

**For The Bulletin Of
January 7, 2018**



From Father Robert

Today's gospel gives us the classic and familiar story of the "visit of the Magi." We have heard it so often that we may sometimes miss critical, and perhaps not so critical, elements in the story. For example, we are never told how many wise men, or magi, there are. We also note that verse 1 states simply that Jesus was born. Not until several verses later do we learn about Herod ascertaining from the magi when the star appeared. He then sent them to search for the child (not infant). That one word, child, rather than infant, is a clue that the star had appeared sometime earlier. And then we learn that Herod ordered male children up to the age of two to be killed. So it seems Matthew had in mind that the visit of the magi happened while Jesus was a child about the age of two.

In our own minds we have likely harmonized Matthew's nativity account with Luke's so that we place Luke's angels together with Matthew magi in the creche! But in Matthew's telling, there is no census that brings the family from Nazareth to Bethlehem, no manger, no animals, and no shepherds.

According to Matthew Jesus was born at home in Bethlehem, where Joseph and Mary lived. We may be forgiven for combining Matthew and Luke's versions of the stories. Even the nativity scenes in our home have harmonized these narratives too!

Ultimately, the importance of what Mathew and Luke are telling us rests not in details about how the family moved from Bethlehem to Nazareth, or whether Jesus was born in a home or stable. Instead, Matthew provides a theological insight into the person of Jesus and the activity of God. The magi are no Jews. They are Gentiles. They worship Jesus. As such they prefigure the Gentile mission that the risen Jesus will inaugurate in the closing verses of this gospel (Matthew 28: 16 – 20). That is to say, Matthew "bookends" his gospel with a story of Gentiles (the magi) coming to worship Jesus at the beginning and the risen Jesus' own command to His disciples to "make disciples of all nations (Gentiles), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Ultimately the Gentiles are coheirs with the Jews of the promises of God. We cannot limit God's mercy. It knows no bounds, and includes all.

Living The Paschal Mystery

It's likely been some time since we've put away our Christmas decorations. Or if we are purists, our decorations have remained up until today. The very timing of the Epiphany, or the visit of the magi, tells us that we've moved on from the Christmas event. We are no longer in the manger. Our lives have begun to move in other directions. The infant is growing up to be a child and is walking. Ordinary Time quickly

approaches. And now we have a visit from strangers who have come to see the cause of our celebration. We call to mind that time, and perhaps we relive some of its joy. But as with the magi, danger unfortunately lurks. They go home another way, aware of skulking peril. This too, along with Herod's massacre of the innocents, foreshadows the violent end that Jesus will ultimately face.

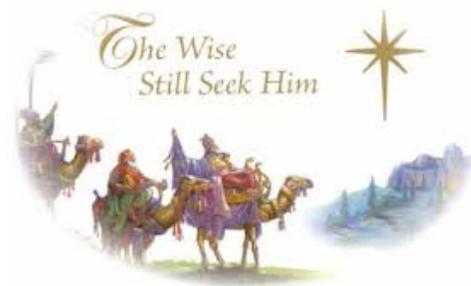
And so, living the paschal mystery is a combination of joy in new life with an awareness of death. But death will be overcome by life. How many of us might prefer to dwell with the baby Jesus in a manger, or sit with the Holy Family when all is calm and peaceful. But that is not the life we lead. Though these periods of calm, serenity, and joy punctuate our lives, we are aware of the pressing journey. We navigate our paths aware of danger and peril. We rely on God and our own sense to steer us toward safety, all the while aware of a specter of malevolence. For we, like the Gentile magi, worship a Child Who will face a violent end, only to be raised up on the third day to new life, the life of the resurrection. It is the paschal mystery.

As we bring the Christmas season to a close between today's and tomorrow's celebrations (The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord), what questions and issues have this Christmas Season raised in your mind and heart?

- What "epiphanies" have you experienced in your life that have been most revealing and instructive?
- What star have you followed that led you to discovering the

"holy?" What star have you followed that led you to emptiness and disappointment?

- What do you see as the largest wall separating you from someone else, the deepest chasm between your family or community or church or nation and others?
- What was the most satisfying and rewarding gift you gave this Christmas? What made it so?



8 tips for nurturing your body, mind and spirit in 2018

Jan 1, 2018
by [Jennifer Mertens](#)

As we celebrate the New Year, we can each take time to reflect on how to usher in 2018 with a fresh commitment to our own well-being. Consider the tips below for meaningful ways to nurture your body, mind and spirit this season.

1. Slow down. Self-care is challenging amid the busyness of modern life. A hectic lifestyle can leave us rushing past our deep longings, and ultimately diminish our presence to life itself. Trappist monk Thomas Merton recognized the detrimental effects of our chronic busyness, writing that "to allow oneself to be carried away by a

multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence."

With the start of 2018, how can you slow down? Carve out time to discern where you truly feel called to place your attention and energy. What do you need to release in order to say yes to this call? How can you let go of other forms of busyness that do not serve you well?

2. Turn off the screen — or at least be intentional about technology use. How many hours do you spend scrolling through Facebook, lamenting TV headlines, or simply Internet surfing? While technology has innumerable benefits, every hour in front of a screen also dumps a flood of external input into your life. How can we be selective about our media intake? What personal commitments and behaviors will ensure that we engage media as a tool, not a source of compulsion?

We must each answer these questions for ourselves. Setting guidelines for the amount of time we use media is a valuable first step.

3. Get back in your body. A felt sense of connectedness to one's physical self is vital to our health and well-being. Whether its yoga, swimming, walking the dog, or anything else, choose a body-centered activity that you love. Do you enjoy this activity on your own? Or is it helpful to have a class, a regular group or a scheduled event to get you out the door? Explore what works best for you and integrate this commitment into your week.

4. Reconnect with the natural world.

Author Charles Cook writes, "Your deepest roots are in nature. No matter who you are, where you live, or what kind of life you lead, you remain irrevocably linked with the rest of creation." Practice savoring your connection with creation. Whether through regular walks in the park, weekend camping trips, or simply watching a sunset, weave an appreciation for God's creation into your daily life.

Especially with the ecological crises facing our planet, our reconnection to nature is more vital than ever. Don't forget to read Pope Francis' encyclical "*Laudato Si'*", on Care for Our Common Home" for inspiration — one that, hopefully, stirs up your inner environmental activist.

5. Seek out an adventure. It doesn't matter if you travel abroad or plan a staycation; try something new — anything! A spontaneous road trip, quirky restaurant, local theater venue or new hobby: Infuse a sense of adventure into your life. Trek off the beaten path of your daily routine to try out new, enriching experiences in your community.

6. "Spark joy." International best-selling author and organizing consultant Marie Kondo offers this mantra in her now-famous book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. Kondo's creative, even transformative approach to the traditional "spring cleaning" process encourages us to reflect on our relationship with our possessions and whether they truly "spark joy" within us. Sensing joy with that item? Keep it. No joy? Let it go.

Amid today's consumerism, Kondo transforms our relationship with our physical "stuff" — clearing out clutter, clarifying priorities, and crafting a truly joyful living space. The book is worth a read and can support us in creating a sanctuary space in our own homes.

7. Cultivate relationships. Ultimately, isn't this what life is all about? Reflect on your relationships with family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, parishioners and your local community. What relationships could use some extra TLC? Choose a few and give them some time. Write a letter. Schedule coffee. Bring dinner to a friend. What can you do — in person — to spend quality time with those you love most?

8. Nurture your relationship with God. Just as we dedicate time to building our relationships with other people, our inner spiritual life also deserves a similar commitment. How can you nurture your spirituality each day? What spiritual practices connect you with God? Whether it's meditation, reading Scripture, journaling or any other kind of contemplative practice, choose a specific time to tune into God each day. The rest of your life, and the start of 2018, will be richer for it.

[Jennifer Mertens teaches religion at a Catholic high school in Cincinnati. She holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Catholic Theological Union. She writes for NCR's [Young Voices column](#).]



...to all our faithful volunteers who give so much of themselves each Saturday morning at 5:45 a.m. when they come to clean the church: **Jun Bajet, Angela Bueno, Jack Goncalves, Mency Osborne, Kathy Romeo, and Emilia Freking.**

...to our faithful parishioners who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall each week: **Steve Rojek, Robert Goncalves, Mary Ewing, Virginia Noack, Patricia Britton, and Harlan Young.**

...to **Dilcia Aparacio** who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens.

...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week:

Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Rowena Cayaban, Monika Kauer, Cynthia Enrique, Belen Farin, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.

...to **our counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week:

Harlan Young, Alicia Perez, Yvette Young, Joe Fanfa and Bev Iacona.

...to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last

week's donations: **Frank Russo and Barbara Jackson.**

...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Carole Miller, Dave Costanza and Vince Augusta.**

...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keep watch over our vehicles during the weekend liturgies: **Don Benson, Jose Palomino, Steve Rojek, Vince Augusta and Bill Barbanica.**



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The Norway Trip Is On for 2018!

Presently 16 people are confirmed for our trip to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark this coming August. Both Fr. Mangini and I are leading the tour and we invite you to join us! This will be a tour of a lifetime and there is room for you to join us. Linda Grelli from Black Diamond Tours is arranging the details with round trip flights on SAS Airlines from San Francisco and back. This is a tour arranged through Insite Tours, one of the leading Tour companies in the world. If you are interested in joining us, please contact me or give Linda call at Black Diamond Travel.