

Church of the Incarnation

240 Main Street, Mantua, NJ 08051

Parish Office 856-468-1314 * PREP Office 856-468-7566

Visit us at www.incarnation-church.org



The Epiphany of the Lord * January 4, 2026

We come together as a Christian community to minister the Gospel of Christ

PARISH STAFF

Reverend Stephen J Rapposelli
Pastor

Reverend Shaji Muttathottil
Parochial Vicar

Thomas F. O'Brien
Deacon

Peter Traum
Deacon

Phil Curran
Deacon

Mr. & Mrs. Casey Corigliano
Directors of Music

Mr. Gerald Voltura
Director of Faith Formation

Mrs. Patricia Houwen
Business Manager

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

Welcome!

Please register at the parish office or online by visiting our website at www.incarnation-church.org.

MASS SCHEDULE

Monday - Friday.....7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

(No 7 a.m. Mass from Memorial Day through early September)

Saturday.....8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Vigil Mass)

Sunday.....7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m..

Holy Days.....5 p.m. (Vigil Mass)

7 a.m., 8:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Holy Day

Eucharistic Adoration.....Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

BAPTISM

Baptisms are held every Sunday and some Saturdays at 1:00 pm. Baptism Preparation Sessions are held on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month via Zoom. Please call the office for an appointment.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Confessions are heard Monday through Saturday following the 8:30 A.M. Mass and on Saturdays from 4:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. in church or by appointment.

CARE OF SICK

Arrangements should be made through the parish office for home visits with the Eucharist for the sick and elderly. The office should be contacted for the Sacrament of the Sick.

SACRAMENTAL SPONSORSHIP

Sponsors for Baptism or Confirmation must:

Be a registered member of a Catholic parish

Be at least 16 years of age

Received Sacraments of Initiation:

Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation

If married, according to the laws of the Catholic Church

Sunday, January 4 The Epiphany of the Lord

Matthew 2:1-12

Herod learns that Wise Men from the East are searching for the newly born Christ Child. He instructs them to find the Child and to report His whereabouts to him. The Wise Men follow a star to the place where Mary and Jesus are and offer the Child gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They do not return to Herod but follow another route to their own country.

Mass Intentions

Saturday, January 3 – The Most Holy Name of Jesus

8:30am Michael Kemble r/b Paul & Saron Swierczynski
5:00pm Vincent Baginsky r/b Yvonne Morse & Family
John McNelis r/b McNelis Family
Diane Mendel
r/b Bernadette Sandone & Nicole Sweeten
Joan & Robert Wnek r/b Taylor Family
Robert A. Wilgus r/b Fran Wilgus & Family

Sunday, January 4 – The Epiphany of the Lord

7:30am John & Craig Forsman r/b Wife & Mother
9:30am Jake Gogstad
r/b MaryAnne & Mike Keresztury
Sam Gandini r/b sister Grace
Alfio Musumeci r/b Anna Musumeci
Andrew Tanzola r/b Catherine Tanzola
Ian Patrick Baker r/b Loretta & Jackie Blake
And Joan Wenzel
Sarah Ann Urbani r/b her Children
11:30am Emanuele Demonte r/b wife Beata
and children Ethan & Julian

Monday, January 5 – St. John Neumann

7:00am Elizabeth Temmalla r/b Bill & Kathy Dougherty
8:30am Jessica Kelbert r/b Joseph Little

Tuesday, January 6 – St. Andre Bessette

7:00am Living & Deceased Members of the Parish
8:30am Michael Palamar Jr. r/b Chuck & Patty Grogan

Wednesday, January 7 – St. Raymond Penyafort

7:00am Kenneth M. Zane r/b Michele McCaffrey
8:30am Julie Crumsho r/b Bill & Kathy Dougherty

Thursday, January 8

7:00am For the Intentions of the Crowley Family
r/b Schultz Family
8:30am Josephine Camma r/b Bill & Kathy Dougherty

Friday, January 9

7:00am Mary Hess r/b Geri Ann Deputy
8:30am Gail O'Dea r/b Campbell Family

Saturday, January 10

8:30am George Chan r/b Capistrano Family
5:00pm Tina Daily r/b daughter Christina

Sunday, January 11 – The Baptism of the Lord

7:30am Joseph Schiavo r/b Tootsie & Patty Bass
Alfred & Josephine Tomarchio r/b daughter JoAnn
Peter Worthington r/b Robert & Irene Binz
Mary Agnes Hess r/b Betsy Groody
Triana DuMont r/b Schultz Family
Jack W. Huston r/b George & Jackie Huston
9:30am Luigi Chiaradonna r/b his Family
11:30am Julia Crumsho r/b Jennie & Tom Williams

Readings for the Week

Monday, January 5	1 Jn 3:22-4:6; Mt 4:12-17, 23-25
Tuesday, January 6	1 Jn 4:7-10; Mk 6:34-44
Wednesday, January 7	1 Jn 4:11-18; Mk 6:45-52
Thursday, January 8	1 Jn 4:19-5:4; Lk 4:14-22
Friday, January 9	1 Jn 5:5-13; Lk 5:12-16
Saturday, January 10	1 Jn 5:14-21; Jn 3:22-30

Prayer for Religious Vocations

Priest: Let us pray for vocations

All: O God, we earnestly beseech you to bless the Church with many priests, deacons, seminarians and religious who will love you with their whole strength, be faithful to their vocation and gladly spend their entire lives to teach your truths, serve your Church and make you known and loved.

Priest: Bless our families, bless our children.

All: Choose from our homes those who are needed for your work.

Priest: O Mary, Queen of the clergy,

All: Pray for us. Pray for our priests, deacons, seminarians and religious. Obtain for us many more. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise You. We bless You. We adore you. We glorify You. We give You thanks for Your great glory. Lord God, heavenly King, O God almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only-begotten Son. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father: you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord, You alone, are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Reading I - Isaiah 60:1-6

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 - Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Reading II - Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Brothers and sisters: You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Gospel - Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

**To everything there is a season and a time
for every purpose under heaven.**

Ecclesiastes 3:1

“...a time to be born...”

Stephen Matthew Costello

“...a time to welcome...”

Barbarito Family

“a time to be married...”

...a time to be healed...”

Ann Marie Agar, Sam Amaradio, Bernadette Andrews, George & Maureen Austin, Verna Bisconte, Edward Boyd, Joseph Brickley, Rita Bruno, Charli Burke, Carla Carelli, Colleen, Lynn Collins, Krista Collings, Bob Cooper, Jerrolyn Covely, Bob D'Alessio, Roxanne Day, Robert Deegan, Alberta DiFabio, Lucyna Dinces, Barbara, Stephen & Vincent DiTullio, Michael Donahue, Mirenda Donnian, Rich Donofrio, Ellie & Les Edwards, Jack Ewen, Francis Ferry, Anna Forsman, Marylou Furfari, Linda Gerwatoski, Jay Gigante, John Gilmore, Margaret Giordano, Michael Groody, Donovan & John Gura, John & Joseph Hart, Kathy Heisinger, Karol Hennessey, Nat Holland, Jason, Adalynne Johnson, Susan Kane, Karen, Carol Taylor-Kearney, Caroline Keenan, Marilyn Angelotti-Kelly, Fred Krumm, Steffanie Lerch, Richard Marcantonio, Michelle Marhefka, Barbara Marker, Elwood Martz III, Maryellen McAteer, John McDevitt, Dorothy McKeever, Anne McMenamin, Barbara & Ira McManus, Christina McNasby, Jack & Tim McSorley, Hannah McStay, Joan Morlachetta, Katie Mutek, Peter Myers, Frank Nowak, Nicole P., William Pappernek, Lee Peters, Giovanni Poloney, Helen Powell, Rose Quigley, Janet Rainier, Teri Reed, Joan Reilly, Mary Reilly, George Rein, Angie & Pete Richman, Patti Roberts, Jim Roche, Karen Rucci, Denise Sacco, Marguerite Sadler, Caterina & Santi Saya, Loretta Scardino, Nicholas Simeo, Sr., Linda Sesko, Eda Shannon, Jason Shipman, Frank Smith, Chris Stalker, Nick Stansbury, Janie Talemal, Jason Tallarida, Ernie Tolentino, Evelyne & Tom Tull, Lou Underwood, Rosemarie Villari, William Walsh, Justin Weaver, John Werner, Nancy Taylor-Williams, Dianne Williamson, Richard Wilson, Theresa Woods, Lois Worthington, Lori Wotypka, Lois Wunsch, Maria Wyzykowski, Catherine Zabrodski, Francesco Zarzycki, Jacqueline Zellner, their caregivers, all others in need of our prayers.

“...a time to die...”

Claire M. Panebianco

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

At the Church of the Incarnation, we come together to receive and be the Body of Christ and to minister the Gospel of Christ.

STEWARDSHIP GRATITUDE

***“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 in **Stewardship** to generously share all 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 you.

Stewardship Report

December 16 through December 22 - \$25,235.80

FORGOT YOUR ENVELOPES?

If you forgot your envelopes, are new to the parish or are visiting the parish and would like to make a donation. You can do so here. **Be sure to select one-time gift – as recurring is default.**



STEPHEN MINISTRY

Eyes and Ears of Jesus

We are the eyes and ears of Jesus on earth today. It is our duty to be watching and listening to people around us, recognizing when they have needs for care. If you find someone with a need, listen and care. If you find the need is something greater than you can meet, tell the person about our Stephen Ministry program. If you would like to talk to a Stephen Leader or to request a Stephen Minister, please call 856-468-5536.



SENIOR STRETCH

Senior Stretch is starting back up on Monday, January 5 at 11:00 AM with Chair Stretching and Conditioning. Register and pay the day you start. Come one day, two days, all four days whatever works with your schedule.

Chair Stretching – Mondays at 11:00 AM
Stretch, Tone and Conditioning – Tuesdays at 9:15 AM
Low Impact – Wednesdays at 9:15 AM
Zumba – Thursdays at 9:15 AM

All classes are held in the Kernan Center and the cost is \$40.00 for as many classes as you want from January through June. After Senior Stretch on Tuesdays and Thursdays join our Prime Timers for fellowship, food, games, Bingo, music and more!

LIVING AS MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

Our Scripture passage for this Sunday comes from the Gospel of Matthew 2:1-12. In this passage, we read the well-known story of the Magi who visit the child Jesus in Bethlehem and bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gifts the Magi brought are all symbolic statements of who Jesus is. Gold is the gift proper for a King. Frankincense was offered by the High Priest to God in the Temple of Jerusalem. Myrrh was used as a perfume in the burial preparation of a body. Thus, the identity of Jesus is manifested in these three gifts: He is King, God (and/or High Priest) and Man (someone who will die). In one way or another, each of us makes the statement of who Jesus is to us based on the gifts we offer from our lives. For some Jesus is a small part of their lives whose reign extends only to an hour on Sunday morning. Such a limited understanding of Jesus will be reflected in an equally limited gift of one's life to the Lord. For others, Jesus is the Lord of their lives twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. Such a comprehensive understanding of Jesus will likewise be reflected in an all-encompassing gift of one's life to the Lord. We tend to give a person the gift that is appropriate because we believe they deserve it and that they can use it.

Think about it: When it comes to Jesus, what does the Lord deserve from my life? Who is Jesus to me? How do I manifest my faith in Jesus through the gifts I offer Him? What are the gifts I offer to the Lord for Him to use?

Like us on Facebook – Incarnation, Mantua



In spite of the changeover to Incarnation, we had a great December! Thank you for your continued support of Joseph's House.

The next pick up will be Monday, January 5. Thank you for all you do to support the Joseph House of Camden! May God bless you and your family this Christmas season!

Drop-off schedule remains the same:
Sunday: 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Monday (Delivery Day): 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM
If you have any questions, please contact:
Jerry Campbell - 856-579-7004
jerbotemple@comcast.net

INCARNATION INSIGHTS

Join us on Wednesday, January 7 for our next Incarnation Insights. We will gather in the Fr. Salerno Room at 7:00 PM and listen to Deacon Peter speak on *"His Voice is often a Whisper"*. This is a great way to start the new year!

GCHS CENTENNIAL JUBILEE:

This year marks Gloucester Catholic's Centennial Jubilee, a milestone that reflects one hundred years of faith, tradition, and the strong spirit of community that has shaped generations of Rams. Please join us this spring as we gather to honor our past, celebrate our present, and continue the proud story of Gloucester Catholic. Once A Ram, Always A Ram!

GCHS Centennial Jubilee
March 22, 2026, 6:00 PM-10:00 PM
Collingswood Ballroom, Collingswood, NJ
Tickets: GCHS100.org – order yours below



Inquiries: gchscentennial@gchsrms.org

Visit us at www.incarnation-church.org



REBOOT

A LIFE-CHANGING EVENT

Perfect
for Ages
12 & Up!

This high-energy, 2-hour event with internationally acclaimed speaker **Chris Stefanick** will awaken your faith, reignite your joy, and equip you with tools to live the life God created you for: A life of JOY. It will help you rediscover the JOY you were created for, and is perfect for everyone... even friends, family, and children (12+) who may not be actively practicing their faith.

Tickets Are Limited!

[HTTPS://BUYTICKETS.AT/REALLIFECATHOLIC/1765337](https://buytickets.at/reallifecatholic/1765337)

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
7:00 - 9:00 PM

Church of the Incarnation
240 Main St, Mantua Twp, NJ 08051



MARCH FOR LIFE WASHINGTON TRIP

Friday, January 23, 2026

“LIFE IS A GIFT” is this year’s March for Life theme. The theme speaks for itself and our prayerful fight continues to be to protect one of the most precious gifts our Lord has given us, LIFE. We cannot stop showing our support until we establish a culture of life in this great country. Please join our five area Knights Councils as we again host a pilgrimage to Washington DC. Details of the trip are as follows:

Mass: 7:00 am – Bus Departure from Incarnation: 7:45 – Arrive in Washington approximately 11:00 bus includes a bathroom – Light refreshments, served about mid-way to Washington - Washington drop off area: Near 7th & Independence. We will collect for driver’s tip.

To reserve a seat: contact Bob LaPalomanto at 856-994-3476 or Incarnation parish office at 856-468-1314. Donation appreciated: \$20.00 per adult to help offset cost. Please leave your donation at parish office along with name for each person participating and cell phone number. The bottom portion of this announcement can be used for that purpose. Make checks payable to Incarnation Council #6364, Inc. Please find it in your heart to participate so we can one day change this culture of death.

***“If we accept that a mother can kill her own child,
how can we tell other people not to kill one another”***

-Saint Teresa of Calcutta

NAME _____ CELL PHONE # _____



DONATE YOUR RECIPES!!

It's not too late to submit your recipe – but time is running out!! Incarnation's Leadership Team is putting together a parish cookbook that celebrates the diversity, love of food and fellowship of our parish community. Please share a treasured family recipe, a holiday treat, a busy night go-to or your favorite comfort dish. Recipes should include Family Name, Recipe Name, Ingredients and Instructions and a short note about the dish's significance (optional). Please email to recipes4goodness@gmail.com or bring a hard copy to the parish office. All proceeds will benefit our parish pantry and those in need in our community.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS SCHOLARSHIPS

The Incarnation Council #6364 of the Knights of Columbus is offering high school scholarships and college scholarships. To be considered, the 8th grade student must be a member of Incarnation Parish or St. Margaret's School and plan to attend a Catholic high school. The 12th grade student must be a member of Incarnation Parish and plan to attend a 2 or 4 year accredited college. The scholarship intends to recognize the student that best represents the Knights of Columbus virtue of charity in the form of active ministry and academic accomplishments will also be considered.

An application can be found on the parish website – <https://www.incarnation-church.org/knights-of-columbus>. Paper applications may be picked up at the parish office. Completed applications must be submitted along with a letter of recommendation from a teacher or counselor at student's school, an essay (essay requirements are on the last page of the application) along with a certification from one of your parish priests.

Completed applications are due by February 20. They may be emailed to davezyc@comcast.net or mailed to the address found on the application cover letter.

INCARNATION ANGELS WOMEN'S GROUP

Looking for something to do in the parish? Just can't figure where you fit in any of the ministries? If you are a woman look no further! The Incarnation Angels just may be the group for you. We meet once a month and our next meeting is this Tuesday, January 13 in the Kernan Center - 7:10 PM. Join us for a very informal gathering. We will discuss ideas and events for the upcoming year. Woman of all ages are welcome - we host many fun, spiritual and social and fundraising events that help our parish in so many ways. Come out just once and see if this just might be the group you did not know you needed.



This upcoming year consider joining one of our many ministries. This is a good way to give back to the community, meet new people and use your talents. Call the parish office at 856-468-1314 with the ministry you want to volunteer with and we'll pass along your information! A full list of ministries can be found on our website: incarnation-church.org.



The Epiphany blessing over your door is to bless your house and everyone who enters it. It's a centuries-old tradition (less common in the United States) that started shortly around the end of the Middle Ages. Priests would traditionally visit the members of their parish after the Feast of the Epiphany and bless their homes. As parishes grew, the responsibility was transferred over to household members.

The home blessing can be done as follows:

Using the blessed chalk, you received at church today, to mark the current year and the initials of the Magi above the inside or outside doorways of your home. Place a cross between each of the letters.

It should look something like this: 20+C+M+B+26

After completing the above markings, pray the following prayer with your family:

May all who come to our home this year
rejoice to find Christ living among us;
and may we seek and serve,
in everyone we meet,
that same Jesus who is Lord of all people,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Symbols:

C+M+B stand for the legendary names of the three Magi – Casper, Melchior and Balthasar.

They also stand for the Latin words, “Christus Mansionem Benedicat” which means: “May Christ bless this dwelling.”

The Crosses represent faith in Jesus.

The Year marks the passage of time and dedication to God in the coming year.

“Chalking the door” is a way to celebrate and literally mark the occasion of the Epiphany and God’s blessing of our lives and home. With time the chalk will fade. As it does, we let the meaning of the symbols written sink into the depths of our heart and be manifested in our words and actions. May God bless us throughout the coming year.



Discovering **hope** and **joy** in the Catholic faith.

January 2026

Church of the Incarnation, Mantua, NJ

Rev. Stephen J. Rapposelli, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Genevieve of Paris

Born in 422, in Nanterre, France, St. Genevieve consecrated herself to God when she was fifteen. She became known for her charity and gift of prophecy. She predicted Paris would be spared from attack by the Huns and led the people in fasting and prayer. Paris was spared. When King Childeric and his son Clovis I conquered Paris, Genevieve convinced Childeric to release his captives. She became a trusted advisor to Clovis, who converted to Christianity.

The Jesus Prayer

January is dedicated to the Most Holy Name of Jesus, reminding the faithful of the power and reverence due to His Name: *"At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth"* (Phil 2:10). A fitting prayer for this month is the Jesus Prayer, long cherished in Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions: *"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner."* Simple yet profound, this prayer can be repeated throughout the day. Prayed attentively, it deepens love and reverence for Christ, invokes His saving grace, and helps cultivate a steady spirit of prayer, humility, and interior peace.

"The things that we love tell us what we are." St. Thomas Aquinas

Turning our hearts back to God

Converting our hearts back to God begins with an honest pause – not a dramatic moment, but a decision to look at our lives as they really are. What shapes our days? What gets our best energy, our first thoughts, our deepest trust? Whatever holds that place is, in practice, what we put first.

Putting God first starts with intention. We make room for Him by removing what crowds Him out. A few minutes of prayer before reaching for a phone. A short passage of Scripture read slowly instead of rushed. These small choices retrain the heart. They remind us to whom we belong.

Repentance is part of the return, but it is not about shame. It is about direction. To repent means to turn. We admit where we've drifted and choose a better path. God does not demand perfection before welcoming us back. He asks for honesty and willingness.

Trust follows close behind. Many of us profess trust in God but still rely

on our own control. Putting Him first means surrendering outcomes we cannot manage anyway. It means praying not only for help, but for guidance, even when the answer may change our plans.

Faith moves us to action. When we

"Do not let the past disturb you. Just leave everything in the Sacred Heart and begin again with joy." St. Teresa of Calcutta

align our choices with God's teachings, our hearts follow. Faith leads to action. Forgiving when necessary. Serving when it is inconvenient. Giving when it feels risky. These actions reshape our priorities.

Community matters. Worship, shared prayer, and accountability keep our hearts oriented toward God when we are tempted to drift.

Turning back to God is rarely instantaneous. It is daily, deliberate, and deeply personal. Each step taken toward Him strengthens the heart's true center.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Blessing ourselves with holy water when entering a Catholic church recalls the ritual washings of the Old Testament, through which the Jews purified themselves before approaching God in the Temple. St. John the Baptist built on this tradition by using water as a sign of repentance and conversion.

Why do Catholics bless themselves with holy water?

Today, this gesture reminds us of our Baptism and renews our commitment to live the Faith. As a sacramental, holy water disposes us to receive God's grace, strengthens us against temptation, and, with proper repentance, helps remit venial sins.

New Year, new habits build change that lasts

Starting and maintaining New Year's resolutions can be difficult for the same reason cultivating virtue is difficult: both require forming new habits. Perseverance rarely comes from sheer willpower alone. Practical strategies, supported by grace, make growth more sustainable.

Begin with achievable goals. Set yourself up for early success by practicing self-denial in small, manageable ways. Learning to say no in minor matters builds the discipline needed to resist greater temptations later.

Replace, rather than simply remove. It is often easier to abandon an unhealthy habit when it is substituted with a better one. Just as swapping potato chips for pretzels can make dietary

changes more attainable, uprooting vice is aided by cultivating the opposing virtue. Greed is weakened by generosity.

Seek accountability. A trusted friend, exercise partner, or prayer companion can provide encouragement and consistency for change. Knowing someone is watching makes it more difficult to give up when motivation fades.

Above all, rely on grace. God invites us to call upon Him, especially in moments of weakness, often marked by anger or anxiety, fatigue, hunger, or sadness. In those moments, turn to the Holy Spirit for strength and consolation, trusting the Lord's promise: *"The Lord will fight for you; you have only to keep still"* (Exodus 14:14).

from Scripture

Matthew 4:12-23, Discipleship is the greatest adventure

This Gospel passage recounts the call of the first disciples. They may not have known Jesus personally at first, but they knew about Him through John the Baptist (John 1:35-42). Hearing the invitation to know Jesus better and follow Him closely, the men dropped what they were doing "at once" and left everything behind.

Under Christ's leadership, the disciples went on to do amazing deeds. They worked miracles, brought the Gospel to distant lands, won countless souls for Heaven, and suffered many

hardships, even martyrdom. The secret of their success was their relationship with Christ as their God, Savior, Teacher, and Friend who promised to be with them always (Matthew 28:20).

All of us are called to be saints – friends of God. Jesus Christ invites each of us, in particular, to know and follow Him. While few of us are called to leave everything behind, we can still offer everything we have to God's service. We can still give our "Yes." Pursuing authentic holiness isn't boring but a great adventure!

Q & A

Why is the feast of the Epiphany important?

The Feast of the Epiphany, celebrated this year on January 4, is important because it celebrates the public revelation of Jesus Christ as Savior of the whole world. The word epiphany means "manifestation" or "revealing."

Originally, the feast commemorated the visit of the Magi, wise men from the East, who followed the star to Bethlehem. In honoring the Magi, the Church proclaims that salvation is universal and that Gentiles are fully included in God's plan.

Traditionally, Epiphany also encompasses two other key moments of revelation: Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan and His first miracle at the wedding at Cana. At His Baptism, the Father's voice and the descent of the Holy Spirit reveal Jesus as God's Son. At Cana, Jesus manifests His divine power publicly for the first time. Together, these events reveal who Jesus truly is.

Epiphany calls us to respond as the Magi did: to seek Christ, to worship Him, and to offer Him our lives. It reminds us that faith is not meant to be hidden, but proclaimed.

Feasts & Celebrations

January 1 – Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. When we celebrate this feast, we honor Mary, but also acknowledge Jesus as true God and true Man. Mary's title highlights God's humility, in that God chose to come to us through Mary, as a vulnerable newborn. This year, it is a holy day of obligation.

January 5 – St. John Neumann (1860). The first American bishop to be canonized was born in the present-day Czech Republic in 1811. St. John traveled to New York as a missionary before becoming bishop of Philadelphia. He built up the Catholic school system and established diocesan

schools. He also built more than 89 churches, several hospitals and orphanages.

January 11 – The Baptism of the Lord (1st Century). Jesus began His public ministry by getting baptized by St. John the Baptist. Jesus was to be baptized to *"fulfill all righteousness"* (Matthew 3:15). This was also when God reveals Jesus as His *"beloved Son"* (Matthew 3:17).

January 13 – St. Hilary of Poitiers (367). St. Hilary converted to Christianity as a young man and was elected bishop around 350. St. Hilary spent most of his office battling the Arian heresy, which denied the Divinity of Christ. He was exiled to Phrygia. He spent his four-year exile writing and teaching against Arianism until the emperor begged him to return home.

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