

Restore the Roots

Cultivating Your Domestic Church

A Liturgical Living Initiative of St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral, La Crosse, WI

Vol. 3 No. 8

JANUARY

4 Sts. Caspar, Balthasar & Melchior



The Three Wise Men, also known as magi or later as kings, appear in the Gospel of Matthew (2:1-12). They came from the east and arrived in Jerusalem asking “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” (Mt. 2:2) Tradition has numbered them to correspond to their gifts and given them the names of Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. Sacred Scripture tells us that they presented gifts of gold (acknowledging Jesus as a king), frankincense (used in worship to signify the Divinity of Christ) and myrrh (a burial spice to foreshadow the death of Jesus) to the Christ Child (Mt. 2:11). The Church celebrates this event in the feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6th or, in the U.S., the Sunday between Jan. 2nd and 8th). Epiphany means manifestation or revelation. Read about the fascinating traditional history of the Wise Men’s bodies (relics) and current locations on page 3! And do the House blessing on page 4. Don’t forget to pick up some blessed chalk!

6 St. André Bessette



A Canadian Holy Cross brother renowned for his humility, faith, healing, and devotion to St. Joseph, St. André came from humble beginnings. Born Alfred Bessette in Quebec and orphaned young, he endured poverty and poor health before joining the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1870, taking the name André. As doorkeeper at Notre-Dame College in Montreal, he prayed for the sick, attributing over 10,000 reported healings to St. Joseph. Pilgrims flocked to him, leading to the building of the Oratory of St. Joseph du Mont-Royal, which he founded and which grew into a major shrine. Despite illiteracy and opposition, his sanctity shone through simple acts of charity. Canonized in 2010 by Benedict XVI, he exemplifies trust in God’s providence. To honor St. André’s devotion to St. Joseph, pray a litany of St. Joseph today. (Find a link on page 3.) Or look up a local healing Mass or service and plan to go to the next one.

24 St. Francis de Sales



Francis de Sales lived in Switzerland and became a priest after he went to a university in Paris, much to the dismay of his father. The heresy of Calvinism was gaining speed throughout Europe during de Sales’ life. Calvinism teaches that every aspect of human nature is corrupted by sin, making us blind, corrupt, and unable to please God. This fear preyed upon the faithful causing many to focus on their own sin instead of God’s mercy. Eventually becoming bishop of Geneva, he became spiritual director to (now) St. Jane Francis de Chantal. His role as spiritual director to her and many others, inspired his writing of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. He writes how every person can achieve sanctity before they die, which was an unpopular opinion in his time. Today, we remember that we are all called to sanctity, and that holiness is not only reserved for religious and priests. See page 3 for more about the book and a podcast for all!

Monthly Devotion: **THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS**

COUNCIL OF EPHEBUS



After the First Council of Constantinople, Arianism was largely in decline, though peace was far from established in the imperial city. A powerful though controversial preacher and Archbishop, St. John Chrysostom, was exiled from there in the early 400s. Perhaps in an attempt to ease tensions, Emperor Theodosius II nominated for Archbishop an apparently quiet but stable presence in the priest Nestorius. Nestorius, however, quickly made waves both politically and theologically, perhaps owing to ignorance and pride. He refused sacraments to the Emperor's sister, prohibited women at Vespers, and was the indirect cause of a large fire at the last remaining Arian chapel and its surroundings. His argumentative reputation from the pulpit and in private conversation left many confused and exasperated. On one occasion, monks came to ask him a clarifying question about Mary's motherhood. From the early Church, she had been venerated as Theotokos, the God-bearer or Mother of God. Nestorius had also used that language, but now he was using the language of Christotokos, the Christ-bearer. The monks wanted clarification, and Nestorius doubled down. Technically (Nestorius' favorite word, all-too-familiar to parents with teenage children), Mary should not be called the God-bearer. Better to call her the Christ-bearer, because technically, how can a human womb hold God?

The monks told abroad what the powerful Archbishop was teaching. Many became outraged, most notably Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria. He exchanged a series of letters with Nestorius, and the controversy became so heated that both appealed to authorities to call a Council. Nestorius had Emperor Theodosius' ear, and all three figures appealed to Pope Celestine I, who sided with Cyril and the Catholic tradition. Cyril became Celestine's official representative to win back Nestorius or condemn him as heretical.

Theodosius officially called the Council, which met in 431 in Ephesus, where after Jesus' resurrection Mary spent the last years of her earthly life with the disciple John. The events of the Council read like a novel. About 250 bishops and representatives came, though several Syrian

bishops were delayed by weeks. In the middle of the hot summer, those who arrived on time were understandably impatient to get the Council over with, especially given that the overwhelming majority sided with Cyril and the Pope. The 30 or so latecomers were Nestorius supporters. Officially, the Council could not begin until the Emperor's Order was read, and unfortunately for the majority, the 'Gatekeeper' responsible for proclaiming it sided with Nestorius. But he was eventually persuaded to read the Order, and the Council began.

Nestorius had spent the time in Ephesus unsuccessfully and belligerently trying to win support; by the time the others arrived his fate was sealed. When the Syrian bishops arrived after the first session, John of Antioch tried to convene an anti-council and excommunicate the bishops who convened the Council without them, though without success.

During the seven sessions of the Council, members read aloud Cyril and Nestorius' exchange of letters, as well as letters from Pope Celestine. They decided in favor of Cyril's theology, attaching an anathema to those who followed Nestorius' position that Mary should not be called the God-bearer. The Council also confirmed the teachings of Nicaea and restored to office those who had been deposed by Nestorian bishops.

Why does Cyril's incorrect theology matter? Put simply, misunderstandings about Mary are rooted in misunderstandings about Christ. Cyril perceived that a dangerous consequence of Nestorius' Christ-bearer language was to divide Jesus into two persons or to separate his natures. If he is two persons, God did not actually become man and take on flesh. If the natures are separated, then Christ is not our perfect sacrifice and representative before God the Father. God is one person with two distinct but not separable natures. It is important because Jesus wants to save us. And to save us, he became like us in all things but sin. The second person of the Trinity took his humanity from Mary but did not lose his divinity. With this confidence, we can honor Mary as Mother of God and follow her Son in his life on earth to know the Father in heaven.

JAN 4

THE RELICS OF THE THREE KINGS



The relics venerated as the bodies of the Three Wise Men, trace a contentious and storied path through medieval Europe. Tradition holds that Constantine gave a large sarcophagus containing the relics of the Wise Men to Bishop Eustorgio. Enshrined in what is now the Basilica of Sant'Eustorgio in Milan, Italy, it became a focal point of devotion and for pilgrims.

In 1162, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa razed Milan after its resistance, including backing Pope Alexander III against imperial forces. The relics were plundered from Sant'Eustorgio by Barbarossa's chancellor, Rainald von Dassel, and conveyed to Cologne, Germany in 1164, boosting the city's ecclesiastical prominence. This act elevated Cologne's status as a pilgrimage hub. In Cologne's Cathedral, a lavish reliquary was commissioned: a silver casket nearly 6 feet long and 4.5 feet high, shaped like a church with nave and aisles, encrusted with gold, gems, and enamel - one of medieval Europe's finest works. Opened in 1864, it houses the bones, venerated to this day.

However, in 1904, because of the intervention of Cardinal Carlo Ferrari, some remains of the Wise Men returned to the Basilica of Sant'Eustorgio. Present day in Milan, there is an Epiphany procession with a live Nativity on Jan. 6 each year from the Piazza del Duomo to the Basilica of Sant'Eustorgio.



LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH

As St. André Bessette was devoted to St. Joseph, a perfect way to honor his feast day is to honor his love for St. Joseph. Pray the Litany of St. Joseph found by scanning the QR code here or by searching online for "EWTN Litany of St. Joseph."



Joseph found by scanning the QR code here or by searching online for "EWTN Litany of St. Joseph."

JAN 6

Editors: Msgr. Richard Gilles and Natalie Elskamp
Special thanks to all the contributing writers.
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Email us! RestoretheRootsLAX@gmail.com



INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE

JAN 24

Introduction to the Devout Life is a spiritual guide written for virtuous souls, laypeople living in the world, seeking deeper devotion, who aspire to holiness without retreating from secular life. It targets souls immersed in worldly affairs who might dismiss devotion as impossible amid social obligations. St. Francis de Sales counters this by showing how devotion enables one to live piously "in the world untainted by worldly breath," likening it to a mother-of-pearl in the sea or a firemoth near flames.

True devotion is not mere external practices like fasting or prayers, but is "a spiritual activity and liveliness by which Divine Love works in us," prompting diligent fulfillment of God's commandments. It presupposes charity and perfects it, distinguishing the devout, who soar like eagles, from the worldly, bound like ostriches. Far from gloomy, devotion is "the sweetest of sweets, the queen of virtues," sweetening hardships like mortifications or trials, much as bees turn bitter thyme to honey. The work divides into five parts to guide the soul from aspiration to confirmed devotion:

1. Turning desire into resolution via general confession, rejection of sin, and Holy Communion.
2. Union with God through Sacraments and mental prayer.
3. Practicing virtues suited to advancement.
4. Avoiding sin and worldly temptations.
5. Renewing and confirming devotion.

Introduction to the Devout Life is a simple yet profound read that can deepen anyone's spiritual life. It is readily found at online or retailers or Catholic shops. We encourage you to pick up a copy if this peaked your interest. St. Francis de Sales, Pray for us!



Find the audio drama about St. Francis de Sales from "The Saints" by scanning this QR code or searching your podcast app.



EPIPHANY BLESSING FOR 2026



-Upon entering the house [or at the front door]

Leader: Peace be to this house.

All: And to all who dwell herein.

Leader: From the east came the Magi to Bethlehem to adore the Lord; and opening their treasures they offered precious gifts: gold for the great King, incense for the true God, and myrrh in symbol of His burial.

**While saying the Magnificat, the room is sprinkled with holy water and incensed, if available.*

All: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

**After the incensing and sprinkling of holy water is completed:*

All: From the east came the Magi to Bethlehem to adore the Lord; and opening their treasures they offered precious gifts: gold for the great King, incense for the true God, and myrrh in symbol of His burial.

Leader: Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead and lead us not into temptation,

All: But deliver us from evil.

Leader: All they from Saba shall come

All: Bringing gold and frankincense.

Leader: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come unto Thee.

Leader: Let us pray. O God, who by the guidance of a star didst on this day manifest Thine only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, mercifully grant that we who know Thee by faith may also attain the vision of Thy glorious majesty. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: Be enlightened, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee— Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary.

All: And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light and kings in the splendor of thy rising, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee.

Leader: Let us pray. Bless, O Lord God Almighty, this home, that in it there may be health, purity, the strength of victory, humility, goodness and mercy, the fulfillment of Thy law, the thanksgiving to God the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. And may this blessing remain upon this home and upon all who dwell herein. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

**After the prayers of the blessing are recited, walk through the house and bless each room by sprinkling with holy water and incensing it.*

**Take the blessed chalk and write the initials of the three Wise Men, connected with crosses, over the inside of your front door (on the lintel, if possible). Then write the year, breaking up the numbers and the year so that they fall on both sides.*

It should look like this, 20+C+M+B+26

Leader: Hear us, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, and send Thy Holy Angel from Heaven to watch over, cherish, protect, be with, and defend all who live in this house. I call upon Thy saints, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, to protect this family and this home from every harm and danger, and I place the marks of their holy names over the doors of this home to remain there as a constant reminder to us and to all who enter here that this house is truly a house of the Lord.

O God, make the door of this house wide enough to receive all who need charity and companionship, narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride, and strife. Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block to children, nor to straying feet, but rugged and strong enough to turn back Satan's power.

O God, make the door of this house the gateway to Thy eternal Kingdom, ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord,

All: Amen.

Optional: Conclude by singing "We Three Kings"