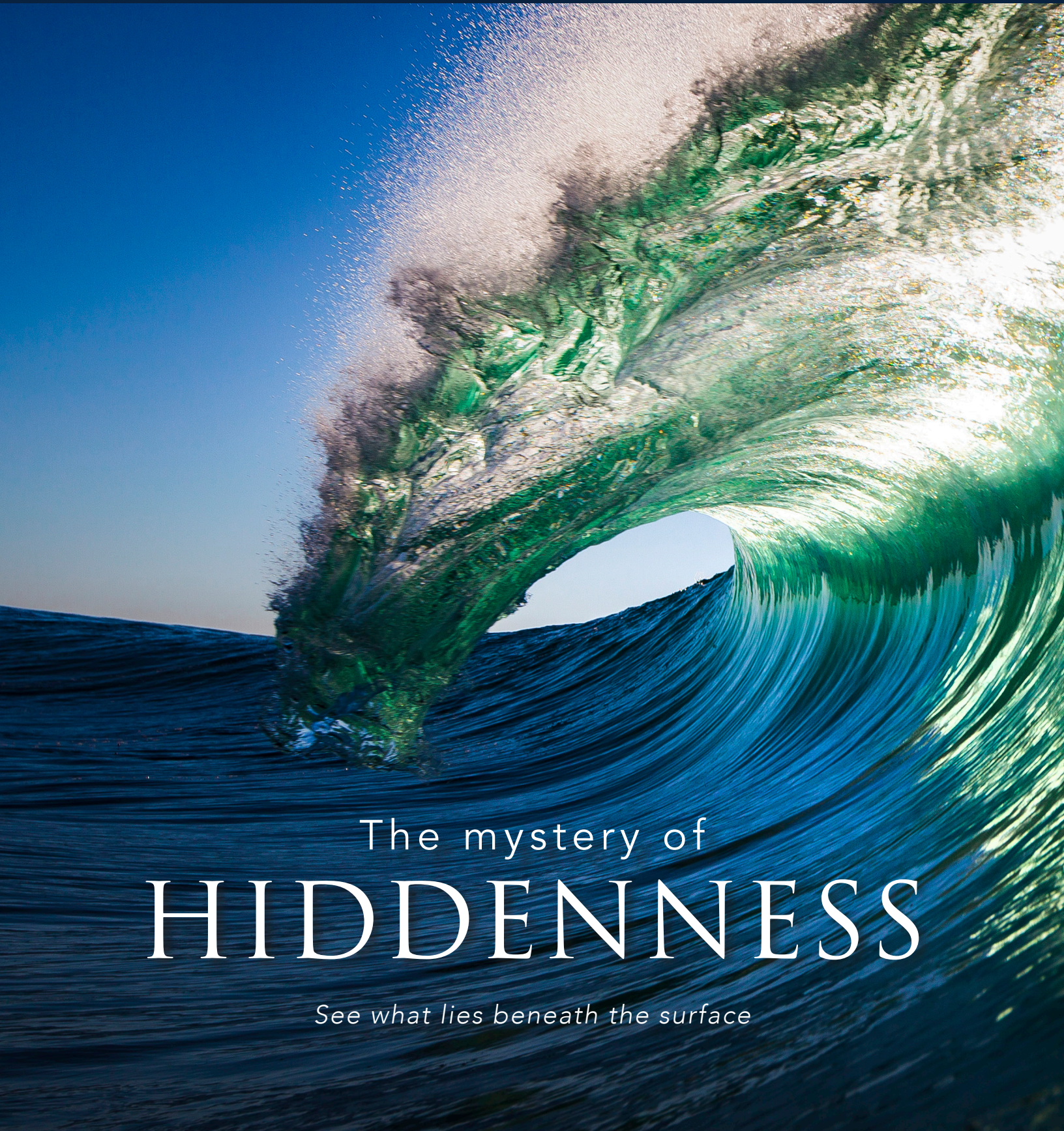


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The mystery of
HIDDENNESS

See what lies beneath the surface



People often ask us, “Why did you become a Sister of Life?”

The answer to that question is unique to each one of us. Yet, a common theme is a profound and personal encounter with Christ, hidden in the Eucharist, Who reaches out with His infinite love and draws us to Himself.

So it happened for me. I was on a discernment retreat with the Sisters of Life, and during Holy Hour my heart was seized by God’s love. Gazing at the Lord in the Eucharist, I knew in the depths of my being that I was loved, and I heard an invitation to respond to God’s love with my entire life.

But my story reaches back further. I was only on that discernment retreat because of the hidden presence of an unborn child. A friend who had lived with the Sisters of Life during an unexpected pregnancy, herself encountering life-changing love, kept encouraging me to visit. Although I was convinced I did not have a vocation, I finally made the trip to New York.

If it were not for the unseen sacrifices of a mother and her tiny, unborn baby, concealed from the eyes of the world, I may never have met the Sisters of Life. It is a wondrous mystery that it was a hidden, unborn life, full of purpose and inestimable value, that led me to find the Life that would captivate my love forever. Who could ever doubt

the transforming impact of that little person in the womb of a heroic mother?

Christ often chooses to act in hiddenness. He, Who possesses “all power in heaven and on earth” (*Mt 28:18*), “empties Himself” (*Phil 2:7*) that we might know the greatness of His love. Gazing upon Christ in the Eucharist, we do not see the power of God Who set the universe in motion and continues to sustain it at every moment... we see instead the love of this God who came to set us free from all that holds us back from being fully alive. When we were lost in the depths of our sin, He came to suffer and die for us, that we might know that we — each one of us — are infinitely precious to Him, worth every last drop of His Blood. Your life matters, and He desires that your heart be a home for His hidden love.

In the end, love is the only power which endures. Everything else can be stripped from us. Like Christ in the Eucharist, we can find ourselves in circumstances of extreme vulnerability; however, what can never be taken away is the reality that we are infinitely loved and that we are capable of loving without limits (see *Fraternal Life in Community*, 22).

I will be praying for you before our Eucharistic Lord.

In Christ, Our Life
and Mary, Our Mother,

Mother Mary Concepta, SV

Mother Mary Concepta, SV
Superior General of the Sisters of Life



THE MYSTERY OF *Hiddenness*

by Sr. Charity, SV



There was no one else around.

I made tracks through untouched snow to a secret place in the woods. The evergreen branches were cloaked elegantly in white. The ground sparkled like diamonds. The snow continued to fall with extravagant gentleness all around me. As I extended my hands and saw the intricate snowflakes accumulate on my mittens, I was swept up into this lavish display of Divine Beauty. There was no one else around, and, yet, I was not alone.

The whole universe was designed for you, by a God Who is pursuing your heart. We can often stop at the simple pleasure of the sights and sounds of the created world. But these are meant to lead us beyond ourselves to the hidden presence of God. “The world is charged with the grandeur of God,” wrote Gerard Manley Hopkins. Creation makes visible, in a profound way, the invisible God. Discovering Him is the vital joy of a sacramental worldview, as St. Augustine found:

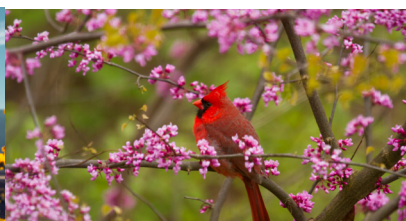
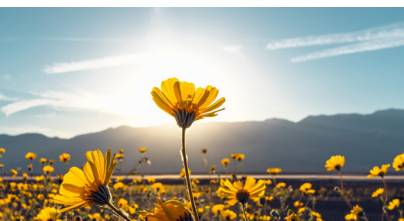
I asked the sea and the deeps, and the creeping things that lived, and they replied, “We are not your God. Seek higher than we.” I asked the breezy air; and the universal atmosphere with its inhabitants answered, “I am not God.” I asked the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars: “Neither,” they said, “are we the God Whom you seek.” And I answered all these things which crowd about the door of my flesh, “You have told me concerning my God that you are not He. Tell me something positive about Him!” And with a loud voice they exclaimed: “He made us.”

The heart of the artist is revealed in his art. God who created the universe is revealed to us in it. Understanding creation as a part of God’s self-revelation gives the material universe a new dignity. Our search for God in the world becomes a thrilling adventure of love. Bishop Fulton Sheen wrote:

To materialists this world is opaque like a curtain; nothing can be seen through it. A mountain is just a mountain, a sunset just a sunset; but to poets, artists, and saints, the world is transparent like a window pane — it tells of something beyond. ...[A] mountain tells of the Power of God, the sunset of His Beauty, and the snowflake of His Purity.

God is not utilitarian. He is lavish. He does not stop with creating just enough beauty and goodness so that we could come to know Him. Rather, creation is extravagant and abundant. Much of the created world still remains undiscovered. More than 80% of the ocean has never been explored or seen by humans. There are planets and galaxies we have never reached. All of it speaks of a God who is infinitely good, true, and beautiful. There is always more to discover in God. He does not hide to keep Himself from us but hides rather so we might seek and find Him. We must ask for the grace to discover Him hiding in the brightness of a sunflower, the smell of baking bread, the intricacies of a leaf, the crashing of waves. “When you search for Me, then you will find Me,” He tells us, “I will let myself be found by you” (*Jer 29:13-14*).

Jesus, help me to find Your presence, hidden in creation, loving me in it all.



HIDDEN LIVES

change the course of history

by Sr. Rose Patrick O'Connor, SV

Hidden lives change the course of history. Our busy world tells us we have to compete to be seen, to be noticed. We can feel we have to prove our worth. Friends posts pictures of their European vacation, and we want to follow it up with the kids' sports achievements. But the truth is, our worth is not measured by fame, success, or whether our gifts are recognized.

English writer George Eliot remarked, "The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half-owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

Most of Jesus' life was hidden. The Scriptures are silent on His life for nearly two decades, and this time He spent with His family in Nazareth is known as His "hidden life." In this, He shows us that there is profound meaning to every moment of our lives, all that is seen and unseen. He continues to entrust mighty missions in hidden places. Do we see Him in the hiddenness of our homes? Are we open to His life there? He has entrusted you with a mission, which only you can fulfill.

Here are four stories of hidden lives, lived in love.

1.

THE BLESSED ULMA FAMILY

Jozef and Wiktoria Ulma were farmers in the village of Markowa, Poland. They had six children, with a seventh on the way: Stanisława, 8; Barbara, 7; Władysław, 6; Franciszek, 4; Antoni, 3; Maria, 2. Wiktoria was part of an amateur theater group, and Jozef loved photography. His photographs show neighborhood events, farming life, and the children playing in the garden and helping their mother around the house.

This family shows us the simple fidelity of family life blossoming into a total gift of self for the Lord. Their

photos capture ordinary tasks like doing the laundry, praying together, and working in the garden. Their hidden holiness day-in and day-out was "training" for martyrdom.

In 1941, the Nazis ordered the death penalty for anyone caught hiding or helping Jews. Markowa was a small village, making it harder to escape detection, but Jozef and Wiktoria chose to shelter eight Jews in 1942. Their guests lived in the attic and helped on the farm.

They lived together for over a year, until the night of March 24, 1944. Nazi officers surrounded the house and captured and shot the eight Jews. They then executed Josef and Wiktoria (who began going into labor shortly before her death) in front of their children.

The Nazis briefly discussed what to do with the wailing children and then decided to shoot them. Pope Francis beatified the entire family in 2023 and chose their wedding anniversary, July 7, for their feast day. He said the Ulma



Family "countered the hatred and violence, which characterized that time, with evangelical love." Their seventh child, who was born and died on the same day, never spoke a word but proclaimed to the world the dignity of the Jewish people and of every human life.

May we follow their example, give our own little "yes" to love in the hiddenness of our homes, and keep the doors of our hearts open to all.

Lie: *My love doesn't make a difference.*

Truth: *Every act of love is eternal.*



In 2007, Dr. Germain and Ortrud Bianchi went to visit the *Home for Abandoned Children* run by the Missionaries of Charity in Mexico. The Sisters brought them upstairs to a big sunny room lined with children's cots. Mrs. Bianchi saw a small boy there, his limbs twisted and deformed, so much so that he wasn't able to walk or even feed himself. It was jarring to see a child suffering so intensely.

Herber Daniel was so tiny that he looked much younger than his 12 years. The Sisters said that even though Herber Daniel couldn't speak, he would always respond to his name with a big smile. They explained that there was a sweetness and softness about him — a sense he had accepted his suffering.

Moved by love, Mrs. Bianchi and her husband went over to his bedside. Immediately, recognizing his pained pattern of breathing, Dr. Bianchi knew that Herber Daniel was actively dying. Dr. Bianchi scooped him up in his arms, and, rocking him back and forth, gathered everyone around them to pray for Herber Daniel.

They cried out to God and prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet with all their hearts. And as they were pleading to God, Herber Daniel died quietly in Dr. Bianchi's arms. It was as if Herber Daniel had been waiting for a father to hold him before he died. Dr. Bianchi felt that this little boy chose him, waited for him. So he continued to pray for Herber Daniel every day. Several years later, he had a dream in which Herber Daniel ran up to him — it was at first hard to recognize him, because he was running — and said, "I want to be part of your family."



Lie: *My weakness is an obstacle to love.*

Truth: *My vulnerability gives me access to communion and new life.*

2.

HERBER DANIEL & THE BIANCHI FAMILY

The next day, Dr. Bianchi announced to his eight grown children that Herber Daniel was officially adopted into their family. Everyone carried holy cards of Herber Daniel and spoke of him as another sibling. One of the children, Gertrude, later married and prayed through Herber Daniel's intercession to become a foster-parent. The family was overjoyed to receive a baby boy, Zachary, on the anniversary of Herber Daniel's death. They later adopted Zachary into their family.

Herber Daniel lived a brief life, unseen by most, but he continues to be a model — and the Bianchi's believe, an intercessor — for reunion in families. He was abandoned by his own family, but at the moment of death God gave him a family. His hiddenness was lived in intimacy with Christ. Though he was completely vulnerable and couldn't do anything for himself, his quiet acceptance of suffering was a gift of love that continues to bear fruit.

If it's done in love, it's printed in

ETERNITY



3.

JAMES WEBB

Budding Australian stunt-man, James Webb, spends his day jumping between moving vehicles, fighting karate masters, and scuba-diving with sharks. But in the midst of the action, he says there's something profound about being hidden.

When James first watched superhero movies, he wanted to do something great with his life. He saw that stunt-doubles acted out the most heroic scenes, so he began karate when he was 10 years old and picked up parkour

tricks on the side. At the end of high-school he began official stunt training. But he soon came to a crossroads.

“I had a few injuries and saw the less-glamorous side of the industry. A turning-point came when I learned about a relative of mine named Chase. He was almost exactly the same age as me, but he had a lot of disabilities. We lived a parallel life. I was embarking on a physical career, and he was on his deathbed. He was not able to speak, but his life was just as full and meaningful. It changed my sense of responsibility. I have a responsibility to use what I have. I had so many doubts, but he's one of the main reasons I persevered. There was something powerfully deep in him that moved me — powerful and undeniable.”

James graduated last year and began working in his first film. He says the creative process is a gift in itself, even if the fruits are not seen by everyone.

“What's awesome is the kid who watches [the movie] and is inspired to be self-sac-

rificial. It feels good to know I won't be known. What matters is that they're inspired — not that I moved them.

“Making things that are good is an act of love, and love might be the deepest part of us. Whether people see it or not doesn't matter, because the deepest part of you is still alive. It doesn't matter how small it is: if it's done in love, it's printed in eternity.”

Lie: *I am not seen.*

Truth: *God sees me, and He loves what He sees.*



4. MEGAN TURLAND

Megan is a good friend of the Sisters of Life. She lives with her husband Benjamin and their four children in Ontario, Canada. Below, she shares about her experience of maternity:

When I first became a mother, it was a big change. I had been working as a missionary, and everyone saw the work I was doing. Now I was just at home, and I really struggled in the beginning. As a missionary I was praying an hour a day, and now I couldn't find any time. I was falling asleep during my prayer time, and I see now that Satan was tempting me: "Oh, your prayer is second-class." I had two kids under the age of two. My husband was doing lots of missionary work, and he was traveling a lot. I was seeing his career advance, and I was seeing my peers advancing in their careers — and I was at home. No one saw my victories in the home. I remember asking the Lord, "You've given me all these gifts — are these gifts best being used at home?"

One day, we went on a pilgrimage to the Canadian Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario. There were talks and prayer times, and I thought, "This is going to be a wonderful day of encounter and



The Majesty of MATERNITY



formation. The talk will be during the baby's nap time... it's all going to be great." And then one of the kids had a huge diaper blow-out, and I spent the whole day away, not joining in the prayer or anything. I was really frustrated. Then I heard the Lord say to me, "This is My chance to encounter you. I want to encounter you here — not in spite of your motherhood, but *in* your motherhood. You get to be My hands right now, caring for these children. Will you let Me encounter you here?"

My heart was pierced. He wants me to go to Him in the midst of my daily life and be reminded of how He delights in me and loves me.

Lie: *My life is too ordinary to be meaningful.*

Truth: *Jesus wants to encounter me at every moment. Everything in my life is important to Him.*

As I've tried to live this out more, I've encountered a lot of freedom. I'm exactly where I need to be. I'm letting go and embracing what is set before me in the moment. I pray for other moms, that they will know what a gift and a privilege it is to be a mom. God is entrusting little ones to your care. It's hard work, and it's hidden. But there's a real awe and wonder about it — it's the majesty of maternity.



THE GOD WHO *Hides*

*An interview with Fr. Wafik Nasry, S.J.
by Sr. Mary Casey O'Connor, SV*

Why does God allow Himself to be hidden from us?

When I was in my early teens, my father had to have eye surgery, after which the doctor bandaged his eyes for many weeks. He had to be led wherever he wanted to go. I hated seeing my father that way. I still remember asking the ophthalmologist, “Why do you not remove these bandages?” He replied, “His eyes are fragile, and the light would hurt them. We will cover them until they are healed and are able to endure the light.”

God sometimes hides Himself precisely because we need to be healed. We as humans are sick as a result of original sin, and we need to be healed from its consequences. The more a soul is purified and healed, the more capable it is of actually seeing God. When we live our life with God and stay with Him, then He will slowly heal us.

Why do we sometimes hide from God?

Adam and Eve hid as a consequence of sin. We hide when we are ashamed or afraid. Hence, the first step is to do a good examen (a conversation with Jesus about your day) to find out why am I ashamed or of what am I afraid.

Sometime the fear is due to the wrong image of God, like the Pharisees had. Remember the parable of the talents, in which the one who received one talent hid it out of fear because he thought his master was demanding (see *Mt 25:14-30*)? ...This is not the image of God Who revealed Himself in Jesus. The more we come to know God, the more we know that we have every

reason not to hide from Him.

How do we find God and not hide from Him?

We have to be authentic. Prayer is the real you conversing with the real God. I pray as I am and not as I *think* I ought to be. And I pray with no preconceived notion of how God will reveal Himself, so I do not miss my visitation. Our contingencies make us aware of our limitations. My problems allow me to see my helplessness. Humble people know they can't save themselves;

they need to be saved. And they are able to receive their Savior. Remember, a conversation is a two-way street. One speaks and one listens. In Holy Scripture, [God] says, “when you seek Me with all your heart, I will let you find Me (see *Jer 29:13-14*).” He doesn't impose on us, and therefore He will only be found by those who want to find Him.

What if I'm trying to find Him in prayer, but it still seems like He's hiding?

Our relationship with God sometimes can look like a game of hide-and-seek. Sometimes we hide and God looks for us; at other times, it is He who appears to be hiding, and it is we who must seek Him. One of the things I remember

about this game is that the more we played it, the better we became at it. We got to know the places where our friends usually hide. I also recall that the relationship with our playmates became stronger. It is the same thing in our relationship with God. The experience of God hiding Himself is common to those who pray. Remember the words of the Psalmist, “My God, my God,

Prayer is the
real you
conversing
with the real
God.

why have You forsaken me? Why so far from my call for help, from my cries of anguish?" (see Ps 22:1). Even Jesus experienced it on the Cross when divinity hid. Prayer is an exercise of faith. It is a confident abandonment to Divine Providence — to God. Sometimes, God does not grant our petitions in order to purify our desire for Him, [so we] love Him for Himself, not for His gifts.

How has God revealed Himself as the hidden God?

God [has hidden] Himself in many ways [over time]: in the burning bush to Moses (see Ex 3:1-6); in the light, silent sound to Elijah (see 1 Kg 19:9-18); as a defenseless child to the Magi (see Mt 2:1-12); as gardener to Mary of Magdala (see Jn 20:11-18); as a fellow traveler to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (see Lk 24:13-34); as a short-order cook at the lake of Tiberius (see Jn 21:1-14); and within the Christian community to St. Paul (see Ac 9:1-19).

[But] make no mistake, the [Mass] constitutes the most powerful moments in human history. God, Who is outside of time, penetrates time and takes us to the Upper Room, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to Golgotha, to the tomb, and to Galilee. In His desire to unite with us, to heal us, to be one with us, He gives us the most precious of all gifts, namely, Himself in a tangible and concrete way — the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we are allowed to participate in the unspeakable events of our salvation, namely, to be one with God.

Do you have any practical advice about how we can learn to see God hidden in our lives?

Doing a daily examen allows you to see His intervention in your life. You will see His uninterrupted care for you. You become familiar with His voice. You will see how He is hiding — in the plants, the animals, in other people, in the circumstances of your life, in reality. To you and me, in everyone we meet, He is there, as in a closed tabernacle. He speaks through other people and through events. He allows all the circumstances of our life, even our defects and weaknesses, for the salvation of our soul and the greater glory of His name. The Bible is the story of God's love for us, but that story has not ended. Doing the examen is reading my own private page of Sacred Scripture.

Stay with Jesus, even if He seems hidden. The goal is to see that Jesus is, in fact, always with me, sitting right next to me. One must not pay attention to distractions. Rather, you have to choose Him freely. It is this free choosing that allows room for faith. I choose to trust that He is there, that His promises are true, that He is intervening in my life. I am able to see that He longs to come and visit me, and that He is fulfilling His promise.

Fr. Wafik Nasry, S.J. is a Jesuit priest who is a good friend of our community. He is a retreat master, an author of 16 books, and an expert in Arab-Christian heritage and interreligious dialogue.



Prayer to the Hidden Christ

by Sr. Charity, SV

We adore You, Beloved Christ, hidden in the womb of Our Lady. You, the Mighty God, chose to enter the world as One too small to be perceived. A young girl's *fiat* was the only herald of Your silent, earth-shattering entrance into human history. We join our awe to hers,
O Hidden, Unborn Christ.

We adore You, Beloved Christ, hidden in the woodshop in Nazareth. We marvel that You, our Savior, spent 30 years in humble labor. We lay our lives before You, O Divine Carpenter — make of us what pleases You.

We adore You, Beloved Christ, hidden in the scandal of the Cross. You were exposed before the mocking crowd, yet they could not see Your glory. In the crosses of our lives, we mount Your chosen throne, True King, and join You in this place of hidden glory.

We adore You, Beloved Christ, hidden in the Eucharist. You come so near to nothingness in this unleavened host that we must catch our breath and remember: this is God. We open our hearts, our hands, and our mouths to receive You, O Infinite Love, Who have humbled Yourself unto folly.

We adore You, Beloved Christ, hidden in every person made in Your image, each a unique icon of Your beauty. You hide in the poor, the sick, the stranger, waiting to be found. Help us to recognize the pathways of our ordinary lives as sacred ground, for in them walks, moves, and speaks the hidden Christ. Amen.

It can be hard to believe that God loves us in our darkest places.

As it was in the garden with Adam and Eve, our reaction to our own sin is to try to keep it hidden. Why? We are afraid that we won't be loved or accepted because of what we've done. We are ashamed of our brokenness and the muddled state of our soul. We find it nearly impossible to love ourselves there, so how could anyone else?

What are hidden wounds? A hidden wound can be any area of sin or pain too difficult to face on our own, something we try to keep secret, or a hurt too deep for us even to recognize. These can range from physical addictions like alcohol and pornography, to things we suffer in our character from our life experiences, like a sense of abandonment or a lack from a family upbringing and relationships. We may have hidden wounds in our past from unaddressed trauma like abortion or a traumatic experience that causes us to act in ways we don't understand.

To put it more simply, a hidden wound is any area that has yet to be made new by the healing love of Christ. Although we will always suffer from brokenness in this world, these hidden wounds can be filled with light when we allow ourselves to be met by the Lord's love and healing power. Jesus brings new life. In Him, our wounds no longer remain places of pain and avoidance, but they can be transformed into sources of hope and life for us and the whole world.

“Healing is an ongoing encounter with God's love that brings us into wholeness and communion.”

-Dr. Bob Schuchts

HEA HIDDEN

**Like a sail, as we unfurl our hearts
we become who we are.**

Matt Fradd shares how, after struggling with a pornography addiction, his life changed when he gave it to Christ. It was no longer a never-ending solo struggle, but an occasion for a new and brave commitment to rely on God. When we open our wounds and struggles to Jesus, we permit the Divine Physician to approach us with His healing touch. We are no longer alone, but recipients of His medicinal mercy and incomparable strength against sin. Matt's surrender not only changed his life, but began his ministry for men and women.

St. Mary Magdalene

was known in the Gospels as the woman from whom seven demons were cast out. St. Gertrude the Great received a vision of her, in which Mary Magdalene was adorned with as many flowers and jewels as she once had sins. Our sins, given over to the Lord, can actually become places of His victory. Our areas of temptation and vice in this life, if engaged with Christ, can become glorified wounds that proclaim the power and mercy of the Lord.

HEALING WOUNDS

by Sr. Zélie Maria Louis, SV

Starts and let God's mercy fill us,
we're made to be.

Diana* shared that after her experience of abortion, a question persisted: "Where was God when I felt so alone?" One day, she decided to look on the internet to find all the tabernacles in her city. She soon found the neighborhood where she had had the abortion. What she saw amazed her: a Catholic Church was only blocks away from the clinic. "I was asking 'Where was God?' and now I see... He was right there," she said, "even before I came to know Him." She saw that even when she was far from Him and feeling deeply alone, He was there in the tabernacle, fighting for her heart. He was close and desiring to speak into her fears, to free her from sin, to draw her into life. Years later, her realization of God's presence and perpetual love, even in her darkest time, gave her the courage to seek forgiveness and healing for her abortion. There is no sin or darkness bigger than the mercy of Jesus Christ.

**named changed for anonymity*

You are not alone.

Hope & Healing After Abortion

- sistersoflife.org/healing-after-abortion

Healing the Whole Person Retreats

- jpiihealingcenter.org
- *Be Healed*, by Dr. Bob Schuchts
- *Be Restored*, by Dr. Bob Schuchts

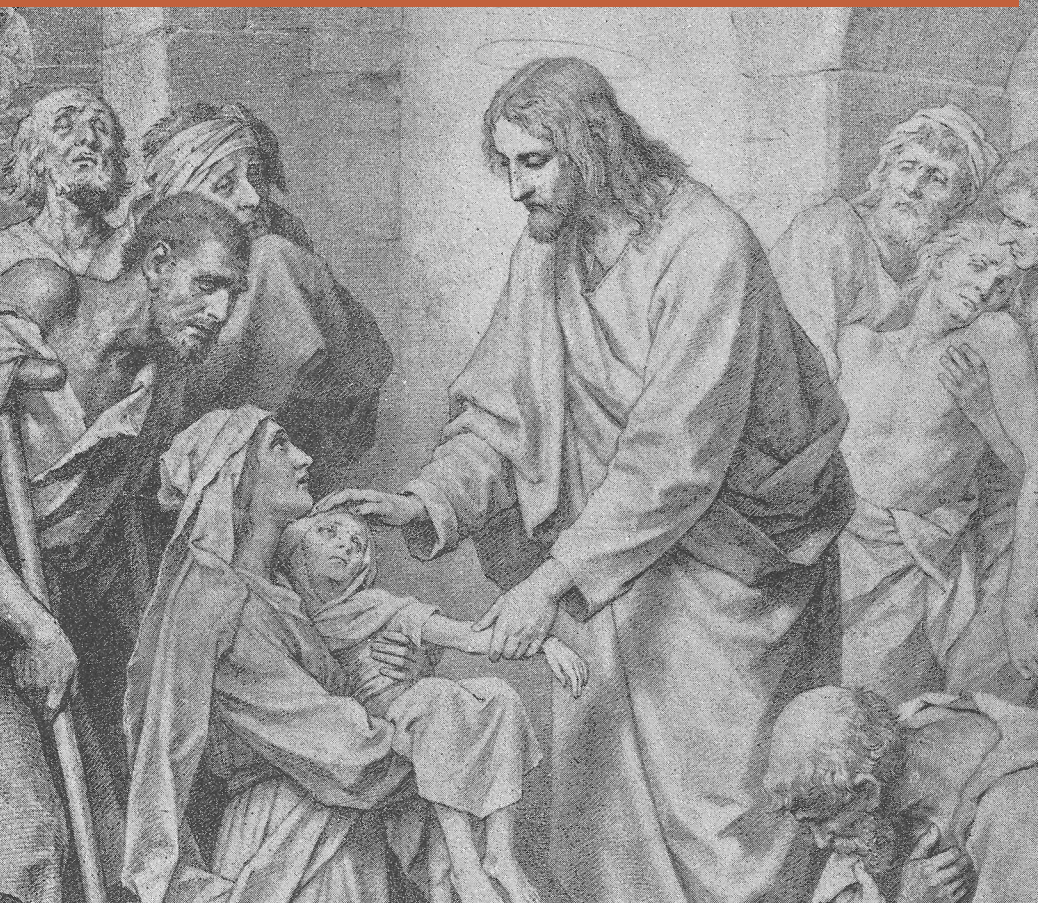
Magdala Ministries for Women

- magdalaministries.org

Strive 21 for Men

- strive21.com

What does God want for hidden wounds?



“Healing is more than the relieving of human suffering. ... When understood at a sufficiently deep level, it expresses the entire content of redemption.”

-Pope Benedict XVI

Communion is the key & the goal

- **Friends** along the Christian journey aren't just a nice support; friendship is crucial to becoming ourselves. We need communion with others to help restore the ways in which communion has been previously broken.
- **Accountability partners** can also help keep us real and supported as we strive for virtue.
- **Counseling and support groups** can help uncover and heal wounds beneath patterns of addiction(s).

We are not meant to be alone. Allowing others to walk our journey of healing with us lessens shame, builds community, and keeps hope for sobriety or healing alive. We are made for communion.

Jesus, You are the Wounded Healer. Help me to allow myself to be loved, seen, and healed.

We see God's reaction to hidden wounds in the person of Jesus.

To the man with the withered hand, before healing it, Jesus gently asks, “Stretch out your hand” (*Mt 12:13*). That is, “show Me where it hurts.” Like the Good Samaritan who comes to the man who is beaten and bloody, Jesus approaches us with His healing remedies and invites us to allow Him to tend to our wounds (see *Lk 10:25-37*).

When we reveal our sin to the Lord, He, like the Good Samaritan, picks us up,

carries us, and takes us to a place where we can be tended to. Jesus is always coming to us and never ceases to find ways to meet us along our way. Letting Jesus come to us with His infinite, gentle, and patient love is the place to begin and live from.

Another place of powerful healing is in the sacraments. The sacraments set our hearts free to receive God's light into our darkness. In confession, God lifts all obstacles to our receiving His care. In the Eucharist, we receive the love and life of God for which every human heart is created. Jesus wants us to live fully alive (see *Jn 10:10*), and healing is only possible with Him.

St. Teresa of Calcutta said: “The devil may try to use the hurts of life, and sometimes our own mistakes, to make you feel it is impossible that Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is a danger for all of us. And so sad, because it is completely opposite of what Jesus is really wanting, waiting to tell you. ... He loves you always, even when you don't feel worthy. When not accepted by others, even by yourself sometimes, He is the One Who always accepts you. My children, you don't have to be different for Jesus to love you. Only believe; you are precious to Him. Bring all your suffering to His feet. Only open your heart to be loved by Him as you are. He will do the rest.”

WHY DID YOU COME SO FAR TO LOVE ME?

by Sr. Caeli Glorise, SV



Before I was a Sister, I had a life-changing experience in Ecuador. We went to visit the Missionaries of Charity's home for elderly homeless men and women. I had been on many mission trips before but this was different, and I was hesitant to serve. We went into the room where all the women in the home awaited their lunch, and we helped to feed them. Toward the end of the day, I was attending to one particular woman who needed extra care. As I was helping her back into her wheelchair, I looked at her face and something changed inside me. I experienced Jesus looking back at me through her, and, as if she knew what had happened in my heart, she began to cry with me. After wheeling her outside to join the others singing in the courtyard, I wept. Crying so hard, I put my face into my shirt to try to hide it. I was overwhelmed that Jesus had met me in this way. He was so vulnerable, poor, frail — and He was letting me meet His basic needs. When I woke up that morning, I hadn't expected to find Jesus in this way, but it changed everything. I saw differently. I had heard the stories about Mother Teresa and her Sisters who see and adore Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor, but before this day I thought it was just nice for them to speak about living this way. Now I knew that these were not just nice words.

After this day in Ecuador, I had a deep desire to go to Calcutta — to be in the place where it had all begun for Mother Teresa. After a wild sequence of events, I found myself in Calcutta the summer before I entered the Sisters of Life. Volunteering with the Missionaries of Charity, I learned about what I would soon stake my life on. I couldn't have prepared my eyes or heart for what I would see and receive. I had for a time now longed to be like St. Veronica —

seeing, seeking, wiping the face of Christ. Due to God's providence, a fellow volunteer named Veronica showed me the way on my first day at the *Home for the Sick and Dying*. God is hidden in the details, and I would soon see Him everywhere.

Day one, I walked into Nirmal Hriday, Mother Teresa's *Home for the Sick and Dying*, to join the Novices in song. As they sang, "Whatsoever you do to the least of My people, that you do unto Me," my heart was pierced. They went on, "When I was hungry, you gave Me to eat; when I was thirsty you gave Me to drink. Now enter into the home of My Father." The song came to life before my eyes as men and women arose from the shadows. In this home of the Father, I saw the Son. I saw Jesus lying in bed; Jesus waiting to be fed; Jesus needing help to walk across the room; Jesus wounded and sick; Jesus calling out for help; Jesus longing to be touched; Jesus weeping. I looked at these women, and I loved them. Day after day I grappled with what I saw, but I was strangely at peace because Jesus was there.

Each face I encountered there is forever etched into my memory.

The Lord often reminds me of moments from that month, and one in particular comes back often. After a long back and forth translated through a Sister, one woman asked me, "Why did you come so far to love me?" I received these words straight from the mouth of Jesus. She who had shooed me away countless times now pleaded with me to not leave. I realized that He had brought me across the world to encounter Him in this hidden way. And now I knew more deeply how far He had come to love me.

I saw Jesus lying in bed; Jesus waiting to be fed; Jesus needing help to walk across the room; Jesus wounded and sick.

SEEING GOD *in Others*

by Sr. Lumen Gloriam, SV



How often do we hear about “seeing God in others”? Sometimes, seeing Him feels easy: perhaps in a person we love or in a kind stranger on the street. But sometimes, it isn’t so easy. In fact, it may seem impossible when we’ve been hurt by others. Many times, seeing God seems like an impossible task to accomplish. But what if we first made an act of faith that He’s already there waiting to reveal Himself?

“To the sons of Adam [Jesus] restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. ...for by His Incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). He has chosen us even when we reject Him. So rather than living as though I have to put God’s presence into those I meet, I can live in a posture of receptivity, open to the gift of encountering His presence in the other. Jesus reminds us that “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of Mine, you did for Me” (*Mt 25:40*).

Meet men and women who love the Lord, and love God’s people. They express with their lives this truth: that “a passion for God will inflame a passionate need to find His presence also in the poor” (Fr. Donald Haggerty, *Conversion: Spiritual Insights into an Essential Encounter with God*). May we too, through their example, encounter Christ hidden in those around us.



St. Teresa of Calcutta (1910–1997) was the foundress of the Missionaries of Charity. She knew the stunning value of the human person and lived with the awareness that each person she cared for was Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor.

“I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, ‘This is hungry Jesus; I must feed Him. This is sick Jesus. This One has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash Him and tend to Him.’ I serve because I love Jesus.”

St. John of the Cross (1542–1591) was one of the great Spanish saints of the 16th century and helped to reform the Carmelite order alongside St. Teresa of Avila. His awareness of God’s presence allowed him to see the Lord in even the most difficult of times — some of his greatest spiritual works were written when he was in prison. He was canonized alongside St. Teresa of Avila and St. Ignatius of Loyola.



“It should be known that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is hidden by His essence and His presence in the innermost being of the soul.”

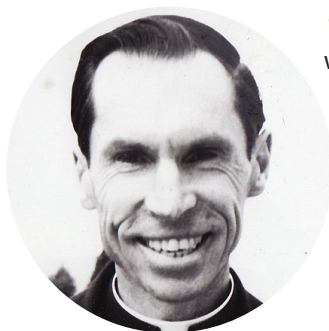


Caryl Houselander (1901–1954) was a British author and mystic. As a young woman, Caryl received a mystical vision of Christ’s presence in the people around her; the experience changed the trajectory of her life. She returned to her Catholic faith and is remembered today for work such as *The Reed of God* and *The Passion of the Infant Christ*.

“I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all sorts of people jostled together, sitting and strap-hanging — workers of every description going home at the end of the day. Quite suddenly I saw with my mind, but as vividly as a wonderful picture, Christ in them all. But I saw more than that; not only was Christ in every one of them, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them — but because He was in them, and because they were

here, the whole world was here too, here in this underground train; not only the world as it was at that moment, not only all the people in all the countries of the world, but all those people who had lived in the past, and all those yet to come. I came out into the street and walked for a long time in the crowds. It was the same here, on every side, in every passer-by, everywhere — Christ. Christ is everywhere; in Him every kind of life has a meaning and has an influence on every other kind of life. It is not the foolish sinner like myself, running about the world with reprobates and feeling magnanimous, who comes closest to them and brings them healing; it is the contemplative in her cell who has never set eyes on them, but in whom Christ fasts and prays for them — or it may be a charwoman in whom Christ makes Himself a servant again, or a king whose crown of gold hides a crown of thorns. Realization of our oneness in Christ is the only cure for human loneliness. For me, too, it is the only ultimate meaning of life, the only thing that gives meaning and purpose to every life.” (excerpt from *A Rocking-Horse Catholic*)

Christ IN THEM ALL



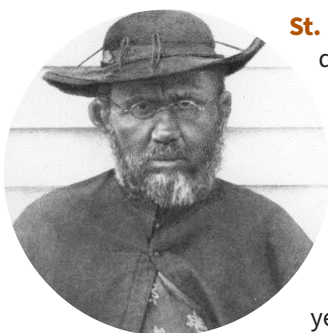
Venerable Aloysius Philip Schwartz (1930–1992) was born in Washington, D.C. and became a missionary priest in South Korea, living with and serving the poorest of the poor. He founded the Sisters of Mary and Boys’ Towns and Girls’ Towns across the world, seeing in each person the dignity of one made in God’s image. His cause for canonization was opened in 2003.

“Capax Dei’ (‘capable of God’) is a description of man in his most sublime dimension. Poor little finite creature though he be, man is still able to be filled with God as a glass with wine or a room with sunlight. Man has within himself the capacity to become a child of God and to share fully in the divine life...”



John Cardinal O’Connor (1920–2000) was the Cardinal Archbishop of New York from 1984–2000. His reverence for the human person and openness to the Holy Spirit inspired him to found the Sisters of Life who seek to uphold the sacred goodness of every person, both through prayer and missions in service to the most vulnerable.

“When you become overcome by the Light that is Christ, you see everyone as made in the image and likeness of God... You think, you speak, of a baby... fashioned after the Word of God. Every pregnant woman, in a very real sense, is carrying the Christ Child.”



St. Damien of Molokai (1840–1889), born Joseph de Veuster in Belgium, entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary when he was 19 years old. After asking to be sent to the island of Molokai in Hawaii to serve lepers abandoned there, St. Damien lived and worked among the people to restore a sense of dignity to those cast out by society. He contracted leprosy himself and died after 16 years of service to the people.

“My greatest pleasure is to serve the Lord in His poor children rejected by other people.”

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THE ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Asking the Hidden Questions

We were made for Heaven, to live forever with God. Because of this, every person has a question hidden in his heart: "What will happen when I die?" For many people, this is a scary question, and there can be a temptation to make decisions about the end of our lives out of fear, or to not make any decisions at all. But Jesus Christ Himself walked the path of death and left us the teachings of His Church to guide us as we approach our own death and the death of our loved ones. **The Church's teachings are Jesus' gift to us**, guiding us to make decisions in love, not fear. You are not alone in exploring the great gift of the Church's teaching on end-of-life care. Let us walk with you.



A video series by the Sisters of Life to shed light on the often hidden, but glorious, mystery of the end of our lives: [sistersoflife.org/end-of-life](https://www.sistersoflife.org/end-of-life)



A guide for Catholic End-of-Life Decisions and Healthcare forms: [nbccenter.org](https://www.nbccenter.org)

My Catholic Will: A free Catholic resource for leaving a legacy of faith and for a Christian burial: [mycatholicwill.com/sistersoflife](https://www.mycatholicwill.com/sistersoflife)



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