



# Reflections on 'The Greater Things'

JANUARY 2021  
Volume XXXV Issue No. 01

*"Amen, Amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)*

## REJOICE, NOW? By: Rev Mark Stockton, Pastor, St. Boniface

*"Rejoice always.  
Pray without ceasing.  
Give thanks in all  
circumstances, for this  
is the will of God  
for you in Christ Jesus."  
1 Thes 5:18*

In any liturgical year, these words make perfect sense for the recent the third Sunday of Advent, or "Gaudete Sunday", a word meaning "rejoice" as we marked the halfway point of Advent and joyfully anticipated the coming of Christmas. In any other year, Paul's words to the Thessalonians to 'rejoice always and to give thanks in all circumstances' would make perfect sense, but not this year.

This year, with all of its circumstances, these words seem out of place. Under the shadow of Covid-19, rejoicing and giving thanks come across as being ignorant or indifferent to the plight of so many people who have suffered so much. How can we rejoice when so many people, including our own friends and family, have fallen seriously ill and even died this year? What does a business owner who has gone bankrupt, or a single parent who lost their job, or a nursing home resident who has become basically a prisoner in solitary confinement, have to be thankful for this year? No, maybe this year, *like so many other things*, we should just *cancel* Gaudete Sunday and keep Paul's words under wraps until a more appropriate time comes along.

Such an approach assumes that Paul could only write those words because neither he nor the Thessalonians had any experience with suffering, but that

couldn't be further from the truth. Paul suffered greatly in his ministry: being arrested, beaten, and stoned several times; being shipwrecked and adrift at sea; facing constant conflict and rejection, not only from the Jews but from his fellow Christians; and ceaselessly worrying about the churches he helped care for, like the church in Thessalonica.

Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians only about 20 years after the life of Jesus, it was a young Christian community having a serious crisis of faith. Like other Christians at that time, they believed that Jesus' promise to come again in glory to bring about the fullness of God's kingdom would happen soon, within their lifetime. And so they waited, and waited, and waited some more, until something unexpected and very distressing happened - the people in their community began to die. Not as martyrs, dying in witness to Christ - they expected that to happen, as Jesus himself said it would and they believed that those who shared in Christ's cross like that would share in his resurrection. They weren't worried about the martyrs. The Thessalonians worried about their friends and family who were dying simply from old age, illness, and other natural causes. This wasn't part of the plan. How could their friends and family who died like this enter into Christ's kingdom if they weren't here when he came? The specter of death that overshadowed this young, Christian community seriously threatened to snuff out the fragile light of their faith.

It was *in the midst* of this darkness and doubt that Paul wrote the words of today's second reading. "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances, give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ

Jesus." He wrote these words, not out of ignorance of the Thessalonians' plight, but *because* of it. He wrote to reassure them that *God accomplishes what he promises*, even if we can't see it in our present circumstances. And how do he know this? What was the reason for his surety? Christ. Through our ceaseless prayer, the Holy Spirit shows us how God has fulfilled all his promises from the Old Testament in Jesus, beginning with the stories surrounding his birth, that we just celebrated during the Advent and Christmas seasons, all the way through his saving death and resurrection. And if God has accomplished all His promises from the Old Testament in Christ, He will accomplish all His promises from the *New Testament* in Christ too.

This is why Paul urged the Thessalonians to '*rejoice always and give thanks*,' **regardless of their circumstances**, and that is *why we need to do the same*, regardless of ours. Paul's words aren't out of place in the age of Covid-19. This is the time we need to hear those words the most, and during these challenging times, the Spirit that assures us of God's promises in Christ sends us out as prophets, like John the Baptist, to share that message of hope in Christ with others. Don't let all that is happening in life quench the Spirit of God in you. Rather, rejoice always and give thanks, for not worrying and despairing is God's will for us in Christ Jesus, who we celebrate. And Emmanuel - God - is with us, regardless of what we see with our eyes.

# Rejoice NOW!

## THE THREE KINGS: REAL OR JUST A NICE STORY? By: Kathy Wilcox

There are many opinions on what to believe in the bible. Is it historically correct? Did all the people named actually exist? Did all the events happen? Since none of us were actual witnesses, it may seem difficult to sort it out. Even “experts” can disagree. For this reason, I was excited when I came across an article about the Three Kings (or Wise Men) who visited the Holy Family.

Fr. Dwight Longenecker, a former Evangelical and Anglican priest, now a Catholic priest, writes interesting articles published on the website ChurchPop.com. He decided to investigate for himself the historical facts surrounding the ‘Three Kings’ story because it was his experience that “Most Bible scholars believe the story is in the category of a *midrash*: a Jewish tale configured to fulfill an Old Testament prophecy or comment on a passage of Scripture.”

His discovery process included studying ancient history, the geography of the area, recent archeology finds, and the culture and religions at the time of Jesus’ birth. He found facts that supported Matthew’s biblical narrative.

He explained that, at the time of Christ, trade routes wound through the Middle East and Northwest Arabia. Along one of the main routes was the ancient city of Petra, home of the Nabateans. The Nabatean civilization was lost to historians for thousands of years in the desert sands. They left no written history, so very little was known about them. It has only been in the recent past 50 or 60 years that archeologists discovered ruins that proved to be Nabatean.

It was not only goods that were transported along the roads; the traders themselves were the main

source of news, moving from town to town, and country to country. Nabatean King Aretas IV was intrigued when he heard that there was a child born in Bethlehem who was being proclaimed “King of the Jews.” King Aretas was a typical politician; he wanted to form a good relationship with King Herod the Great, and thinking that the child could possibly be an heir to Herod’s throne, he sent three members of his inner circle as envoys to Herod’s court to bring gifts for the ‘new King.’ These Magi had a Jewish background and were scholars with knowledge of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. They traveled with the diplomatic offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that represented Arabian royalty.

Early in January, on or around the 6<sup>th</sup>, the church celebrates the feast of The Epiphany, commemorating the visit of the three Kings or Wise Men to the Holy Family. It is exciting to see the validity of this wonderful account of so long ago confirmed, but there are other important messages to note. We must be careful to discern things that have not necessarily been definitively proven by facts instead of just dismissing them, especially things related to our faith. Faith itself is a gift; *and we believe by faith, not by sight*. We believe the bible is the written Word of God, not because we have a binder full of documented facts, but because the Holy Spirit revealed that It IS the written Word of God.

As I prayed about this amazing discovery of Truth, I realized that God uses everyone to work out His plans. He chooses those who can work out His plan, whether they are political leaders, traders with camels carrying goods from town to town,

shepherds watching their flocks at night, and even Herod the Great, who by trying to murder the child, actually acknowledged who He was. He used King Aretas IV, who sent gifts that were only given to a king, thus God giving witness that Jesus *was* the King of the Jews.

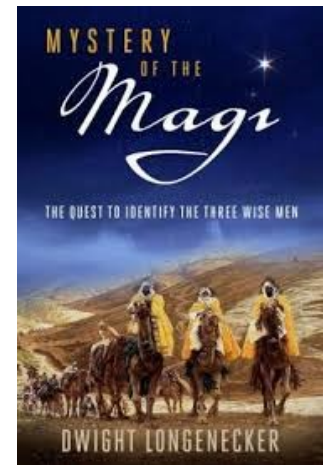
We must to remember that even though we cannot always see with our eyes what God is doing, He is in charge and His will, WILL be done. We are part of His plan, just like the merchants traveling with news or the three kings. He is always using us in ways we cannot know. So, we pray that His will is done as we speak Truth and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. No one is insignificant. We are His army. He will use us. Amen.

*For we walk live by faith, not by sight.* 2 Corinthians 5:7, NASB.

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Hebrews 11-1, ESV

Fr. Dwight Longenecker has written a book about this topic,  
THE MYSTERY OF THE MAGI  
it can be found at

<https://www.churchpop.com>



## Memorials

Carmelita Morabito presented to Paul Morabito (10.00)

Angie Priscaro Presented to Fr. Jerry Priscaro, Betty, and Sr Maria Assumpta (10.00)

Kathleen Crane in gratefulness for her service to Word Of Life (10.00)

### What is intercessory prayer?

God works on the earth through humans. Therefore, it is a partnership of the redeemed child of God working hand in hand with God toward the realization of His redemptive purposes on earth.



### Why intercede?

God commands it. (1 Tim 2:1) and He is always looking for someone to pray! (Ez 22:30,31)

God promises in His Word ‘The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.’ (James 5:16)

Christ is the one and only intercessor. He is interceding for us so we can pray, “asking in His Name.” Our calling and function is to release Him to intercede for us as we pray. Intercessors *meet with God* and also *meet the powers of darkness, claiming the victory Christ has already accomplished*. We exercise that authority the situations God puts us in, for us and for others.

The love of God is unconditional but His favor and blessings are not. An intercessor’s habit of trusting, faithful, prayer builds blessing and favor, leading intercessors pray at strategic times to create a boundary of protection. We also *co-operate* with the Holy Spirit so that in our weakness, He will produce results. (Rom 8:26-28). The Holy Spirit will lead us as we pray, perhaps revealing things about the situation (words of knowledge) and bringing scriptures to mind so we can *pray them into* the situation and literally pray in the Spirit in tongues, since this is a ‘perfect’ prayer; the Holy Spirit knows more perfectly what prayer is needed than we do with our limited human intellect.

Knowing and using our authority in Christ Jesus prepares us for spiritual warfare, which is one part of intercessory prayer. One of the greatest gifts we can give each other is the gift of prayer.

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.*  
(1 Timothy 2:1)



Pray for nations and leaders, pastors, and those in authority.  
Pray for the homeless, aborted (or at risk) babies, the sick and the dying.  
Pray for those who have no one to pray for them.  
Pray for your enemies and for the poor.  
Pray for your family, friends, and associates.  
Pray for the poor souls in purgatory.

Most importantly, **ask the Holy Spirit to bring people to mind**. He surely will! Their names will likely continue to come to mind throughout the day, once you make yourself available, because the Lord is always looking for someone willing to pray. As their names come to you, simply lift them to the Lord. Ask God to help them, to bring them to wholeness, to forgive them, to touch them with His love, to release His power on their behalf. Pray with simple faith, as a little child turning to your Daddy, knowing He longs to give you what you want.

You might ask, “Lord, what does this person need?” Often an area of need will come to mind. When it does, you can say simply, “Lord, Abba, please meet that need.” Even if you don’t know their specific need, HE does, and the Holy Spirit can help you pray the perfect prayer for them. Pray simply, from your heart. Pray, “Father, I pray your heart’s desire be done in their lives. It was He who prompted you to ask so you can be sure that He will do something about the need! He promises in His Word:

***The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*** (James 5:16)

(Resource: Intercessions from: *MIRACLE HOUR - A Method of Prayer that Will Change Your Life* by Linda Schubert)





I began writing this article soon after returning home from singing at the First Saturday Mass since March 2020. I praised God that arrangements had been made to resume Masses. Being away felt like breathing with one lung. The Gospel reading was one of my favorites, Mark 12:41-44 (NIV).

*“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.”*

This reading in Mark and the reading of Mary Magdalene anointing Jesus with perfume in the book of John have always been my *worship readings*.

Much of the time, whether I worship at home or leading public worship, everything goes well. I’m not tired. I don’t feel sick. I’m not in a lot of pain, and stress and craziness are at their typical levels. I get out of bed thinking about God and giving thanks for another day and for all His undeserved graces in my life. These are the days when my *worship-bank account* overflows.

When you have a big worship-bank account balance, you can make a withdraw and you hardly notice because you are drawing from an excess; you have more than enough energy and time should things come up and you have to make more withdrawals. I sing and praise God for my *surplus* of love and energy.

Then there are times when leading worship or worshipping at all takes everything I have; and sometimes it feels like I don’t have it in me to go and sing or lead worship. When I was Music Director for Bread Of Life and then St. Joseph’s Bread Of Life, I had frequent Sunday morning conflicts to leading worship. I would wake up in so much pain and feeling so ill that I could hardly move. On these mornings I would ask myself, “Do I go to the emergency room or do I try to go to Mass?”

Since these battles typically were the worst on Sunday mornings, it’s not hard to realize their origin, since they attempted to prevent me from going to Mass and using the gifts that God gave me. But knowing where the battle was coming from did not make the pain, weakness, and feeling of illness any less real. It was real.

There were mornings when I recall lying on the floor racked in pain and saying, “There is no way I can do this today. I have to go to the emergency room.” Yet, I would slowly and with difficulty get ready and just drive to the church. These are the days when, like the poor widow, I had only two cents left in my *worship-bank account*. Getting ready and going took everything I had to live on.

There were also days when I sang out of complete grief. I sang for all my grandparents’ funerals. Many years ago, I sang for my beautiful best friend’s funeral. I sang for my beloved Chris Brzozowski’s funeral. I sang for the funeral of my best friend’s son. I sang for the funeral of a young Navy Seal who died too young. And so many more. These were the times when I had to go and give “my two cents,” everything in my *worship-bank account*, in order to lead worship.

On these days when I came and offered my widow’s mite (two cents), I learned a spiritual lesson that has never ceased to amaze me: ***Jesus is never outdone in faithfulness.*** Just as He acknowledged that the widow gave more because she was giving out of her need, giving all the money she needed to live on, He also was with me and knew I was giving everything, and even more than I had to offer. He received the precious gift that I offered

Him on those days. At most of the funerals I mentioned, I would have a conversation with God beforehand: “Lord, I am truly not strong enough to sing today without completely breaking down.”

Warming up on the songs at home before these funerals was useless because I couldn’t make it through one song without weeping and having to stop. *Crying and singing are generally mutually exclusive events.* You can do one or the other well, but not both. But as I was faithful to show up, the Holy Spirit also always showed up. At those times I felt the palpable comforting presence of the Lord beside me, in front of me, above me, and below me as I opened my mouth to praise Him in the midst of my own pain when I had nothing left to give but gave it anyway.

I feel a heavy and weighty anointing of the Holy Spirit, like oil drenching my own hurting heart, when I sing during my times of pain and struggle. And on the days when I fought between going to the ER or driving to church, I chose the church. And each and every time, the moment I walked in and started to get everything ready for Mass, the pain and illness instantly departed. *God is faithful.*

Psalm 34: 1-3 says: “*I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*” (KJV, emphasis added).

And so it is that we are called to praise and bless the Lord regardless of how much or little is in our worship bank account. Through hardships. Through trials. Through detraction. Through pain. Through grief. Through violence. Through depression. Through anxiety. Through calamity. **And through pandemics.** “*Continually.*” And there is power when we “*exalt His name together.*”

When we worship together, whether in good times or bad, an amazing thing happens. He is **MAGNIFIED**. His presence and His power become more real and apparent, and the worship-bank account, like the loaves and the fishes, begins to multiple itself.

**Our God is a MULTIPLIER.** He takes what we give from our hearts and creates more. I have watched this happen my whole life. There have been days when I was so sick that I could hardly even whisper let alone sing. I had no voice. Yet when I got up to sing, not only did I have a voice, but I had such a beautiful, full, and anointed voice that I had to sit back and almost observe in amazement as a bystander as God gave me something I did not have that day. More than once I have had to ask myself, “*Where did that come from?*” I know where it came from. It came from a faithful God who

magnified my two cents and multiplied my meager loaves and fishes.

Give Him your loaves and fishes, regardless of how much or how little you have. He’s a multiplier. **Praise Him in the storm. Praise Him on your walls of Jericho. Praise Him whenever there is a battle. BLESS THE LORD AT ALL TIMES.** When God’s children keep their eyes on Him and focus on worshipping Him, in the midst of the storms right now or the storms to come, that’s when our God (Daddy, Abba) says, “My kids are worshipping me. They are trusting me

and calling on me.” And like any good father, He rolls up His sleeves and starts to beat off the bullies. Worship is spiritual warfare. We just do our job and God does His, and we trust that the outcome will be consistent with His will. From my own experience of God’s faithfulness and multiplied blessing in the midst of hardship, whatever you are facing, even if it costs you everything... give Him your “two cents.”



THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS  
EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, OF  
THOSE IN HEAVEN, AND OF  
THOSE ON EARTH, AND OF THOSE  
UNDER THE EARTH, AND THAT  
EVERY TONGUE SHOULD  
CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS  
LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE  
FATHER.  
PHILIPPIANS 2:10-11

## ***All Day Adoration*** ***Every Knee Shall Bow!***

We come to ***bow our knees*** before our God and King.


We bring the needs of our Country;  
our diocese; our family, friends and  
loved ones; our religious; end of  
Covid... and more, to the Lord.

We worship Him and trust in His  
loving faithfulness that He hears our  
prayers.

There is a special urgency given the  
tumult of the past year just to *come*  
*and pray*. Each year, we feel the  
blessing of God during this event.  
Come for a visit or spend the whole 14  
hours with our Lord.

***Exposition at 10am + Midnight Benediction***

***“At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow”***



***All Day Adoration***  
***“Every Knee Shall Bow!”***

10am Friday, January 29 through Midnight  
Holy Rosary Chapel, Erie, PA

10am Exposition  
Fr. John Jacquel

3pm Chaplet of Divine Mercy  
Fr. Johnathan Schmoldt

6pm Evening Prayer  
Fr. Rich Toohey

10:30pm Worship: Jaci Phillips and  
MaryJo Titus with  
Violinist, Louis Nicolai

Midnight Eucharistic Procession and  
Benediction  
Fr. Joe Petrone, Fr. Jerry Priscaro  
Covid precautions observed





# The gift

"I expect you to share with everyone in the church, the grace of the baptism in the Holy Spirit."

POPE FRANCIS

a life in  
the spirit course



## Are you hungry for more of God?

### **THERE IS MORE!**

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or call

TA at Word of Life - (814) 824-1286

Registrations appreciated by

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Accessible to persons with disabilities.

Friday, March 12, 2021

6:00 - 9:00 pm

Saturday, March 13, 2021

8:30 am - 3:30 pm

St. George's Catholic Church

5145 Peach St. Erie PA

Sponsored by:

**Word of Life**

Catholic Charismatic  
Renewal Center

[www.eriecd.org/wordoflife](http://www.eriecd.org/wordoflife)



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# upcoming events

## First Saturday of the Month Mass in honor of Our Lady

9:00 AM at St. Gregory's, Northeast, PA  
Sacred Music beginning at 8:50 AM  
Music provided by: Soloist, Jacqueline Phillip;  
Violinist, Louis Nicolai and Organist Corey Spacht  
Celebrant: Rev. Jerry Priscaro

## Extravagant Love

### Day of Adoration

Holy Rosary Chapel  
2701 East Ave, Erie

Friday and Saturday, January 29 & 30, 2021  
10AM Friday - Benediction at Midnight

## Life In The Spirit

St. George's Church, Erie PA

Friday and Saturday, March 12 & 13, 2021

Holy Redeemer, Warren PA

Friday and Saturday, May 21 & 22, 2021

## Greater Things Luncheon

St. Joseph/Bread of Life Community Center

Saturday - 9:30 AM - 12:00 PM

April 17th and August 21st

## Fan Into The Flame Seminar

St. Joseph/Bread of Life Community Center

Friday & Saturday - June 18 - 19, 2021

## Worship Concert

St. George Church

Thursday, September 16, 2021

## Greater Things Conference

Our Lady of Peace Parish

Saturday, October 16, 2021

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

## Spirit Filled - Healing Mass

Sponsored by Son of God Prayer Group

Holy Rosary Church

2701 East Ave, Erie

Tuesday's Worship 6:15 Mass 6:30

2021 - May 11th - August 10th - October 5th

Jesus, Son of God, in whom the fullness of the Divinity dwells, You call all the baptized to "put out into the deep," taking the path that leads to holiness. Waken in the hearts of young people the desire to be witnesses in the world of today to the power of your love. Fill them with your Spirit of fortitude and prudence, so that they may be able to discover the full truth about themselves and their own vocation. Our Savior, sent by the Father to reveal His merciful love, give to your Church the gift of young people who are ready to put out into the deep, to be the sign among their brothers of

Your presence which renews and saves. Holy Virgin, Mother of the Redeemer, sure guide on the way towards God and towards neighbor, You who pondered his word in the depth of your heart, sustain with your motherly intercession our families and our ecclesial communities, so that they may help adolescents and young people to answer generously the call of the Lord. Amen.

—John Paul II—

## You Can Help Make a Difference

**Word of Life is completely dependent upon your donations** to spread the fire of the Holy Spirit in the Diocese of Erie.

Your donation, no matter how much, makes a big difference!

**Contributions can be made by check, text, Tithe.ly app, and on the website.**

Checks can be made payable to:

**Word of Life Charismatic Renewal Center**

St. Mark Catholic Center

429 E. Grandview Blvd

Erie, PA 16514



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*"Every Knee Shall Bow!"*

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The office is generally open limited hours.  
Please call before coming.

The purpose of this newsletter is to proclaim  
the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to provide  
teaching, news, and calendar of events, which  
help to foster Catholic Charismatic Renewal  
throughout the Diocese of Erie.

**This newsletter may be copied to put in  
churches or shared with others.**

### CHIEF EDITOR

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### FORMATTING

Loretta Laufer

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