

Pop-Up Food Bank at Bermondsey Home

After the food bank at her local church shut down, Henrietta Onyema, 63, from Bermondsey in South London knew she had to help the people in her neighborhood who were struggling to make ends meet. This prompted her to start her own pop-up food bank outside her house.

At first, Onyema used her own money to buy food and other supplies for her neighbors, especially to assist the elderly who were in most need of help. Then, word spread, and Onyema was met with an outpouring of support from local people and even supermarkets who offered donations.

“It pleases your heart when you do something good for people, but everybody should help each other,” Onyema told the *BBC*.

The local priest from St. Peter & the Guardian Angels church, Father Tesfamichael Negusse, described Onyema as “incredible,” observing that “she has her heart in the need of people. She’s always concerned with the neighborhood.”

**A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water.
(Proverbs 11:25)**

Merciful Father, what can I do to help my community today?

Science and a Miracle

Though they already had two biological children, Clint and Alissa Finlayson of Kalispell, Montana, felt God calling them to adopt a child as well. As reported by Lisa M. Krieger in *The Mercury News*, they wound up adopting two daughters, Lily and Ada, from an orphanage in China, despite the fact that the girls were suffering from a hereditary red blood cell disease, which required them to get six-hour-long transfusions every 21 days.

When the Finlaysons learned that UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland, California, was offering a cutting-edge gene therapy for the disease, they applied for Ada and Lily to receive treatment. The girls were accepted, so the family moved to Oakland for several months.

Ada was the first to receive the four-month treatment that involved collecting stem cells from her blood, enduring chemo to kill off “the bad stem cells,” then have the new re-engineered cells infused into her body. The process proved to be a success. Alissa noted, “It’s science, and it’s a miracle...We believe that God has paved a way for us to be here.”

Honor physicians for their services, for the Lord created them. (Sirach 38:1)

Lord, pave a way towards healing for all who are sick.

Perfection is Impossible

Though he is now retired, Roger Federer remains one of the greatest tennis players in the history of the game. Yet, in a commencement speech to the graduates at Dartmouth College in 2024, he pointed out to them that “perfection is impossible.”

Federer explained that despite earning victories in 80 percent of the 1,500+ singles matches he played, he only won his points 54 percent of the time: “In other words, even top-ranked tennis players win barely more than half of the points they play.”

That fact taught him to treat each point as important while he was playing it, but to put it behind him once it was over so he could focus on the next point. That approach can also be applied to life, Federer said, because everyone will face losses.

“Negative energy is wasted energy,” Federer concluded. “The best in the world are not the best because they win every point...It’s because they know they’ll lose...again and again...and have learned how to deal with it. You accept it. Cry it out if you need to...then force a smile. You move on. Be relentless. Adapt and grow.”

Do not remember the former things...I am about to do a new thing. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Help me learn from the past without dwelling on it, Jesus.

My Life with the Jedi, Part 1

Two of Eric Clayton's great passions are Ignatian Spirituality and *Star Wars*. He has found his faith nurtured by St. Ignatius of Loyola's ideal of seeing God in everything—and by the heroic moral and spiritual journeys of the characters from a galaxy far, far away. As such, Eric wrote a book titled *My Life with the Jedi: The Spirituality of Star Wars*.

A key aspect of Jesuit spirituality is being “a man (or woman) for others.” One of the main elements of *Star Wars* is how the heroes are people who live for others. Han Solo, for instance, begins the series as someone looking out only for himself.

When Eric watched *Star Wars: A New Hope* with his daughter for the first time recently, he was shocked to discover she thought Han was the villain because he seemed selfish. It made Han's turn to selflessness and friendship at the end of the film that much more powerful for both Eric and his daughter.

Look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 2:4-5)

Allow me to be a “person for others,” Jesus.

My Life with the Jedi, Part 2

My Life with the Jedi author Eric Clayton believes that one way to grow in knowledge of ourselves and our world is to become “contemplatives in action,” another Ignatian tradition.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, Eric explained, “The term comes from Jerome Nadal, who was one of the early Jesuits with Ignatius...At that time, [the] 1540s, your common form of religious life was to be in the monastery. So, this idea of a religious order that was out in the world was very uncommon.

“Nadal says, ‘The world is our monastery. We are called to take that form of prayer and experience of God—discovering how God wants to shower us with love—and bring it into the world...then allow the world to affect us and keep doing it.’

“What are the Jedi? They reflect, they meditate, but then they go back into the world and keep serving peace [and justice]...[So you need to] bring all these moments of suffering and challenge from the real world into your prayer, let [them] inform how you act. Then, you go into the world and do what you uniquely are able to do.”

Prepare your minds for action. (1 Peter 1:13)

*Lead me to put my prayers into action,
Creator.*

From Foster Care to Adoptive Dad

There are over 390,000 children living within the U.S. foster care system, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. One of those children was Robert Carter.

Though he was never adopted, Carter, now 33, turned his pain into purpose and went on to adopt five children—all siblings—who had been separated in the foster care system.

“I feel like I just used my trauma and my hurting stuff to be my fuel, to keep going and... want to help people and do better in life,” Carter told *CBS News*.

Carter entered the Cincinnati, Ohio foster care system at age 13. He persevered through that tough time to graduate high school and open his own business. He became a foster dad of three young brothers in 2018, and when he discovered they had two sisters, it struck a chord in him to reunite this family.

Carter worked passionately to bring all five siblings together. When the adoption became finalized, it was a blessed day. Now, Carter is giving his kids the life he always dreamed of.

**The testing of your faith produces perseverance.
(James 1:2-3)**

Merciful Jesus, open people's hearts to adoption.

Florence Nightingale's Legacy, Part 1

Florence Nightingale, considered the founder of modern nursing, was born to a wealthy British family in 1820. Early on, she developed a passion for caring for those who were sick or in poverty, and she believed God was calling her to become a nurse. Her parents forbade it, however, since upper class young women in that era were expected to marry wealthy men, not take jobs that involved “menial labor,” reported *History.com*.

Nightingale eventually defied her parents' wishes and traveled to Germany to enroll in nursing school. Upon completion, she returned to London to work at a hospital during the city's cholera outbreak. Because of unsanitary conditions in the hospital, the disease spread quickly. So, Nightingale improved hygiene practices in the facility, which lowered the death rate considerably.

Nightingale's next mission would be the challenge of her career. British soldiers were fighting Russia in Crimea over control of the Ottoman Empire. Thousands of soldiers there were in military hospitals with few nurses to care for them. Nightingale answered the call. More tomorrow...

Rescue the weak and the needy. (Psalm 82:4)

Guide me in being a healer, Divine Physician.

Florence Nightingale's Legacy, Part 2

Florence Nightingale organized a group of nurses to travel to Crimea and care for British soldiers in military hospitals, reaching out to nuns from various religious orders to accompany her. A few days later, they were on their way.

Upon arrival in Constantinople, Nightingale's team was met by the worst conditions any of them had ever encountered. As reported by *History.com*, the hospital was built on a cesspool, which contaminated the water; patients often lay in their own waste; and rodents and bugs ran around everywhere.

Nightingale ordered her team to both sanitize the facility and compassionately care for the soldiers. At night, she would walk through the hospital with a lamp, personally checking each patient. Because of this, they dubbed her "the Angel of Crimea."

When Nightingale returned to England after the war, she received a hero's welcome. She had also changed the perception of nursing among the upper classes, who now deemed it a worthy profession. Despite being bedridden from illness from age 38 on, she advocated for better health care until her death at age 90.

**If you...satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then
your light shall rise in the darkness.**

(Isaiah 58:10)

God, bless compassionate nurses.

The Rookie Shepherd

Taking part in birthing a sheep was not something Kerry Weber had done before, but it was the situation in which she found herself at an educational farm many years ago. With the baby stuck in the birth canal, Weber helped pull it free, after which the little lamb began frolicking in the field, oblivious to the help it had received from a “rookie shepherd.”

Writing for *America* magazine, Weber then recalled Jesus’ words, “My sheep hear My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.” She reflected, “It takes time for a lamb or sheep to follow a shepherd. It is a learned behavior, not instinctual.”

“As a modern-day member of Jesus’ flock,” Weber continued, “I have faith that my shepherd knows me...I also know that...sometimes I forget to listen for God’s voice. Other times I hear it and ignore it. Sometimes I find myself like that little lamb, frolicking about the earth oblivious to the shepherd who over and over again pulls me out of darkness and sets me free...But also, I know that even as I wander, I will not be lost for good. I take heart in the knowledge that, for all my mistakes, ‘no one can take [me] out of [God’s] hand.’”

**Be their shepherd, and carry them forever.
(Psalm 28:9)**

Keep watch over me and guide me, Divine Shepherd.

Cooking with Nonna

When she was a student at St. John's University in Queens, New York, Rossella Rago lived with her grandmother, Romana Sciddurlo, in a basement apartment in Brooklyn. The two spent a lot of time together, so Rago absorbed lots of cooking lessons from her beloved "nonna" (Italian for "grandmother").

When Rago's father asked her what career she wanted to pursue, she jokingly responded that she'd like her own cooking show. Though initially meant in jest, they developed the idea together, and came up with a show titled *Cooking with Nonna*, in which Rago would join her own grandmother, as well as others, in the kitchen. As reported by *St. John's Magazine*, they soon shot some episodes, and the program became increasingly popular, leading to cookbooks and more.

Rago has cooked with about 50 different nonnas throughout the years, but notes the show is not just about food. She explained, "These nonnas are part of the greatest generation that ever lived, and it's so important to document them. They are the ones who really deserve all the attention and accolades."

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother. (2 Timothy 1:5)

May we revere our grandparents, Father.

A Mother's Love

It was a reunion 34 years in the making. In March 2023, 34-year-old Rachel Ruiz shared a heartwarming TikTok video, showing her long-awaited meeting with her birth mother, Angie Howard.

While few words were spoken by the two women, the love and gratitude between them was clear, especially after they were joined by Ruiz's adoptive parents, Brent and Marian Haslam.

More than 10 years ago, the Haslams gave Rachel a letter from her birth mother, in which she wrote that she hoped the two could connect in person someday. That led Rachel to start searching for Angie. Not only did the two finally connect, but their families also got to know each other. Rachel was even able to meet her biological grandmother just three days before her death.

“My mom thanked Angie, as my parents couldn't have biological children,” Rachel told *Today.com*. “Angie said she was grateful that I was raised by such loving parents. She always prayed for that.”

**Can a mother forget...the child of her womb?
(Isaiah 49:15)**

Abba, we thank You for the unconditional love of mothers.

Yogi and Scooter: Friends for Life

Baseball Hall of Famers Lawrence “Yogi” Berra and Phil “Scooter” Rizzuto became great friends when they played for the New York Yankees during the 1940s and 50s. That relationship extended decades beyond their days on the diamond.

Yankees broadcaster Michael Kay recalled, “When Phil Rizzuto became ill towards the end of his life, he was put in an assisted living facility, 30 minutes away from where Yogi lived. Every single day, because teammates were important to him, Yogi would drive there and play cards with Phil. When Phil would start to fall asleep, Yogi would hold his hand.” Phil died in 2007, and Yogi remembered him as “a hell of a guy.”

When Yogi passed away in 2015, many of his acts of kindness came to light. They were celebrated even more in the 2023 Christopher Award-winning documentary *It Ain't Over*, which highlighted not only his massive baseball accomplishments and unforgettable “Yogi-isms,” but the humble and loving man that he remained all his life.

A true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin. (Proverbs 18:24)

Lord, give me the heart and strength to be a good friend until life's end.

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 1

Shame, stigma, and misconceptions surround the topic of mental illness, even in church circles. For instance, there are some Christians who believe that mental illness can be healed or avoided solely by improving your spiritual life. But this is simply not the case. Mental illness and suicide can happen in “good Catholic families,” just as they do in less religious homes.

That doesn't mean religious faith has no role to play in navigating these situations. In fact, the opposite is true. In conjunction with professional counseling and sometimes medication, the light of Christ can serve as a guide and a strength to patients and their families navigating mental illness.

Following the suicide of his 29-year-old daughter Katie, who had bipolar disorder, Deacon Ed Shoener made it his mission to reduce the stigma around mental illness in the Church, to encourage compassion for those dealing with mental illness, and to guide parishes in creating their own mental health ministries. Deacon Ed joined us on *Christopher Closeup* to share his story and mission. More tomorrow...

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears. (Psalm 34:17)

Help us reduce the stigma around mental illness, Savior.

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 2

Katie Shoener's mental illness first manifested itself when she was in high school, though she hid it well from her parents. Their introduction to the problem occurred after she attempted to commit suicide. It was extra shocking because, outwardly, Katie appeared to be thriving.

"We had no idea what was going on," Deacon Ed recalled. "We knew very little about mental illness. Me, in particular, I attributed it to other things. I thought, 'You're being a drama queen. You're drinking,' that sort of thing. [I] got off on the wrong foot with this, but eventually came to learn what mental illness is, and that she was living with bipolar disorder."

"My heart goes out to so many people I've ministered to since that, whose child actually died in their first suicide attempt in their late teens. It comes out of the blue, and [the parents] are so wracked with guilt that they didn't see it coming... Fortunately for us, Katie survived that first suicide attempt, and eventually got into mental health care and treatment."

The wisdom from above is...willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits. (James 3:17)

Make us humble enough to explore mental illness honestly, Lord.

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 3

Katie Shoener's bipolar disorder manifested itself mainly as depression and mania. Counseling and medication stabilized her most of the time, but every once in a while, she would fall prey to a bipolar episode.

Deacon Ed Shoener observed, "I'd literally be talking to her, and a half hour later...she'd be almost catatonic. She'd be so depressed...But most of the time, she was good, and she took it very seriously. She took all the meds. She saw a therapist and psychiatrist, and she understood it was an illness and tried to manage it as best she could as an illness.

"But mental health care is still not where it needs to be. It's not like you can take a blood sample and say, 'Okay, well, such-and-such levels are off. We need to act quickly.'...It's more trying to understand your feelings and symptoms. So, it's a more difficult illness to manage at this stage."

Katie managed her bipolar for more than a decade and was building a good life. Deacon Ed believes her suicide was an impulsive choice made during a major depressive episode.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His faithful ones. (Psalm 116:15)

*Comfort parents who lose a child to suicide,
Jesus.*

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 4

In the aftermath of his daughter Katie's suicide, Deacon Ed Shoener wrote an obituary about her and what happened so that there wouldn't be any "gossip or speculating" in their parish or small town of Scranton, Pennsylvania. That obituary went viral, shocking Deacon Ed, but also teaching him a vital lesson.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, he said, "Apparently, it spoke to what so many people with mental illness live with. The stigma, the discrimination, being defined by their illness...I was open that [Katie] had this illness, but she wasn't defined by [it], and she's a beautiful child of God, loved by Jesus Christ. This clearly resonated with people."

"This viral response, for me, was almost a mystical experience, of so many people around the world saying that the Church needs to step up and...start ministering to people that live with these illnesses and their families and their caregivers, because I'm absolutely convinced that Christ wants to be in the middle of all of this... Christ wants to be there, and He sends His Church to do that."

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4)

Christ, help us bring Your presence to the mentally ill.

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 5

Deacon Ed Shoener emphasizes that mental illness cannot be prayed away with a stronger spiritual life, as some people suggest. He explained, "This outdated notion that they have a mental illness because they don't pray enough, that's harmful."

"People, often, with depression and anxiety, already [feel] they're not good enough. The illness tells them they're not worth living, that they're a terrible mistake. So, to have someone heap on top of that by saying, 'You're thinking that way because you don't pray enough,' that makes things worse. So, I hope people stop thinking that way. Mental illness is an illness, like every other illness. We have to understand it and treat it that way."

Deacon Ed continued. "I'd add that people living with mental illnesses have very deep spiritual lives...We can pray with people with these illnesses, we can support them...I live with depression. Twenty percent of people in this country live with some sort of diagnosable mental illness at the moment...So, we're all in this together."

**The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.
(Romans 8:26)**

Support me in my mental struggles, Holy Spirit.

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 6

After losing his daughter to suicide, Deacon Ed Shoener co-founded the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers in 2018, along with Bishop John Dolan from the Diocese of Phoenix, Arizona. They offer resources to parishes on ways to begin their own mental health ministries, as well as resources to individuals looking for prayers, community, books, liturgy, films, and more.

“When Katie first experienced bipolar disorder,” recalled Deacon Ed on *Christopher Closeup*, “we had no one to talk to. And to be honest with you, the last place I thought to go was the Church to talk about mental illness and what happened. Now, we encourage parishes to have support groups for the parents and caregivers, where they can come in and talk about this.

“So often, people are isolated. They think they’re bad parents, [that] they did something wrong [because] their child had a mental illness... So, we offer this online training program...It’s free...I would encourage people, go to our website (*catholicmbm.org*), take the training courses, and it’ll give you the confidence to start this type of ministry.”

Bear one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)

Inspire parishes to start mental health ministries, Abba.

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 7

Though his daughter Katie is no longer physically present in Deacon Ed Shoener's life, his faith affirms his belief that she is still with him in some way. He said, "The communion with the saints is not just the saints who are painted on a wall...We all hope to be a saint one day, to live eternally with God. So, our loved ones, we're still in communion with them. And yes, absolutely...I pray for Katie all the time."

"The other thing I want to add on death and judgment, particularly for suicide," Deacon Ed added, "is that there's still people out there that think the Church teaches that someone who died by suicide goes to hell."

"That's not what the Church teaches. The Church teaches that our loved ones who died by suicide have the opportunity for what the catechism calls 'salutary repentance,' and that we pray for the souls of our loved ones who have died by suicide. That old teaching was a misunderstanding of the psychology of suicide. The Church has a better informed understanding of what brings people to suicide now than it did 50 years ago."

The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Welcome those who have died by suicide into Your heavenly Kingdom, Lord.

Deacon's Mental Health Mission, Part 8

The death of a child is the darkest experience any parent can go through. Having survived the most intense pain and grief he's ever experienced, Deacon Ed Shoener is now focused on the light.

At the end of his *Christopher Closeup* interview, he concluded, "I've always thought that this ministry is bringing the light of Christ into very dark places. So, my assurance is that I'm carrying the light of Christ. It's not me. It's not Ed Shoener. It's not anybody else that's in ministry that's doing this. It's Christ that's bringing His light into these lives. That's the solace I take. I know Christ is with me in this ministry.

"Admittedly, it can be a difficult ministry at times. I have someone I have to call this afternoon whose best friend died by suicide yesterday. It's a tough ministry at times, but it's joyful in the sense that you know you're doing the will of God, that God wants to be there and wants to send His ministers into these dark places. So, that's where I find joy."

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:6)

Guide me in bringing Your light into people's lives, Jesus.

The 72-Year-Old Graduate

At age 72, Sam Kaplan never dreamed he would be walking across the stage wearing a cap and gown. Yet in May of 2023, more than 50 years after graduating high school, Kaplan earned his bachelor's degree in Cinema and Media Arts. His decision to enroll was essentially a whim.

“I was riding down 316 and heard on the radio that Georgia Gwinnett College [in Lawrenceville] was offering a degree that involved script writing,” Kaplan told NBC affiliate *WWBT*. “My car seemed to have developed automatic steering...Five minutes later, I was registering for the Fall [semester].”

Sam, who grew up as one of seven children and worked many odd jobs throughout his life, made fast friends with both his younger fellow students and professors alike. “Sam was always willing to share photos and stories of his interesting life and family,” Associate Professor Kate Balsley added. “We’re so proud to see him graduate...We will miss him.”

The proudest person in the audience on Kaplan’s graduation day? His 99-year-old mother! It just goes to show, no matter your age, it is never too late to fulfill a long-held dream.

Let the wise...gain in learning. (Proverbs 1:5)

Savior, may we always seek to further our education.

Prayer for Families

One could argue there is no greater wealth than that of a loving, devoted family. Like all of life's precious gifts that come from above, we should strive to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for this priceless blessing every day, as it is a blessing far too often taken for granted. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers this prayer for families everywhere:

“We bless Your name, O Lord, for sending Your own Incarnate Son, to become part of a family, so that, as He lived its life, He would experience its worries and its joys.

“We ask You, Lord, to protect and watch over this family, so that, in the strength of Your grace, its members may enjoy prosperity, possess the priceless gift of Your peace, and, as the Church alive in the home, bear witness in this world to Your glory...Amen.”

May the love, strength, and wisdom of our families, near and far, immediate and spiritual, continue to guide and sustain us through all of life's beautiful triumphs and sorrows.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother...and your mother...and now, I am sure lives in you.

(2 Timothy 1:5)

Abba, may we always strive to maintain a legacy of faith.

Blessing in a Bag

More than 10 years ago, Chicago high school sophomore Jahkil Naeem Jackson came up with the idea of handing out Blessing Bags, as a means of alleviating the plight of the homeless. Now, after learning about the concept from a Facebook post, P.S. 204 crossing guard Sandy Irrera has adopted the practice in her Brooklyn, New York neighborhood as a way of living out her Catholic faith.

Irrera's Blessing Bags contain several of life's everyday essentials (i.e. soap, snacks, etc.), along with her own special addition: a five dollar bill. "I want each bag to have the same things, things I think they could use," Sandy told *The Tablet's* Paula Katinas. "I always keep at least three Blessing Bags in my car, so that if I see someone, I can jump out and give them one."

With the encouragement of P.S. 204 principal Ursula Annio, students at the school have already donated items towards their crossing guard's philanthropic efforts. "It's like we're part of a movement," Sandy concluded. "It's not a big, orchestrated thing...I want to prove to people that it doesn't take much to help."

**Kindness is like a garden of blessings.
(Sirach 40:17)**

God, may we cherish all life's blessings, big and small.

Brooks Robinson Found Hope in Faith

During the 1960s and 70s, Baltimore Orioles third baseman Brooks Robinson was known as “the Human Vacuum Cleaner” because he was so good at catching balls hit toward him. On the occasion of Robinson’s death in 2023, he was also remembered as a kind, decent, charitable man whose faith was key to his life.

Though he was raised Methodist, his wife, Connie, was Catholic. Robinson told the *Catholic Review* newspaper that once they had children, he thought it was important that they go to church together, so he converted to Catholicism.

As recounted by George Matysek Jr., Robinson relied on his faith to get through health challenges, including prostate cancer. Robinson said, “It’s...been an outpouring of love which I’ve never seen before. I’ve compiled a lot of [religious] medals that people sent me. I really think that was a big part of it.”

As he got older, Robinson noted, “I think more about my Catholic faith now than I ever did. It seems like the older you get, the more you think about Jesus Christ and how you’re living.” Surely, heaven gained an All Star upon Robinson’s passing.

Abide in My love. (John 15:9)

Remind me to think about Your love, Jesus.

A Country United

Last Memorial Day, former *WWL-TV* News anchor Karen Swensen was at her local Winn Dixie supermarket in Metairie, Louisiana, when she saw 90-year-old Dillon McCormick in the parking lot, collecting shopping carts. Swensen told *CBS News* that she wondered, “How can someone who’s clearly lived a long time and worked so hard be out here in this heat, pushing carts?”

Swensen approached McCormick to make further inquiries. A veteran of the Air Force, he explained that he had been working at Winn Dixie for the last 23 years to bridge the gap in his monthly bills, which his Social Security checks did not cover.

Moved by McCormick’s plight, Swensen shared his story on social media, along with a *GoFundMe* page. Within 24 hours, the retired newswoman had raised a whopping \$244,000 to gift to the grateful McCormick.

“We take care of our own, not only in Louisiana,” Karen concluded proudly, “but this entire nation banded together. I looked at who was donating...it’s the left, it’s the right, it’s everything in between. We united for the right reason.”

**Be united in the same...purpose.
(1 Corinthians 1:10)**

Messiah, may we strive to unite for all the right reasons.

We Will Remember

Connor Nicol comes from a military family, so the teen Eagle Scout is inclined to respect those who serve their country. In 2020, he created a special nonprofit, named We Will Remember, to honor Americans who lost their lives in combat overseas.

As reported by Sheniece Chapell of *Scouting Magazine*, Connor combed through the national archives to collect the names of every fallen veteran. Then, he began making memorial dog tags with each veteran's name, along with listing some background information about the person on a piece of paper.

Connor invites people to adopt each dog tag and remember the fallen veteran every day in their thoughts and prayers. To date, he has created 36,000 dog tags for those lost in the Korean War. He is now making more for those who died in Vietnam.

Connor said, "I want to create a personal connection so there is at least one person who is remembering that service member's name—keeping their memory alive...It also increases awareness and appreciation for the dedication and sacrifice of those who gave everything for our country to be safe."

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His faithful ones. (Psalm 116:15)

Welcome our fallen military members into Your kingdom, Lord.

Professor's Baby Friendly Policy

Jerusalem psychology professor Sydney Engelberg gained Internet fame for a simple gesture: holding a student's fussy baby while continuing to teach class.

When a student was in a bind and asked if she could bring her baby to class, Engelberg agreed, even volunteering to hold the baby so that the student could concentrate on her group exercise. Another student snapped the photo of Engelberg comforting the baby, sharing it on social media.

This may not seem like a lot, but this simple gesture gained admiration from parents around the world. As reported by *CNN*, one commenter wrote, "Good for him for understanding how hard it is for her to be a student and a mother and that she's trying to better herself for her son."

This is just one example of many in which Engelberg is helping those students who are unable to find alternative childcare arrangements—and doing so "in a way which enables them to remain engaged, [and] shows respect for their situation."

Those who respect their mother are like those who lay up treasure. (Sirach 3:4)

Help me, dear Jesus, show respect for others, no matter their situation.

Staying the Course with Courtesy

It might surprise you, but the late Mario Andretti, a champion auto racer, once said that he felt “safer on the racecourse than I do on the streets.”

Not only do professional drivers keep their minds on their driving, Andretti explained, but the pros are “exceedingly courteous to one another on the track.”

The reason is simple. Courtesy saves lives. Once, A.J. Foyt saw sparks flying from the back of Andretti’s car and signaled him to pull over. He could have done nothing and allowed his rival to break down. Instead, Foyt’s courtesy prevented a potential pile-up.

If these sportsmen can make time for courtesy, even in the heat of a race, why can’t the rest of us? Small, ordinary acts of thoughtfulness add up to a life well lived.

**Speak evil of no one...avoid quarreling...be gentle...and show every courtesy to everyone.
(Titus 3:2)**

Give me a grateful heart and a thoughtful manner, Holy Spirit.

Fantastic Voyage

At age 29, Cole Brauer made history, becoming the first American woman to race around the world by herself in her 40-foot boat, First Light. The only woman and the youngest competitor in the grueling, four-month-long, 30,000-mile Global Solo Challenge, Brauer placed second out of 16 sailors.

“It would be amazing if there was just one girl that saw me and said, ‘Oh, I can do that too,’” Brauer told *NBC News*. It’s likely that far more than one girl saw her. Although sailing alone, Brauer was buoyed by the support of other team members, family, friends, and 450,000 Instagram followers.

In addition to stormy seas, dangerous icebergs and 30-foot waves, Brauer faced challenges even before she set foot in her boat. Potential sponsors didn’t think the 5-foot 2-inch woman could do it. But telling her she couldn’t do something just made Brauer even more motivated to complete the task. The race’s organizer, Marco Nannini, observed, “The biggest asset is your mental strength. Cole is showing everyone that.”

You have given it a path in the sea, and a safe way through the waves. (Wisdom 14:3)

Holy Spirit, help us inspire young people to live life to the fullest.

Watch Out for Money Scams

According to AARP, a lot of older people have lost significant amounts of money to investment scams. Here are some of the steps they advise you to consider before investing in anything:

- **Check credentials.** Most scams involve unregistered groups. Check at *adviserinfo.sec.gov*.
- **Look for transparency.** “Be wary if you can’t independently verify financial statements.”
- **Take your time.** “If it’s a legitimate investment, it’s going to be available tomorrow,” says Claire McHenry, president of the North American Securities Administrators Association.
- **Get a reality check.** Ask someone not involved with the suggested investment for their thoughts.
- **Know your limitations.** Can you afford to lose the money? Do you understand the proposed opportunity?

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance. (Proverbs 21:5)

Guide us to make wise choices, Lord.

A Prayer Group's Call to Action

As the parishioners of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Davenport, Iowa, were holding a prayer vigil one evening, groups of rattled and upset strangers began arriving. A nearby six-story apartment building had partially collapsed, leaving these people without homes.

Father Rudolph Juarez and his parish team quickly stepped in to help. As reported by Barb Arland-Frye for *OSV News*, “St. Anthony’s is well known for its service to the most vulnerable and marginalized people.” Volunteers came together to serve “homemade deli sandwiches and picked up boxes of Little Caesars Pizza, which was a big hit with the guests.”

Lorena Pérez, who attended the prayer vigil, shared the story on social media, noting the displaced people “had nowhere to go...Thank God a very small group (of us) were in prayer, and by the grace of God the church was open. Now, it’s a haven for them...Now, San Antonio is a sanctuary for them. Thank God they found a place to go.”

If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness. (Isaiah 58:10)

*May I be a comfort to those who need help,
Father.*