

St. Mary's Parish

Bulletin Magazine



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FROM THE PUBLISHER



Dear St. Mary's Parishioners,

The new liturgical season of Lent is already upon us! I am always amazed at just how fast Advent and Christmas go by. Can you even believe that we are now well into the new year?

As we all prepare for Easter through the journey of Lent, I want to call your attention to some amazing articles in this month's edition. First, we have a wonderful new family that has joined our Parish! Many of you recognize them from the Baptism of their youngest son a few weeks ago. What a powerful way to begin your journey at this parish!

In the spirit of Lent and service, there is information on a volunteer service trip to Africa that Father Tom is encouraging everyone to support either by your attendance, financial assistance, and/or prayers. Please prayerfully consider this.

Lastly, since there is so much happening at the parish, you'll see in the bulletin various opportunities to be a part of the community. I encourage you to read carefully through these pages to stay "in-the-know."

As always, I am so grateful to the contributors of this amazing edition of St. Mary's Parish Bulletin Magazine. Please support the businesses that have sponsorships in this magazine. Without them, this magazine would not be possible!

If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Peace and Joy!

Johnathan Gunther

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RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Irresistible Make-Ahead Egg Bake

By Jordan King

There is never a bad time for egg bake; breakfast, lunch and dinner are all perfect times to enjoy this filling entree. It is nice to have a recipe that I can walk away from after I put it together, especially during the holidays when time is tight and I am spending hours on end in the kitchen. There is no babysitting this irresistible dish!

Ingredients

- 1 package of crescent roll dough
- 1 package of hash browns
- 1 pound of ground breakfast sausage or sausage links/patties chopped into ½ inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 8 eggs
- ¼ milk
- 1½ cup cheese

Directions

Heat oven to 375 degrees. In a greased 11x9 pan, unroll the crescent roll dough and lay it flat in the bottom of the pan. Pour hash browns over the dough and spread sausage pieces evenly throughout. Drizzle maple syrup over the layers in the pan; scramble the eggs with milk and pour over. Top evenly with cheese and bake for 40 minutes.

It's time to help your money grow.

WP

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THE TITHE THAT BINDS

By Kimberly Gamba

A tithe serves two purposes. First, it supports the Church. But, more importantly, a tithe is a symbolic gesture of recognition that all that we have really belongs to God. By offering the first tenth back to God through the Church, we demonstrate that we trust in Him and not in what He has allowed us to acquire.

The Bible shows how central this simple act of faith is to a healthy spiritual life. The prophet Malachi calls the people of Israel to return to God. In his prophecy, he outlines a number of areas where the people have been unfaithful, and God answers the people's question about why He has been so far away from them:

"But you say, 'How are we robbing thee?' In your tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food

in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing" (Mal. 3:7-10).

The language of God is very strong. Those who are not tithing are accused of robbing God! Upon closer examination, we find an amazing promise in this passage. Ordinarily it is a sin to "put God to the test" (cf. Deut. 6:16, Mt. 4:7) but here is the one exception. We are encouraged to test God by bringing our whole tithe, so that He may provide us with overflowing blessings.

Shortly after we were married, we went away to graduate school. Curtis thought God had called him to study theology, but leaving his job in California and becoming a starving student wasn't easy. By this time we had two children. After much prayer we decided to go, with the understanding that

this was a luxury and that Curtis would do what he needed to do to provide for our family. If we missed a single meal then he would drop out of school and go back to work full-time. During school we remained committed to tithing, despite the difficulty of giving ten percent when our income was so low.

Finally, the day arrived. We were broke and out of food. Up until this time we had never missed a meal. Curtis knew that the next morning he would have to resign from school. Then we heard a knock on the door. When we opened it, a friend was standing there with a large pot. She said, "I made way too much spaghetti tonight, could you use some?" We had spaghetti that night and again for lunch the next day. That afternoon an unexpected reimbursement check came in the mail. God had provided.

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THE MILLER FAMILY

Comes Home to St. Mary's

By Kimberly Gamba | Photos By iStock photography

Please welcome the Miller family to the St. Mary's community! Kevin and Liza may have just moved here with their three children, but they are hardly strangers to the area. Liza's family (her maiden name is Kelly) has been a fixture here in the area for generations. In fact, her parents, Bob and Susan, met at St. Mary's school when they were in fifth grade. Now, 50 years and 4 children later, the two still attend the same 10am Sunday Mass they attended as children. You can find Bob and Susan with their children and grandchildren at the Nightingale Supper Club each week after 10am mass.

Liza is the oldest of Bob and Susan's children, and is so happy to now be home, going out to Sunday brunch as she did as a child but now with her husband and own children. Liza grew up here at St. Mary's with her sister and two brothers. The Kellys were all Steelers fans, and they've never been afraid to show it.

"You know those guys who take their shirts off in below-zero weather? My dad was one of those guys," Liza said.

In addition to being active in the parish

community, Liza and her siblings all attended St. Mary's School.

"Looking back now, I was so lucky to have had that experience," she says. "To come to school every day and talk about God? That's a great thing. I think that—no matter what you do with your life—it stays with you."

From Baptism to Confirmation, Liza has received all of her sacraments here at St. Mary's. She still remembers tasting a non-consecrated wafer to prepare her for her First Communion. "It tasted like an envelope," she recalls.

After Confirmation, Liza graduated and attended Georgetown, where she received her bachelor's degree in speech communication. It was at Georgetown, though, that something else happened: Liza met Kevin Miller. A Baltimore native, Kevin was a year younger than Liza, but she knew he was the one for her when he started talking about going to Sunday Mass.

"He was definitely very outgoing, the life of the party," Liza says, "but even then he was already serious about his faith life and

what it meant to him."

The couple dated for two years before getting engaged (despite the fact that Kevin is a diehard Ravens fan). True to his character, Kevin asked Bob Kelly for his permission to marry his oldest daughter. Naturally, Bob said yes. After a two-year engagement, Kevin and Liza were married at the Georgetown University church on May 23, 2009, a day Liza still remembers vividly.

"To be there in that church... With all our friends and family... It was quite an experience. I would say it was literally breathtaking."

After the wedding, the young couple settled down in the Washington, D.C. area. An economics major, Kevin began working as an analyst in the D.C. area. Meanwhile, Liza worked with the intention of staying home as soon as they began a family. That moment arrived very soon as Kevin and Liza welcomed Mary into their family in 2010. Soon after that, they welcomed their first boy, Thomas.

Last year, the couple welcomed Vincent, who struggled after a premature birth



and a variety of related health issues. After countless doctor appointments and medical bills, Liza realized that her young family needed a community with a built-in support network. And so, after praying and discussing it with Kevin, the Millers made the move to back to Springfield, and Liza was home again. Even though the Millers had made numerous visits to Springfield, moving back proved to be a completely different experience.

“It’s a strange feeling,” she says. “You have to stop and reacquaint yourself with

the surroundings. You see what’s changed in ten years and what hasn’t.”

The Miller family wasted no time in getting involved with the St. Mary’s community. The oldest two children, Mary and Thomas, have already begun attending the school, where Liza also volunteers on a regular basis.

“It’s great to help out with the school, but I honestly think that I do it to stay close to my kids,” she adds with a smile.

Kevin is also very involved, starting a Sunday night basketball league and a

men’s faith discussion group. And you can be sure to see both Kevin and Liza at the Mardi Gras fundraiser this February. The couple has already signed up to volunteer at the event, and it promises to be a fun night.

If you’d like to meet the Millers, just look for them at Mass or in the parking lot at school, where they like to stay and chat after pick up in the afternoon.

“We’re kind of hard to miss,” Liza says. “Our hands might be full, but we’d love to meet you. Go Steelers!”

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This year marks the Holy Year of Mercy, which was instituted by Pope Francis so that we might rediscover the tremendous gift of mercy and focus on placing mercy before judgment in our daily lives. As a result, the theme of many St. Mary's initiatives this year will be Divine Mercy. I am so hopeful and excited about the many gifts this year will bring the St. Mary's community. First, allow me to express some truths about the topic of God's mercy.

God's mercy is boundless. It is for everyone. Remember the merciful actions of Jesus. Remember how he pleads to God the Father from the cross, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do" (Lk. 23:24). Remember how rather than condemning the woman caught in adultery, Jesus has mercy on her saying, "Go and sin no more" (Jn. 8:1).

We must trust in divine mercy while at the same time doing everything in our power to avoid sin. To view God's mercy as an excuse to offend God and live godlessly is deadly. That is called presumption, which separates one from God, making forgiveness and growth in holiness impossible. Instead, we pray, we trust in God, we do our best to serve our neighbor, and we develop an awareness of our weakness. And, of course, we regularly receive the sacrament of reconciliation. It is there we experience God's mercy directly and personally.

Every single one of us suffers from our own sinful ways. However, if you are in deep pain due to abuse, addiction, depression or loneliness, please contact me so I can assist you with beginning to walk on an authentic path of healing and reconciliation.


I am also increasing the availability of the sacrament of reconciliation during this year of mercy. It is now available every day fifteen minutes before mass. Furthermore, St. Mary's now offers a monthly weekend of reconciliation, during which guests will

speaking on theological topics related to trusting in God's mercy, and priests will offer opportunities for receiving the sacrament of reconciliation (more on this later). Lastly, you will also receive a gift from the parish: *Divine Mercy in My Soul: The Diary of Sister Faustina Kowalska*. This spiritual masterpiece will be mailed to you. This extraordinary gift from an anonymous donor will help you learn a great deal about divine Mercy.

May this year of Mercy provide you with the spiritual refreshment and peace that follows from the experience of God's merciful love.

God Bless you all,

Fr. Tom



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CRAFT SALE TO BENEFIT ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

Did you know the annual craft sale brings in \$25,000 a year on average for our school's budget? We are looking for more crafters just like you! If you have a project idea, please let us know. Some supplies can be provided or reimbursed. Crafting for the sale continues year-round, and we are currently looking for new and exciting projects for this year's sales. Please contact Claire Stobb if you would like to learn more!

CALLING ALL SEAMSTRESSES!

Our Liturgy and Environment Committee will be cleaning out the environment closet and needs your assistance with some mending and ironing of our liturgical altar clothes and environmental fabric!

If you are willing to assist please contact Debbie in the parish office or stop into Church on Friday afternoons from 1-3pm.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

@St. Mary's School Gym

Join other men of the parish in the school gym for a pick-up game of basketball and open gym time each Monday evening! Please bring your own water and any balls/shirts needed for 3-on-3 play. Snacks will be provided.

Time: 7-8pm (basketball), 8pm: snacks and fellowship

MASS TIMES

Tuesday, Thursday & Friday: 7:30am

Wednesday: 6pm

Saturday: 4:15pm

Sunday: 7:30am & 10am

RECONCILIATION

Wednesday: 4:30-5:45pm

Saturday: 3-4pm

ADORATION

The side chapel is now open 24 hours for Adoration. Please call the parish office for the door combination code or see the sign-up sheet in the side chapel to sign up for a time to sit with the Lord or drop in any time.

ROSARY & DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET

All are invited to join us in praying the rosary Wednesdays at 5pm and in praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet Fridays at 3pm.

MORE BULLETIN NEWS ON PAGE 12

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PRAYING THE FAMILY ROSARY

By Kimberly Gamba

I'm sure nine out of ten parents would agree: Praying the Rosary as a family can be a participation in the Passion of Christ. It's a form of redemptive suffering unlike any other. With the nomadic tendencies of little ones and the other struggles of family life sure to interrupt this needed prayerful meditation, we could easily ask ourselves, why even begin a tradition of prayer that will only end in frustration?

THE CALL

To establish the habit of praying the Rosary as a family, the first step—and not the least daunting—is the call. Just trying to gather the children for family prayers can be quite a feat. As a father of eight, I know how easy it is to get discouraged by the seemingly endless struggle of gathering young children for the family Rosary. But consider this when you are tempted to despair after giving the call over and over . . . and over again: We exert the extra effort to prepare and gather the children for school, doctor appointments, or even a trip to the zoo. Does not their spiritual health have far greater implications than these events?

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

The Rosary has a rhythm that models our life: Joyful and sorrowful events unfold before us daily. By meditating upon the mysteries found in the Rosary, we can unite our experiences—even the experience of family prayer!—with those of the Holy Family.

The Rosary is an opportunity for us to settle into the rhythm of God's life through the Person of Jesus Christ. Rather than being one more thing in this world that offers to gratify our personal desires or needs, the Rosary is an exercise in self-donation. We can instill this virtue in our children by encouraging them to offer the Rosary for those with no one to pray for them.

POINTLESS SUFFERING?

As we gather for the family Rosary in our home, exhaustion often overwhelms me the moment I sit down. I feel unfortunately very much like Peter and the disciples, who fell asleep in the garden during Jesus' agony. I have actually drifted off in the middle of a Hail Mary only to be startled awake by my wife praying a little louder, inviting me back into the land of the living.

It isn't just a personal struggle, though. With children weeping and gnashing their teeth, instead of being a heavenly experience, this prayer time seems to reflect a manifestation of purgatory.

A RESURRECTION MOMENT

On Good Friday several years ago, my four-year-old son led the fourth sorrowful mystery for the first time. We all clapped as he finished. Everyone in the family was so proud and excited at this beautiful moment. I knew that he could pray some of the prayers before, but he had never led a mystery. That night he wanted to. It was a glorious moment that would not have come had we not been persistent in praying the family Rosary.

In the end, teaching our children to focus on the beauty of God's love within time, and our invitation as His children to spend eternity with Him, is the catechesis we as parents are asked to convey.

Leading our family into this meditation is not easy, nor is it always contemplative or the conduit for warm and fuzzy feelings. The importance and value of the Rosary is there nonetheless. Make the call heard in your family, invite them into the rhythm of life by meditating upon the beauty of God in time, take all of the struggles of this Rosary time and place it upon the Cross, realizing that the impact you are making in their lives is leading them to the beauty of the Resurrection.



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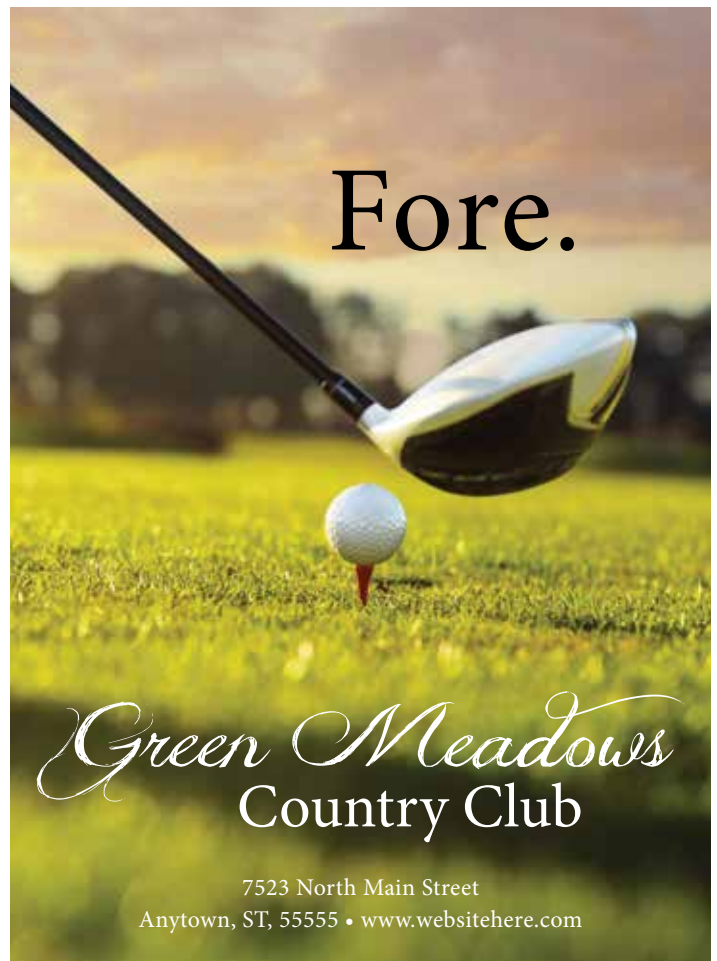


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It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way “by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity.”

168 Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and “a school for human enrichment.”

169 Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life.



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FAITH FORMATION

ST. ANNE'S WARMING SHELTER MEAL

St. Mary's confirmation class, in collaboration with the Social Concerns Committee, will be preparing and serving the Sunday evening meal at St. Anne's Warming Shelter on the 19th. Please call the parish office or see the table in the back of Church if you would like to sign up for a serving shift. Not able to make it? No problem! The Social Concerns Committee could use your help in preparing some of the food items! Sign up to drop off a dessert or tableware, and a Social Concerns Committee member will contact you about when and where to drop off your contribution.

NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Enjoy a donut and orange juice as you network with other St. Mary's parishioners every first Monday from 8-10am. This networking breakfast is perfect for professionals, business owners, those seeking services and those un- or underemployed! The breakfast is drop-in, so come as your schedule permits.

COFFEE AND CHRIST

Our mom's group, "Coffee and Christ," will be changing their monthly meetings to Fridays at 9am in the Fellowship Hall. There will be a discussion on the group's current book choice, Ann Voskamp's *One Thousand Gifts*. Books are available in the Family Life Office. Coffee, pastries and childcare is provided.

Time: 9-11am



PARISH DIRECTORY

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- Fr. Tom Smith, Pastor
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- Debbie Smith, Parish Secretary
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ADULT MINISTRY

PRAYING WITH THE SAINTS

Kick off the month by coming to our new adult program, Praying with the Saints, every 1st Sunday at 7pm in the Fellowship Hall. Adults are welcome to come and pray and enjoy sweet treats as Fr. Tom and Betty Travers present Praying with the Saints. Fr. Tom will guide the group in Lectio Divina, and then Betty Travers will lead a discussion on a different saint each month. A light meal will be served, followed by an opportunity for reconciliation and fellowship. Please call the parish office to register.

Time: 7pm

Cost: \$5 per person suggestion donation

DIVORCE PRAYER GROUP

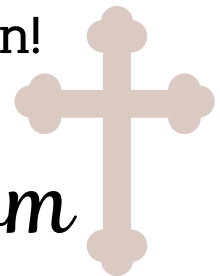
If you are going through a divorce and looking for an encouraging and safe place to share and pray or if you have been divorced and would like to encourage others, please consider being part of our new divorce ministry. We are looking to start a prayer/support group at St. Mary's. Possible topics include annulment, co-parenting and dating after divorce. If interested, please visit the parish website for an anonymous survey or contact Fr. Tom in the parish office.

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SOUP FOR THE SOUL

Sparks Inter-Generational Fellowship

By Kimberly Gamba, Youth Ministry Editor

This fall Josh Nelson, an eighth-grade student in St. Mary's Parish Day School, approached me after serving at the Funeral Mass of Janice Hopkins. He was impressed by what he had learned about his fellow parishioner, especially her service and involvement in our community. Janice had been a parishioner at St. Mary's since her baptism in 1932, and for 31 years Janice cooked and served soup in some capacity for St. Mary's Parish. She started sharing her soups in the winter months when she lived next to the school. Janice would walk over to the school to have her lunch with the priests and teachers and would always bring an extra bowl of soup for a priest or school teacher who hadn't packed a lunch or only had a cold sandwich. Janice's soups became so famous that once winter would hit each year several people

would begin "forgetting" their lunches. Janice was fast to catch on and created the Soup and Soul Bible Study, held the second Friday of each month.

As Josh shared with me the fun facts he had learned about Janice and her soup he said, "I eat lunch here every day, just like she did! I never met her, though. Probably because we didn't go to the same weekend Mass, and she did old people things, and I do young people things."

And so a partnership began! Josh and his classmates and the Youth Ministry Program are reviving the Soup and Soul program. The Bible Study now has an added goal: for the youth and the more elder members of our parish to join together for fellowship and Bible study. Josh and Margaret Jo Jones, our oldest parish member at 97 years, prepared the Bible Study together, choosing the scripture verses to cover and the discussion questions that would spark conversation among the small groups—chosen by birth month, not birth year.

Eighty-four parish members attended our first Soup and Soul program. Among those in attendance was Robert Hopkins, Janice's oldest son. Robert brought his mother's chicken soup recipe and taught the eighth grade class how to make the famous soup.

Please join us for our next multi-generational Soup and Soul lunch on Friday, February 12th. We will be celebrating St. Valentine's Day. The Youth will be serving the lunch and in return our older parish members will be sharing courtship and dating practices from when they were young.

If you have an idea for our Youth Ministry Program please stop in to see me or call me at extension 555 in the parish office!

-Kimberly



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YEAR OF MERCY!

“No one can be excluded from God’s Mercy.” These were the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, as he announced that the Church will celebrate an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy from December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016.

What a comforting thought, that no one, including ourselves, can be excluded by God’s Mercy! Our Church will be celebrating mercy all year, so what exactly is mercy?

Mercy is compassion. Mercy is forgiveness. Where is there a place for compassion or forgiveness in your life? Could you grant upon someone else mercy, compassion and forgiveness? Are you in need of letting go of some past decisions, mistakes or hurts and accepting these things from God could change your life? Either way, our Holy Father is calling for us to allow ourselves to open our hearts and let the Lord use mercy in our lives this year.

“In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of casting open the doors of his heart and of repeating that he loves us and wants to share his love with us.”

— Misericordiae Vultus, ¶25

Spiritual challenge for you: are you open to allowing God to surprise you? If not, what could you do to prepare your heart for God’s mercy and surprises?

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Week 1 - Mary Mother of God **Gospel: Luke 2:16-21**

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Week 2 - Baptism of the Lord **Mark 1:7-11**

He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Week 3 **John 1:35-42**

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

Week 4 **Mark 1:14-20**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.



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