

## An Actress Finds a New Path, Part 1

Annie Lees grew up wanting to be an actress, but she hated living in Los Angeles. When a role in a play took her to Minneapolis, Minnesota, she fell in love with the community and decided to stay.

One day, as she was entertaining the crowd between innings at a St. Paul Saints baseball game, she began talking to an older man in a nearby seat. Lees could tell he had some kind of memory issues, so she chatted with him for an hour, reported Katy Read in *The Minnesota Star Tribune*.

Lees recalled, “After the game, his daughter comes up to me. And she was emotional. And she said...‘My dad has Alzheimer’s, and for you to stand there and talk to him was so amazing. Don’t ever stop doing what you’re doing.’”

Some weeks later, Lees was working a Saints game again when the man’s daughter approached her and said, “I’m so happy to see that you’re still doing this. My father has since passed on, but we will never forget what you gave to him that day.”

That comment set Lees on a new path in life.

**Do not cast me off in the time of old age.  
(Psalm 71:9)**

*Father, may we take the time to listen and speak with our elders who are ill or lonely.*

## **An Actress Finds a New Path, Part 2**

Earlier in her life, Annie Lees had developed an addiction to alcohol and drugs. She finally got help after realizing that God had a better plan for her life that she wanted to discover. Following her encounter with the man who had Alzheimer's, Lees mentioned it to her pastor, who asked her if she'd ever thought about going into ministry.

Since Lees loved listening to people share stories about their lives, she found herself drawn to becoming a chaplain. As reported by *The Minnesota Star Tribune*, Lees is now the chaplain at Catholic Eldercare, a local facility that houses seniors with dementia and other medical issues.

Lees said, "It's a...very particular time in people's lives. They're coming to the end of things...I think what's so beautiful about it is honoring them and helping walk them home."

She then quoted a line she heard on a podcast that motivates her every day: "Our job is to walk each other home. And if we can do that for one another in some small way every day, whatever it is, I think that's what this life is all about."

**In the path of righteousness there is life, in walking its path there is no death.  
(Proverbs 12:28)**

*Guide us in walking each other home to You,  
Savior.*

## Welcoming Country, Happy Marriage

In 1983, in connection to the celebration of the Fourth of July, *The Minneapolis Star and Tribune* asked its readers to send them letters explaining what the United States meant to them. Stephen MacLennan didn't need to think long. He felt grateful that his country had welcomed his girlfriend, Mai, and her family as refugees after they escaped from Vietnam.

Not only did Stephen's letter to the editor express his gratitude, it revealed that he planned to ask Mai to marry him that very day. She said yes, and the couple soon embarked on "for better or worse" together.

The *Tribune* pursued a follow-up story in 2025 and learned that the "worse" occurred one year later when Mai was diagnosed with leukemia. She survived, but treatment left her unable to have children. Still, Stephen and Mai enjoyed a happy life for 40 years until cancer took Mai in 2024.

"On her last day," the *Tribune* reported, "they were together. She told [Stephen] she loved him and thanked him for taking care of her." Stephen still misses Mai, but remains grateful for their life together.

**Love...endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:7)**

*Help couples build strong, happy marriages,  
Creator.*

## Meet Your Uncle Sam

Uncle Sam didn't always have a beard. That was given to him in the 1870s by American cartoonist Thomas Nast. And contrary to what you might think, Uncle Sam was a real person.

Samuel Wilson, a genial Troy, New York meat packer, was known to everybody around town as Uncle Sam. Early in the 1800s, he contracted with Elbert Anderson to supply barrels of salted meat to the War Department. The barrels were stamped with four letters: a small E.A. to identify the prime contractor—and a large U.S., indicating the government.

But the use of those letters to identify the United States was not common at the time, and they led some of Sam Wilson's workers to ask about their meaning. None of them really knew, but one suggested that as E.A. stood for Elbert Anderson, so U.S. must stand for Uncle Sam.

Because Sam Wilson was a prankster, everybody liked the joke, and so everything bearing the initials U.S. was said to belong to Uncle Sam. The mythical Uncle Sam has served the nation well ever since.

**Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.  
(Matthew 22:21)**

*Jesus, help our country live up to its founding principles.*

## God and Basketball

“We’re teaching life lessons through sports...Being kind, playing together, and all those values that sports hold.” So says Rich Fazzi, who directs the summer basketball camp for youth at Immaculate Conception Parish in Weymouth, Massachusetts.

From kindergarteners to sixth graders, Fazzi works with about 70 children each day. He’s good at what he does because his regular job is assistant basketball coach at UMass Dartmouth. Being at the camp, however, allows him to combine his faith with action.

Immaculate Conception’s pastor, Father Huy Nguyen, sees the program as having both practical and spiritual value. It helps parents a great deal because daycare is expensive. And from a faith perspective, said Father Huy to *The Pilot’s* Wes Cipolla:

“It’s good for kids to have summer in the summer, but also, we want them to not forget about Jesus, too...We want to bridge from here to the church over there. And slowly, we try to bridge so the kids can know more about Jesus.”

**While physical training is of some value,  
godliness is valuable in every way.**

**(1 Timothy 4:8)**

*Help sports be a bridge to faith for our youth,  
Creator.*

## From Vegetables to Wildflowers

Little Portion Farm in Ellicott City, Maryland, has grown more than 100,000 pounds of produce since 2019. Run by the Conventual Franciscans, all harvested produce is donated to the Franciscan Center in Baltimore.

This farm could not function without the generous help of volunteers, who donate their time and talents to keep it running.

Pat Murphy, a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist in Columbia, is one of those volunteers who found the experience educational. “The people who run this place...are so welcoming and warm,” she told the *Catholic Review*. “There is no judgment. Come when you can.”

In addition to a plethora of vegetables on the farm, you can also find wildflowers. Matthew Jones, the farm manager, said this is due to St. Francis of Assisi’s belief that parts of a garden should always be left wild. Those beautiful wildflowers, Jones believes, are what draw people in and have them “praise God.”

**Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth.” (Genesis 1:11-12)**

*Thank You, Lord, for Your most bountiful harvest!*

## Rock Star Saves Suicidal Woman

Known for hits such as “Living on a Prayer,” rock star Jon Bon Jovi helped answer a prayer in 2024 when he talked a woman off the ledge of a bridge while she was contemplating suicide.

Bon Jovi was filming a music video on the Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge in Nashville, Tennessee, when he noticed a distressed-looking woman standing nearby on the bridge’s outside ledge. He walked over, greeted the woman with a wave, and engaged her in conversation.

After chatting for several minutes, Bon Jovi, along with his production manager, assisted the woman over the railing and back onto the bridge, where she and the singer shared a hug.

Bon Jovi was hailed as a hero, with one fan, Jerry Braden, posting on social media, “My hero not only as a musician, but as a human being.”

**I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword...because you have trusted in Me, says the Lord. (Jeremiah 39:18)**

*Merciful Jesus, make me alert to other people's distress so I can offer them help in their darkest times.*

## Facing the Hurdles of Life, Part 1

Clint Hurdle grew up going to Bible school with his two sisters every Sunday at their local Methodist church in Florida. Though the seeds of faith were planted early in his life, it was decades before they took root and blossomed.

In the meantime, Clint played professional baseball with the Royals, Mets, Reds, and Cardinals. During those years, he admits to using Jesus like an ATM card, calling on Him when he needed help—and putting Him aside when things were going well. But life was never truly “going well.”

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about his book *Hurdle-isms: Wit and Wisdom from a Lifetime in Baseball*, Clint explained, “There’s two kinds of people in this world: those who are humble and those who are about to be...There was a time when I was full of myself...but I had my ego kicked out of me on the field from a talent base, from a marital base...I had two DUIs about nine years apart...and then I had two divorces. I wasn’t fired from any jobs for that, but maybe I was less than what I could have been at the jobs I had.”

How did Clint turn things around? More tomorrow...

**A man’s pride will bring him low.  
(Proverbs 29:23)**

*Lord, teach me humility so I can walk in Your way.*



## Facing the Hurdles of Life, Part 2

Ego, alcoholism, and failed relationships derailed Clint Hurdle's promising baseball career. That's when he finally made a change. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, he explained:

"Everybody's bottom is different, but when I hit that last bottom, I just knew that my life had become unmanageable. This wasn't going to work anymore. I actually made a list of things I needed to improve upon. On the top was: rededicate my life to Christ. The second was: get sober."

And so, at 40+ years of age, Clint followed through on both those goals. He is now 26 years sober, and his faith sits at the center of his life—though the journey was not always easy.

Clint admits that "surrendering" to God did not come naturally to him. He would often say to God, "Thy will be done, but can we do it my way?"

Clint reflected, "Once I laid it down—and [was] thankful that I'm still alive, that I have an opportunity to be a better man today than I was yesterday and focused on serving others—things turned around." More tomorrow...

**If we confess our sins, He...will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.  
(1 John 1:9)**

*Help me rededicate my life to You, Christ.*

## Facing the Hurdles of Life, Part 3

Following his turnaround, Clint Hurdle's life improved dramatically. He said, "I could never have [thought]...I'm going to be blessed in this way. I've been married for 26 years. We have two wonderful children. I've managed two Major League teams for 17 years." He also has a third child from a previous marriage with whom he has a wonderful relationship.

Clint started sharing his hard-earned wisdom and faith with an email chain 16 years ago. It grew to 6,000 subscribers when he offered the messages for free at *ClintHurdle.com*. In recent years, his son, Christian, challenged him to share his positivity on social media as well because it could reach a lot more people.

At first, Clint resisted the idea due to the negativity associated with social media. But then Christian quoted his father back at him: "If you hunt good, you find good. If you hunt bad, you find bad."

And so, Clint entered the arena determined to be "light, bright, and polite." He has now turned those messages into the book *Hurdle-isms: Wit and Wisdom from a Lifetime in Baseball*.

**If there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)**

*Lord, may I strive to both "hunt" and "find" the good.*

## Facing the Hurdles of Life, Part 4

Clint Hurdle's daughter, Maddy, was born with Prader-Willi Syndrome. "It's a deletion of the 15th chromosome," Clint explained, "which...lets you know you're hungry—and then, after you've eaten, it's the one that lets you know you're full." Maddy's system, therefore, has "no regulation, no off switch...whether it's anxiety, food security, verbal outbursts."

Despite Maddy's struggles, Clint knows that she doesn't need to be defined by them because she possesses so many positive qualities. He said, "Maddy went through high school. She had an aide with her in class. She went through vocational training school. She works three days a week at a dog store...She won a gold medal two years ago in Special Olympics."

"It has put my wife and I in a position of truly unconditional love for each other as well as for her. Unconditional love. I thought I knew it. Not until I got to live it...I've been blessed with three children. They have skill sets very different from mine, but I do believe God's put them in my life to transform me in areas where I needed to grow and I needed to appreciate more."

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

*Remind me to appreciate my family and friends, Abba.*

## Facing the Hurdles of Life, Part 5

Though Clint Hurdle's life has already been transformed by God, he started saying a prayer every day asking for even greater transformation: "Lord, help me become a simple person in a complex world."

Why is that prayer important, and how can it help others as well? During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about his book *Hurdle-isms: Wit and Wisdom from a Lifetime in Baseball*, Clint concluded, "I don't have to solve everybody's problems. I need to be a simple man. I need to do what's next, what's right in front of me, make my next good choice."

"I don't have to worry about what's going to happen two weeks from now. I've got to take care of today...Being a simple man has been an answer for me to not try and think I'm 'more than,' that I'm some kind of white knight on a horse going to come in and save this or save that. I need to be a good friend, good father, good brother, good servant of Jesus, good husband. That's going to keep me full today."

**So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6:34)**

*Holy Spirit, guide me in making my next good choice.*

## State Trooper's Courageous Idea

Eighteen-year-old Sam Dutcher thought he was going to die. The 2022 Honda Pilot he was driving in Fargo, North Dakota, kept accelerating instead of stopping, no matter what he did. The brakes and emergency brake wouldn't engage, and the car couldn't be shifted into neutral or turned off.

Dutcher was traveling on a thankfully clear road when he called 911 for help, knowing he would eventually crash. He made his way into Clay County, Minnesota, where State Trooper Zach Gruver clocked his vehicle going at 113 mph.

With time running out, Trooper Gruver came up with a novel idea. He zoomed in front of Dutcher's car, slowed down, and then braked, allowing Dutcher to crash into him and ultimately come to a stop. It was a risky maneuver, but it worked. Remarkably, no one got hurt.

Dutcher was deeply grateful to Trooper Gruver. A Patrol spokesman told *KARE11* News, "For everything that was going wrong, a few important things went right. Without the sacrifice of Trooper Gruver, we might not have had the victory and outcome we did."

**Be...of good courage, and act.  
(1 Chronicles 28:20)**

*Lord, guide me to find the right solutions to difficult problems.*

## A Visible Guardian Angel

St. Vincent de Paul founded the Daughters of Charity in 1633 as a religious order that would devote itself to serving the poor and sick. The principles that guided them back then continue to resonate hundreds of years later.

As St. John's University in Queens, New York, dedicated its new St. Vincent Health Sciences Center for health care education in 2024, one of the speakers recalled a vital lesson that St. Vincent imparted to the Daughters of Charity in their Common Rules. As reported in *St. John's Magazine*, he wanted to ensure the Sisters not only ministered "to the bodies of those they served, but to their entire person."

Very Rev. Stephen M. Grozio, Provincial Superior General for the Vincentians' Eastern Province, quoted St. Vincent as saying, "Never get angry with [patients], and do not speak to them harshly; they have enough to put up with because of their illness. Imagine that you are the visible guardian angel, their father and mother. God has made you to be their consolation."

**When the cares of my heart are many, Your consolations cheer my soul. (Psalm 94:19)**

*Savior, guide me in being a consolation to someone today.*

## Making Glasgow Smile

“I am enough.” Those were the words that Scottish creator Beth McNeill spelled out on white beads on the bracelets she made and distributed at a Taylor Swift concert in 2024. Her goal was to remind people “how wonderful a person you are.”

Soon after, McNeill began hiding these bracelets in envelopes throughout Glasgow. Along with the bracelets, inside these envelopes was this handwritten message: “You found me! I have scattered envelopes like this over the city to make the people of Glasgow smile.”

McNeill, who works in education, told *The Daily Record’s* Eve Beattie, “I think more than ever we need the little things in life to put a smile on our face[s]. Small...acts of kindness really go a long way. Especially with how mental health is these days, and as someone that also is affected by anxiety and depression, I think we need to be all connected and talking.”

“Kids nowadays don’t have the confidence or self-belief, ultimately the potential I can see in them,” Beth observed. “So, in my practice I’ve started ‘I am’ affirmations to...lift them up...It’s infectious... Making someone happy...makes you happy.”

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

*Father, may we serve as beacons of positivity for others.*

## Living the Good Life

His name was Evan Sholl, and he ran two of the most popular cafeterias in Washington, D.C., for much of the 20th century. On his tables stood cards featuring table prayers for Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. His kitchen was staffed by loyal and dedicated employees, and in the lobbies of his cafeterias, you would find displays of religious literature (including Christopher News Notes) that were yours for the taking.

Sholl once told an interviewer that he always felt “it’s better to be a steward than a captain.” As a result, he tried to be of service to his employees, his suppliers, and his customers.

Some of his employees worked for him for 50 years. He had a multi-racial workforce, paid his staff well, and gave them time off to make spiritual retreats, in addition to paying the retreat expenses. His goal, he said, was to practice his faith through his business, and he felt this approach had provided a terrific life. He passed away in 1983, having left a legacy of faith and goodness that touched many people.

**Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead. (James 2:26)**

*Lord, let me live my life in harmony with my beliefs.*



## **‘Old Ladies Against Underwater Garbage’**

Susan Bauer, age 85, loved underwater swimming in Cape Cod’s ponds, especially enjoying the turtles she saw there, each one unique. She didn’t, however, love the cans, tires, firecrackers, and other bits of trash settled at the bottom.

The psychologist and oceanography author eventually transformed her passion to protect the turtles and their habitat into an environmental group called Old Ladies Against Underwater Garbage (OLAUG).

Bauer’s efforts drew national media attention. She has “inspired countless individuals to find their own path to communing with nature,” according to Pam Hugi, writing on the *Senior Planet* website.

Bauer was awed by underwater life and attracted others to the cause. She believes it’s possible to find awe-inspiring activities “through art, music, nature, other people.”

**The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein; for He  
has founded it upon the seas, and established  
it upon the rivers. (Psalm 24:1-2)**

*May we find beauty in nature, Creator.*

## Do Not Be Afraid of Old Age

A few days after Pope Francis' death in April 2025, a book about aging was published by his friend, Cardinal Angelo Scola. The pope had written the book's Preface, and it contained wisdom for all of us as we move on in years. Pope Francis wrote:

“We must not be afraid of old age, we must not fear embracing becoming old, because life is life, and sugarcoating reality means betraying the truth of things...Because to say ‘old’ does not mean ‘to be discarded,’ as a degraded culture of waste sometimes leads us to think. Saying ‘old’ instead means saying experience, wisdom, knowledge, discernment, thoughtfulness, listening, slowness...Values of which we are in great need!

“It is true, one becomes old, but this is not the problem: the problem is how one becomes old. If we live this time of life as a grace, and not with resentment; if we accept the time...in which we experience diminished strength, the increasing fatigue of the body, the reflexes no longer what they were in our youth—with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness—well then, old age too becomes an age of life which, as Romano Guardini taught us, is truly fruitful and capable of radiating goodness.”

**In old age they still produce fruit. (Psalm 92:14)**

*Teach me to embrace aging, Creator of Life.*

## A Commitment to Love

Being a celebrity doesn't protect you from hardship. That is the case for comedian Jay Leno, whose wife, Mavis, suffers from dementia. Still, he approaches his caregiving with a positive attitude.

In an interview with *People* magazine, Leno said, "When you get married, you...take a vow: 'Will I live up to this? Or will I be like a sleazy guy if something happens to my wife?'" Leno chose to live up to his vow.

"I enjoy the time with my wife," he explained about their day-to-day life. "I go home, I cook dinner for her, watch TV and it's okay. It's basically what we did before, except now I have to feed her and do all those things. But I like it."

Leno believes that unwavering commitment is what ultimately defines love in general—and his marriage in particular. He noted, "I'm glad I didn't cut and run. I'm glad I didn't run off with some woman half my age or any of that silly nonsense. I would rather be with her than doing something else."

**Love is patient; love is kind...It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4,7)**

*Strengthen married couples' commitment to each other, Abba, in good times and bad.*

## Pierogis in Space

Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski is only the second astronaut from Poland to travel to space (the first since 1978), but in Summer 2025, he became the first to bring pierogis along with him for the ride!

Uznański-Wiśniewski joined Axiom Space's fourth mission to the International Space Station. While his primary goal was conducting experiments "to further research in medicine, biology and engineering," reported *TVP World*, he wanted to add a personal dimension to the trip by taking one of his favorite Polish delicacies along for the ride.

Pierogis consist of fried or boiled dough filled with meat, cheese, potato, or some other ingredient. Creating a version that would be edible in space, however, took some trial and error.

Uznański-Wiśniewski worked with a small family business that figured out a way to freeze dry the pierogis in a way that they still tasted delicious. This allowed him to share an earthly feast with his fellow international astronauts as they all worked together for the common good.

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

*Wherever we are, Father, allow us to eat together in a spirit of unity and fraternity.*

## Showing Up for Life

Fifteen years ago, south-east Londoner Darren Awol was “shot in the back...in an unprovoked attack in Anerly.” More than a decade later, with the help of “crutches and a wheelchair,” Awol was able to cross the finish line in the London Marathon in an impressive six hours and 35 minutes.

“I was told I would never walk again,” the now 43-year-old Awol told *SunnySkyz.com*. The injury to his spine caused him to be paralyzed below the waist. “But through sheer determination and relentless effort, I rehabilitated myself and regained the ability to walk—even without feeling in my legs.”

Though Awol contemplated suicide several times, he didn’t follow through, noting, “What I took from this experience is that everyone has a purpose, a drive, and someone they’re doing it for...We’re here for a reason.”

For Awol, that someone is his son, who was only two years old at the time he was shot. The boy is now 17 and served as Awol’s “biggest motivation” to get back on his feet. “No matter what I go through mentally and physically,” Awol concluded to *BBC News*, “I show up for life.”

**I have finished the race...kept the faith.  
(2 Timothy 4:7)**

*Abba, grant us faith and perseverance in times of struggle.*

## Start Early to Prevent Drug Abuse

Many years ago, J. Clayton Stewart was the coordinator for a drug abuse program in the state of Washington. For years, his family took in foster children, most of whom would be classified as drug abusers. In an article in *Marriage and Family Living*, he wrote that “a major part of the defense against drug abuse begins at a very early age.”

“If your child feels basically good about himself/herself,” Stewart said, “or if he/she is striving toward a particular goal, he/she is far less likely than most others to become involved with drugs to the point of personal injury.”

Speaking of the young people his family had taken in, he observed, “The most tragic element in all of them was the fact that they didn’t feel very good about themselves. Nor did they have strong goals beyond enjoyment for today.”

In the young, feelings of self-worth depend as much on others as on interior dispositions. Young people need to know that they are loved, that their talents and abilities are recognized. If they live with constant criticism, they may lack confidence and search for artificial ways to bolster their fragile egos.

**Hearken to the sound of my cry. (Psalm 5:2)**

*Help me give young people encouragement,  
Lord.*

## Water is Everything

Most people in the United States take it for granted that when we turn on our faucets, clean water will come out. This is not the case in other parts of the world. The village of Sakdje in Cameroon, Africa, for instance, is subject to frequent droughts, leaving residents searching for water that doesn't cause illness.

Enter the Claretian Missionaries, who came to serve the Catholics in the area by holding Masses, administering the sacraments, and creating a vibrant parish life. The priests quickly realized these things would be difficult to do if their parishioners did not have clean water, so they set out to help rectify the situation by building overhead water tanks and wells.

The priests are making progress and have even begun building schools in the communities where the water problem has eased through their efforts. As reported in the newsletter *Living Hope*, Father Jude Thaddeus Langeh said, "I estimate the benefit to 2,000 to 3,000 inhabitants per village... Water means freedom. Water means life. Water means fraternity. Water means school. Water means emancipation. Water is everything."

**The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places. (Isaiah 58:11)**

*Help us quench our physical and spiritual thirst, Creator.*

## Flower the People

Fresh flowers, whether bundled into bouquets or shaped into more elaborate arrangements, never fail to accompany the best celebrations of life, while also reminding us to appreciate the natural beauty around us. But what about the many flowers that are deemed not good enough for mass distribution and get thrown in the garbage?

Having experienced homelessness, landscaper Trevor Phillips knows how it feels to be “tossed aside.” So, after seeing one too many flowers in dumpsters “behind a number of Nashville florists,” he decided it was time to put these discarded beauties to better use, believing they would serve as the perfect pick-me-up for patients at local “health and rehabilitation centers.”

With the help of a few caring volunteers, Trevor’s mission, aptly named “Flower the People,” soon blossomed in earnest, becoming for him “a dream come true.” He especially enjoys delivering the flowers himself, telling *WKRN News*, “A lot of times, I end up sitting down with somebody, and it’s them helping me. I find out what’s important in life.”

**The flowers...are in blossom. (Song 2:12,13)**

*Father, help us to see the potential beauty in all things.*



## Full Circle with St. Christopher

When author Torrey Maldonado won his first Christopher Award for writing the young adult novel *Tight*, he was surprised by the image on the front of his medallion.

Throughout his childhood, his mom had a copper image in a silver frame hanging on the wall of their home. It featured a man, hunched over, carrying a child on his shoulders. That was St. Christopher carrying the child Jesus.

Fast forward to many years later when Torrey received his Christopher Award. “When I saw the award,” he recalled during a *Christopher Closeup* interview, “my jaw dropped because the saint on the award, the image on the award, was the exact same image that I had seen growing up my whole life, from being a tot all the way up to graduating college.”

“It’s fascinating that my mom had planted the image of St. Christopher in my head long before you planted the Christopher Award in my hand,” Torrey added in amazement.

That same evening, Torrey visited his mom to show her his award so they could both enjoy this full circle moment together.

**The hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. (Philemon 1:7)**

*Allow Your saints to surprise me, Creator.*

## A Neighbor Saves a Life

It was 1961, and a group of neighbors in San Diego were enjoying a backyard party. Suddenly, a mother noticed that her 21-month-old son, Ben, was missing.

Several parents started walking around the area looking for him, but Barbara Ribeiro followed her gut instinct and went to a house that she knew had a pool. There, she saw Ben lying at the bottom of the pool. Barbara pulled the boy out of the water and immediately began performing CPR because he wasn't breathing. Her quick thinking saved his life.

Soon after, Ben's family moved away and lost touch with Barbara—until 2025. Having lived a fulfilling life as a business owner and father of two, Ben wanted to reunite with the woman who had rescued him from certain death.

As reported by *CBS 8*, the reunion was emotional and included some tears. Ben told journalist Jeff Zevely, “When I really think of it, I think [it was the] hand of God. He made sure that I made it for some reason. I have very much been blessed.”

**Save me, O God...I have come into deep waters. (Psalm 69:1-2)**

*Lead neighbors to look out for each other,  
Father, with guidance from the Holy Spirit.*

## Finding Peace Here and Now, Part 1

Throughout his life, author Eric A. Clayton struggled with comparing himself to others and often feeling inferior. Then, his spiritual director, Father Jim Bowler, S.J., introduced him to the idea that God “delights” in him and looks at him as “beloved.”

Accepting this concept can be difficult, Eric observed during a *Christopher Closeup* interview about his book *Finding Peace Here and Now*: “That sense of being beloved for simply ‘being’ is so countercultural and foreign to us, who feel like we have to do and produce and earn and succeed...It’s a lot easier to count our mistakes... than it is to say, ‘I’m the beloved of God, and I can live out of that joy and out of that delight.’”

Living out of that joy and delight can serve as the cornerstone of inner peace, which we can then spread outward. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius can help because they lead us to ask and answer the question, “What are we made to do? We’re made to praise, reverence, and serve God, and in so doing, help ourselves and help others.”

**See what love the Father has given us; that we should be called children of God. (1 John 3:1)**

*Remind me that I am beloved by You, Creator.*

## Finding Peace Here and Now, Part 2

Praising, reverencing, and serving God can lead us to inner peace, which we can then spread outward. But the ways in which we do so vary because we are each unique individuals. In essence, we need to get to know ourselves at a deeper level in order to find out what God wants from us.

Eric Clayton explained, “That’s a question of looking at my own experiences, skills, passions, and desires—and bringing that into the world... How can I go deeper into myself to...better understand, what is it that makes me tick?”

“This is a wonderful quote from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit: ‘The more we descend into ourselves, the more we encounter God at work.’ I like that imagery, [that] there’s always more to discover of ourselves.”

“The more we discover ourselves, the more we discover God at work in our stories...And the more we can do that, then the more we have to give to the world...Real success in the eyes of God isn’t an acquisition of more money and honors and pride, but, in fact, an engagement with the world around us.”

**Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve...with whatever gift each...has received. (1 Peter 4:10)**

*Teach me to better know myself and my gifts,  
Holy Spirit.*

## Finding Peace Here and Now, Part 3

Several years ago, Eric Clayton traveled to a Jesuit community in Amman, Jordan, to interview war refugees from Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia. Their peace had been destroyed by acts of violence which upended their lives.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about his book *Finding Peace Here and Now*, Eric noted that these refugees all arrived feeling bitter and mistrustful. But as they came into contact with the Jesuits and others who were helping them, their attitudes softened.

One person stood out to Eric, a young man he calls Amani, who, due to his past circumstances, arrived “hating people of Arabic background, hating White people, and hating people of other religions.” Then, Amani began taking dance classes.

As he got to know the Jesuits and his fellow refugees on a personal level, his hate began melting away, and he regained the inner peace which allowed him to build outward peace.

“It’s very good to dance with people of different nationalities,” Amani said. “We just see ourselves as human beings.”

**Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.  
(Romans 12:17)**

*Help me to live peaceably with all, Creator.*

## Finding Peace Here and Now, Part 4

Joy is another avenue we can take towards peace, although Eric Clayton admits he didn't always see it that way. He recalled a conversation with Jesuit author Father Mark Thibodeaux, who told him the Examen prayer should begin in a spirit of gratitude.

That didn't make sense to Eric because some people are struggling with hardships and injustices in their lives. Why would they be thankful? "We begin with gratitude because it lifts our horizon," Father Mark responded. "Instead of spiraling and focusing just on the problem, we say, 'God is still here.'"

Eric saw the wisdom in that approach, explaining, "Somebody shares a smile, the flowers are beautiful today, this bird is doing something crazy and it's really making me smile...Those little things is where God meets us. In the specificity, in the seemingly mundane, God meets us there, and I think that's all we have to share with each other."

"We have these big, great, sweeping concepts of peace, but peace happens interpersonally. It happens when we share something of ourselves."

**A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. (James 3:18)**

*May gratitude lead me to peace, Savior.*

## Finding Peace Here and Now, Part 5

Finding peace comes easier when we adopt what Eric Clayton calls “a spirituality of curiosity.” This involves looking at the world and the people around us not in judgment, but in “wonder and awe.”

“We used to [say] ‘fear of the Lord’ was a fruit of the Holy Spirit,” Eric explained. “When I was young, ‘fear of the Lord’ became ‘wonder and awe.’...Of course, we’re afraid of God because God can do such great things. But it’s not that we’re supposed to cower; we’re supposed to embrace, to be curious about God’s creation.”

“And we are God’s creation! So, we’re not just curious about what the butterflies are up to, but we’re curious about what we are up to! What is my neighbor doing? Why are they sad? Why are they weeping? Why are they joyful? Be curious.”

“It’s hard...[because] it’s so much easier to count our sins, mistakes, and shortcomings...It’s much harder, but much more enlivening, to turn with curiosity—asking, ‘I wonder what this person is up to’—and be in awe of them and all that God is up to in the world. I think that’s the foundation for peace.”

**Make me to know Your ways, O Lord.  
(Psalm 25:4)**

*May curiosity lead me to love You and my neighbors, Lord.*