

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

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Feast of the Holy Family

Unbelievable, When You Think About It!

It is always good to be able to look at that which is familiar with a sense of newness. The story of Christ's Incarnation, though we know it so well, remains a great mystery since God the Father chose to send His Son, Jesus in this incredible way – incredible in the sense of not credible as it is so beyond belief. And since there is "nothing new under the sun" we think we've heard it all about Jesus' birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and return to the Father. It's like the priest who was visiting a classroom of third graders and asked them if they could figure out, by a description he would give them, what animal he was describing. He said, "Sometimes it's black and sometimes it's brown, and sometimes it's gray or red, and even sometimes it is white! It carries things in its mouth for the long winter months. Can anyone guess what it is?" A little boy slowly, hesitantly raised his hand and replied, "Well, Father, I'm sure the answer is 'Jesus' but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me!"

We're like that little boy sometimes as we live within the realms of religion and faith. We get used to the questions and answers of faith, the pictures the scriptures have painted in our minds and we think we know the story so well. Perhaps we do know the story quite well, but that just might be our problem. Given any Feast within the Church year, any liturgical celebration held in the parish, all of us, I think, come with our own preconceived notions of what we can expect, (and sometimes we might even come not expecting anything).

Take Christmas for example. We know the story so well and have a thousand different "Christmas is" definitions and examples: Christmas is the birthday of Jesus. And it is, but it is really far, far more than that. When considered beyond the recollection of Jesus' birth Christmas takes on a whole new dimension for our careful consideration.

When we consider the history of the world itself, there has been no one and nothing to compare with Him and His coming, for He is God! No one knew, for example, centuries before that Mohammed, or Buddha, Confucius or any other great religious leader was coming, but with Jesus it was the opposite. He is the only religious leader in human history who was ever pre-announced. He was expected. His arrival was not by chance or coincidence for the Old Testament had contained at least 165 prophecies about Him - where He would be born, how He would be born, where He would live, words that He would say, how He would die and even the words He would utter while He was dying. He was expected. *"But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days."* The point that Christ was expected is of the utmost importance because He not only comes from God, as could any prophet who is sent by God, but He is God who took on human flesh - the most humiliating thing God could do: the Creator taking on the forms of His creation in a human nature.

Secondly, His coming would have such an impact on world history that he would divide it in two; marked as before his coming (BC – Before Christ) and after his coming, (AD – Anno Domini, year of Our Lord).

Thirdly, while He took on a human nature He was given by his mother, Mary, He was 100% divine and 100% human - God become man. Like us He was born of a woman but not of a father of earth but of heaven. In fact, He made his own mother. Being God, and unlike any of us or anyone who ever lived, He pre-existed his own

mother. He was the only human ever born of a woman who was a virgin.

Yet even though He was God, was expected and impacted our human history, He came among us in the most unlikely way: in poverty, humility and alone, with only His mother, Mary, foster-father, Joseph and an assembly of farm animals to witness His birth.

There were signs along the way of 'who' this child of Mary and Joseph was to be. When Jesus was taken to the temple for His dedication, Simeon held the child with a revelation and confirmation from God that in his arms he was holding the long-awaited Messiah.

Later in the temple Jesus would teach adults and shock his parents with his words of "Did you not know that I should be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49)

And He grew in 'age, grace and wisdom' and so did, no doubt, His parents who were coming to grips with their Son's identity and purpose in His earthly life.

As soon as Jesus began His public life, (around the age of thirty), He gathered people around Him, teaching, healing, inspiring and perplexing His disciples and the crowds, all the while speaking about His death. All of us humans come into this world to live out our days here until the day we die, but for Jesus, the death He talked about was the goal of His coming - that through His death, sin and death in us humans would be put to death for ever for all those who believed in Him. He talked about the meaning and purpose of this earthly life (the challenge and mystery that all humans ponder in one way or another) and spoke about an endless life that was to come - a life and the life He Himself would grant to all those who lived their lives for Him and in Him. He was God walking the earth in a human body.

When His death did finally come, His 'hour', His followers largely missed the point of his life and fled the scene, devastated and filled with grief. But those who hadn't been that close to Him were strangely drawn to Him and were deeply touched by His life and death. His tomb was the only one in human history that was ever guarded for fear that He might rise or that His followers would attempt to steal His body and then claim that He had risen. And He did indeed rise! He rose from death and walked among His doubting and crestfallen disciples, revealing Himself to them once again and giving them pause to look back and see who He indeed was. After revealing Himself to His friends as truly alive again, He bid them farewell, entrusting them with the mission to go to the ends of the earth proclaiming all that they had seen and heard, making new disciples until He would come back to the earth again. He instructed them to wait and pray for He was to send the Advocate – the Holy Spirit. He first called them to "come and see" and now told them to "go" and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that He would be with them.... and us.

These past two thousand years, we on the earth have witnessed the fruit of that sending and the reality of Christ's presence among us. As Roman Catholics, the oldest and the original "Church" Christ himself founded, we have seen the fulfillment of Christ's promise that He would be with us, that He would sustain us, in that while kingdoms of the earth and great rulers have come and gone into the dust, the Church Christ established is still here, living and awaiting the promised fulfillment that He will come again. He came to take away sin and death, and did so in His bodily death on the Cross. He made the instrument of torture and death the symbol and eternal sign of victory for all who come to believe that He is the Son of God and live their lives according to His teaching, His instruction and His

ways. Yet most of all, his words and presence among us still speaks infinitely of the wisdom of the ages, the truth that is beyond what the world can appreciate and comprehend. His greatest and meant to be experienced word to us still is His "love" which is the force for the conversion of the heart that longs for Him and desires to be happy in Him forever.

All this only barely scratches the surface of who Jesus is for us and what Christmas, therefore, really means. It is all truly unbelievable when you stop to think about it. And that's what Christmas should be and Christmas should do for us: lead us, like Mary, to ponder. *Blessed Christmas!*

(Fr. Charles)



Tues Dec 31 st 4:30pm	NEW YEARS EVE
Wed Jan 1 st 10:00am	SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD.
Thurs Jan 2 nd 8:30am	+Emma Lope Requested by Roderick Lope
Fri Jan 3 rd 8:30am	+Emilia & Ted Requested by Eva
Sat Jan 4 th 3:30 to 4:00pm 4:30pm	Confession +Margaret Ogles Requested by Barb & Mary
Sun Jan 5 th 9:00am	For the People
11:00am	+Mattia Bellicose Requested by Joanne & Angelo Vivona

Please Pray for the Sick

Jean Ferguson, Fred Coulson, Hilary Joseph, Henry Niepalla, , Albert Sant, Teresa & Feliks Kosierb, Elizabeth Pavilsa, Ashley Zavitz, Alex Poirier & Family, Tammy MacDonald, Anita Taglione, Denis Fennessy, Mary Little, Yvonne Grimm, Janine Wright, Anne Johnston.

Please Pray for the Recently Deceased

Barbara Moreau



The Sanctuary Lamp Burns For the Intentions of the St. Mary's Parishioners From Dec 29th to Jan 4th, 2024



THE FEAST OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

(New Years is a Holy Day of Obligation in Canada)

New Year's Eve: Tuesday December 31

4:30pm

New Year's Day: Wednesday January 1

10:00am

The Office will reopen on Thursday Jan 2nd
A Happy New Year to You All

Feast of the Holy Family Of Jesus, Mary & Joseph December 29, 2024



ShareLife is grateful for your generous hearts this 2024!

NEW: Your gift will double in value! From November 1 until year-end, your contribution to our parish's ShareLife campaign will be matched by an anonymous donor up to a total of \$500,000.

If you've shared your blessings through ShareLife in 2024, thank you. Because of you, a neighbor is healing, a young mother is finding stability, and someone struggling with hunger now has a meal. Your kindness has transformed lives through ShareLife.

There's still time to touch more lives. If you donate online by December 31, you will receive a **2024 tax receipt**.

Please support the work of ShareLife agencies through sharelife.org/donate or by giving at our parish using a ShareLife envelope. Thank you for living the Gospel!

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