

The Other Wise Man

### by Norm Berger

Scripture tells us that there were Three Wise Men who journeyed to Bethlehem to pay homage to the newborn King and to present gifts to this special child. The feast of Epiphany, commemorating this event, ends the twelve days of Christmas (in 2018, the feast is on January 7). So, as the Christmas season is ending liturgically, we hear of

the Wise Men appearing at a primitive dwelling, greeted by a startled likely and Joseph curious and Mary. Then the Wise Men leave the Holy Family, bypass Herod, and are never heard from again.

What if that was not the end of the story? What if a *fourth* wise man missed meeting his fellow astronomers and, hence, had to



journey on alone? This is the premise of a beloved story, "The Story of the Other Wise Man" written by a Presbyterian minister and educator, Henry Van Dyke (born in Philadelphia in 1852; died in Princeton, NJ, in 1933). In the story, Artaban from Ecbatana, a city in the region of Media in modern-day Iran, is friends with the three Magi and plans to join them at the distant Temple of the Seven Spheres to journey to Bethlehem. He sells all that he has to obtain supplies for his trip and jewels as gifts for the child to be born: a sapphire, a large, beautiful ruby, and a wondrous pearl. Artaban hurries his horse to the meeting place as he is late in starting. Nearing his goal, he encounters an elderly Jewish man dying in the road. Taking pity on him, he tends to him (since he is a physician as well as an astrologer). Due to this delay, when Artaban reaches the meeting place, he discovers his fellow travelers have already left without him. He finds a parchment from the Magi telling him to follow them across the desert. However, his swift horse is now spent and he knows he now must buy camels for a desert crossing. He uses the sapphire to buy what he needs and continues with new resolve.

He journies on alone finally reaching Bethlehem. The town



is in an uproar and Artaban knocks on a door to inquire of the whereabouts of the Christ child. A young woman with an infant in her arms begs him to protect her baby as soldiers are combing the town to dispatch infants such as hers. A loud knock is heard. It is an officer soldiers! with the Artaban bribes him with the ruby and

saves the woman's child. Learning that the parents of Him he is seeking are gone, he leaves Bethlehem to continue his search.

Now the narrative switches to events narrated by an observer in a so-called "Hall of Dreams." This observer

# The Gift of Giving

### by Marianne Thomas

We know the custom of giving gifts at Christmas began when the Wise Men presented the first Christmas gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Baby Jesus. Although today's society credits it to a jolly old elf with a white beard, the symbolization of a giver of gifts with no expectations can also inspire us to give.

Parishioners Pat and Jerry G. of Towamencin are blessed to spend the holidays with their daughter, her husband and their two young granddaughters. Christmas stockings filled with really unique stocking stuffers are their favorite. Stuffers include gift cards, perfume or cologne and unique, old-fashioned items like Sen Sen, Teaberry gum and even bacon-flavored toothpaste and floss. They get together on Christmas Eve to light the fireplace and receive a visit from Santa, followed by a family dinner. They realize that there is no better gift than the gift of family.

Sue and Walter K. of Lansdale has a continually growing family, with 4 married children and 9 grandchildren ranging in ages from under one to 15. When their own children were young, they did not put up their Christmas tree until Christmas Eve, when all the kids were asleep. "It was very hectic to get it all done in such a short time, but seeing their faces on Christmas morning made it all worthwhile". Their gift-giving always includes books and practical gifts of clothing, pajamas and winter gear. Walt likes buying the adults "something that they would never buy for themselves". They remember one year when their kids were teenagers and they had a "Dollar Store" pollyannas; they all enjoyed seeing who found the best gift to give. They know the best Christmases are the ones everyone remembers.



As many of us can relate, Barb and Pat M. of Lansdale feel that they do not need anything for themselves but they enjoy buying do gifts for their two grown sons and grandchildren. Gifts include clothing (pajamas are always books, popular), and usually a toy from their wish The lists. adults exchange names and they also enjoy



having an ornament exchange among their extended family.

Rose and Dale W. of North Wales decided years ago not to exchange gifts. They do not have children and buy themselves what they need throughout the year, so instead they try to give of themselves during the holidays. They volunteer, donate monetarily as well as give toys, coats, gloves and scarves to many local charities. They say they prefer the gift of giving rather than receiving.

My mom, Stella, always told us about her childhood on the farm when they never received any gifts. They decorated and had a tree with real lit candles for Christmas Eve only and had huge family meals that lasted for days when their extended family came up from the city. But the only gifts she ever received were from the "rich lady" her mother worked for as a laundress. This woman would bring in the neighborhood children for a Christmas party and they picked a gift off of her tree. She never forgot the year she got a pencil and was thrilled!

As the busy shopping season winds down and the holidays are behind us, we may begin to realize that it wasn't what we gave to whom, but it's the memories and blessings we receive when we give. It is important that we remember that Christmas itself is God's gift to us, the giving to us of His only Son As in John 3:16: "God loved the world so much, that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not be lost but have eternal life." **A** 

# **Parishioner Spotlight**

# Deacon Tony Bellitto

### by Dan Miller

Our Parishioner Spotlight this issue is about a familiar member of St. Stanislaus; however, he is now in a new role within the parish. Deacon Anthony Bellitto is the newest Permanent Deacon on our clergy staff, having assumed his position in June of this year. Deacon Tony and his family have been involved members of the parish since coming here in 1998, but he is already finding so much to love about this new vocation.

Deacon Tony and his wife Sharon are both from New York, (him from the Bronx, her from Long Island), and were married in 1987. Tony graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering and a Master's Degree in

Environmental Engineering from Manhattan College, and has a true passion for water - in fact, his license plate says "Living H20"! He will soon be celebrating 20 years as the executive director of the North Penn Water Authority, and hopes to stay there until he retires. He gets to see God in both of his vocations. He is inspired by St. John Paul II's encyclical on Faith and Reason regarding the compatibility of the scientific with the spiritual. He says that, by working as a water service provider with the NPWA and as a deacon with St. Stanislaus, he is involved in both the natural and the supernatural needs of people.

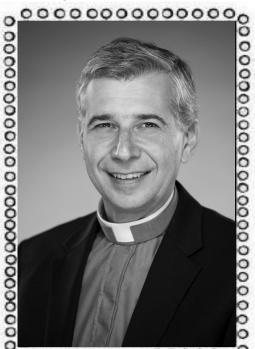
Tony and Sharon moved to Lansdale

in 1998 with their two children, Juliana and Eric, and were immediately welcomed by St. Stanislaus. They quickly got involved in parish and school activities, including Pastoral Council, the Summer Festival, prayer groups, lectors, Eucharistic Ministry, and the GIFT program. Tony feels that God truly led his family here.

After being a part of the parish and reflecting a lot on his faith, Tony felt a calling to the diaconate. He was inspired by some really exemplary men in our parish, such as Deacon Chuck Lewis and Deacon Steve Vondercrone, whom he regards as mentors. He was also influenced by the strong faith of his parents, and by the priestly vocation of his uncle, who is a retired Bishop in New York. He was very attracted to ministry, hoping that this would be a fulfilling and joyful calling.

Becoming a deacon is a volunteer position, and a lot is involved in the vocation. Tony went through a one-year period of discernment, where he was able to meet people who could give him more information and share their experiences. He ultimately decided that this is what God was calling him to do, applied, and was accepted to the program.

From there, Tony entered a 6-year study program, which involved going back to school at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary and earning a Master's Degree in Theology. This involved classes every week, plus monthly workshops, and



other meetings and events. He found this experience very enjoyable, as it allowed him to learn so much more about his faith. It was certainly a big time commitment, but Tony and his family were able to manage their time and juggle their other responsibilities. Throughout this entire period, as always, they prayed that God would find a way for them to make it work.

Tony's wife Sharon is a third grade teacher at Regina Luminas Academy. Their son Eric just graduated from Penn College in May and has a job with Allan Myers Contracting. Their daughter Juliana graduated from Temple University and is a professional photographer. She and her husband Colin just had a new

baby boy, John Adams Laury III, on November 14th. Tony's family has been supportive of his diaconate ministry, every step of the way. They take everything one day at a time, praying for guidance and strength. He said that a lot of this vocation is prioritizing what is most fulfilling and worthwhile to them.

Tony reflected that, with each step in the process of becoming a deacon, it was more clear that this was the right choice for him. He felt a calling to this vocation out of a sense of gratitude to God for all the blessings He has given. He can see God's hand in his life, and knows that

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# Our Pastor's Pen 🖉

Dear friends / Mis amigos queridos

A Christmas tradition which parents use to educate their children in the Christmas story comes down to us from one of Christendom's most beloved saints. According to *The Life of St. Francis of* 



Assisi by St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan monk who was born five years before Francis' death, St. Francis got permission from Pope Honorious III to set up a manger with hay and two live animals—an ox and an ass—in a cave in the Italian village of Grecio. He then invited the villagers to come gaze upon the scene while he preached about "the babe of Bethlehem." The visual impact of the scene on the people was striking. Remember that those to whom Francis ministered were primarily poor and uneducated. They needed to hear or see something, not read about it.

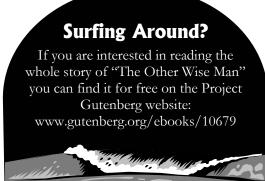
The nativity scene's popularity took off from there. Within a couple of centuries, nativity scenes had spread throughout Europe. It is not known if people actually played Mary and Joseph during Francis' time, or whether they just imagined those figures' presence. We do know that later scenes began incorporating dioramas and life actors, and the cast of characters gradually expanded beyond Mary, Joseph and sweet baby Jesus, to sometimes include an entire village.

The manager brings the simplicity of the Incarnation and gift of God to people who did not have anything of value to speak about. The majestic Son of God was born in a stable . . . to working-class people . . . in a dumpy little village few people ever visited! God invested Himself in the human condition. He did not take the easy route. He would work, trade, grow up and be educated as any commoner. He truly was "God Among Us."

As we celebrate His arrival at Christmas, there are many beautiful opportunities to re-connect with the story we learned as children. Everyone is welcome at St. Stanislaus to join our worshipping community in doing just that. Come and be open to what God may work within you, rather than limiting your arrival to your "annual Church visit!" Know that you are always welcome, and we will enjoy your coming home at Christmas and beyond. Have a blessed and joyful Christmas, and a prosperous and healthy New Year!

Sincerely in the Lord,

Thege. Joseph Tracy



## NEWSTAN

#### MISSION STATEMENT

In response to the St. John Paul II's call to evangelization, St. Stanislaus Parish started publishing *NewStan* to serve members of the parish community and the community at large, to inform parishioners and members of the North Penn region about new developments in the parish, and to serve as a channel for communications among St. Stanislaus parishioners and benefactors.

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Those who wish to contribute items for publication should forward them to the *NewStan* mailbox in the St. Stanislaus Parish Center The inclusion of submitted material is subject to the judgment of the editors in consultation with Monsignor Tracy and the St. Stanislaus Communications Director. The editors reserve the right to edit all submitted material for length and content.

> Visit St. Stanislaus Parish on the web at <u>www.ststanislaus.com</u> Follow us on Facebook: St. Stanislaus Lansdale **承承知**

Have a question about St. Stanislaus Parish, or about the Catholic faith in general? Forward questions to the *NewStan* mailbox in the Parish Center, anonymously if desired. We will get them to the right person and publish the answers in a future issue.

# **NewStan Book Review**

## <u>The Secret of the Rosary</u> by St. Louis De Montfort

### by Lorraine Miller

The Secret of the Rosary by St. Louis De Montfort is one of his most important works. In it he describes the many benefits of the Rosary, and how to say it with true devotion. He was a French priest and Dominican Tertiary who died in 1716. It has been reprinted at least 40 times as of 2016. As we look forward to one of the biggest holidays in the liturgical and



secular calendars, it seems appropriate to examine this small book in order to help us keep the real meaning of Christmas close to our hearts.

St. Louis describes the Rosary as a "Crown of Roses" and as "The mystical rose tree of Jesus and Mary in life, death and eternity." He says that "every time people say the Rosary devoutly they place a crown of one hundred and fifty-three red roses upon the heads of Jesus and Mary. Being heavenly flowers these roses will never fade or lose their exquisite beauty." In addition, he tells us that the roses of our own rosary will "never wilt or die, and they will be just as exquisite thousands of years from now as they are today," certainly a heartening statement. In this book he tells us "in a simple and straightforward manner," of the authenticity of the message of the Rosary.

The book is in the form of prayer with 53 short chapters including pieces of history, spiritual advice, and preaching, laid out like a Rosary of 53 *Ave Marias*. St. Louis writes:

"Through the Holy Rosary:

- 1. Sinners are forgiven;
- 2. Souls that thirst are refreshed;
- 3. Those who are fettered have their bonds broken;
- 4. Those who weep find happiness;
- 5. Those who are tempted find peace;
- 6. The poor find help;
- 7. Religious are reformed;

- 8. Those who are ignorant are instructed;
- 9. The living learn to overcome pride;
- 10. The dead (the Holy Souls) have their pains eased by suffrages."

He claims that the Holy Rosary has "chased away devils, destroyed sin and renewed the world."

This book also helps us to learn about the origins of the Rosary in appearances of Our Lady to St. Dominic and his subsequent passion for preaching the Holy Rosary. The Blessed Virgin Mary said to St. Dominic, "One day through the Rosary and Scapular I will save the world."

The front cover of this book of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary is "somewhat mysterious" in origin. It was discovered in 1918 in the cellar of the boarding school where Berthe Petit, a humble Franciscan Tertiary, was educated. It was "Confided by Our Lord to Berthe Petit: "Teach souls to love the Heart of my Mother pierced by the very sorrow which pierced Mine." (Dec. 25, 1909). For many of us, the celebration of Christmas is a time of joy. For others, it is a time of suffering. Praying the Rosary can help all of us to make it a time of growth.

# A Christmas Wish

by Dianne Spotts

Before God created time, He chose the moment when He would send His Son Jesus to become one of us - to walk among us and save us. I pray that all of your moments will be blessed by the full wonder of that miracle, and the joy of a close personal relationship with Him. May our Lord's grace be with you and yours now and

# The Foods Traditions Are Made Of

## by Lino Viola

"Tradition," according to *Merriam Webster* is "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior, such as a religious practice or a social custom."

I was raised in a first-generation Italian family which was steeped in various family traditions. These practices and beliefs were passed down from generation to generation. Many of them were centered around a family's religious and/or cultural heritage which created a sense of familiarity and commitment. They paved the way for good times and good memories. Traditions have a way of helping to form a bond.

I learned early on in life that traditions are made up the "Big Four F's": Faith, Family, Food and Fun. I'm sure the order of importance changed as I matured. You knew something was coming just by looking at the crèches that were in each home and church. You could feel the excitement building as one practiced a form of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of the Bambino Gesu (Baby Jesus).

The baking of pizzelle, biscotti, struffoli (pan-fried dough tossed with honey and sprinkles), and panettone (the Italian Christmas cake) would begin a few days before Christmas, filling the house with these wonderful smells and making our taste buds perk up, but tasting these special treats was forbidden until Christmas Eve.

This was a time for grandparents to shine as each had their own set of duties and responsibilities, yet all would take the time to teach their grandchildren the meaning behind the various traditions. They had a way of captivating the young ones with their storytelling. My grandparents died before I was born but I was fortunate to spend some time with a friend Steve and his grandmother on occasion.

I remember her mentioning Christmas taking in three separate feasts: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Epiphany (the day when we exchanged gifts). "La Vigilia" is the Vigil of Christmas or the Christmas Eve celebration. I met up with Steve mid-morning of Christmas Eve. He told me how his grandmother had taken him to an early morning Mass. When they got home she began baking fresh bread which had this salivating effect which I found hard to explain.

As she continued to prepare different dishes for that evening's big feast she explained the tradition of having a meatless meal. The Vigil dinner consisted of cheese, fish and pasta. According to Steve's Nonna, the cheese was served first and symbolized the milk of Mary, which nurtured the Baby Jesus. Then came the fish. The number to be eaten had to be one, three, seven, or nine, because the numbers had a symbolic meaning in the Christmas story. One fish symbolized the Christ Child, and three the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Seven was symbolic of the Holy Family, the three shepherds, and the choir of angels. And finally, nine was the Holy Family, the three shepherds, and the Three Magi. These dishes vary from family to family, but one likely finds an array of seafood including clams, mussels, squid, shrimp, lobster, tuna, and baccala (salted cod) made in a variety of ways.

During the day I learned different variations of the story and tradition of the feast of seven fishes from the one that was handed down by my family. I could see that all was woven around one's faith and not much was of great revelation. However, I did leave with one explanation that was new to me. What made the Christmas Eve meal even more different was the spaghetti. It was served without red gravy or sauce. We typically had angel hair pasta served with agli'olio (garlic fried in olive oil) poured over it. Steve's Nonna said that this symbolized the pure white hair of the choir of angels, which would later come to life as we ended that Holy Night, the Vigilia, by partaking of the Banquet at midnight Mass.

## Recipes for Seven Fishes Feasts

## From the St. Stanislaus Family Cookbook

If you need a dish for your "Seven Fishes" celebration, here are two recipes from parishioners as published in the 2012 *St. Stanislaus Parish Family Cookbook*.

## Shrimp and Garlic Sauce

## From the kitchen of Anna Patcon

1 package medium-size shrimp, cooked 1/2 head of garlic, mashed Salt and pepper to taste 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil Capers (optional) 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, minced 1/8 cup sherry 4 or 5 stalks of scallions, chopped

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# The Other Wise Man

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sees various scenes, as the years of Artaban's search for Jesus swiftly pass. Eventually he makes his way to Jerusalem where, as in Bethlehem, the city is in an uproar. He encounters a young woman being dragged away by soldiers. She breaks free and runs to Artaban, recognizing him by his clothes as a fellow countryman. She falls to her knees and begs him to save her from a life of slavery for the debts of her deceased father. Artaban gives his last gift, the fine pearl, to the soldiers as a ransom for her. Then the sky darkens and the ground shakes violently from an earthquake and a heavy roof stone is loosened and falls on Artaban's head. As he lies dying bemoaning the fact that all his gifts for the Messiah are gone, a bright light appears. A heavenly vision opens to the injured Artaban who is being cradled by the young woman. A voice is heard in the vision, telling Artaban that what he did for others, he did for Him. At last, he has found Him whom he longed to discover. The goal of his quest has been realized even though Artaban felt himself a failure.

Like many of us, Artaban spends his life to find Jesus and encounters many challenges on the way just as we do. Here is a Wise Man we can readily identify with! This Wise Man continues the Christmas story as our own lives continue after the Christmas season. It is a story of faith in One not seen until life is ebbing and sacrifices that seem to be loss but have become gain.!

# **Deacon Tony Bellitto**

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he has been blessed in so many ways. Now he wants to give back by serving the people of our parish in his new role. He was a little nervous at first, but already feels adjusted to the role, more quickly than he even thought.

As a permanent deacon with St. Stanislaus, Tony is ready and willing to be available to Msgr. Tracy and the parish community in any way he can. It is especially a privilege to give homilies at Mass and perform baptisms. He compares his work as a deacon to his work with the NPWA: the members of the parish community are his "customers" and in this role, he wants to be able to be of service to them.

One particular thought from Deacon Tony especially resonates during this Christmas season: "God is interested more in our availability than our ability." In his new role, Deacon Tony has certainly shown already the great effect that giving one's availability to God can have.

# **Seven Fishes Recipes**

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In a small amount of olive oil, sauté the scallions until they are limp. Add the garlic and sauté very briefly, being careful not to burn them. Add the rest of the oil, salt, pepper, and shrimp and simmer at a low temperature, about 2 minutes. Add the rest of the ingredients and simmer 1 additional minute. Serve over your favorite pasta with fresh grated Parmesan cheese.

## Italian Tuna Fish

### From the kitchen of Betty Gilbert

2 cans crushed tomatoes
1 can chunky crushed tomatoes
2 cans tuna (solid pack light)
<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup extra light olive oil
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1 tsp. parsley
1 tsp. dried basil
<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp. crushed red pepper
1 large onion, chopped
1 tsp Italian seasoning
1 10-oz bag frozen broccoli

Salt and pepper to taste

In a large pot, put your oil and all seasonings; simmer until you see garlic is getting lightly browned. Remove from heat. Then put the 3 cans of tomatoes in your pot with the tuna fish; cook for a few hours. Cook and drain broccoli; add into the same pot. Put <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup of oil and <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> teaspoon crushed red pepper in pot; heat through. Serve with your favorite pasta.

# **Upcoming GIFT Event**

The next  $\underline{\mathbf{G}}$  rowing  $\underline{\mathbf{I}}$ n  $\underline{\mathbf{F}}$  aith  $\underline{\mathbf{T}}$  ogether presentation is:

 Tuesday, January 9, Fr. Thomas Whittingham (Pastor of St. Katherine Drexel parish in Chester, PA): "Everyday Mysticism" How opening our eyes to see that Jesus' own life is

How opening our eyes to see that Jesus own life is being lived out in the lives of everyone we meet each day can turn our "everyday" existence into a "mystical" experience.

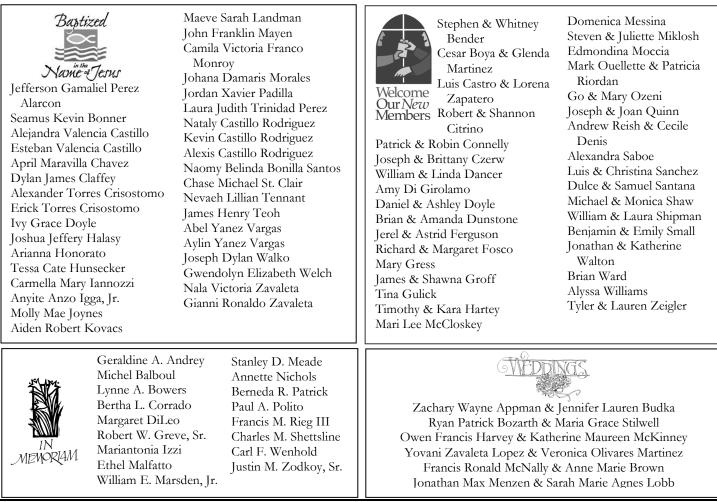
All GIFT presentations begin at 7:00PM in the Parish Center Lobby meeting room. Check the Sunday bulletins and Parish website for updated information. Bring a friend!

*NewStan* The Newsletter of St. Stanislaus Parish 51 Lansdale Avenue Lansdale, PA 19446

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## Parish Census Data for July – October 2017



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