

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

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*Oh Come
Let us Adore Him*

THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS



This year, as Christmas falls on a weekend, we have a week following the Fourth Sunday of Advent and a week after Christmas to New Year's. *[This year is really the exception as Christmas happens to but rarely falls on a weekend – every 6 or 7 years. Next year Christmas day will be on a Monday forcing a hurried liturgical and practical rush from the Fourth Sunday of Advent to the celebration of Christmas within just a few hours.]* Don't get me wrong, Christmas is wonderful, but really only when we get time to catch our breath and afford ourselves the ever-so-necessary luxury of being able to ponder the mystery that is Christmas itself - recalling the time when Jesus came.

At the very least, once a year, it is good to ponder the time and event of Jesus' coming. The story itself is outrageous and unbelievable, especially when one stops to think that the Saviour was promised in all of human history, and that when he came it was in such a simple, humble fashion that human minds could scarcely believe it, let alone accept it. Yes, this was the way that God chose to come and save us - by sending His Son, Jesus to live among us. In fact, the story has become so familiar and common place in our Christian history that perhaps we don't really grasp how truly extraordinary it is.

I mean, think about it, this story of God's will:

- God promises throughout salvation history that he will send a Saviour -someone outside of ourselves who could truly save us from darkness, sin and death
- the Saviour will be born among humans and will walk, talk, and live among them
- the one on earth through whom he will do this is a woman who has already been especially prepared for this task by being born herself, without sin, (an act of God alone), through the mysterious event we know as the Immaculate Conception.
- the woman, Mary, is a simple, peasant woman, a young Jewish girl really, who has great faith and faithfulness to God
- she is so poor that she only has doves to offer in the temple
- while she is in fact engaged to a man named Joseph, she is not yet married to him and has been saving herself for the time they will marry

- God sends an angel, Gabriel, to Mary to ask her if she will cooperate with God's plan of entering the world through her, though she be a virgin.
- Mary gives her assent to God's will with her 'yes' - Mary willed motherhood and by this same act of her will became a mother
- in the lives of Mary and Joseph, God takes care of all of the details, giving them just the information they need at each moment, which demands their trust and faith in God's unfolding plan
- God reveals to Joseph in a dream that he is to accept Mary's pregnancy because it is part of God's plan
- a census is called and requires that Mary and Joseph leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem, even though Mary is close to giving birth to her child
- upon their arrival there is no place for them to stay and Mary and Joseph are forced to take shelter and refuge in a stable outside of the town
- she gives birth to Jesus amidst the cattle, the oxen, the lambs, bringing to birth and fruition God's desire to send the Lamb among us
- Wisemen, who had heard the prophecies of the coming King, had set out to follow the star which was to lead them to the place of the birth of the Messiah – a barn
- Shepherds, people with rather bad reputations, who lived among their flocks, also received the news of the birth of the Saviour by the angels and were given exclusive invitations to come and see the Messiah in the form of a tiny babe
- the Magi and the shepherds arrive at the manger scene and represent the two groups ever to be found around Christ: the Magi, who represent those who, while they possess human wisdom, know that they do not know everything, and the shepherds, who know that they really know very little about God - yet both groups are invited to bow down before the newborn King
- the three wise kings present strange gifts that would seem useless for a baby - gold, frankincense and myrrh. Yet they are richly and mysteriously symbolic gifts:

Gold, because Jesus was a king, *the King*

Incense, because he was a Priest, yet a priest who would not offer a sacrifice outside of himself, but would offer his very self, his life-blood for the redemption of all humanity, and Myrrh, a funeral spice, because this King and Messiah would die, not like all other worldly kings, but would by and through his dying save all in the Kingdom he came to establish - a Kingdom that would have no ending.

The scriptures tell us that Jesus grew in age, grace and wisdom, but so too did his parents, Mary and Joseph. They would continuously have unfolded before them the great and salvific will of God to save His people from their sins and to win for them the gift of eternal life.

I have always loved the song sung by the monks of Glenstall Abbey in Ireland called, *The Darkest Midnight*. The words, with rich meaning and depth are accompanied by the hauntingly beautiful music of the score. In the original lyrics there are eleven verses, but usually just three are popularly sung.



Tuesday Dec 27
8:30am No Mass
Wednesday Dec 28
7:00pm No Mass
Thursday Dec 29
8:30am No Mass
Friday Dec 30
7:30am Holy Hour
8:30am The Families of Sandy & Al Mattacott
Requested by Sandy Mattacott
Saturday Dec 31
4:30pm New Years Eve
Sunday Jan 1
9:00am New Years Day
11:00am New Years Day

Please note the office will be closed
Between Christmas and New Year

Our Sanctuary Lamp Burns
For the Parishioners of St. Mary's
From Dec 25 to Dec 31, 22



Please Pray for the Sick

Chelsea Cando, Dorothy Dynes, Margot Brandreth, Ken Buchan,
Jean Ferguson, Rose Flanagan, Fred Coulson, Andrew Vella, Gwen
Collard, Janine Wright

Pray for those who have died recently

The Nativity of the Lord
December 25, 2022 Let us say yes to living the Gospel



NEW: Your year-end gift will double in value! From now until the end of 2022, your contribution to our parish's ShareLife campaign will be matched by an anonymous donor up to a total of \$1 million.

"Our faith community has always responded heroically to the needs around us, particularly through our enthusiastic support of ShareLife. We can help alleviate the suffering of those whose lives have been upended by the pandemic. Let us say yes to Jesus' call to live the Gospel by providing for those in need." – Cardinal Thomas Collins. You can donate with a ShareLife envelope, online through our parish website, or at sharelife.org/donate. Thank you for helping end hunger by donating generously to ShareLife today.

The Darkest Midnight

The darkest midnight in December;
No snow nor hail nor winter storm,
Shall hinder us for to remember
The Babe that on this night was born.
With shepherds, we are come to see
This lovely Infant's glorious charms.
Born of a Maid, as the prophet said,
The God of love in Mary's arms.

Have you not heard the sacred story
How man was made those seats to fill,
Which the fallen angels lost in glory
By their presumption, pride and will?
They thought us mean, for to obtain
Such glorious seats and crowns in heaven.
So through a cheat, they got Eve to eat
The fruit, to be avenged on man.

Ye blessed angels join our voices
Let your gilded wings beat fluttering o'er
While every soul set free rejoices
And every devil must adore.
We'll sing and pray that he always may
Our Church and clergymen defend
God grant us grace in all our days
A merry Christmas and a happy end.

Of course, the remaining point of our Christmas recollection is to look back at what God has done through the mystery of the Incarnation; God taking on a human form in the Person of Jesus, and to view the birth of the Messiah in the context of Jesus' promise that HE WILL COME AGAIN! The news of the King's coming 2000 years ago brought fear and trepidation to those who were afraid of losing their earthly tin crowns. They were those people who lived in this world with a real sense that the world as they knew it was all there really was. Unfortunately, this is not a thing of the past only but the reality of many in the world today who hold that this earthly life is all they will ever see and know. That is why the very life of Jesus was threatened at its very beginning by Herod, though God would not allow Herod to have his way. Christ's coming again at the end of time, whenever that might be, should not be greeted with fear, lest we be living in this present world to suffer the same fate as the likes of Herod. Each Mass we celebrate finds the Eucharistic Prayer concluding with the Our Father.

As we end our recitation of this powerful prayer that Jesus taught us and handed on to all those who would be his followers, the priest adds;

***"Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour,
Jesus Christ.***

Blessed Christmas to all! (Fr. Charles)

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