

THE ST. JAMES NEWSLETTER

2020 – No. 1



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Editor's Note

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the parishioners with information about what is happening in our parish. The newsletter is a supplement to the information in our bulletin.

This newsletter will focus on longer articles that provide more details than are found in the bulletin. Our initial thoughts are to provide four newsletters per year. Black & white printed copies will be available in church. Full color copies can be downloaded from the parish website.

<https://www.stjamesonline.org/>

Since this year we are celebrating our 160th anniversary the articles in this newsletter are historically based. Please contact the editor with any suggestions for articles that are of interest to the entire parish. The editor can be contacted via email at rbober119@comcast.net Thank You.

Ray Bober, editor

Who is St. James the Less?⁽¹⁾

St. James the Less, the author of the first Catholic Epistle, was the son of Alphaeus of Cleophas. His mother Mary was either a sister or a close relative of the Blessed Virgin, and for that reason, according to Jewish custom, he was sometimes called the brother of the Lord. The Apostle held a distinguished position in the early Christian community of Jerusalem. St. Paul tells us he was a witness of the Resurrection of

Christ; he is also a "pillar" of the Church, whom St. Paul consulted about the Gospel.

According to tradition, he was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and was at the Council of Jerusalem about the year 50. The historians Eusebius and Hegesippus relayed that St. James was martyred for the Faith by the Jews in the Spring of the year 62, although they greatly esteemed his person and had given him the surname of "James the Just."

Tradition has always recognized him as the author of the Epistle that bears his name. Internal evidence based on the language, style, and teaching of the Epistle reveals its author as a Jew familiar with the Old Testament, and a Christian thoroughly grounded in the teachings of the Gospel. External evidence from the early Fathers and Councils of the Church confirmed its authenticity and canonicity. The date of its writing cannot be determined exactly. According to some scholars it was written about the year 49 A.D. Others, however, claim it was written after St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (composed during the winter of 57-58 A.D.). It was probably written between the years 60 and 62 A.D.

Our Mission Statement

I have been attending St. James for the past 37 years. In each of the recent bulletins there is a section usually found on page three that is entitled "Our Parish Mission Statement". Before I took courses in management, I did not know what a

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mission statement was or how to use it. I am willing to think that most parishioners simply read over this statement quickly and move on to other areas of the bulletin.

However, a mission statement is something that is very important. Wikipedia defines it as follows (the bold highlights are mine):

*A mission statement is a short statement of **why** an organization exists, **what** its overall goal is, identifying the goal of its operations: what **kind of product or service** it provides, its **primary customers** or market, and its geographical **region** of operation. It may include a short statement of such fundamental matters as the **organization's values or philosophies**, a business's main competitive advantages, or a desired future state—the "**vision**".*

Our parish mission statement says the following:

The Catholic Community of St. James has been spiritually rooted in Woodbridge since the 1860s. *This answers the geographical region we serve.*

We are a culturally diverse group of people united in Jesus Christ through baptism and faithful to the word of God. *This explains our primary customers. I.e. all Catholic people.*

We are a parish that encourages all members of our community to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and are committed to do the will of God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. *This statement reflects our values.*

We believe in and practice Christ's compassionate concern for all. *This is our vision for all of our members.*

We strive to become a vibrant church that focuses on developing, maintaining and propagating the essential elements of parish life through evangelization, worship, service and

stewardship. This is our vision for our church as a member of the Woodbridge community.

As you can see there is a lot included as part of our mission statement. It is only a short statement but it defines who we are, what we want to be and gives direction for how we expect to get there. I would encourage all of our parishioners to look at the mission statement and see how they can help us succeed as a parish.

A Historical Perspective

The next sections of this newsletter will show how we have strived to achieve our mission over the years since St James parish was founded. Information for this section was obtained from the parish archives and from the Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission with the gracious permission of their chairperson, Dr. Dolores Caprano Gioffre. For more information on the history of Woodbridge I would encourage our parishioners to look at the Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission website located at

<http://www.woodbridgehistory.com>

The menus that appear on the top of the page will take you to the various sections. I would especially recommend the section entitled "Historic Tours"

St James Church ⁽²⁾



A horse & buggy on Main Street

The history of St. James begins in the 1660s and 1670s, when the discovery of a fine type of potter's clay attracted Irish and French immigrants to the young town. As the early Catholic community

grew larger, Jesuit priests of St. James Chapel in New York, Reverend Charles Gage and Reverend Henry Harrison, were sent as missionaries to hold mass for Woodbridge Catholics in private homes. Early Catholic residents Hugh Dunn and James Kelly were among those who invited others for services at their homes.

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St. James Church records date the first celebration of Holy Mass in 1683, held by Reverend Gage or Reverend Harrison, according to tradition. Another record documents the Baptism of a young Robert du Poitiers of Staten Island, by Father Nicholas Gulick of Maryland, who visited Woodbridge to administer the sacrament. As early as the 1850s, Woodbridge Catholics were without a Church. Many traveled to Rahway or to St. Mary's Parish in Perth Amboy for worship, the latter taking on Woodbridge as part of their mission.

By 1865, a small wooden frame Church, which would later become the first school, was built along upper Main Street. The Church continued to be served by St. Mary's in Perth Amboy until the 1870s. In 1877, Father Stephen Bettoni was installed as the first resident pastor of St. James. Father Bettoni remained in charge until his death on October 14, 1882. The new pastor, Reverend James F. Devine was appointed by the new, first Bishop of Trenton Michael J. O'Farrell, and served the parish until he was replaced in May of 1883 by Father James Walsh, who built the first rectory and enlarged the church. The people of Woodbridge, who held Father Devine in highest esteem were more than delighted when he returned to them again as pastor in May of 1885.



As the congregation grew, a second Church was pushed into construction by Father James Devine. It was dedicated and consecrated in 1888 by Bishop Michael J. O'Farrell. St. James would not be incorporated as a parish until 1893.

The Church remained along upper Main Street until 1924, when the building was moved on a tractor a half-mile down to the corner of Main Street and St. George's Avenue by popular house mover, John Meljjs of Perth Amboy. It was the first time a building this large was ever moved in this fashion in the United States.

The second Church structure remained here until dedicated pastors Monsignor Griffin and Monsignor G. McCorristin, the longest serving pastor of the parish, made plans for the modern development and construction of a new Church and facilities. Ground was broken for the



present church in 1966. Bishop George W. Ahr dedicated the new Church just months after the old Church was demolished.

The present Church and School sit upon land which is believed to be near the site of the original Parker Printing Press. [just a little digression] In 1751, James Parker established the first printing press in the colonies in Woodbridge. He printed many public documents, including legislative proceedings, newspaper, and The New American Magazine, the first periodical ever to be published in America.

While a great outlay of money was demanded for all this work, so judicious was Father Devine in the disposal of funds that when he left Woodbridge, much to the grief of the people, scarcely a cent of debt remained on the church property.

Father Joseph F. Flanagan came to St. James parish in October 1895 to succeed Father Devine who was promoted to the larger parish of the Sacred Heart, New Brunswick. During Father Flanagan's stay here, the first two graduates of St. James School became religious. Richard T. Ryan became the Reverend Richard T. Ryan and Ellen Holohan became Sister Mary Cyril of the Sisters of Mercy of New Jersey. Father Flanagan's untimely death occurred on the seventh of January 1899.

Today, the Parish Community of St. James holds an important place in the early history of Woodbridge. Over 300 years later, The St. James Parish family continues to serve the community of Woodbridge in accordance with our mission statement on page 1.

St James School⁽²⁾

After beginning the beautiful new church Fr. Devine, purchased a new rectory and shortly after the dedication of the new church, renovated the old one and turned it into a school, with grades one through eight, and built a new convent for the Sisters of Mercy, whom he introduced into the parish to teach in the parochial school in 1890. Reverend Mother Mary Regis Hollywood appointed Mother Mary Joseph Donahue as Superior and Sister Mary Baptist Meehan as one of her assistants. In accordance with their rule, they also visited the sick, the poor and conducted religious instruction.

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In 1890, the Sisters of Mercy converted the original wooden frame Church along upper Main Street into a three-room schoolhouse. In September of that same year, 125 students from grades one through eight were enrolled at the parish school. Much like the public elementary schools in Woodbridge proper, St. James students received a well-rounded education. The Sisters taught academic subjects along with music, painting and drawing, as well as needlework. In 1921, due to the increase in enrollment, a converted hall on Second Street and Amboy Avenue housed kindergarten through grade three, while grades four through eight were taught at the school on upper Main Street. By 1924, the present St. James School was constructed.

The St. James graduating class of 1924 was the School's first students to be admitted to Woodbridge High School a successful feat, as the Woodbridge High School Principal, Dr. John Love, was reluctant to them. Subsequent additions to the School in 1954 as well as development of curriculum and daycare great-grandfather contributed to the school's growth. As the school expanded, so did the Church.

Rev John J Griffin

Editor's note: Another of our former pastors who was the pastor for 19 years is the Rev John J Griffin. He is the namesake of the Knights of Columbus 4th Degree Assembly which is across the street from St. James.

Rev. John J Griffin was born in "little old New York" on January 1, 1856. He was a graduate of the parochial School of the Transfiguration, St Francis Xavier's College (1876), St Joseph's Seminary (3 years) and the Grand Seminary in Montreal. He was ordained on February 17, 1883. His first pastorate was in High Bridge in January, 1886 with Missions in Clinton & Flemington. He built the first rectory in High Bridge in 1891 and spent 6 ½ years there. Fr. Griffin also served in St Paul's in Burlington from 1892 to 1899.

In the K of C council chambers there is a photograph of Rev. John J Griffin by the front door in a place of honor. Father Griffin came to St James after Father Joseph

Flanagan passed away in 1899 and served as (Rector) pastor of St James until his death in 1918. (a period of 19 years)



During this period Father Griffin doubled the church property and built a school for \$10,000.

There were a lot of changes in the world and in Woodbridge during Father Griffin's pastorate. The only communication mechanisms in the late 1800s and early 1900 were by letter, telegraph, personal communications or newspaper(s) so the information flow was not what it is today. Great changes took place in the world and I am sure that Father Griffin was not affected by most of them since it took time for the news to get to Woodbridge (even with the telegraph).

Among the world changes were the following:

- **Spanish American war ended (1899)**
- **Queen Victoria died**
- **The Boxer rebellion took place in (1900)**
- **Marconi sent the first trans-Atlantic radio signal**
- **Pope Pius X was elected (1903)**
- **The first flight at Kitty hawk (1903)**
- **1st model T left the factory (1908)**
- **Boy Scouts were founded (1910)**
- **New Mexico became a state (1912)**
- **Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated (1914)**
- **World War I begins (1914)**
- **The Russian revolution started (1917)**
- **An influenza epidemic began (1917-1918)**
- **The first World War I ended (1918).**

Woodbridge and St James were affected by World War I in that many of the men in Woodbridge served in the Great War. One of the Knights, the council treasurer, Edward Kelley was killed in 1918. Men from the Knights of Columbus, at the risk of their lives, helped the sick in the killing influenza epidemic of 1917-1918.

Father Griffin served as the pastor of St James and as pastor faced many challenges. To understand these challenges, we need to look at what Woodbridge was like



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during his pastorate. Woodbridge was a small community with a population of about 7,631 in 1900 (according to Wikipedia).



The picture on the left is Main Street in 1900 and gives some idea of Woodbridge. This view is looking down Main Street from St

Georges Avenue (Route 35). The church on the right is the Methodist church (built in 1870) that is still in use today. The street is not paved as we know it and there are a few electric wires.

Not sure about telephone service but a basic service might have existed.

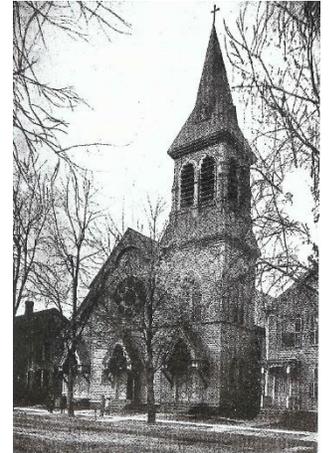
Father Griffin had as parishioners, the workers that toiled in the local industries which were centered on clay pits and brick making. "Most of the workers were of Irish descent". Later on, more Germans and other Europeans were employed by the brick industries.

At this time, workers were paid 12 cents per hour and by 1912, pay was up to 15 cents per hour. Each company had about 150 horses to haul the Clay. There were also Doctors and Blacksmiths to care for the horses. Even though prices were low it must have been quite a challenge for parishioners to support St James when they made so little. How Father Griffin built a school for \$10,000 is amazing.

Then as now Woodbridge had multiple transportation options. For long distance there were trains. Woodbridge had a train station that opened in 1873. Woodbridge also had a 7-mile trolley service along Rahway Avenue that was started in 1895. And there were always horses. Livery stables were commonplace. I would guess that Father Griffin either had a horse or access to one so that he could visit his parishioners. Horseless carriages came in widespread use after WW I.

Father Griffin certainly lived in interesting times with transportation and communications challenges making his job as pastor difficult and challenging.

In January 1899, Father Griffin was a new young pastor (only 43 years old) born and educated in New York who was assigned to St James. The parish of St James was still being developed. A view of the Parish and rectory is above.



One of parishioners (who is a contemporary of Fr. Griffin) remembers that Fr. Griffin used to look out the rectory window and if he saw someone smoking would yell out "Take that cigarette out of your mouth before I come and take it out". If you didn't do put the cigarette out, he would chase you down Main Street.

Father Griffin wanted to develop an organization that would serve both the spiritual and fraternal needs of the men of St James. He envisioned a place where fathers, brothers and sons could congregate for an evening's fun or fraternity and have a great time. He realized that developing such an organization from scratch would take talent and time.

Father Griffin met with John F. Ryan and Richard P Race to develop the plan for the Knights of Columbus chapter in Woodbridge. By 1904 the new charter was ready and so was formed the nucleus of Council #857.

To honor the pastor of St James Church who was so instrumental in bringing the Knights of Columbus to Woodbridge the 4th Degree Assembly was renamed the Rev John J. Griffin Assembly 857.

Msgr. Charles G. McCorristin

Editor's Note:

Another major milestone in the history of St. James was the appointment of Monsignor Charles G. McCorristin as pastor.

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Monsignor McCorristin was born in Millville, New Jersey, on August 24, 1887, the eldest of eight children of Alexander and Mary L. Kane. It was in this South Jersey community that Charles G. McCorristin was born and whose schools he attended in his youth. After graduating from St. Mary's School in June, 1900, in preparation for the priesthood he entered St. Vincent College at Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where he completed his entire course of studies. He was ordained on May 27, 1911 in St. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

He then began two score years (40 years) of distinguished and fruitful work in the church and the Knights of Columbus. Msgr. McCorristin served for 37 years as the state chaplain of the Knights of Columbus. He was also the Faithful Friar of the Knights of Columbus's 4th Degree General Assembly #0857.

Father McCorristin had many assignments before he came to Woodbridge. He served as a curate at the Sacred Heart Church in Trenton, New Jersey, pastor of St. Patrick's Church and pastor of St. Joseph's Church in East Camden.

Father McCorristin at St. James

In 1937, Father McCorristin started his career at St. James in Woodbridge where he would remain as pastor until his passing in 1966, a period of 29 years (he is the longest serving pastor of our church). He was appointed pastor in 1937 by the Most Reverend Moses E. Kiley, Bishop of the Trenton Diocese. He guided his parishioners, guiding them through the difficulties of World War II. Many young men of the parish made the supreme sacrifice for their country.

Monsignor came to Woodbridge in April, 1937, and guided a tremendous growth in St. James' Parish so that it was necessary to build additions to the church, school, and convent, and to build a new rectory to accommodate the priests. During this period the school grew from an enrollment of 300 pupils to an enrollment of 950.

In the ensuing years, Monsignor McCorristin was elevated to the rank of Domestic Prelate with the title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor in July, 1948, by Pope Pius XII. During the same year, he was appointed



Moderator of the newly founded Mt. Carmel Nursing Guild by Bishop William A. Griffin. Monsignor was also the Dean of Middlesex and Somerset Counties and a Consulter of the Diocese of Trenton.

The fiftieth year of Monsignor's ordination as a priest was celebrated with honors by the parish. The shrine to St. Joseph the Worker was presented to Monsignor as his Golden Anniversary gift from the parish.

During his term at St. James parish, Monsignor McCorristin recognized the need for a much larger church. With the permission of Bishop George W. Ahr, Bishop of Trenton, Monsignor launched a campaign for funds to erect a new church. His goal was \$500,000, but aware of the loyalty and devotion of his parishioners, Monsignor knew that they would react favorably. The parish responded overwhelmingly to his call for support.

They exceeded the goal and the amount reached was almost \$600,000. The Campaign had been finished, and the designs for the church prepared, but their approval was delayed due to the illness of Monsignor. With the death of Monsignor McCorristin on April 12, 1966, not only was the parish saddened but the entire community felt his loss. He had spent twenty-nine years of his priesthood serving not only the people of St. James but also all of Woodbridge Township. He



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is the longest resident pastor in the history of the parish thus far.

Father McCorristin and the Knights of Columbus

Father McCorristin history with the Knights began even before he came to St. James. He served as Chaplain of Woodbury Council for several years and took an active interest in not only the activities of his own council, contributing much to its success, but also in the activities of all the councils in the southern part of the state as well as the State Council.

Until his passing in 1966 (a period of 37 years), without interruption, Monsignor McCorristin was reappointed to the office of State Chaplain by all Past State Deputies serving during that time, and by the then State Deputy Vincent E. Mulhall.

Ministries

As stated in our Mission Statement at the beginning of this newsletter **“We strive to become a vibrant church that focuses on developing, maintaining and propagating the essential elements of parish life through evangelization, worship, service and stewardship”**. The primary way we do this is through our ministries. We organize our ministries under an umbrella organization called a Commission. At the **Thanks for**

Giving celebration in November we recognized the good work that our people (over 400+) do. Below is a list of our ministries. If you would like to volunteer please feel free to contact the ministry leader.

Social Concerns Commission **Deacon John DiJoseph & Linda Donnelly**

BEREAVEMENT

Dolores Gioffre
doloresgioffre@msn.com

BLOOD DRIVE

Mitzi Hozjan
Maryhozjan@aol.com

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Peggy Foley
ckb703@aol.com
732-636-6343

FOOD PANTRY

Peggy Foley
foodpantry@stjamesonline.org
732-636-4310

CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

Linda Donnelly
732-634-3026 X351

HOMEBOUND

Fr. Nalaka Silva
nalakasvh@yahoo.com
732-634-0500 X201

LAZARUS MINISTRY

Christopher McGrath
CAMgrath@aol.com

RESPECT FOR LIFE

Keith Miklas

SHAWL MINISTRY

Office of Persons with Disabilities

Evangelization and Spiritual Life **Commission** **Dennis Marshall**

ALTAR ROSARY SOC.

Andrea Smykla
stjamesaltarrosary@gmail.com

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Steve Gardella
Steve.Gardella@aol.com

JAAM YOUTH

Teresa Zappulla
Jaamyouthministry4@gmail.com

PRAYER CHAIN

Peggy Foley

PARISH MISSION PREP.

Monsignor Charlie
Fathercharlie@stjamesonline.org
732-634-0500 X203

Women of Faith

Camilla Lauricella
732-634-0500 X111

CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS OF AMERICAS

COURT MERCEDES 769 (18 and older)
Eileen Swingle/ Madeline Mentel

JUNIOR CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS (6-18 yrs old)

Micky Brady

SONSHINE SUMMER

Dorothy Zmigrodski
dzmigrodski@stjamesonline.org
732-634-3026 X350

SONS OF ST. JOSEPH

Dennis Marshall

Liturgy and Worship Commission **Christopher McGrath (Chair)**

ALTAR SERVERS

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BAPTISMAL PREPARATION **PREPARATION**

Deacon John DiJoseph
732-634-0500 X108

GREETERS/USHERS

Pete Miami /
Jim Donnelly

LITURGY COUNCIL

Christopher McGrath
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MUSIC MINISTRY

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EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

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EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF **COMMUNION, LECTORS and SACRISTANS**

Deacon Roel Mercado
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RCIA - RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION **ADULTS**

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CHILDREN

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Administration Commission Sean Keaveney (Chair)

CEMETERY CLEAN UP
Sean Keaveney

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Formation and Education Commission Deacon Bill Lange

HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (HSA)
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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
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SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Dolores Gioffre
dolores.gioffre@msn.com

HELP

One of the challenges in producing a newsletter is in recognizing and writing about topics that are of interest to all parishioners. Please take a few moments to think about what you would like to see in the newsletter and send me an email with your thoughts.

For the next newsletter I am hoping to do a “year in review” newsletter that focuses on all of our ministries and what they have accomplished in 2019. I would like to address the following for each ministry

- What does the ministry do?
- How do they do it?
- What is involved?
- If they need members how can I help?
- What do they intend to do in the future?

I hope that this will give all of the parishioners of St. James information on how we show the Love of Christ in our lives, our parish and in our community.

Words of wisdom for 2020

In 2019 I was influenced by the following words that I would like to end this newsletter with. The first quote is from *Henri Nouwen* who was an internationally renowned priest and author, respected professor and beloved pastor. Fr. Henri Nouwen wrote 39 books on the spiritual

life. The following two selections from his works affected me deeply.

“We seldom realize fully that we are sent to fulfill God-given tasks. We act as if we were simply dropped down in creation and have to decide to entertain ourselves until we die. But we were sent into the world by God, just as Jesus was. Once we start living our lives with that conviction, we will soon know what we were sent to do.”⁽³⁾

Henri Nouwen also said:

“I am here to remind you in the name of God that you are the Beloved Sons and Daughters of God, and that God says to you, ‘I have called you from all eternity and you are engraved from all eternity in the palms of my hands. You are mine. You belong to me, and I love you with an everlasting love.’⁽⁴⁾

Another quote that also affected me is by St. Mother Teresa⁽⁵⁾ which talks about making a fresh start. As we start 2020, we can all make a fresh start by beginning again..

Yesterday is gone.

Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.

References:

- (1) From the website; Catholic Online (2019)
https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=356
- (2) Selected information reproduced from the Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission website:
<http://www.woodbridgehistory.com>, (2019)
Section entitled “Historic Tours”, Woodbridge Walking Tour II ,Page 3.
- (3) Nouwen, Henri (2013). “Discernment: Reading the signs of daily life”, p.129, SPCK
- (4) Nouwen, Henri “You are the beloved: Daily Meditations for spiritual living”, page 34
- (5) <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/355892>, Mother Teresa of Calcutta (2010). “In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories & Prayers”, p.17, New World Library