

# Awaken

the soul & let your spirit fly

A bimonthly publication of Good Shepherd Catholic Church ~ steadfast in awakening our true being in God.

## "Forget all that is not Jesus. Forget yourself for love of him."

### *Surrendering to Jesus*

Saint Therese of Lisieux's "Little Way" stings at the heart with its simplicity and total abandon into the arms of Jesus. "*I want to be a saint...I am not perfect, but I want to become perfect,*" she announced as a teenager, determined to find a way.

Therese entered the Carmel in Lisieux, France, searching, hoping and suffering on many levels.

Upon contemplating the Holy Face of Christ, Therese found her answer. She saw Jesus' humiliation, wounds and extreme suffering. More important, she saw Jesus accepting his death, and loving, forgiving and abandoning everything to God, confident in redemption. She discovered that in her "littleness" – *her brokenness* – letting go to Jesus was the way.

The season of Lent gathers us, the Christian faithful, on a penitential journey to Easter. That journey, which is both personal and communal, invites

a full immersion into the mysteries of Christ's Passion, death and Resurrection, much like the process that led St. Therese of Lisieux to surrender to the merciful love of Jesus. The "little" saintly giant advocated a fruitful



St. Therese of Lisieux

surrender devoid of complacency, indifference or lukewarmness; rather, a surrender serenely capable of seeing Christ stepping down to help humanity climb up.

*"The only way to make progress along the path of divine love is to remain very little and put all our trust in Almighty God,"* St. Therese said.

Spiritual "tools" help the faithful make progress, too. Prayer, sacraments and the practice of virtue, by the grace of God, are God's way of strengthening the desire for holiness and sainthood.

Beginning with the powerful distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday, continuing to the weekly devotional practice of Stations of the Cross and leading onward to Triduum's rites – *Mass of the Lord's Supper, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil* – Lent is a pilgrimage *within* the current Jubilee 2025 pilgrimage that encourages us as "pilgrims of hope." Lent invites us to "*repent and believe in the Gospel*" (Mark 1:15) and to internalize Jesus' words, "*whoever wishes*





# RESILIENCY

*Reflections on Virtues*

## Ann and Bryan Koenig

"...helping Jesus pick up the cross"

Bryan and Ann Koenig have long considered the virtue of resiliency – *where it comes from, and how it has shaped their lives.* This June, they celebrate 25 years of marriage. With three daughters, and a profound Catholic faith, they discuss a deep-rooted resiliency that is heartening and healing, giving strength to each new day.

"My stroke in 2007... that was a big one, a life or death matter," Ann recalls of those unbelievable days when mustering hope seemed like all they could do. The young parents faced the unexpected and harrowing medical event not fully aware at the time of the undercurrent of resiliency surging up within them.

"I just give thanks to God," Bryan says, humbly steering clear of any notion of a "why me" response. Instead, he speaks with genuine reverence for the sacred ground of trial and suffering that "others are enduring," too.

"Fortunately, I made it," Ann says with obvious gratitude and compassion for Bryan. "He's the unsung hero, and still is to this day," she says, explaining how "he was faced with major decisions...the weight of the world."

Ann describes how the type of stroke she experienced frequently causes death. Perplexed but inspired, she asks, "Why was I saved?" With the gift of survival on her mind early on, she began detecting the first signs of resiliency budding within her.

**RESILIENCY WITHIN. FROM OTHERS. ALWAYS OF GOD.**

"Some of it is within you," Ann asserts, "and some of it comes from the people in your life," she continues, citing how the help and encouragement of others make a huge difference in overcoming adversity. But as with all virtue, "it is God-given," Ann insists, seeing how resiliency is a special grace that restores strength, physically and spiritually.

Bryan points to his parents as models of resiliency. "What they had to go through in life, their struggles, and raising four children," he explains, honoring his parents who had the resolve to cope and recover from challenges. Ann recalls her father, too, "who grew up during the "Great Depression," fought in WWII, came from nothing and worked hard." Their respective up-bringsings planted the seeds of resiliency, rooting within

them stories and lived experiences of "staying positive and working through difficulties."

"We had lots of help," Bryan stresses, mentioning family and friends as the consistent "others" who helped the Koenig family manage those surreal months and early years of recovery after Ann's stroke. "It was just amazing, and it still is today," Bryan explains, "because we can't do some of the things like we used to do.

"We had people from church coming by, bringing us dinners and helping us," Bryan recalls of times when "maybe you don't have it in you anymore, and somebody pops by." Resiliency can mean allowing yourself to lean on somebody else for help he assures.

"I used to want to do everything on my own, with no help," Ann admits, expressing how initially she might have denied an outstretched hand to help her down the stairs "because I had to do it myself." She realized, "you can't really do that. I lean on other people a lot."

"I had a very powerful experience receiving the Eucharist in the hospital," Ann shares of her awareness of God's presence, God's grace. "The healing powers emboldened me," she remembers.

Going to the Stations of the Cross particularly resonates with Ann. "Jesus fell and each time he got back up," she says, reflecting on Jesus carrying the cross. "And there were Veronica and Simon...helping hands that showed up" for Jesus, she observes, identifying God's ever-present hand encouraging a spirit of resiliency.

"Going to Mass every Sunday, hearing the



Gospels," Bryan confirms, "that helped tremendously," relating to Jesus' struggles and pains.

"It [resiliency] came from God," Ann assures as she ponders Bryan's strength, her strength. "I don't think I was that strong before, but I woke up ready to fight."

"We both grew up Catholic," Ann says, intimating how the couple continues "learning in a new way. It's been our whole life. Now it's next level."

"Even in little sufferings, we're picking up the cross...we're helping Jesus," Ann upholds, certain of their God-given purpose fueled and perpetuated by the virtue of resiliency. ✝

Bryan and Ann serve as facilitators for the FOCUS pre-marriage inventory, helping couples unpack and appreciate the marriage commitment, the ups and downs and secular influences that can undermine the bond. Their daughters all attended St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School. Their oldest daughter lives in Chicago and will be married later this year. Their middle daughter attends Creighton University in Nebraska, and their youngest daughter is a junior at Christian Brothers High School.







Visit [GSCCEG.org](http://GSCCEG.org) to learn more about upcoming events.



### One Love, One Hope!

Save the date! March 8, 2025 in the Father Philip Wells Parish Hall for the [2025 Youth & Young Adult Music, Art, and Poetry Contest](#). Be inspired by the amazing talent within the community!

New this year, attendees can purchase a Panamanian dinner plate for \$15 each to enjoy during the talent showcase.

Sponsored by the St. Josephine Bakhita Black Catholic Ministry, the event is from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Please consider a donation that evening to support next year's showcase. Thank you for supporting youth, young adults and the arts!

### Easter Egg Hunt!

Good Shepherd will once again host an Easter Egg Hunt especially for our parish youth! Join in the fun on Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025 following the 9:00 a.m. Mass. The event is planned for the school lawn where a carpet of colorful eggs will wait to be found.(Inside the parish hall in case of rain.) Watch for news and updates on the parish website and in the bulletin as this event draws nearer.



Why is there something rather than nothing?

Why is everything so obviously messed up?

What if anything has God done about it?

How should I respond?



Ever ask yourself these questions?  
We invite you to join us for The Rescue Project.

Together we can discover The Story.

[The Rescue Project is this year's Soup for the Soul!](#) Beginning March 7 and continuing through May 2 (excluding Holy Week) at 5:00 p.m. in the parish hall. Commit to this 8-session series that starts with a simple soup and bread meal and continues with a compelling video episode. Small group discussion after the video.



Stations of the Cross follows in the church Friday evenings at 7:30 p.m., March 7 to April 7. All are welcome.



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to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24-26)

Lent mirrors St. Therese’s “little way” and “messages” us daily to trust and hope in God’s mercy.

## Perspective on SURRENDER

The idea of surrender might evoke negative images such as waving a white flag, loss rather than victory, or more likely, forfeiting control. The modern world comes with a range of definitions that can make it hard to grasp what surrendering to Jesus really means.

The popular Catholic Hallow app explains the concept of surrender this way:

*"Surrender is not the same as giving up. Giving up is walking away. Surrender is giving control to God."*

While "giving control" frightens many, a long lineage of saints beg to differ. Giving God control results in *true* freedom.

The Hallow app continues: *"When we surrender to God, we give him access to our lives. We let go and trust in His plan for us."*

Regarding the scary part, the app says, *"It's worth it. We have to die to ourselves. Jesus is worth dying for. There is no greater gift than what Jesus offers us: salvation, eternal life."*

**Note:** Content creators for Hallow include advisors and experts who are bishops, theologians, professors and authors. Content is reviewed to ensure it aligns with Church doctrine.

# "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me"

Matthew 16:24-26

## Begin with Reconciliation

The Lenten pilgrimage stakes claim to contrite hearts.

*"A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me."*

The psalmist’s words hits the point about contrite hearts. In fact, all of Psalm 51 does, refocusing prayerful readers on contrition.

**This deep sorrow precedes meaningful repentance and marks the beginning of a surrendering heart.**

As Lent walks us through deeper conversion and repentance, it prepares us for renewal and transformation by the grace of God.

*Good Shepherd's Lenten penance service is March 19. Consult the parish website for more information.*

Surrender is not about passivity; it is actually deeply active! It is an act of the will to turn to God, an act of faith to trust Him, and an act of hope to believe He can and will redeem all things.

Amanda Woodiel  
Catholicmom.com

## Suscipe The Ignatian Suscipe Prayer

**Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will.**

**All that I am and all that I possess, Thou hast given me: I surrender it all to Thee to be disposed of according to Thy will.**

**Give me only Thy love and Thy grace; with these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more. Amen.**

St. Ignatius used the Latin word "*suscipe*" to ask the Lord "to receive" everything. Pronounced SOOS-chee-peh, the word elicits a radical self-giving in response to God’s generosity.

St. Ignatius of Loyola



O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!

## Fasting, Almsgiving and Prayer

Catholics give heightened attention to fasting, almsgiving and prayer throughout the season of Lent. Often viewed as a "holy trinity" of sacrificial self-offering, these Lenten commitments embody the meaning of surrender.

Each is a spiritual practice representing the essence of denying oneself, taking up the cross and following Jesus Christ.

**Fasting** best represents self-denial. Not merely "giving up" something for Lent but examining the use of time and goods. Fasting is often associated with food but also can be "giving up" time for a Holy Hour or confession or sacrificing time for holy purposes.

**Almsgiving**, too, is surrendering; an external action of caring for the poor ... taking up the cross for those less fortunate. Accommodating needs, donating goods, reaching out in love.

And, "without prayer there is no encounter with Christ," Father Michael insists, emphasizing the importance of "making room for God," for following Christ.

"Do you have time to pray?" he asks, spurring an interior look at the priority of surrendering to God, reading scripture, and worshipping at Mass.

## The Surrender Novena brings consolation

*This nine-day Novena prayer, attributed to Servant of God Fr. Dolindo Ruotolo exudes what many describe as a "spirituality of surrender." Turn to the novena when suffering from anxiety, life's stressors, and distractions that burden or divert authentic spirituality.*

**Day 1 — Jesus to the soul:** Why do you confuse yourselves by worrying? Leave the care of your affairs to Me and everything will be peaceful. I say to you in truth that every act of true, blind, complete surrender to Me produces the effect that you desire and resolves all difficult situations.

**O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything! (10 times after each day's meditation)**

**Day 2 — Jesus to the soul:** Surrender to Me does not mean to fret, to be upset, or to lose hope, nor does it mean offering to Me a worried prayer asking Me to follow you and change your worry into prayer. It is against this surrender, deeply against it, to worry, to be nervous and to desire to think about the consequences of anything. It is like the confusion that children feel when they ask their mother to see to their needs, and then try to take care of those needs for themselves so that their childlike efforts get in their mother's way. Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in My care, so that only I act; saying, "You take care of it."

**Day 3 — Jesus to the soul:** How many things I do when the soul, in so much spiritual and material need turns to Me, looks at Me and says to Me; "You take care of it, then closes its eyes and rests." In pain you pray for Me to act, but that I act in the way you want. You do not turn to Me; instead, you want Me to adapt to your ideas. You are not sick people who ask the doctor to cure you, but rather sick people who tell the doctor how to. So do not act this way, but pray as I taught you in the Our Father: Hallowed be Thy Name, that is, be glorified in my need. Thy kingdom come, that is, let all that is in us and in the world be in accord with Your kingdom. Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, that is, in our need, decide as You see fit for our temporal and eternal life. If you say to Me truly: Thy will be done, which is the same as saying: You take care of it. I will intervene with all My omnipotence, and I will resolve the most difficult situations.

**Day 4 — Jesus to the soul:** Do you see evil growing instead of weakening? Do not worry; close your eyes and say to Me with faith: "Thy will be done, You take care of it." I say to you that I will take care of it, and that I will intervene as does a doctor; and I will accomplish miracles when they are needed. Do you see that the sick person is getting worse? Do not be upset, but close your eyes and say, "You take care of it." I say to you that I will take care of it, and that there is no medicine more powerful than My loving intervention. By My love, I promise this to you.

**Day 5 — Jesus to the soul:** And when I must lead you on a path different from the one you see, I will prepare you; I will carry you in My arms; I will let you find yourself, like children who have fallen asleep in their mothers' arms, on the other bank of the river. What troubles you and hurts you immensely are your reason, your thoughts and worry, and your desire at all costs to deal with what afflicts you.

**Day 6 — Jesus to the soul:** You are sleepless; you want to judge everything, direct everything and see to everything and you surrender to human strength, or worse—to men themselves, trusting in their intervention; this is what hinders My words and My views. Oh how much I wish from you this surrender, to help you; and how I suffer when I see you so agitated! Satan tries to do exactly this: to agitate you and to remove you from My protection and to throw you into the jaws of human initiative. So, trust only in Me, rest in Me, surrender to Me in everything.

**Day 7 — Jesus to the soul:** I perform miracles in proportion to your full surrender to Me and to your not thinking of yourselves. I sow treasure troves of graces when you are in the deepest poverty. No person of reason, no thinker, has ever performed miracles, not even among the saints. He does divine works whosoever surrenders to God. So don't think about it any more, because your mind is acute and for you it is very hard to see evil and to trust in Me and to not think of yourself. Do this for all your needs; do this all of you and you will see great continual silent miracles. I will take care of things, I promise this to you.

**Day 8 — Jesus to the soul:** Close your eyes and let yourself be carried away on the flowing current of My grace; close your eyes and do not think of the present, turning your thoughts away from the future just as you would from temptation. Repose in Me, believing in My goodness, and I promise you by My love that if you say, "You take care of it." I will take care of it all; I will console you, liberate you and guide you.

**Day 9 — Jesus to the soul:** Pray always in readiness to surrender, and you will receive from it great peace and great rewards, even when I confer on you the grace of immolation, of repentance and of love. Then what does suffering matter? It seems impossible to you? Close your eyes and say with all your soul, "Jesus, you take care of it." Do not be afraid, I will take care of things and you will bless My name by humbling yourself. A thousand prayers cannot equal one single act of surrender, remember this well.

### Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mother, I am yours now and forever. Through you and with you I always want to belong completely to Jesus.



# Here I Am, Lord! Send Me!

## Parishioners, ministries *adopt* families in need

“I do believe God led me” to this, Betty May says of her work to facilitate an outpouring of generosity from Good Shepherd parishioners and ministries for what is lovingly known as “adopt-a-family.” She is 100 percent convinced of God’s hand in bringing this most recent story to her attention.

“Out of the blue, I got a call,” Betty begins, explaining that “Ebony” expressed concern for a new neighbor in her affordable housing complex and she knew they needed help. Ebony had previously been aided by Good Shepherd’s [Works of Mercy Homeless Outreach ministry \(WOM\)](#) led by Betty, and Christmas “adopt-a-family” efforts under the auspices of Knights of Columbus and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School’s 4<sup>th</sup> grade class.

“They’re refugees from Afghanistan and they arrived last September or October,” Betty learned of the family of seven who came to Elk Grove after a harrowing experience. A former gatekeeper, translator, university chancellor and professor in Kabul, Afghanistan, Mohamed found himself in a desperate situation when the Taliban took control of the country. They were actively looking for him. Fleeing for their lives, Mohamed, with his wife, Shabana and their five young daughters, sought a safe house operated by Catholic Charities back in August 2021. It would be another three years before they found safe passage to the United States as political refugees.

### Led. Called. Sent.

Betty phoned the family to find out more about their situation. Soon, she

spread the word throughout the parish community about ways donors could help accommodate the family and their nearly empty apartment.

“Mohamed asked for beds,” Betty shares, hinting at a simple ask, a humble need. By that evening, they had a bed.

Parishioners Lance and Mary Hastings made the delivery one December night and were warmly greeted by Mohamed and his family.

“He was very grateful,” Mary relays, sensing his unassuming manner instantly. “He didn’t want us to do too much,” in terms of the heavy lifting required to get the boxspring, mattress, headboard and bedding upstairs.

Another parishioner provided triple and double bunk beds, neatly allowing all the sisters to share one of two bedrooms efficiently.

“Our [Saint Vincent de Paul Conference](#) at

God “destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ.”

**Ephesians 1:5**

“We are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

**Ephesians 2:10**

Good Shepherd was able to provide five new mattresses for the girls,” says Steve May, a Vincentian who knows well the joy found in easing hardship and poverty...the “send me” effect. “Additionally, we provided multiple grocery bags of food from our locker,” Steve adds, telling of the collaboration that resulted in tangible goods but also the spiritual care that naturally occurs in the human family that loves one another.

“This beautiful family from a Muslim country and background did not celebrate Christmas before our meeting them,” Steve says, explaining how most of the deliveries occurred around Christmas 2024, giving an opportunity to “share our faith with them.”

The [Knights of Columbus](#) also supported the family as part of their annual “Adopt-a-Family” Christmas outreach. Member Knight Mike Blakey heard of their new struggle with the apartment complex’s laundry machines, which often did not work or were so dirty inside that it made it impossible to actually clean clothes. The large family wondered if washer and dryer units for their apartment might be possible. Mike knew the total cost was beyond the Knight’s budget. Yet in God’s perfect timing, Betty received an anonymous \$500 donation from a parishioner.

“It just all came together,” Mike

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God...

Ephesians 2:19

recalls. “They needed something expensive and we happened to be there at the right time,” he says, describing how the anonymous gift paired with the Knight’s gift made the laundry units possible, including hook-ups and installation.

A dozen other parishioners and WOM also helped with various practical needs and household items. Their once-empty apartment soon felt like a comfortable home.





## Gratitude. Hospitality.

"This family is so kind and sweet," Betty mentions. She describes their "incredible" hospitality

that welcomes each donor /visitor graciously. Despite their limited means, they invite guests to sit down, talk as friends do, and share a snack.

"They serve tea and nuts, fruit or pastries," Betty says, impressed with the priority attention they give so freely, attentively.

Mary and Lance confirm the same. "Please come up, we want to show you our apartment," Mary says, repeating Mohamed's kind invitation to sit and

visit, to even stay for dinner.

"What is the catalyst for doing this?" Mohamad asks Betty, seemingly overwhelmed with the generosity. "I believe you have been sent to me as angels...to help my family," he concludes.

Steve and Betty accompanied Mohamed and Shabana to the Good Shepherd Fellowship Breakfast in January. On another occasion, Steve and Betty's grandchildren enjoyed playing and laughing with Mohamed and Shabana's daughters at the Elk Grove District 56 playgrounds.

"We're all God's children," Betty May says, referring to a natural generosity encoded in our DNA just waiting to be tapped...to be sent out to serve.

The family continues to be eligible for a food stipend for a limited period. Mohamed spends his days tracking leads for jobs and resources. Shabana is securing a driver's license and their daughters are attending school – thriving in school and loving math and science.

### What is Adopt-a-Family?

The parish and its affiliated organizations and ministries "adopt" families in need to extend a charitable hand of love, support and goods to help out in dire times. Families might be transitioning from homelessness, or facing insurmountable hardship.

## PARISH ADOPTING MORE FAMILIES THROUGHOUT MARCH

Good Shepherd parishioners and ministries will have *more* opportunities to help families this spring. **Watch the parish website and bulletin for details** about *how to make donations to families/refugees who are transitioning from homelessness or resettling.*

### THANK YOU!

Thank you to food donors who supported [Starting Point Sacramento's food drive](#) in February. These food gifts are helping Starting Point as it assists children and refugees facing food insecurity during resettlement.







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*Practice the faith...*  
**Awaken** THE SOUL

This August, Dannelle and Mark Kloepfel will celebrate 40 years of marriage and over 30 years as Good Shepherd parishioners. They talk easily about their shared devotion to the Stations of the Cross, something they've done together every Lent.

"I like to walk the path," Dannelle says of the steps and experiences of Jesus. "It helps me to stay focused on every step." Mark, too, refers to "time to quiet my mind, open my heart, and focus on the Passion of Christ."

Their words are subtle but clear, expressing unity in their appreciation for the practice but more so, an unambiguous indebtedness to Christ. Focus and preparation, they agree, are vitally necessary to enter more deeply into the magnitude of Christ's Passion and Resurrection.

"Scripture tells us to be 'equally yoked,'" Mark says, pointing to 2 Corinthians 6:14, happy for their shared beliefs and experiences. He knows the faith they have in common makes it easier to "relate" to each other. At the same time, it also makes it easier to grow individually.

"We enjoy each other's spiritual awakenings," Mark adds, noting that they

understand "each other as spiritual beings" growing and seeing their journey in personal, sometimes different ways.

"I would go alone [to Stations of the Cross] whether Mark" could make it, Dannelle considers, but also emphasizing how "going as a unit makes it stronger... going with him makes marriage stronger and *me* stronger."

When asked which of the stations they are most drawn to, both reply, "station six when Veronica wipes the face of Jesus."

"My first instinct was station 15, the Resurrection," Mark admits, drawing a parallel to his love for sports and an inclination for "the win." In Christ's resurrection, "we have a win," he quips, but in all seriousness, he turns to station six.

"We live our lives like Veronica," Mark suggests. Like Veronica's kind and loving gesture, "we do small things for others because of our faith... because we're followers of Jesus."

**Mark & Dannelle Kloepfel**  
**"Stay Focused" with the Stations of the Cross**

Peering into the scene closely to visualize Veronica, Dannelle sees her "wiping his beautiful face covered with sweat and blood, and horridness." It is "so relatable because our souls were beautiful at Baptism, but have become disfigured by our sin," she says.

"I also have a fondness for station four when Jesus meets his mother," Dannelle continues while Mark mentions the powerful impression of station five when Simon of Cyrene gets recruited to help carry Jesus' cross.

"Each station has significance and they guide you" to think deeply, Mark posits. "They're each a different story speaking to us, wherever we are," Dannelle says. Both agree that they do "feel changed" by the Stations of the Cross each and every time they set out on this

pilgrimage of "the Way."  
 "It begins like a treadmill," Mark says of the methodical and somber pace, but in time, after the ritual descent into these challenging meditations, "we are ready for the magnitude of Easter Vigil." Dannelle and Mark's rejoicing on that day will be especially meaningful as they welcome their daughter-in-law into full communion with the Catholic Church on Easter Vigil.

