



# Immersed in Christ



## Newsletter

Lent 2008

**Welcome to Newsletter 2008!** We missed the Advent newsletter because between September and Christmas we had eleven trips out of town, mostly missions and retreats. We have indeed bitten off more than we can chew, but we are not spitting any of it out! The vision is too great! Besides, when Jesus sent his disciples out without “gold or silver,” suitcase or even a change of shirt, he was establishing the principle that the absence of human resources is a mark of the work of God. By that standard we are highly accredited! We lack time, money and personnel. But we have generous volunteers and even some financial backers, and we are going to “keep on keeping on” until Christ comes again!

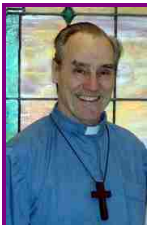
**What is the vision?** In a word, it is the “new evangelization” three popes have called for. The Good News is not *news* to us as it should be, and we don’t perceive it as so *good* that we can’t wait to get out of bed every morning to start living it.

What is missing is *depth* and *impact*. Our perception of Christianity is too diffuse: a multiplicity of doctrines, rules, practices, ministries and virtues superficially understood. Accepted, not embraced. We need to concentrate our flame, like a blowtorch. Let’s cut into *Baptism*.

If we can penetrate the mystery of Baptism, we have got it all. What does that entail? There are five gifts enfolded in Baptism, five *calls* and *empowerments*. They are the invitation and grace to *be Christ*, to *be a disciple*, to *be a prophet*, to *be a priest* (by Baptism), and to *be a steward* of the kingship of Christ. We accept these gifts through five commitments. If we live those out, we will live and experience the Good News. And we will evangelize the world!

**We are offering a new resource!** So far in this newsletter we have been following the book *Reaching Jesus: Five Steps to a Fuller Life*. Now we are moving on to the way these Five Steps are presented and developed in Matthew’s Gospel.

Matthew’s Gospel breaks into four parts. Part I presents *Jesus* as *Savior* (Step One) and as *Teacher* (Step Two). Part II presents the *Church* and our call to bear *witness* to Christ (Step Three). Part III presents Christ’s *ministry* and ours as dying to self to live totally for God and others in love (Step Four). Part IV presents the *work of the Kingdom* as persevering in faith and fidelity until Christ comes again (Step Five). We offer six books on these themes as developed by Matthew. You can find them all on our websites or by contacting us at:



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# Jesus — in Matthew 1 to 9

The first nine chapters of Matthew present Jesus as the promised Messiah. They tell us what Jesus came to be for us and how our lives will change if we learn to *interact* with him deeply, consciously and constantly.

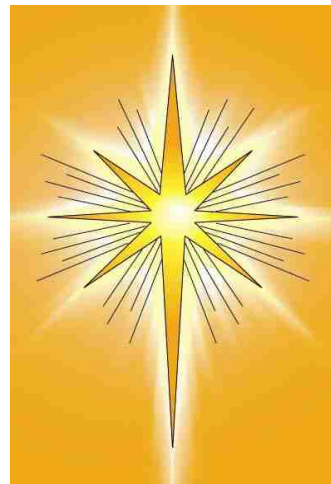
**Jesus as Savior** is described in Matthew, chapters 1 and 2, under five titles:

- “*Son of David*”: Jesus is the promised Messiah who will bring to *fulfillment* all of God’s promises to Israel and to us. He offers us life “to the full,” here and hereafter.
- “*Jesus*” (“God saves”): Jesus saves our lives from destructiveness, distortion, mediocrity and meaninglessness — our family and social life, business and politics. He saves everything we give him part in.
- “*Son of God*”: The “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” is the favor of *sharing in the divine life of God*. We are empowered to act on the level of God in everything we do.
- “*Emmanuel*” (“God-with-us”): Jesus heals and renews our lives through *human interaction* with us, still available today.
- “*Universal Lord*”: Jesus is the Savior of all people and nations. Everyone on earth hears his voice in one way or another. He speaks to each of us constantly.

These chapters present the *mission* of Jesus as giving “life to the full.” Matthew is honest in warning us, however, that Jesus also leads people into crisis. He arouses *conflict*. But the bottom line is always his *triumph*.

This is all explained and developed in the book *Why Jesus?* We recommend it especially during and after Advent and Christmas. It expands Step One of *Reaching Jesus*. (So does the booklet *Be Christ*: daily reflections on the Mass readings during Advent and Christmas).

**Jesus as Teacher** is Matthew’s second focus, calling us to *metanoia*, a completely new way of looking at life. His chapters 3 and 4 take us through the *call to conversion* with the *experience of God* consequent upon it. They expose the graduate-level *temptations* that distort our understanding of Christianity at the root, and they conclude with Christ revealing his *identity* through action.



Chapters 5 to 7 are the *Sermon on the Mount*. They show Jesus teaching us the New Law of graced living. He systematically converts all Ten Commandments from laws of good, human behavior into guidelines for living on the level of God.

Chapters 8 and 9 are “review chapters” that show us Jesus living out in action all that Matthew has said about him.

These chapters are explained and developed in two books: *A Change Within* and *Make Me a Sabbath of Your Heart*. We recommend these especially for Lent. They expand Step Two of *Reaching Jesus*, the call to *be disciples*. (We also offer the booklet *Be A Disciple*, which gives daily reflections on the Mass readings during Lent, drawing out of them whatever they say about discipleship).

# Metanoia now!

***It's wake-up time!*** Every day is, but Christians use the Spring, the season of plant awakening, the season God chose to raise Jesus from the dead, to come to life again.

Lent is the time of “new evangelization.” Time to take a new look at the Good News. To readjust our focus. Update our response.

Lent is a time for *conversion*: new, deeper, more passionate conversion, that will “lay the axe to the root of the tree,” calling into question the *root* attitudes and values our lives are built on, the *root* goals that guide all our choices and determine what fruit our lives will bear. “Radical” conversion is a focus on *root and fruit*.

***The key:*** Conversion does *not* mean just turning away from the sins you have been committing. Be real. If you were able to stop you would have done it already. Conversion means *turning to* what will *enable* you to stop all sin. That is not a “what.” It is a “who” — the *person* of Jesus Christ.

“Eternal life is this: to *know you*, Father, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” “I came that they might *have life*, and have it to the *full*.” Christian conversion is always, from beginning to end, under one form or another, a *re-discovery of Jesus Christ*. “Continual conversion” is continual change in our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is an upgrading of love.

***Focus Lent on Jesus:*** Who is he for you? Do you understand him deeply? How often do you think about him, talk to him? About what? Are you a “disciple,” a *student* of his mind and heart? Do you want to be? If you don't feel drawn to “more,” are you in touch with your heart? There is a way to find out.

## THE “EXAMINED LIFE”

Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Who wants to live without awareness? Not knowing what our decisions are really based on? Where they are coming from? Why we are really making them?

Let's don't kid ourselves. Taken as a whole, people are predictable. In general, they do what their peer group does. How are you different from yours? Name five ways.

Catholics have a specific antidote to this. It is called the “Sacrament of Reconciliation.” But if we don't know how to use it, it won't do us much good.

I was over forty years a priest before I realized that during confessions I was not hearing sins. I was hearing ideals.

If you confess to using bad language, what do I hear? That you have a higher ideal than any of your friends suspect. You cuss, but in your heart you don't accept it as good. That is a revelation — to you as well as to me.

As we examine our hearts before Confession we realize that we have really, personally, accepted in faith some values that are higher than our behavior. We may sin, but it bothers us! This is encouraging! We cannot look down on anything we do unless something in us has risen above it. What Reconciliation actually reveals to us — and to the priest — is how good we are!

This discovery is also a mystical experience! We discover we are in live contact with Jesus Christ, accepting his ideals. Every *confession* of sin is a *profession* of faith — and an experience of enlightenment.

Reconciliation is the “sacrament of the examined life.” Lent would be a good time to take advantage of it.

## Suggestions for Living It!

Say **Good Morning** to Jesus everyday and feel free to complain about the weather. You would if you were talking to anyone else.

As you think about everything you have to do for the day, ask Jesus to be with you for each one of them. You can even ask him to help you remember something you need to do.

Do you and Jesus have a song? Something that reminds you of him every time you hear it? If not, find one. It doesn't have to be a religious song. Load it on your MP3 or a CD you listen to while driving.

Do something fun to celebrate your relationship with Jesus: a special dinner, a movie, or even a trip. The more you celebrate your relationship with Jesus, the more you will enjoy it.

Do you have any issues with Jesus? Do you feel your relationship is not growing? Are there any particular hang-ups you have run into? Now might be a good time to try to solve them.

Most of the problems we have in our relationship with Jesus are similar to problems we have in any other relationship. Talk them over with a good friend or spiritual director. If you don't have someone you can talk with about them, find someone.

*And if you have kids...*

Set an extra place at the dinner table to remind everyone in the family that Jesus is there with you.

If your children's Godparents are not involved in their lives, ask someone else to step in as a surrogate. Children can never have too many people encouraging them in the faith.

Pray together as a family a few times a day – at the table, in the car, at bedtime and any other time you have just a few minutes. You can keep it simple – just remind everyone that you are in the presence of Christ and that you want him to live in your hearts.

## Q&A: I know lots of people for whom God is not important. I don't want that to happen to my kids. What can I do?

People lose the faith for a lot of different reasons and it is impossible to address all of the reasons for giving up. The best we can do is try to give people a great experience of the Good News!.

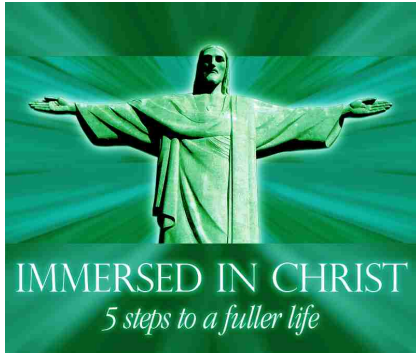
So how can you instill a personal relationship with Jesus in your children?

1. Live it yourself and share your experiences with your children.
2. Help your children develop the habit of asking Jesus to be with them.
3. Make your family's religious observances pleasant. Too often, the whole process of dragging the family to Church becomes stressful for everyone.
4. Smile in Church. Sing and teach your children the songs.

5. Celebrate the baptismal anniversaries for everyone in your family. Make a point every time of telling your kids that Baptism is the moment when Jesus gave you special life.

6. Read the Bible at home. Let your kids know what time you have set aside for prayer and meditation.
7. Attend a Scripture study or other class offered at your parish.
8. Take your kids to Religious Education classes at your Church and let them know it is as important as going to school.
9. Live your faith and tell your children how important it is to you!

## Here's What We've Been Doing



A man who is planning to become Catholic learned about the WIT prayer during a parish mission (“Lord, do this *with* me, do this *in* me, do this *through* me”). He now talks to his friends about how he is able to use it “in ways that make daily life just plain **fuller**.” He was talking on the phone to a friend who was complaining about some issue and he said, “Forget it Bob, you can't fix it, let it go. Until you start using the WIT prayer I told you about on our golf trip you're never going to calm down!” Since the mission he has made this prayer his “mantra,” and a part of every day.

Have any of the rest of you shared the WIT prayer with anyone? Tell us what they said about it.

- We have a number of Parish Missions coming up, please pray for all involved:

Sacred Heart Cathedral Knoxville, TN February 2 - 6, 2008

Sacred Heart Parish Coronado, CA February 9 - 13, 2008

Sacred Heart Parish Salem, MO February 16 - 20, 2008

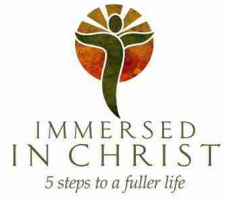
St. James Parish Tupelo, MS February 23 - 27, 2008

Multiple parishes Bourbonnais, IL March 1 - 5, 2008

St. Johns Parish Madison, AL March 29 - April 2, 2008

- Fr. Knight has written Daily Reflections based on the lectionary readings to support each step throughout the Liturgical Year. Call or email us if you would like to receive one and are not on the list.
- In March and April, Marsha Raus and Fr. Knight will team-teach five classes for the Memphis Institute of Liturgy and Spirituality on “The Spirituality of Harry Potter” and other fairy tales, and in June, Fr. Knight will begin to teach a semester course “Theology of Sacraments and Worship” for the Master of Arts program in Catholic Studies at Christian Brothers University, Memphis.
- We are offering Twilight Retreats on the campus of Christian Brothers University in Memphis. They are scheduled for March 25, April 29, & May 20, 2008, 6:30 pm. All are invited.
- Our website usage has doubled in the last year. We offer a daily email with a short Scripture quote and question. We have about 500 people on the list now. For more details see the website [www.hisway.com](http://www.hisway.com).
- In the last year and a half we have received nearly \$70,000 in gifts. This has allowed us to pay salaries, offer Twilight Retreats and continue sending out the reflections booklets and other materials to many people. Thank you all!

## Thank You and God Bless!



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# Disciple

*Choosing to lead a life characterized by reflection  
on the message of Jesus is the second step.*

