

A Season of Grace in Action



The Apostle Paul reminds us that “God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that ... you may share abundantly in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). It’s a vision of life rooted not in fear or competition, but in God’s overflowing generosity — a reminder that grace is meant to shape how we live.

That message feels especially urgent today. Across our country, people are carrying so much: exhaustion, anxiety, loneliness and the pres-

sure to keep up. As Christians, we’re not immune — and yet Jesus calls us to be in the world without being of the world.

Grace is the threshold between those two worlds. When we allow ourselves to receive God’s mercy, grace gives us the courage to live differently: to give in a world that urges us to hoard, to care for the least in a world that expects us to fight to be first.

Mercy helps make us an active partner with God’s redemption of the world, becoming Grace in Action. This fall, I invite you to make space in your daily life to let God’s mercy transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, on earth, as it is in heaven. — *Chris*

Thanks, Blessings and Godspeed

Mother Julie and Father Joseph, like so many priests from St. Michael's, have been called to lead other parishes: Julie as priest-in-charge at St. Mary's Church in Ardmore, Pa.; and Joseph to Trinity Episcopal Church in Manassas, Va.

Farewell, Mother Julie ...

In September 2019, Mother Julie Hoplamazian entered our parish and danced into our hearts.

Her creativity, joy, merriment, resilience and deep passion for Christ and for justice have always shined through, despite Covid, construction, health scares and clergy transitions.

Julie brought her zeal to the Reparations Committee and to our small group Bible studies and cheered on the 2-3-4s. Her deep faith was steeped in the worship of the time-tested Armenian church, involving soul, mind and body.

We saw this worship expressed — in a uniquely Julie way — by her centering the holiness of dance and other movement.

Much of her most powerful preaching drew on the sorrows and triumphs of her family and people to shed clear light on paths for social justice in America.

So may we honor Julie's time among us by calling out in her people's ancient tongue:

Շնորհակալ եմ, Մայր Ժիւլի: Ցտեստը ինձ:
Shnorhagal em, Mayer Julie. Tsdestyun.

Thank you, Mother Julie. Until we meet again.

— *Ned Boyajian*



Left: Mother Julie, demonstrating a développ  , founded Faith on Pointe, her ministry devoted to "ballet for every body, steps for every soul."

Right: Julie and friends at an anti-ICE protest at 26 Federal Plaza.

... and Father Joseph

Mother Julie, in her farewell blessing to Father Joseph on Sept. 27, noted in awe that he had just preached "an entire sermon with absolutely no notes in front of him."

"Trinity Church in Manassas is getting one of the good ones," Julie summarized.

In his valedictory sermon, Joseph invoked St. Michael: "To understand ... what it means to be angels, to be bearers of the divine's word, of the Good News, is that it can require a sending-forth, a going-out, a departing."



A post-service scrum surrounded Joseph on St. Michael's Day.



A St. Jude's Day Primer

Thelonious Monk used to swing around a lamp-post to the rhythm of traffic on Amsterdam Avenue. The corner bodega would let you use their phone. The neighborhood, known as San Juan Hill, was declared a “slum” and demolished in 1959 to make way for Lincoln Center.

The razed neighborhood was the backdrop for the opening scene in the new "West Side Story."

On Oct. 4 the Reparations Committee screened "San Juan Hill: Manhattan's Lost Neighborhood," a documentary commissioned by Lincoln Center that chronicles the displacement of thousands of working class families, many of them Black and Afro-Caribbean.

The film showed the New York Philharmonic at the opening of Lincoln Center in 1962, performing Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus, intercut with footage of the wrecking of homes in San Juan Hill. It moved some parishioners to tears, others to anger.

"San Juan Hill: Manhattan's Lost Neighborhood " is available free on YouTube. So is "The Tragedy of Urban Renewal," a six-minute documentary about the destruction of the former Black neighborhood east of St. Michael's, including the St. Jude's Chapel. Same era, same story, same tears. — *Tom Phillips*



Shelter Before Culture: Protesting at City Hall against the Lincoln Square Development.

Lincoln Center Tears Down the Wall

In May, Lincoln Center held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Lincoln Center West Initiative, a vast new performance space and public park, designed to be welcoming to all, with a new orientation — facing west to the Amsterdam Houses. A first step: demolishing the wall on the east side of Amsterdam Avenue that loomed like a barrier.

A Living History



St. Jude’s Chapel marker, plaque and fragment.

This spring and summer, Park West Village generously created a new plaque for the Central Park West garden where, during the Bicentennial, St. Michael's had placed a marker in honor of St. Jude's Chapel. PWV also rearranged and relandscaped the garden to include fragments of razed buildings there. The plaque tells the story:

“This marker commemorates St. Jude's Chapel, a mission of nearby St. Michael's Episcopal Church, that served the Upper West Side's Black community for nearly 50 years. The chapel stood on what was 99th Street until 1957 when it was demolished during urban renewal. The stone fragments displayed here are remnants of the residential buildings that once lined this neighborhood and were razed along with St. Jude's.”

The ABC Blesses the 2-3-4's

On Sunday, Sept. 27, Sarah Mullally, Archbishop of Canterbury, preached at an evensong service at St. Thomas Fifth Avenue. A group of us from the 2-3-4 Group at St. Michael's took the opportunity to see her in person.

To our surprise, we waltzed into the church at 3:30 p.m. for the 4 p.m. service and had our pick of seats. Where was everybody? Archbishop Sarah is the Anglican equivalent of the pope, head of a worldwide church. By comparison, the Anglican communion is thin.

Thin is personal. Archbishop Sarah made eye contact with half the congregation during the procession. And our row



kneeling and chanting. But we also were uplifted by the archbishop's presence, words, prayers and blessing.

— *Ren Belcher*

The 2-3-4 Group welcomes 20-, 30- and 40-somethings (and friends).

When 'Something Else' Upends Your Life

Photo: Lisa Hancock



Stacy Kim

In a pathbreaking new book, Stacy Kim, a social scientist and career coach, examines the all-too-human emotion of envy (one of the seven deadly sins) and how to translate it into a force for change. Stacy, her husband Kyle Okimoto, our co-warden, and daughters Allison and Gillian are longtime members of St. Michael's. Our priests and our parish shared in the family health crisis that Stacy describes here.

"Well, it's not a fracture," said the pediatric orthopedist, calling to share X-ray results. I had taken Gillian to see the doctor that morning because of lingering pain in her right knee.

"What a relief!" I was half listening, half wondering why she was calling so late. It was after 9 p.m.

"It's a tumor. The radiologist and I both agree you should meet our colleague." She has an opening "first thing tomorrow."

"Wait, should I be worried?"

"Let the doctor see your daughter. She'll know if the tumor is benign or something else."

The next morning, as soon as Kyle and I arrived, we were whisked into an exam room, jumping ahead of everyone else in the crowded waiting room. Moments later, we learned that our 11-year-old's X-ray revealed a "classic presentation" of osteosarcoma, a rare bone cancer with only 1,000 diagnoses a year in the U.S.

Not benign, but "something else."

From there, we were instructed to go to the seventh floor. The elevator doors opened to brightly colored walls, floors and child-sized furniture, welcoming us to the world of pediatric cancer. We met our oncologist and spent the rest of the day learning our marching orders for the next nine months.

Gillian was stoic, asking thoughtful questions. But when she learned the chemo would weaken her immune system and prevent her from attending school, she began to cry, giving Kyle and me permission to do the same.

The next week, instead of spending Christmas with Kyle's family in Honolulu, we stayed home for Gillian's first and shortest of 10 surgeries over the next five years.

"Something else" upended our lives.

During that time, well-meaning people tried to console us: "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." "When God closes a door, he opens a window." "Everything happens for a reason."

Nothing could spark rage in me faster than such words.

Each time, I wanted to scream back, "Cancer could kill my child!" "I don't like the blasted window God opened!" "Tell me the reason my child got cancer!"

While I would never, ever utter those words to anyone, I hate, hate, hate to admit that now, years later, there is a tiny kernel of truth to them.

For our family, cancer was a monumental threat that annihilated our sense of normal life. For Gillian, cancer threatened her life. For Kyle, Allison and me, the possibility of losing her infiltrated every choice we made.

As I write this, Gillian is NED: that is, she has "no evidence of disease." But we will never be "cancer free." It left scars inside each of us, as deep and long as the one down her leg. The fear of recurrence haunts us.

Eventually, in some ways, we fell back to our baseline levels of happiness prior to the "something else" diagnosis. But in other ways, our family changed.

I'll share how cancer helped me with my envy.

I experienced beyond-the-call kindness and generosity from the moms at our daughters' school, moms I had once envied for their polished lifestyle and confidence at school pick-ups and drop-offs.

Our friends and family, of course, offered their support, but many of them lived far away. The people who mobilized to give us concrete assistance were those school moms. They knew we didn't have a car, so they coordinated rides to and from the hospital. They took turns bringing us home-cooked meals. They brought Gillian's friends when she was allowed visitors. They took Allison in when she needed a break from us. They texted check-ins to remind me I was never alone.

Having always been the helper, I was finally forced to receive help. I was grateful. But more importantly, I realized that my petty envy had caused me to lump these women together as "those moms."

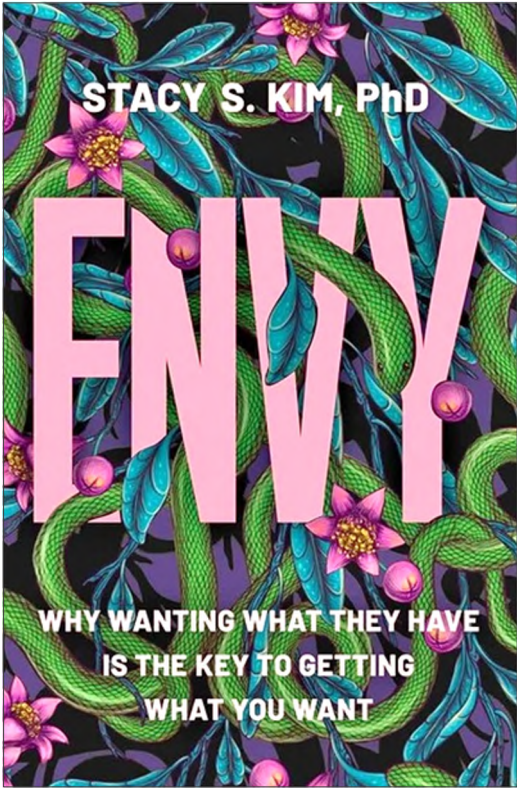
By not knowing each of them as an individual, I robbed myself of the opportunity to learn what it is that I wanted. I felt ashamed for envying their lifestyle or the time they spent at the gym. But, if I looked deeper at my envy, I could have seen that the "intangible desire," the deeper thing I wanted, was

to feel less alone and more at ease in this larger group of moms.

It was the discomfort of my envy, my shame of it, my wanting to bury the pain of it that caused me to dismiss them. When what I truly wanted was to befriend them.

It isn't envy that makes us behave badly. Not examining envy, and ignoring it, leads us astray.

— Excerpted from *"Envy: Why Wanting What They Have is the Key to Getting What You Want,"* by Stacy S. Kim, PhD. Copyright © 2026 by Stacy S. Kim, PhD. Reprinted with permission of Balance Publishing, an imprint of Hachette Book Group. All rights reserved.



Prayer for a Pilgrim Soul

The late Annie Dillard first captured the national imagination with "Pilgrim on Tinker Creek" (1974), her meditation on nature and spirit. You may know her through her essays in school anthologies such as "Living Like Weasels," "Seeing" or "Heaven and Earth in Jest."

If you are a Christian who has struggled with religion, you may also know Dillard as a writer who can minister to those whose faith has run thin. She's gifted with the Ignatian quality of seeing God in all things and the sincerity to wonder aloud (as she did in "Holy the Firm"): Did Christ "ascend once and for all, pulling his cross up after him like a rope ladder home?"

So I pray for the departed soul of Annie Dillard: lyric writer, keen observer of Creation and fellow pilgrim on the long road home.

— Chris Edling, our new seminarian



Photo: Courtesy of Hollins University

Annie Dillard, ca. 1974