

ST. DENIS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

230 LAKE STREET, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO L2R 5Z3

PHONE: 905-685-5911 + FAX: 289-434-5269

WWW.STDENISCHURCH.CA

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Denis Parish is to create a warm and welcoming, Christ-centred, Catholic community that answers the call to know, love, and serve God by spreading the Gospel through words and actions.

PASTORAL TEAM

PASTOR

Very Rev. Fr. Stephen Joseph Bruzzese, V.F.
pastor@stdenischurch.ca

PRIEST-IN-RESIDENCE

Rev. Fr. Aji Varghese
ajivargheseoic@gmail.com

SECRETARY & BOOKKEEPER

Mrs. Nancy Chmay
secretary@stdenischurch.ca

DIRECTOR OF EVANGELIZATION

Mr. Ryan Hermack
evangelization@stdenischurch.ca

PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Monday: Closed
Tuesday to Friday: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Closed everyday for lunch: 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

PARISH SCHOOLS

ST. DENIS CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY

Principal: Mrs. Victoria Wegelin
175 Carlton Street, St. Catharines, ON L2R 1S1
905-682-4156

ST. JAMES CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY

Principal: Mr. Ken Lococo
615 Geneva Street, St. Catharines, ON L2N 2J3
905-934-3112

ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC SECONDARY

Principal: Mr. Tony Della Ventura
541 Lake Street, St. Catharines, ON L2N 4H7
905-646-2002

SACRAMENTAL SERVICES

MASSES OF THE LORD'S DAY

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.
Sunday: 8:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.

WEEKDAY MASSES

Tuesday to Friday: 8:00 a.m.

CONFESSIONS

(IN CHURCH)

Tuesday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:45 a.m.
Saturday: 3:15 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.
Sunday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. & 9:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

CONFESSIONS

(IN MEETING ROOM)

Monday to Friday: 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

BAPTISM

Every Sunday at 11:30 a.m.
Please call the parish office to schedule an appointment with the priest!

WEDDINGS

Please call the parish office to schedule an appointment with the priest!

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

(IN MEETING ROOM)

Sunday to Saturday: 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

MONTHLY HOLY HOUR

(1ST THURSDAY & 1ST FRIDAY)

8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

DEVOTION TO MARY

(DAILY RECITATION OF THE ROSARY)

30 minutes before all Masses

Would you like to become a parishioner?

Please call or email the parish office.

Thank you for your continued generosity towards our parish!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2023

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

MASS INTENTIONS

WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday, January 9 – Private Mass

Holy Souls in Purgatory

Tuesday, January 10 – 8:00 a.m.

Sp. Int. Emilia Witek

Wednesday, January 11 – 8:00 a.m.

Sp. Int. Irena Shook

Thursday, January 12 – 8:00 a.m.

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, Virgin

Sp. Int. Miketic Family

Friday, January 13 – 8:00 a.m.

St. Hilary, Bishop & Doctor of the Church

Holy Souls in Purgatory

MASSES OF THE LORD'S DAY

2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Saturday, January 14 – 4:00 p.m.

Bruce Butterworth | Russell Masters | Klara Schapoks

Sp. Int. The Giudo Family | Sp. Int. Liz & Family

Sunday, January 15 – 8:00 a.m.

Pro Populo – For the People

Sunday, January 15 – 10:00 a.m.

Rosalia Bruzzese | Leo Loeffen | Gerardo Miciano

Serefino & Alicia Mejia



COLLECTION FOR JANUARY 1

Pre-Authorized Debit [January 3]	\$ 3,315.00
Offertory	\$ 3,190.00
Mary, Mother of God	\$ 1,080.00
E-Transfers & CanadaHelps	\$ 737.00
Christmas	\$ 525.00
Building Fund	\$ 235.00
Angelic Appeal	\$ 230.00
Total Collection	\$ 9,312.00

Thank you for your faithful stewardship!

~ Please remember the parish in your will ~

THE PASTOR'S PORTICO

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, in which our Lord manifests himself to the nations, represented by the magi. Even though the world stopped celebrating Christmas on December 25th, we know that the splendor and awe of Christmas reaches its climax in the feast of Epiphany. On this feast of Epiphany, we too have seen the Lord! Therefore, *"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you"* (Isaiah 60:1). As the star rose in the East and brought the Magi to Christ, so too we must now imitate the star in its humble service (c.f. St. Leo the Great). Today's Epiphany presents us with Our Lord's divinity, and we should come to understand that his saving work is available to all.

Tomorrow, we conclude the Christmas Season but celebrating the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. In the Gospel we hear the voice of the Father say, *"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."* While these words are spoken directly of Jesus, they were also spoken of us on the day of our own baptism. St. Gregory of Nazianzus says, *"He [Christ] wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world. You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great light, bathed in the glory of him who is the light of heaven."* ***We all know the day we were born (birthday date), but do we know the day we were re-born into eternal life (baptismal date)?*** If you do, great, be sure to celebrate it with as much joy as you would your birthday. If you do not, I would like to challenge you to find out and begin celebrating it this year. In addition, we can receive a Plenary Indulgence (all normal conditions needing to be met) by renewing our Baptismal Promises on that day; never let an opportunity of grace go to waste!

As many of you have noted, we have done extremely well in our previous three collections: \$8,207.00 (December 18), \$16,208.00 (December 25), and \$9,312.00 (January 1). As a result, we were able to purchase two \$15,000.00, 1-year cashable GICs at a rate of 4.6% through Meridian. These will be used for capital projects in the future. Thank you again for your continued commitment to parish life, we would not be able to do all the amazing things we do, without your generosity and kindness.

Fr. Stephen Joseph Bruzzese

PRAYER OF REPARATION

O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences by which He is offended. By the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary I beg the conversion of poor sinners. Amen.

QUEEN OF CLERGY CENACLE

This is a group of laity and clergy dedicated to praying for an increase in vocations to priesthood and for the clergy. To be added to the group please email cenacle@stdenischurch.ca. The next meeting is Monday, January 9th at 7:00 p.m.

SUMMIT MINISTRY

Our next Summit meeting will be on Thursday, January 12th at 7:00 p.m. in the small meeting room. This group is designed to take a deeper dive into the upcoming Sunday readings. If you want more information, please email Ryan Hermack.

PRE-AUTHORIZED GIVING

Are you interested in using our new monthly Pre-Authorized Debit Program? Our deadline for the February withdrawal is Wednesday, January 25th. As of today, we have 26 parishioners/families registered, which generates \$3,315.00 per month. This truly is easiest way to give. Thank you for your faithful stewardship!

LIFETEEN

Our next LifeTeen program will be taking place on Tuesday, January 10th at 7:00 p.m. in the parish hall. The group is open to all those students in high school. To sign up, please contact Ryan Hermack.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

In thanksgiving to God for all the many people who have worked so hard to make St. Denis "A Catholic Centre of Excellence" in 2022, I would like to show my appreciation by hosting a Volunteer Social, the date is still to be determined. This will be in lieu of a "Christmas Gift". This will be an excellent opportunity to gather, share some food and fellowship, and meet other volunteers. Please keep your eye on the bulletin for more information.

MARIAN SHRINES PILGRIMAGE

Are you interested in joining an exclusive and cultural journey of a lifetime? If so, then this pilgrimage is for you! Join us for our 12 day pilgrimage which includes: Fatima with the celebration of the sixth and last visit of Our Lady (The Miracle of the Sun), Avila, Madrid, Zaragoza, Lourdes, Barcelona & much more. See breathtaking landscapes with places and historical sights. Experience local treats and indulge in delicious meals. Pray at beautiful shrines dedicated to Holy Family, Our Lady, and many saints. Enrich your Catholic faith and open your hearts to receive blessing and graces along the way that will encourage you throughout your lifelong pilgrimage.

Monday, October 9th to Friday, October 20th
\$4,940.00 per person (based on 2 per room)

What's Included?

- Roundtrip airfare to and from Toronto
- 10-night accommodation in 3+ & 4-star hotels
- Breakfast and dinner daily
- Mineral water and wine with dinner
- Transportation by private motorcoach
- All entrance fees, tours, and visit to holy sites
- English speaking guide
- High speed train ticket (Madrid to Zaragoza)
- Daily Mass & spiritual activities
- Hotel taxes and service charges
- Fuel surcharges & airport taxes
- Gratuities to hotel & restaurant staff

If you are interested in coming or would like more information, please let Fr. Stephen know as soon as possible...spots are already starting to be filled.

TAX RECEIPTS

Good News! Tax receipts will be available starting on weekend of February 4th & 5th after Mass. After this, they will be available for pick up at the parish office. Please make sure that your information is up-to-date by sending an email to Nancy, if any of your information has recently changed.

KARAOKE NIGHT

Join us next Saturday, January 14th at 7:00 p.m. in the parish hall for our first karaoke night! The entrance fee is \$10.00 and that will get you a drink and twice slices of pizza. There will be many songs to choose from and if done well, we may even recruit you for the choir 😊 We look forward to seeing everyone there.

THE MARIAN SHRINES OF PORTUGAL, FRANCE & SPAIN

With the spiritual leadership of **Fr. Stephen Bruzzese, Pastor of St. Denis, St. Catharines**

October 9 to 20, 2023



We invite you on an Exclusive spiritual and cultural journey of a lifetime! Our 12-day pilgrimage includes Fatima with the celebration of the sixth and last visit of Our Lady and Miracle of the Sun, Avila, Madrid, Zaragoza, Lourdes, Barcelona & much, much, more... see breathtaking landscapes with palaces and historical sights. Experience local treats and indulge in delicious meals. Pray at beautiful shrines dedicated to Our Lady and Saints, enrich your Catholic faith and open your heart to receive Blessings and Graces along the way that will encourage you throughout your lifelong pilgrimage.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 MONDAY OCT 9

FLIGHT TO LISBON

We will fly from Toronto to Lisbon aboard Air Canada. Relax and enjoy your flight with complimentary meals and entertainment on board. Group seating for our flight will be assigned by the airline.

DAY 2 TUESDAY OCT 10

FATIMA

Welcome to Portugal! Upon arrival and clearing customs and immigration, we meet our professional English-speaking Tour Manager and board our bus to drive to Fátima, where the Blessed Mother appeared in 1917 to three simple shepherd children and exhorted mankind to pray for world peace. On the way, we will enjoy a panoramic sightseeing of Lisbon with a stop for pictures at the Belem Tower. We arrive in Fatima, check-in in our hotel and get settled in our rooms. After dinner we will join the Candlelight Procession.

Overnight: Fatima

Dinner

DAY 3 WEDNESDAY OCT 11

FATIMA

This morning we follow the Stations of the Cross and visit Aljustrel, where the children's hamlet is still preserved in its original state, and Valinhos where Our Lady appeared after the children's return from prison. We pray at the Little Chapel of Apparitions and visit the tombs of Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia at the Basilica of the Rosary. Free time for private prayers. After dinner you may join the Candlelight Procession.

Overnight: Fatima

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4 THURSDAY OCT 12

FATIMA-OBIDOS-NAZARE-FATIMA

A day of touring... Journey to the medieval town of Óbidos and the coastal village of Nazaré where we will have free time to explore and if you wish taste the local seafood in one of the many restaurants along the beach. Back in Fatima, enjoy some free time on your own. Dinner and optional Candlelight Procession.

Overnight: Fatima

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5 FRIDAY OCT 13

FATIMA-SALAMANCA

Six times, from May 13 to October 13, 1917, the Virgin Mary appeared here to three shepherd children. Join us today to celebrate Holy Mass and commemorate the sixth and last visit of Our Lady and *Miracle of the Sun*. In the afternoon we travel to charming Salamanca, Spain.

Overnight: Salamanca

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6 SATURDAY OCT 14

SALAMANCA-ALBA DE TORMES-AVILA-MADRID

We enjoy a panoramic sightseeing of Salamanca and see the most important sites in the city: the Plaza Mayor, St. Stephen's Convent and the famous University before getting off to Alba de Tormes and the Carmelite convent to see two of St. Teresa's most sacred relics, her left arm and her heart along with relics of Saint John of the Cross. Next to the 12th-century city of Ávila, where St. Teresa founded the Order of Carmelites. Visit the Monastery of the Incarnation and the convent of St. Teresa, where the saint experienced her remarkable vision of the angel. We continue to Madrid, the largest city in Spain and one of the most elegant capitals in Europe.

Overnight: Madrid

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7 SUNDAY OCT 15

MADRID

We enjoy a sightseeing tour of Madrid's historic centre and see the Puerta del Sol and Plaza Mayor, where events have been held since the 17th-century! The afternoon is free to explore on your own, visit a museum or join an optional tour. Tapas in Spain is a food lover's dream and tonight we'll "go out for Tapas" and eat like the locals, hopping from bar to bar discovering the best eateries in town.

Overnight: Madrid

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8 MONDAY OCT 16

MADRID-ZARAGOZA-LOURDES

We depart by High-Speed train for Zaragoza and pray at one of Spain's most important Marian Shrines dedicated to Our Lady of the Pilar. The shrine is built on the site where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. James the apostle on his way to northwestern Spain. Accompanied by celestial music, angels and a brilliant light, Our Lady encouraged St. James and his disciples on their journeys. This apparition was unlike any other, because when Our Lady appeared to St. James, she was still living on earth in Jerusalem. During the vision, St. James was given a wooden statue which is now in the center of the Basilica. In the afternoon we journey into France and arrive in Lourdes. Tonight join in the Candlelight Procession and pray the Rosary.

Overnight: Lourdes

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9 TUESDAY OCT 17

LOURDES

During our stay in Lourdes we will have an opportunity to attend Mass at the Grotto and walk in the footsteps of St. Bernadette. We will see the Boly Mill where St. Bernadette was born and the Cachot, an abandoned prison where Bernadette's impoverished family lived. We join with pilgrims from around the world to pray for the sick, drink water from the miraculous spring and/or submerge in the healing baths. Experience Christ's love as you walk the life-sized Stations of the Cross overlooking the holy Grotto. Kneel in the chapel built on the very rock of the Grotto in obedience to the request of the Immaculate Conception. After dinner join the Candlelight Procession.

Overnight: Lourdes

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 10 WEDNESDAY OCT 18

LOURDES-CARCASSONE-BARCELONA

Depart Lourdes towards the French-Spanish border en-route to Barcelona, Spain. We stop in Carcassonne and enjoy free time for lunch and a walk around the medieval town. Continue to Barcelona for the last leg of our trip.

Overnight: Barcelona

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 11 THURSDAY OCT 19

BARCELONA

Get introduced to this fascinating city including Plaza Catalunya and Paseo de Gracia to admire the eccentricity of Gaudi's architectural masterpieces in Houses Batlló and Milà and the Basilica of the Sagrada Familia, Gaudi's masterpiece. Once completed, will have 18 towers: 12 dedicated to the apostles, 4 to the evangelists, one to Jesus and another to Mary. Free afternoon and evening to explore on your own. Tonight we share our thoughts and enjoy a Farewell Dinner.

Overnight: Barcelona

Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12 FRIDAY OCT 20

FLIGHT HOME

At the agreed time, transfer to the airport for our return flight. **CONCLUSION OF OUR PILGRIMAGE.**

Breakfast

PRICE PER PERSON IN DOUBLE OCCUPANCY

\$ 4,940.00 CAD

Price includes Fuel Surcharge & Airport Taxes (\$ 762,61 CAD) and are subject to change without notice until time of ticketing. Supplement for individual room \$ 780.00 CAD.

See next page for complete list of inclusions

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage (Psalm 84)

To register and for more information please contact:



30 Wertheim Court # 20, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1B9
(905) 889-1681 Toll-Free 1-800-268-0900 Ext. 233
edgar@gateways-international.com
TICO Reg. #2171876

THE TOUR INCLUDES

- ✓ Roundtrip airfare from Toronto
- ✓ 10-night accommodation in First Class hotels, std room
- ✓ Breakfast and dinner daily
- ✓ Mineral water and a glass of local wine with all Dinners
- ✓ Transportation by private motorcoach throughout
- ✓ All entrance fees, tours and visit to holy sites as per the itinerary with English speaking guide
- ✓ High Speed train Ticket in 2nd class Madrid-Zaragoza
- ✓ Daily Mass and/or Spiritual activities
- ✓ Hotel taxes and service charges
- ✓ Fuel surcharge & Airport taxes (at time of printing is CAD\$762.61 and may change at any time without notice until time of ticketing)
- ✓ Gratuities to hotel and restaurant staff

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- ✓ Meals and drinks not mentioned above
- ✓ Passports: Canadian citizens require a valid passport for more than 6 months after the return date
- ✓ Gratuities to guides and drivers and other local staff: **€ 140.00** per participant collected in cash ahead for your convenience
- ✓ Costs of personal nature, optional excursions, excess baggage charges
- ✓ Insurance for medical, Cancellation and Interruption, baggage

BOOKING

A deposit of \$ 500.00 CAD per person is required at time of booking. If you opt to purchase Non-Medical or All-Inclusive insurance, it must be purchased at time of first deposit. See payment schedule below. *Bookings after June 9, 2023 are subject to availability.*

PLEASE NOTE ALL PAYMENTS ARE 100% NON- REFUNDABLE.

CANCELLATIONS AND CHANGES

If you must cancel, Gateways International must be informed in writing immediately. **All payments are 100% Non-Refundable.** A \$75 CAD fee will be applied for any changes you wish to make to the group's itinerary. Changes after full payment is received will be treated as cancellations.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Participants on this tour take full responsibility for being fully able to participate in the daily scheduled activities of the group, noting that tours organized by Gateways International require physical fitness. There is daily walking, sometimes up or down slopes, and at times sidewalks and uneven terrain. One may choose not to participate in parts of the sightseeing; however, there is no refund for missed sightseeing.

OPTIONAL TRAVEL HEALTH & CANCELLATION INSURANCE

CAD \$Premium per person	All-Inclusive	Non-Medical	Staying in single room add
up to 59 years	334.00	294.00	36.00
60-64 years	405.00	334.00	43.00
65-69 years	488.00	370.00	50.00
70-74 years	647.00	423.00	56.00
75-79 years	978.00	602.00	86.00

- ✓ **All-Inclusive Worldwide Plan** provides coverage for *cancellation and interruption* up to sum insured, trip delay, baggage & personal effects, baggage delay, personal money loss, passport loss, airflight accident and travel accident.
- ✓ **Non-Medical Plan** provides coverage for *cancellation and interruption* up to sum insured, trip delay, baggage & personal effects, baggage delay, personal money loss, passport loss, airflight accident and travel accident. There is no coverage for Emergency Medical.
- ✓ See the [Policy Brochure](#) for the full description and eligibility.
- ✓ For people living outside the province of Ontario, insurance will be processed by Old Republic Insurance Company of Canada.
- ✓ Premium per person is subject to change without prior notice

Travel insurance is designed to cover losses arising from sudden and unforeseeable circumstances. Please contact us to get a copy of the policy. It is important that you read and understand the policy before you purchase as the coverage is subject to certain limitations, conditions or exclusions.

****All participants must hold Trip Cancellation/Interruption + Emergency Medical Insurance to travel with us. Proof of coverage if purchased elsewhere must be provided at time of booking.**

COVID-19 is known event and is excluded from cancellation coverage. However, if you contract COVID-19 prior to departure, you may be covered for trip cancellation.

All participants must comply with the travel regulations and guidelines of Public Health and the Ministry of Health of each country we visit. Proof of vaccination and further testing may be required at time of travelling.

Please contact us if you live outside the Province of Ontario and for other types of coverage.

FR. STEPHEN BRUZZESE, MARIAN SHRINES PILGRIMAGE, OCT. 9 TO 20, 2023

Deposit Registration Form – copy of passport required

Name (as per passport): First _____ Middle _____ Last _____

Address: _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Home Phone (____) _____ Cell Phone: (____) _____ e-mail: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Do you have any Dietary restrictions? _____ Do you have any Medical problems? _____

Passport #: _____ Exp. Date: _____ ☐ Enclosed is a photocopy of my passport (page showing name and photo)

☐ I am departing from Toronto ☐ Other _____ (fare supplement to be informed accordingly)

☐ I have a Roommate ☐ I need a Roommate (subject to availability) ☐ I would like to travel Single, Pay **\$ 780 CAD** Supplement

☐ Enclosed is my **deposit of \$ 500 CAD – by e-transfer or Cheques payable to Gateways International, for credit card complete below**

☐ I authorize Gateways International to charge the deposit of **\$500 CAD** now, and/or balance of **\$4,440 CAD** (plus or minus changes in Airport taxes if applicable) by **June 9, 2023**, on my credit card listed below

Credit Card Type: VISA _____ MASTERCARD _____ AMEX _____ Card Number _____
CVV _____ Exp. Date _____ Name as it appears on credit card _____
Signature _____ Date _____

INSURANCE: Please add the following Travel Insurance to my package (Payment will be collected separately)

☐ All-Inclusive Worldwide Policy ☐ Non-Medical Policy ☐ I decline insurance. Proof of my own Emergency Medical & Cancellation/ Interruption policy attached.

My signature below indicates that I have read and agreed to the Terms and Conditions outlined by Gateways International in this brochure. I also understand that is now mandatory that all participants on a Gateways International tour, must have Emergency Medical and Trip Cancellation/Interruption insurance, which is not included in the trip price, and that Gateways International's cancellation policy cannot be waived for any reason. In order to participate in the aforementioned group, I confirm I will have such insurance, and I will not hold Gateways International liable in any matter that is or is not covered by this added insurance.

Signature of participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Please complete and mail with payment to: GATEWAYS INTERNATIONAL, 30 WERTHEIM COURT # 20, RICHMOND HILL, ONT L4B 1B9

Star Struck
The Epiphany of the Lord

"They were overjoyed."

Opening Prayer

Jesus, you came to save the world and destroyed death and evil for my sake. You bring joy and light to all things and seek me at all times. Help me be completely present to you. Help me let go of all things that are holding me back from you. Open my heart to your joy, peace, and redemption. Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 60:1-6

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

SECOND READING Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

GOSPEL Matthew 2:1-12

Beyond Words

Have you ever met a "big time" celebrity? Maybe you spotted a famous actor or actress in an airport or got an autograph from a well-known athlete. Perhaps you got a selfie with a famous musician or shook hands with a big-name star. Maybe you had a celebrity "like" your tweet or respond to a post. If you have, you remember how excited you were. If you haven't, imagine how you'd feel if someone you really looked up to or admired all of a sudden was face-to-face with you. It'd be pretty epic, right? Like a day you would never forget. Would you feel excited? Commit the moment to your memory? Take 100 selfies? Refuse to wash your hands ever again?

Would you be "overjoyed"? Would your joy reach excessive levels which you've never experienced?

The magi were excited when they saw a star, too, but for very different reasons. The star they beheld was one filled with both promise and mystery. The heavenly orb led them to an even greater heavenly reality in a manger. The Prophet Isaiah told us it was going to happen, but it was the Gentiles (non-Jews) who cracked this code. Their arrival and imminent worship did more than reveal the baby's royal identity; it revealed the depth and breadth of God's plan to save us. Jesus was coming for everyone, not just the "chosen" Jewish people.

Did you catch that? The wise men thought they were seeking the Lord only to realize that the God of the universe (not even "their" god") was actually the one seeking *them*! In the second reading we hear how this beautiful mystery was being made known and we are all invited to behold this mystery, to contemplate it, and to celebrate it. If the fact that God came to save you from death does not fill you with indescribable joy, it may be time to ponder this fact on your knees before the God of the universe, just like the magi did. Jesus is waiting in the tabernacle. Show up, bring your gifts, and follow in their oh-so-wise footsteps.

Random Fact

Scripture never names the magi. In fact, the Bible doesn't even say there are three "kings," only three gifts. Tradition tells us (through St. Bede) that the names of the magi are Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. Gaspar is often depicted as a younger, beardless, and red-haired man. Melchior is usually seen as an older man with white hair and long white beard. Balthazar is normally depicted as a middle-aged man of dark complexion with a heavy beard.

Behind the Scenes

It can be difficult for us to truly appreciate how challenging St. Paul's mission was within the early Church. Trained as a (Jewish) Rabbi but called to be "the apostle to the Gentiles," St.

Paul had the unenviable task of evangelizing the non-Jews and welcoming them into God's chosen family amidst Jews who, from birth, hated them. On top of that, prior to St. Paul's conversion, he (Saul) was the one hunting down the new Christians and condemning them to death. It's easy to see why St. Paul had few friends who completely trusted him when his missionary work began and had enemies everywhere who felt he had lost his mind or sacrificed his soul.

This backdrop makes the second reading even more impressive. Saint Paul tells the Ephesians that the Gentiles are not merely "tacked on" to God's open door to salvation but equal to God's chosen people, the Jews, as "co-heirs, members of the same body" (Ephesians 3:6). Saint Paul is not giving the Gentiles a lower status but one equal in stature before God and man. Given this background on the second reading, one can more easily see why the Church, in her wisdom, decided to place this epistle within the cycle of readings for Epiphany Sunday.

Word Play

The word *epiphany* comes from the Latin *epiphania* meaning, "to reveal." For the first several centuries of the Church it was actually the Feast of Epiphany, even more than Christmas, that celebrated the "revelation" of the Incarnation. Epiphany Sunday is a celebration of the reality that God took flesh at an appointed time in history and that God was announcing and offering salvation to *all*, not just the chosen people of Israel.

Journal

1. The Savior of the world seeks you. How can you present yourself to Him? Go to the chapel? Go to Mass? Pray more frequently?
2. Through the sacraments, specifically Baptism and Confirmation, God gives us spiritual gifts to help us build His kingdom. What gifts do you have that you can use for His glory?
3. Are you coming to Jesus with joy? If not, what is holding you back from being joyful? How can you be joyful through the midst of what is holding you back?

Challenge for the Week

The best way to encounter Jesus is to go to Mass. The Mass is the closest we can be to God on Earth. This week, pick a day to go to daily Mass. Show up where Christ is sure to be, just like the magi showed up at the Nativity. If you cannot attend a daily Mass, go to an adoration chapel near you to pray when you are available. The first step of prayer is to actually show up.

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