

Reflections

Volume 123

International

Catholic Family Newsletter

December 2025

Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

The Lamb of God

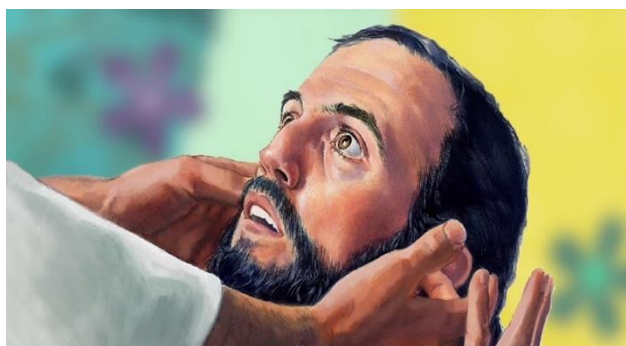
It's Called CHRISTmas for a Reason

Your Guardian Angel

The Three Mary's Under the Cross

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

You don't need perfect belief in Jesus to receive His attention for your prayers. Remember the man who had a son who was deaf and dumb. He brought him to Jesus. Mark 9:22-25 & 28-29. The father said to Jesus, " But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said to him, If you can!" Everything is possible to one who has faith. Then the boy's father cried out, "I do believe, help my unbelief!" Jesus healed the son, who could now speak and hear. " When he entered the house, his disciples asked him in private, "Why could we not drive it out? " He said to them, "This kind can only come out through prayer."



You don't need perfect faith or belief in Jesus to ask Him to help you when you pray. Be persistent in your prayers and ask Jesus to help you have faith in Him. Do as the father of the deaf and dumb son, said to Jesus..." **I do believe, help my unbelief."**

By: Richard Pickard
Blessings to All:

The Lamb of God Sacrificed on the Cross for Us.

In Christ's time, the Jewish priests offered a lamb as a daily offering twice a day: one at the **third hour** (around 9 AM) and the other at the **ninth hour** (around 3 PM). These were the regular daily sacrifices, also known as the Tamid offering, meaning continual.

The sprinkling of the unblemished lamb's blood over the altar symbolizes atonement for sin, cleansing, and justification. The blood was seen as a sacrifice that paid the penalty for sin, allowing for the forgiveness of the sinner and the purification of the sanctuary from sin's defilement. It was the path for the restored fellowship with God.

We see that Christ became the sacrificial lamb at the 9 am sacrifice when he was nailed to the cross. (Mark 15:25 states that it was the "third hour" when Jesus was crucified) As His blood flowed from the nail wounds, the Jewish priest would shed the blood of an unblemished lamb for the forgiveness of sins of the people.

As Jesus was lifted up on the cross, he saw all those who were there and said "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."(Luke 23:34). And at the same time, the Jewish priests would offer the lamb as a sin offering and the Jewish people at the temple would recite the Shema, a declaration of faith. Which translates to "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One". The Shema prayer is significant in Judaism as the **cornerstone** of Jewish faith.

Here again, we see the biblical connection to Jesus. Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22, which states, "The **stone** that the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone**". And in Acts 4:11, Peter states, " This Jesus is the **stone** that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the **cornerstone**". In this verse, the apostle Peter is addressing the Jewish religious leaders, explaining that while they rejected Jesus, God has made him the essential **foundation of the church** which was later confirmed by His resurrection.

Jesus is the foundation of faith, the most important **stone** upon which His church would be formed. Peter, the **first Pope of the church** would watch over its members. Jesus tells Peter in Aramaic in Matthew 16:18..."Jesus says to the apostle Peter, "*And I also say to you that you are **Kepa (rock)**, and on this **Kepa (rock)** I will build my church and the gates of the netherworld will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*"

As Jesus is the chief cornerstone, his position aligns and guides every other part of the spiritual building, and he is the **primary stone** that all believers are to measure their lives against. Jesus did not leave His new church without leadership. The Bible describes Peter as a leader of the early Christian church, with Jesus giving him the responsibility to lead and care for his followers. In John 21:15-17 we see Jesus reminding Peter to ...“Feed my lambs.”... “Tend my sheep.”... “Feed my sheep.”

As Jesus’ death of the cross was nearing he uttered “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”. This is biblically significant as He is quoting the opening of Psalm 22 and fulfilling its prophecy. **Jesus is expressing both intense human anguish and the spiritual weight of taking on the sins of the world. This moment represents Jesus's experience of bearing the separation from God caused by sin, and the depth of his suffering, while also pointing to the psalm's ultimate message of God's deliverance and ultimate victory through the resurrection.**

We also see that when the Jewish priests sacrificed the second unblemished lamb at the three o’clock hour, it is when Jesus gives up his spirit. “Father into your hands I commend my spirit”, Psalms 31-5.

Jesus giving up his spirit at 3 p.m. (the ninth hour) is significant because it marks the moment of his death on the cross, seen as a fulfillment of a sacrificial lamb and the culmination of his mission. This event is central to Christian belief, **representing the sacrifice for humanity's sins and the act of voluntarily laying down his life.** The 3 p.m. hour is also associated in the ¹*Chaplet of Devine Mercy*, given by Jesus to St. Faustina, known as the Hour of Mercy. Jesus said to St. Faustina that, *"At three o'clock, implore My mercy, especially for sinners; and, if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in My Passion, particularly in My abandonment at the moment of agony. This is the hour of great mercy for the whole world"*.

Jesus’ life, death and resurrection followed the prophecies of the bible that foretold of the Messiah. Many passages of the bible have confirmed that Jesus is the Messiah, who would take away the sins of the world. As a reminder, here are a few verses for you to consider. Of the best-known prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the death of Messiah, are Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 which certainly stand out. Psalm 22 is especially amazing since it predicted numerous separate elements about Jesus’ crucifixion a thousand years before Jesus was crucified... The Messiah will have His hands and His feet “pierced” through (Psalm 22:16; John 20:25). The Messiah’s bones will not be broken (a person’s legs were usually broken after being crucified to speed up their death but Jesus did not have his legs broken) (Psalm 22:17; John 19:33). Men will cast lots for Messiah’s clothing (Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35).

¹ <https://www.thedivinemeracy.org/message/devotions/pray-the-chaplet>



Finally, St Peter says it all in 1Peter 2:24, "Jesus bore our sins on the cross so that believers could die to sin and live for righteousness and be healed by his wounds."

If you are a Christian, then you understand the great sacrifice Jesus did for you. If you have any doubts, please ask Jesus to enlighten you. The bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, confirm that Jesus is the Messiah. He took upon Himself all the sins of mankind so that You can receive the forgiveness of your sins.

If your not a Christian, my article should give you the opportunity to see the connection in the Old and New Testament about who is the Messiah and how Jesus confirms all the prophecy about Him. Jesus loves You. Ask Him to help your doubts. He will send people into your life to help you understand His sacrifice and grant graces to you to accept Him.

Romans 10:9 states that if you confess with your mouth that "**Jesus is Lord**" and **believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**" This verse is a **cornerstone** of Christian belief, emphasizing that salvation comes through a combination of public declaration and internal belief in Jesus's resurrection.



The Lamb of God



He Rose from the dead.

It's Called CHRISTmas for a Reason

- By Dan Fitzpatrick

Two sayings you have no doubt heard over the years during Advent are, "Jesus is the reason for the season" *and* "You can't spell 'Christmas' without Christ."

Unfortunately, this true message of Christmas – that a miracle took place 2,000 years ago when our Savior was born – are getting more and more difficult for kids to hear this time of year because the culture has removed religious significance from the event.

Unless their parents make an extra effort to get across this fundamental point and/or unless the youngsters attend Mass weekly, kids will only be "preached to" by legacy media and secular society, thus learning more in December about Santa and Rudolph than about Jesus and the Nativity.

The Media Research Center has shown in studying the network news stories (of ABC, CBS, and NBC) that in all of their Christmas-related coverage, **only 1% of their stories mentioned God or Jesus.** In one recent year, the major three TV networks ran 527 stories about Christmas in their nightly news broadcasts yet only seven had any connection with Christianity. Instead, the Christmas stories they produced were about the impact this holiday was going to have secularly, such as regarding store sales, vacation traveling, and the weather.

Knowing that their sons and daughters will not be picking up Christ-based knowledge of the Christmas and Advent seasons from the culture, Catholic parents need to be counter-cultural by working attentively at keeping their family's focus on the historical arrival of Jesus and the future anticipation of Him coming again. While it is fine and natural for kids to have visions of toys, trees, and nutcrackers dancing in their heads this time of year, parents would do well to make sure there are moments spent on contemplating and celebrating the real reason for the holiday/holyday, the miracle of Jesus's birth. Some suggested actions parents can take include:

- You and your young ones kneeling in front of your church's Nativity scene before or after each Mass these weeks of Advent and the succeeding Sundays of Christmastime, praying in thanksgiving for God becoming a man in the form of Jesus via the Incarnation.
- Listening as a family to famous Christmas hymns and pointing out the significant lines. For example, the expressive lyrics to "We Three Kings"

have these meaningful words that most kids might have never understood and most adults might have never meditated on: *"Born a babe on Bethlehem's plain; Gold we bring to crown Him again; King forever, ceasing never, Over us all to reign."*

- Gathering your children around your computer and showing them this famous portion of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" that explains what Christmas is all about.
- A Charlie Brown Christmas... Find for free at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2694746987454732>
- Making it a point to naturally and enthusiastically say, "Merry Christmas!" in return to all the store clerks and people you meet in the coming weeks who are so intent on being politically-correct that they will only greet you with a "Happy Holidays!" Let your counter-cultural actions help spread the Good News to them while witnessing for your children how proud you are to be a Christ-follower.

• Finally, moms and dads act counter-culturally when they make weekly Mass attendance a priority for their family, and don't settle for only going to church on Christmas, Easter, and a few other Sundays of the year when it's "convenient." Whereas I'm confident everyone reading this will be attending Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, how many will attend the Sunday after Christmas?

The majority of self-identified Catholics do not attend Mass on a weekly basis, with many mothers and fathers saying they're just too tired to battle with their children in making them attend. As tedious and difficult as it is to say "no" to your daughter when she asks if she can wear the latest fashion of a low-cut shirt or to say "no" to your son who wants to buy that popular video game that is rated "M" (Mature), good parents will still stick to their guns and not give in out of exhaustion or lethargy.

This same level of earnestness must be given to keeping your kids going to Mass as a family every weekend – not just on Christmas and every-now-and-then thereafter. Just like Saint Paul said to the early disciples about the difficulties of being a Christian, no one said parenting was going to be easy either. Stick to doing what you know is right, even if it means being counter-cultural and against what society in general and the media are telling you is standard. For this Advent and Christmas season, this entails keeping CHRIST in CHRISTmas. And then for the entire upcoming **year 2026**, this should entail making Sunday Mass attendance the most important thing your family does together each week.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

God Places His Angels. To Protect and to Care for Us

God Almighty commanded His angels. To give us hope, to protect, to comfort and to serve us.

By: Mrs. Diane Mary Markey



I PRAY GOD BLESSES YOU, THROUGH MY ARTICLE.

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them. (Psalm 34:7)

Reflection. We are watched over by God's angels. When hard times come. His angels give us the courage to carry on.

Scripture Readings: *For He will order His angels, to protect you wherever you go. (Psalm 91:11,)*

Luke 22:43 states that an angel appeared to Jesus from heaven and strengthened him while he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. This occurred as Jesus was in deep anguish before his betrayal and arrest, and his prayer was more earnest, with his sweat becoming like drops of blood.

Almighty God loves each of His children. He provides heavenly angels. His angels surround us. We are never truly alone. We have a band of heavenly angels surrounding us and caring for us. Almighty God has commanded His heavenly angels, to watch over you and me. Our Heavenly Father has charged His angels to protect us. From all the evil that is world throws at us each day.

We work in God's service. Toiling each day for our families, and the glory of God. We do so. Believing we have nothing to fear. Because Almighty God has placed a multitude of His angels to ensure our safety.

Scripture Reading: [Exodus 23:20](#) in the Bible, where God promises the Israelites that He will send an angel ahead of them to protect them on their journey to the Promised Land. The passage emphasizes that this angel is acting with divine authority and requires absolute obedience from the people, with dire consequences for rebellion.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 1:14 states that angels are "ministering spirits" sent to serve those who will inherit salvation. This verse emphasizes that angels are servants of God and are dispatched to assist believers, highlighting both the importance of believers in God's plan and

the superiority of Jesus Christ over the angels, who are the ones carrying out this service.

Why does Almighty God provide us with angels? Because He loves His children so much. People have always had a fascination with angels and angelic beings. Many famous artists, authors, sculptors and poets have tried to capture their essence.

When God so chooses, Our Father makes His angels visible and audible. So, that a message is delivered. Something that is fascinating about angels, is that they are truly interested in our spiritual welfare.

Scripture Reading Luke 15:10 states, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents". This verse is part of Jesus' parables and highlights that God and His angels celebrate and rejoice when a person turns away from sin and turns back to God. It is a concluding statement to the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin.

Can you imagine this? When a person falls on her knees and accepts Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior. Heaven is filled with singing and with joy. Like the father welcoming home. His prodigal son. Our Heavenly Father is welcoming Home, His lost child. God's heavenly beings sing in joy "*over one sinner who repents.*"

Angels are Almighty God's servants sent by Him to care, comfort and protect us.

We picture our Lord Jesus in the desert being ministered to by God's angels. After forty-day and forty long nights of going without food, Our Lord was weak and feeble. God's angels were sent to care and to look after His every need.

Our Guardian Angels love babies born and, in the womb...



"Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side to light and to guard, to rule and to guide. Amen." This prayer asks for the angel's help with light, guidance, protection, and rule throughout the day.

All of us have guardian angels. Talk to yours and thank your angel for helping you each day.

The Three Mary's Under the Cross Who was Mary of Cleophas

By: Christopher Y Wong, EWTN

"And there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother and His **mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas**, and Mary Magdalen." How should we understand "His mother's sister," literally, as in having the same parents, or in the same sense that Jesus's "brothers" are to be understood as close relatives?

The short answer is that Mary of Cleophas is probably the Blessed Virgin's sister-in-law. Mary of Cleophas may have had a previous husband named Alpheus, or this Alpheus may have been Cleophas. The Blessed Virgin Mary, of course, only had one husband (Joseph) and remained a virgin. The long answer follows.

Jesus' relatives...

Reading the Bible, we find that Jesus had brethren named James, Joseph, Simon (Simeon) and Jude (Mt 13:55). We also know that His mother Mary had a "**sister called Mary**." This other Mary in turn had a husband named Cleophas (Jn 19:25). I hope here to summarize and untangle this maze of relatives. I do not seek to prove the Blessed Virgin Mary's perpetual virginity here; there are many other sources for that purpose that I will list below.

First, let us see what the Gospels tell us. At the death of Jesus, we are told that Mary wife of Cleophas/Clopas (Jn 19:25) was present. She was described as the mother of James and Joseph (Mt 27:56) in one account, and mother of James the Less and Joses in another (Mk 15:40). On the other hand, James is described as the son of Alphaeus in the synoptic Gospels' listing of the Apostles (Mt 10:3, Mk 3:18, Lk 6:15). We can infer that Mary wife of Cleophas is unlikely to be a true sister of the Virgin Mary, since they bear the same name. However, they are related in some way. This parallels the semitic use of "brother" in relating James to Jesus.

An ancient historian named Hegesippus can shed further light. A native of Palestine, Hegesippus finished his Memoirs in the reign of Pope Eleutherius (AD 175-189) when he was an old man. He draws his information from personal sources, as he was able to question some surviving members of Jesus' family. Hegesippus can tell us that:

"After the martyrdom of **James**, it was unanimously decided that Simeon, son of Clopas, was worthy to occupy the see of Jerusalem. He was, it is said, **a cousin of the Saviour**;" Hegesippus recounts in fact that **Clopas was a brother of Joseph** (Eusebius, Hist. eccl., III, 11).

St. Epiphanius (Haer., LXXVII, 7) says the same and adds (ibid., 14) "that this Simeon, the son of Clopas, was a cousin of James the Just," as Hegesippus says in another passage. (Prat, Jesus Christ, p. 505).

Cleophas is the brother of Joseph (Jesus' adopted father). It follows that Cleophas' wife Mary is the Virgin Mary's sister in law, which explains why they can

have the same name and are called sisters. It also follows that James is Jesus' cousin. Ferdinand Prat reasons:

"We know, then, that the mother of two of the brothers of the Lord was Mary of Cleophas, the sister of the Blessed Virgin. We also know that Cleophas, St Joseph's brother, was the father of a third, called Simon or Simeon. Since the remaining one, Jude, is always connected with Simon and is, like him, part of the family of David, it is natural to suppose that he was also a son of Cleophas.

All the points that remain obscure would be cleared up, in our opinion, if two hypotheses are risked. Mary, the sister of the Blessed Virgin, having two sons, James and Joseph, by a first marriage, was married a second time to Cleophas, brother of St. Joseph, who also had two sons, Simon and Jude, by a former marriage. In light of the customs of the country and the age, there was nothing extraordinary in the marriage of a widow and a widower, each with children. The second hypothesis is that the **sister of the Blessed Virgin** had as her first husband a man of the tribe of Levi, called Alpheus.

In this fashion nine or ten problems would be solved. Thus one could explain why James, Joseph, Simon and Jude are always named in that order, as brethren of the Lord; why James and Joseph are a pair distinct from Simon and Jude; why Mary, sister of the Blessed Virgin, is called the mother of James and Joseph and not the mother of Simon and Jude; why, according to Hegesippus, Simon and not James is the son of Cleophas; why, again according to Hegesippus, Simon and Jude are of the family of David; why, according to tradition, James was of sacerdotal ancestry; why the common opinion of Catholics identifies James, son of Mary, sister of the Blessed Virgin, with James the Apostle, the son of Alpheus; why Mary of Cleophas is called in the Gospel sister of the Blessed Virgin, when she was really her sister-in-law, being the wife of St. Joseph's brother; finally, why, after the deaths of Joseph and Cleophas, the two sisters brought their families together, so that thereafter the two families seemed to be but one." (Prat, Jesus Christ, p. 136-137).

We do not hear of Cleophas or Joseph (Jesus' adopted father) in the Gospels during Jesus' adult life. We can imagine that after their deaths, the two families—deprived of their protectors and heads—came together under one roof. This would further strengthen their ties: the two Mary's as "sisters" and Jesus and His cousins as "brothers". Gospel and tradition kept these names without denying Mary's perpetual virginity.



The Poem that Nelson Mandela Read Each Day in Prison And interesting Fact



Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid leader who was jailed for his activism and in 1994 became South Africa's first black President. He regularly recited one poem during his more than **twenty-five years of imprisonment**—the 1875 poem "Invictus" by English poet William Ernest Henley. The poem, which helped Mandela persist through extraordinarily challenging circumstances, includes the iconic lines, "I am the master of my fate: / I am the captain of my soul."

INVICTUS...

BY [WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY](#)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning's of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,

**I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.**

Fact Note: Nelson Mandela's very small cell on Robben Island was approximately 8 feet by 7 feet. He spent **18 of his 27 years in prison there in this small concrete room**. He was later transferred to a larger cell in Pollsmoor Prison, which was 21 by 18 feet. His cell on Robben Island was known for being extremely cold due to the harsh conditions and a lack of heating. **Mandela was a Christian and never lost his faith.**

The International Catholic Family Newsletter

Is Published Monthly

Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.



The Rosary is the 'weapon' for these times. – St. Padre Pio

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