

GOOD FOR THE SOUL

So this year, instead of stretching your limbs and melting the fat, why not stretch your soul and melt the excrescences of your lazy spirit? The trouble is, of course, that in soul matters also we fall back on the same annual resolutions, like praying more or going to daily Mass, in which experience has taught us we are less likely to persevere. So, by all means stay faithful to your accustomed spiritual exercises, morning and evening prayer, rosary and Mass when you can. But widen your horizon.

TRY SOMETHING NEW

Research shows that people make more resolutions to start a new habit (84%) than to break an old one (16%).

So, why not try something new and exciting and well within your capacity? If I may adapt a blurb from the U.S. Catholic magazine: *Stretch Your Soul in Fifteen Minutes a Day*. These exercises can be done at home or in church or anywhere, at a time of your own choosing. They are enjoyable and painless. Most likely, if you make a sincere effort, these exercises will grab you and you will want to extend the time more and more.

I am proposing that you undertake either contemplative or mental prayer.

Let me explain the difference. In contemplative prayer, you remain quiet, think no thought, say no words. You are simply present to God and wait for God to act without any contribution of your own.

In mental prayer or meditation, you go in search of God using your own faculties of mind and will and heart, as I will explain.

MAKE A START

Let's start with contemplation. The experts recommend a minimum of 20 minutes once or twice a day. Most of us, though, have to start more slowly. So, if you can manage 10 or 15 minutes at first, that's fine. This is how to proceed:

1 Choose a sacred word (a mantra) as a symbol of your desire to be in God's presence and to receive whatever grace God wants to give you. There are many such words, for example, *Maranatha*, *Jesus*, *Lord*, *Mercy*, etc.

2 Sit comfortably, preferably in a straight seat. If you're too comfortable, you might fall asleep. Relax completely from head to toe. Then close your eyes, and slowly repeat your mantra word, without thinking of it or of anything, spiritual or otherwise. As your mind empties, just stop repeating the word and rest silently in God's presence, thinking nothing, saying nothing.

3 Distractions will come. It's hard to empty our minds. That's okay. Simply go back to repeating the mantra until you settle into quiet again.

4 When the time is up, let yourself come to, nice and gently. Don't expect any specific thing to happen during prayer. If and when God chooses, God may lead you into a moment of close union with himself.

The main thing is don't give up easily. ■



Today's readings

Nb 6:22-27

Gal 4:4-7

Lk 2:16-21

Imagine how bewildered Mary must be. She has just given birth to her baby in a cattle shed. This little baby, she has been told, is God's own son. And now some local shepherds have turned up with a most extraordinary tale - how an angel of the Lord had appeared to them and told them of the birth of the saviour, and that they would find him in a stable.

Mary watches as the shepherds pay homage to her child, and listens to them as they glorify and praise God.

No wonder Mary ponders these things in her heart. It must have been all so hard to take in, to make sense of. Here she is, a teenager from an average background, and she is the mother of God's Son. Here she is, nursing her new-born in a miserable out-house, and strangers are coming to pay him homage.

Overwhelming as her situation may be, Mary does not panic. She does not back away from God's will for her.

One the eighth day, she and Joseph take the child to be circumcised, and they give him the name which the angel had told her to give him. They call him Jesus.

Mary is fulfilling God's plan for her. She does what God has asked her to do.

GOD'S WORD TODAY

SoulSpace

1 January 2017 – Mary, The Holy Mother Of God Year A

Psalter Week 2

SERIES: STRETCH YOUR SOUL IN 2017

Season colour: WHITE

In this short series, Fr George Wadding looks at different kinds of New Year resolutions.



CONTEMPLATION

Most of us have made New Year's resolutions. The most common are to exercise more, to diet and lose weight, to drink less alcohol, or to give up smoking.

Resolutions like these shouldn't be confined to New Year. Our lives and health are priceless gifts of God. If we truly cherish them we don't wait until January 1 every year to nourish and promote them. One look in the mirror on any day should be enough to ring the alarm bells and send us scurrying to empty the fridge of noxious fats or reduce or cut out our alcohol consumption (says he, whose own girth is a daily reminder of the mortal peril in which he stands!).

[continued on back page]



SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
Today, Sunday, 1st January 2017
WORLD DAY FOR PEACE

Because she accepted her vocation Mary became the mother of Jesus, God made man. We become the adopted children of God by accepting the gift of his Spirit as Mary did.
NEW YEAR'S DAY - SUNDAY, 1st JANUARY 2017
MASSES 8.30 A.M. 10.30 A.M.
12.00 NOON - MASS FOR PEACE
Evening Mass 7.00 P.M.

FRIDAY 6th JANUARY 2017 FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY
 Friday is the Feast of the Epiphany - a **Holy Day of Obligation** and it is also the **First Friday of the month.**



As we enter a New Year may Christians everywhere celebrate their faith with joy and renewed hope.

MASS TIMES: FRIDAY, January 6th
Vigil (Thursday) 7:30 p.m.; 8.00 a.m.; 10.30 a.m.; & 7.00 p.m.



God's plan for the world, the mysterious purpose of existence, is unveiled by the coming of Christ. God wants it to be known, and it will be known, by all who follow the light of the faith leading them to Christ.



Father, you revealed your Son to the nations by the guidance of a star lead us to your glory in heaven by the light of faith.

Amen.



THANK YOU

The priests of the parish would like to thank all who contributed to the Christmas collection for the Support of the Clergy.

8:00 A.M. DAILY MASS Please note that the 8:00 a.m. morning Mass will resume on Saturday, 7th January. Thank you.

READINGS FOR SUNDAY NEXT, 8th January 1st Reading: Is. 42:1-4. 6-7; 2nd Reading: Acts 10:34-38; Gospel: Matt. 3:13-17.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK. May we experience Jesus as Gift, The gift of the Word to be spoken, The gift of the way to be walked, The gift of the life to be lived, The gift of the love to be loved. Amen.

FEAST DAYS THIS WEEK: Monday, 2nd Jan.: St. Basil Bishop of Caesarea, and Gregory, Bishop of Sasima and Constantinople. Tuesday 3rd: St Muchin, bishop, Thursday 5th: St. Charles of St. Andrew, priest: Saturday, 7th: St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest.

BINGO - GILLOOLY HALL - RESUMING on Sunday, 8th January at 9.00 p.m. With a jackpot of €2,950.

CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
NEW YEAR'S DAY SUNDAY JANUARY 1
MASSES – 8.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m. – 7.00 p.m.
MASS FOR PEACE - 12.00 NOON

MASSES -MONDAY – JANUARY 2 – WEDNESDAY JANUARY 4
MASSES- 10.30 a.m.

MASSES —Thursday JANUARY 5
10.30 a.m. Vigil 7.30 p.m. for Holy Day
CONFESSIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER 7.30 p.m. Vigil
FRIDAY – JANUARY 6 - FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY
MASSES – 8.00 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. - 7.00 p.m.

SATURDAY – JANUARY 7
MASSES – 8.00 a.m. 10.30 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. Vigil
CONFESSIONS 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.
SUNDAY – JANUARY 8

MASSES – 8.30 a.m., 10.30 a.m., 12.00 noon and 7.00 p.m.
WEEKDAY MASSES FROM MONDAY – JANUARY 9
8.00 a.m. & 10.30 a.m.



Visit Our
Christmas Crib



Come and pray with us at our Christmas Crib:

God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Saviour was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger, may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise up our thoughts to Him, who is *God-with-us* and Saviour of all, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

FR FLANAGAN PRAYER GROUP The JANUARY 2017 MEETING of FR. FLANAGAN will take place on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 10th January, at the earlier time of 7.00 p.m., in St. Mary's Presbytery. New members always welcome.

DIOCESAN VOCATIONS "They shall beat their swords into ploughshears and their spears into pruning hooks...." If you think that God is calling you to serve the Lord of the harvest as a priest, Contact: Fr. Jim Murray at 071 9162136 or Fr. John Coughlan at 071 9662012, or email vocations@elphindiocese.ie

CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
Upcoming EVENTS THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday 1st Peace Mass at 12noon
 Wed. 4th "Wednesday Tea" after 10.30am Mass
 Saturday 7th Confessions 2.00p.m. - 4.00p.m.

DATES TO REMEMBER

DAY RETREAT FOR FAMILIES, 10am - 5pm on Saturday, 7th January 2017 in Summerhill College, Sligo. Guide donation €70 per family. To book phone Therese on 086 8228174 or email info@livingfamily.ie.

FAMILY CARERS IRELAND are providing the QQI Level 5 Healthcare Award in 2017 in or around your area based on demand. One day topic specific workshops also available. For more info contact the training unit on 0579322920.

PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORJE on 7th June 2017 for 7 nights. €699 per person. For information please contact Marita Concannon Tel: 098 64017 or 089 4146331.

CHURCH GATE COLLECTION for Irish Heart Foundation next weekend, 7th & 8th January. Please support generously.

MASS ST. BERNADETTE'S CHAPEL will be celebrated on Monday, 9th January at 5.15pm.

CHARITY LADIES LUNCH Women's Little Christmas Black Dress Ladies Lunch in Kilronan Castle on Sun 8th Jan @ 1pm – Tickets from 087 7708865 – all proceeds to local homeless charity – North West Simon Community, please support.

DOMINICAN ORDER 1216 – 2016

CONGRATULATIONS We congratulate the Dominican Order and especially the Dominican Community here in Sligo who on 22nd December 2016 celebrated the 800th anniversary of the founding of their Order with a Papal Bull by Pope Honorius III in 1216. We thank them for their loyal and dedicated service over those 800 years and especially their service to God and humankind unbroken here in Sligo since 1252. We pray every blessing on them in their future ministry.

RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP BOXES & 2017 CALENDARS

We thank most sincerely our dedicated Area Representatives who have distributed the Responsible Stewardship Envelopes and Calendars for 2017. Please let us know if you have not receive yours and we apologise for the oversight. We take this opportunity to extend a warm welcomes to all who have joined our parish community during the last 12 months and invite you to contact the Parish Office on 9162670 or email finance@sligocathedral.ie to join in support, in whatever way you can, of our Cathedral. We would also like to express, once again, our deep gratitude to all who contribute to the upkeep of the parish.

Anniversary & remembrances



DAY	10.30a.m.
MON 2 nd	1st Anniversary MICHAEL MCKEEVER 
WED 4 th	MARY JANE HEALY
THURS 5 th	1st Anniversary TOM STALLARD 
FRI 6 th	THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION
SAT 7 th	Month's Mind KEVIN DEEHAN 