ST. BRENDAN CHURCH

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The Epiphany of the Lord
January 7, 2018

God Comforts His People: The *Hygge* of Spiritual Accompaniment

The Epiphany of the Lord this Sunday marks the last week of our current message series: *God Comforts His People*. Over the last six weeks, we have been using a popular symbol of comfort and coziness from Scandinavia called *hygge* (pronounced "hue-gah") to understand the kind of spiritual comfort God offers to us.

During Advent and Christmas, we have explored how to bring spiritual comfort to ourselves and others (i) by slowing down and becoming consciously aware of God's nearness to us, (ii) by preparing our homes and hearts for the Lord's coming, (iii) by loosening control over our lives and allowing God to bring comfort to us, (iv) by offering spiritual comfort to others, and (v) by finding comfort in the gift of our own families.

This week, we take comfort in the revelation of God's only Son, who was born to bring consolation and hope to a struggling world. An epiphany is the manifestation of the divine, and in this week's gospel the newborn king of the Jews appears to the three magi as the savior of the world. They sought him out and traveled afar to pay him homage. Along with angels, shepherds, and animals, the wisemen accompanied the Lord in his first hours on earth. Their journey can teach us how to bring comfort to others by accompanying them in seeking out the Christ. We can make spiritual life *hyggelig* for others in three simple steps.

Be Open. Most people will never proactively ask for spiritual guidance or accompaniment. Yet, there are many opportunities to walk with someone on the spiritual journey. The wisemen in today's gospel followed a star to find the Christ. To the extent we are open and look for the signs, God will show us when and how to accompany another person. Often, it will be a small window of opportunity: an offhand comment at a party, a moment of grief, or a stranger who seems downcast.

Be Trustworthy. People frequently confess gossiping or betraying the trust of another. So few people actually are trustworthy that, when you develop a reputation for being a responsible confidant, others naturally will gravitate to you and trust you with their deepest thoughts. King Herod tried to tempt the wisemen to reveal the location of the Infant Jesus, but they proved trustworthy. To accompany others on their spiritual journey requires a high degree of personal integrity.

Be Quiet. A spiritual guide listens more than he or she speaks. It may be tempting to offer easy advice or clichéd opinions, but you should refrain. The only true spiritual growth comes from discoveries made on one's own. No amount of logic or persuasion will correct erroneous beliefs or move people to a deeper spiritual level. The magi "prostrated themselves and did [Jesus] homage." When seeking to accompany others on matters of the divine, listening is far better than speaking.

Everyone needs someone to talk to about their spiritual life. Accompanying others on their journey to God is a form of spiritual *hygge*, comfort along the way. Be open to the opportunities; be trustworthy when they happen; and then be quiet.

—Fr. Roger Gustafson

Featured Events

YEAR OF PRAYER CONTINUES
January 24 at 7 p.m.

St. Brendan's year of prayer continues next month with Frs. Evlogios Champas & Kevin Kennedy speaking on *Praying with Icons*. Praise & Worship Music included and light refreshments following the presentation.

HOLIDAY CLOSURE:

MONDAY JANUARY 18 2016 | MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

RECTORY OFFICE CLOSED
Monday, January 15

The Rectory Office will be closed on Monday, January 15 to observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The office will reopen on Tuesday, January 16. We apologize for any inconvenience.

WALK -FOR -LIFE MASS
St. Brendan Church
Saturday, January 27, 10:00 a.m.

Join us for a special Mass celebrating the dignity of human life, followed by a light reception in the Church Hall. After the reception, all are invited to walk as a group to the Forest Hill station, where we will take Muni to the Civic Center and continue to walk as a group in the Walk for Life. Please note that **there will be no 8:00 a.m. Mass on this day.**

ST. BRENDAN SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE
Sunday, January 28, 10:00-12:30

Please join us at St. Brendan School's annual Open House. All classrooms from kindergarten through eighth grade will be displaying special projects that our students have made. You will be able to meet the teachers and learn more about our excellent academic programs. We also invite you to visit our library, science lab and computer room and enjoy refreshments in the Church Hall.

We Are Praying Together And Staying Together

New Year's Day is a good time to look back at where we have been and see ahead, hopefully, to a better future. This is not only true in our personal lives, but also as a parish. On the first week of January 2018, we take a brief look at the state of the parish.

"The five-year pastoral plan that we developed with the Advisory Board is based on the five purposes of what a church is supposed to do," said Father Roger. "People come to church to connect with others, deepen their prayer life and relationship with God, heal from life's wounds in a safe space, grow in faith, and reach out to others."

These purposes are often sequential. Community involvement leads to a deeper connection with God, which allows people to seek healing and strength from the Church, which in turn creates a hunger to grow in faith and then, finally, a desire to go out into the world as a disciple. At Saint Brendan, we talk about these five stages of spiritual growth as "connect," "pray," "heal," "grow," and "love."

Last year with its *One Body* theme, Saint Brendan focused on the first of these stages. The hope was to increase a sense of connection and belonging among parishioners. "We beefed up our Sunday hospitality," said Parish Manager, Lisa Rosenlund. "Greeters were assigned to Sunday Masses, a welcome station was created in the vestibule, a weekly electronic newsletter was initiated, a new website was developed, and several large scale events were hosted to bring people together, including our first annual Saint Brendan festival in May."

Focusing on the second stage of spiritual growth, the theme for the parish this year is *Pray Together. Stay Together*. "Our pastoral plan for the year consists of four programs," Father Roger said. "But what I'm most proud of are the small groups that Sister Angela created, so that parishioners can talk about important issues, pray, and just do life together in a relaxed, informal, and safe environment. We have over a hundred people coming regularly to our small groups."

The parish also brings in guest speakers once a month to talk about various aspects of prayer. Father Joe Spieler spoke on contemplative prayer, and Father Roger discussed gratitude as a form of prayer. Internationally-known author and artist, David Clayton, offered advice on how to create a space for prayer at home. In the coming months, the church will provide talks on praying with icons and orthodox spirituality, praying with the gospels and the saints, and using music to enhance prayer. The highest form of prayer, the Mass, will be explained during the six weeks of Lent.

Third, the parish hosted a powerful concert dedicated to Our Lady on the 100th anniversary of her appearance in Fatima and will have a highly-acclaimed Catholic speaker available at our Saint Brendan Festival in May. Finally, the bulletin each week contains an article about a different form or style of prayer.

"We truly are praying together and staying together," Father Roger said. "I am excited about what the new year holds for our parish."

The Good News

Prayer in the Tradition of Saint Francis

By Lisa Rosenlund,
Saint Brendan Parish Manager

Each week, we summarize a specific style, form, or approach to prayer, using the highly-acclaimed book by Robert J. Wicks, *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition: A Handbook of Practical Approaches* (Franciscan Media 2006). In this article, you'll learn more about prayer in the Franciscan tradition.

Born Francesco di Bernardone in 1182 in the Umbrian town of Assisi, Saint Francis did not set out to found a religious order. In fact, the first twenty-four years of his 44-year lifespan were spent living comfortably as the son of a wealthy cloth merchant and attempting to raise his non-noble status by becoming a knight. However, he was unsuccessful and was captured in battle with a neighboring town. His conversion began in captivity and, after his father ransomed him from prison, he returned home "a beaten and changed man."

At first, Francis rejected his affluent lifestyle and began wearing simple peasant clothing. Then he started selling clothes from his father's warehouse and giving the proceeds to the church and the poor. Ultimately, he moved outside of town altogether and took up an itinerant lifestyle. Francis' writings indicate that he initially preferred to "live the Gospel as something of a 'lone ranger.'" However, although he did not seek it out, others began following him and adopting his new way of life.

In contrast to the Benedictine tradition's balanced life of prayer and work, Saint Francis leaned more towards unceasing prayer. Indeed, he believed that prayer should be continual and therefore encouraged his friars to pray the daily office.

Reflective of the burgeoning community developing around him, Francis' prayers were expressed almost exclusively in a collective voice. Indeed, only one of those he wrote was in the first-person singular. According to Wicks, prayer was "a communal experience," for Francis, "one that extends beyond the individual petitioner or adorer of God to include the community gathered locally or the communion of saints more broadly."

Francis referred to himself as an *idiota*, or unlearned, person, though he was not illiterate. His understanding of Scripture astonished the most educated scholars of his time, and he composed his own psalmody and prayers based on passages from the Bible, especially the psalms.

Francis balanced his time in community with periodic retreats to hermitages and quiet places to pray. He specified that three or four friars should go together to a hermitage. Two of the friars were to act as mothers and lead the life of Martha in the story of Jesus visiting the home of two sisters, Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). The other one or two friars were to be their children and lead the life of Mary. Occasionally, the roles were to be reversed. Citing scholars, Wicks notes that this prescient "vision of non-dominating governance within the fraternity, frequently conveyed in feminine imagery," is another of Francis' many legacies to us as aspirants to Christian spirituality.

Like Saint Francis, by praying daily, praying in community, taking time for periodic retreats and creating our own prayers and psalms, we can make ourselves increasingly present to God.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares them generously in love of God and neighbor. Stewardship is not about money or fundraising. It is a spirituality. It is a way of life.

A steward recognizes that God is the source of all life and every blessing and that all gifts of time, talent, and treasure come from God. A steward is grateful for those gifts. A steward takes care of and increases those gifts, and

During the twelve days of Christmas, the universal Church reads through the first letter written by Saint John, one of the twelve apostles. At the beginning of his letter, John says that he and the other disciples testify to "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands." Like the other apostles, John was part of a privileged generation who saw, heard, and felt the Lord Jesus Christ in his person and among whom the Son of God walked in the flesh.

Many Christians may feel envious of this unique opportunity. Yet, we too have experienced a similar privilege. Unlike all the generations existing before Christ, Saint Paul says in the second reading today, the "mystery," hidden for all ages, has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Though "darkness cover[ed] the earth" for so long "and thick clouds cover[ed] the people," as the first reading proclaims, nations now "shall walk by [God's] light." To us has been revealed God's awesome plan of salvation in Christ.

As Saint Paul recognizes of himself, however, we are to be stewards of this knowledge. It has been entrusted to us for the "benefit" of others. To the extent we keep the mystery of God's plan to ourselves, we deny others the fullness of our joy and the beauty, goodness, and truth of our faith. The ultimate purpose of stewardship is evangelization and working to make more disciples of Jesus Christ. As Saint John himself writes, "let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18).

--Father Roger Gustafson, Pastor

Each of us instinctively knows that we should not turn up as a guest at someone's home empty-handed. Most people come with a bottle of wine, a bouquet of flowers, or some other token of appreciation to offer their hosts. Even the wisemen in today's reading arrive at the crib of Jesus Christ with gifts for the newborn king. In the same way, should we not appear at God's house with an acceptable offering of gifts that are pleasing to him?

Whatever financial blessings God has given you this holiday season, we invite you to make a planned, proportionate, and sacrificial financial commitment to this parish and to the poor that will continue throughout the year. The biblical standard is a tenth of our income, before taxes or anything else is taken out, half to the Church and half to the poor. It's a huge step and takes trust, but we can never out give God.

NO SECOND COLLECTION NEXT WEEK

Offertory figures not included because collection count was not completed in time for publishing deadline due to a much-deserved break for our staff and volunteers.

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Mon - Thurs: 8:30 am - Noon, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Sun: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
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School

940 Laguna Honda Blvd.
San Francisco CA 94127
Tel. (415) 731-2665
www.stbrendansf.com

Convent

Canossian Sisters
234 Ulloa Street
San Francisco CA 94127
Tel. (415) 681-3465

MASSES

Sunday: 7:00, 8:00, 9:30,11:30 AM
Mon-Fri: 6:30 & 8:30 AM
Saturday: 8:30 AM 5:00 PM
Holy Days: 6:30 AM, 8:30 AM and 6:00 PM

CONFESSIONS

Saturday: 4:15 - 4:45 PM
Wednesday: 7:15 - 7:45 PM

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Wednesday: 7:00 - 8:00 PM
Saturday: 4:00 - 4:45 PM

BAPTISMS & WEDDINGS

For information, please see our website at www.stbrendanparish.org or call us at (415) 681-4225.

MASS INTENTIONS (January 8-14, 2018)

Weekday

	6:30 a.m.	8:30 a.m.
Monday	Wayne Harrell (D)	Andy Greene (D)
Tuesday	Liz Bucci (L) (Healing)	Joseph Montabno (D)
Wednesday	Open	Open
Thursday	Open	Ricardo S. Morada (D)
Friday	Open	David L. Alvers (D)

Weekend

SAT 8:30 a.m.	Open
SAT 5 p.m.	Marie De Loache (D)
SUN 7 a.m.	Silvestra Echanis (D)
SUN 8 a.m.	People of St. Brendan Parish
SUN 9:30 a.m.	St. Brendan Tree of Life
SUN 11:30 a.m.	Frank Esmurdoc (D)

STAFF

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Administrative Assistant Ext. 101
Maeve O'Reilly
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Parish Leadership

Advisory Board : Mike Modesti
Finance Committee : Eoin O'Connor

Children and Youth

Under Five Ministry:
Kendra Perlitz Devon Klinefelter

Girl Scouts:
Lisa Shaskan Kirstin McFarlane

Boy Scouts:
Boy Scouts: Maureen Hurley
Cub Scouts: Robert Rees (rdrees@gmail.com)

Youth Ministry:
Stacey Simpson Gus Del Puerto

Religious Education & Sacramental Preparation

Infant Baptism & RCIA for Children
Sr. Angela Furia (415) 681-4225, Ext. 201

Adult Faith Formation/Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA):
Manolito S. Jaldon, Jr. (415) 681-4225, Ext. 205

Sunday Children's Liturgy:
Marco & Karen Donaldson

Preparation for Reconciliation & First Holy Communion *Grade 2:* Stephanie Stanko
Faith Formation: *Grade 3:* Tara Donohue
Grades 4 & 5: Christina Bui
Preparation for Confirmation:
Grade 6: Manolito S. Jaldon, Jr. & Ben Gerigk
Grade 7: Liza Bonpin
Grade 8: Mary Zell Spellman
Youth of St. Brendan: A Life Teen Ministry (Post Confirmation & High School):
Manolito S. Jaldon, Jr. & Ben Gericgk

Liturgical Ministries

Lectors: Richard Pinto
Eucharistic Ministers: Charlotte Bautista
Ushers: Mike Casazza
Sacristan: Jack Mona
Liturgy Committee: Anne Kearney

Parish Life

Welcome Committee
Kathleen Bost Jeremy Straus
(sbwelcomecommittee@gmail.com)
Hospitality Committee
Maria Evangelista
Mothers' Club
Lori Doyle
Men's Club
Joshua Shaskan
Respect Life
Mary Ann Schwab
Knitting Ministry
Marie Jean Longa
Experienced Navigators:
Tony Fernandez
Small Groups:
https://stbrendanparish.groupvitals.com/groupFinder

Outreach Ministries

Consolation Ministry
Merry Jean Chan mjchanstb@gmail.com
Detention Ministry (San Dimas)
Julio Escobar (415) 244-5594
Marian Servers
Dr. Lou Scheerer
St. Vincent de Paul Society
Tad Tassone (415) 587-3849