

The Search for Happiness

A story with an important message made its way around the Internet recently. It seems appropriate to share it with you at the beginning of this new year:

“A professor gave a balloon to every student in his class to write their name on. Then, he asked them to throw it in the hallway. The students were given five minutes to find their own balloon, but no one was able to do so.

“The professor then told the students to take the first balloon they found and hand it to the person whose name was written on it. Within five minutes, everyone had their own balloon.

“Finally, the professor said to the students, ‘These balloons are like happiness. We will never find it if everyone is looking for their own. But if we care about other people’s happiness, we will find ours, too.’”

If we love one another, God lives in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:12)

Help me be a source of happiness for others, Lord, and, in turn, find happiness myself.

Neighborly Love Helps Elderly Woman

In 2021, Gean LeVar of Glendale, Arizona, lost her husband of 58 years when he passed away in their home. To make matters worse, the police—after entering and seeing how unlivable the conditions were—had no choice but to condemn Gean’s house. She lost her husband and home all in the same day, and she had no family members to help her.

That’s when her neighbor, Carmen Silva—who barely knew Gean at the time—stepped in. As reported by *CBS News*, Carmen told Gean, “Don’t worry...We’re going to fix it.”

Carmen invited Gean to live in her home. Although Carmen’s small, three-bedroom house with eight children was already full, the family eagerly made room for one more, treating Gean like an “adopted grandmother.” Carmen explained, “I’ve always taught my kids to take care of their elders.”

In another expression of neighborly kindness, the nonprofit group Operation Enduring Gratitude, which helps Arizona veterans and their families, heard Gean’s story and rebuilt her house, making it livable once more. Gean now plans to share her new home with her adopted family.

**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
(James 2:8)**

Jesus, may I always be welcoming.

A Miraculous Delivery

In Ocala, Florida, there is a Safe Haven Baby Box at the local fire station, where anyone can drop off an infant, no questions asked. An alarm always rings after a baby is deposited to alert nearby firefighters of the delivery.

One January morning, at about 2:00 a.m., an Ocala fireman named Vincent heard the telltale peal of the alarm bell. He opened the box to find a baby girl peering up at him as she clutched her bottle.

“I picked her up and held her,” Vincent told *Today’s* Selim Algar. “We locked eyes, and that was it. I’ve loved her ever since...The way I found her—this was God helping us out.”

After he brought her to the hospital, Vincent wasted no time writing a letter to the administration there, expressing his fervent desire to adopt her. He and his wife had been trying for 10 years to have a baby and were even “registered to adopt.”

By April, this infant, whom the couple named Zoey, “officially” became their daughter. “She’s loved beyond words,” the happy father concluded.

Every perfect gift is from above. (James 1:17)

Jesus, we thank You for the precious gift of loving parents.

The Burnt Pie

On his Twitter account, Rabbi Yisroel Bernath recalled an incident he once witnessed between his grandparents during his youth. His grandmother was a fantastic cook, but one day she served his grandfather a burnt pie. “Not just a little burnt,” Rabbi Bernath wrote, “but black as coal.”

Rabbi Bernath waited to see how his grandfather would react. Surprisingly, he simply ate the pie and asked the young Bernath how his day was. Later, his grandmother apologized to her husband for the state of the pie. He responded, “Dear, I like your pie.”

When they were alone, the young Bernath asked his grandfather whether he had told the truth. The grandfather put his arm around Bernath’s shoulder and explained, “Your Grandma had a tough day at work. She was tired. The burnt pie didn’t harm me, but a sharp word could have hurt her.”

Rabbi Bernath then shared this long-lasting lesson from that bit of his grandfather’s wisdom: “We all make mistakes. We shouldn’t focus on mistakes, but support those we love.”

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

May my words always be loving and supportive, Paraclete.

'What a Great Human!'

University of South Carolina college student Jake Degnon was staying with his family in Rockville, Maryland, for Christmas break. Unfortunately, two days before he was supposed to return to school, he discovered his wallet was missing. The family spent the whole next day looking for it, a task made more difficult by the fact that it had snowed.

As Jake's mother, Laura, wrote in an email to the *Good News Network*, her son's wallet was even more full than usual with "quite a bit of Christmas money, college money, and of course his school ID, license, debit, and credit card."

As Jake was getting ready Saturday morning to head back to college, sans wallet, their doorbell rang. "A wonderful man by the name of Juan was standing there," Laura said, "asking if Jake lived here. I started to cry...and asked if he found his wallet."

Indeed, Juan had found Jake's wallet, in the parking lot of the store Degnon had shopped at just two nights before. Nothing was missing inside; everything was just as Jake had left it. "What a great human!" Laura concluded. "Juan made my son's day, and mine, more than he will ever know!"

For everyone...who searches, finds. (Luke 11:10)

Father, may we all strive to be "great humans."

Remembering the Three Kings

Though she now lives in Staten Island, New York, Magna Velazquez relishes the memory of growing up in Puerto Rico, especially when it comes to the Feast of the Epiphany, also known as Three Kings' Day, on January 6th.

On this feast day, children receive gifts that commemorate the Magi visiting Jesus and bringing Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Magna's parents would give her and her siblings empty shoeboxes to fill with the best hay, so the camels carrying the Three Kings had something good to eat.

Magna told *The Good Newsroom*, "Like the birth of Jesus, Three Kings' Day carries many traditions with the community at their core. In some instances, people were poor and had no gifts to give, but regardless, we found something to share, and the gathering was the celebration."

Keeping these traditions alive is important to Magna, as is her Catholic faith. She prays that young people believe in God and let Him be born into their hearts. "This is the greatest gift you can give yourself or others," she said.

They saw the child with Mary His mother; and they knelt down and paid Him homage.

(Matthew 2:11)

May Jesus be born anew in my heart every day, Creator.

Warm and Cozy

As the Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool's Director of Finance, Jill Boggan was in a unique position to help when she learned that a rise in fuel costs over the winter would hinder many people from warming their homes.

Boggan launched an initiative in which the archdiocese's 37 parish centers would be opened to provide "not only warmth, but also tea, coffee, cookies, free Wi-Fi, and television" to anyone, reported *PillarCatholic.com*. The project was dubbed "Warm and Cozy," and found great support and participation.

In addition, visitors were invited to donate old coats, scarves, or other winter clothing to be given to those who couldn't afford them.

Father Stephen Pritchard, pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption in Gateacre, pointed out another key component of the initiative's success. He explained, "I think there's an epidemic of loneliness...More than just people coming together to get warm, it's actually creating a sense of community, a sense of belonging, and people care for each other. That's why 'Warm and Cozy' for me is important."

Show hospitality to strangers. (Hebrews 13:2)

*Guide us towards the warmth of community,
Savior.*

Pen Pal Offered Prisoner Hope

For 28 years, Lamar Johnson languished in a St. Louis prison for a murder he didn't commit. It was only after an original eyewitness admitted he lied when he fingered Johnson as the killer—and when the actual murderer confessed—that Johnson, at age 48, was fully exonerated in 2023.

One thing that kept Johnson's spirits up during his incarceration was the letters he received from his pen pal, Ginny Schrappen. As reported by *CBS News*, the now 80-year-old Schrappen was given a letter many years ago by her church's deacon. That letter came from Johnson, who had written to the church hoping to find a parishioner he could correspond with.

Schrappen was happy to oblige and soon came to believe in Johnson's innocence herself. Upon his release, the two pen pals met, and he explained what her support had meant to him. Johnson said, "Especially when somebody is innocent, you want someone to believe in you, because when you have people who believe in you and they won't give up on you, then it makes it harder for you to give up on yourself."

You had compassion for those who were in prison. (Hebrews 10:34)

*Help me bring hope to someone in despair,
Jesus.*

Project Cover-Up

One cold winter's day, fourth grader Chase Pinheiro was walking to baseball practice when he saw a woman on the side of the road, asking people driving by in their cars "for food and money."

Touched by this woman's plight, Pinheiro went to see Julie Capirchio, the Dean of Students at his school, St. Joseph's in West Warwick, Rhode Island. He said, "I'm really upset because it's getting cold, and I feel like we should have a clothing drive." Dean Capirchio told the *Rhode Island Catholic*, "The students at St. Joseph are so good...They will go out of their way to do something kind."

Moved by Chase's plea, Dean Capirchio quickly arranged a "school-wide clothing drive," named "Project Cover-Up," for three days in mid-January. All articles of winter clothing collected from this drive were given to the local St. Vincent de Paul Society and "distributed to those in need."

"I think this would have been what Jesus would have done," Pinheiro added. "I hope [the clothing drive] will help them and bring them comfort."

**I have set you an example...Do as I have done.
(John 13:15)**

Jesus, may we model our lives after Your giving example.

Believing It's Never Too Late

Although Joseph “Gabe” Sonnier took pride in his work as a janitor at Port Barre Elementary School in Louisiana, his future held a different path.

As a young man, he had always planned to attend college, but family difficulties postponed that dream. Sonnier told *People.com* that a former principal had seen his potential and advised him to become an educator. Being a janitor was “a good and honest living,” this principal explained, “but I’d rather see you grading papers than picking them up.”

With encouragement and perseverance, Sonnier eventually was able to return to college at age 39. Keeping up an exhausting schedule, he continued to work full-time. The effort paid off as he worked his way up to become Port Barre Elementary’s principal.

While Sonnier’s position as a leader is a challenging one, he can now encourage others. Some of his young teachers were inspired by his life story to earn their own Master’s degrees.

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

God, give us the strength to persist in pursuing our goals.

An Actress's Alternate Career Choice

If Jennifer Garner hadn't become an actress, she thinks she would have liked to become a minister. In fact, her mother still thinks she may be a minister some day.

During an interview with *Allure* magazine's Danielle Pergament, Garner explained that she grew up attending the United Methodist Church in her West Virginia hometown—and she still goes to church in California with her kids. Her oldest daughter, Violet, is even a Sunday School teacher.

Garner said, “What I like about the study of religion, it reminds me of the study of theater—it's really a liberal arts education. You have to understand history, geography, literature. It's art, it's everything.”

She added, “I think the more you engage, the more you learn about different ways that people believe and worship, the more you can sit next to anyone and be a neighbor. There's such value in that to me. I don't know that I will ever be someone who is writing a sermon Sunday morning, but I like the idea of it. I like the idea of going back to divinity school.”

Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor.

(Romans 15:2)

May my faith help me to be a good neighbor to all, Jesus.

Respect the Trades

In Lanham, Maryland, the young men and women you'll find in Plumbers and Gasfitters Union Local 5's training facility must combine intellect with elbow grease to become masters at their jobs. But they realize they are often seen as being uneducated because they didn't go to college.

“The division is partly a function of people thinking that because the work is dirty, it must be stupid,” motorcycle repairman Matthew Crawford told *CBS News's* Ted Koppel. “If people never attempted skilled manual work, they may not understand just how intellectually rich and engaging it can be, and demanding.”

Tradespeople earn money while apprenticing—and lucrative salaries once they have mastered their crafts. They are hoping that white collar America adopts a new attitude towards them. Jake Thiess, an apprentice at Local 5, said, “We do work with our hands a lot, but a lot of it's up here [indicating his brain]...People think it's simple to fix a toilet..[or] to weld a pipe. A guy I work with said it's art without an audience.”

Do not abuse...hired laborers who devote themselves to their task. (Sirach 7:20)

Creator, may we respect the art and talents of all trades.

A Leap of Faith

From jigs to reels, hornpipes to leaps, Father Brian Frain has mastered the steps to bring Irish dancing to his parish. The 59-year-old pastor of St. Ignatius in Baltimore recently spoke to the *Catholic Review's* George Matysek Jr. about his approach.

Traditional Irish dance has been an important part of Father Frain's life ever since he was a boy. He remembers falling in love with the beauty of the movement and winning several regional Irish dance championships.

From 1987 to 1992, he ran his own school of Irish dancing before giving it up to become a Jesuit priest. Thankfully, he's been able to integrate his love for the tradition with his ministry. "There's a joy that's expressed in Irish dancing," he said. "I just love it when I see kids dancing, and they know what they're doing and that they can do it. It's a beautiful thing."

Irish dance is both individual and communal, Father Frain added, much like the practice of the Catholic faith. "You are no longer just a self, but you're part of a community. It requires you to stop thinking individually and start thinking of who's around you."

**Let them praise His name with dancing.
(Psalm 149:3)**

May I always be joy-filled in my faith and actions, Lord!

A Calling Beyond Retirement

Phyllis Gipson spent 35 years teaching art in public school. When the time came to retire, she couldn't imagine just sitting home and doing nothing. Looking for ways to serve, she headed right back to the classroom.

Gipson spoke to Cathy Fithian, principal of Christ the King School in Kansas City, Kansas, and told her she would like to teach there. Reluctantly, Fithian said an art teacher was a luxury the school couldn't afford. But Gipson, a devout Christian, responded, "You don't understand—this is my calling."

"The first year, I would show up in the building with all my bags and stuff," she said in an interview with *The Leaven*. "[The kids] would start applauding, yelling, 'Today is art! Ms. Gipson's here!' How affirming is that? It made me know I was doing something to help somebody."

For two days a week, Gipson spreads a love for the creative arts and knows she is carrying on a legacy of giving back. "My father told us all the time that when you retire, you serve your community," she said. "And he was the perfect model for that."

Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding. (Proverbs 3:13)

*May I share my talents with those around me,
Lord.*

MLK's Commandments of Nonviolence

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used to ask volunteers working with him to sign a commitment card that they would adhere to his 10 commandments of nonviolence. While they are specific to his mission, they can also apply to anyone.

The commandments stated: “**1.** Meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus; **2.** Remember always that the nonviolent movement in Birmingham seeks justice and reconciliation—not victory; **3.** Walk and talk in the manner of love, for God is love.

“**4.** Pray daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free; **5.** Sacrifice personal wishes in order that all men might be free; **6.** Observe with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy; **7.** Seek to perform regular service for others and for the world.

“**8.** Refrain from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart; **9.** Strive to be in good spiritual and bodily health; **10.** Follow the directions of the movement and of the captain on a demonstration.”

Do not envy the violent and do not choose any of their ways. (Proverbs 3:31)

Lead us towards peaceful ways of resolving conflict, Jesus.

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 1

At age 10, Hayley Arceneaux was a healthy, active youngster who had just earned her black belt in Tae Kwon Do. Shortly thereafter, she began experiencing leg pain and discovered a lump above her leg. The diagnosis came as a complete shock: bone cancer.

Up until that point, everyone that Hayley had known with cancer had died, so she feared her fate would be the same. “God must hate me,” she thought.

Twenty years later, Hayley has gone on to become a physician’s assistant at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, taken part in numerous medical mission trips around the world, and even orbited the earth three times as an astronaut on SpaceX’s Inspiration4 mission. And her perception of God has changed as well.

So how did all this come about? Hayley shares her story in the Christopher Award-winning book *Wild Ride: A Memoir of I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships*. We discussed it recently on *Christopher Closeup*. More of her story tomorrow...

Do not fear, for I am with you...I will strengthen you, I will help you. (Isaiah 41:10)

Guide me through life’s unexpected twists and turns, Lord.

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 2

A few days after being diagnosed with bone cancer at age 10, Hayley Arceneaux and her parents traveled to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, for her treatments. There, she developed a renewed sense of hope because the staff "made her feel like a normal kid that was going to be okay," she told The Christophers' radio host, Tony Rossi.

Hayley's road to healing, however, wasn't easy. She endured a year of intensive chemotherapy, many blood draws per week, surgery to remove the bone affected by the tumor and replace it with an internal prosthesis, and numerous physical therapy appointments.

Despite all that darkness, Hayley focused on the light. She explained, "When I think back to that year having cancer, I don't think about all the medical stuff, per se. I think about the fun times, the incredible friendships that formed. There [were] a lot of happy and special moments... Going through cancer like I did that year made me who I am, and it gave me so much love and zest for life."

**A cheerful heart is a good medicine.
(Proverbs 17:22)**

Jesus, in times of illness, send me people to bolster my spirits—and let me be a light to someone who is suffering.

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 3

When she was diagnosed with cancer at age 10, Hayley Arceneaux's first thought was, "God must hate me." But this view soon changed. As Hayley said during an interview about her Christopher Award-winning book *Wild Ride: A Memoir of I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships*, "I come from this incredible uplifting family, and immediately my mom said, 'That's not true. God loves you.' While it was scary, we found faith as something that we could hold on to. It gave us a lot of hope."

Hayley added, "My mother would write down specific Scripture [verses] that we would concentrate on and say out loud every day, almost like mantras. So, faith and prayer really helped us through that year. It has helped through the many difficult times in the years that followed."

Hayley relished her time at St. Jude, and even began volunteering there when she was a patient. When people were at the hospital donating blood, she would go around the room and thank them for what they were doing. Dubbed the "Gratitude Administrator," that set the stage for Hayley's life goal.

This is my comfort in my distress, that Your promise gives me life. (Psalm 119:50)

May Your Word sustain me in times of trouble, Savior.

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 4

The time that Hayley Arceneaux spent as a cancer patient at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital allowed her to see all the good they accomplish. That's why she grew up with the goal of working at St. Jude's someday.

Though it took many years, Hayley became a physician's assistant there who works with leukemia and lymphoma patients. What came next, however, was a complete shock, though one she quickly embraced.

Hayley's superiors called and asked if she wanted to become a member of the all-civilian crew on SpaceX's Inspiration4 mission to space, which was created to be a fundraiser for St. Jude's with the aim of collecting \$200 million.

Hayley's brother is a rocket scientist, but she herself had never considered becoming an astronaut. Still, her adventurous spirit—as well as the opportunity to raise money for her beloved hospital—led her to quickly say 'yes' and take part in the academically-challenging, physically-grueling training.

**But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.
(2 Chronicles 15:7)**

*Holy Spirit, guide me in pursuing new goals,
both chosen and unexpected.*

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 5

As Hayley Arceneaux began her training to travel to space, the mission commander told her and her fellow astronauts that they needed to get “comfortable with discomfort.” This held true in their first exercise: climbing Mount Rainier in Washington.

Because of the prosthetic in her leg due to her bone cancer at age 10, Hayley had never done any climbing and didn’t know if she’d be able to make the journey. She trained for a month beforehand, but nothing could compare to the actual climb, which took nine and a half hours on their first day. But Hayley accomplished the task with help from her fellow trainees.

For Hayley, getting comfortable with discomfort is also good life advice. During an interview with The Christophers, she said, “Anyone who can go out of their comfort zone should do it. One thing I talk about in my book...is the importance of saying ‘yes’ to opportunities that can change your life. Sometimes these opportunities that come your way can even be scary. But [it’s] important... to say that ‘yes,’ and it will change your life in such incredible ways. It will make you even more you.”

Whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all. (Galatians 6:10)

Help me say ‘yes’ to the right opportunities, Paraclete.

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 6

Traveling to space and orbiting the earth three times gave Hayley Arceneaux a new perspective on God. She said, “Someone has described that view of Earth from space as, ‘This is what God sees.’ And it really is life-changing to see the Earth from space. I felt incredibly fortunate for this plan that God had for my life. It’s something I never could have seen coming...That helped build my faith as well.”

Devoted to promoting St. Jude’s, Hayley found two ways to make the patients there a part of her mission. First, there was a video conference held between a number of the kids being treated at St. Jude’s and the Inspiration4 crew while they orbited the earth. Hayley saw this as a way to give the kids hope for the future, telling them, “If I can do this, you can do this.”

In addition, Hayley contacted the parents of the friends and patients she has lost to cancer and asked them for a photo of their child. “While I was in orbit,” she said, “I took a picture of their child’s photo with the Earth behind them and [sent] the pictures to the families afterward saying their child made it to space.”

**I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord...
to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)**

*Help me follow Your plans for my life,
Creator.*

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 7

Hayley Arceneaux's compassion for her patients at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is evident to anyone who reads her Christopher Award-winning book, *Wild Ride: A Memoir of I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships*. She has even participated in several medical mission trips because she wants to bring hope and healing to those in need.

Hayley noted, "I've always had a heart for global medicine and part of that goes back to knowing how fortunate I am to have gotten such incredible healthcare when I needed it. Also, at a young age, realizing that kids who are born in other parts of the world don't have access to that same type of healthcare."

Hayley continued, "One thing that's struck me [in visiting other cultures] is how much we have in common. Even though the language sounds different, even though the food and the currency and all of that is different, the core of humanity is the same. Also, looking at the earth from space, I was impacted with how united I felt with my fellow earthlings...because from space, it's all one."

All of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another...and a humble mind.

(1 Peter 3:8)

May I see that the core of humanity is the same, Creator.

I.V. Drips and Rocket Ships, Part 8

Today, Hayley Arceneaux continues her work as a physician's assistant at St. Jude's and remains a model of what being a pediatric cancer survivor looks like. And when she hits times of darkness in her life, she knows how to approach them.

Hayley concluded her *Christopher Closeup* interview with the following observations: "Even as a kid, there were certain times when I felt like I was losing my hope, and it made the situation around me so much harder. So, I've learned how important it is to maintain some kind of hope. Also, to appreciate the days that you're in and try to find joy where you are.

"For me, as a kid, some of that came through putting on dance shows with my other friend who was going through treatment—or going around and thanking people who were donating blood. Those little jobs I would find at the hospital gave me a lot of purpose. I think that's something that is important to focus on, too. You don't have to wait until the end to find your happiness; you can find your happiness now, too."

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

When life seems at its darkest, Jesus, help me to find Your light, joy, and peace.

A Humble Farmer's Good Deeds

For approximately 10 years, on the first of every month, Alabama farmer Hody Childress secretly performed a good deed. He would walk into Geraldine Drugs, a pharmacy in his DeKalb County community, and give a folded up \$100 bill to owner Brooke Walker. His instructions?

Use the money to help people who couldn't afford their prescriptions. And if anyone asked where the money came from, he told her to say, "It's a blessing from the Lord."

When Childress began experiencing medical problems, he would send a relative to deliver the money to Walker, never telling the relative what exactly it was meant for. His acts of kindness were only revealed after Childress passed away at age 80 in January 2023.

Walker told *AL.com* that she used the money "to help children needing Epi-Pens for allergic reactions, families in-between insurance coverages, and people just leaving the hospital." Childress's family and friends are working to establish a fund in his name to continue the practice.

**When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.
(Matthew 6:3)**

Help me be a blessing to others, Jesus.

Vienna's Dementia-Friendly Concerts

The Musikverein—the beautiful concert hall where the Vienna Philharmonic performs—is hosting a special event: a concert where older people, many of whom have dementia, can attend and be one with the music.

The series, which began in October 2022, is a “huge success.” Concert moderator Veronika Mandl told *France24.com*, “People are still receptive to music even in an advanced stage of dementia, because it connects to different areas of the brain.”

Concertgoers are allowed to get up and walk around during performances, and rows of seats are spaced out to allow for movement in wheelchairs. Also, the staff are trained to understand people living with dementia and help them feel more comfortable.

Music has an enormous impact on people with dementia, helping them feel happy and more alive. As Mandl said, “Music is memory, an emotion, a connection with different things.”

There were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. (Nehemiah 12:46)

Lord, may those who live with dementia always hear Your songs of love and hope.

Woman with Autism Practices Selflessness

While autism sometimes makes it harder to understand the needs of others, Danielle Rizzo found a way to empathize through donating her used eyeglasses.

At the age of three, Danielle needed to wear eyeglasses, but due to her autism, this proved challenging. Her parents, Dave and Mercedes, wrote at *CatholicMom.com*, “Both of us would hold her small hands so she could not remove the glasses as we walked around the house.”

Danielle grew to understand the importance of wearing her glasses and now, 20 years later, the Rizzos donated her old glasses to the Lions Eyeglass Recycling Program. This program gives recycled glasses to children and adults around the world.

When Danielle placed her old glasses into the donation box one pair at a time, her face lit up. Her parents observed that this selfless action moved her “a little bit closer to realizing that others have needs and that she can help.”

**It is in giving to that we receive.
(St. Francis of Assisi)**

Lord, bless and guide all families dealing with autism, and help all individuals with autism discover their potential to love and do good.

College in the Convent

With a decrease in the number of women pursuing religious life, Our Lady of the Angels convent in Philadelphia was not as full as it used to be. In fact, half the convent was empty. So, when nearby Neumann University ran out of student housing and began looking for new places it could situate its young adults, the nuns offered their home as an option.

Now, the nuns live on one side, while the college's students reside on the other. During waking hours, however, there's plenty of intermingling going on, from fun conversations to shared meals. Student Katela Villasenor told *CBS News* that the nuns have become like a second family: "They have so many stories...funny ones, serious ones, wise words."

The nuns are also benefiting from these new relationships. Sister Esther Anderson said they are "gaining so much from the presence of the students here...Life, energy...topics and activities that we might never have sought out."

One of those activities turned out to be a TikTok dance video, which resulted in joy and laughter for all involved.

One generation shall laud Your works to another. (Psalm 145:4)

*Help me build friendships across generations,
Savior.*

Life is Too Short

French author Andre Maurois once wrote, “Life is too short to be little. Often we allow ourselves to be upset by little things we should forget...We lose many irreplaceable hours brooding over small grievances that in a year’s time will be forgotten.”

Maurois concluded by saying, “So let us devote our lives to worthwhile actions and feelings—to great thoughts, real affection, and enduring undertakings.”

Anger and hurt feelings are very normal and very human, but life is too short to be endlessly upset or brooding, even over real hurts and injustices.

Work at coming to terms with anger and upsets. Seek inner peace through prayer—and work at achieving God’s peace one day at a time.

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

Jesus, move me past anger to find Your peace.

An Unusual M.D.

Doctor Hector Perrone had an unusual family. His brother and sister, as well as his son and daughter, were all doctors. But Dr. Perrone was the most unusual of all.

He served in the Army Medical Corps in World War II. Afterwards, he worked as a physician for large corporations. And, after business hours and on Saturdays, he had a private practice.

So far, that's not so unusual. But what he charged those private patients was extraordinary: five dollars a visit!

Dr. Perrone's wife said he never raised his fee from the 1950s until his death in 1991, because he was "just an old-fashioned man." A patient said of him, "He was just idealistic" and "he didn't care about money that much."

Idealism. Putting people ahead of money. Those are goals worth striving for.

**Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the needy honor
Him. (Proverbs 14:31)**

*Guide me in valuing people over money,
Creator of all.*

A Home and a Family

No matter what life threw at him, 10-year-old Nate never lost his optimism. Despite being diagnosed with sickle cell anemia, enduring multiple limb amputations, and even being removed from his biological parent's care, Nate remained positive. His approach captured the hearts of two of his teachers, Jenna and Tim Riccio.

Nate was hospitalized in September 2019 for emergency surgery. To comfort the boy who always brightened her reading class, Jenna decided to visit him in the hospital. There, she found out that Nate was being placed into foster care.

Jenna realized she had plenty of space for Nate in her home, so she casually asked a caseworker if she could become his foster parent. After weeks of background checks, the approval was given, and Nate moved in.

When Jenna and Tim got married, Nate was the ring bearer. Today, Nate is a proud big brother to baby Julien. And in 2022, the final adoption was approved. Nate was ecstatic. "I'm happy that I never have to imagine life without Nate," Jenna said.

He destined us for adoption as His children through Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:5)

Open my heart to others, Welcoming Jesus.

Olympian's Prayer and Hard Work

Sydney McLaughlin is known for her record-breaking achievements in track and field, but she attributes her success in part to her faith in God. She is now using her fame to share that faith with the world.

McLaughlin not only won Olympic gold in 2021, she broke her own world record in the 400-meter hurdles at the World Athletics Championships in 2022. In fact, her 50.68-second finish was the fourth time that the 22-year-old New Jersey resident broke the world record in the event.

She told *NBC Sports*, “I’ll have to start off by saying all the glory to God.” On Instagram, she added that prayer and hard work “divinely culminated in 50.68 seconds.”

Sister Percylee Hart, principal of Union Catholic Regional High School, from which McLaughlin graduated, told *Catholic News Agency*, “We are all called to become all God calls us to be, and be good people, and Sydney models that and affirms that with her messages about her faith.”

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness. (Hebrews 4:16)

Jesus, boldly give me the strength to reach my goals and to never lose hope that You are running beside me.