



Winter Edition

Volume 12 Issue 15

Greetings!

As the year draws to a close, we are cloaked in winter's darkness. Let us look up to the heavens with wonder as the wise men did when they followed the brilliant star which came to rest over the place where Jesus was born. Look up and see our Salvation wrapped in swaddling clothes and hear the multitude of the heavenly host singing and praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

This year in the ministry, Our Lord has given us many reasons to praise Him. We formed our 105th Chapter, we launched our Bible Study, we published our first "Magnificat Proclaims" book which is in its 2nd printing, and we all watched with wonder as our ministry was featured on EWTN with Johnnette Benkovic on her "Women of Grace" program. We can only sing, "Lord, we are amazed by you!"

Have a peaceful and blessed Christmas and rejoice in the New Year!

Blessings,

Kathy MacInnis

Kathy MacInnis, Coordinator

Central Service Team

This is a "Printer Friendly" version of the Newsletter

Most printers have three print options: color, grayscale or black and white.



Holy Father's Monthly Intentions



December:

Universal: That all may experience the mercy of God, who never tire of forgiving.

Evangelization: That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope.

January:

Universal: Interreligious Dialogue That sincere dialogue among men and women of different faiths may produce the fruits of peace and justice.

Evangelization: Christian Unity That by means of dialogue and fraternal charity and with the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christians may overcome division.

February:

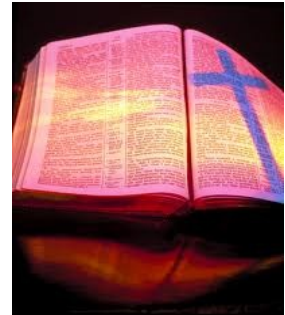
Universal: Care for Creation That we may take good care of creation – a gift freely given – cultivating and protecting it for future generations.

Evangelization: Asia That opportunities may increase for dialogue and encounter the Christian faith and the peoples of Asia.

Liturgy of the Hours

Second Reading

From a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, pope



Christian, remember your dignity

Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born, let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal happiness.

No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no man free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of victory at hand. Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagan take courage as he is summoned to life.

In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile it with its creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown mankind.

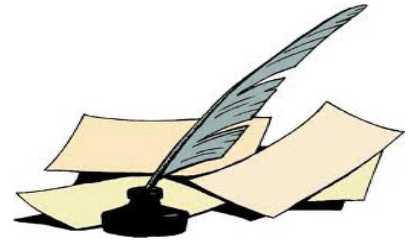
And so at the birth of Our Lord the angels sing in joy: Glory to God in the highest, and they proclaim peace to his people on earth as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvelous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men?

Beloved, let us give thanks to God the Father, through the son, in the Holy Spirit, because in his great love for us he took pity on us, and when we were dead in our sins he brought us to life with Christ, so that in him we might be a new creation. Let us throw off our old nature and all its ways and, as we have come to birth in Christ, let us renounce the works of the flesh.

Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God's kingdom.

Through the sacrament of baptism you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not drive away so great a guest by evil conduct and become a slave to the devil, for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ.

Fr. Kevin's Korner
Magnificat CST Spiritual Advisor
Fr. Kevin Scallon, C.M.



Vocation to a Consecrated Life

The vocation to Consecrated Virginity has existed since the early church and is the oldest form of consecration in the church. It pre-dates the emergence of religious life. Mention is made of this vocation in the early church by people like Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Saint Ciprian, St. Ambrose and others: examples abound, such as Saint Agnes, Saint Agatha, Saint Cecilia, Saint Lucy and Saint Catherine. Even Saint Patrick in his autobiography *The Confession* commented on the great number of young Irish women who, in response to his preaching, embraced the state of virginity for the sake of Christ and the service of the Gospel. In those early times, the consecration was not a form of religious life characterized by the taking of religious vows. These were single lay women living in the world and serving the church by a life of prayer while involved in various apostolates under the direction of the bishop. The vocation of consecrated virgins living in the world was not really made clear until its revival at the Second Vatican Council and in 1983 when it was incorporated into the Code of Canon Law #604. The church was to establish this form of consecration as a vocation for women to follow a way of life which would be recognized and accepted by the Bishop as an integral part of the life of his diocese.

My own experience of dealing with women who came to me wanting to embrace this way was to get the church involved by introducing them to their local priest and bishop. Unfortunately, I found that both bishops and priests were simply not interested. But things have changed in the last number of years, and now bishops have a more informed view of things, especially as more and more women are coming forward. Such as vocation requires mature discernment. This is usually done by the pastor or spiritual director and ultimately by the bishop himself. He is the one who discerns and decides how to go forward, and how long the period of probation ought to last. My own view is that, with the demise of so many religious communities and the emergence of new ones, it seems providential that, guided by the Holy Spirit, the church would provide for people who do not wish to be religious but who desire to live a consecrated life in the service of the church. Those I have guided to enter into such a consecration have experienced a profound transformation in their inner lives, and also in their apostolate within the church. I know that there are many women today who are looking for just such a way to dedicate their lives to Christ. Those who came to me had already been living deeply spiritual sacramental lives, which is part of the requirement of undertaking such a consecration. I am sure that there are many single women and widows out there who would gladly consecrate themselves to Jesus Christ and to a life of holiness of body and soul.

May all of us in Magnificat pray earnestly that these wonderful virtues, proclaimed by the Church in every age, would continue to flourish in the Church. I pray that our Blessed Mother Mary would draw many people to follow her under her banner of Queen of Virgins. I wish you every grace and blessing in this Season of Advent and the Birth of Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Coincidence or God- Incidence?

By Paulette Renaudin, CST Member



A few weeks ago, I was privileged, along with CST sister, Diane Bates, to attend the Benedicta Leadership Institute and the National Women of Grace Conference held in Diane's home parish, St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine, Texas. What Divine Providence! Nothing is coincidence! The amazing thing was that Johnnette Benkovic had invited Living Praise Worship Team to lead the praise and worship at both events. It was the first time Magnificat CST members, Grapevine Magnificat Chapter's Leadership, Women of Grace Regional Representatives, and Living Praise were all celebrating under one roof! Coming together under the same anointing was a beautiful

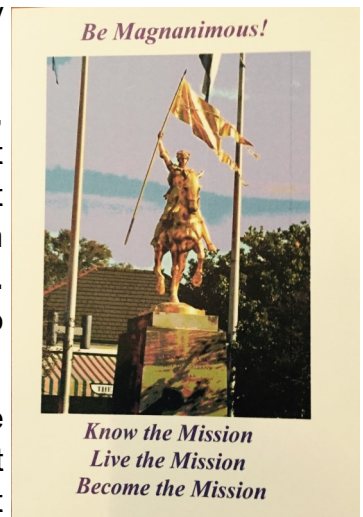
experience that only the Holy Spirit could have orchestrated! What a holy exchange of sacred sisterhood!

Johnnette taught the Benedicta Leadership Institute to her leaders, regional team members, facilitators, and many women coming for the first time to one of her events. Entering the Family Life Center each participant was gifted with a framed picture of St. Joan of Arc with this exhortation printed on it, **"Be Magnanimous! Know the Mission. Live the Mission. Become the Mission."** Magnanimity is defined as "great-souled" also as generous, courageous, and forgiving.

St. Joan of Arc's mission was the common thread throughout the weekend and we even watched EWTN's DVD of her life. We followed that viewing with round table discussion of her mission. She is certainly a saint for such a time as this that we are living in now. The theme of the Institute was "Leading Like THE Lady" which, of course, is Our Blessed Mother. The Benedicta Institute teaches the building blocks of Catholic women's leadership. We discussed Catholic Saints who have been leaders for women. Johnnette defines the Catholic woman leader as "a daughter of the Church who seeks to use the gifts, talents and feminine genius to bring Jesus to the world and the world to Jesus Christ as exemplified by the Blessed Virgin Mary's magnanimity of soul, servant's heart, and conformity to the will of God." How are Catholic women to accomplish their providential role as spiritual mothers (with Mary) of the human race? The answer is simply, like Mary. She stressed how we can become "mini Mary's" in living out our lives.

The two pillar virtues we need are humility and magnanimity. We discussed how to grow in the virtues. Johnnette describes Women of Grace's mission in light of a godly view of the future, and it serves as a rudder that guides and directs their mission in its decision making process, outreach and activity. It presupposes an essential desire to be in conformity to God's will in all things. Magnificat women formed the prayer teams for an evening session after Fr. Philip Scott, F.J., anointed everyone present. The women then came to the prayer teams for prayer to stir up the gifts of the Spirit. Fr. Philip's homilies at each Mass were outstanding and extremely inspirational.

Following the Benedicta Institute was the Women of Grace National Conference: The theme was "Woman's Influence, Effect, and Power: Reclaiming the Feminine Ideal." Presenters included Johnnette Benkovic, Dr. Monica Miller, a pro-life advocate since 1971, who spoke on the role of



women in the modern world. Paul Thigpen PhD., who has written 45 books and spoke on Mary: the Ideal of Feminine Power, the truth of who we are will be measured against Mary. Also, Fr. Philip Scott, F.J. gave one presentation on Our Lady and also afforded every woman the opportunity for confession during the weekend. The Conference included a Spiritual Warfare Panel with 4 presenters and then was followed up with questions from the audience for clarification. Each session started with 30 minutes of Praise and Worship led by Living Praise Worship Team. Susan Potvin, the leader, also gave a talk on "Embracing Our Heritage of Hebrew Worship" and explained the terminology of Hebrew Worship which we actually use today to change the atmosphere during our praise and worship time.

I came away grace-filled, deeply inspired and very thankful to have been able to receive amazing grace from such a powerful weekend. I made many new friends who became sisters in the Lord. What a blessing!



Central Service Team Facebook page

Visit and like the page at <https://www.facebook.com/MagnificatMinistry>

Thank you to all who have commented, liked, and shared our posts. Every time you like, share, or comment you create activity which then multiplies the number of souls exposed to the Magnificat mission, which in turn reaches out to more souls in need of our Savior. Let us glorify the Lord in all we do, even on social media, and they will come to know the One who is the way, the truth, and the life! All glory to God!



The Year of Mercy

Pope Francis chose December 8, 2015 to open the Year of Mercy. That day marks the 50th Anniversary of the closing of Vatican II.

Pope Francis is proclaiming that mercy is the key to the Church's continuing renewal in this "new phase of her history." This Holy Year will end on the feast of Christ the King, whom Pope Francis asks, "to pour out his mercy, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future."

A Formed Conscience

By Teresa Tomeo, Host of Catholic Connection



There was a lot of talk during the Synod of Bishops on the Family suggesting that the Church should allow more room for the application of personal conscience when it comes to the laity and moral decision-making. With all due respect to those making the suggestion, if this important process of discernment is going to be effective, Catholics need to grasp what personal conscience means in the first place.

Speaking from personal experience as a cradle Catholic, my understanding for many years was weak at best and equated personal conscience with nothing more than strong personal opinion. I may have been aware somewhere in the back of my mind that the Church said "yes" or "no" to this teaching or that teaching, but in the end, it was about doing what worked for me. As far as becoming familiar with Church instruction regarding the development of a well-formed conscience, well, those words were foreign to me until I discovered them in the Catechism of the Catholic Church years later during my journey back to the Catholic Faith.

I had no idea that I was supposed to be guided by the Holy Spirit, sacred Scripture and the authoritative teachings of the Church. Who knew? Again, I didn't - and unfortunately, given the poor catechesis over the past few decades, I was not exactly in the minority.

That's why I really appreciated the honesty from Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia regarding this topic. While serving at the synod, he was featured in the French Catholic magazine *Famille Chrétienne* with the nature of personal conscience a key portion of the interview. While the archbishop certainly recognized the importance of people of faith following their conscience, he also points out the difference between conscience and personal opinion or preference.

"The Church is not a collection of sovereign individuals. We're a community, a family, organized around the person of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. We have an obligation to form our consciences in the truth. That means we need to allow ourselves to be guided by the wisdom and teaching of the Church that Jesus founded."

His comments brought me back to a conversation I had with a radio listener of mine a few years ago.

It was shortly before a major election, and this listener wrote to me explaining that she was just fine with voting for legislation - along with politicians - that greatly contradicted Church teaching. She had done her homework and felt good about her decisions. She also prided herself on being a "well-informed Catholic."

In my email response, I asked her about her research. Certainly, if she considered herself to be informed, she had also consulted solid Catholic sources such as documents from the USCCB as well as the Vatican. To her credit, she admitted her approach was much like mine had been. She did not even own a copy of the Catechism nor had she included any other Catholic sources in her decision-making: an all too familiar scene taking place in today's Catholic circles.

"If my conscience disagrees with the guidance of the Church on a matter of moral substance, it's probably not the Church that is wrong. Human beings - all of us - are very adroit at making excuses for what we want to do, whether it's sinful or not," Archbishop Chaput said.

Letting our conscience be our guide sounds like a sensible - even noble - idea.

But as Archbishop Chaput reminds us, if we're being guided by the culture or our own pride and passions, we could easily be heading in the wrong direction.

Teresa Tomeo is the host of "Catholic Connection," produced by Ave Maria Radio and heard daily on EWTN Global Catholic Radio and Sirius Channel 130.

Spiritual Advisor on EWTN 'The Journey Home'

The Walnut Creek, CA Magnificat Chapter (Servants of the Immaculata) was so happy that their Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Jerry Brown on August 31, 2015 was the guest on the EWTN *The Journey Home* Program. His testimony is inspirational as he tells of his journey from Episcopal Minister to Catholic Pastor.

Marilyn Bayer, was the previous Assistant Coordinator of the Chapter, who moved to Kentucky. It was her inspiration that made all of this happen. Fr. Jerry Brown was their guest speaker at their Magnificat Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, December 5, 2015



From left to right in the photo is Greg and Sharon (who live 1/4 mile from the Journey Home studio), Marcus Grodi, Fr. Jerry Brown, Marilyn Bayer and her sister, Janet, and Marilyn's son, Michael Bayer.

Birmingham, Alabama 20th Anniversary



A Canticle of Praise

Below is an excerpt of a lovely article published in the
Birmingham Diocese Newspaper

Born of and nurtured by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Magnificat's primary mission is to evangelize and help Catholic women grow spiritually in holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit. At the heart of all Magnificat is PRAYER!

In 1991 Sister Virginia Delaney, a Daughter of Charity and Vice President for Missions at St. Vincent's Hospital, brought news of a Catholic organization ministering to women to her friend, Carolyn Wright. Inflamed by the love of the Holy Spirit, a small group of women persevered in prayer to discern making Magnificat available to the women of Alabama. These faith-filled prayer warriors, Carolyn Wright, Peter Ann Ryan, Lil Bruzzese, Martha Dixon, Sue Dominick and Olga Coburn, stepped forward to become Birmingham. Bishop David E. Foley designated, "Mary, Woman of Faith," as the official title of the Birmingham Chapter.

Carolyn Wright, the founding Coordinator of the Birmingham Magnificat Chapter, currently serves as a member of the Central Service Team's Communication Ministry Team and the Southeast Regional Team. Reflecting on the creation of the Birmingham Chapter, Carolyn exclaimed, "The formation of this chapter of Magnificat was nothing short of amazing! It is more than any of us ever imagined or hoped for! It has brought forth fruits of love for The Trinity and Our Lady, as well as support of the Church and her priests. Magnificat Women come together, not only as friends, but as sisters in the Lord."

Peter Ann Ryan, a close friend of Carolyn's, became the first draftee in the discernment process concerning the Magnificat Ministry. She joyfully reminisces, "Over these twenty years, I am still astounded by the gifts of the Holy Spirit as He reveals His plan of love, encouragement and affection in the response of those coming to Magnificat. The awesome "coincidences" that occur between and among faith-filled women, prove the presence of a good and gracious God . . . touching and uplifting His children."



L to R: Olga Colburn, Lil Bruzzese, Carolyn Wright, Martha Dixon, Peter Ann Ryan, Sue Dominick

The first Magnificat Prayer Meal in Alabama was held at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Birmingham on February 17, 1996 with Sister Briege McKenna, O.S.C. as the speaker. There were 500 women in attendance. Olga Coburn, who has been on the service team since its inception, also participated in this first meal. Using her gifts of leadership in the Charismatic Renewal, Olga was delegated by the Lord to give His word to the women at the Magnificat Meals. With a grateful heart, Olga proclaims that, "My joy is from being the Lord's instrument, especially in Magnificat, to pronounce His prophetic word to the women He has called to be present. From the beginning He has blessed this ministry, which became

manifested on that first breakfast with Sister Briege proclaiming His works and healing, including my right hand. Through His Mother, Mary, He continues to bless and use women to further His Kingdom."

Kathy MacInnis, current Coordinator of the Magnificat Central Service Team says, "At each meal, a woman gives her testimony of how the Lord God has touched her life in an extraordinary way with His grace. The women in attendance come to understand that what God has done for that speaker, He can also do for them. This is a source of freedom and empowerment!" This witness of God's action and mercy in the speaker's life focuses on hope in the midst of adversity and brings to life the scripture quote: "They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." Rev 12:11

On February 6, 2016, the Birmingham Chapter of Magnificat will be celebrating its 20th Anniversary at Our Lady of the Valley Social Hall in Birmingham with their spiritual advisor, Bishop Emeritus David E. Foley, as their speaker.

Bishop Foley's love and devotion to the Blessed Mother is emphasized in the following prayer he has written, "O Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of our Catholic Church, may all women of the world take you as their model of what it means to be a woman. May you, who are Woman of Faith, lead us by the power of the Spirit to a new evangelization of the world. Amen."

May God bless their 20th Anniversary Meal!



Bishop Emeritus David Foley & Sr. Briege McKenna at the Chapter's first Magnificat meal.

Magnificat Bible Study: Visiting Marilyn Quirk's Group

By Kathleen Beckman, CST Advisory Team Member

Thanks be to God that the Visitation (Lk 1:41-59) continues to be lived throughout Magnificat Ministry. While in New Orleans recently, I had the opportunity to visit Marilyn and Pete Quirk's home and Paulette and Rusty Renaudin's home. It is always a joy to be with Magnificat women, but it is a special grace to be in the company of the early pioneers of this ministry. Founding service team members throughout the ministry are fruitful spiritual mothers and pioneers with a unique anointing of the Spirit. They are beloved as the elders of the ministry, wise, like the women of the Old and New Testament.

It was a real treat when Marilyn invited me to her Tuesday morning Magnificat Bible study. There is tangible peace in Marilyn's home. You can sense years of prayer and sacrifices that permeate her holy family home.

I knew several of the women in Marilyn's Bible study, so it was a very warm reunion. My goodness, I met these precious ladies in my mid-thirties and now I'm a grandmother! Twenty-five years have passed quickly!



Left to Right: Puddin McNamara, Joal Kuebel, Joan Lococo, Kathleen Beckman, Donna McNamara, Marilyn Quirk

Marilyn had shared with me that some women in the bible study were not in Magnificat ministry. This is a good reminder for all of us that the Magnificat Bible study is not exclusive to Magnificat women. It can draw women from outside Magnificat circles and it is ideal for us to cast the nets wide to catch more women for Jesus (and Mary).

We should invite parishioners and friends who, for various reasons, may not be part of Magnificat. There are women in homeless shelters, women's prisons, maternity homes, and facilities for the poor, single mothers and widows, who could benefit by studying the women of the Bible. We can help them to break open the Word of God that heals and makes whole.

This is important because Magnificat should remain a ministry that, like Mary, runs toward all women catechized and un-catechized. Magnificat is a missionary ministry by God's design. This is evident by the expansion of over a hundred chapters worldwide without professional marketing rather, by the divine marketing of the Spirit who knows exactly what women of the Church need.

Marilyn's Bible study began after prayer from the heart of every woman present. As they voiced their heart-burden aloud, the women entered into intercessory pray for one another. There was praise music from a CD - one song of praise and the anointing became stronger.

It was a joyful blessing to see the action of the Holy Spirit at work as the dynamic exchange of comments about Judith began. The Old Testament woman, Judith, was the subject of this week's study. She is a female character to be admired for several reasons but especially because, as was discussed at the Bible study, she was a woman of deep prayer and fasting - one attuned to the still small voice of the God in the depth of her heart. A widow in mourning, she had prayed and fasted for three years (3 years!) before moving into action as God asked.

We get the impression that Judith was a force to be reckoned with. After all, she cut off the head of the enemy of her people who threatened their existence. The women exchanged ideas about the vocation of Judith as another handmaid of the Lord who said yes to what was asked of her by God. And hers was no small mission! She was courageous but with discerning wisdom and mystical depth to know God's will.

It was interesting to listen to the different responses from each woman as unique as each soul represented. It reminded me of a symphony wherein each person plays their instrument to produce a beautiful piece of music. There was laughter, surprise, and sometimes silence as they pondered the insights someone received.

At the appropriate time, Marilyn played the CD. It was marvelous to hear the voice of Judy Zelden (our very own Judy!) uttering words of wisdom plumbing the depths of the scripture. She also cited the Catholic Catechism and Papal writings and tied everything together. All the women of Magnificat owe a debt of gratitude to her for this Bible study.

Following the CD teaching, there were a few more closing comments and then the meeting ended. I was blessed to be able to experience Marilyn's leadership of the Magnificat Bible study. It was a fruitful encounter just like Mary's and Elizabeth at Ain Karem. I really believe and even prophesy that from this Bible study rivers of grace will flow out to all women and the world. Some of the waters of grace will be seen, some will be hidden from our sight, but living water will run forth from Magnificat's collective YES to study the amazing women of the Bible!

After this experience of our Bible study, I would like to lead a Magnificat Bible Study at a woman's maternity home in my own diocese.

Mary, Mother of the Church and all women of the Bible, pray for us please!

December 8, 2015

Happy Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception



Holy light on earth's horizon,
Star of hope to those who fall,
Light amid a world of shadows,
Dawn of God's design for all.
Chosen from eternal ages,
You alone of all our race,
By your Son's atoning merits
Were conceived in perfect grace.

Mother of the world's Redeemer,
Promised from the dawn of time:
How could one so highly favored
Share the guilt of Adam's crime?
Sun and moon and stars adorn you,
Sinless Eve, triumphant sign;
You it is who crushed the serpent,
Mary, pledge of life divine.

Earth below and highest heaven,
Praise the splendor of your state,
You who now are crowned in glory
Were conceived immaculate.
Hail, beloved of the Father,
Mother of his only Son,
Mystic bride of Love eternal,
Hail, O fair and spotless one!

Edward Cairnall + 1878

Embracing Our Heritage of Hebrew Worship

By Susan Potvin, Magnificat CST Advisory Team and Chairperson for Praise and Worship.

The goal of all worship is to journey into the holy of Holies - that intimacy with the Lord, which is deep, contemplative union with Him. But to do that, the Scriptures teach us that we are to break through with the "high praises (tehillah)" spoken of in Psalm 149:6. The Hebrews understood the wide dimension of expression and action that was incorporated in their worship of the Lord. It was not an optional part of their expression; it was how they worshipped with their whole body, mind and strength. They knew and experienced that the Lord is "enthroned upon the praises (tehillah) of His people (Psalm 22:3). The Lord inhabits, dwells in, builds a throne and comes and sits in the high praises - the tehillah and halal praises - of His people. By understanding the more specific translation of all the words of worship, we (the modern day Church) are able to give ourselves permission to worship more fully, engaging our whole person as passionately as the blessed Mother would have understood and expressed worship in her time. The news is, the Charismatic and Pentecostals did not invent this form of worship, nor does it have anything to do with personality (introvert or extrovert), or spirituality (contemplative/active).



As Catholics, we are very adept at expressing the acts of worship called "barak" ("to kneel down, to bless God as an act of adoration") and "zamar" (singing songs that are already written down, accompanied by musical instruments.) But let us not short-change ourselves! Let us employ all the expressions of worship that the Lord expects! Let us ask the Blessed Mother to help us worship the Lord as she did! When we do this, we will experience a new level of the Lord's presence and power. We will experience a greater depth of freedom and intimacy with the Lord. Our goal of reverence before the Lord will take on a sense of awe like never before imagined.

Let us join with the palmist and our Blessed Mother in a fuller expression of worship to the Lord. "I will bless (barak - kneel and adore) the Lord at all times, His praise (tehillah -spontaneous singing) shall be always in my mouth. My soul will glory (halal - spontaneous spoken praises) in the Lord ... O magnify (gadal - advance and boast) the Lord with me, let us exalt (rum - raise up boldly and aloud) His name together." Psalm 34:2-4.

Susan leads the worship team, Living Praise, which serves Magnificat and travels throughout the U.S. and Internationally providing worship and worship workshops. She has been following the Lord's call to worship Him for over 35 years. She has a BA in Theology from Franciscan University and an MA in School Counseling from Liberty University. For worship CD's and resources, visit www.LivingPraiseWorship.com.

Magnificat Brings Women Together for Prayer, Fellowship, Good Food

By Katie Lefebvre

The first-ever Magnificat Meal in the diocese was held Oct. 3 in the Knights of Columbus Hall in Storm Lake. There were approximately 65 women in attendance from three states and every corner of the diocese. The women were invited to become a member of the newly-formed Magnificat chapter.

"There are some awesome benefits to being a member of Magnificat," said Storr. "I don't know about you, but I could use 105 chapters of Magnificat praying for me every day. "There is a ministry wide rosary blanket of prayer and each Chapter is assigned a day. The Diocese of Sioux City Chapter has been assigned the 12th day of the month. On that day, we are asked to pray for Magnificat, all the members and for our priests," said Storr.

The women prayed a decade of the rosary together and the Magnificat prayer. The Magnificat is the day Mary and Elizabeth met, "both expecting holy sons, and the day when Mary, like us, said, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,'" said Storr.

"I was very honored to be asked to be part of Magnificat," said Father Paul Bormann, Spiritual Advisor. "It has been a long road. A lot of their meetings, in addition to the prayer they have had as a team, has been dedicated to getting paperwork done. It was a long process to be accepted and for our name to be accepted - Mary Undoer of Knots."

Karen Dwyer

Karen Dwyer, Ph.D., was the speaker for the event. She is an inspirational speaker, college teacher and author of seven books including WRAP Yourself in Scripture - A Modern Guide to Lectio Divina and The Book of Esther: God's Plan to Save a Nation and a Family.

"I am so glad to see a new Magnificat group formed," said Dwyer. "Joy to you from Omaha, from my prayer group and from our new Magnificat group. There is nothing more joyful than being part of Magnificat and being called into service."

She said each person is called to have a testimony. Dwyer, who is a convert to Catholicism, shared her own testimony and journey with the women.

"I began to read and pray Scripture," she said. "I want to build my house to stand when the floods come, when the rains come and when the storms come. I know the only way is to build it upon the words of the Lord." Her prayer group, The Heart of Jesus Prayer Group, in Omaha has been going since 2003. The group does 45 minutes of praise and thanksgiving and 45 minutes of Scripture reflection.

"The Lord speaks to me in Scripture," said Dwyer. "He speaks to my heart. I write it down and I think about it. I meditate on it all day long." She talked to the women about personal prayer and WRAP (Write, Reflect, Apply, Praise and Prayer) yourself in Scripture, published by the Institute of Priestly Formation. "When it comes to your prayer life, God wants to speak to you," she said. "This is a book about Lectio Divina, which is having communion with the Lord."





The Northwest Iowa Magnificat Service Team includes Fr. Bormann, Spiritual Advisor, Julie Storr, Coordinator, Anita Gaspers, Assistant Coordinator, Michele Leiting, Secretary, Kathy Steffan, Treasurer, and Becky Behrens, Historian

West Bend Wisconsin Magnificat Breakfast



West Bend Magnificat Breakfast with 230 enthusiastic guest.



Terri & Tom Biertzer, Kathleen Beckman, Fr. Paul Casper

Death, Combat and Prayer Power

By Kathleen Beckman, CST Advisory Team Member



Walking into a room to visit an eighty six year old priest friend who was convalescing after open-heart surgery five months ago, I asked, "Father, what are you doing?" He replied, "I'm talking to the Lord" as he focused on a large, life-like crucifix hanging on the wall next to his bed. "May I ask what you and the Lord are talking about?" "Sure, I am asking Jesus why He left me here since I nearly died several times but I'm still here!" I asked, "Did Jesus tell you anything about that?" Father replied, "He said I'm not finished yet. There is more that He asks of me - more prayer, more sacrifice, more love."

Spiritual Combat

Father, a priest of fifty-five years, shared that during the post-operative convalescent time he experienced great combat over his soul. "The devil is terrible with his onslaughts! He tempts me, "See, priest, your God is mean and he wants you to suffer more. Suffer, suffer, suffer - that crucifix is just suffering. He has forgotten you! He doesn't care. You are all alone now. You are mine. There is no heaven. I'll take you now." Father reported that he was aware of many good angels in battle against the evil ones. He suffered much in this spiritual combat.

I asked if he was able to pray or how did he respond to the demonic attacks? Father shared, "I gathered all the strength of my will and made acts of faith in Jesus Christ. I prayed repeatedly, "Jesus, I trust in You" and often I just repeated the name of Jesus. I reminded myself of the articles of faith professed in the Creed and I repeated, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, etc." He persevered in spiritual combat that is real: "I think the evil spirits perceived I was near death, in a weak condition and they attacked - beastly cowards!" His vast priestly experience of helping people near death somewhat prepared him for the reality of the devil's violence.

This very ill priest exercised faith, hope and love even when he felt he was losing the battle. Weeks turned into months of struggle. Presently he is in a state of peaceful surrender, a strong intercessor for the Church still. His priestly ministry continues in the gift of self-sacrifice and the offering of suffering for the conversion of souls. He tells me, "I want to embrace humanity and offer it back to the Eternal Father in union with Christ on the Cross. So many souls to save!" This, from a very tough Navy man who was surprised by God when, while in the Navy as a young man, he read, "Seven Story Mountain" by Thomas Merton. Something happened in his heart. Upon discharge from the Navy he was headed to Notre Dame University. After reading the book he felt an inspiration to visit a Trappist Monastery on his way to Notre Dame. In accordance with God's will (forsaking his best made plan) he entered the Trappist Monastery where he remained for seventeen years before Christ called him to diocesan priesthood in the diocese near his family.

Father has had to surrender his independence because of physical infirmities but his priestly soul radiates the love of the pierced heart of Jesus even more powerfully these days. I look forward to my visits with Father as he hears my confession weekly - a profound gift!

Prayer Power

Since I've journeyed with this sick priest for the past five months (along with many other people in our diocese who cherish his priesthood), I've been thinking of the simplicity and power of the prayer that Father offered during intense spiritual combat. There is a good lesson here.

Where does the power of prayer come from? The power of Christian prayer derives from a covenant

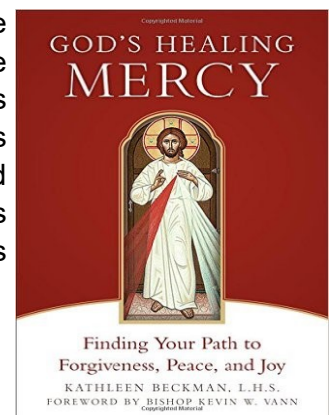
relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man springing forth from the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC 2564). According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. Peter Kreeft helps us to understand the power of prayer in his catechesis on "Jesus" The shortest, simplest, and most powerful prayer in the world:

The kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power," says St. Paul (1 Cor. 4:20). The reason this prayer is so powerful is that the name of Jesus is not just a set of letters or sounds. It is not a passive word but a creative word, like the word by which God created the universe. (He "is" the Word by which God created the universe!) Every time we receive Christ in the Eucharist, we are instructed by the liturgy to pray, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, "but only say the word" and my soul shall be healed." All our energy and effort is not strong enough to heal our own souls, but God's word of power is. That word is so powerful that by it God made the universe out of nothing, and by it he is doing the even greater deed of making saints out of sinners. That word is Jesus Christ." (Peter Kreeft, *Prayer for Beginners*, Ignatius Press).

Also, the prayer that Jesus taught St. Faustina, "Jesus, I trust in You" is a simple but powerful prayer that releases faith in the face of fear. This prayer testifies to the primacy of trust over fear. Christ has given us a weapon against fear in times of spiritual combat with the profound words, "Jesus, I trust in You". We could consider this part of the spiritual armor that St. Paul refers to in Ephesians, "...take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). If ever there was a perfect expression of our faith, "Jesus, I trust in You" is one. Personally, whenever I experience the fiery darts of the evil one tempting me to discouragement, doubt, division, diversion and fear, etc., the prayer, "Jesus, I trust in You" or the name of "Jesus" never fails to divert the darts of the devil away from me. It may take some time, but the more I repeat those prayers, the more my will engages with faith against demonic temptations or vexations.

During the month of November, when the universal Church focuses on saints (All Saints Day) and the souls of the faithful departed (All Souls Day), it is good to remember that our universal vocation is to become a saint (holy) and thereby prepare ourselves for the final spiritual combat over our soul.

Soon the Church will cross the threshold of the holy door to enter the Jubilee Year of Mercy. We can anticipate a great adventure with Jesus, The Divine Mercy! Christ journeys with us on the path of merciful love toward holiness and healing. Spiritual combat may have its "hour" but Christ's victory wins the day (a day that becomes eternal). His victory is the cause of our joy and perseverance to the end. Like the eighty six year old priest at the start of this reflection, we release the power of prayer. Father reminded me that Jesus told St. Faustina, "Fight like a knight!"



**New Release for the
'Year of Mercy'
By Sophia Institute Press**

See www.foundationforpriests.org for more about prayer power, spiritual combat and priesthood.

October Trinidad Magnificat 2015



Front: Bernadette Patrick, Kathleen Beckman, Back: Fr.Derek Anton, Fr. David Kahn , Fr. Dwight Merrick



Top: The Tobago Chapter Bottom: October Trinidad Magnificat Retreat Luncheon





Praise Report

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a grace-filled Christmas and a
Happy New Year!*

*Love and Prayers,
Your Central Service Team
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