



Catholic Women's League

St. Catharines Diocese

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

CWL Catholic

Connections

National CWL: cwl.ca

Provincial CWL: cwl.on.ca

St. Catharines CWL: stcatharinescwl.ca



President's Message: Be Grateful

At the coming end of 2021 I did not want to focus on what was or what will be but rather what was positive about this year. **I am grateful:**

- for all the work the pharmaceutical companies did to create a vaccine
- we live in a country that was able to get the vaccine and administer it
- that my family and friends have remained healthy through this time
- that life is slowly returning to normal
- that technology has allowed us to stay connected
- for the support I have received from many across the province to help me transition to the role as Diocesan President
- that my daughter is engaged

I am also so grateful for:

- the church and our faith which gives us strength and hope during these times
- that I belong to a parish that cares for one another and works together in spite of all the obstacles we have faced
- the CWL at all levels that looks for ways to continually better the country
- for Catholic education available to our children
- for Fr Richard Kowalchuk who is our CWL Diocesan Spiritual Adviser, his faith, guidance and inspiration and for being a friend to so many

May you have a safe and Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year with family and friends filled with love, hope and faith!

Lisa Fillingham, Diocesan President

A little extra note on Bees

During winter months there are fewer flowers and other sources of food for the bees. Water is also scarce and so many bees drown as they try and drink from swimming pools. Grate an apple and add some water in a bowl. The bees will be able to get the sugars from the fruit and drink the water and not drown as they can stand on the fruit pieces.

Our bee populations are threatened, let's give them all the support we can. Lisa



Message From Deedee Alexandre:

This photo was taken in 2017 when I visited the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. It is a rare image of the Virgin Mary smiling. Merry Christmas.

Don't Forget! I will be starting a new **CWL Book Club**. We will meet **online each Tuesday evening** at 7 p.m. for *approximately 1.5 hours*.

The start date will be:
Tuesday, January 11, 2022.

The book will be: Josephine Lombardi's fabulous book—**Experts in Humanity: A Journey of Self-Discovery and Healing**. It can be ordered online.

Use the **same Zoom link** for each Tuesday meeting.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84539960812?pwd=eW5QMk9pc0FHU2VINWVzQllySWZJQT09>

Meeting ID: 845 3996 0812
Passcode: 089466

Please have the **Introduction** already read—pages 6-12. In future sessions, we will read approximately 20-25 pages or so.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Zoom Advent Retreat.



Thank you and
God Bless.

With love,
Deedee Alexandre

**The Crib
is for the
Cross**

(Deedee—Advent began on Sunday, November 28th—Happy New Liturgical Year!)

Mass prep – 30 seconds/3 points: 5 Tips from Jesus for Advent



Photo Courtesy of Sr. Amata CSFN

[Fr. Pawel Rytel-Andrianik](#) - published on 11/27/21

Let's turn to Our Lord himself for advice on how to live this joyful season.

The Gospel for this **First Sunday of Advent** is [Luke 21:25–28.34–36](#)

1. Joyful expectation

Advent – a time of joyful expectation. The Gospel of the first Sunday of Advent tells us about the waiting for the Son of Man. And Advent itself is precisely a time of joyful waiting for Christmas. In this climate, **Jesus gives five practical pieces of advice.**

2. Key Words

Take heart

Advent is a time to **take care of your life and spiritual health**, which is why you need retreats – including online retreats, days of recollection, and other ways to get to your heart.

Lift up your heads

In other words: Be courageous, do not be afraid! **Look with courage and optimism at your life and your future**, and at the same time, lift your heads above what you are doing, see more, expand your horizons.

Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy

Jesus does not say to look out for others, but to keep watch over oneself, which means **starting with oneself**. So that as Jesus warns in today's Gospel: "that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life and that day catch you by surprise like a trap" (Luke 21:34–35).

Be vigilant

Being vigilant means keeping our eyes and ears open to what is happening around us. It consists in recognizing the signs of the

times that God gives us each day, and also seeing how He cares for us. **Being vigilant means being sensitive to the signs of God in our lives.**

Pray at all times

God Himself—Jesus Christ—found time for prayer. Prayer is like the air we breathe. Saint John Paul II said that **time spent in prayer is never time lost**. Prayer is a conversation with a Friend. It can be said that “pray at all times” means not only when we are in church, but on various occasions, for example, on our way to work, when walking, etc. You can turn to the Lord God on any occasion.

3. Today

Advent is a time for making resolutions. The spiritual fathers say that this does not mean making many resolutions that, later, are not put into practice, but making **a specific one** that can be carried out.

Now, it is best if this resolution is related to the most important commandment, what is most important in life, that is, the commandment to love God and your neighbor as yourself.

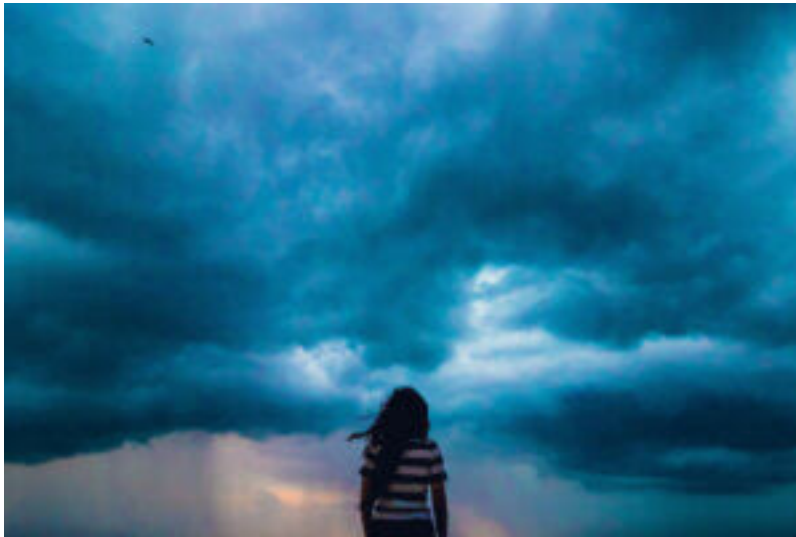
Do I already have my concrete resolution for Advent?

What is the “Rapture”?

Based on a faulty interpretation of Scripture, this belief system has misled countless believers.

When the end times approach, will believers be suddenly snatched up to Heaven while others are “left behind” to suffer the great tribulation?

Should believers, therefore, be constantly on the watch for signs of the end times and plan their lives accordingly?



The answer is: ***NO***.

The theory of “the Rapture” is pretty common among certain Evangelical and Fundamentalist Protestants today. While there are different theories among Protestants regarding the Second Coming and the rapture, for the sake of simplicity we’ll do a quick run-through of terms and then focus on the most common form of the “Rapture” error.

Let’s start with the *millennium*. This term refers to a Christian golden age (some believe that it will last exactly 1,000 years) that will precede the Second Coming.

Postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism all refer to different theories about the millennium and the events surrounding it. All of them have some idea of a “rapture” —the moment when believers will be gathered to Christ at the end of time. All of them believe (as do Catholics) in a period of tribulation before the Second Coming.

The “rapture” most people are referring to when they use the term, however, is found in premillennialism. Premillennialism teaches that the Second Coming will happen before the millennium, Christ will reign on earth *during* the millennium, and the Final Judgment will occur afterwards.

More specifically, the Rapture is found in *pretribulationist* premillennialism. Pretribulationism holds that the Rapture will happen *before* the great tribulation. This novel idea popped up in the United States very recently—in the 19th century, in fact.

In a few words, this theory says that the righteous will suddenly be taken from the earth and caught up to God, while the unrighteous are left on earth to face the tribulation. The millennium and then the Final Judgment will happen afterwards. The few isolated Scripture passages that are often used (incorrectly) to support this claim include Luke 17 (“One will be taken, one will be left”) and 1 Thessalonians.

This idea is not what Jesus taught, since He taught that the tribulation would be experienced by believers and non-believers alike. He told us to be ready for this tribulation and to lift up our heads. He said that if the period of suffering were not shortened, no one would be saved. Jesus *never* said that the righteous would not suffer. The idea of escaping this final suffering sounds comforting but is not a Christian doctrine.

Furthermore, Jesus' Second Coming will not happen in stages. He will come once, after the tribulation, to conduct the Final Judgment and the general resurrection. We do believe in a sort of rapture, but we don't call it that, and it's a very different idea from "*the* Rapture." The Church simply teaches that the righteous will meet Christ when He *does* come and be gathered to Him for all eternity.

Who was the first incorruptible?

1,400 years after the death of St. Cecilia, her body was still intact.

The Catholic Company—Nov 22, 2021

It was the year 1599. Cardinal Sfondrati had ordered the restoration of the Basilica of St. Cecilia, a Roman virgin-martyr who had died in the 3rd century.

In the midst of the work, two sarcophagi were discovered. They belonged to St. Cecilia, her husband St. Valerian, her brother-in-law St. Tiburtius, and another Roman martyr named Maximus. Pope Pascal



I had discovered the relics in the 9th century and placed them in the new basilica. Born around the year 200 as the daughter of a noble Roman family, St. Cecilia had desired to remain a virgin but was given in marriage to the nobleman Valerian. At her request, he respected her vow of virginity, and was converted to the

Faith along with his brother Tiburtius.

In the midst of his conversion, it is said that Valerian received a vision of Cecilia's guardian angel. The two brothers would receive the palm of martyrdom before Cecilia did.

After the death of her husband and brother-in-law, the authorities tried to kill Cecilia by smothering her with steam in a bath house. She was miraculously saved, so an executioner was sent to behead her. He struck her three times but failed to decapitate her. She lay

seriously wounded for three days before dying, her head turned to the floor, her hands symbolically expressing her faith in the Holy Trinity: pointing three fingers of one hand, and one finger of the other—three Persons in one God. It was in this position that Cardinal Sfondrati and his witnesses found Cecilia's incorrupt body when they uncovered her casket. Out of reverence, they left her body in that position. After allowing pilgrims to come venerate this holy virgin-martyr, miraculously preserved from corruption, they



reinterred her. Stefano Maderno's famous sculpture—now displayed in front of the altar where she is

buried—illustrates the posture in which she died.

Why do Catholics confess their sins to a priest?

“Why can't I just confess my sins directly to God?”

The first and best answer to this question is: **because Jesus said so!**

In St. John's Gospel, Jesus appeared to His Apostles after His Resurrection and said to them:

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."



—John 20:21-23 Christ clearly states in this passage that He wishes to act *through* the Apostles in order to forgive men their sins. Since the Church is founded on Peter and the Apostles, the powers given to them are communicated to their successors.

Why might Jesus have chosen to affect the forgiveness of sins in this way?

One reason is so we never have to worry about whether our sins are forgiven. God has given us a simple formula—Confession—for getting back into

His graces when we have failed. It's not based on subjective feeling, but a sacred rite. Within Confession, our contrition doesn't even have to be perfect, although perfect contrition is the ideal. "Perfect contrition" is being sorry for a sin because it offended God. "Imperfect contrition" is sorrow for sin due to a natural fear of punishment.

Imperfect contrition is all that is necessary within the Sacrament of Confession. God does the rest.

Wow, what a gift. A way to confess and do penance without all the worry of "Have I done it right?"

Other reasons include the sacramental graces we receive in Confession and the advice of the priest, both of which assist us in avoiding sin and growing in virtue.

Jesus is Wisdom Itself. He is the Word of God. He never did anything that was unnecessary—sacramental confession included. He knows us far better than we know ourselves and knows just what we need.

(Deedee: a really effective refresher)

Can you name the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit?

You've learned about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. But did you know there are also twelve *fruits* of the Holy Spirit?

The Catholic Company—November 12, 2021

You probably had to memorize the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as part of your Confirmation preparation. You may have accidentally thrown in a few fruits of the Holy Spirit on a Confirmation class quiz: wisdom, fortitude, knowledge... peace...or was it piety?... generosity...is that a gift or a fruit...?

Let's have a refresher.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are seven specific graces He gives us, particularly in the Sacrament of Confirmation. According to the Catechism, they are permanent dispositions that help us respond to the promptings of the Spirit:

Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

The *fruits* of the Holy Spirit are the result of a life lived according to the Spirit. They are the natural outcroppings of a branch closely united to the Vine, who is Christ. In the true vine discourse in the Gospel



of John, Christ said that those who abide in Him will bear much fruit and glorify the Father.

St. Paul lists the twelve fruits in his letter to the Galatians, and this number has been confirmed by the tradition of the Church:

Charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

Ever notice how someone who strives after holiness just glows with these attributes? Like fire producing light and heat, a soul on fire with the Holy Spirit naturally emits these traits. Not that we are always patient, kind, and good every moment of every day, but if we keep working to remove the barriers of sin, these fruits will surely shine.

(Deedee: a truly amazing story!)

The staircase St. Joseph built in New Mexico

Jim Buzbee | Shutterstock

[Daniel Esparza](#) - published on 07/06/16 - updated on 11/24/21

The Chapel of Loretto in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is home to an exceptional work of carpentry

[Click here to launch the slideshow](#)

[The staircase of Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico](#) is well known for at least two mysteries: the identity of its builder and the physics of its structure.

No one is able to fully understand how the structure can stand on its feet without any kind of central support attached to it. It is indeed an architectonical marvel, in that sense. There is, maybe, a third mystery, too: although the staircase is known to be made of spruce wood, no one has been able to determine either what subspecies of spruce it is, or even **how the wood got to the chapel.**



[Launch the slideshow](#)

In 1852, by order of the then bishop of Santa Fe, Jean Baptiste Lamy, the Chapel of Our Lady of Light (inspired by the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris) was built. It was placed **under the care of the Sisters of Loretto**, who were to arrive from Kentucky to found a school for girls.

When the chapel was ready, builders were faced with an unexpected problem: there was no way to climb from the nave to the choir, on the second floor. It was a **sad error in the design — one that the building's architect, Antonio Mouly, could not solve, since he had already passed away**. When the nuns insisted on building a staircase, the builders told them it would be impossible, and that building a normal, regular ladder would take too much room. Finally, **they advised the nuns to demolish the choir**. The

nuns decided they would pray a novena to St. Joseph, patron saint of carpenters, asking for another solution.



Kit Leong | Shutterstock When the chapel was ready, builders were faced with an unexpected problem: they could not add a ladder leading from the nave to the choir, on the second floor.

After finishing the novena, according to testimonies passed from generation to generation since the mid-nineteenth century, **a man appeared at the door of the chapel, saying that he could build a stairway, under one condition: he be granted total privacy.**

The stranger locked himself in the chapel for three months with a saw, a square and a few other simple tools, and disappeared as soon as the work was finished, **without ever having asked for any payment for his services.**

The staircase, which is around six meters high, takes two full turns over its axis until it reaches the choir. **It was built without any nails or glue, and lacks any kind of central support. The construction itself is said to be “impossible.”** According to some, it should have collapsed the very first moment someone used it, although **it is assumed that the central spiral staircase is narrow enough to work as a central support on its own—quite an architectonical accomplishment indeed.**

In any case, the original staircase was not attached to any wall until 1887, ten years later, when the railing was added, and the outer spiral was attached to a nearby pillar.

Tradition claims the mystery of the identity of the carpenter has never been satisfactorily solved, and **there is not even a delivery report that might help decipher where the wood came from.** During those three months, no one saw anyone entering or leaving the chapel.

As the carpenter left before the Mother Superior could pay him, the Sisters of Loretto offered a reward to anyone who could make his identity known, but no one ever showed up. **So, since then, the crafting of the staircase has been attributed to St. Joseph himself.**

Why did the centurion pierce Jesus in his side?

Photo by Lucien de Guise

[Lucien de Guise](#) - published on 11/12/21

The artist Raphael understood that the intention of crucifixion was to prolong the public spectacle.

We should be grateful when a painting of the crucifixion appears in an art documentary. It's a rare happening these days, especially when the theme of the BBC's latest show is "Nature and Us: A History through Art."

Much as I admire the scholarly presenter, Dr. James Fox, he makes one dubious statement about Raphael's 1502 masterpiece in the National Gallery, London. He says, "... Christ, as he bleeds to death on the cross." Jesus and the countless other victims of crucifixion do not die from loss of blood. The ancient Romans wouldn't want to make death so easy.

In reality, the intention of this form of capital punishment was to prolong the public spectacle. There are many theories on the precise cause of Christ's death. For victims of crucifixion, it is usually asphyxiation. In the case of Our Lord, it is possible that his heart was fatally weakened by the appalling abuse and dehydration that began even before he was nailed to the cross. The reason for the centurion

Longinus piercing his side with a spear was to check whether Our Lord – and eventually his lord, too – had died. It was a classic Roman test. The presence of blood and water confirmed death.

With the emphasis that many artists have put on angels catching cupfuls of Christ's blood, it's understandable that a historian as eminent as Dr. Fox might come to the wrong conclusion. Raphael probably knew better as he was less generous with the red paint than many artists.



The virtual Museum of the Cross

The Museum of the Cross is the first institution dedicated to the diversity of the most powerful and far-reaching symbol in history. After 10 years of preparation, the museum was almost ready to open; then came COVID-19. In the meantime, the virtual museum has started an Instagram account to engage with Aleteia readers and the stories of their own crucifixes: [@crossXmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/crossXmuseum)

(Deedee: a very inspiring story)

Holocaust survivor sends letter of gratitude to Pope Francis



By Grabowski Foto | Shutterstock

[Francisco Veneto](#) - published on 11/09/21

After Pope Francis visited her home, Jewish writer Edith Steinschreiber Bruck wrote him a moving message of thanks.

Jewish writer Edith Steinschreiber Bruck, a Holocaust survivor who now lives in Rome, wrote a letter of thanks to Pope Francis for his statements during his recent meeting with the Jewish community in Slovakia. The Pope had stated that the Holocaust “dishonored” the name of God.

Edith Steinschreiber Bruck is a native of Hungary, but has lived in Italy since she was 20 years old. **In her youth she was imprisoned by the Nazis, together with her parents and three siblings, in the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau.**

Her parents and one of her siblings died during their brutal confinement in the death camps, while Edith and her other brother and sister survived long enough to be rescued by Allied troops in 1945.

Holocaust survivor

After that traumatic period, Edith sought to rebuild her life and became a writer of short stories, novels, plays, and screenplays. **Among her most important works are her memoirs published in 1959 about her experiences in the concentration camps.** She has also directed films in Italy, and more recently has been lecturing in schools and universities about the Holocaust.

Pope Francis was [at the writer's home in Rome for a visit](#) on February 20, 2021.

Now, she has written to the pontiff and sent him the letter through Italian journalist Stefano Maria Paci, who delivered it to the pope during his flight back to Rome from Slovakia.

Here is the text of Edith's missive, as reported by [Sky tg24](#) and other sources:

Dear Pope Francis,

Your words about antisemitism, which has never been eradicated, are more relevant today than ever, not only in the countries you are visiting, but throughout Europe. I hope that your visit will have positive effects.

I have been following you and listening to your fundamental words, which cannot leave anyone indifferent in places where evil has taken over. May God accompany each of your steps of peace, of coexistence, and open hearts and consciences that are still unclear!

I hope that your voice and the warmth it emanates will reach out and touch and awaken the goodness that is within everyone. Sometimes even in the deepest darkness, light finds a way to advance. I know this and so I live and hope.

I heard from my Hungarian friends that you left a trail of love.

Thank you for staying with us as long as possible.

With gratitude and infinite thanks, a hug from your “sister” Edith

St. Augustine’s trick when you’re worn out or upset



Antoine Mekary | ALETEIA

Pope Francis greets a man during the general audience of November 10.

[Kathleen N. Hattrup](#) - published on 11/10/21

Pope Francis quoted Augustine's advice: When things are hard, we have to "wake up" our faith, like Christ in the boat.

Pope Francis referred on November 10 to some advice from Saint Augustine for dealing with hard times. As the Pope wrapped up his catechesis series on Paul's Letter to the Galatians, he acknowledged that sometimes, walking according to the Spirit can be hard, and **tiredness can set in.**

Paul promises that freedom only comes through a life in the Spirit, and this, the Pope said, "**generates *enthusiasm*** in us; we feel drawn to follow immediately the way of freedom, to 'walk according to the Spirit.' Walking according to the Spirit always makes us free."

But, "on the other hand, we are aware of our limitations because we are daily in touch with how difficult it is to be docile to the Spirit, to surrender to his beneficial action. Then ***tiredness can set in that dampens enthusiasm.*** We feel discouraged, weak, sometimes marginalized with respect to a worldly lifestyle."

In those moments, the Pope said, there is Saint Augustine's advice, which he gives by calling on the Gospel episode where Jesus is asleep in the boat, and a storm arises.

This is found in **Mark 4:38-39:**

But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care

that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

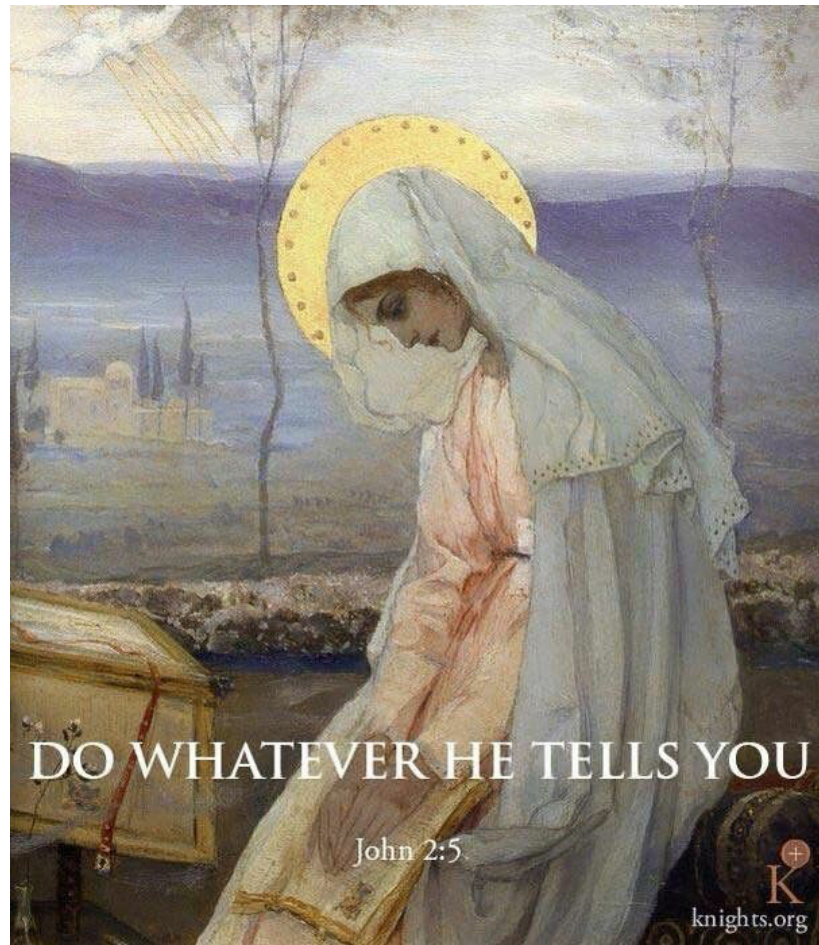
Pope Francis quoted Augustine’s teaching:

This is what he says: “The faith of Christ in your heart is like Christ in the boat. You hear insults, you wear yourself out, you are upset, and Christ sleeps. Wake Christ up, **rouse your faith!** Even in tribulation you can do something. Rouse your faith. Christ awakes and speaks to you... Therefore, wake Christ up... **Believe what has been said to you**, and there will be tremendous calm in your heart” (*Sermon 63*).

So St. Augustine’s counsel for our difficult moments is to do what the apostles did, the Pope said. And in following their lead, we will see things with a light that wasn’t possible before:

They woke Christ up. Wake up Christ who sleeps; you are in the storm, but **He is present**. This is the only thing we can do in terrible moments: Wake up Christ who is within us, but sleeps like [he did] in the boat. It is exactly like this.

We must rouse Christ in our hearts and only then will we be able to contemplate things with his eyes for **He sees beyond the storm**. Through that serene gaze, we can see a panorama that is not even conceivable on our own.



(Deedee--Trust me, you'll be more than informed!)

**YouTube Priest...Priest Debunks Common Catholic
Myths**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BoBu28EeJY>



a) Looking for unique art?

--go to: pelhamartfestival.com

--Visual Artists of Welland Gallery Shop at the Seaway Mall

b) Father Richard Kowalchuk purchased Formed—and online—an incredible wealth of Catholic programs and movies and such. Great time of the year to explore it. Thank you Father Richard!

Good afternoon, Lisa. Would you please contact the parish presidents and begin to invite the Ladies to start their "formation"? To begin, I am recommending a survey of the Faith which can be accessed in the following way: Once logged in, go to: Programs--Faith formation--Symbolon. This is a 10- part instruction. Very engaging.

1. Visit FORMED.org
2. Click Sign Up
3. Select "Sign Up As A Parishioner"
4. Find **Star of the Sea** by parish name, address, or zip code
5. Enter your email - and you're in!

c) CWL Annual Dues—are due! Make sure you're paid up!

d) Next issue of this Catholic Connections:

January 1, 2022—see you then!

The Church lists the corporal works of mercy as follows:

1. Feeding the hungry
2. Giving drink to the thirsty
3. Sheltering the homeless
4. Clothing the naked
5. Visiting the sick
6. Visiting the imprisoned (sometimes listed as “ransoming the captive”)
7. Burying the dead

The Church lists the spiritual works of mercy as follows:

1. To instruct the ignorant
2. To counsel the doubtful
3. To admonish sinners
4. To bear wrongs patiently
5. To forgive offenses willingly
6. To comfort the afflicted
7. To pray for the living and the dead

CWL Executive: 2021/2022

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Liturgical Calendar: December 2021

--Living with Christ—

3rd : St. Francis Xavier

4th : St. John Damascene

5th: 2nd Sunday of Advent

6th: St. Nicholas

7th: St. Ambrose

8th: Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin
Mary

9th: St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin

10th: Our Lady of Loreto

11th: St. Damascus I

12th: 3rd Sunday of Advent

13th: St. Lucy

14th: St. John of the Cross

19th: 4th Sunday of Advent

21st: St. Peter Canisius

23rd: St. John of Kanty

25th: Christmas: Nativity of the Lord

26: Holy Family

27th: St. John

28th: Holy Innocents

29th: St. Thomas Becket

31st: St. Sylvester I

~the end~