

# In Your Midst

A JOURNAL FOR ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL PARISH



*December 2006*

# In Your Midst

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*"I am in your midst as one who serves."  
From the great oculus high above the altar of St. James  
Cathedral, these words of Jesus communicate His abiding  
presence among us. This inscription gave us the name for  
our Journal and continues to be our guiding inspiration.*

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### Editor

*Joan McDonell*

### Layout and Design

*Maria Laughlin*

### Comments/Suggestions

Your comments are welcome!  
[mLaughlin@stjames-cathedral.org](mailto:mLaughlin@stjames-cathedral.org)

804 Ninth Avenue; Seattle, WA 98104  
Phone 206.622.3559 Fax 206.622.5303  
[www.stjames-cathedral.org](http://www.stjames-cathedral.org)

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# Keeping Christ in Christmas

*Parishioners meditate on making Christmas a true feast of faith  
in the midst of holiday hustle and bustle*

**D**ear Friends,  
“Keeping Christ in Christmas” is hardly an original thought. We’ve been hearing that as far back as we can remember. I had an aunt and uncle, parents of a very large family, who took the idea so seriously that they had no Christmas tree at all in their home. Only an oversized crèche scene that looked like it might have been on loan from their parish church. Needless to say, there was no Santa Claus in that home although, happily, the Magi story did leave an opening for a modest gift exchange (nothing on the scale of gold, frankincense and myrrh, however!).

Even though I think my aunt and uncle may have gone a bit far, I have to give them credit for trying. In our culture where consumerism is king it’s pretty easy to forget what Christmas is really about, and it’s definitely anything but easy to “put Christ back into Christmas.”

Advent can help. At St. James Cathedral we make a concerted effort to let Advent be Advent: a quiet counterpoint to all the Christmas craziness that jams the airwaves from shortly after Halloween. The gentle interplay between light and darkness in our Advent liturgies, the restrained yet joyful music, the haunting echo of hand bells, the scriptural texts with their themes of longing and anticipation, the Bible study sessions, the Sunday evening Advent sacred concerts—all these can help us focus on the Christ who came among us long ago but who continues to come among us in ever new and often surprising ways.

Advent can help. And I think we can help one another, too. In the pages that follow, some of our fellow parishioners share their thoughts and stories about Christmas and where Christ fits into it all. I am hopeful that their reflections will get us thinking about how Christ can become the heart of our Christmas this year.

*Father Michael G. Ryan*

**A**s I thought about how I keep Christ in Christmas, I found myself contrasting the two central stories of Christ’s life—Christmas and Easter. Easter is a huge, sweeping epic, which takes place in the blazing sun of mid-day in a vast, geopolitical context. While the story is ultimately a glorious affirmation of redemption and



resurrection, it also contains within it elements of sorrow, profound suffering, and betrayal.

Christmas is different. Christmas takes place on a dark, chilly night, in a lowly manger lit by a star. There are no surging crowds, only a new baby, a young mother, her husband, and some guests—shepherds, a few wandering foreigners, and some farm animals. Of course, I know how the story ends, so the setting is fraught with great meaning for me. But I’m betting the folks gathered that night didn’t have much beyond their faith that this little baby might just possibly represent the yearning we all feel, even in the darkest, coldest night, for hope, for joy, and for the deep, abiding promise Mary—like all mothers—felt when holding her baby in her arms.

Each Christmas, John and I sit down with the Heifer International catalogue and decide whether to give a goat (always a popular choice) or a flock of chickens to a family in the Third World....maybe this year, we’ll throw caution to the wind and get a llama! The decision to do this grew out of our reflection on what Christmas represents to us. Christmas is a story of humility and simplicity....and wonder. And it’s a celebration of faith, of life, and of the potential within all of us to become better people. It’s about being led by a child to work for peace, for justice, for compassion and for love.

So, as I warble my favorite carols, cheerfully replicate my mother's sugar cookie recipe and decorate our tree with much loved ornaments, I think of all the gifts I have been given – not the brightly wrapped kind, but the lumpy, damaged, complicated, intangible kind – and silently give thanks. And I dare to hope that all of us can reach past our anger and fear and allow the spirit of Christmas to fill us with faith, and joy, and love.

*Joyce Mork-O'Brien*

**A**s the mother of two young girls, Meredith 4 and Katharine 6, it sometimes is a challenge trying to keep “Christ in Christmas.” When Katharine started Faith Formation classes two years ago, it seemed an excellent time to really open up dialogue on the true meaning of Christmas. I bought a Playmobil Nativity set, and it gave us a child-friendly way to teach our children about Jesus' birth, his family and the story of that magical night in Bethlehem. The girls loved setting up different scenes in the stable, and playing with the Baby Jesus. We talked about how Christmas is about Jesus' birth, but they still wondered if Santa Claus was going to get them what they wanted. And one day I found the Baby Jesus driving the Barbie car!

My husband, Mark, and I continue to teach traditions that help our family keep Christ in Christmas. During the Advent season (and throughout the year), we attend Mass as a family, and have our own Advent wreath at home so that the girls can experience, through our faith, this blessed time of year.

We've also established the tradition of having the girls select tags off the Giving Tree, going shopping for the items, and allowing them to experience the joy of helping others.

Our daughters love music, so singing beautiful songs such as “O Holy Night,” “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” and other traditional Christmas hymns help us further reflect on the wonders of the season.

We pray, that by our example, and with the Grace of God, our children will learn to experience “Christ in Christmas.”

*Christine L. Leahy*

**I** love Christmas: the hustle and bustle of shopping for ornaments at touristy stores in the middle of summer; spending time in prayer at Midnight Mass in a small parish in snowy Casper, Wyoming where I don't know another soul in the church; spending time with my parents and nearby family in Renton in a celebration that for many years has focused more on sharing our favorite scripture passages and less on sharing gifts; and the three or four days spent in



large parties with my newer extended family and friends in Wyoming – families who have been gathering annually for these events since before I was born. And then, of course, there are the wonderful liturgies at St. James Cathedral—so wonderful that a few years ago I couldn't have imagined *not* spending Christmas day at St. James.

Honestly I'm not sure which of my Christmas moments are the most grace filled. The way I keep Christ at the center during this time is by consciously incorporating each event into the two month Christmas pageant that begins around the first Sunday of Advent and ends sometime after Epiphany. Sometimes, admittedly, it gets out of order. One moment is all red and green tied up with bows, then Advent and purple and then back to Christmas gold. But by immersing myself in the liturgies that are going on throughout these seasons, I can remain aware of the bigger picture of the mystery of the Incarnation without worrying too much if the sequence of the pageant is a little messed up: sometimes the Magi get to Bethlehem before the shepherds. As long as the angels get the *Gloria in Excelsis* sung, it all works out fine.

*Wendell Dyck*

**W**eeks before Christmas, I do some serious “Spring Cleaning” in preparation for the coming of a very special guest. Christ is coming! We want Him to feel welcome. With the house ready, I have to be ready, too, but how?

Back home in the Philippines, December 16-24 is a period of preparation we call *Simbang Gabi*, a novena of Masses in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary as she waits for the birth of her son, Jesus. So we wait with her and as we wait, we pray for the sick, the poor, the aged, the lonely. We forgive, ask forgiveness and reconcile. *Simbang Gabi* is a time to let Christ's light, symbolized by the *parols*, to shine through. The *parols*

adorn the windows of every Filipino home from the stately mansions to the humblest shanties. The array of *parols* illuminating the streets is always a sight to behold.

*Simbang Gabi* came about as the result of the efforts of the early missionaries who wanted the farmers who were up at dawn to work in the fields and the fishermen who were coming home from the sea, to be able to attend Mass. *Simbang Gabi* is also called *Misa de Gallo* (Mass of the Rooster) because the Mass take place at the crack of dawn when roosters begin to crow.

Filipino Catholics who came to the United States brought with them *Simbang Gabi* as an expression of faith. In 1995, the Archdiocese of Seattle adopted it as an annual archdiocesan event. Although the celebration of *Simbang Gabi* outside the Philippines has been adjusted to accommodate climate and social conditions here in the United States, its intrinsic value remains the same: to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. The beauty of the *parols* reminds us of the star that led the shepherds and the wise men to the *Santo Niño*—the Holy Child.

*Teresita Guerrero*



I am grateful for the opportunity to share some thoughts about keeping Christ in Christmas. I thought a bit and prayed a bit, and suddenly my muse (her name is Edith) insisted I could write a poem of some sort on the subject. I reread some Herbert, some Crashaw, some Milton, and this is the result!

A king they say is on his way  
to guest our humble home:  
break out the bunting, deck the hall  
as he comes to his own.

Go shop the mall from wall to wall  
and get him lots of things:

buy gold and swank and scents and fur  
as fitting for a king!

But wait, they say a newborn babe  
will be our guest instead:  
buy binkies, blankies, teddy bears,  
a crib and feather bed!

But no, they say creation day  
he long since made his bed,  
yet he will own when he comes home  
no lair to lay his head.

Can I, wee king, do anything  
to keep you from the cold?  
When there's no lodging at the inn  
what good are gifts of gold?

No offering will please our king  
but humble, homely heart  
whose chambers offer cordial warmth,  
whose door is never barred.

Then welcome in, my newborn king,  
come sit upon your throne  
made not of stone but frail flesh,  
come make my heart your home.

They say all gifts are from above,  
but dearest was the one  
when in his everlasting love  
God gave his only son.

He shows us thrift in giving gifts:  
far more than goods or pelf  
to share such love as never ends  
and gift the gift of self.

*David W. Colbert*

As a music teacher and singer, my life during Advent can quickly resemble the verses of “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” but the Lords-a-leaping, calling birds, and partridge in a pear tree are replaced with dress rehearsals, concerts, special liturgies, and school performances. Don’t get me wrong. I count my blessings. I love what I do! Somehow, in spite of all the reminders around me of what this season was all about, I was getting to Christmas Day and feeling empty. Sure, my eyes tear up as the tympani, brass, and organ begin “O Come All Ye Faithful” at Midnight Mass. But something was missing.

Two years ago, five days before Christmas, I happened to overhear a conversation among some

fellow parishioners. They were having to forego the *festivities* of Christmas so that a roof would remain over the heads of their four children. Well, three days later, with the help of my family and friends, we delivered gifts and food. The family invited us into their small apartment (which, by the way, was far tidier and more organized than mine). We shared tea, talked about the kids, and at the end of our time together they said, “See you tomorrow at Mass.”

One year later this giving project, with the help of my students at St. Catherine School, grew to sponsoring thirty-five families. I sat in my car last Christmas morning in front of the apartment building where these families live, and felt the joy of every hand that had prepared and every hand that had received these blessings. How do I keep Christ in Christmas? Easy—make sure the guest of honor is invited.

*Stacey Sunde*

**I**n Mexico, my husband’s native home, Christmas is celebrated differently. The most obvious difference is that in its predominantly Roman Catholic culture, the Mexican Christmas has not morphed into the generic holiday of winter break. As a result of my experience with the people of that country, every year I make a conscious effort to have a more humble yet more dignified way of celebrating Christmas.

Besides trying to be more modest in our consumption, we have turned to the traditional way of thinking of Advent as a little Lent. Each year, our children receive an Advent calendar at the beginning of the season with little doors to open each day. This way they can actively anticipate the season’s events. We decorate our family table with an Advent wreath and each week we say a prayer as we light our Sunday Advent candle.

St. Nicholas comes on the eve of December 6th and leaves a small present and coins in everyone’s shoes that have been left in the hallway outside of the bedrooms. Beginning on the Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12th, we decorate the manger of our Nativity scene. Joseph and Mary start their journey around the house beginning on the third Sunday of Advent. Baby Jesus, of course, arrives on Christmas Eve and the Three Kings complete their journey to the manger on Epiphany. We attend Mass as a family on the Eve of Christmas. Instead of buying presents for others, we try to bake cookies together for them. We also encourage our children to make their own gifts; so, for example, our seven year old son is currently in the process of knitting scarves for his friends.

*Jennifer Wilcox Acevedo*



**W**INNING THE WAR ON “XMAS.” Much like the shorthand X that takes the Christ out of Christmas, there is so much to distract us during Advent. Sometimes the remembrance of the birth of Love and Salvation and Hope—the answer to our prayers—by way of the arrival of God’s son— even seem foreign to our typical modern celebrations. I’m not sure exactly how to do Advent right, but I can certainly tell you what *not* to do. Here goes:

**DO NOT GO DOWNTOWN.** Standing on the corner of Fifth and Pine you will have the rare advantage to hear both the steel drum band, the bagpiper, the Salvation Army bell ringer and the Holiday carousel—the cacophony of sounds will render the average person dumbstruck. If you can think of Jesus’ message of hope, let alone cross the street, you just may contain the genetic makeup to cure ADD.

**DON’T GO TO EVERY PARTY YOU’RE INVITED TO.** I find it difficult to go to a Christmas party and feel part of the true spirit of the season in a room full of people I know for a fact do not believe in Jesus. Don’t worry about making an excuse; explain to the host it’s like attending a Super Bowl party without TV.

**DON’T GO SHOPPING.** My family decided to take our yearly Secret Angel gift exchange up a notch and make each other gifts. It is by far more beautiful and meaningful than the digital camera that seemed to show up like the Magi year after year.

**DON’T GIVE UP.** Every year I vow I am going to eschew the many traps of the commercial holiday season and make Advent a more spiritual journey, live the Gospel in a new and invigorating way. And without exception I fail in some new and surprising way. But even if you try and fail, the important thing is hope wins in the end, which is what the Christmas season is all about.

*Scout Colmant*

**H**ow often can any of us say we have been able to recreate a cherished childhood memory? My happiest time as a child was always Christmas. I grew up in a small town in Arizona, and as a little girl I believed completely that my family's Christmas was the best one anyone could have, year after year.

Very early Christmas morning Father Ben would come to our house, pick up my two younger sisters and me, and take us to Fort Whipple Veteran's Hospital. There we would sing Christmas carols during Mass that was broadcast over the hospital radio into the rooms of the patients. We never saw them but Father Ben would always tell us later how much it meant to the men to hear us sing.

Back home again to open gifts. After all was cleared away, we began to help our parents prepare for our REAL Christmas. Tables borrowed from the Elks Club were set up, from the front door of our old Victorian house to the kitchen. My mother would spend the day in the kitchen cooking Christmas dinner for the 30 to 40 homeless people my father was to bring home in the afternoon. Some were people we remembered from the year before, others were new; all were seated at the tables, given little gifts and my mother's wonderful turkey dinner. Before dinner began my sisters and I were called to the head of the table, my father would ask everyone to bow their heads while we led them in saying grace. This vivid memory is as clear to me, more than 50 years later, as if it were today.

And now, my memory and the dream of my past have been given to me all over again. As a case manager for the Archdiocesan Housing Authority, I have had the honor for the past twelve years of recreating that Christmas dinner, this time for the thirteen residents of Rose of Lima House for homeless women, and their guests.

Our celebration at Rose House begins early, with decorating, baking, cooking dinner, singing. Although people who know us here in Seattle are very generous and our living room is filled to brimming over with lovely gifts, what we all love most are the funny, kind, creative gifts we make for one another and for our guests. Once again, as in my childhood, I can look down the long tables where sometimes more than twenty people are celebrating. Our prayers before dinner are in thanksgiving for the gift of being together and come from Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Jewish traditions.

My wish is that everyone could experience this miracle of Christ's love as I have, repeated again and again over time.

*Kathy Lewis*



**W**hen I think about Christmas and how I celebrate this amazing event, the birth of that magnificent Baby, I have two different experiences. All the Christmas years pre-2003 were pretty much the same... frantic baking, decorating, gift buying, party going and real chaos. Every Christmas Eve Mass concluded the same way, with me crying as I heard "O Holy Night" being sung. I would think about that Baby who would suffer and die such a horrific death. I wonder now as Mary held that Baby if she had any idea what was in her future.

I mentioned the year 2003 as being the time when Christmas changed for me. That Christmas my only son, Marc, was heroically battling cancer. I had no desire for any celebration but Marc really wanted my husband and me to put up a tree. Marc said that he wanted to see the decorations. My husband and I had been collecting them for the thirty-eight years we had been married. They all had a story. When I think about that day now, I wonder if Marc was really saying "I want to see those decorations one last time." It did happen that 2003 was the last time Marc saw those decorations. Marc lost his battle on December 26, 2004.

When I look at the statue of Mary in the Cathedral I feel like we are sisters. We both have held our sons at birth and at death. I have to be honest and say that Christmas is a conflict for me, celebrating the birth of my Savior and the death of my son. I am trying to focus on the love I feel for my family and friends. This new approach to Christmas is so freeing and I am able to really celebrate and focus on the EVENT that changed the world. The only decoration in our home now is a Nativity that I bought forty years ago for the first Christmas as a new wife. What else do I really need?

*Bette Mandich*



# Celebrating our Centennial

*As we recall the day you filled this church with your glory and holiness,  
may our lives also become an acceptable offering to you*

**E**ach year, on the eve of December 22, something special happens at St. James Cathedral. The priests and faithful gather together in the vestibule. A procession forms. Led by the cross, the entire group moves through the church together, lighting the candles mounted high on the wall at each of the entrances, twelve candles in all. We sing with the psalmist: "I rejoiced when I heard them say, 'let us go to the house of the Lord!'" Then all take their places for a solemn celebration of the Eucharist.

What's the occasion? It's a birthday, of sorts! December 22 marks the anniversary of the dedication of St. James Cathedral. It was on a chilly Sunday morning, December 22, 1907, that Bishop O'Dea dedicated St. James with all the rites and ceremonies of the church, and for the very first time offered Mass within the consecrated walls of the new Cathedral. Eighty-seven years later, on December 22, 1994, Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy rededicated the Cathedral following a major restoration and renovation.

In St. Augustine's *Confessions*, there is a telling episode in which Victorinus, a somewhat reluctant convert, accepts the doctrines of the Church but would rather be excused from attendance at public worship. "Are Christians made by walls?" he asks. Not by walls, the answer comes, but by community. Because when Christians come together for prayer, they are more than the sum of their parts: "where two or three are gathered in my name," Jesus says, "there am I, in the midst of them." In marking the anniversary of the



St. James Cathedral under construction in 2007, prior to its dedication on December 22, 1907.

dedication of our church, we do not celebrate and honor a physical building, but a spiritual one. "As we recall the day you filled this church with your glory and holiness," says the Prayer over the Gifts for the Dedication of a Church, "may our lives also become an acceptable offering to you."

And yet, buildings are important, too. In a mysterious way, the consecrated bricks and mortar, stained glass and statuary, of our Cathedral church have the power to gather us, teach us, and inspire us. The bells of the tower summon us to prayer; the ceremonial doors invite us to become a part of the great journey of God's chosen people; the images of saints remind us of the cloud of witnesses, the holy people who not only inspire us by their heroic lives but help us by their prayer. Our

churches surround us with beautiful things, to remind us of the infinite beauty of God.

**T**hroughout the coming year, 2007, we will celebrate the Centennial of St. James Cathedral (see the sidebar for some of the highlights). While this may be the biggest birthday celebration the Cathedral has seen, it won't be the first! The year 1929 marked the Silver Jubilee of the Cathedral Parish, and the parish responded with a handsome publication, complete with a silver-embossed cover illustration of the Cathedral with the words "SILVER JUBILEE 1904 1929" streaming like rays of glory from the towers. "For twenty-five years," the Bishop noted, "the cross atop the Cathedral has carried a message of faith to the visitor here; for twenty-five years the doors of this parish's church have been open to those who seek grace and heavenly solace.

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Corinna Laughlin is the Pastoral Assistant for Liturgy at St. James Cathedral. To find out more about the coming Centennial Celebrations, visit [www.stjames-cathedral.org](http://www.stjames-cathedral.org).

How many have been healed and comforted in this holy temple of God!"

Three years later, when the time came to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Cathedral itself, the mood was considerably more subdued. The nation was in the throes of the Great Depression, and the death of Bishop O'Dea on Christmas Day of 1932 dampened the spirits of the community. The 25th anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral passed almost unnoticed.

By the time the Golden Jubilee came around in 1957, things were looking up. The economy was thriving, and the church in Western Washington was growing by leaps and bounds. A glossy book, a series of liturgical and civic celebrations, and, of course, a fundraising campaign, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of St. James Cathedral.

Bishop Thomas Gill, pastor of the Cathedral, wrote: "Like the mute message of the twin spires which from this hill-top by day and by night lift their noble height heavenward, the message written imperishably into these stones for posterity was and is an incessant urging that men lift up their minds and hearts and hands to the praise and to the works of the Lord, their God."

Archbishop Connolly observed, in his own inimitable style, "the Golden Jubilee of our Cathedral is robed in the mellow glow of lingering and heart-warming memories—memories of frugal beginnings, of pioneer struggles, of unsung heroism on the part of bishop, priest and people alike—memories of growth, of heartaches, of tears; of sacrifice and steadfast loyalty."

Nor did the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. James Cathedral pass unnoticed. Special prayers and liturgies marked this important anniversary in 1982. "The world changes, our perceptions change, the Church endures," said the souvenir view book published on that occasion. "St. James Cathedral is an eloquent expression of earlier generations' whole-hearted commitment to that Divine truth. Their legacy enriches our lives."

During the coming year 2007, we will mark yet another significant milestone in the colorful history of our beloved house of prayer. There will be plenty of prayers, plenty of opportunities to explore our fascinating past and to appreciate the artistic treasures old and new that surround and inspire us.

But that is not really why we mark the anniversary of the dedication of this house of prayer. Archbishop Connolly says it best: "Our Jubilee observance should be much more than a mere remembrance of the glories of the past. It must be an hour of apostolic readiness and solemn resolution 'to rebuild the world for Christ.' We must be determined to live our faith in truth, to share that precious heritage with those about us, to work for its spread and advancement with the same resolute courage and tireless zeal that inspired and motivated those who have gone before us.

"Our Cathedral stands in the heart of a great metropolis for all the world to see as a perpetual, public profession of our Catholic faith and a constant challenge for us and for future generations to be ever worthy of our golden heritage." ♦

## *Highlights of the Centennial Year 2007*

*In November of 2004, we marked the centennial of the founding of the Cathedral Parish. In November of 2005, we began a Year of Prayer and Renewal. At the Midnight Mass of Christmas, 2006, we will begin the third and final year of our Centennial celebration, as we mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of St. James Cathedral. Here are some of the highlights:*

**December 24, 2006, 12:00 Midnight**  
*The Centennial Celebration begins at the Midnight Mass*

**December 31, 2006, 11:00pm**  
New Year's Eve Concert: Mozart at 250,  
St. James at 100

**January 24, 2007, 7:00pm**  
Citywide Prayer for Christian Unity. *Bishop Vinton R. Anderson, AME, former President of the World Council of Churches, will preach*

**February 16-17, 2007, 8:00pm**  
Great Music for a Great Cathedral

**March 24, 2007**

Archdiocesan Day of Reconciliation. *Priest confessors will be available in the Cathedral throughout the day, 10am to 5pm*

**April 12, 2007, 7:00pm**

Holocaust Memorial: Remembering the Shoah

**July 25, 2007, 2:00pm**

Archdiocesan Celebration of the Centennial on the Feast of St. James

**December 15, 2007, 8:00pm**

Centennial Organ Recital. *The very first event in the new Cathedral, a week before its dedication, was an organ recital. Cathedral Organist Joseph Adam recreates that historic moment on the 1907 Hutchings-Votey organ*

**December 22, 2007, time TBA**

Parish Celebration of the Centennial and conclusion of the Centennial Celebration

# Experiencing the Spirit of Taizé

*Brother John reflects on the mission and meaning of Taizé*

**T**aizé is not just a kind of music. Nor is it simply a form of worship. A few years ago, there was an article in the *Wall Street Journal* (of all places) about Taizé. They kept talking about Taizé, Taizé, Taizé, but they were talking about it as a form of prayer. They mentioned that there was a community in France that happens to pray in the Taizé style. I wrote a letter to the editor, and told them they'd put the cart before the horse!

That is what Taizé is *not*. I should say what Taizé *is*. We're a monastic community, a religious community which is ecumenical and international. There are about 100 brothers from 25 different countries and different Christian churches—Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed, trying to live together as one, to be a sign of reconciliation. That's for us the key thing: the community life as a sign of the Gospel, a sign of reconciliation of Christians.

The community began in 1940 during World War II. Our founder, Brother Roger, came to this little village of Taizé, a poor village in Burgundy, where very few people lived, and began to hide Jews and other refugees who were trying to escape the Occupation. He did this for three years by himself, until they found out what he was doing and he was obliged to go back to Switzerland. There, he met three other young men, and as soon as the war was over the four of them came back to Taizé. They began to live together, to pray together three times a day, to work to support themselves, and also to welcome whoever came. At the beginning, German prisoners, orphans, and so on; later on, young people.

Brother Roger wasn't a theologian, he wasn't a great thinker. But he had a few intuitions and put his whole life into trying to live them out. One of those intuitions was that people need concrete signs of the Gospel. For people to hear about the message of Jesus is important, but beyond words, people need concrete signs to help them understand that word. We know if we look at the New Testament, the sign of the Gospel is community, people sharing what they owned and sharing their faith.

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A native of Philadelphia, **Brother John of Taizé** is a brother of the ecumenical community of Taizé in France. He is the author of a number of books on scripture. These remarks are extracts from a talk he gave on October 4, 2006 in Cathedral Hall. Find out more about the Taizé community, download Bible reflections, listen to chants, or find out about making a retreat at [www.taize.fr](http://www.taize.fr).



Brother John of Taizé led us in a few days of Prayer and Renewal, October 4-7, 2006.

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The theme of reconciliation was of the utmost importance to him. He dreamed of a community where people who were very different could find oneness, unity. He was thinking especially of the divisions among Christians—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox—which kept the Gospel from being lived clearly.

Brother Roger was from a Protestant background where there wasn't a tradition of religious community. That was already becoming ecumenical, learning about the monastic tradition in the Catholic and Orthodox churches. He set out to create a kind of monastic-inspired community—not a Protestant monastery, but a sign of reconciliation. The first brothers were from the Reformed Church, then other Protestant denominations followed—Anglicans; and then Catholics after the Second Vatican Council. It's not a new denomination, but a place where people remain who they are but live together with other Christians.

Brother Roger's original idea was to be a sign of reconciliation. In the 1940s and 1950s it wasn't possible to think about Catholics and non-Catholics living together; just praying together was a big step back then. In the new climate after the Second Vatican Council, we had discussions with the Archbishop of Paris and others and were able to admit Catholic brothers. Today, we're a little more than 100 in the community; maybe 50/50 Catholic and Protestant.

**B**efore too many people compliment me on my English, let me say I grew up in Philadelphia. When I finished college I had a chance to go abroad for a year, and spend a year traveling around Europe. At the time I was searching for something, for a way to live my faith, for a community. I had heard talk of Taizé. I got there one day in November, and there was nobody there, it was a very quiet time. I spent the week in



More than 500 gathered for a special prayer for reconciliation with music from Taizé on Friday, October 6, 2006.

silence. It was a very good week for me, and I said to myself, I have to come back. I came back for Holy Week, and there were about 6,000 people.

I stayed awhile. We have volunteers who stay three months—six months, or a year helping out. I spent some time doing this. I went home again with a lot of questions. Is God pointing me there? I had a lot of doubts, too. I went back a year later, and I still had that question, but I realized the question itself was a sign. I stayed. After about four years of study and discernment, I made a lifelong commitment. We make the traditional monastic vows—community of goods, sharing everything; celibacy, and accepting the decisions made in community.

Prayer is at the center of our lives. At the beginning, it was the traditional monastic prayer, singing the psalms, reading the scripture, litanies, intercessions and so on. We still keep that basic structure, but we simplified it because our visitors come from so many different backgrounds and languages. So we use repetitive chants with solo verses, and always a long time of silence in the center.

So, prayer three times a day. Then we work to support ourselves—selling pottery, writing books, making other crafts to sell. Finally, we welcome and offer hospitality, at the beginning to refugees, and orphans; today mostly to young people of college age, who come for a week.

This began to happen spontaneously in the 1960s. Students started coming, no one knows exactly why, except that it was a time when people were looking for meaning for their life, and trying to figure out their faith. They came, they were welcomed, they told others, and the numbers started to grow. Brother

Roger felt this was a sign of the times; it was important to welcome these young people to everything that was most important to us—the prayer, the Bible, the community. That's how we started.

Taizé continues to be one of the few spaces in the church in Europe where young people feel it's *their* place, where they feel welcome. They take part in the prayer, they have Bible study each day, work, and after a

week they leave, to take home what they've learned. Each year we welcome something like 50,000 young people from all over the world.

We don't have a *staff*—that's a word that doesn't exist in Taizé. There are just the brothers, the sisters, the young volunteers, and the young people who pitch in. That helps keep costs down. We do invite the young people to make a donation for each day of their stay, but that averages out to 6 or 7 dollars per day. That's possible because we keep it so simple.

Most of you know Brother Roger was killed last year. He was 90 years old, at the end of his life; but it happened in a very unexpected way during evening prayer. He was killed by a deranged woman. The surprise wasn't that Brother Roger passed on; he was 90 years old, he was slowing down a lot; but that he died that way. Paradoxically, it gave us a real push forward. After the first shock, we got so much support from people, so many visitors and telephone calls, so many people manifesting their solidarity. Cardinal Kasper came from Rome to preside at the Eucharist, there were bishops and church leaders from all the denominations; it was a big event which gave a real confirmation to our mission. Eight years ago Brother Roger had named his successor, Brother Alois, so it made the transition very easy.

This past summer, I felt Brother Roger was very present with us—not physically, but spiritually. Many people who came back told us that they didn't feel it was any different.

It's very mysterious. There was a kind of blessing hidden in the midst of that strange event. ♦

# The Pew Next to You

*Meet Gwen Johnson and the Conte family—Laura, Rich, Gabriella and Francesca*

**G**wen Johnson described where she sits every Sunday morning at the 8 o'clock Mass as her "parish within a parish," but her twin sister Carolyn Schmidt says it is her "neighborhood." "I like the sound of the word neighborhood," Gwen said. "It's safe and friendly, it is where I come each Sunday."

Gwen's "neighborhood" is the back pew in the west nave.

Joining Gwen each Sunday are Laura and Rich Conte and their daughters, Gabriella, 9, and Francesca, 6 1/2.

Gwen has been a parishioner at St. James Cathedral since 1990. Rich and Laura were married here in June of 1994 by Father Ryan.

But Gwen and the Contes didn't meet until Gabriella was born almost nine years ago. Then, Rich and Laura moved from their customary spot up front to have a quick access to exit, if necessary. It was not long before Gabriella was captivating those sitting around her, and most of all, Gwen.

Gwen is a Seattle native with parents and grandparents who lived on Queen Anne Hill. Her grandparents started the Queen Anne Hardware that is still operating on top of the hill. Gwen and Carolyn went three years to St. Anne School until their parents, Ainar and Lorraine Johnson, moved the family to Christ the King Parish where the twins grew up.

Gwen's career in telecommunications began at Pacific Northwest Bell. Stops along the way have been with AT&T, Qwest and Boeing. Now, she's at Verizon. When Gwen moved downtown from Edmonds she registered at St. James Cathedral and found her place in the back pew. She prefers this spot as she sees and hears all that happens in the whole cathedral. Gwen is especially fond of organ music as her mother was the organist at St. Anne's Church, played for the Carmelite Nuns in Shoreline, and at other parish churches in the area. She also directed several choirs.

**L**aura and Rich are both from the East Coast, Laura from New York and Rich from Pittsburg. They met in New York where Rich was an agent with the FBI and Laura, a staff member. Rich had been sent to the Northwest

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Joan McDonell is a Marriage Tribunal Advocate at St. James Cathedral as well as a daily volunteer in the Cathedral Parish Office.



Rich and Laura Conte, with daughters Gabriella and Francesca, and Gwen Johnson (right). They have shared a pew at the 8:00am Mass for nearly ten years.

previously and he liked the area so much he put in a request to be assigned in Seattle. That took several years, but in 1993 he was in Seattle and at St. James.

Laura remembers how their friendship in Gwen's neighborhood grew. First Gwen brought Gabriella a Christmas trinket and then a Valentine and as holy days and holidays came and went with shared stories and parties, they all realized their relationship was deeper than just sharing a pew.

Francesca joined them after her birth in January 2000. Laura and Rich had named her for St. Frances Cabrini and knew that this saint had often worshiped

in the cathedral. After Father Ryan had baptized Francesca, he carried her over to the saint's shrine for an introduction and photos.

It seemed no time before Gabriella started school at St. Louise and made her First Communion (this past May). Now Francesca is in the first grade. Patty Barnes and Terry Mondhan, ushers in the west nave, watched the girls grow from infancy to school-age. Recently, they invited them to help out. Gabriella said for her first time, Terry held one door open and she the other. Patty made it official by presenting them with their own personalized usher badges. Now they help on St. Vincent De Paul Sundays and often stand with Patty or Terry at the doors with the Sunday bulletins.

Both are in cross-country at school and take ballet lessons. Francesca also is on a soccer team. Laura coaches the school's cross-country team for the older girls. She has volunteered with the ESL program and is on a parish team of women that prepare and send out cards to parents of recently baptized children and to couples on the first-year anniversary of their wedding at St. James.

Over the years, Laura and Rich's families have come from New York and Pittsburgh to celebrate holidays with Gwen and her Seattle family. Whenever they have gathered together at the altar table and the family table, it has been a true celebration. A fun event is the almost annual tea party in May at Contes' Bellevue home. Guests are other mothers and daughters and Gwen.

Gwen remarked on how St. James keeps growing and changing. She said when she first came to St. James there were no children in the back pew. Now it is a safe haven for several more families.

**T**he past several years have been difficult for Gwen and Carolyn as they saw their parents age and die within nine months of each other. Lorraine Belcourt Johnson died on December 4, 2005 and Ainar Johnson on September 3, 2006. Their Funeral Masses were celebrated at St. James.

Gwen said one thing that helped her during this time has been the support and love of Laura and Rich and Gabriella and Francesca.

"I look into Gabriella and Francesca's eyes," Gwen says, "and they look right back at me with such acceptance and love." ♦

## *New Year's Eve Gala*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31  
11:00 o'clock pm

*Mozart at 250*  
*St. James Cathedral at 100*

*The CATHEDRAL CANTOREI, our professional chamber choir, the CATHEDRAL SOLOISTS, ORGANISTS, and CATHEDRAL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA present a festive sane, safe, and sober new year's concert, Seattle's oldest classical New Year's Eve celebration.*

*Suggested donation \$25, students and seniors "pay as able" passes are available in person at the Music Office.*

[www.stjames-cathedral.org/music](http://www.stjames-cathedral.org/music)

## *Dinner & Dessert at the Cathedral*

*This New Year's Eve, you are invited to join a special dinner and dessert to benefit the Cathedral's mission of prayer and service on Seattle's First Hill.*

*COCKTAILS & DINNER*  
8:00pm—10:30pm  
*Pastoral Outreach Center*

*PRE-CONCERT LECTURE*  
9:45pm

*Perry Lorenzo, Director of Education for Seattle Opera*

*NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA CONCERT*  
11:00pm *in the Cathedral*

*DESSERT WITH THE MUSICIANS*  
*after the concert*  
*Pastoral Outreach Center*

**\$150 PER PERSON**

*Information, Maria Laughlin, 206-622-3559*  
[mLaughlin@stjames-cathedral.org](mailto:mLaughlin@stjames-cathedral.org)

# Image of the Divine

*Were we led all that way for Birth or for Death?*

**T**he Cathedral's north transept windows tell the story of the Nativity in glorious color and light. In the center is the Holy Family in the stable at Bethlehem. On the left we see the shepherds, kneeling in adoration, and on the right, the three wise men, sumptuously robed, bearing their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (note the thurible in the foreground and the abundant incense winding its way heavenwards).

The Magi have long captured the imagination of artists. How was it these learned men had the vision and imagination to leave everything they knew for a sight of the "newborn king of the Jews"?

The 17th-century Anglican divine Lancelot Andrewes preached on the subject of the Magi in the presence of King James on Christmas Day, 1622. "It was no summer progress," he said. "A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in the very dead of winter... Sorry for nothing so much as that they could not be there soon enough, with the very first, to do it even this day, the day of His birth."

He goes on to draw a comparison with ourselves. Would we have been willing to make such a journey? "And we, what should we have done? ... Our fashion is to see and see again before we stir a foot, specially if it be to the worship of Christ. Come such a journey at such a time? No; but fairly have put it off to the spring of the year, till the days longer, and the ways fairer, and the weather warmer, till better traveling to Christ. Our Epiphany would sure have fallen in Easter week at the soonest."

The 20th-century Catholic novelist Evelyn Waugh offers a different take on the three wise men in his novel *Helena*. Unlike Lancelot Andrewes, his heroine sees the Magi as arriving *late*. "You are my special patrons," she says, "patrons of all latecomers, of all who have a tedious journey to make to the truth, all who are confused by knowledge and speculation... of all who stand in danger by reason of their talents." She concludes her reflections with a prayer: "for his sake who did not reject your curious gifts, pray always for all the learned, the oblique, the delicate. Let them not

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Maria Laughlin is the Director of Stewardship and Development at St. James Cathedral.



North transept window depicting the Magi. Charles Connick, 1916-1917.

be quite forgotten at the Throne of God when the simple come into their kingdom."

The great poet (and Anglican convert) T. S. Eliot offers a different interpretation of the wise men. His poem "The Journey of the Magi" is famous for its understated tone: "... there was no information, and so we continued/And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon/Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory."

He goes on to imagine the homecoming of the Magi. What did they do with the vision they had seen? How did they live out what they had learned? It's food for thought as we approach Christmas:

*... were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.* ♦

# Cathedral Almanac

## July

**23. Feast of St. James and Parish Picnic.** We celebrated the feast of our beloved patron with great solemnity. This year, at the parish picnic, we also celebrated with Father Ryan his 40th anniversary of ordination (see July 2006 issue). In his homily for the day, Father Ryan said: “on this feast of our heavenly patron, let us give thanks to God for our faith in Jesus Christ and for giving us St. James to be our patron and guide along the great pilgrimage of faith. And let us give thanks for this parish, this incredible community of faith – this blessed yet motley troop of fellow pilgrims – earthen vessels each of us, but chosen vessels, carrying a priceless treasure wherever we go, a treasure whose surpassing power comes from God and not from us!”

**26. Interfaith Prayer for Peace.** Representatives of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths came together at St. James Cathedral to pray for peace in the Middle East. Some 300 gathered for this simple service of prayer, meditation, and song.

## August

**7-11. Choir Camp.** This year’s Choir Camp was the biggest and best ever, with more than 30 young people spending five exciting days at St. James Cathedral, learning about prayer, procession, and music.

“Singing is an amazing way to pray,” one camper wrote. “When you praise God in a song it has so much more power than just praying. You can gather together or just sing by yourself, but it always works, no matter who you are or how you sing.”

**21.** Bishop Joseph Tyson celebrated the Funeral Mass for Officer Joselito Barber, a young Seattle Police Officer killed in a tragic auto collision while on duty.

## September

**7-10.** The Cathedral Choir entered into a three-day retreat before their memorable return to the Sunday 10 o’clock Mass.

**22.** The 10th Annual Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen Charity Golf Tournament was held at the Newcastle Golf Club this year. A huge thank you to



Jeff Meder, tournament chair, and to all our sponsors. The tournament raised about \$50,000 to support the Cathedral’s mission in the heart of Seattle.

## October

**1. First Sunday Youth Celebration.** Children’s Faith Formation classes began after their summer hiatus. Children, parents, and catechists received a special blessing at the Noon Mass.

**4-7.** We were privileged to welcome Brother John of Taizé, who led us in days of prayer and renewal, beginning with Mass and a simple supper on Wednesday evening and concluding Friday night with a special prayer for peace and reconciliation. (See article on page 10.)

**2. God is Love.** A four-week series of lectures from parishioner Perry Lorenzo explored Pope Benedict XVI’s first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*.

**21.** Bishop Joseph Tyson celebrated a special Mass with the Hungarian community of Seattle on the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution.

**24.** More than 400 people gathered for a lecture on the **Dead Sea Scrolls** with noted biblical scholar Father John Endres, SJ.

**27.** Archbishop Brunett offered the traditional “**Red Mass**” for local alumni of Gonzaga University Law School.

## November

**2. All Souls Day.** The Cathedral Choir presented Mozart’s matchless *Requiem* in the context of the solemn Mass of All Souls. In his homily for this evening, Father Ryan said, “We who have blessed with Christian faith are able to view life’s contradictions, life’s most troubling mysteries, in a way others cannot. We are able to look at the puzzling interplay between sadness and joy, between pain and peace, between death and life and see there no more and no less than what happened to Jesus.”

**4. Liturgy Day.** Each year, the Cathedral’s ushers, Ministers of Holy Communion, readers, and Emmaus companions gather for a day of prayer and renewal. ♦

—M.L.

# Leaving a Legacy

**E**ach November, as we pray for all our beloved dead, our bulletin covers feature the names of deceased benefactors to the St. James Cathedral. These are people who over the past twenty years, through gifts both large and small, have made it possible for us to carry out our mission of prayer and service here on First Hill.

Their bequests have supported every part of our ministry, from our outreach to the poor and homeless, to our splendid music program, the maintenance of our Cathedral, and much more.

By remembering the Cathedral in their wills, these people—some of them quite poor, others quite wealthy—have continued to make a difference in the



Children of the Cathedral School, 1927

lives of many people (including ourselves!) long after their own lives have ended.

What will our legacy be? Remembering St. James in your will is a way to say something about what you value the most, after you're gone.

The Development Committee of St. James Cathedral is launching a Legacy Society to recognize and thank those who have remembered St. James in their estate planning. If you have

remembered the Cathedral in your will, please let us know. If you would like more information on estate planning, contact Maria Laughlin in the Stewardship and Development Office, 206-622-3559. ♦

## ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL

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