

HOLY REDEEMER



GRACE NOTES

June 2024

Introduction...

In a recent survey, June was voted the best month of the year. Actually, June came in third, behind December and October. However, it's reasonable to assume that children were included in the survey and that they all voted either for December (because of Christmas) or October (because of Halloween). So the unbiased voters undoubtedly made June number one. And what's not to like about June. School's out. It's warm, but not like the Dog Days of Summer warm. The water at the beaches is a little chilly, but not freezing like it is in May. Fishing is great. Locally grown strawberries are everywhere. The full moon in June is even called "The Strawberry Moon." And the roses have started to bloom, a sure sign that summer is here, and so is God. For only God can make a rose.



The Reverend Dr. Phebe L. McPherson put that important fact beautifully in her Martin Luther King, Jr. Day sermon in 2020.

“On this day of remembrance and honor, when we sing the praises of a life as beautiful and miraculous as Dr. King’s. At the same time, let our souls be touched by the lives of thousands for whom justice and mercy have not yet been realized. In the end, let us never give up hope—for deliverance of all God’s people and for the world. In Christ we have seen the glory of the full blossom, a song of redemption for the soul of the world. For only God can make a rose.”

And one more thing about June. The renovations to Holy Redeemer Church will be completed in June. Hooray!

On the Shoulders of Giants – Mary Magdalene

Isaac Newton said that all he had accomplished in life was due to “standing on the shoulders of the giants” who came before him. Each month we will remember one of the giants upon whose shoulders the parishioners of Holy Redeemer are perched.

For the past year Grace Notes has focused on the Apostles: the original twelve as well as the two that were added following Jesus’ crucifixion. This month we’re going to feature the person that may have been even closer to Jesus than the Apostles, particularly during the final phase of his life, and who has served as an inspiration to countless women over the centuries: Mary Magdalene.

Much of what we know about the life of Jesus and those close to him is based on a very small amount of source documentation, most of which was written after Jesus died. Therefore it is not surprising that controversy exists regarding the lives of his original followers. And without question the greatest controversy involves Mary Magdalene. Although she is named 14 times in the four canonical gospels -- more than nearly all of the Apostles – the level of frequency does not lessen the debate over her impact on the early Christian Church. Her initial appearance in the Bible is memorable, when we are told she was once “possessed by seven demons.” (Most theologians agree Mary likely suffered from seizures or some other form of physical illnesses, and not demons.)



Her final appearance is just as dramatic when she discovers the empty tomb and encounters the risen Christ. In between these two events Mary Magdalene made another notable appearance when she “took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair, filling the house with the fragrance of the perfume.” While all three of these occasions are significant, if asked to identify the most important thing about Mary Magdalene most Christians would immediately state that she was a prostitute who was reformed by Jesus. And yet there is absolutely nothing in either the New Testament or in the non-canonical gospels (those gospels not approved by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.) to indicate that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. Such speculation appears to be due entirely to two homilies delivered by Pope Gregory in 591 A.D.. Mary, he said, was the sinner woman with the alabaster jar who appeared at Simon the Pharisee’s house to anoint Jesus’ feet. Pope Gregory later added that not only was Mary a sinner woman, but her greatest sin was lust. “It is clear,” he stated, “that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts.” And thus a legend was born.

So if not a prostitute, what was Mary Magdalene doing before she met Jesus? We know that she was a Jewish woman from Galilee, and based on the relative freedom she seems to have enjoyed, she may well have been wealthy and/or of high social status, which could certainly explain her possessing the large quantity costly perfume she used to anoint Jesus’ feet.

Much more important than Mary Magdalene’s supposed occupation or social status is the prominent role she played during Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection. It is worth remembering that while Jesus

hung on the cross all the apostles except for John had fled for fear they would suffer the same fate, while women – including Mary Magdalene – kept watch at the foot of the cross. Women were also the ones who followed Joseph of Arimathea to the burial site. And, of course, they are the first to learn of Jesus’ resurrection.



The gospels vary in their accounts of who first visited Jesus’ empty tomb. In Luke, it is just “the women”; in Matthew, it is “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary”; in Mark, it is “Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome”; and in John, it is just “Mary Magdalene.” The common denominator in all these accounts is Mary Magdalene, and even when multiple women are mentioned, her name always comes first.

In John’s gospel, Mary Magdalene meets the risen Jesus face to face. When she realizes that Jesus has returned from the dead, she cries out the Aramaic word for teacher and tries to embrace him. Between that moment and when she tells the Apostles what has happened, she alone possesses the entirety of the Christian gospel. She becomes the apostle to the apostles: the first one to preach the Good News of the resurrection.

At this point, Mary Magdalene completely disappears from the Bible.

The fact that she’s never mentioned again has led some to speculate that her absence is a deliberate exclusion by the men attending the Council of Nicea -- who determined what would be included in the New Testament -- rather than an accurate reflection of the events that followed Jesus’ death and resurrection. This impression is buttressed by many references to Mary Magdalene’s in the non-canonical or unapproved gospels, which suggested that she often served as a leader to the other disciples. At one such gospel, Peter says to her, “Sister, we know that the Savior greatly loved you above all other women, so tell us what you remember of his words that we ourselves do not know or perhaps have never heard.”

Mary Magdalene’s final days are also controversial. Following the death of Jesus, the disciples fled Jerusalem and spread in every direction, inspired by the Holy Spirit to preach. Some believe that Mary Magdalene accompanied John and Jesus’ mother to the Turkish island of Ephesus, where she died. However, on the other side of the Mediterranean a different story arose about Mary Magdalene’s final days. Legend says that a boat with no sails and no oars landed on the shores of Provence in Southern France. On board were Mary Magdalene, Mary Salomé, Mary Jacobé, Lazarus and his sister Martha, Maximin (a disciple of Jesus), and their Egyptian servant Sara.



After landing in Provence, many of the group set off to spread their new religion. Lazarus headed east, becoming the first bishop of Marseille, and Maximum headed north, becoming the first bishop of Aix-en-Provence. Martha, Mary Salomé, Mary Jacobé and Mary Magdalene joined them in converting the people of Provence to Christianity. Mary Magdalene then continued on alone to the mountains further east, where she settled in a lonely grotto, spending her days in prayer and penance.

After 30 years in her grotto, Mary Magdalene felt that her end was near, and made her way to Aix-en-Provence to receive communion from her old friend Maximin before she died.

Unfortunately for conspiracy theorists, there's no credible record of Mary Magdalene having married Jesus and starting the Merovingian line of French kings -- for that you'll have to rely on Dan Brown and the DaVinci Code.

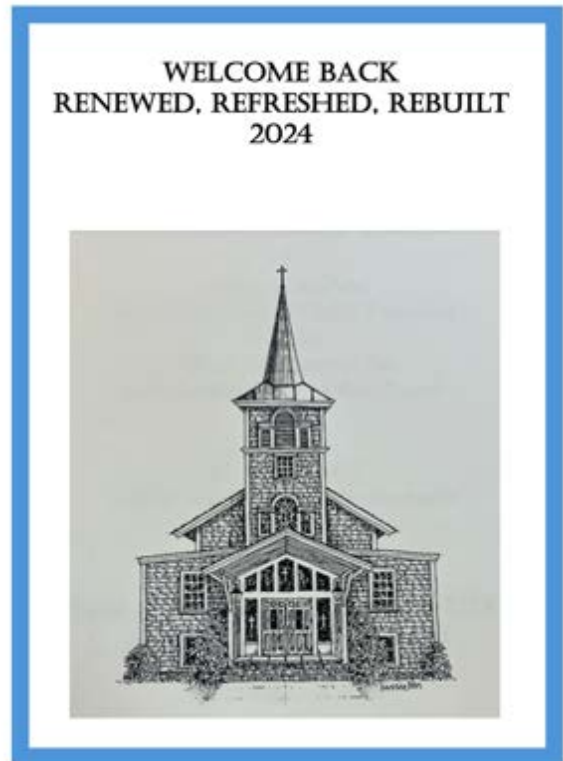
Holy Redeemer Church Rededication Activities

The renovation of Holy Redeemer is nearly complete, and we will soon be moving back into the church. The changes will provide a more welcoming and accessible environment. A Rededication Planning Committee has been working diligently to celebrate this landmark in parish history. We are planning a "Sneak Preview" Prayer Service and Reception on Sunday, June 23 for all donors to the Capital Campaign. The anniversary of the first Mass ever celebrated in at Holy Redeemer is June 25. If all goes well, our 8 am Daily Mass that day would be a nice date to celebrate the first Mass in the renovated church.

Bishop da Cunha plans to celebrate the Mass of Rededication of the Church and Blessing of the New Altar on Sunday, July 7, at 2 pm, and all are encouraged to attend. Please mark your calendars and invite your family to this historic event. A reception for all attendees will follow the Rededication Mass.

We have several other events planned as the summer progresses. Early in August and again in September, we will hold Open Houses and invite the wider Chatham community to tour the renovated church. We're looking for people to serve as docents and explain what has changed in the church, what the furnishings in a Catholic Church are, and how we use them in our worship or for devotions. If you would like to serve as a docent for one of these Open Houses please call the rectory at 508-945-0677.

We are also planning an organ concert for August to showcase our new Allen Organ. And on Sunday, August 25, we will host a Parish Picnic featuring food, games, and some musical entertainment that will help wind down the last days of summer.



Flower Ministry

Holy Redeemer is happy to announce its newest ministry, the Flower Ministry. For some time the availability of fresh flowers in front of the altar has been hit-or-miss, often dependent on whether or not a wedding party had taken their flowers with them to the reception or left them at the church. Volunteers have now stepped forward to prepare beautiful flower arrangements for the church throughout the year. How can you support their efforts? The Ministry has provided flower pots at the entrances to the church for donations to help pay for the cost of the flowers. If you could drop any loose change into the flower pots on your way into or out of the church the Flower Ministry would greatly appreciate it.



Also, if you would like to join the Flower Ministry please call the rectory at 508-945-0677. We'd be delighted to sign you up.

Zeitgeist and the Hymn "Oh God Beyond All Praising"

The word "Zeitgeist" is a German term that means "spirit of the time." It refers to something that catches the collective consciousness, such as "The Age of Optimism," in the late 1800s or the "Spirit of Camelot" that was associated with the President Kennedy's brief time in office. But can music – particularly a church hymn -- capture a collective spirit, and even transport us to a different, and sometimes other-worldly place? It definitely can if the hymn is one that has the soaring, emotional pull of "Oh God Beyond All Praising."



If you are unfamiliar with the hymn here is a YouTube link to a performance by the Villanova Pastoral Musicians: <https://youtu.be/4V-AQbKyg48?si=LrsTKGwlkai4ZrkJ>.

"Oh God Beyond All Praising" has a rich provenance. In 1982 Michael Perry, an Anglican priest, "borrowed" the music from the Jupiter section of Gustav Holst's hugely popular "Planets" symphony, and introduced lyrics that perfectly matched the uplifting quality of the composition.

*“and whether our tomorrows be filled with good or ill,
we'll triumph through our sorrows and rise to bless you still.”*

It was the second time Holtz's theme from Jupiter had been adapted for a different purpose. In 1921, the composer himself fit the music to a patriotic poem by Sir Cecil Spring-Rice entitled *“I Vow to Thee, My Country,”* creating a work that has since been sung at nearly every important British event, from Winston Churchill's funeral to Diana and Charles' wedding. Most recently it was sung at Queen Elizabeth's funeral. In 1983 Holtz's theme from Jupiter even made it onto the big screen, playing a prominent role in the soundtrack to the movie about the first seven American astronauts, *“The Right Stuff.”*

The next time Holy Redeemer's Choir, led by Director Cheryl Duerr, lets loose with *“Oh God Beyond All Praising”* – which fortunately they do frequently – take a look around at your fellow mass attendees, all standing a little taller, eyes lifted a little more toward heaven, one or two brushing back a tear. You'll have all the proof you need that music can indeed capture a collective spirit.



They're B-a-a-a-a-a-c-k!!

Summer in Chatham means many things. The return of Cape Cod Baseball and Band Concerts in Kate Gould Park. The playing of *“Jaws”* at the Orpheum Theater. The re-opening of The Kreme-n-Kone. It also means the return of thousands of tourists to the area and the accompanying difficulty making a left-hand turn at busy intersections. For Holy Redeemer and Our Lady of Grace Chapel it also means occasional masses with standing room only conditions.

While it might be tempting to bemoan the crowded streets and yearn for the months when the Stop-n-Shop was not overflowing with customers and parking spaces were readily available in the lot behind the Squire, it's also worth remembering that the summer tourists bring much needed revenue to Chatham and create hundreds of jobs. And it's not just the summer visitors who enjoy baseball and band concerts: lots of year-round residents like to take in a ballgame or two and also enjoy the band music that fills the air on Friday nights. Neither of which would happen without the summer tourists.

As for the extra attendees at Holy Redeemer and Our Lady of Grace, it's worth remembering that many of those who are now both year-round residents had their first exposure to the parish as summer visitors and subsequently made the decision to relocate to Chatham based on the warm reception they had at a weekend mass. There are many factors that contribute to the vibrancy of a church, and one of the most important is the friendly and welcoming atmosphere that regular mass attendees create for visitors. It has been a parish tradition for a number of years – which was temporarily interrupted during the pandemic -- to greet fellow worshipers at the beginning of mass.



This summer, when Father Sullivan or Father George begin mass by suggesting we take a few moments to greet our neighbors, consider asking folks who are visiting Chatham where they're from, where they're staying, and what they're planning to do while they're in town. You might even consider suggesting a restaurant or two they might like to dine at and let them know that no visit to Chatham is complete without a trip to Marion's Pie Shop or The Candy Manor. It just might be that the tourists you spend some time chatting with this summer could be the newest members of the parish a couple of summers from now. And you made that happen.



Getting to Know the Members of the Parish – Carole DeChristopher

We see the expression “to serve” so frequently that we often take it for granted. AARP’s motto is “To serve, and not be served.” The Girl Scout Promise contains the expression “To serve God and my country.” Police Departments often have as their motto “To protect and to serve.” But how many of us take the time to really think about what it means to serve others, particularly when serving others means taking time away from our own personal pursuits. As Marian Wright Edelman pointed out, service “is not something you do in your spare time.”

The tennis great Arthur Ashe noted that “true heroism is very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge *to serve others* at whatever cost.” By that definition Carole DeChristopher is definitely a hero since her entire life has been focused on providing service of others. We’ll give some examples shortly, but let’s start with some background information. Carole was born in Peekskill, New York, in a house where “I learned about being respectful to everyone.” She got an early start on serving others when as a college student she participated in a lay mission in North Carolina, and also taught religious education to children in Spanish communities.

Carole spent nearly all of her working career in and around metropolitan New York, where her early service-related efforts turned into a lifelong vocation. As she put it, “I asked God to put me where he wanted me. He did and then He said, ‘bloom where you’re planted’.”



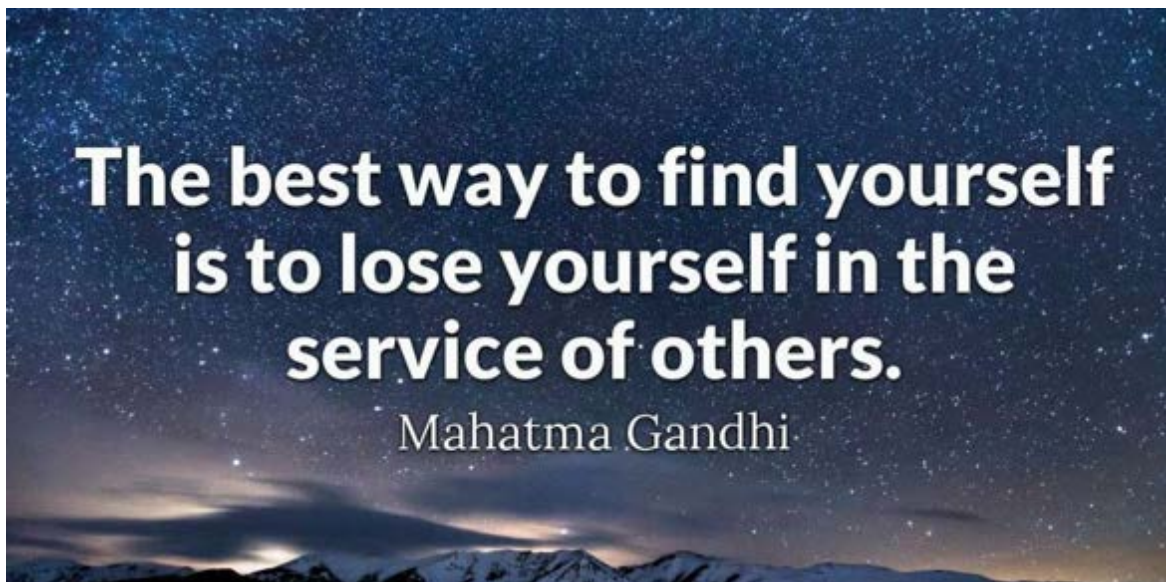
Carole began her career as a teacher with the Good Shepherd Sisters, then worked as a guidance counselor at St. Barnabas High School in the Bronx. She later worked for the Department of Social Services as a Social Worker in Children’s Services and in Child Protective Services, eventually rising to the post of District Director. She also served as an expert witness in a number of child abuse cases. Can one provide any greater or heroic service than coming to the aid of abused children?

While residing in Yonkers Carole lived for ten years in a community setting, located in a low-income part of the city. “The Sisters of Charity considered it a convent but the lay women and nuns who lived there considered it a ‘house of prayer’, as did the community at large.”

Carole subsequently moved to Cape Cod and has been a member of Holy Redeemer Parish for the past 24 years. “The people and the friendships I’ve formed have kept me here.” The move to the Cape did not dampen Carole’s devotion to service, and she has been an active member of Holy Redeemer’s Choir and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, as well as Chatham’s Council on Aging, FISH, and the Harwich Historical Society. She also recently served on Holy Redeemer’s “Clean-Up Chatham” team that removed trash for a number of areas in town.

Carole’s participation in the Faith Sharing Group that she helped form at Holy Redeemer has been an integral part of her spiritual growth and she is very grateful to those who have shared the journey with her. The group meets most Wednesdays at 10:30 am and focuses on among other things scriptural study, other religious writings, and the important role women have played in the Church and continue to play. The group is very diverse, but united in their common faith and their devotion to helping and supporting each other.

Carole turned 80 in May, which is a noteworthy achievement in its own right. But not nearly as remarkable as her unwavering dedication to a life of service. “I have chosen a single life vocation because it gives me more time to serve.” Well put.



Jeopardy for Catholics

Here's the way this works. We will give you an important aspect of Catholicism as noted in the "The Mary Knoll Catholic Dictionary," and ask you to name it. As always, your answer must worded in the form of a question. Given that Memorial Day has just passed, which in a different era meant that women could once again start dressing in white, we're focusing this month on fashion in the Bible

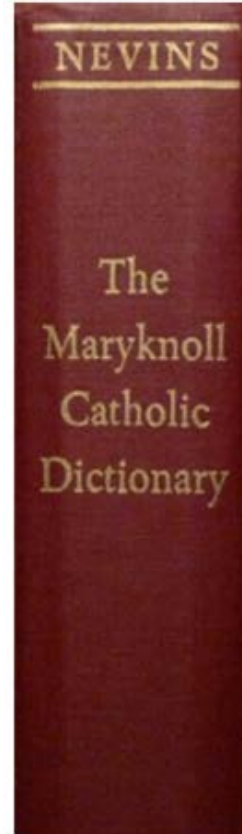
Here goes.

Number 1: They were the first to make a fashion statement wearing fig leaves.

Number 2: He took a minimalist approach to fashion and sported a garment made of camel's hair accompanied by matching leather belt.

Number 3: He favored a coat of many colors, prompting a famous sibling rivalry.

The answers are provided on the final page of Grace Notes.



...Conclusion

"The Twelve Chairs" is a 1970 comedy written and directed by Mel Brooks with a glass half-empty theme song entitled "Hope for the best, expect the worst." Given the challenging times we currently live in, and the potential for another contentious election season, it would not be surprising if many of us might considered adopting "Hope for the best, expect the worst" as our mantra. However, we would do well to remember that we have experienced many challenging times before and overcome all of them.



Consider the following:

- For the first half of the twentieth century the most feared disease in the country was polio, which killed thousands of Americans annually, and turned our 32nd president into a paraplegic. All that ended in 1955 with the discovery of the polio vaccine.

- For most of the twentieth century millions of people of color were deprived by segregationist senators in the South of the right to vote. Then in 1965 another Southern senator turned against his peers and pushed through the Voting Right Act, finally securing the franchise for every citizen in the country.
- A generation ago it was inconceivable that an African American would ever become President, much less serve two terms.

There are many problems that confront us as we move forward, whether they be local or federal or related to the church. History has shown that fixing them requires hard work, cooperation and time, and not anger, despair and cynicism. And though it might seem pollyannish, perhaps it might be better for our collective psyche to reject a “hope for the best, expect the worst.” approach and instead take on “Trust in God, expect the best,” as our mantra.



Answers to Jeopardy for Catholics

Answer to Number 1: Who were Adam and Eve?



Answer to Number 2: Who was John the Baptist?



Answer to Number 3: Who was Joseph, son of Jacob?

