



ST. ROMUALD CATHOLIC CHURCH

394 N HWY 259 · HARDINSBURG KY 40143

December 24, 2017 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

dear Padre

Parish Office:

Phone: 756-2356

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Hours: Monday - Friday

8:00am - Noon, 1:00 - 3:00pm

Email: stromuald@bbtel.com

www.stromuald.org

Pastoral Staff:

Pastor, Father Brian Johnson

Email: Brian.Johnson@pastoral.org

Deacon, Tony Anthony

Deacon, Mike Wiedemer

Administrative Asst, Jane Haynes

CRE: Adult, Rosa Hockenberry

CRE: RCIA, Marie Rose

CRE: 7-12, Gayle Poole

CRE: K-6, Kim Brumfield

Pastoral Council:

Dana Bland, Kevin Oelze,

Janet Bland, Danny O'Reilly

Chris Brumfield, Don Payne,

Gera Jarboe, Gail Pollock

Harry Mattingly, Pam Pollock

Joellen McGary, Mark Rhodes

St. Romuald

Interparochial School:

Phone: 756-5504

www.stromualdschool.org

Principal, Rob Cox

School Board

Representatives:

Jamie Barr, Amy Flood,

Jennifer Payne

An antiphon in the Christian breviary states, "The angel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin Mary, who was engaged to be married to Joseph" (December 20). Was she married or not when Jesus was conceived?

Much of the confusion is due to what constituted marriage at the time of Jesus.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph when she was found to be pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. During the usual betrothal period of a year, the woman remained with her family. However, the bond between the couple was already as permanent as marriage. That's why Mary was legally known as Joseph's wife, even though they didn't yet live together or have all the rights belonging to a husband and wife. In fact, the arrangement during betrothal was so binding that it could only be terminated in divorce.

Moreover, in that patriarchal society, a betrothed woman who had sexual relations with anyone other than her husband was accused of adultery. Had Joseph ended this betrothal in disgrace, Mary would have been deprived of marriage for the rest of her life and dependent on her extended family upon her father's death. But Joseph was an upright man who intended to divorce her quietly without publicly stating the reason, in order to spare Mary and her family's reputation. That's when an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to have no fear about taking Mary as his wife, for the Child was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20). Fr. Byron Miller, CSSR



Masses for the Week

December 26th - January 1st

Tues	1:00 pm	Colin Whitfill (Extended Care)
Wed	5:00 pm	Joy David Brown (DH)
Thurs	9:30 am	Tim Hardesty (JH) (Medco)
Fri	9:00 am	Joe Nimmo
Sat	5:00 pm	Herman Barr (JK)
Sun	7:00 am	Timmy Stevenson (MW)
	10:00 am	Catherine Curran (PC)
Mon	9:00 am	Lorena Bland

Stewardship of Finance

Last Sunday's Collection will be published next weekend

Sunday Collection.....	\$
Building Fund.....	\$
Children.....	\$
Loose change for the Poor.....	\$

Parish Financial Summary

July-November, 2017

Total Income	\$217,800
Total Expenses	\$211,700
	\$ 6,100

Thank you for your financial stewardship!

Worship and Sacrament

Anointing of the Sick: Anointing of the Sick is celebrated with the parish community every first Wednesday at 5:00 pm Mass. Yet, anytime, anointing is available for illness, preparation for surgery or for recovery, by calling Fr Brian.

Baptism: Congratulations on the birth of your child! Your Church Family is excited about your family growing and our family growing! We look forward to celebrating your child's baptism! Preparation for new parents or those new to the parish is held by appointment. Call Fr Brian.

Marriage: Congratulations on your engagement! Your Church Family wishes to help you fully prepare spiritually and walk with you into this lifetime commitment to each other. In order to allow sufficient time, couples must contact the parish office at least 6 months before the anticipated wedding date.

Confession/Reconciliation: Every Wednesday 4:00-5:00 pm; every Saturday 4:00-5:00 pm, every first Saturday after 8:00 am Mass, or anytime by simply asking or calling Fr Brian for appointment.

Visitation of the Sick: Please notify Father or the office upon admission of a family member into nursing homes or hospital. Often we rely upon word from the family about illnesses of a member. Please call.

RCIA: Interested in the Catholic Faith? The RCIA process is a "spiritual journey" that fully initiates those who are not baptized or who have baptism from another tradition and wish to join fully the Catholic Church. Classes are offered through the year culminating at Easter! Please call the office for details!

Membership in the Parish: Welcome to all new families or persons moving into our parish. We are glad that you are joining the parish community. We want to visit with you and help you settle into the church. Please register in the parish office as soon as possible.

Ministers of the Liturgy - December 30th & 31st

	Eucharistic Ministers	Lectors	Ushers	Servers	Rosary Leaders	Music Ministers
5:00 pm	Kathy Flood Mary Jo Rankin	Autumn Siler Christi Tivitt	C-Jim Siler* C-Danny O'Reilly S-Mark Rhodes S-Davye Duggins	Emily Claycomb Emma Foran	Karen Huddleston	Pippa
7:00 am	Anne O'Reilly Jean Oelze	Jim Heavrin	C-Greg Wethington* C-Leo Wheatley S-Michael Whitfill S-Mike Whitfill	Benjamin Anthony Madison Anthony	Crystal Greenwell	Pippa
10:00 am	Sandra Hinton Sally Hinton Rosa Hockenberry Lisa Kennedy	Lori Carwile Nora Dailey	C-Greg Hinton* C-Ethan O'Donoghue S-Ron O'Donoghue S-Chase Robbins	Parker Davis Tyler Davis	Laura Frank	P.J./Choir Cantor/Carlos
Radio Minister: Joe Hess Children's Liturgy: NO CHILDREN'S LITURGY						



Suddenly, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. After surprising and calling her by name, he said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). So many angel appearances in the Bible begin with those words! "Do not be afraid!" I always wonder why. I'd think an angel visit would be exciting fun, with me responding "Glad you came Angel, since you are here, jump in we've got a lot to do!" But I have never had an angel appear to me, so who am I? Angels have agendas and missions from God, so it would be my

arrogance to re-direct and put to help an angel of God! Angels are God's messengers, not my or any human's messengers. But again, what about that 'Do not be afraid' We all know there are different types of fear. For example, there is the 1) 'I am about to die-Fear', and the 2) 'This is so weird-I've never seen anything like this before-what do I do now Fear', and the 3) 'I am standing in front of a crowd and my mouth won't open-Fear', and even the 4) 'I am not living up to God's call for me-Fear', and even the 5) 'I am afraid this job is not going to end well-Fear'? All kinds of fear! So, let's ask what kind of fear in Mary Gabriel is softening or comforting by his greeting to her. Since she is 'full of grace' her fear wouldn't seem to be a timid personal fear. More likely it was simply the startling sight and experience of a dazzling angel appearance! Perhaps she gave Gabriel a ponderous look, with the expression on her face saying so humbly, "I am afraid I don't understand why you would appear to **'simple, little me'**. If her facial expression was one of wonderment and holy awe that would explain why later she puts into words her astonishment, "How can this be, as I have no relations with man?" She was saying to Gabriel, "I trust you Gabriel, and I trust God, but **all of this is beyond me**. "God and you have chosen me? This is happening to me?" Of course, her strong faith and attitude of perfect humility comes out when she gives her final answer saying "I am here to serve God. Let it be done to me accordingly" (Luke 1:38).

When I was in college I heard for the first time a performance of the hymn 'Gabriel's Message' by STING. I found it sublimely 'haunting' in a beautiful way. The first lines are 'The angel Gabriel from heaven came....His wings as drifted snow....His eyes as flame' If he visited me, I would fear the combination on Gabriel of 'drifting snow wings and flaming eyes'. Have you ever seen snow on fire? The singer Adele may be able to 'set fire to the rain', but what about setting snow on fire. One time I did! My brothers and I were splitting fire wood in the yard, and as I was leaning over the log-splitter, I looked up to see my brother trying to put out a layer of fire burning across the snow-topped yard. He was shoving more snow over it, after having spilled fuel by the fire he'd lit to keep warm! But I think just seeing an angel involves such a 'suspension of ordinary experience', that the event would cause anyone to **step back and shudder**. In fact, a review of angel appearances in the Bible shows that perhaps the most frequent first words out of the mouth of angels are "Be not afraid". Luke 1:13 has an angel saying "**Do not be afraid**, Zechariah..." Luke 2:10 has an angel saying to the shepherds in the fields, "**Do not be afraid!** For behold, I bring you good news of great joy". Acts 27:23-24 tells of an angel appearing to St Paul and saying, "**Do not be afraid...**" And at the resurrection scene in Matthew 28:2-5 says "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like **lightning** and his clothing was white as **snow (there's that snow and fire theme again!)** the angel said to the women "**Do not be afraid!** I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified....." So, every angel appearance begins with words of reassurance and comfort to introduce God's good message to the recipient and His good acts being set in motion. And Mary receives news of this divine plan and places herself completely in God's service through her obedient response! Mary is not afraid, Mary trusts her Savior. She says to

God, "I am your handmaiden – My life is yours."

And, "Perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18). The apostolic motto of St John Paul II was "Totus Tuus". He meant it to signify his consecration to the Blessed Mother (inspired by the life/writing of St Louis Marie De Montfort), and his desire to mirror the servant life and receptive disposition of Mary. As Mary gave her all to the Lord's Service, St John Paul II imitated her example of making a complete 'self-gift' of himself to God. From St De Montfort's consecration prayer we read, "All that I have is yours. O Mary, place within me your heart." Mary is The Model Disciple. Her humble lowliness and the willingness to **place herself last and least** is reflected in her response to Gabriel's message, "I am the handmaiden of the Lord." The word 'handmaiden' implied complete and total subservience to the direction of the master, like saying, "I'm always at your hands" or even "I am your hands". This accounts for Mary adding, "Let it be done according to your Word". Her attitude was, "God, You say it and I do it!"

Pope Francis recently addressed an audience (11-23-2017) of First order and Third order Franciscans in Rome, and he challenged them to always choose the Christian role of 'Minority'. We should not be afraid to be 'little', 'unknown' or 'poor'. Maybe Francis is only introducing a new word '**Minority**' for what we in church have always called the '**preferential option for the poor**' or the exercise of '**authority as service**'. Francis asks us "Are we Christians, models of 'giving to others, or just taking for ourselves?' Do we demand our own rights, or do we protect the dignity of others' rights? Do we collect and 'appropriate' for our own security, or do we trust and freely give away to another for their good?" Pope Francis went on to point out that our 'Hidden and Humble God' came to save us by appearing, born among poverty on the move, finding home to be wherever there was an open space! Are we open to this encounter and communion with the powerless servant child Jesus and his lowly mother Mary? Pope Francis describes this perfect discipleship of 'Mary following Jesus' as a '**spirit of 'non-appropriation' or 'minority', avoiding all superiority!** Like Mary, to follow Jesus, we humble ourselves, lowering our position to serve and assist others. Matthew 18:3 "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." **Jesus' birth reveals this pattern of 'chosen minority'. A humble child open to being held in the arms of another, trusting and depending on the care and communion of others. And Mary follows, exemplifying this lowly dependence and trust in her prayer, "I am the handmaiden of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your Word" (Luke 1:38).**

Here are some daily questions to consider in our prayer time!

Sunday: Did I receive a call or challenge in my prayer at Mass today? What remained with me after Mass?

Monday: Practice Patience! We Christians need to set the example of 'non-hurried' peaceful celebration of Jesus' birth!

Tuesday: Does Mary's humility move me to imitate her? How can I humble and lower myself to serve others better?

Wednesday: Am I preoccupied with any fears? Is my lack of trust in God's care to blame? Pray for greater trust.

Thursday: Count your blessings. Have I been grateful enough to others for their care and service?

Friday: Perform an act of penance and sacrifice for the good of someone else today.

Saturday: For what am I going to Mass this weekend for to thank God, and to ask of God's grace to accomplish in the new year?

Peace and Prayers, Fr Brian Johnson

PARISH NEWS & EVENTS



Are you or someone you know interested in knowing more about the Catholic faith or considering becoming a Catholic???

If yes, please contact Fr. Brian, Deacon Mike, Deacon Tony or Marie Rose at 756-2356 anytime throughout the year!

Youth Mark your Calendars:
Youth 2000 Conference March 9-11, 2008 Brescia University Campus

Parish Council & Finance Committee Reports:

At their last meeting, parish council discussed how best to communicate with the parish matters that are discussed at meetings. Please find multiple copies of their meeting minutes in addition to the detailed monthly financial reports posted on the bulletin boards. They will be always be available there or just take a copy with you.

Please take note of the new arrival of different titles on the CD rack. Check them out and listen to the great topics on apologetics, prayer and spirituality.

New Missalettes With Mass Prayers in Front Cover:

Please note that the missalettes now contain on the inside front cover the longer prayers we offer at Mass, similar to the old Mass cards that were in the pew holders. The company beginning to offer those prayers in a more accessible place conveniently replaces now those older cards that were showing so much wear and tear. But like a good Rosary, Bible or Prayer Book that shows tattered edges and wearing, it is a good sign of them being used so much! More Prayer, More Grace, More Good!

Good Samaritan Center is in need of diapers sizes 3, 4, 5, and 6. Please put in baskets at the doors of the church. Thank you.

Celebration

ANNIVERSARIES: Jerry & Marie Rose will be celebrating 40 years of marriage on December 31st.

BIRTHDAY: Carl Jarboe, Dec 25th, Donnie Vessels, Dec. 26th and Helen Fentress.

Parish Hall Keys: If you have rented the parish hall in the last few months and still have not returned the key, please return as soon as possible.

Funeral Meal Dishes: We are very grateful to all the ladies of the parish who provide food for the funeral meals. There are several dishes that have not been picked up. The parish hall is open Monday thru Friday from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm daily for you to pick up any dishes you may have left. Thank You!



First Reconciliation December 3, 2017

This Week at St. Romuald

Mon	9:00 am	Christmas Day Mass
Tues	10:00 am	Scripture Study
	1:00 pm	Mass at Extended Care
	4:00 pm	Rosary
Wed	4:00 pm	Confessions
	5:00 pm	Mass
Thur	9:30 am	Mass at Medco
	6:00 pm	Family Holy Hour
Fri	9:00 am	Mass
Sat	5:00 pm	5th Sunday Collection for St. Vincent de Paul
Sun	7/10 am	5th Sunday Collection for St. Vincent de Paul
Mon	9:00 am	New Year's Day Mass

UPCOMING:

Jan 7 11:00 am High School Religious Ed Classes

PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY

A Word from Pope Francis:

"Jesus bestowed upon the Church His healing power... The Church's mission to the sick is a response to Jesus' gift, for she knows that she must bring to the sick the Lord's own care, full of tenderness and compassion. Health care ministry will always be a necessary and fundamental task, to be carried out with renewed enthusiasm by all, from parish communities to the largest healthcare institutions. Doctors and nurses, priests, consecrated men and women, volunteers and families take part in this ecclesial mission. Jesus, healed the sick as a sign of the abundant life of the Kingdom, where every tear will be wiped away. How often Jesus sought out the sick, touched them and brought them the comfort of presence and healing. Jesus' heart is open to all and excludes no one." (Homily 12-11-2017)

February Men's Conference: Mark your calendars- February 17th at RiverPark Center, Owensboro 8:30-4:30. Speakers will be national catholic evangelists Christopher West and Doug Barry, to order tickets visit www.kycatholic.com or email msullivan@smsmlaw.com

Pray to end abortion: Join other Catholics and those from other faiths that gather each Saturday at 2nd and Market in Louisville from 7:00-8:00 am (EST) to pray for families entering the abortion clinic. Many children have been saved and mothers spared future grief by this prayer action and support. With God, all things are possible! Archbishop Kurtz is known to show up and pray with everyone too!

Abortion Update: Last week 47 women went into EMW Clinic for abortions at 2nd and Market Street in Louisville. **Please pray to end abortion.**

DRF Update for St. Romuald, Hardinsburg:

Thank you for your generosity toward our parish goal target: as of **12/12/2017**
St Romuald Parish Target Amount: \$12,069.67
Pledged for year: \$9,467
Paid Contributions so far: \$5,834.50

Need Marriage Help-Try Retrouvaille: The word 'Retrouvaille' (pronounced Retro- Vie' is a French word meaning rediscovery. The program offers tools needed to rediscover a loving marriage relationship. Thousands of couples headed for cold, unloving relationships or divorce have successfully overcome their marriage problems by attending the program. Next Program is January 12-14, 2018 5:00 pm at Maple Mount, St Joseph. Please call Joe Bland in Family Life Office to register, 270-683-1545.

Readings for the Week

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 [1-5, 9-14]
Tuesday: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Ps 31:3cd-4, 6, 8ab, 16bc, 17; Mt 10:17-22
Wednesday: 1 Jn 1:1-4; Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; Jn 20:1a, 2-8
Thursday: 1 Jn 1:5 — 2:2; Ps 124:2-5, 7cd-8; Mt 2:13-18
Friday: 1 Jn 2:3-11; Ps 96:1-3, 5b-6; Lk 2:22-35
Saturday: 1 Jn 2:12-17; Ps 96:7-10; Lk 2:36-40
Sunday: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3; Ps 128:1-5 or Ps 105:1-6, 8-9; Col 3:12-21 [12-17]

Knights of Columbus News

Raffle Drawing Winners: \$1500 Prize – **Barry Mingus**, \$1000 Prize- **George and Nancy Walz** and \$500 Prize - **Dana Bland**. The KofC Hardinsburg Council 2499 want to thank everyone for your support in this fund raiser.

5th Sunday Breakfast at St Anthony's on the 31st Dec after the 6:30 Mass. KofC members please let Pat O'Reilly know if you can help at this breakfast.

Basketball Slam Sweepstake Tickets:

Parishioners: the Knights of Columbus are selling Basketball Slam Sweepstake tickets. They are \$10.00 each (buy two and get the third one free). By purchasing two tickets you get a FREE ticket online! Go to www.basketball.com/free to redeem. Free tickets will be emailed to you. TEAMS: There are 24 teams, the ticket holder scratches off the box on front of the ticket to reveal their four teams for the entire tournament. Team codes are listed on back of the ticket. If any team(s) do not make it into the tournament, alternate teams will be assigned and posted on www.basketballsweeps.com by March 15, 2018. PRIZES; \$2600 Total Cash Prizes will be awarded. Prizes are based on the total cumulative score of each 4-team combination. HIGHEST and LOWEST 4-Team totals win prizes! In case of ties, prizes are combined and split. WINNERS are posted after the tournament and prizes are mailed out to the winners. It makes no difference on how many games your 4-teams play, or whether teams win or lose. Go to the website to check results starting April 4th. Ticket sale monies support the Knights of Columbus Disaster Relief Program. Deadline for ticket sales are **Mar 1st**. Contact me at 1-270-617-0754 for ticket purchases and more info. Pat O'Reilly, Grand Knight

PRAYER REQUESTS

We Pray For:

Gene Aldridge, Don Alexander, Paula Anthony, Baby Barr, Gene Bennett, Joe Bennett, Roy Bennett, Lorena Bland, Becky Brown, Mary Brown, Ava Bruner, Juanita Burch, Brian Butler, Billy Carwile, Jerry Carwile, Kayla Christian, Mallorie Collins, Debbie Critchelow, Rick Dale, Vonda Decker, Amanda Douthitt, Marolyn Dowell, Kenneth Dowell, Treyten Drake, Debbie Dubree, Davye Duggins, Sammy Duggins, Tijuana Duncan, Lottie Eauer, Tessa Farris, Carroll Ferguson, Ginny Flood, Cindy Getz, Jenny Ginn, Dorothy Greenwell, Bill Greenwood, Linda Greenwood, Susan Griffin, Janet Hallway, Kay Harris, JoAnn Henning, Lisa Henning, Joe Hess, Kitty Himmelhaver, Bill Hinton, Doug Hinton, Johnny Howard, Lori Howard, Rick Hurley, Merri Hurt, Braddock Inman, Robert Jackey, Virginia Jeffries, Mary Ann Johnson, Brenda Kelly, Louise Kennedy, Angie Lawrence, Parker Leslie, Annette Lucas, Junior Lucas, Margaret Lyons, Walter Manning, Bevan Michael Miller, Elaine Miller, Richard Miller, Blaise Mills, Sharon Morgan, Emma Nottingham, Don O'Donoghue, Joe Oelze, Patsy Oelze, Earl O'Reilly, Janet O'Reilly, Libby Osborne, Martha Payne, Brian Phillips, Peggy Phillips, Joe Priest, Robert Priest, Sandy Priest, Stella Prewitt, Jack Purcell, Kay Ray, Melvin Roach, Rita Roach, Shirley Robbins, Lincoln Roberts, Suzanne Rose, Carri Roth, Eric Severs, Rex Lee Sheets, Haley Sloan, Beth Smith, Steve Smith, Jerry Sosh, Virginia Stanford, Lucye Stupak, Pam Sturgeon, Phillip Sturgeon, Loretta Swink, Adalee Taul, Gina Thornsberry, Rufus Tivitt, Calla Stiith, Tessa Wadsworth, Fallon Wen, Greg Wethington, Raymond Wethington, Jimmy Whitworth, Mary Rita Whitworth, Carolyn Wilcheck, Kevin Wilcheck, Robert D. Wilson, Anne Wolfe, Sandra Zanone. **Serving in the Armed Forces:** Mandie Adams, Kevin Arnold, Fred Barham, Austin Brown, Timothy Cashen, Ryan Critchelow, Cody Garst, Parker Findlay, James Hanor, Christian Hansen, Jack Hayes, James Howard, Charles Kuhlman, Bradford O'Reilly, Jordan Pate, Liana Tindle, Chase Upchurch, Garrett Wadsworth



Kick the new year off right with a public reading of God's word on the Court House lawn! January 1-4, there will be teams to recite the Word of God, over 90 straight hours. Teams from different churches will take on a three hour watch shift (a total of 30 watches) to ensure the proclamation of the Bible starting with Genesis and ending with Revelation. If you are interested in taking a reading shift or being a 3hour team captain, please let Fr Brian know as we try to assemble a reading team.



AROUND AND ABOUT

Catholic Faith Information: Please check out and pick up any of the free pamphlets and booklets in the back of church about Catholic teaching and practices. They are excellent resources from the Knights of Columbus about our faith beliefs!

Called by Name Program: Every young Catholic man should consider all vocations, including whether or not God is calling him to priesthood. However, if not invited or encouraged to think about priesthood, it may never be considered. Many young men may have the burning question within of God calling them to priesthood, but they may be waiting for a confirmation from someone else, to nudge them into seriously pursuing God's priestly call for them. Do you know a faithful young man who may have a vocation to the priesthood? We believe that our future priests will come from our own parishes and schools, but we need your help to identify them. We're looking for high school students and older. Any man you recommend will receive good information from the Vocation Office about discerning his vocation, as well as invitations to discernment retreats and other events. Tell Fr Brian, Deacon Mike or Deacon Tony, to approach them or to invite the vocation director to reach out to them.

Al-Anon Meeting: Mondays 7:00 pm St Romuald Parish Hall. Come find support and understanding to recover a sense of serenity in your life.



Senior Group Christmas Celebration!





Sunday, Dec 24, 2017

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, CHRISTMAS EVE
Yes, yes, yes!**

2017 can seem like a litany of bad news. Floods, famine, and earthquakes. Conflicts, threats, and shootings. Headlines fixed our gaze on horror, relentless as it was real. Our personal lives may be just as anxious, logging illnesses, financial

upsets, imperiled relationships. While it's natural to recall difficult events in blazing detail, it takes more effort to compose a litany of good news that's just as true. Give yourself a present that will last all year. Begin a grace box, jotting down something wonderful you hear, see, or receive every day. You'll have 365 reasons to be merry next year!

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 *Samuel* 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; *Romans* 16:25-27; *Luke* 1:26-38 (11). "And coming to her, the angel said, 'Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.'"

Monday, Dec 25, 2017

**SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)
Word is spreading!**

Words are powerful things. They encourage love, underscore hate, and kindle fear. Words create reality because what we speak does take on flesh and live with us. Have you not wished for the chance to say what was left unsaid, in a moment that is gone forever? When God spoke a word into being in Genesis, the whole world resulted. Later, God spoke Divinity into Mary's body and the world was saved from itself. This Christmas, give voice to your heart and say what needs to be said to those you love.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Vigil: Isaiah* 62:1-5; *Acts* 13:16-17, 22-25; *Matthew* 1:1-25 (13); *Night: Isaiah* 9:1-6; *Titus* 2:11-14; *Luke* 2:1-14 (14); *Dawn: Isaiah* 62:11-12; *Titus* 3:4-7; *Luke* 2:15-20 (15); *Day: Isaiah* 52:7-10; *Hebrews* 1:1-6; *John* 1:1-18 (16). "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory."

Tuesday, Dec 26, 2017

**FEAST OF STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR
Follow Stephen's lead**

Some things, we feel sure, are impossible to forgive. But then we reluctantly recall that Jesus forgave his crucifiers, and Stephen, the first martyr of the church, forgave his murders in faithful imitation of his Lord. Believe it or not, today Stephen (d. 35) is known as the patron saint of masons and bricklayers—a strange role for a man who was stoned to death! Yet, why not? We are all pledged to bless those who curse us. What better way to do that than to take up the cause of your old enemy? Pray for your persecutors today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts* 6:8-10; 7:54-59; *Matthew* 10:17-22 (696). "You will be dragged before governors and kings because of me."

Wednesday, Dec 27, 2017

**FEAST OF JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST
Time to see the light**

Today is a day to celebrate the unique perspective on Jesus the writings of John have to offer. In particular, light and darkness. John sees Jesus as the light of the world, and so it is customary to light candles on this day. As the evening falls today, light a candle and say a favorite prayer in honor of the One who said, "I have come as light into the world" (*John* 12:46).

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 *John* 1:1-4; *John* 20:1a, 2-8 (697). "The life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it."

Thursday, Dec 28, 2017

**FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS
Stand up for the least of these**

No sooner do we celebrate the birth of one baby when the Bible recalls the slaughter of other babies. Like the infant Moses before him, the Messiah escapes to Egypt with his family. Let's not look the other way as this reading comes up each year, but let it be a reminder: Children still are victimized by adults who abuse their power—personally, professionally, or politically. Let's change that. What can you do today to be an advocate for children? Check out .org for some ideas.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 *John* 1:5—2:2; *Matthew* 2:13-18 (698). "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt."

Friday, Dec 29, 2017

**MEMORIAL OF THOMAS BECKET, BISHOP, MARTYR
Get your priorities straight**

In the 12th century, Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, stood firm against King Henry II in the latter's efforts to establish himself as absolute ruler over everything in his kingdom, including the church. Becket's refusal to submit to the king's ultimate authority cost him his life. The stakes are not always that high in the tensions between church and state, but people of faith must prepare themselves for difficult choices. Be clear about which of your loyalties are temporal—finite and fleeting—and which are eternal—everlasting and true for all time.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 *John* 2:3-11; *Luke* 2:22-35 (202). "This child is destined to be a sign that will be opposed so the inner thoughts of many will be revealed."

Saturday, Dec 30, 2017

SIXTH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

We all have a role to play

Anna is one of nine female prophets noted in the Bible. She was also a widow who spent most of her life in the work of worship and proclamation at the temple. This was unusual, because in Hebrew tradition, widows were more often looked upon as problems: Who would marry them, support their children, and feed them? In the early church, the fortunes of widows were reversed. The holy office of widows became an honored station in life. Those formally consecrated as widows became ministers of charity, freed from accountability to men as they used their own wealth, traveled, and played a vital public role in the community. How might your station in life be "consecrated"?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 *John* 2:12-17; *Luke* 2:36-40 (203). "There was also a prophet, Anna, who never left the temple."

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