

The Call to Faith

Though she grew up with parents who didn't practice their Catholic faith, 27-year-old Éva woke up one Sunday morning with the conviction that she should attend Mass. A resident of Var, France, she chose the Church of Saint-Louis in Hyères.

Éva didn't always understand what was going on at Mass, but she followed along the best she could and felt overcome by emotion when it was over. "I felt a light invading me," she told *Aleteia*'s Agnès Pinard Legry.

Éva continued to go to Mass, joined the church's youth group, and even researched Christian beliefs on her own. After some time, she requested to formally join the Church and was baptized on Holy Saturday in 2025.

When asked what specifically drew her to Christianity, Éva said, "If I really had to choose just one fundamental lesson, it would be that of forgiveness. The famous 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Society pushes us to react violently to the wounds inflicted by others. The teachings of Christ teach us to be more patient, to put things into perspective and to enjoy every moment with our loved ones."

**You did not choose Me but I chose you.
(John 15:16)**

Awaken me to Your divine call, Prince of Peace.

Holocaust Survivor's Hope in Music, Part 1

As a Jewish child in Poland during World War II, Saul Dreier was confined in numerous concentration camps. His entire family was killed by the Nazis, but he survived.

Recalling these years for *AARP: The Magazine*, Dreier wrote, “There was a famous cantor in one of the camps with me, and he would sing Jewish songs. And in those moments of music, I found escape.”

Dreier noticed that the cantor’s songs would benefit from a steady beat, so he found two metal spoons and drummed along with his performance. “Almost every night, we would all gather and sing,” he said, “even though we were starving and exhausted. That is how I learned the drums.”

The camps were eventually liberated, and Dreier went on to live a rich, fulfilling life in the U.S. But working a job and raising a family prevented him from having time for music. His old drumming talents lay stagnant until age 89, when he read the obituary of a fellow Holocaust survivor and felt motivated to revisit his musical talents. More tomorrow...

While the musician was playing, the power of the Lord came on him. (2 Kings 3:15)

May music bring us hope in dark times, Creator.

Holocaust Survivor's Hope in Music, Part 2

When 89-year-old Holocaust survivor Saul Dreier read the obituary of 110-year-old concert pianist Alice Herz-Sommer, he learned that she, like him, had endured life in a concentration camp and found hope in music. She continued playing after the war to “heal hearts,” Dreier recalled in *AARP: The Magazine*.

Feeling the need to honor Herz-Sommer, Dreier came up with the idea to start a Holocaust survivor band. Both his wife and his rabbi told him he was crazy. Nevertheless, Dreier pursued the idea and bought a set of drums. Initially, his wife told him, “Either the drums go or you go.” Fortunately, she never followed through on her threat.

Dreier connected with other Holocaust survivors and their children. They played their first concert in 2014, performing Jewish, Polish, and Hebrew dancing music. And they were a hit! Even Dreier’s wife felt proud of him.

Since then, Dreier’s band has performed around the world. He concluded, “Music is hope. I am not interested in politics or taking sides. My purpose in life is to get people to see that we are all one, we all sing the same song.”

Have we not all one father? (Malachi 2:10)

Remind us that we are all Your children, Yahweh.

Los Angeles Parishes Offer Relief

In 2025, the rampant, wind-driven fires in Los Angeles County forced many families to evacuate their homes. With nowhere to turn during these moments of fear and grief, these families were welcomed by Catholic parishes opening their doors as places of refuge.

At Sacred Heart Church in Lincoln Heights, the city of Los Angeles offered evacuees water, food, and masks, while the St. Vincent de Paul Society provided other supplies, including children's clothes and diapers, reported *OSV News*.

St. Andrew's School in Pasadena opened their gymnasium to those affected by the hazardous air quality caused by the Eaton Fire to the north. Coffee, donuts, and snacks were brought to the gym.

Despite feeling helpless in this situation, Principal Jae Kim noted there were ways to help those affected: "You can hug them, pray with them, listen to them as best you can," serving as a great reminder that even in the darkest of times, we can act as points of light.

**When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were...helpless.
(Matthew 9:36)**

Jesus, bless all those impacted by tragedy.

State Trooper's Advice Changes Life

A conversation that didn't last more than 15 minutes changed 20-year-old Abbie Rutledge's life. Back in 2022, Rutledge was feeling discouraged because she was "broke and in a dead-end job," reported *CBS News*. When Alabama State Trooper J.T. Brown pulled her over for speeding, she told him she "couldn't afford a ticket."

Brown's surprising reply to Rutledge's confession? He suggested they "talk about it." At the end of their brief but impactful discussion, the two determined that "Rutledge would make a great nurse." Not only did Trooper Brown let Abbie off with only a warning, he wrote on it, "Promise me you'll go to scrub or nursing school, and slow down."

Abbie went on to enroll at Bevill State Community College in Jasper, Alabama, and completed a "two-year surgical technology program" in 2024. Trooper Brown attended her graduation ceremony. "I wanted him to see the impression he made on me," concluded Abbie, who is now a surgical technician. "Five minutes talking to anybody...can make the largest impact on their life."

**A word fitly spoken is like...gold.
(Proverbs 25:11)**

God, open our minds and hearts to the wisdom of others.

Barbers to the Rescue!

Talk about a close shave! Barber Rafael Santana was cutting a customer's hair at the Look Sharp barber shop when, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed "a small pink reflection whiz by the window." As Santana recalled to *Today.com*'s Elise Solé, he realized, "Yo, there's a little girl by herself!"

Both Santana and the shop's owner, Osvaldo Lugo (a father of four himself), ran out in pursuit of the toddler, who was "heading toward a busy intersection." The security camera footage from Lugo's shop showed he got to her right as she reached the crosswalk. The two men were then able to reunite the youngster with her "shocked but grateful mother," who was "at a bus stop... around the corner."

East Hartford, Connecticut mayor Connor Martin gifted these barbers with certificates for their bravery, while the local police department acknowledged their heroism on Facebook. "We did this out of love," Santana, also a father, noted in conclusion, "and we'd do it a million times again. We protect and serve our community at all costs."

Let us work for the good of all. (Galatians 6:10)

Abba, thank You for the gift of closeknit communities.

A Superhero in More Ways Than One

When Cassandra Cooper's 12-year-old son, Brody, came home upset because hardly anyone signed his middle school yearbook, one actor stood up to be the real-life champion he plays in the movies.

As reported by *NJ.com*, Cassandra wrote on social media, "My poor son...2 teachers and a total of 2 students wrote in his yearbook. Despite Brody asking all kinds of kids to sign it...My heart is shattered. Teach your kids kindness."

Actor Paul Rudd, who plays superhero Ant-Man in Marvel movies, heard about Brody's story, personally called him via FaceTime, then sent him a follow-up letter stating, "It's important to remember that even when life is tough that things get better. There are so many people that love you and think you're the coolest kid there is—me being one of them!"

Brody and his mother were beyond excited that Rudd reached out to them. Brody told Rudd, "[You're] my favorite superhero."

Rudd responded, "You're mine."

This is the kindness you must do me; at every place to which we come, say of me, "He is my brother." (Genesis 20:13)

Holy Spirit, lead me to be a friend to the friendless.

American Mother, Part 1

In 2012, Diane Foley's oldest son, James, was working as a freelance journalist in Syria when he was taken hostage by terrorists. After two years of torture, they murdered James and posted video of the atrocity online.

Devastated and heartbroken, Diane's Catholic faith instilled her with the strength she needed to get through that experience, led her to work on behalf of other hostages, and even motivated her to show a measure of grace and mercy to one of her son's killers. She shares her story in the Christopher Award-winning book *American Mother*, co-authored with Colum McCann.

Though *American Mother* was written as a result of James' death, what it really captures is the way he lived because Diane believes that is his true legacy. From his earliest years, Jim (as Diane calls him) was a good-hearted, easygoing, happy child who went out of his way to help others. For instance, when a fellow student had no place to live, Jim invited him to stay with their family for the summer. But it was in college that Jim's selflessness truly grew. More tomorrow...

**Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.
(Proverbs 22:6)**

Help parents be role models of kindness for children, Lord.

American Mother, Part 2

Though James Foley was always a kindhearted child, his mother, Diane, said his time at Marquette University in Milwaukee increased his capacity for compassion in action even more. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, she explained:

“Their ethos is: be the difference...The university challenged him from freshman year to volunteer in the inner city...Jim embraced that. I think it opened his eyes to the fact that there’s a lot of poverty, there’s people who don’t have a mom or a dad or breakfast. He did volunteer work throughout his years at Marquette, which included Habitat for Humanity, working on American Indian Reservations, etc.”

Marquette’s Jesuit ethics of “being a person for others” continued guiding Jim’s life choices after his graduation. He worked at Teach for America and continued mentoring students after his time with the organization was completed; he volunteered at a care center for unwed mothers; and he worked at Chicago’s Cook County Jail, helping inmates earn their high school diplomas. More tomorrow...

Let us not love in word or speech, but in truth and action. (1 John 3:18)

Teach me to be a person for others, Abba.

American Mother, Part 3

As he helped many people less fortunate than he was, James Foley developed a passion for storytelling. He became a journalist to help readers know and care about those in need and, eventually, people in conflict zones around the world. His mother, Diane, believes his international focus stemmed from Jim having “three younger siblings who were in the Army, Air Force, and Navy.”

Though Diane worried constantly about her sons in Iraq and Afghanistan, she admitted she was “clueless about the risks that journalists take...the risks that freelancers [take], particularly in conflict zones, but even domestically when they’re doing real investigative journalism...It takes moral courage to want to dig into the truth and get those voices heard, and I didn’t realize how dangerous it could be.”

That became evident in 2011 when Jim and several other freelancers working in Libya were taken hostage by Qaddafi loyalists. Diane was shocked when she received the news. She relied on her faith to help her through. More tomorrow...

**The Lord is near to the brokenhearted.
(Psalm 34:18)**

Jesus, protect journalists working in war zones.

American Mother, Part 4

While Diane Foley's son, Michael, engaged with the U.S. government to secure Jim's release, Diane and her husband, John, relied on their faith for strength. During an interview about her Christopher Award-winning memoir *American Mother*, she recalled, "I remember John and I going to the adoration chapel and praying...It was like the Lord had been preparing me for this in so many ways."

"My dad was Unitarian, my mom was Roman Catholic, and they disagreed what faith I should be baptized in. My dad said, 'How about [we] wait until she's of age and let her decide?'...I became a Catholic not until I was 16...From then on...I've been gifted with a gift of faith and a lot of good people who've nurtured me along the way."

"As a preteen, my dad had an office in our little town in New Hampshire, and I would go down to St. Bernard's Catholic Church...I remember being drawn to the Blessed Mother, to the stillness and the sacred space...No matter where in the world I've been, I've been able to find a Mass to go to and the Blessed Sacrament to sit before. What a gift!" More tomorrow...

O woman, great is your faith! (Matthew 15:28)

*Increase my faith in You in times of strife,
Jesus.*

American Mother, Part 5

The members of Diane Foley's parish prayed for her son Jim's safety while he was held hostage in Libya. Diane observed, "One of the most difficult things is to be in despair and be alone. And I was not alone...I knew God was with me, but I also had the grace to see God in so many good people around me."

When Jim was released after six weeks, he said that he could feel people's prayers lifting him up during his captivity. He also revealed that a fellow prisoner had passed some Scripture verses to him through a hole in the cell, allowing him to meditate on them.

Though the entire experience could have prompted Jim to pursue a safer career, he instead found himself even more deeply committed to practicing "moral courage." Diane explained, "In journalism, that meant to dare to hunt for the truth...and bring it to light. But [Jim] also knew that sometimes doing that would get you arrested, as it did in Libya, or condemned by colleagues who might not want the full story to come out."

Sadly, Jim's story would soon take another dark turn.

Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me. (Psalm 43:3)

Holy Spirit, help me tap into my moral courage.

American Mother, Part 6

After spending some time back in the U.S., James Foley returned to the Middle East. It was becoming increasingly dangerous there due to the Arab Spring, so journalists with major companies were leaving. Freelancers filled the void, so Jim took part in that. He worked there for about a year before being taken hostage by ISIS in Syria on Thanksgiving Day 2012.

His mother, Diane, retired early from her job as a nurse practitioner to work with the U.S. government to secure Jim's release. However, there was no dedicated person or office to handle hostage situations at that time. Diane felt that the government largely gave her the runaround about how important that saving Jim was to them.

In August 2014, a video of Jim's murder by his captors was widely shared on social media and became international news. Grief-stricken by her loss, Diane prayed for the grace to move forward. She said, "I felt the Lord wanted me to somehow use the horror of all this for the good of others because I know that's what Jim would've wanted."

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

Comfort all people grieving loved ones, Abba.

American Mother, Part 7

The murder of her journalist son, Jim, by terrorists in Syria caused Diane Foley an immense amount of pain. All these years later, she believes God guided her through that horrific time.

She reflected, “When bad things happen, we need one another...We need God with skin on. We need people who really care. And that’s been my experience. We received buckets of mail for a full year after Jim was murdered, and it was through a lot of that goodness and some of those donations, we were able to start the Foley Foundation.”

The James Foley Legacy Foundation was founded within three weeks of Jim’s death to continue his work of “moral courage.” In addition to advocating for the safety of journalists in conflict zones, the Foundation’s work also resulted in finally establishing a single government point person to handle hostage situations: the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs.

To date, the Foundation has helped bring home more than 140 innocent U.S. nationals. More tomorrow...

**I will turn the darkness before them into light.
(Isaiah 42:16)**

*Help me to bring light out of dark situations,
Father.*

American Mother, Part 8

Years later, two of James Foley's murderers were captured and extradited to the U.S. One of them, Alexandra Kotey, pleaded guilty to all charges and offered to meet with the victims' family members. Diane accepted his offer and credited God with giving her the grace to get through this unusual exchange.

"One of Jim's gifts was as a listener," Diane told The Christophers, "and I wanted to be able to hear [Kotey] as Jim would've heard him...But I also, as a mom, wanted him to know who Jim was because a lot of the jihadists objectified the prisoners and just saw them as images of anything bad our country's ever done, and not as people. But thanks be to God, I was able to hear him, and I really felt he heard me."

"He never really asked me to forgive him. He did express remorse. I think forgiveness is a lot of times an interaction, but certainly I'm willing to forgive...Hatred is sad. When we choose to hate one another, everybody's hurt. Everybody. And when we dare, with God's grace, to try to love, there's hope for everyone."

I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

Jesus, give me the grace to move beyond hatreds, even justifiable ones, to find mercy, peace, and love.

No Challenge Too Great

The late Kitty O’Neil was not only Hollywood’s foremost stuntwoman, she was living proof that a person’s disability need not define him or her. Deaf since infancy, O’Neil once told the parents of graduates at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf, “Handicapped people have a lot of talent...They are just the same as anyone. It’s important not to push, but at the same time, if you can teach a child to face challenges, face life with a positive attitude, the rest will follow.”

When O’Neil was 12, she began a swimming and diving career which led to the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. Later, she took up every kind of motorsport racing, setting several speed records and hitting a personal high of 618.34 mph, the second fastest speed anyone had ever recorded on land.

While some people avoid adversity, O’Neil observed, “Through God...all of us can find the way to meet the challenges of life. When I get up in the morning, I read the Bible and ask God what He wants me to do with the rest of the day. With this kind of meditation, I feel I can follow the path He sets for me.”

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

Father, help me face challenges with a positive attitude.

School Custodian's Special Recognition

The Swedeborg, Missouri School Board voted unanimously to name its main elementary school after cherished custodian Claudene Wilson.

Wilson, age 64, has been a “permanent fixture” there for 30 years, and students turn to her for help and support. She has also taken on roles beyond just her job description, including lunch duty, landscaping, and even painting.

“She’s the lifeblood of the school,” Charles Boren, the Swedeborg School Board president, told *People*. “She’s the backbone of it.”

With a surprise name unveiling, Wilson was beyond thrilled and genuinely touched by the honor. “The kids really got to my heart,” she said. “I’ve watched them grow.”

Wilson is a beautiful example of how small acts of kindness can make a big difference in a child’s life.

Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor. (Proverbs 21:21)

Lord God, how can I help make a difference in someone’s life?

St. Joseph's Helpers Build Ramp of Hope

After a tragic accident left 18-year-old Manal Alyasseri paralyzed from the waist down and requiring a wheelchair, she could no longer maneuver the steps outside her home.

That's when the teen's mother, Michelle, reached out to St. Joseph's Helpers to see if they could build a ramp to the front door to provide her daughter with a sense of hope and independence.

St. Joseph's Helpers, a Catholic-Christian organization at St. Mary Parish in Rockwood, Illinois, consists of volunteer handymen who give of their time and skills to help those in need.

Rayna Bennett, the organization's executive director, received the call and was inspired by Alyasseri's bravery and perseverance. Bennett was able to obtain the funds needed to secure a ramp structure to the family's home.

This ramp opened up the world to Alyasseri. Volunteer Tony Rosati told the *Detroit Catholic*, "This story is about...the resilience of an 18-year-old girl. We're just the guys helping along the way."

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:17)

Jesus, thank You for helpers who give of their time and talents.

Strangers on a Mountain

An unexpected meeting during a hike on Provo, Utah's Y Mountain became a life-changing encounter for mother of four Krissy Miller and Pastor Schiller Joseph.

As reported by *KSL.com*, the pastor, afflicted with lupus, had been on dialysis for three years while living in Florida, waiting for a kidney transplant. He relocated to Utah to improve his chances of finding a donor. When he ran into Miller on Y Mountain, she asked him, "What do you like about Utah?" Pastor Joseph responded, "I moved up on the [kidney] donor list."

Krissy, who had wanted to become a living organ donor for some time, recalled, "That was the one and only time Schiller had ever been on Y Mountain...I believe God made our meeting possible." She immediately offered the pastor her kidney if they proved to be a match.

Less than six months after their fateful encounter, Pastor Joseph and Miller both underwent successful surgeries for the transplant. Pastor Joseph marveled, "God reminded me...‘I give you somebody who...matches you in...blood.’ It’s the story of His testimony...This miracle was to be told."

**You are the God who works wonders.
(Psalm 77:14)**

Lord, may we trust in You to work miracles.

Bargain Day for Seniors

“Sorry, this pump open to elderly only.” Back in the late 1970s/early 1980s, Joe Gaspardi, the owner of a gas station in Louisiana, posted that sign on a set of pumps every Monday morning and kept it there until noon.

Not only did Gaspardi set aside that area for senior citizens, he sold gas to them for exactly what it cost him. Why? He figured that most of the aged are retired and living on a fixed income. “We all look forward to 65, retiring, taking it easy for a while,” he said. “I don’t see how people can do it anymore.”

Gaspardi estimated that he gave up about \$1,000 in receipts for every 10,000 gallons he sold to senior citizens. He was okay with losing that money, however, because he thought of his own elderly parents and figured that he would be 65 himself someday and might also need the same kind of break.

Even though this story took place decades ago, Gaspardi reminds us of the debt we owe to our seniors and the respect that is their due.

The Son of Man...will repay everyone for what has been done. (Matthew 16:27)

Jesus, help me to keep in mind the good works of our elders so that I may treat them with kindness.

Movement for Body and Soul

Are you reading this while sitting down? Well, maybe you should stand up. It's healthier! Recent studies have shown that many Americans are spending up to 12 hours a day sitting down. This lack of movement increases our risk of medical problems, such as dementia, heart disease, and diabetes. It also makes our muscles less flexible. So, what's the solution?

As reported by *AARP: The Magazine*, moving your body for a few minutes every half hour can reap positive benefits. So, make it a point to add more movement to your routine: walk around your home or up and down some stairs every once in a while; take a walk outside by yourself or with a friend; do some simple exercises that require standing. And when you are sedentary, don't sit still. Move your legs and arms.

From The Christophers' perspective, you could also add prayer to your standing breaks. While walking, say an "Our Father," meditate on reasons for gratitude in your life, or have an honest conversation with God. There's no reason better physical health can't be coupled with improved spiritual health.

I pray...that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul. (3 John 1:2)

Help me to be physically and spiritually active, Creator.

School Cook Serves Up Faith Lessons

Stephanie Nix's three daughters were attending St. Joseph Catholic School in St. Joseph, Minnesota, when the head cook there retired. The position went unfilled for months, so Nix applied for it despite not having professional cooking experience. "I wanted [my daughters] to see me modeling that I can try and learn something new," Nix told *The Central Minnesota Catholic*'s Amber Walling.

In the four years since then, Nix has become an integral part of the school community. Even though she does a self-described "background job," she knows that students rely on her cooking to have enough energy to learn well. Nix also uses mealtime to teach students about their faith. For instance, she put animal crackers on the menu for the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi—and angel food cake for the Feast of the Archangels.

In addition, students appreciate Nix's compassionate soul. Preschool teacher Sarah Mattson said, "She is always on the lookout for people who may be having a hard day and knows just how to help them. She always knows what kids need, and they know they always have a safe place with Mrs. Nix."

**The hungry He fills with good things.
(Psalm 107:9)**

*Grant us food to nourish our bodies and souls,
Abba.*

A Break from the Noise

If your mind and spirit feel as though they need a break from the noise of the world, consider centering prayer (also known as contemplative prayer). It involves sitting in a quiet place by yourself, focusing on a particular word (such as “Jesus” or “love”), and being open to God’s presence.

Chances are that numerous distracting thoughts will drift through your mind while trying to do this. That’s normal and simply the way our brains work. The key, writes the St. Jude League in their *Faith Reflections* newsletter, is to release those thoughts when they come and return to your sacred centering word “as a way to refocus on clearing the way for God.”

The League offers this prayer to help you prepare: “Lord, quiet my restless mind. Still the racing thoughts, and silence the distractions. Draw me into Your presence, deep within. Let Your peace fill the empty spaces. Let Your voice calm my heart. Teach me to seek You in stillness, knowing that You are always there, guiding, comforting, loving. Amen.”

Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. (Psalm 37:7)

When I feel overwhelmed by the world, Father, may I seek and find You in stillness and prayer.

A Coach with Character

When legendary St. John's University basketball coach Lou Carnesecca died at age 99 in 2024, he was remembered for his many accomplishments on the court. Those included 526 wins and only 200 losses as he guided his team (then known as the Redmen, now the Red Storm) to 18 NCAA tournaments.

But Carnesecca was most beloved for the person he was, modeling for his players how to be men of character. As reported in *St. John's Magazine*, former NBA All Star Chris Mullin, who played for "Looie" at St. John's in the 1980s, said he always told the team, "Show humility whether you are winning or losing."

In addition, Carnesecca often shared a proverb with his players that reminded them their luck could change quickly: "A peacock today, a feather duster tomorrow."

On the personal front, Carnesecca remained devoted to his wife, Mary, for 73 years—and his faith was always an integral part of his life. He once shared, "I pray to the Blessed Mother that she gives me the strength and courage to handle what's coming. It's out of my hands; I can't call time out."

Make every effort to support your faith with goodness. (2 Peter 1:5)

Abba, guide young athletes to coaches with character.

Delivery Driver's Gut Instinct Saves Life

Last March, in the town of Poole in Dorset, England, supermarket delivery driver Leandro Pinto Dantas could definitely “sense something was wrong” when he arrived to drop off an order for his customer, Mrs. A. Thorne.

Dantas explained to *BBC* reporter Sophie Cridland, “Her light was on and the TV...I knocked on the door, but didn’t get an answer, so I called the contact phone number we had for the delivery, but got no reply.”

After looking through the window and seeing Thorne “lying unconscious on the floor,” Dantas called the emergency number, “999.” According to a ‘thank you’ note penned by Mrs. Thorne and published in *The Bournemouth Echo*, Dantas went “above and beyond what...[she] would expect supermarket delivery drivers to do.”

He even stayed with Thorne until the paramedics arrived, returning to work only after she was taken to the hospital. It turned out Mrs. Thorne, a diabetic, had hypoglycemia and just needed glucose to bring up her blood sugar. “I’m just happy I was there and saved her,” Dantas humbly noted in conclusion.

I will help...uphold you. (Isaiah 41:10)

God, may we always follow our gut instincts to help others.

What We Receive in Love

During Holy Week a few years ago, Marina Berzins McCoy was following St. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises and imagined herself being in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus, trying to offer Him some comfort as He mentally and spiritually prepared for His crucifixion.

At *Ignatian Spirituality*, McCoy wrote, "As I prayed, I discovered that my desire to be intimately with Jesus, and not to leave Him alone in His time of need, was a mirror reflection of Jesus first choosing to be with me in my own suffering. God came to be a human being and to suffer so that we would never be alone in our own suffering, anxieties, fears, and sorrows."

McCoy realized that God's willingness to accompany us through dark times should prompt us to be with others in their own struggles. "We cannot always alleviate others' pain by removing it from them," she concluded, "but we can faithfully remain present to them so that they are not alone. What Jesus does for us becomes mirrored in what we can then go out and do for others. What we receive in love, we can then go on to give."

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Lord, may I serve as a reflection of Your selflessness.

Two Processions

On Palm Sunday, we remember Jesus riding into Jerusalem for Passover to the cheers of many onlookers. But as Father Bob Warren of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement pointed out, another procession was happening nearby around the same time:

“At each Passover, the Roman Governor, Pilate, rode up to Jerusalem. He brought extra troops in case of trouble to reinforce the local riot squad. Picture it—Pilate’s procession arrived from the west, and Jesus entered the city from the east.”

“Pilate rode into the city on a warhorse. Jesus rode in on a donkey. He was fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah who foretells that the King of Peace on a donkey will banish the warhorse and battle from the land.”

“The gauntlet had been thrown down,” Father Bob continued, “and the contrast was clear. Jesus versus Pilate, the non-violence of the Kingdom of God versus the violence of the empire. That was the contrast—two arrivals, two entrances, and two processions. Two ways of life and two choices represented by these two processions on Palm Sunday.”

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!...Your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is He, humble and riding on a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)

Help me choose Your way of life, Prince of Peace.

The Humble King

Each Palm Sunday, we recall the image of the crowds praising God and celebrating Jesus as he rode a donkey into Jerusalem. But why did He enter the holy city on an animal considered a “beast of burden” rather than a more regal creature, such as a horse?

Writing in *The Tablet*, Rita Piro explained, “The horse was the animal of war and violence, adorned with grandeur, ready to do battle among warriors and kings. The lowly donkey...was considered the animal of peace, unity, and friendship. The steady, faithful friend of the common man. Any man, king, or peasant alike who came riding on a donkey was seen as a symbol of gentleness, humility, and service.”

“The master has need of us, too,” Piro continued. “Like the donkey of Palm Sunday, we are all called to carry Jesus to others. The way we act, speak, look, and even think must always reflect Jesus, His ways, and His teachings. Whether or not we consider it a burden to do so is up to us.”

Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt! (John 12:15)

Make me humble so I follow Your ways, Jesus.

Mercy and Humility Lead to Heaven, Part 1

When Jonathan Jackson joined the cast of *ABC's General Hospital* at age 11 as Lucky Spencer, he was inducted into soap opera's most famous family, portraying the son of the iconic couple, Luke and Laura.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, Jonathan noted, "I was so blessed because my parents in real life are beautiful people that I've learned so much from. And then in the artistic world, I was given Tony Geary and Genie Francis as these incredible parental figures and mentors."

Geary and Francis became role models for their TV son on how to handle fame. Jonathan recalled, "[Tony]...was always one of the most humble people that I ever worked with...It's the same thing with Genie."

"Then, [there were] other people, other examples that I would see around me of success and wealth and power—and they were miserable. Their lives were in chaos. I was a kid at the time, so I'm observing all of this and going, 'Wow, fame is horrible...and it's corrosive to the soul.'"

Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and...integrity. (Titus 2:7)

Guide me in being a role model to others, Lord.

Mercy and Humility Lead to Heaven, Part 2

Another blessing for actor Jonathan Jackson was the way that he was slowly exposed to different Christian beliefs that kept him grounded. “I’m very thankful that in the various Protestant circles that I grew up in,” he recalled on *Christopher Closeup*, “I was sheltered from the most fundamentalist, puritanical, legalistic [views], which can often be a bit traumatizing.”

“There was, I would say, a very orthodox balance of grace and truth. I wasn’t raised [with this belief that] sin doesn’t really matter, just accept everything. But it also wasn’t this hyper-legalistic, fundamentalist thing where you’re just judging everyone.”

Jonathan read C.S. Lewis’ book *Mere Christianity* when he was 14 or 15. The chapter on “the Great Sin”—pride—revolutionized his life. He said, “I started to hear my thoughts for the first time. When I was talking with people...I had all of these judgments [of them]. I started to become aware of it, and then every time it would happen, I would repent, and I’d say [to God], ‘Take that from me.’”

Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own? (Matthew 7:3)

Teach me not to be prideful, Messiah.