



## The Fairest One of All

“Magic mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?” The evil Queen in Snow White has a genie in the mirror who reassures her that she is the ‘fairest of them all,’ until he doesn’t. When Snow White is revealed as fairer than the evil Queen, her murderous rage is loosed against Snow White.

Envy is one of the most dangerous vices. It can kill, and not only in cartoon fairy tales. Envy has dealt the deathblow to friendships and professional partnerships. It has prompted efforts to destroy the reputations of others. It often sits at the root of the most malign gossip.

Envy itself is born of self-fascination. This, my friends, is a universal condition. We are endlessly interested in ourselves. Granted, we are fascinating. But we are too small to deserve all the attention we bestow on ourselves.

The remedy for our self-fascination and the misery it brings (regardless of whether we think too much or too little of ourselves) is to think about ourselves less.

Worship stands between us and the magic mirror.

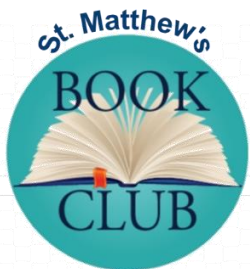
**Prayer:** *Give me a truly magic mirror that lets me see through the glass to behold Your presence in the world and in my neighbor. Amen.*

The magic mirror facilitates our self-idolatry. Worship of the God of all the universe turns our gaze to a much larger horizon.

When we give our attention to the fairest One of all, it has the effect of distracting us from ourselves and our selfish concerns.

The worship of God is not an act that satisfies God’s ego need for praise. Rather, it lures us out of our self-fascination and enables us to see more clearly the world we inhabit and the people around us. We can see people more nearly as they are, not just how they compare to us or what good or harm we can expect from them.

Here’s a twist: true worship can do more for our self-acceptance than the flattery of a magic mirror. The God we worship invests us with a worth and dignity that our self-regard cannot match. The fairest One of all looks at us and sees us as more than we are. God sees us as the perfect reflection of Christ which we are destined to become.



## St. Matthew's Book Club is Back

Mark your calendar for **Wednesday, January 25** when St. Matthew's Book Club will get together and discuss "The Great Divorce," by C.S. Lewis.

If you plan to participate, you **MUST** let us know so we can plan and communicate with those who are participating. Please drop a line or give a call to Pastor Lynn.

If you would like a ride or help ordering the book, call Michelle in the office at 716-649-1532.

## Offering Envelopes

There are rituals that mark the dawn of a new year: the pop of a champagne cork, hanging a new calendar, and receiving a fresh box of envelopes for your Sunday offering. This year something is missing in those New Year’s rites of passage. There are no new offering envelopes... yet.

Our shipment of envelopes has been delayed by the manufacturer. As soon as it arrives, we will make them available in the narthex. Until then, please use a pew envelope or send a check or make an online donation – whatever is easiest for you. If you have questions, contact Vanessa Rich, St. Matthew’s Financial Secretary. Thanks for your patience and thanks for your financial support of the ministry of St. Matthew’s.

**New Year’s Resolution for Kids:** “I’ll color on paper and not on the walls.” **New Year’s Resolution:** *I don’t call them New Year’s Resolutions. I prefer the term, “casual promises to myself that I’m under no obligation to fulfill.”*

# JANUARY

*Birthdays & Anniversaries*

## *Happy Birthday!*

Clayton Errington (1/4), Donn Mergenhagen (1/4), Carl Waible (1/5), Bill Asboth (1/8), Kim Hamm (1/14), Jewell McFarland (1/20), Sharon Mooney (1/20), Gail Burdick (1/23), Barbara Middaugh (1/26), Peggy Scales (1/30)

*Happy Anniversary!* Tracy Meyers & Marna Pritchard (11/22/1985)



Congratulations to Devon and Bill Asboth on the birth of Rose Mabel on December 17!

The St. Matthew's family shares in the joy of the Asboth and Rich families.

### **Church Directory**

If anyone would like a copy of the newest church directory, please contact Michelle in the office (716-649-1532).

*grateful*  
**THANKFUL**  
*blessed*



Welcome to the newest member of St. Matthew's - Aubrie Elizabeth Muszynski. Aubrie was baptized on December 18.

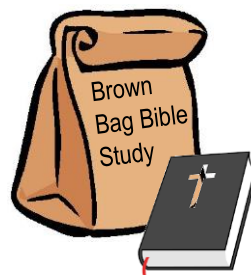
Congratulations to Joshua and Starr, and blessings to the whole family, especially Tyler and Philip, who are such great big brothers to their new baby sister!



Please keep in your prayers: Sandie Davison, Lola Donner, Eugene, Lauren Hayes and family, Paul Hayes, John & Karen Kaitanowski, Molly, Pat Nagel, Les & Yvonne Shearer, Kelly Thien; our elderly members & friends in assisted living or homebound: Marilyn Fenske, Jessie Gillette, Jewell McFarland, Reta Rauker, Jean Roth, Peggy Scales, Helen Wilson; those serving in the military: Alex Steinbronner, Aydan Stormer

## TRIVIA

1. What are disposable diapers called in the UK?
2. Mageirocophobia is the fear of what?
3. What is the fattest organ in your body?
4. In Wyoming, from January thru April, it is illegal to take a picture of what?
5. Where on the human body is the zygomatic bone found?



### **Wednesday's Brown Bag BIBLE STUDY**

**Resumes January 11, 2023.**

Come with your lunch and bible to the Council room to visit with each other and learn and grow in the Word with Pastor Lynn. All are welcome ... bring a friend!

## A Tale of Two Priests

Once upon a time, in a land far away, there were two priests. One priest was wealthy and powerful, a friend of the emperor, with an audience of millions. The other priest lived on a modest salary in a backwoods region, preaching to a congregation of 20 or 30 souls.

The emperor sent his armies to conquer a foreign land. He expected his mighty army to prevail, but they did not win an easy victory. The emperor grew furious with his generals, and he drafted more young men into the army to join the fight.

Then the rich powerful priest – the pal of the emperor, preached a sermon. The priest called the war a holy and good thing. He promised the soldiers that if they fought for their emperor and were killed in battle that their sacrifice (not the sacrifice of Jesus!) would wash away all their sins and they would be taken into heaven.

This sermon made the emperor very happy.

The other priest, the nobody who lived in the backwoods who had a tiny congregation of poor working people, also preached a sermon. He said the war was unjust – there was no good reason to be fighting. He said that the soldiers were not following the way of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. He said that in the war they would be killing fellow Christians – their own brothers and sisters. He said they had to choose whether they would be faithful to the emperor or King Jesus.

This sermon resulted in the priest's arrest and the loss of his job.

If you've seen the news, you know this is not a fairy tale. It is the story of Vladimir Putin and Kirill, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. The other priest, the Russian Orthodox priest who no one heard of before his arrest for preaching against the war, is Father Ioann Burdin.

This true story has a moral, just like fairy tales of old. The moral is this: When the Church allies itself with political power it loses its ability to proclaim the truth of the Gospel. It can fall into the kind of blasphemy that Kirill preached – that killing and dying for the state washes away sins, rendering the one sacrifice of Christ irrelevant. The story brings to mind the Crusades and the abuses that caused Martin Luther to protest.

It's a word of warning to those who would declare that God is allied with a nation or a party or an ideology.

You will sometimes hear people say that the US is a Christian nation. This is mistaken. At its founding and to this day, it establishes no state religion, even though for most of its history the majority of citizens have been Christians.

Christian churches have a great advantage in the US because they are not established by the state. We have freedom of expression; we can, like the prophets of old, speak truth to power.

As Christians, our first allegiance is to Christ and his Kingdom. It is the people of God, not any nation, who Jesus charged to be a shining "city on a hill." We are the ones called to be salt and light.

From Constantine to Putin, when the church has yoked itself to an empire, it has perverted the Gospel, lost its voice, and abandoned its first allegiance to Christ. That's the consistent message of faithful pastors like St. Ambrose, Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Ioann Burdin.

**Prayer:** *Keep me mindful that, "I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ."\* Let me have no other King. Let me bow before no other throne. Amen.*

\*From the Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1.



1. Nappies
2. Cooking
3. The brain. The brain is composed of nearly 60% fat; more than stomach.
4. A rabbit (doesn't seem to have anything to do with trapping regulations)
5. Facial cheek (cheekbone)

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