



Epiphany

JOY: *Jesus First, Others Second, You*

1st Sunday After Epiphany

الأحد الأول - زمن الدنح

St Anthony Maronite Church
كنيسة مار أنطونيوس المارونية

OFFICE HOURS

M-TH: 9 AM - 4PM

Friday: 9 AM—2 PM

Saturdays: By Appointment

MAILING ADDRESS

145 Amesbury Street
Lawrence, MA 01841

Phone: 978.685.7233

Fax: 978.688.4475

rectory@stanthonylawrence.org

www.stanthonylawrence.org

MEET OUR PRIESTS & DEACONS

Pastor

Fr. Elie Mikhael 305.807.9087

pastor@stanthonylawrence.org

Parochial Vicar

Fr. Jebrael Moussallem... 412.616.4144

pv@stanthonylawrence.org

Deacon Nadim B. Daou

Visiting Deacon

Michael Charchaflian

Sub-Deacon James T. Demers

PARISH

MISSION STATEMENT

You are welcomed and loved by St Anthony Community. We are transformed through prayer, acts of love, forgiveness, service and stewardship.

OUR CHURCH AT PRAYER

Daily Liturgies

M & W: 9 AM

T & TH: 7 PM

Weekend Liturgies:

Saturday: 4 PM Vigil

Sunday Liturgies:

8:15 AM - Arabic

9:30 AM - English

11:30 AM - English & Arabic

Holy days of obligation

Vigil Liturgy @ 7 PM

Feast Day @ 9 AM

SACRAMENTS

Baptism & Confirmation

1 month in advance with the Pastor

Matrimony

Couples should make arrangements six months prior to the wedding date

Reconciliation

One hour Before Thursday & Saturday Liturgies, or by appointment

Anointing of the Sick

Please notify the Rectory if a member of your family is ill, hospitalized, or unable to come to Church and would like to receive communion at home

Please refer to our website for more Sacrament Celebrations Guidelines

PARISH SECRETARY

Pat McKeever

rectory@stanthonylawrence.org

PARISH MINISTRIES

Religious Education

ccd@stanthonylawrence.org

Knights of Mary

kom@stanthonylawrence.org

Maronite Youth : MYO

myo@stanthonylawrence.org

Publishing: Bulletin

bulletin@stanthonylawrence.org

Choirs (English, Arabic & Syriac)

Kids Choir

Knights of the Altar

Maronite Young Adults

Bereavement Ministry

Cenacle of the Rosary

(Tuesdays @ 6PM before Liturgy)

Cenacle of Divine Mercy

(Sundays Before the Liturgies)

~Sacristan (s)

RESOURCES

AVAILABLE ONLINE

www.stanthonylawrence.org

Membership Registration

Under Welcome

Baptism & Confirmation:

Guidelines & Registration

Under Sacraments -Baptism

Sacrament of Marriage:

Guidelines , Foccus & Pre-Cana

Under Sacraments-Marriage

Banquet Hall Guidelines:

Contract Form & Donations

Under Events

Burial Guidelines:

Charges, Fees & Lot Sales

Under Cemetery

1st Sunday of Epiphany

الأحد الأول-زمن الدنج

Saturday, January 12 @ 4:00 PM

For: In Honor of Shaker & Gisele Asmar (Anniversary)

Sunday, January 13 @ 8:15 AM

For: In Honor of Ghassan & Claudine Raad (Anniversary)

Sunday, January 13 @ 9:30 AM

For: In Honor of Matthew & Katelyn Maroon (Anniversary)

Sunday, January 13 @ 11:30 AM

For: In Honor of Gaby & Adele Maroun (Anniversary)

For: +Sayde Tarraf Alghoul, By her sons, Walid and Tony Alghoul, and their Families.

1st Week of Epiphany

الاسبوع الأول - زمن الدنج

Monday, January 14 @ 9 AM

For: In Honor of Youssef and Dunia Issa (Anniversary)

Tuesday, January 15 @ 7 PM

For: In Honor of Maya Fares (Birthday)

Wednesday, January 16 @ 9 AM

For: In Honor of Mark and Mary Anne Alliegro (Anniversary)

Thursday, January 17 @ 7 PM -

Feast of St. Anthony the Great - Holy Day of Obligation

In Honor of Grece Abou Ezzi (Birthday), By her Children, Chloe and Chaniel.

Friday, January 18 @ 7PM NO LITURGY

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

الأحد الثاني - زمن الدنج

Saturday, January 19 @ 4:00 PM

For: Special Intentions

Sunday, January 20 @ 8:15 AM

For: +Chukri & Nadia Raad Awil, & Salma Awil, By their daughter, Mona, wife of Mr. Youssef Khoder, & their Family.

Sunday, January 20 @ 9:30 AM

For: Special Intentions

Sunday, January 20 @ 11:30 AM

For: +Tanous Ata, By his wife, Leila, children and their Families.

2018 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

If you would like to receive your 2018 End of year Contribution statements please contact the Rectory. The statement can be e-mailed to you or sent by mail.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Our Parish will be presenting its Annual Parish Financial Report for the fiscal year ending January 2018, and report to our community in the spirit of transparency in sharing information regarding the financial health of our church and school. Our church mission is funded by your generosity. Your contributions are used to fund parish ministries, pay salaries, maintain our buildings, expanding our cemetery and fund our religious education programs. Your generous donations to the Eparchy and other special collections that aid the needy in our community and beyond demonstrate your commitment to our church mission. The staff, volunteers, and I will continue to work very hard to make St. Anthony as strong as possible, both spiritually and temporally, for the greater glory of God.

We march toward a future with hope, relying not only on our own strength but on the Lord Who remains faithful to His covenant.

Blessings,
Fr Élie Mikhael

UPDATES TO OUR PARISH MEMBERSHIP

As for our Annual parishioners record maintenance, a review of the parish list will be executed to update the records. We will assign newly graduated professional parishioners to a new-household with new contribution envelopes Humbled for God's blessings upon our parish that is flourishing because of His Grace and of your faith and charity.

FUEL COLLECTION ENVELOPES

Throughout the winter months, you will notice a Fuel collection Envelope. Be advised that this collection is taken for us to help defer the costs of the Church heating bill. We thank you for your attention to this matter.

TITHES & OFFERINGS

January 6

Sunday Collection (Online)	\$ 4,857.00
Candles	\$ 168.00
Sunday Coffee Hour	\$ 101.00
Fuel	\$ 800.00
Donations (In honor, in memory, Baptism, etc.)	\$ 1,135.00
Total Deposit	\$ 7,061.00

SPECIAL THANKS

We take a moment to offer our sincere gratitude to Mr. Leonard Samia and his family for their generous donation of **\$15,000.00.**



We thank you for the kindness you've shown towards Saint Anthony Church and assure you and your family of our continuous prayers.

**Helping for the
Spiritual Growth &
Prosperity of Our
Parish !**

**Contribute to Our
Parish Growth.**

Apply Online:

[http://
stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/](http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/)

Online giving is a great way to teach people faithfulness in their giving, **and for people to give conveniently whenever and wherever they are.**

PARISH

MINISTRIES , ORGANIZATIONS & NEWS

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Susan Veilleux ccd@stanthonylawrence.org

All parents of children making First Communion please read this carefully.

Prayer practice sheets were sent home this week with your children. Please be sure your child can pray the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Act of Contrition. Although the prayers are reviewed in class weekly, its your reinforcement at home that will support your child learning these prayers.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNICANTS

****SAVE THESE IMPORTANT DATES****

- ⇒ **Sunday, February 3, @ 10:30 AM** in the church, there will be an informational meeting for First Communion parents.
- ⇒ **Saturday, March 2nd @ 9 AM - 12 PM**
First Reconciliation- Parents do not need to stay. Children will make their first confession followed by an activity. This date is mandatory per Fr. Elie.
- ⇒ **Sunday, May 5th @ 10:30 AM**
First Communion Practice, children only
- ⇒ **Friday, May 17th @ 5:30 PM**
First Communion Practice, with Parents
- ⇒ **Saturday, May 18th @ 10:30 AM**
First Communion, celebration & Liturgy



KNIGHTS OF MARY

Marie Charabati
kom@stanthonylawrence.org

- ◇ January 19 (Regular Session)
- ◇ February 23 (Regular Session)

All sessions are 5:30pm to 7pm unless otherwise noted.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Meeting: Tuesday, February 12th @ 7 PM



MARONITE YOUTH - MYO

Gloria Azzi
myo@stanthonylawrence.org

Friday, January 18th: Faith Formation

Becoming an MYO Advisor

We are looking for a committed and motivated **parishioner, aged 25+** that is interested in becoming a MYO Advisor.

If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact Gloria @ myo@stanthonylawrence.org or call the Church Office.



KNIGHTS OF THE ALTAR

Sub-Deacon James Demers

Meeting: Saturday, February 2nd @ 11AM



MARONITE YOUNG ADULTS

Sahar E. Ata
mya@stanthonylawrence.org

Events to be published



SUNSHINE COMMITTEE

Katy Abraham

The Sunshine Committee spent days in December visiting our home bound parishioners and sending out Christmas greetings and what a wonderful time we had. Thank you to all who allowed us into their homes. It was a great time for all of us.

Please let us know if you or a loved one would like an occasional visit because we would be very happy to spend a little time with you. If you have questions you can call the rectory and leave your name and number and a member of the committee would be happy to get in touch to set up a convenient time to visit.

Katy Abraham, St. Anthony Sunshine Committee

PARISH

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

MATTHEW:
THE KING & HIS KINGDOM

Holy Adult Mind
Follow Soul Faith Spirit Believe
Heart Prayer Christ
Catholic Formation Understand
Love of God Relationship

Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday

January 23 @ 10:30AM
English Session

January 16 @ 7:00PM
Arabic Session



جمعية سيدة لبنان للنساء

يفتح باب الأنتساب في بداية السنة الجديدة . يسعى عضو الأخوية إلى أن يكون إنساناً ناضجاً ومسيحياً عميقاً ورسولاً في المجتمع من خلال الالتزام في دعوة ورسالة الكنيسة في العالم

Our Lady of Lebanon Ladies Guild,
an outreach to women who speak Arabic to nurture their faith and to nature their cultural background

Save THE Date

Saturday, March 2nd
For our Parish Half
More information to follow

Adoration

of the

Blessed Sacrament

Thursday January 17th

@ 7:30 PM



FAMILY OF ST SHARBEL Thurs., January 17th

- ◇ 6:30 PM - Rosary of Saint Sharbel
- ◇ 7:00 PM - Divine Liturgy
- ◇ 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM - Eucharistic Adoration

عائلة مار شربل: الخميس 17 كانون الثاني:



6:30 مساء: صلاة المسبحة

7:00 مساء: أقدس الألهي

7:30 مساء: إرتفاع الصليب المقدس



COMING SOON !!!!
A NEW MINISTRY
FOR WOMEN
COMING TO OUR
CHURCH

The Lord said to St. Francis, "Rebuild my Church," for such a time as this, the Lord is calling to women, asking them to work in the beauty of their natural gifts as women, and is saying to them, "Heal my body."

Pope Prayer Intentions - January 2019 -

Evangelization:

That young people, especially in Latin America, follow the example of Mary and respond to the call of the Lord to communicate the joy of the Gospel to the world.

READINGS

First Sunday After Epiphany

2 Corinthians 10:1-11

Brothers and Sisters: I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away! I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards. Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete. Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we. Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.' Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present. **Praise be to God always!**

Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint John 1:29-34

The Apostle said: The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

This is the truth. Peace be with you.

LECTORS

Saturday, January 12 - 4:00 PM Alexa Ata
 Sunday, January 13 - 8:15 AM Mona Hbaiter
 Sunday, January 13 - 9:30 AM Elizabeth Frias
 Sunday, January 13 - 11:30 AM
English: Mansour Chaya Arabic: Selim Matta

Saturday, January 19 - 4:00 PM Christine Ryan
 Sunday, January 20 - 8:15 AM Huguette Sfeir
 Sunday, January 20 - 9:30 AM Michael Faris
 Sunday, January 20 - 11:30 AM
English: George Saab Arabic: Ajia Elia

THE SANCTUARY LAMPS

Right Sanctuary Lamp

This week's Sanctuary Lamp will burn
In Loving Memory of Helen Hajj
Offered by her son, Daniel Desantis, & Family.

Left Sanctuary Lamp

This week's Sanctuary Lamp will burn
In Loving Memory of Helen Hajj
Offered by her son, Daniel Desantis, & Family.

الأحد الأول بعد الدنح

رسالة القديس بولس الثاني إلى أهل قورنتس

يا إخوتي، أنا بولس نفسي أناشدكم بوداعة المسيح وحلمه، أنا المتواضع بينكم عندما أكون حاضراً، والجريء عليكم عندما أكون غائباً. وأرجو ألا أُجبر عند حضورتي أن أكون جريئاً، بالثقة التي لي بكم، والتي أنوي أن أجروها بها على الذين يحسبون أننا نسلك كأنا جسديين. أجل، إننا نحيا في الجسد، ولكننا لا نحارب كأنا جسديين؛ لأن أسلحة جهادنا ليست جسدية، بل هي قادرة بالله على هدم الحصون المنيعة؛ فإننا نهدم الأفكار الخاطئة، وكل شموخ يرتفع ضد معرفة الله، ونأسر كل فكر لطاعة المسيح. ونحن مستعدون أن نعاقب كل عصيان، متى كملت طاعتكم. إنكم تحكمون على المظاهر! إن كان أحد واثقاً بنفسه أنه للمسيح، فلينكز في نفسه أنه كما هو للمسيح كذلك نحن أيضاً. فأنا لا أخجل إن بالغت بعض المبالغة في الافتخار بالسُلطان الذي وهبه الرب لنا لبنيانكم لا لهدمكم. ولا أريد أن أظهر كأني أخوفكم برسائلي؛ لأن بعضاً منكم يقولون: «رسائله شديدة اللهجة وقوية، أما حضوره الشخصي فهزيل، وكلامه سخيّف!». «فلنعلم مثل هذا القائل أننا كما نحن بالكلام في الرسائل، عندما نكون غائبين، كذلك نحن أيضاً بالفعل، عندما نكون حاضرين.

إنجيل القديس يوحنا 1: 29-34

في الغد رأى يوحنا يسوع مقبلاً إليه فقال: «ها هو حمل الله الذي يرفع خطيئة العالم. هذا هو الذي قلت فيه: يأتي ورائي رجل قد صار فدّامي، لأنه كان قبلي. وأنا ما كنت أعرفه، لكنني جئت أعمد بالماء لكي يظهر هو لإسرائيل». «وشهد يوحنا قائلاً: «رأيت الروح نازلاً كحمامة من السماء، ثم استقرّ عليه. وأنا ما كنت أعرفه، لكن الذي أرسلني أعمد بالماء هو قال لي: من ترى الروح ينزل ويستقرّ عليه، هو الذي يعمد بالروح القدس. وأنا رأيت وشهدت أن هذا هو ابن الله.»

ALTAR SERVERS

Saturday, January 12 - 4:00 PM

Elias Saab Sharbel Saab

Sunday, January 13 - 8:15 AM Volunteers

Sunday, January 13 - 9:30 AM

Caleb Hassan Noah Hassan

Sunday, January 13 - 11:30 AM

Andrew Azzi Anthony El Hachem
Charbel Yammine Geryes Geha

Saturday, January 19 - 4:00 PM

Elias Saab Sharbel Saab

Sunday, January 20 - 8:15 AM Volunteers

Sunday, January 20 - 9:30 AM

Logan Gabriel Jason Demers

Sunday, January 20 - 11:30 AM

Anthony Chaya Elias Azzi
Jonathan Merheb Michael Merheb

<p>ST ANTHONY ARABIC SCHOOL REGISTRATION FORM</p>	<p>OFFICE USE ONLY</p> <p>Date Received: _____ Initials: _____</p> <p>Payment Received: YES / NO Amount: _____</p> <p>Cash: _____ Check: _____</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

GENERAL INFORMATION

Last Name _____ Child's First Name _____
 Date of birth _____ Grade next fall _____
 Mother's Name & (Maiden Name) _____ Cell # _____
 Father's Name _____ Cell # _____
 Address: (City, State, Zip Code) _____
 Email _____

(Class assignments and ALL important notifications will be emailed to this address)

Registration Fees: \$ 300.00 Per Semester

Payment Methods: Check # _____ Amount: \$ _____ Cash Amount: \$ _____
 Credit Card (processing fee 2.75%)
 CC # _____ MM/YY _____ CVV _____

Cash & Checks are accepted.

Make payable to: St Anthony Maronite Church

MEDICAL CONCERNS: Please inform us of any learning challenges, social concerns, medications, allergies or other information: _____

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: In an emergency, and if a parent cannot be contacted, you have my permission to contact the following person to help make decisions regarding the care for my child:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____
 Home Phone #: _____ Cell Phone #: _____

I hereby consent and authorize Father Elie Mikhael or his designated representative, to obtain and provide for my son/daughter any and all medical care or treatment which might become necessary, until either parent or the emergency contact person can be reached. I further expressly release and waive Father Elie Mikhael, his designated representative, and St. Anthony Maronite Church, and the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, from any liability, action, claim, cause of action which I might otherwise have in the event of illness or injury during the period that my son/daughter is attending the Arabic School.

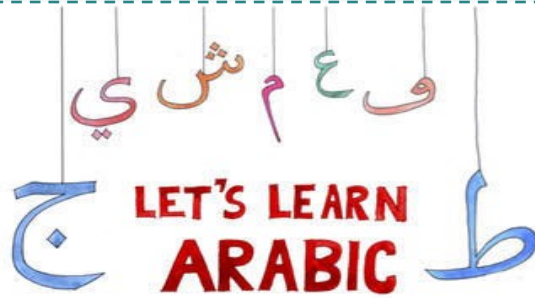
Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

PHOTO RELEASE (Please check appropriate box below)

AUDIO VISUAL TAPING AND PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT: On occasion, videotape, audio tape, slides, and photographs are taken of children and youth during church and diocesan sponsored activities. These are utilized in newsletters, websites, event promotion, advertisements and another printed media. I / We consent / do not consent (check one) to the use of such materials in which I may appear. I release the staff and volunteers of St. Sharbel Mission and the Eparchy of St Maron of Brooklyn, NY from any liability connected with the use of my child's picture or voice recording as part of any of the above or similar activities.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Launching Our Arabic School!!



Registrations Open!!!

Ages 7-17

Email the Office at

rectory@stanthonylawrence.org

Subject: Arabic Classes

Classes to begin in January 2019

Registration Deadline:

January 20th

On Saturday Mornings.

Program: Reading, Writing and Speaking

Cost per Semester: \$300 -Materials Included

****Registration form on page 8****

CONGRATS ON YOUR BAPTISM

We join with the parish family to offer our sincere congratulations to the family of:

Chloé, Child of Elie and Diane Mazraani

who received the Blessed Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. May Christ continue to bless her, whom we welcome into the flock.

CONDOLENCES

We, the Parish of Saint Anthony, offer our sympathies to the families of:

- **Saydé Bourouphael**, her children, Charly, Amine, Robert, and Najib, their spouses and families.
- **Jenny Mackraz**, her sister, Rita, nieces, nephews and their families.

May their souls rest in peace and their loved ones be comforted.

The Son Himself is the Word,
the Logos -
the eternal Word
became small
small enough
to fit into a manger.
He became a child,
so that the Word
could be grasped by us.

In this way,
God teaches us
to love the little ones.

In this way,
He teaches us
to love the weak.

In this way,
He teaches us
respect for children.

The child
of Bethlehem
directs our gaze
towards all children
who suffer
and are abused
in the world,
the born
and the unborn.

Pope Benedict XVI

Anastpaul/18

ST MONICA - OPEN HOUSE

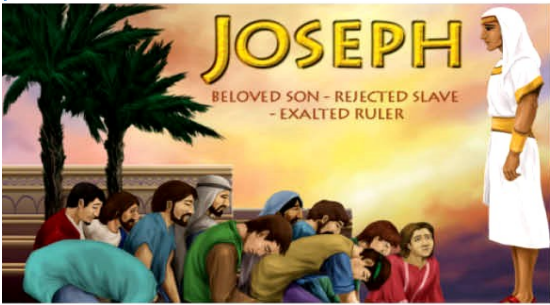
St. Monica School in Methuen is hosting their Open House on Sunday, January 27th from 10 AM to 1 PM and Tuesday, January 29th, 9-11 AM and 6-7:30 PM. Join them for a tour, meet the faculty, staff, families and students and see what St. Monica has to offer! For more information, contact the school at 978-686-1001.

ST JOSEPH - OPEN HOUSE

St. Joseph Regional Catholic School in Salem is hosting an Open House on Sunday, January 27 from 1:00 - 3:00 pm. This event is open to alumni, parishioners, and prospective families. Join us for tours, classrooms visits, student demonstrations, and refreshments. We will also kick-off our 60th anniversary celebration which begins in 2019! Questions? Contact Christine, clatino@sjrcs.com.

FORMED

Stanthonychurch.formed.org- Parish Code: N3CCNK

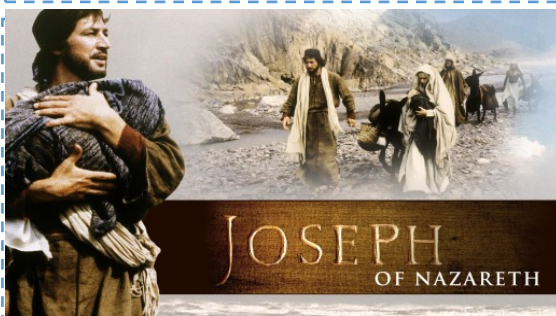


The thrilling Biblical story of Joseph is told in this high quality 3-D animated feature film for children ages 5 and up. Young Joseph is a dreamer, indulged by his father and resented by his older brothers who soon sell him into slavery without their father's knowledge. Now captive in Egypt, Joseph experiences humiliation, hardship and imprisonment. But his faith and his gift for interpreting dreams soon lead him to an exalted position in the kingdom. When his brothers come calling for help, Joseph responds in a surprising way. The program sets Joseph's story in the context of God's plan for Israel and the promised coming of the Messiah. It powerfully demonstrates God's sovereign hand in all things.



In this happy presentation, Brother Francis invites us to share in the realities of the Sacrament of Baptism and the union it provides us with God's big family! Filled with instruction and inspiration, "Born into the Kingdom" is a great reminder of God's wonderful grace!

Reborn explores the deeply personal power of Baptism, bringing to light the spiritual reality for parents and godparents and, most importantly, the child being baptized. Rendered with a cinematic beauty that's become the hallmark of the Augustine Institute's film productions, Reborn presents the foundation of the Church's teaching on Baptism, with a step-by-step explanation of the rite itself, including its profound place in Scripture and Tradition.



The first feature film ever on the story of St. Joseph, who was a carpenter, the husband of Mary, and the foster father of Jesus Christ. Scripture tells us that St. Joseph was a "just man" and that God gave him the most daunting task ever asked of a man—to be the husband of the woman who would give birth to the Messiah and the father and protector of this Holy Family. He would be the man closest to Christ.

Starring Tobias Moretti in a manly, appealing performance, we are shown the human, noble, and deeply spiritual aspects of Joseph the carpenter, son of David, servant of God, and loving husband of Mary. He is presented as a man of faith who must grapple greatly with the profound mysteries of the miraculous conception, the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the incredible challenges of protecting and raising Jesus amidst the threats on his life from the moment of his birth and beyond.

As Joseph is informed by God's messengers about trusting and following his plan for Christ, the dangerous flight into Egypt to save his child, and finally returning to Nazareth to raise Jesus, this lovely film presents beautiful vignettes of these and other powerful scenes in the life of the young Christ and the Holy Family that are authentic and inspiring. Also stars Stefania Rivi, Franco Interlenghi, and Andrea Prodan.

If you are like I am then you most likely act out a certain cycle every year. Each Jan. 1, you make New Year's resolutions, keep them for a while, and then, eventually, sometimes by Jan. 2, break them and fall back into old habits.

If you are like I am then you also have a certain sense of why this is going on . . . even as you are seemingly powerless to change things. Old habits, especially bad ones, are hard to break.

Aristotle said that habit is second nature, it replaces instinct. Augustine, who knew more than most about the difficulty in breaking old habits, once put it this way: "I longed to give myself wholly to you, Lord, but I was bound by my own will, as by a chain. Because my will was perverse it changed to lust, and lust yielded to become habit, and habit not resisted became necessity. These were like links hanging one on to another—which is why I have called it a chain—and their bondage held me bound hand and foot."

In a former time, before we had psychological words such as obsession, dysfunction and neurosis, this was called being possessed by a demon. There was more wisdom and accuracy in that than our age sees fit to acknowledge. In our bad habits we are indeed possessed!

Given all of that, it is no big wonder that we so easily break new resolutions. The wonder is that we continue to make them, knowing our own histories. Why do we? Why do we continue to want to make new resolutions when we know that, barring miracles, we will not, in the end, succeed in keeping them?

Robert Frost says that there is something inside of us that hates a wall, that wants it down. That is also true for the wall of bad habit and the part that wants it down is the best part of us. Stated positively, there is something inside us that hates our own moral fat, that refuses death, even in this sense.

There is something inside of us that is driven to the higher, that refuses to settle for second best, that wants to sing the new song that the psalmist speaks of, that believes in the possibility of resurrection.

There is something inside of us that needs to keep on keeping on.

Thus it is a sign of health that we keep making new resolutions, despite a life-long history of failure. Why? Because in striving to renew ourselves in the face of our own falling we are making an important act of faith:

First of all, in making new resolutions we are saying: "I believe in a God who continues to love me, even when I can't live up to it." Every time I pick myself off the floor after a fall and begin again with some hope in my heart looking for a new start, I am saying the creed in a way that is considerably more radical, in terms of expressing actual belief in God, than is my too-easy Sunday recital of it.

To make a new resolution is to believe in God.

But it is more. To make new resolutions is to express faith in the God of the resurrection. To try for new life, for a fresh start, precisely when bad habit has kept me so long in a certain helplessness, is to say: "I believe in the resurrection and the life!"

Why do I say this?

Martin Luther once put it this way: "Just as God in the beginning of creation made the world out of nothing, so his manner of working continues unchanged." For anything to really change, including our capacity to live beyond our own wounds and selfishness, God still had to defy the impossible.

Our inner world, akin to the physical world, is, to all outward appearance and to our own feeling of it, a closed system, determined entirely by history, by cause and effect. Within it, certain things are possible and certain things are impossible. What has been will continue to be.

There is, it seems, and so says Qoheleth, nothing new under the sun. The case for the impossible is pretty strong, especially when the judge knows the history of failed resolutions.

That is where faith and the resurrection enter in. As the angel Gabriel tells Mary: "For with God nothing is impossible." Somewhere, deep inside of us, in that place where we want to make New Year's resolutions, we still carry that faith. In that place we still say the creed and still believe in the resurrection. Because of that belief, because of new year's resolutions, God can still make something out of nothing!