew to connect the Old and New Testament stories for us. There is one God with one plan for the salvation of the world. Just as he chose one people to be his subjects and witness to the world, he sent his one and only Son to be the one way of reconciliation with him.

When we see the parallels between God's actions with Israel and Jesus, we must not stop there. Rather we glimpse that divine pattern running on to the present, realizing what God would have us do as the Church. As Christ's body, we are to be the bearers of the gospel, God's Word, to the nations. As with Israel and so too with the Church, God's people are to be witnesses of God's nature through the testimony of their life of obedience to him. In that way we become the vehicle of the message of redemption from bondage to sin and death and the portal of entry into the Promised Land - the kingdom of heaven. Once more, God has blessed his people with both an identity (sons and heirs) and an eternally relevant purpose (an important role in the story of salvation).

Look It Up: Ephesians 1:3-6

Think About It: If God is at our center, then there is always a profound reason for gratitude.
- by The Rev. Dr. Chuck Alley, *The Living Church*, 2025

† This Date on the Church Calendar

Thursday, January 1st

The Feast of the Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

On the church's liturgical calendar, New Year's Day, January 1, is also the Feast of the Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is also sometimes called the Feast of the Circumcision, since it is observed on the eighth day or "octave" of Jesus' birth, when, in Jewish tradition, infant boys are circumcised and named, in accordance with the Law of Moses (Leviticus 12:3).

"After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21).

The name "Jesus" comes from *Joshua* or *Yehoshuah*, the Hebrew word for "savior" or "deliverer." Devotion to the Holy Name can be traced back to Paul's Letter to the Philippians, which says God highly exalted Jesus "and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:9-11).

The observance of the Circumcision on the first day of January was originally designated as a fast day in A.D. 567, to counter pagan festivals that occurred at the beginning of each new year. Eventually it evolved into a feast day, celebrating the naming of Jesus and his circumcision; in Jewish tradition circumcisions are often a festive occasions, when family and friends gather to witness the naming of the child.

Collect for the Holy Name

Eternal Father, you gave to your incarnate Son the holy name of Jesus to be the sign of our salvation: Plant in every heart, we pray, the love of him who is the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen (Book of Common Prayer, p. 213).

Hymn 435 (The Hymnal 1982)

At the Name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of glory now;
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word. ...

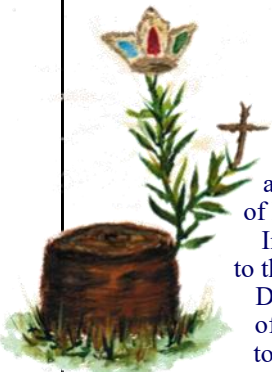
Name him, Christians, name him,
with love strong as death,
name with awe and wonder
and with bated breath;
he is God the Savior,
he is Christ the Lord,
ever to be worshiped,



† He Shall Be Called a Nazarene

The original language of the Bible was rich in word play. Several of the authors used what we would call puns. These had a practical as well as artistic purpose. Since few people could read, it was necessary to hold large sections of the scriptures in memory. Playing upon words aided this accomplishment. Sadly, most translations fail to convey the puns. The gospel of Matthew is a good example.

In Hebrew the word "netser" means "branch." It can refer to a plant branch or to the "branch" of a family tree. The most important family in Israel was that of David. Isaiah 11:1 talks about a "shoot (or branch) sprouting from the stump of Jesse (David's father). Matthew seems to be connecting the name of the town, Nazareth with the netser of the royal family.



† The Good News of Jeremiah's Weeping

Jeremiah 31:7-14

In *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairytale* the American theologian, Frederick Buechner, writes "the Gospel is bad news before it is good news." That is certainly true for Jeremiah, whose long career as a prophet is characterized by weeping. From the beginning his was the kind of ministry that no one appreciates because he was a truth teller to those who fabricated and lived by lies. But his was the voice that could not be silenced, though like the Truth that would one day come,



Jeremiah was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and familiar with grief. In the end Jeremiah will die in exile and the last words of his book will describe the burning and looting of the temple in Jerusalem. But despite the overwhelming bad news for Judah and the suffering that will ensue as the consequence of unfaithfulness God speaks a greater truth through the tears of the weeping prophet. On the other side of mourning is joy; on the other side of sorrow is gladness. The young will dance and the old shall be merry for the Lord, who scattered them will bring them back to life like a well-watered garden. But this greater truth can only be experienced if one accepts the lesser truth, the first truth about ourselves. That we, like Judah, prefer an easy word to a hard one, and have perfected the art of living illusionary lives believing secret sins can be confessed without being

acknowledged. In the end captivity will come if it hasn't already. But that is the good news for only from captivity do we listen to the greater truth. That in His weeping the Truth dried our tears for His pain purchased our joy, His death our life. And knowing that the Truth has set us free makes it much harder to go back to living a lie. And that is good news indeed.



† Socks & Toiletries for the Homeless

It's been especially frigid recently, so please remember homeless people are on their feet all day, and the only pair of socks they own are very likely to be threadbare. Once again, this year we are collecting socks and toiletries for the men's homeless shelter throughout the winter months. Place donations in the bins in the back of the church or Crocker Hall.

WHY DO PEOPLE START ATTENDING CHURCH?

A Friend Invited Me - 86%

Organized Visitation - 6%

Invited By The Priest - 6%

Advertising - 2%

RESOLVE

To be faithful
in little.
To be faithful
in much.

GIVE to your
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH



† *Art in the Christian Tradition*

The Last Judgment,

by Joos van Cleve (ca. 1485–1541),
oil on panel, painted circa 1525-1530,
© Metropolitan Museum, New York

In our Gospel reading for Sunday, at first, Nathanael is doubtful about Jesus. He asks, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” His judgement is quick and not very generous. But it does not last. By the end of the Gospel, Nathanael’s view has completely changed. After meeting Jesus, he comes to believe and says, “You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” Nathanael needed time and personal encounter to see who Jesus really was and to discover the goodness that lay beneath the surface.

Jesus, however, does not need time. Even after Nathanael’s dismissive comment, Jesus speaks well of him and recognizes his honesty straight away. The Gospel reminds us that while we often struggle to see the good in others, the Lord sees it immediately. That is both comforting and challenging. It is comforting because God notices the goodness in us that others may overlook; but it is also challenging, as like Jesus, we asked to always see the good in others.

We should be careful not to jump to conclusions about others, and even more careful not to be quick in our judgments, because Scripture reminds us again and again that ultimate judgement belongs to God alone. This truth is powerfully expressed in *The Last Judgment* by Joos Van Cleve, circa 1525. We see Christ sitting enthroned at the center, calm and authoritative, raised above the turmoil of the world, reminding us that judgement is not chaotic or impulsive, but judgment is just and divine. Christ appears at the moment of judgment in a burst of light and color, surrounded by clouds and putti and flanked by the apostles. The figure of Christ seems to be inspired by the famous ancient sculpture of the Laocoön. This majestic scene is divided into heavenly and earthly zones, which are linked by two hovering angels blowing trumpets, Jesus blesses the saved, shown at lower left, while Saint Michael shepherds the damned into hell burning in the distance at the right. The dead rise from their graves, while souls are separated, not according to appearances, reputation, or first impressions, but according to truth known fully only to God.





† Helping Our Neighbors

Here is an update about St. Paul's ongoing food-related ministries serving our community:

Drive Thru Food Collection - occurs every other Wednesday from 11 am - noon. We have now held 149 food drives since April 22, 2020! Last time we delivered food to the Bethel Community Food Pantry and the Jericho Partnership in Danbury.

Our next food collection, will be Wednesday, January 7th and will support the F.A.I.T.H. Food Pantry, Newtown, and the Jericho Food Pantry in Danbury.

Thank you all for your ongoing generosity and to the many volunteers who have helped to load the vehicles and deliver food to the pantries.

Next Drive-Thru Food Collection Wednesday January 7th

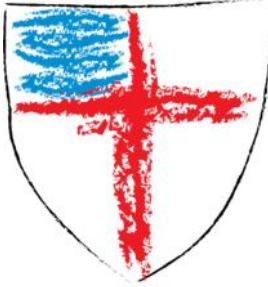


*Help us,
Help others!*

11 am to Noon

If you would like to request Altar flowers for a particular Sunday in Memory of a friend or loved one, please fill out the flower chart or envelope located in the back of the church or send an email request to dszen@yahoo.com or contact David Szen.





† Ih-pis-kuh-puh l / Dik-shuh-ner-ee

(Episcopal Dictionary)



† Water

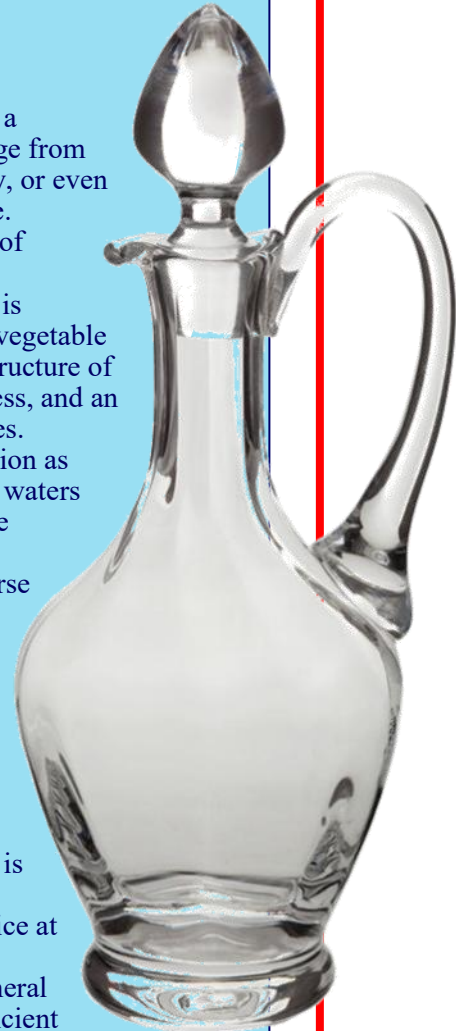
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Water - Water is a major element in religious rituals. It is a natural symbol of birth, fertility, life, and cleansing. To emerge from the waters is to be clean and fresh and new. To wash the body, or even the hands, is symbolically to become clean in an interior sense. Ritually, water is a symbol of purity and washing is a symbol of purifying. Ritual immersion renews life and power. It is a reappropriation of the energy of the first creation so that what is immersed is made new. Water is necessary to all animal and vegetable life. It is a part of their physical being. It is also part of the structure of many minerals. Water is characterized by fluidity, formlessness, and an almost endless ability to adapt itself to shapes and temperatures. Genesis describes the formless waste at the beginning of creation as “the waters” (Gn 1:2). Everything is born out of the primeval waters of chaos. The earth itself takes form when it emerges from the waters.

The principal use of water in Christian worship is to immerse the candidate in baptism. It is a sign not only of cleansing but of ritual death and rebirth in Jesus Christ. Water is the sacramental matter of baptism. The use of “holy water” for blessing, or for signing oneself with the cross, is intended to



renew baptism and the baptismal covenant in the believer. Water is also mixed with wine in the chalice at the eucharist, recalling the general custom in the ancient world of mixing water with wine before drinking it. It was given a symbolic interpretation during the Monophysite controversy. The mixture of water and wine was seen as symbolic of the union of humanity and deity in the person of Christ. The monophysites refused to add water, symbolizing their belief in one nature of the Incarnate Word.



† Women's Wed Evening Bible Study

The Women's Evening Bible Study has started a study on Wednesdays, at 7:00 on Zoom. The topic is Courage: people in the Bible who showed courage in difficult circumstances. We will see how each person met their situation, what role God played, and what we can apply to ourselves now. All women are welcome. For more information contact Kathy Whipple at kthyw49@gmail.com.



† St. Paul's Walking Group!



Our St. Paul's walking group is racking up the miles! Their next walk will be at Richter Park Golf Course, Friday, January 2nd at 10:00 am. Plan to meet at the parking lot at 100 Aunt Hack Road, Danbury. Sign up with Ron Switzer (rjswit@msn.com) to be on the mailing list.



† Sunday School Info!

ATTN: PARENTS OF ALL SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Sunday School classes start at 10:15 am each Sunday. Bring the students directly to their classrooms. Children will be returned to the sanctuary in time for Communion.



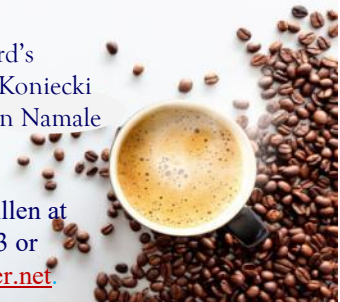
COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

Jan 4th	8 am - Greeley's	10:30 am - Tilford's
Jan 11th	8 am - Mary/Chuck Allen	10:30 am - Pam Koniecki
Jan 18th	8 am - Tim Huber	10:30 am - Vivian Namale



COFFEE HOUR HOSTS NEEDED

Contact Mary Allen at 203-775-6633 or chamla@charter.net.



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



There are still a few 12 Days of Christmas Events remaining, join in the fun details on pages 14-15.



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

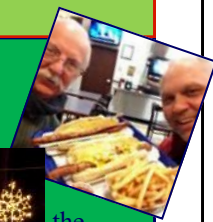
The Twelve Days of Christmas is probably the most misunderstood part of the church year among Christians who are not part of liturgical church traditions. Contrary to much popular belief, these are not the twelve days before Christmas, but in most of the Western Church, are the twelve days from Christmas until the beginning of Epiphany (January 6th; the 12 days count from December 25th until January 5th).

Once again we are celebrating the Christmas season with plenty of opportunities to Worship, Celebrate, Fellowship, Outreach, Reflect and Discover.

Thu, Dec 25 - The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Before diving into your presents, at 9 am join us for our Christmas Holy Eucharist. After all Jesus is the reason for the season.



Sat, Dec 27 - "Hot Dogs and Holiday Lights" A great combination. We know where the best are and we'll carpool and have a blast. Meet at St. Paul's at 6 pm.



Fri, Dec 26 - It's "Pizza, Games & Prizes Night!" Join us for Pizza in the Guild Room at 6 pm. Then we'll have a game night with a twist. Fun for the whole family! Bingo! Yahtzee! Checkmate! You Win!



Sun, Dec 28 - 1st Sunday after Christmas Day - "In the beginning was the Word." Worship with us at 8 am or 10:30 am. **"Holy Land Revisited"** at 12:30 we'll reconnect with our Israel tour guide via Zoom in the Guild Room, talk about our 2025 trip, see pictures, and learn more about life in the Holy Land.

(Continued on page 15)

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

(Continued from page 14)



Mon, Dec 29 - "Downton Abbey Tea Party" Join us for this new event: An enchanting Downton Abbey tea party where elegance

meets whimsy, savoring delightful teas and treats in true Edwardian style in our Guild Room! We'll watch the *Downton Abbey Grand Finale* Movie. Sign up at church.

Tue, Dec 30 - "David" We have 3:30 pm group tickets at AMC for Angel Studios latest giant movie: *David*. From his mother's

songs to his clash with Goliath, David's journey from humble shepherd to anointed king



tests the limits of faith, courage, and love - culminating in a battle for the soul of a kingdom. No doubt, we'll grab a bite to eat afterwards. Sign up at church.

Wed, Dec 31 - Feast of the Holy Name

At 10 am, come celebrate the naming of the child Jesus on the eighth day after Christmas, as recounted in Luke 2:21: "At the end of



eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." Then join us in Crocker Hall for a hot bowl of soup / lunch.



Wed, Jan 1 - "Healthy Hike" Let's start out 2026 on a healthy note. Meet at St. Paul's at noon we'll head across the street for a brief, family friendly hike in Williams Park and then find some lunch afterward.

Fri, Jan 2 - Calling all "Holy Rollers"

Join us at 5 pm at Danbury Duckpin Bowling if you have time to "spare" as we "strike" out for an evening of fun. We have several lanes reserved...no ball, or skill required...we'll provide everything.



Sat, Jan 3 - "Cooking with Tim."



Sun, Jan 4 - 2nd Sunday after Christmas Day - Joseph follows his dreams and fulfills two more prophecies "Out of Egypt I have called my son." and "He will be called a Nazorean." Worship with us at 8 - Traditional Eucharist or 10:30 am Contemporary Eucharist.

Mon, Jan 5 - House Blessing House blessings have always been a favorite of the 12 Days. Join us at 7 pm at the home of Andrea & Brian White in Brookfield for an evening House Blessing that includes Holy Eucharist, dessert and fellowship.



Everyday during the 12 Days of Christmas is a Free Coffee Day.

Monday thru Friday, 7 to 9 am, claim your free coffee from David Szen at the Newtown General Store; on Saturday at Theo's Downtown Diner from 7:30 to 9 am; and on Sunday at coffee hour.



Remember, Christmas is about giving, so for the 12 Days of Christmas, please support the Jericho Partnership by bringing in food for their pantry, books for children, coats, socks and toiletries for the homeless. They'll be blessed and so will you.



Please note: The schedule is flexible, subject to change due to weather, the participants and the whims of the organizers! Check *Sword Points* and our website for times, directions and updates.

Some events require reservations,



**Saint Paul's Parish
Chronic Pain Support Group**

Compassion • Hope • Fellowship

Next Meeting

THURSDAY, January 8th

11:30

St Paul's Parish • The Guild Room
174 Whisconier Rd. Brookfield, CT

Contact - chronicpain@saintpaulsbrookfield.com

*Pre-registration Required

***Meets on the 1st Thursday of every month**

† Transforming Saints of God

Wednesday, December 31st

Samuel Ajayi Crowther

Bishop in the Niger Territories, 1891

In Canterbury Cathedral, on St. Peter's Day, June 29, 1864, Samuel Ajayi Crowther (c. 1807 – 1891) was ordained the first African bishop in Nigeria for “the countries of Western Africa beyond the limits of the Queen's domains.”

Crowther's gifts to the Church were many. A skilled linguist, he helped translate the Bible and Book of Common Prayer into Yoruba and other West African languages. He founded schools and training colleges, where he encouraged the study of the gospel, traditional subjects, and farming methods that allowed students to raise basic crops and cotton as sources of income.

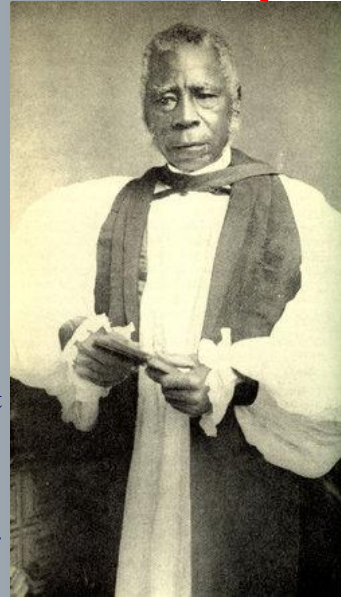
As a child, Crowther had been captured in 1822, during a Nigerian civil war, and sold to Portuguese slave traders. Intercepted by a British anti-slavery patrol, the ship and its human cargo were taken to Freetown, Sierra Leone, a haven for freed captives after the British Parliament abolished the slave trade in 1807. There, Crowther was educated at a Church Missionary Society (CMS) school, was baptized in 1825, and became a teacher in Sierra Leone, an active center of African Christian ministry that sent indigenous lay and ordained ministers throughout West Africa.

Crowther's leadership skills were soon evident, and, in 1842, the CMS sent him to their Islington, England, training college. He was ordained a year later, returned to Sierra Leone, and then moved on to Yoruba territory. He also made extended mission journeys to the interior of Nigeria, where, in encounters with Muslims, he was known as a humble, patient listener and a thoughtful, non-polemical partner in dialogue.

At the time of his ordination as bishop, the British tried to keep missionary activity solely under the control of white British clerics, some of whom set about subverting Crowther's authority, something he patiently endured, while actively continuing his expansive work among Africans. Despite the difficulties, Crowther's achievement was considerable, and he has been called the most widely known African Christian of the nineteenth century. He created a solid base from which a much later generation of indigenous African leadership emerged to chart their own political and ecclesial futures.

Crowther died in 1891.

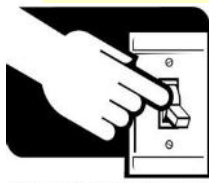
In 2015, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby officially apologized on behalf of the Church of England for its treatment of Crowther.



“..they fell down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh...”

- MATTHEW 2:11

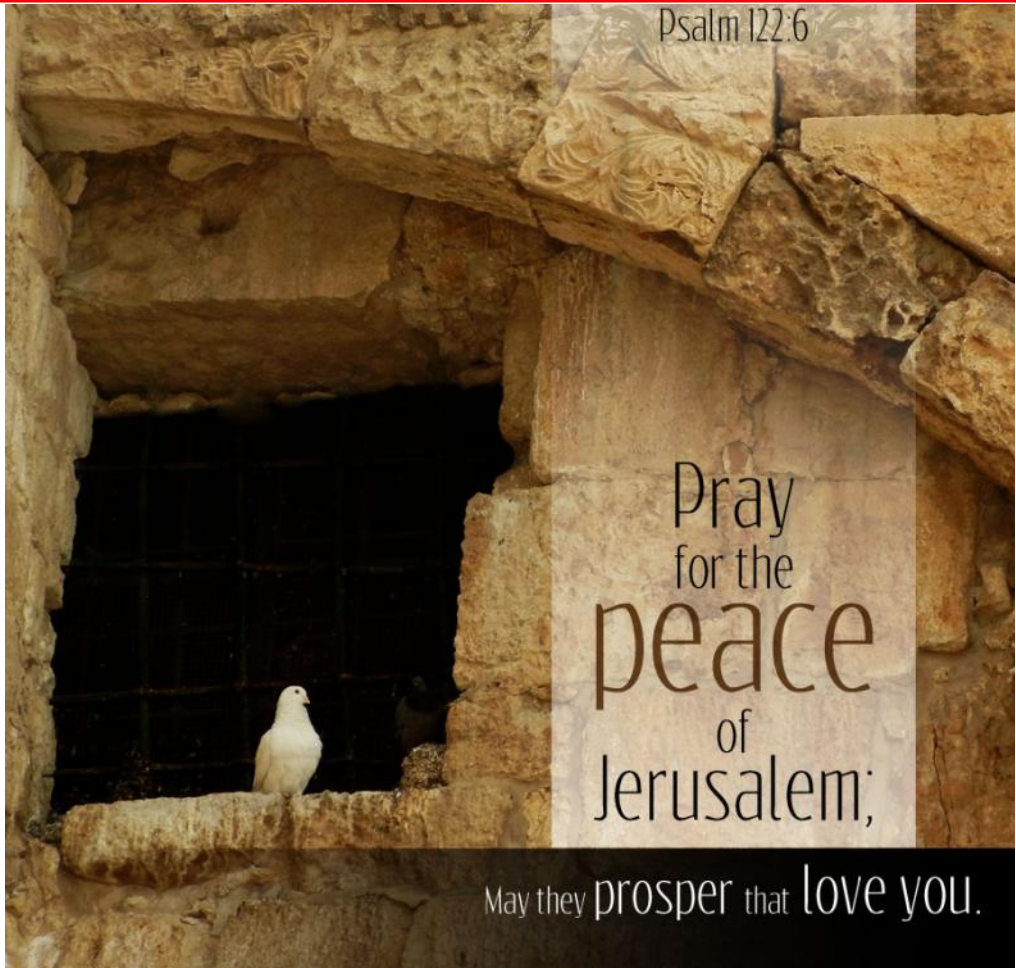
Notice the order of events in the Magi's visit. First, they knelt before Jesus and prayed to Him. Then they presented Him with their gifts. We, too, must take time to pray before we present our gifts to the Lord. We never know what God may be asking us to share!



TURN IT OFF

† Good Stewardship Begins At Home: *Our Home*

Please remind all who use our home to be good stewards by turning off lights, closing curtains, turning down thermostats, cleaning up after themselves and locking doors when they are leaving, especially as fuel prices are costly.



Take a Hanger
Fill a Hanger

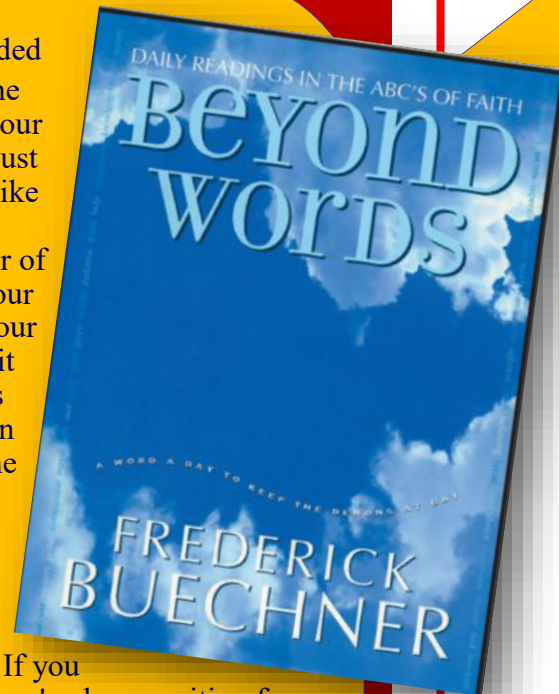


We are holding our annual Coat Drive to benefit the various agencies in Danbury supported by the Jericho Partnership. **“Take a Hanger”** from the rack we’ll have at the back of the church this weekend. Check your closets for those unused coats. And **“Fill a Hanger.”** Bring it back to St. Paul’s and we’ll get that coat on the back of someone who needs it.

† Thought for Reflection

- from Fr. John Morrison

"IT is the moment of light surrounded on all sides by darkness and oblivion. In the entire history of the universe, let alone in your own history, there has never been another just like it and there will never be another just like it again. It is the point to which all your yesterdays have been leading since the hour of your birth. It is the point from which all your tomorrows will proceed until the hour of your death. If you were aware of how precious it is, you could hardly live through it. Unless you are aware of how precious it is, you can hardly be said to be living at all. 'This is the day which the Lord has made,' says psalm 118. 'Let us rejoice and be glad in it.' Or weep and be sad in it for that matter. The point is to see it for what it is, because it will be gone before you know it. If you waste it, it is your life that you're wasting. If you look the other way, it may be the moment you've been waiting for always that you're missing." All other days have either disappeared into oblivion or have not yet emerged from it. Today is God's day. What are you going to do with it? "LORD, I REJOICE IN THIS DAY THAT YOU HAVE MADE AND GIVEN TO ME." AMEN.



Frederick Buechner, *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith*

Phishing Scams - Don't fall for them! Please do not respond to any message from Fr. Nate or St. Paul's by email or any other method of communication that asks you to purchase something (often a gift card) or asks for a "favor." **Delete these messages, do not reply, do not click links in the messages, mark them as Spam or Junk.** If there is any doubt about the veracity of a text or email, contact Fr. Nate by e-mail at (priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com) or the office (dszen@yahoo.com).





Israel - Walking in Jesus' Footsteps



✠ Holy Family in Egypt - part 1 ✨

The Gospel account of the Holy Family seeking refuge in Egypt is unsupported by archaeological evidence, but to Coptic Christians it is affirmed by their oral tradition, a fifth-century patriarch's vision, the locations of early desert monasteries - and the claimed confirmation of modern-day apparitions:

Only Matthew's Gospel records that Joseph, Mary and Jesus fled to Egypt to escape King Herod's massacre of young children. In a few short paragraphs, Joseph is warned in dreams to leave Bethlehem and later, when Herod dies, to return to Israel (2:13-23).

Egypt was a logical retreat. It was part of the Roman empire, but outside Herod's domain, and some cities had significant Jewish communities. The well-trodden Via Maris ("way of the sea") through Gaza and the northern Sinai coast made travel easy and relatively safe.

Biblical scholars W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann affirm that

"there is no reason to doubt the historicity of the story of the family's flight into Egypt. The Old Testament abounds in references to individuals and families taking sanctuary in Egypt, in flight either from persecution or revenge, or in the face of economic pressure."

Major Source Inspired by Vision

Outside of the New Testament, in the second century the anti-Christian Greek philosopher Celsus accused Jesus of "having worked for hire in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having experimented there with some magical powers, in which the Egyptians take great pride."

In the third century the Holy Family's flight to Egypt was noted by the theologian Hippolytus of Rome, who even gave a time frame of three and a half years.

(Continued on page 21)



Holy Family arriving in Egypt, by Edwin Longsdon Long

(Continued from page 20)

Holy Family in Egypt

A major source for the Coptic Orthodox Church is a homily attributed to the fifth-century Coptic Pope Theophilus, 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria, and said to be inspired by a vision of the Virgin Mary. He described the Holy Family fleeing from the Milk Grotto in Bethlehem and detailed numerous miracles performed by Jesus in the towns of Lower and Upper Egypt.

Some accounts say that Salome, possibly a relative of Mary (and often mistakenly referred to as her midwife) accompanied the family.

Miracles or fantasies?

The Arabic Infancy Gospel, from the fifth or sixth centuries, narrates supposed incidents from the family's travels in the land of the pharaohs - including several miracles, often fantastical, wrought by the child Jesus.

In this account, trees bowed before the infant, animals paid homage to him, pagan idols tumbled at his approach, spiders weaved a thick web to conceal Mary and Jesus in a tree, and there was even a chance encounter with the two criminals who would be crucified alongside Jesus.

List of locations keeps growing

How long the family was in Egypt, where they went or what they did there, is not reported in Matthew's Gospel. But by the eighth century, building on local traditions, Bishop Zacharias of Sakha had already established a Holy Family path in the Nile Delta.

In the 12th century a scribe called John ibn Said al-Kulzumi drew up a geographical list of nine sites visited by the holy refugees. A century later, when the Coptic priest Abu I-Makarim referred to 14 locations, the outline of an itinerary had clearly been established.

The presence of early monasteries and churches was seen as confirming local traditions, which were also celebrated in Coptic liturgies and art.

A patriarchal commission of hierarchs and scholars has published an "official" map of the route of the Holy Family, but the popular list of holy locations keeps growing, sometimes stirring rivalry between adjacent sites.

With an eye on boosting "spiritual tourism", the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for Egypt (a predominantly Sunni Muslim state) has launched the Holy Family Trail - a 2000-mile route for four-wheel drive adventurers.

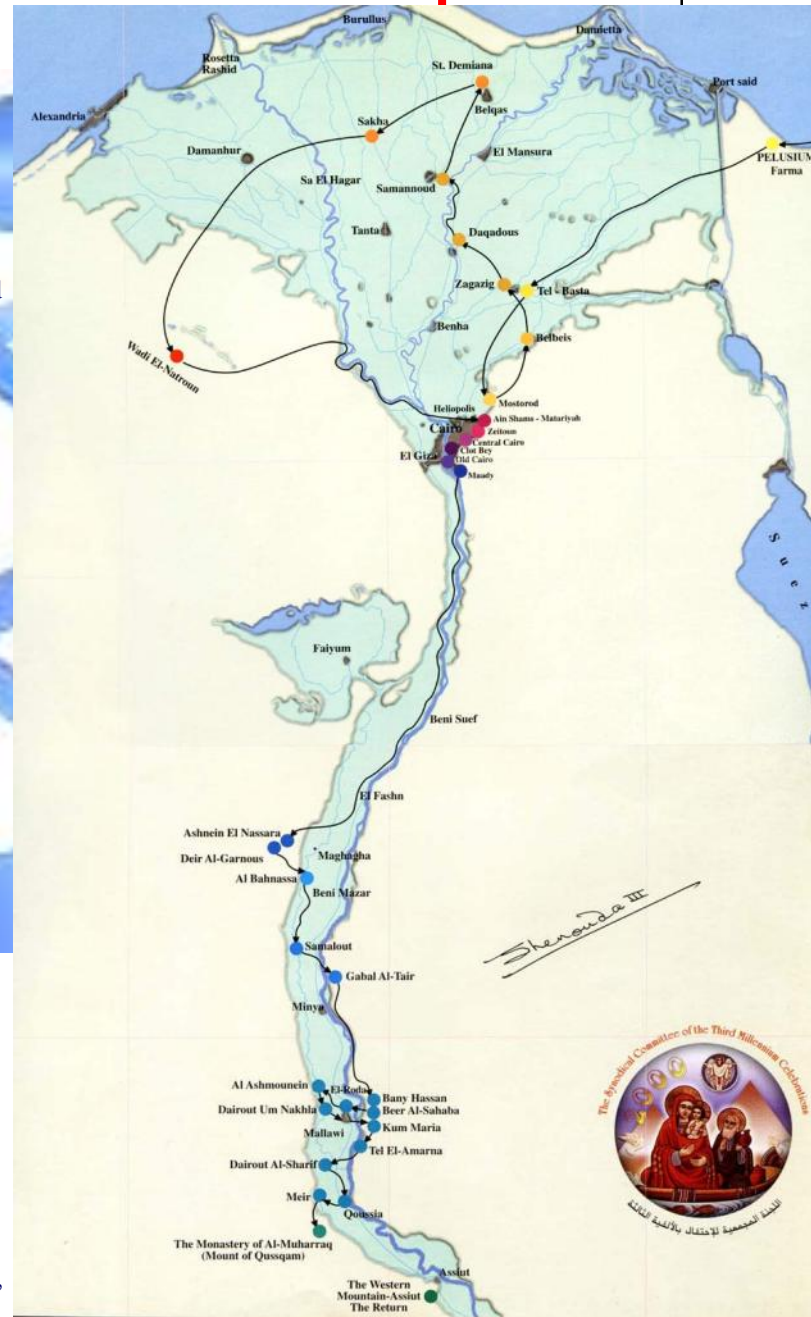
Promoters of the trail display unexpected precision: "The Holy Family arrived in Egypt on the 24th day of the Coptic month of Pshnece, or on 2 June . . . They stayed in Egypt for three years and 11 months," according to former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs Zahi Hawass.

Nile was crossed and re-crossed

The popular list of locations suggests the Holy Family - travelling by foot, donkey or boat, and moving often - crossed and re-crossed the forks of the Nile Delta, then travelled south (upstream) as far as Gebel Qussqam, before returning by boat down the Nile to the Cairo area and retracing their steps overland to Israel.

Next week in *Sword Points* we explore some of the best attested sites with their associated Coptic traditions.

Map of Holy Family's itinerary signed by Coptic Pope Shenouda III



✠ Fill the Valley of Tears with Shouts of Joy

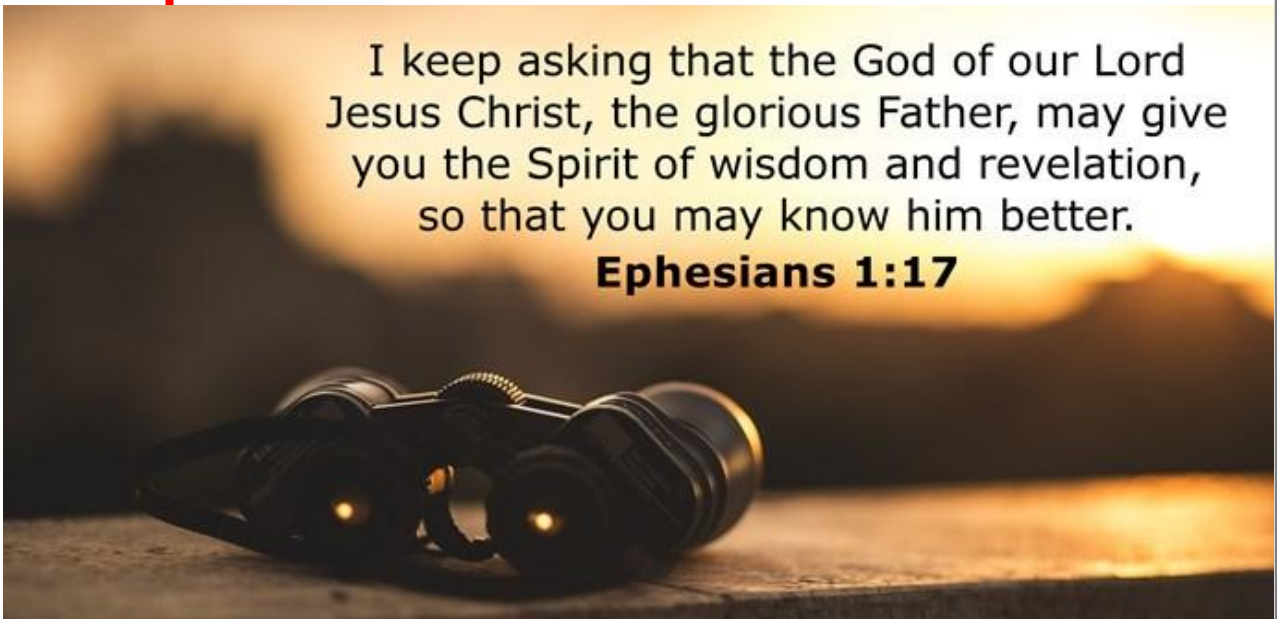
Psalm 84

If you Google the Valley of Baca you'll find out we've all been there. Baca is Hebrew for weeping, but the point is not that we are familiar with the geography, but that in the passing through God promises to turn the valley of tears into a place of springs and pools of peace. It is not a pie in the sky the sun will come up tomorrow bet your bottom dollar promise, but God's guarantee for souls that long for lovely dwelling places. Strength in the Lord will not disappoint. It is in the "as they go through" that we "go from strength to strength," and though the song of hope might be sung for a time, with weeping eyes through clenched teeth joy will come on the morrow, as pilgrim clasps the hand of pilgrim and the song of victory swells to fill the valley of tears with shouts of joy for the living God.



I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Ephesians 1:17



✠ Adult Class

Being Real – The Power of Vulnerability and Transparency is the title of our next Adult Christian Formation series starting January 11th. Perhaps when you hear the word vulnerability or transparency you get uncomfortable. However, the only way we can grow as Christians and be authentic believers is to recognize what we truly need and be open to God and to others. When it comes to transparency, God is not asking us to do something that He hasn't already done himself! Please join us in the Guild Room each Sunday morning at 9:30 for this intriguing and challenging 5-part series.

We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it.~ Madeleine L'Engle

† Wednesday Morning Healing Service

Our mid-week Wednesday morning 10 am Holy Eucharist with healing prayer, now has about 50 worshippers weekly.. With live music and a brief homily, this service is just what you need to sustain you through the week. Come join us and check it out or watch on YouTube Live.

HOW DO PEOPLE START ATTENDING CHURCH?

- A Friend Invited Me - 86%
- Organized Visitation - 6%
- Invited by the Pastor - 6%
- Advertising - 2%

churchgrowth.org

Our Men meet weekly to study on Monday nights. They are currently dissecting the Gospel of Luke. Join them each Monday night at 7 pm in Crocker Hall. All the studies are available live on YouTube.

The Gospel According to John

A THIRD OF US

† Praying for the 1/3 of our world that are still unreached with the Gospel

Chechen

Country: Russia | Population: 1,670,000 | Language: Chechen | Main Religion: Islam | Evangelical: 0.01%

The Chechen live in southern Russia between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea in the valleys of the Caucasus Mountains. They are a strong and determined people who attempted to gain independence from Russia after the breakup of the USSR in 1991. This independence movement led to many years of wars and violence. Numerous terrorist attacks further generated much distrust between ethnic Chechens and the rest of Russia. Chechens are highly devout Muslims and hold strong to their Islamic faith in spite of attempts to eliminate Islam in the region. Pray for the Lord to remove barriers so that Christian workers can live and work in the region. Pray that Chechen hearts would become open to the message of Jesus, and that they would accept the peace, forgiveness, and new life He offers.





David Greeley celebrates today. **Darin Crocker** blows out candles on Friday. Opening present on Saturday is **Joanne Siergiej**. Cake cutting day is Sunday for **Sophia Tilford, Cathy Schrull & Heidi Pinheiro**. Have a blessed day everyone!



Presents

COFFEE WITH JESUS



Holy, holy, holy!
Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning
my song shall rise to you!

Lisa, when I hear your praises start, I wanna rain upon you blessings that'll fill your heart.

I see no stain upon you.

Praise



Is it an "if then" situation, Jesus? Do you wait for praise before you bless?

Don't complicate this, Lisa. It's an endless loop. I bless. You praise. You praise. I bless.

Just roll with it.



©Radio Free Babylon® All rights reserved. A few months back we did a comic based on the old Keith Green song "When I Hear The Praises Start." We're reworking it into an island vibe jam. People wonder, "How do I praise?" Do what Lisa did here. Take an old hymn or a modern chorus you're familiar with and just speak the words to God. Change "Thee" to "You" and "Thine" to "Your" and make it personal. Mean the words you speak. Let them flow from your heart. Now you're praising

† January

The first month of the year gets its name from the Roman god Janus, whose name means “gate.” Janus has two faces. One looks behind, the other ahead. January is a month in which we look back in time and look ahead.

January is the month of Epiphany. That can be the merriest day of our merry Christmastime. In most churches in North America, Epiphany is kept on the first Lord’s Day of the year. A Greek name for Epiphany is *ta phota*, which means “lights.” It was Advent during most of December, when the days got as short as they can get. But now the light is growing. That’s something hopeful to keep in mind. Even in the dead of winter, spring is on its way.

These winter days of growing light take us to Lent. They are Carnival days. Carnival is the customary time of year for plays and puppet shows and circuses and all the human arts that can help drive the cold winter away. This is a season of hospitality. To people in need wintertime hospitality can be a gift of life and light.

New Year’s Day

On New Year’s Eve, some people “pray in” the new year. Church bells peal out the old and ring in the new. With noisemakers and fireworks, people make a racket to try to care away their troubles. The next morning, many people attend church services. It is the Roman Catholic Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God; the Lutheran and Episcopal feast of the Holy Name of Jesus; and the Byzantine feat of the Circumcision of Jesus. In Greece January 1 is also St. Basil’s Day. A bread, *vasilopita*, is baked with a coin in it; whoever gets the coin is crowned queen or king for the new year. (The name Basil means “royalty”).

In some countries January 1 is the official day to exchange Christmastime gifts. Everywhere, feasting is customary. In Japan, where pink and red are colors of good fortune, a pink fish call red snapper is served. Strawberries are eaten as a taste of spring.

In many European countries, a dinner of roat pork is supposed to bring a boutiful year. Swedes drink a toast to the new year with *glögg* - hot spiced wine. In southern and southwestern United States, black-eyed peas are cooked in a traditional New Year’s dish call hoppin’ John.

On this day people visit friends to settle any misunderstandings a from the previous year. People also call on the folks they want to spend time with during the next year. In some families, parents bless their children. Many people pay a visit to their godparents.

Hospitality is the rule of the day. At the new year may people make a special effort to be loving and outgoing. Perhaps extra good will on this day is a Christmastime hope that this spirit will last all year long.



† This Sunday's Readings

(Click on the red links for the readings)

The Light of Christ

[Isaiah 60:1-6](#)

In our Hebrew scripture lesson the prophet envisions the end of exile and the glorious restoration of Jerusalem. Although darkness covers the earth, the Lord will be a light making God's people shine. To this radiance shall come the nations. Rich treasures will be brought from afar to honor God.

[Psalm 72:1-7,10-14](#)

The psalm asks that God endow the king with compassionate justice and righteousness, and that his reign may extend over all nations and throughout all generations.

[Ephesians 3:1-12](#)

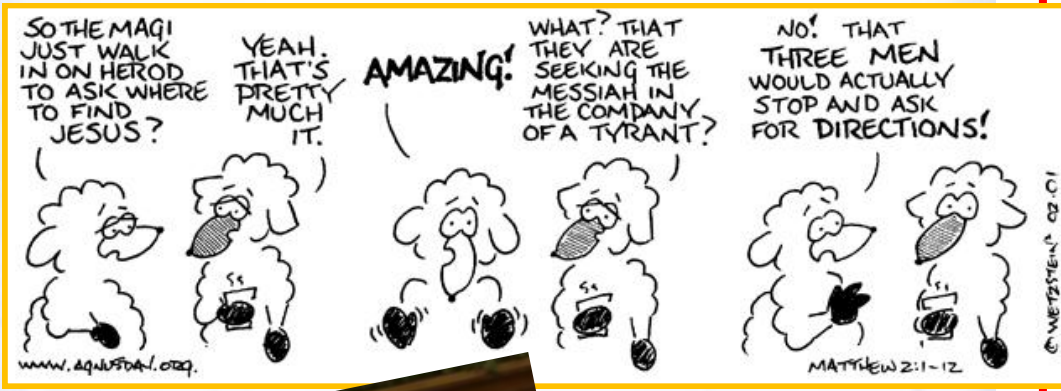
Here is set forth the great theme of Paul's apostolic commission: the revealed mystery that Christ's salvation extends beyond Judaism to include all peoples. The apostle is near the end of his ministry and in prison at the time of the writing of this letter. Now it is recognized as God's eternal purpose that the Gentiles are to be members of the same body. The wisdom of God is made known through the church even in transcendental realms.

[Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Our gospel is the story of the wise men from the east, who, guided by a star, come to worship the child born to be king. Despite the wicked plotting of Herod, the Magi are able to bring their gifts to Jesus without betraying his exact location. Early Christians found in the rich symbolism and motifs of the story the fulfillment of both Hebrew scripture prophecy and the dreams of many peoples. The meaning of this birth, amid terrifyingly human circumstances, enlightens and transcends human history.

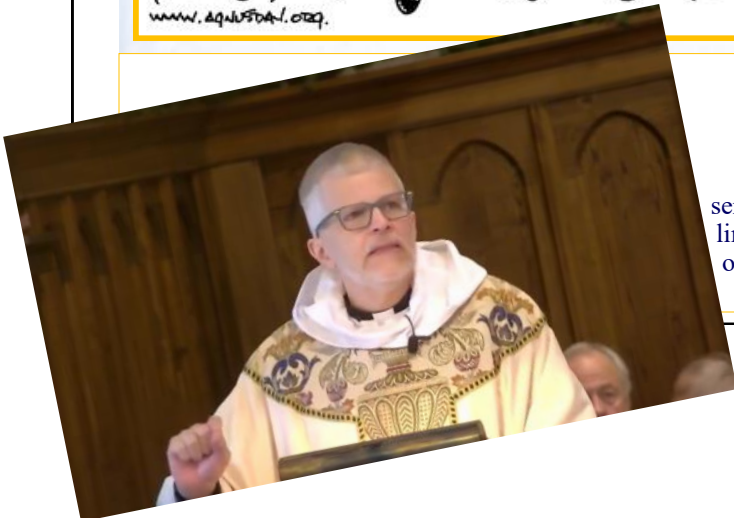


Matthew 2:1-12
That this comet is understood to be a sign of the birth of a "child who has been born King of the Jews"



† Sermon Shorts

"Participate in the Divine Life" To replay all our sermons, audio and videos follow this link for the [Sunday Sermons](#). Check out our [Sermon Archives](#) as well.



† Your Prayers Are Requested For...

It is such an intimate time when praying for the health and well being of others and such a privilege God has pitched a tent in our midst. God's word has taken flesh. That all may know God's presence bringing us together, it is fitting that our flesh should call to God in holy words of petition, as we pray for...

.....Ed Licence, Gail Winkley, Barbara Hock, and other parishioners convalescing in extended care facilities.

.....[Trinity](#), Brooklyn; [St. Peter's](#), Cheshire; [Holy Advent](#), Clinton.

.....Revival at St. Paul's and the greater Danbury area.

.....All immigrants, refugees & the ministries that serve them.

.....For the Peace of Jerusalem. - *Psalms 122:6*

.....Clayton Ferry, Barbara Hock, Jim Megura, Peter Scalzo, Sr., Peter Scalzo, Jr., Doris, Cathy Latimer, Karen, Beverly Hall, Roger, Cynthia, Valerie, Heidi Pinheiro, Dale Mitchell, Ruth, Blake, Cliff, Evelyn Kirner, Jane Sedor, Jim Beck, Larry Wanzer, Bob Finn, Paul Kovacs, Peter Ruscoe, Larry Coleman, John Crisalli, Erin LaBrake, Walter, Elana and Veronika continued healing.

.....the people of [Ukraine](#); the people of [Grenada](#); the people of [Spain](#); the bishop, clergy and laity of the [Diocese of Seychelles](#) - The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean; and our sister and brother members of the [United Free Church of Scotland](#).



.....For the Church: that like Mary and Joseph, we may face the future with faith and trust in God, no matter what trials or uncertainties may stand before us.

.....[Faith Food Pantry](#), Newtown, which is the recipient of our food basket collections for the month of January.

.....Our missionaries, Will & Becky McLaughlin and their family, and their ministry in Cambodia; and for all missionaries: that God will inspire the message that they offer, help them to recognize how they can best serve their communities, and sustain them in times of loneliness.

.....For greater appreciation of human life: that God will guide us in nurturing and protecting all human life.

.....[His Vineyard Christian Fellowship](#), Bethel, a church partner of the Jericho Partnership.

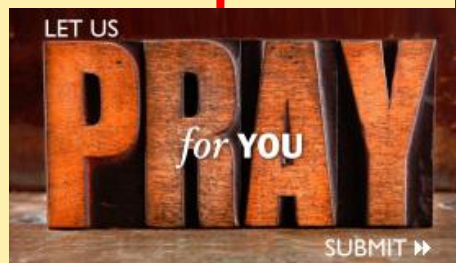
.....[The Unity of the Church](#).

.....That just as Mary reflects the light of Christ, we too, are called to reflect Christ's light to the world..

.....For peace amongst nations, ethnic groups, religions, and in our city streets: that God's love made visible in the Christ Child may turn hearts from violence and open new paths of peace and justice.

.....For the people of Bethlehem and all the holy land: that God will inspire leaders in undoing injustices and wounds, in ending violence, and in establishing a just and lasting peace for all inhabitants of the Holy Land.

.....[Peace Among the Nations](#).



Bible Project: John 1:12

As we begin our parish-wide emphasis on the Gospel of John, here's a helpful video that summarizes, John 1:1-12.





Just For the Joy of It!

(And Christian Fellowship)



Did you know... that the oldest New Year's resolutions date back 4,000 years to the ancient Babylonians, who made promises to their gods during their 12-day Akitu festival (celebrated in March), vowing to return borrowed farm equipment and pay debts to receive divine favor, making them the earliest known precursors to modern resolutions? Later, the Romans linked resolutions to January 1st with offerings to Janus, the god of beginnings, and medieval knights made chivalry vows, solidifying the tradition



OVERHEARD AT THE MAGI CLUB



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Watch us on YouTube

Ecclesiasticus 43:27 - We could say more but could never say enough; let the final word be: 'He is the all.' - 30 -