



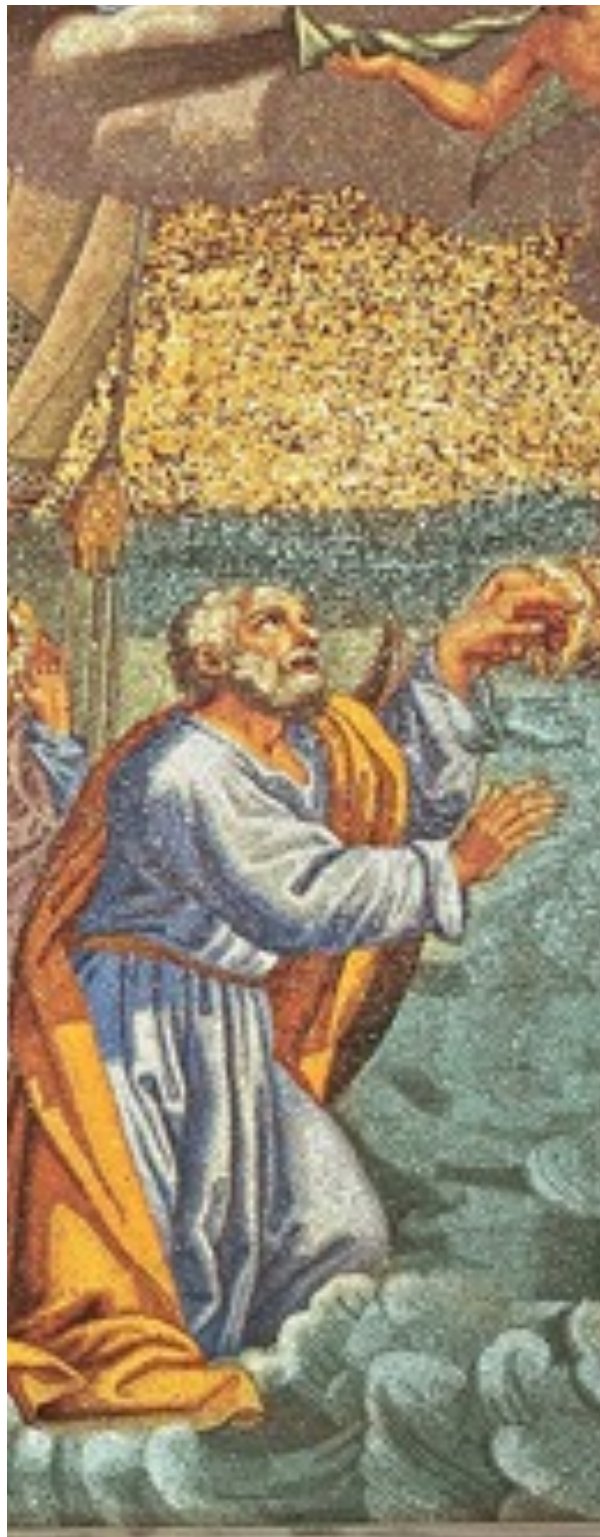
Becoming Courageous Men in an
Age of Rampant Fear and Anxiety

Fr. Roger J. Landry
New Canaan Society Manhattan
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An Age of Fear

- We are living in an age of growing fear and anxiety.
- As toddlers, many of us fear monsters and the dark, thunder and lightening, strangers, doctors, dentists and dogs.
- As we grow, other fears take their place. We fear roaches, rats and bats. We worry about failing ourselves and others. We're phobic about public speaking. We dread loneliness, not being liked or not having friends, having relationships break down or never form.
- We fear betrayal, humiliation, rejection and irrelevance. We're scared of getting fired, of financial collapse, poverty and misery. We fear being judged or falsely accused.



An Age of Fear

- We fear losing control, becoming debilitated, or losing our mind.
- We fear something terrible happening to someone we love.
- We fear missing out, not seeing the world, and at the end of our life, looking back with regret that we had placed the ladder of success against the wrong wall.
- We ultimately fear suffering, death, the possibility that hell is real and that, in our weakness, we might indirectly choose it.
- These fears, which ultimately go back to the Fall, devour our souls and psyches and enfeeble the Church.



The Importance of Courage

- Against our fears, God insistently tells us to take courage.
- One of the most important phrases in Sacred Scripture is “Be Not Afraid,” which appears 104 times in the Old Testament, 44 times in the New.
- Jesus tells us not to be afraid of his call (Lk 5:10), not to be afraid of drowning at sea (Mt 8:26), not to be afraid of wars and insurrections (Lk 21:9), not to be afraid of the death of loved ones (Lk 8:50), not to be afraid of those who can only kill the body but can’t harm the soul (Mt 10:28), and not to be afraid of what will happen to him in his Passion (Jn 14:1).
- To believe in him, to trust in his accompaniment, to have faith in his victory over suffering and death, he suggests, is to be filled with courage.



The Importance of Courage

- For Catholics, this has been an insistent message of recent popes.
- Pope John Paul II's homily at his inaugural Mass, Oct. 22, 1978: *Non Abbiate Paura!* He saw that fear was eating people alive and that so many demagogues were exploiting that fear.
- Pope Benedict XVI's homily at his inaugural Mass, Apr. 24, 2005: "Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, ... that He might take something away from us? ... Do we not risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? ... Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything in return."
- Pope Francis throughout his ten years has regularly preached about "parrhesia," the boldness that comes from the Holy Spirit, against fears than enervate the Christian life.



Courage and Religious Freedom

- One area that courage is needed is with regard to religious freedom.
- Popular culture routinely mocks Christian teaching and attacks Christians.
- We're treated as bigots for upholding Christ's teachings on marriage, as misogynists for defending the sanctity of every life, as traitors for treating immigrants the way we would treat Christ.
- We're sued for not baking cakes, renting halls, making websites for not compromising our consciences in favor of the culturally correct *zeitgeist*.

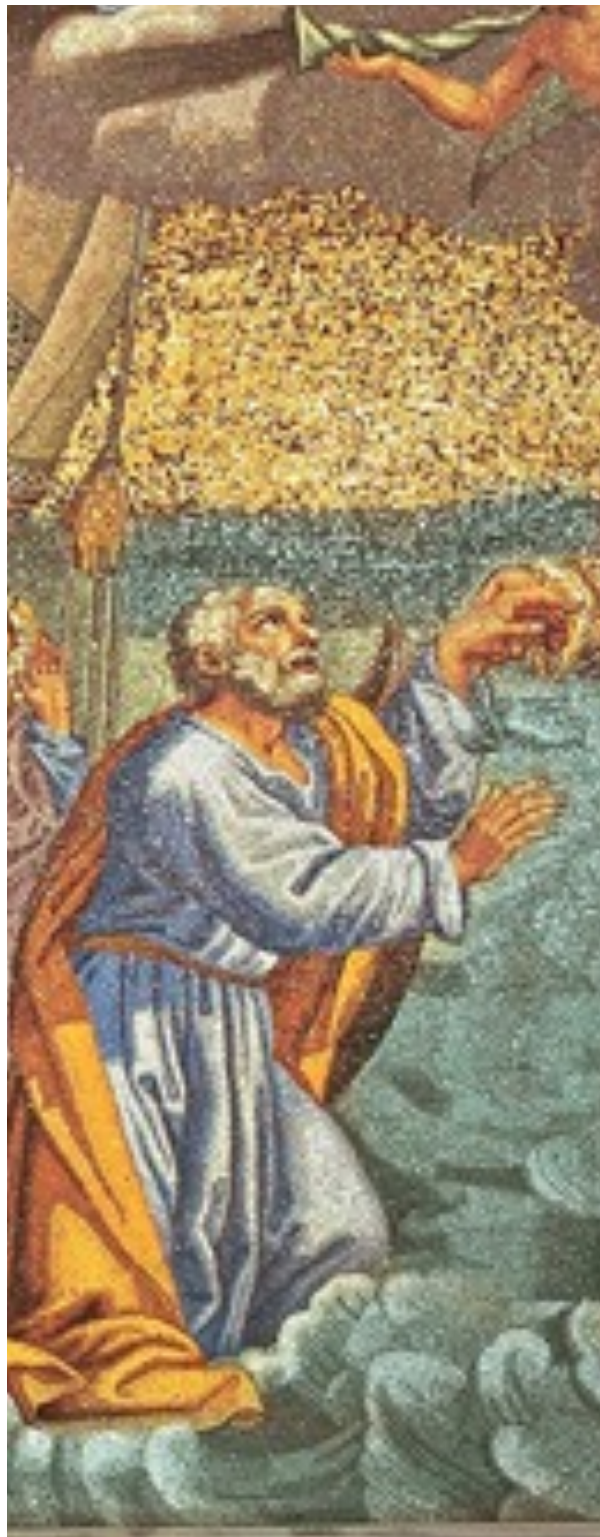


Courage and Religious Freedom

- When Jews face anti-Semitism or Muslims confront Islamophobia, they respond vigorously and marshal the public to get involved.
- Christians, however, despite far greater numbers, largely let bigots get away with it. Christianophobia is the last acceptable prejudice because we tolerate it, because we often don't have the resolve to stand united against the cultural bullies.
- Before the legions of elites forcing their values revolution on everyone else, many Christians, instead of witnessing to Jesus and the faith, have entered a witness protection program.

Confronting Our Fears

- Many Christians, including Christian leaders, are faint-hearted and conflict-averse.
- We need courage to defend our faith because doing so often touches on many of the deepest and most common fears people have: the fear of public speaking, losing friends and being alone, of not being liked, of losing the argument, of saying something the wrong way and living to regret it, of letting the Lord down, of disappointing and unintentionally hurting others' feelings, of rejection, of being ridiculed, of being judged unfairly, of being falsely accused, of various types of suffering we might undergo as a result.
- But we're not the first: Moses, Jeremiah, Gideon, Jonah, and Isaiah were all afraid. Peter, Andrew, James and John were afraid. Paul had to be consoled by Jesus. God wants to help us, too.



Ten Virtues and Practices We Need to Grow in Courage

- Faith
 - To recognize that Christ, who promised to be with us always until the end of time, will be good to his word.
 - Faith has emboldened so many: Eleazar, the mother of the seven sons, the Syro-Phoenician woman and Centurion.
 - Faith helps us to trust in God's providential care rather than in ourselves.
- Cooperation with the Holy Spirit
 - Fortitude is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Is 11:2).
 - On Holy Thursday, the apostles left the Upper Room and cowardly betrayed the Lord. 53 days later, they left the same room and boldly announced the Gospel, even when the same Sanhedrin that had had Jesus crucified was trying to intimidate them.



Ten Virtues and Practices We Need to Grow in Courage

○ Prayer

- Prayer is faith in action.
- The more we turn to God rather than our problems, the more we recognize in every circumstance that he who triumphed over both sin and death is with us, strengthening us.
- Prayer nourishes our sense of divine filiation.

○ Charity

- Charity helps us to sacrifice ourselves for the good of others. “No one has any greater love,” Jesus said during the Last Supper, than “to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13).
- Moms and dads, even the most temperamentally timid and conflict averse, instinctively protect their children in the face of gunmen, bombs and tornados.
- The greater the love, the greater the audacity.



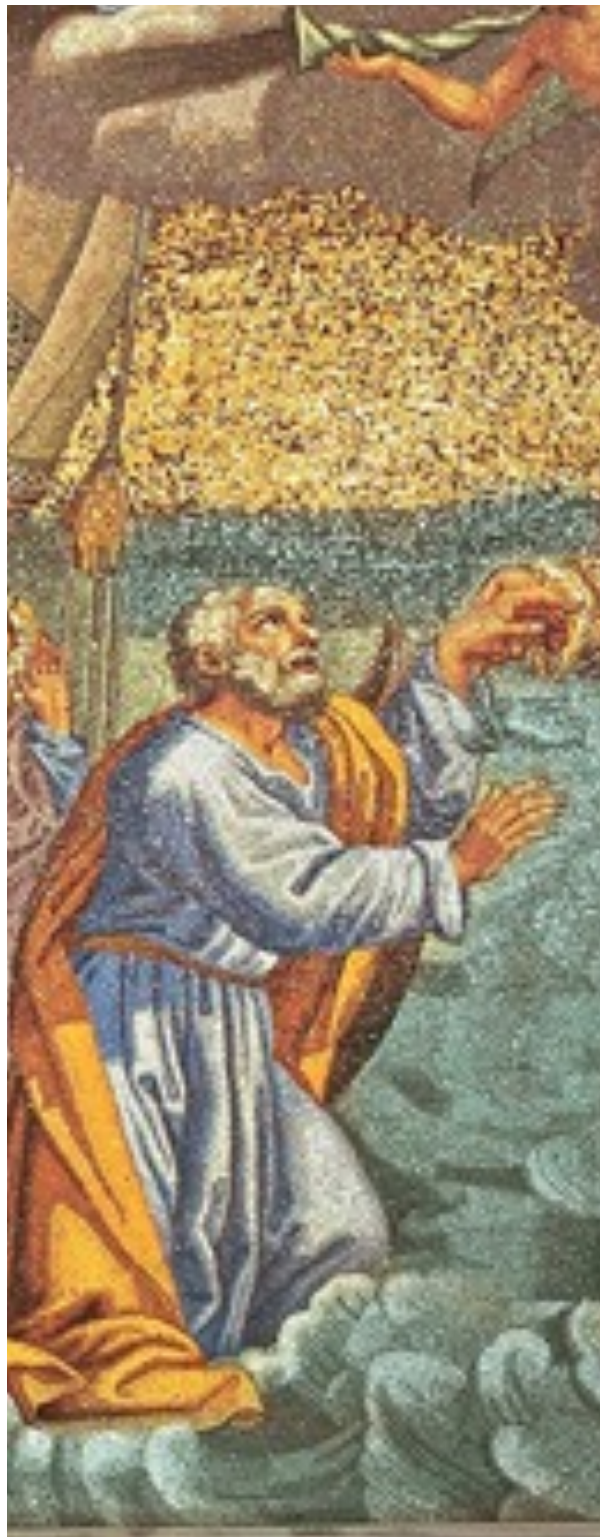
Ten Virtues and Practices We Need to Grow in Courage

- Surrounding ourselves with courageous people.
 - We see this historically in the military and in missionaries. We become like our friends.
 - In the early Church, the faithful would regularly visit the tombs of the martyrs, to help them remain faithful under trial. Close to Home: The Shrine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville, New York.
- Acts of Courage
 - We form the habit by repeated acts.
 - When we pray for courage, God responds by giving us his grace, but also opportunities to exercise our moral muscles to do what we ought despite human fears.



Ten Virtues and Practices We Need to Grow in Courage

- Asceticism
 - In an age of affirmation and the pursuit of the maximization of pleasure, self-denial and picking up our Cross each day to follow Christ almost seem insane.
 - Many do not moderate their appetites for food and drink, cannot conquer their anger, or stop their addiction to television, the internet, or social media.
 - Courage is needed to train ourselves through mortification to say yes to God and no to the concupiscence of the eyes, flesh and pride of life.



Ten Virtues and Practices

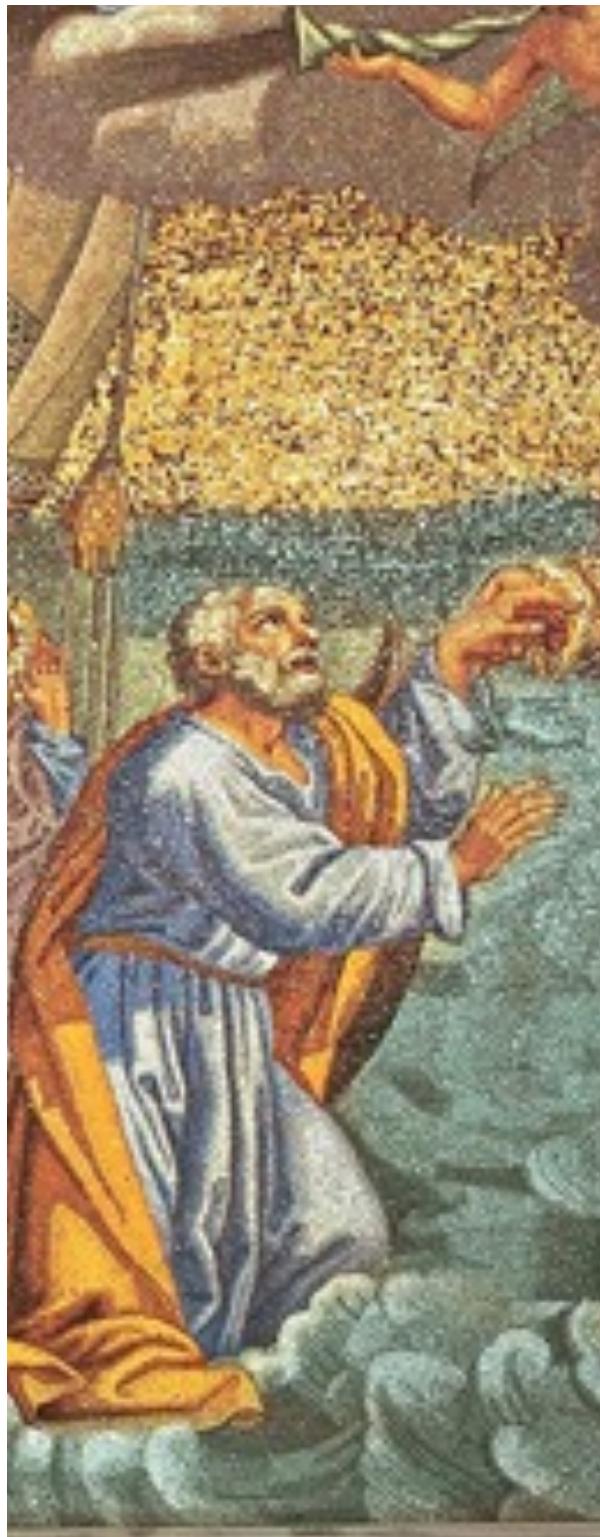
We Need to Grow in Courage

- Patience and Perseverance
 - We live in an age in which many people give up: on prayer, fighting sin, suffering, going to Church, on their marriages or vocations, on jobs, hope even life itself.
 - We need courage never to give up, never to stop running the race, fighting the good fight, keeping the faith and growing in it. The virtue of perseverance helps us to grow in courage, which, in turn, helps us to persevere more, in a virtuous spiral.
 - Patience goes with perseverance. Patience means an ability to suffer (from Latin *patior*). Courage requires we do not have an excessive fear of pain and where our fear of pain ultimately derives, the fear of death. Courage makes us capable of suffering.



Ten Virtues and Practices We Need to Grow in Courage

- Chastity
 - Perhaps the biggest addiction of our age is to lust. More than 4 of 5 men in the USA watch pornography regularly. The profits flowing from porn dwarf in annual revenue everything earned by all the major sports leagues combined. We can't eliminate the demand for prostitution or even for human trafficking victims.
 - We need the courage not just to be continent but to love God with all our mind, heart, soul and strength and to love our neighbor to the same self-sacrificial extreme by which Christ loved us.
 - St. Ambrose's comment about St. Agnes.
 - St. Paul's insistence in 1 Thess 4 about the connection between chastity and holiness.



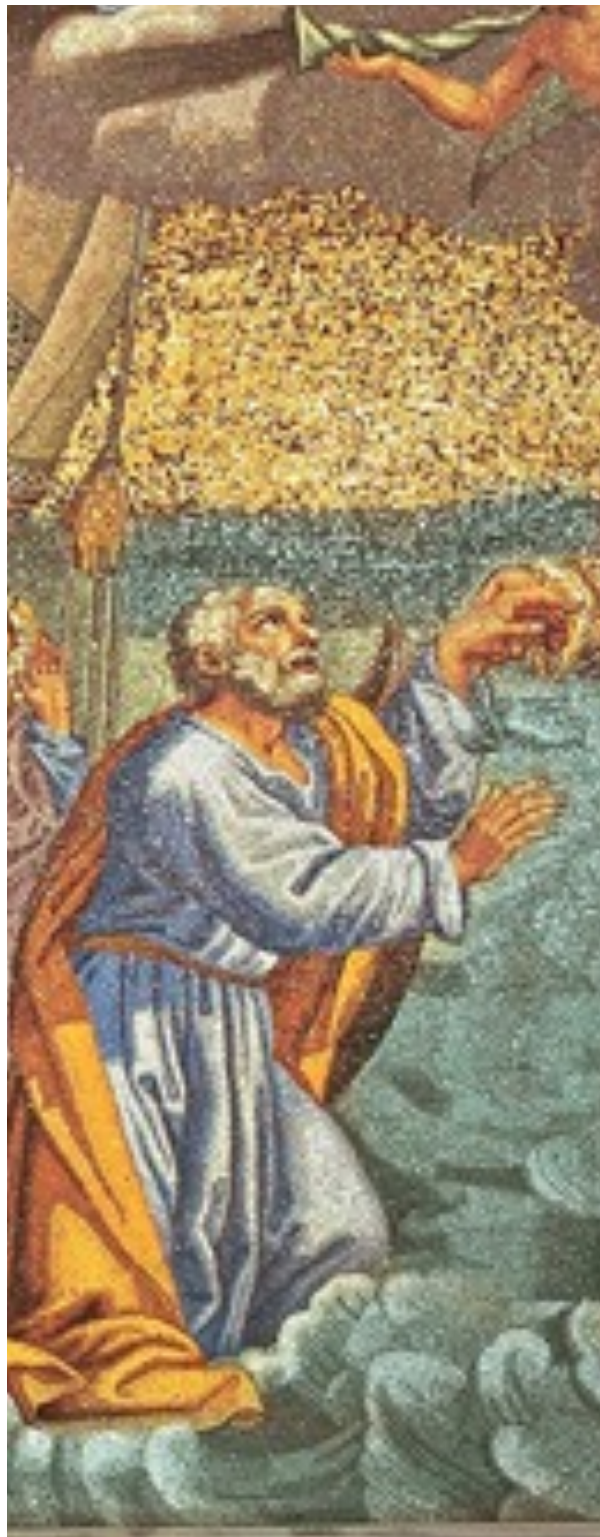
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- Regular Meditation on Death
 - Lent is a season in which we remember we are dust and unto dust we shall return.
 - The Imitation of Christ, Thomas à Kempis' 15th-century spiritual classic, advised that the easiest way to overcome the fear of death is to ponder it each day: "In every deed and every thought, act as though you were to die this very day." Once we start doing that, we start to get our priorities straight and stop procrastinating on what's important.
 - United 93: When we're not afraid to die because we've rehearsed it daily in prayer, we will be read to offer our life without fear should that prove necessary.
 - The Capuchins' message in the Bone Church.
 - Pondering Jesus' words in Lk 23:46 and Jn 10:18.



Taking Courage Today

- In response to the anxieties and fears eating people, society and the Church alive today, in the midst of the storms of life, God not only tells us not to be afraid, not only gives us help in the gift and virtue of courage, but gives us himself.
- He wants us to seize that gift and help us become bold witnesses who can encourage others.
- It's time for Christians to show we truly believe in Jesus' words, "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid," and, like waves of apostles, saints and martyrs throughout the centuries, boldly lead others to courage, too, by leading them to its Source.





Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.
Believe what you read.
Teach what you believe.
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,
Fr. Roger J. Landry



Most Recent Homilies

God's Comfort and the Conversion Required to Receive It, Second Sunday of Advent (B), December 6, 2020

Accepting, Following and Announcing Jesus without Offense, Second Sunday of Advent (EF), December 6, 2020

Walking the Way of the Kingdom Jesus Indicates, First Saturday of Advent, December 5, 2020

Running to Meet Our Light, Strength and Salvation, First Friday of Advent, December 4, 2020

Listening to and Acting on the Long Awaited One's Words, First Thursday of Advent, December 3, 2020

Going Hungry to Meet Christ in a Three-Fold Banquet, First Wednesday of Advent, December 2, 2020

Childlike Eyes to See, First Tuesday of Advent, December 1, 2020

Singing the Song of the Lamb, 34th Wednesday (II), November 25, 2020

Turning to the Lord Who Comes to Judge the Earth, 34th Tuesday (II), November 24, 2020

Following the King and Lamb Wherever He Goes, 34th Monday (II), November 23, 2020

Most Recent Articles

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Remembering Andrew Walther, November 7, 2020

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The Pastoral Malpractice of Liturgical Abuse, The Anchor, September 4, 2020

The Chosen, The Anchor, August 21, 2020

Most Recent Talks

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Novena in Preparation for the Immaculate Conception, Leonine Forum, November 28 to December 8, 2020

Blessed Michael McGivney and the Call to Holiness, McGivney Festival Young Adult Prayer Vigil, October 31, 2020

Apprenticeship in the Art of Living, Duc in Altum Virtual Schools Summit, October 28-30, 2020

Preaching on Marital Love and Accompanying Couples toward the Full Embrace of the Church's Teaching, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Divorced and Remarried, Challenges and Triumphs in Pastoral Care, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Heart of the New Evangelization: Meeting, Knowing and Loving Jesus Back, New Zealand Evangelion's In his Name Virtual Conference, October 10-11, 2020

Christian Anthropology: The Human Person in the Modern World, Leonine Forum Opening Lecture, October 8, 2020

Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching, UNSRC Catholic Club, August 27, 2020

Making Better Confessions, Catholic Information Conference, July 24, 2020

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Questions and Comments

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