



IMMACULATE HEART OF *M*ARY

Parish Mission + Mision Parroquial

*With Mary, we seek to know Christ better and to make him better known through our words and actions.
Con María, deseamos conocer mejor a Cristo y darlo a conocer por medio de nuestras acciones y palabras.*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DECEMBER 20, 2020



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Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 am-3:00 pm

Bishop of the Diocese of Oakland

The Most Rev. Michael C. Barber, SJ

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Mon-Fri Office Hours: 9 AM - 3 PM

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Transitional Deacon

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George Muggee

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The Pastor's Page/Página del Pastor

Dear families of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

King David wished that the ark of God might have a more permanent home. David may have envisioned something like the cedar palace where he resided. God had in mind something more: a throne where David's descendants would rule for ever, a kingdom where Jews and Gentiles alike would be welcome.

Mary's prayerful nature led to an even more disturbing message. She would conceive and bear a Son though she was not yet married. "How can this come about?" Mary wondered. **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,"** she was told (Luke 1:35).

Mary's acceptance of this difficult challenge ushered in this, the final age of God's reign. What was once a secret known only by chosen people like King David and his descendants must now be made clear to all so that, as Saint Paul wrote to the Romans, we can be brought to the **"obedience of faith" "according to the command of the eternal God"** (Romans 16:26).

Do we accept the challenge? Are we prepared to receive Jesus into the world and our lives. Let us spend this fourth Sunday of Advent preparing the way of the Lord and letting the Holy Spirit come upon us this Christmas.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us.

Father Quang

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Queridas familias del Inmaculado Corazón de María,

El rey David deseaba que el Arca de Dios tuviera un hogar más permanente. David podría haberse imaginado algo así como el palacio de cedro donde residía. Dios tenía en mente algo más: un trono donde los descendientes de David gobernarían para siempre, un reino donde judíos y gentiles serían bien recibidos por igual.

La actitud devota de María llevó a un mensaje aún más inquietante. Concebiría y daría a luz un hijo a pesar de que aún no estaba casada. "¿Cómo podrá ser esto?", preguntó María, **"El Espíritu Santo descenderá sobre ti", le contestó el Angel** (Lucas 1:35).

La aceptación de María de este difícil desafío marcó el comienzo de esta, la era final del Reino de Dios. Lo que antes era un secreto conocido solo por el pueblo elegido como el Rey David y sus descendientes, ahora debe quedar claro a todos para que, como escribió San Pablo a los romanos, podamos llegar a la **"obediencia de la fe", "en cumplimiento del designio eterno de Dios"** (Romanos 16:26). ¿Aceptamos el desafío? ¿Estamos preparados para recibir a Jesús en el mundo y en nuestras vidas. Pasemos este cuarto domingo de Adviento preparando el camino del Señor y dejando que el Espíritu Santo venga sobre nosotros esta Navidad.

Inmaculado Corazon de María, ruega por nosotros.

Padre Quang

Weekday Masses/Misas Diarias

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 8:00AM (English) - Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday: 8:00AM (Bilingual)

Saturday Vigil Mass

5:00PM (English)

Sunday Mass/Domingo Misa

7:30AM (English) - 9:00AM (English) - 10:45AM (Español) - 12:30PM (English) - 2:00PM (Español)

5:00PM -Traditional Roman Rite (Latin)

Confessions

Tuesdays 6:00PM - 7:00PM — Saturdays 3:30PM - 4:30PM

Prayers & Weekly Scriptures/Oraciones y Lecturas de la Semana

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK INTENCIONES PARA MISAS DE LA SEMANA

SAT. DEC. 19TH

8:00AM + Perfacto Pascasio
Banuelos de Zasati Family

SUN. DEC. 20TH

9:00AM + Jorge Viroy, Jr.
+ Angelita and Carol Morris
+ Charlene Vera
Immaculate Heart of Mary
10:45AM + Ernestina Marin
+ Maria del Rosario Marquez
+ Emerlinda and Alfrdo Gomez
Susana Ordaz - Birthday
12:30PM + Antero Silveira
+ Joan Mayjoffo
5:00 PM Fred and Christopher Ellenberger
Special intention

MON. DEC. 21ST

8:00AM Martin Ochoa-Aragon – Birthday
+ Ana Franco

TUE. DEC. 22ND

8:00AM Banuelos de Zesati Family
+ Ernesto Martinez

WED. DEC. 23RD

8:00AM + Victorio Hans
+ Toni Fulscher

THU. DEC. 24TH

8:00AM + Shane Rojo
+ Toni Fulscher
3:00PM Special Intentions of Parishioners
5:00PM Special Intentions of Parishioners
7:00PM Special Intentions of Parishioners
9:00PM Special Intentions of Parishioners

FRI. DEC. 25TH

9:00AM Special Intentions of Parishioners
10:45AM Special Intentions of Parishioners
12:30PM Special Intentions of Parishioners
5:00PM Special Intentions of Parishioners



Sick Relatives & Friends Parientes y Amigos Enfermos

Ryan McCloud, Ramon Antonio Toledo, Kay Aviani, Mia Eternal, Rosa Velasquez, Giselle Honore, Gina Lilly, Mary Spinelli, Bev Casey, Stanley Etienne, Mary McCann, Jacqueline Reed, Frances Brecht, Sean Bowen, Susan Rossillon, Kathleen Hernandez, Corey Amesquita, Barbara Snider, Gloria Crabaugh, Deacon Ron Horan, Barbara Crandell, Ryan Adler, Anita and Ed Camera, Edu Sunga, Richard Grimes, Kim Wiley, Lois Valley
**** Mary Jeanne and Dave Brink, Debbie Morris, Debbie Juarez, Therese Brantome, Eleanor Janson, Maria Luisa Guisar Oseguera, Maria Guadalupe Espindola, Sotico Amboy, Connie Madrid, Chris Heuer, Louise Delia, Mickey Eitner, Ida Gutierrez, Elisa Heitzmann, Troy Moncada, Marge and Larry Cragle, Romano Marchetti, James Halvorsen, Sandy Heinisch, Juanita Cruz, Rose Marie and Michael De Marzo, Greg Fasula, Arlie Blackshear, Mary and Larry Ratto, Michael Lopez, Peggy Scalise, Beth Camola, Catalina and Eulogio Oseguera, Chris Kamola, Jose Velez, Michelle Young, Juan and Patricia Galarza, Elena Sanchez, Jan Cooper, Kate Friend, Margarita Orosco, Sandy Gamble, Dolores McLean, Cecille Cansino, Joe Stiglich, Lana Terry, Juanita Young, Art Silverglid, Chipa Moore, Lori Crommie-Carrillo, Bob Rushworth, Elsie Martindale, Nicole and Solangue Patino-Paroni, Amoni and Ike Afodu, Jim Pulliman, Lyndsey Burrow, Kandy Aldana Selby, Michelle BrewsterRosalia Santillan, Billy Silva, Larry Morales, Mary Lou Rodriguez, Chita Moore, Richard and Rita Nahm, Teresa Burke, Mary Franchetto.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK LECTURAS DE LA SEMANA

Monday: 197: Sg 2:8-14 Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, Lk 1:39-445
Tuesday: 198: 1 Sm 1:24-28 (Ps) 1 Sm 2:1, Lk 1:46-56
Wednesday: 199: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps 25:4bc-5ab, Lk 1:57-66
Thursday: 200: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29 Lk 1:67-79
Vigil: 13: Is 62:1-5 Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29 Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 Mt 1:18-25
Night: 14: Is 9:1-6 Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13 Ti 2:11-14 Lk 2:1-14
Friday: 16: Is 52:7-10 Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 Heb 1:1-6 Jn 1:1-18
Saturday: 696: Acts 6:8-10; 7-54-59 Ps 31:3cd-4, 6-8b, 16bc, 17 Mt 10:17-22
Sunday: 17: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 Ps 128:1-5 Col 3:12-21 Lk 2:22-40

Lectura

Primera lectura

2 Sam 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

Tan pronto como el rey David se instaló en su palacio y el Señor le concedió descansar de todos los enemigos que lo rodeaban, el rey dijo al profeta Natán: “¿Te has dado cuenta de que yo vivo en una mansión de cedro, mientras el arca de Dios sigue alojada en una tienda de campaña?” Natán le respondió: “Anda y haz todo lo que te dicte el corazón, porque el Señor está contigo”. Aquella misma noche habló el Señor a Natán y le dijo: “Ve y dile a mi siervo David que el Señor le manda decir esto: ‘¿Piensas que vas a ser tú el que me construya una casa, para que yo habite en ella? Yo te saqué de los apriscos y de andar tras las ovejas, para que fueras el jefe de mi pueblo, Israel. Yo estaré contigo en todo lo que emprendas, acabaré con tus enemigos y te haré tan famoso como los hombres más famosos de la tierra.

Le asignaré un lugar a mi pueblo, Israel; lo plantaré allí para que habite en su propia tierra. Vivirá tranquilo y sus enemigos ya no lo oprimirán más, como lo han venido haciendo desde los tiempos en que establecí jueces para gobernar a mi pueblo, Israel. Y a ti, David, te haré descansar de todos tus enemigos. Además, yo, el Señor, te hago saber que te daré una dinastía; y cuando tus días se hayan cumplido y descanses para siempre con tus padres, engrandeceré a tu hijo, sangre de tu sangre, y consolidaré su reino. Yo seré para él un padre y él será para mí un hijo. Tu casa y tu reino permanecerán para siempre ante mí, y tu trono será estable eternamente’ ”.

Salmo Responsorial

Sal 88: 2-3. 4-5. 27 y 29

“Cantaré eternamente las misericordias del Señor.
Cantaré eternamente las misericordias del Señor”

Segunda Lectura

Rom 16, 15-27

Hermanos: A aquel que puede darles fuerzas para cumplir el Evangelio que yo he proclamado, predicando a Cristo, conforme a la revelación del misterio, mantenido en secreto durante siglos, y que ahora, en cumplimiento del designio eterno de Dios, ha quedado manifestado por las Sagradas Escrituras, para atraer a todas las naciones a la obediencia de la fe, al Dios único, infinitamente sabio, démosle gloria, por Jesucristo, para siempre. Amén.

Evangelio

Lc 1: 26-38

En aquel tiempo, el ángel Gabriel fue enviado por Dios a una ciudad de Galilea, llamada Nazaret, a una virgen desposada con un varón de la estirpe de David, llamado José. La virgen se llamaba María.

Entró el ángel a donde ella estaba y le dijo: “Alégrate, llena de gracia, el Señor está contigo”. Al oír estas palabras, ella se preocupó mucho y se preguntaba qué querría decir semejante saludo.

El ángel le dijo: “No temas, María, porque has hallado gracia ante Dios. Vas a concebir y a dar a luz un hijo y le pondrás por nombre Jesús. Él será grande y será llamado Hijo del Altísimo; el Señor Dios le dará el trono de David, su padre, y él reinará sobre la casa de Jacob por los siglos y su reinado no tendrá fin”.

María le dijo entonces al ángel: “¿Cómo podrá ser esto, puesto que yo permanezco virgen?” El ángel le

contestó: “El Espíritu Santo descenderá sobre ti y el poder del Altísimo te cubrirá con su sombra. Por eso, el Santo, que va a nacer de ti, será llamado Hijo de Dios. Ahí tienes a tu parienta Isabel, que a pesar de su vejez, ha concebido un hijo y ya va en el sexto mes la que llamaban estéril, porque no hay nada imposible para Dios”. María contestó: “Yo soy la esclava del Señor; cúmplase en mí lo que me has dicho”. Y el ángel se retiró de su presencia.



Credo de Nicea

Creo en un solo Dios, Padre todopoderoso, Creador del cielo y de la tierra, de todo lo visible y lo invisible.

Creo en un solo Señor, Jesucristo, Hijo único de Dios, nacido del Padre antes de todos los siglos: Dios de Dios, Luz de Luz, Dios verdadero de Dios verdadero, engendrado, no credo, de la misma naturaleza del Padre, por quien todo fue hecho; que por nosotros, los hombres, y para nuestra salvación bajó del cielo, **y por obra del Espíritu Santo se encarnó de María, la Virgen, y se hizo hombre**; y por nuestra causa fue crucificado en tiempos de Poncio Pilato, padeció al tercer día, según las Escrituras, y subió al cielo, y está sentado a la derecha del Padre; y de nuevo vendrá con gloria. Para juzgar a vivos y muertos, y su reino no tendrá fin. Creo en el Espíritu Santo, Señor dador de vida, que procede del Padre y del Hijo, que con el Padre y el Hijo recibe una misma adoración y Gloria, y que hablo por los profetas.

Creo en una iglesia, que es santa, católica y apostólica. Confieso que hay un solo bautismo para el perdón de los pecados. Espero la resurrección de los muertos y la vida futura del mundo. Amen.

Readings

First Reading

2 Sm 7:15, 8b-12, 14a, 16

When King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!" Nathan answered the king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you." But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?' " "It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever."

Reponsorial Psalm

Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

"Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord"

Second Reading

Rom 16:25-27

Brothers and sisters:
To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel

Lk 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Then the angel departed from her.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Christmas Prayer

Glory to God in the highest!

Oración de Navidad

! ¡Gloria a Dios en las alturas!

My precious Lord, Jesus,
I adore You with profound love and
rejoice in the celebration of Your birth.
Your love for us is unfathomable,
it is glorious, transforming,
awe-inspiring, and deeply personal.
You chose to come and dwell among us,
being born into poverty,
rejection and humility.
Yet Your mother knew whom she bore,
Her heart was filled with the tenderest
love
as she adored her Child and her God.
Help me, dear Lord.
to come to love You with the heart of Your
mother.
Invite me to adore You with St. Joseph
and the poor shepherds.
Reveal to me the glorious power of Your
birth
and change my life on account of this
perfect gift of Yourself.
I love You, dear Lord Jesus.
Help me to love You with all my heart.
Newborn Savior of the World,
I trust in You.
Mother Mary and St. Joseph,
Pray for me and for all.
Amen.

Mi apreciado Señor Jesús,
adoro con profundo amor y me regocijo
en la celebración de Tu nacimiento.
Tu amor por nosotros es insondable,
es glorioso transformante
impresionante, y
profundamente personal.
Decidiste venir a vivir entre nosotros
nacer en la pobreza, el rechazo y la
humildad.
Sin embargo, tu madre sabía a quién
daría a luz, su corazón se llenó del más
tierno amor mientras adoraba a su Hijo
y a su Dios.
Ayúdame, amado Señor,
para llegar a amarte con el corazón
de tu madre.
Que atienda a tu presencia y te adore con
San José y los pobres pastores.
Muéstrame el glorioso poder de tu
nacimiento y cambia mi vida por el regalo
perfecto de ti mismo.
Te amo, amado Señor Jesús.
Ayúdame a amarte con todo mi corazón.
Salvador recién nacido en el mundo,
Confío en ti.
María Madre nuestra y San José,
Rueguen por mí y por todos nosotros.
Amén.O

Oracion San Miguel

San Miguel Arcángel,
defiéndenos en la batalla.
Sé nuestro amparo contra la per-
versidad y asechanzas del demonio.
Reprímale Dios,
pedimos suplicantes,
y tú Príncipe de la Milicia
Celestial,
con el divino poder de Dios,
arroja al infierno a Satanás
y a todos los espíritus malignos
que andan dispersos
por el mundo
para la perdición de las almas.
Amén.



Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle,
be our protection
against the wickedness and
snares of the devil.
May God
rebuke him we humbly pray;
and do thou, O Prince of the Heav-
enly host,
by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan
and all the evil spirits
who prowl about the world seeking
the ruin of souls.
Amen

December 20, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16 | Rom 16:25-27 | Lk 1:26-38

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

During Advent, we await the One who is perfect grace, light, and joy. The Christ Child's arrival during a time when darkness has been increasing each day, and our anticipation of that arrival, emphasize his salvific role. For if even the smallest light is a glimmer of hope in the night, how much more is Christ's perfect and all-consuming light a life-saving flare in the darkness of sin and death. As we hear the angel Gabriel say of Christ, in his visitation to Mary: "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High ... and of his kingdom there will be no end." Emmanuel, God with us, is the reason for our hope, and the reason for our joy.

GO EVANGELIZE | PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

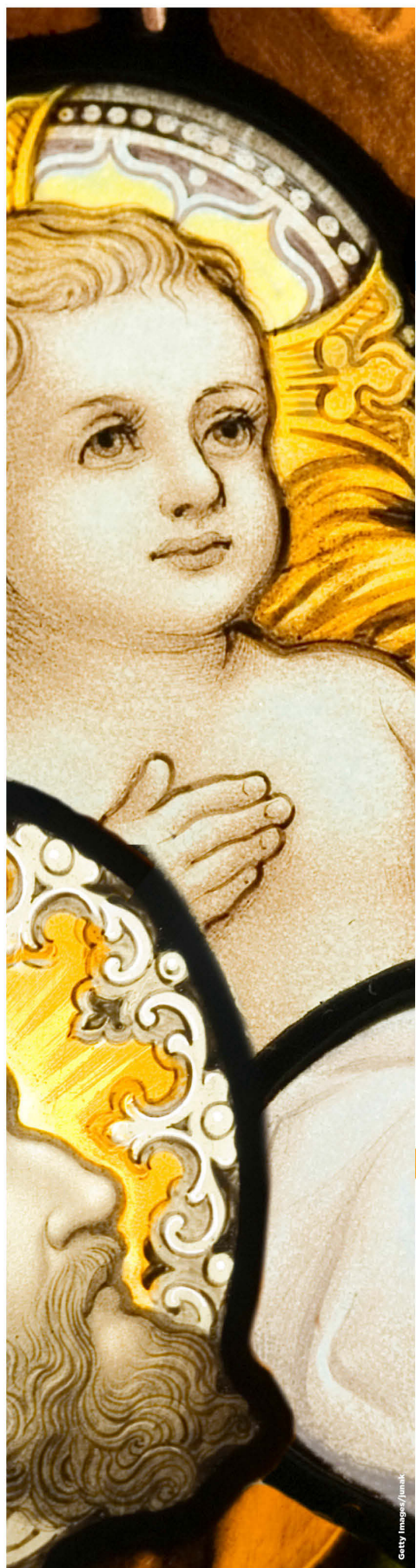
I don't know about you, but despite my best intentions, I have been known to get a little swallowed up in the commercialism of Christmas. But this last week of Advent feels like a chance to reorder my mind and heart. One way to do this is by focusing on the "O Antiphons," prayed during the Church's evening prayer from December 17-23. Each antiphon begins with the word "O," and is followed by a title for the Messiah, found in Scripture, and a petition for him to come and save his people. Although this may sound overly complicated, you most likely know of these without realizing it: they have been transposed into the verses of the hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Today's first reading speaks of David, who thought he could build a place for God to dwell, but he can't. Instead, for us, whom God created and fashioned in his own image, God created a dwelling for his Son, so that he might enter into our human history as one of us; and in doing so, dwell among us and within us forever. Come, Lord Jesus.

INVITE When lighting the final candle on your Advent wreath, invite your family to help you make the prayer interactive. Focus on the lesser-known verses of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, such as the one below – it is an ancient prayer still very relevant today.

O King of the Nations

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of humankind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,
And be for us our King of Peace.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*



Information/Información

St. Vincent de Paul for Friday's Food Pantry

For the weekend of December 27, 2020, please bring canned tomatoes. THANK YOU!

Para el fin de semana del 27 de diciembre, 2020, por favor traigan tomates enlatados. GRACIAS!!!

SCHEDULE OF SECOND COLLECTIONS

January 3, 2021 - Facility Improvement
January 10, 2021 - Seminary Collection

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FECHAS DE SEGUNDAS COLECTAS

3 de enero, 2021 - Fondo de Mejoramiento
de las Instalaciones
10 de enero 2021 - Colecta para el Seminario

Spirituality of The Lord of the Rings

In early 2021, we are going to offer a class on the Spirituality of The Lord of the Rings, the classic work of JRR Tolkien. In 1999, readers named it one of the best books of the millennium. The BBC named it one of the most inspiring books ever written! If it's been a while since you read it, dust it off and dig in. If you have never read it, get it and get ready for an adventure! The class will be based on the book not the films. More information will be coming, so start reading and keep an eye on the bulletin!

Donate Your Car or Any Vehicle!



We will pick up ANY vehicle within 48 hours in all 50 States. Free towing. 100% tax deductible. Donations used to fund the many charitable activities of the Knights of Columbus Brentwood Council #7467. Call: 925-529-2019

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FAITH DIRECT

"People rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart."
- 1 Chronicles 29:9

Our to-do lists can get lengthy during this season, but Faith Direct's eGiving program will give you one less thing to remember each week.

No more envelopes to find before you go to Mass, no more scrambling thru your purse for your donation.

Visit www.faithdirect.net and use our church code: **CA752.**

Thank you for your continued support.

We now have a code for the website **FORMED.ORG** - Simply open a web browser and type in: www.formed.org. - Go to the lower right hand side and click on "Register" and follow the prompts. Our IHM code is: **CM7TFZ**

This is a dynamic website that has all things Catholic, on demand, all the time! Check it out!!!

Ministry Meetings/Reuniones de Ministerios

Confessions / Confesiones

Tuesday/Martes: 6:00 - 7:00PM
Saturday/Sabado: 3:30 - 4:30PM
+

Devotions/Devociones

Monday to Friday/Lunes a Viernes
7:30AM

Holy Rosary/Santo Rosario

Mother of Perpetual Help Novena Novena Madre del Perpetuo Socorro

Wednesday/Miércoles
8:30AM

+

Divine Mercy Chaplet Novena Coronilla a la Divina Misericordia

Friday/Viernes
8:30AM

Anointing of the Sick Unción de los Enfermos

Home Communion Comunión a los Enfermos

Contact a priest / llame a un sacerdote

+

Marriage/Matrimonios

Requires at least six month preparation
Requiere por lo menos 6 meses de preparación

Baptism/Bautismos

634-4154

+

Funerals/Funerales

Holy Cross Catholic Funeral Services
Servicios de Funerales Católicos
757-0658

The Story of the Nativity of the Lord

On this day, the Church focuses especially on the newborn Child, God become human, who embodies for us all the hope and peace we seek. We need no other special saint today to lead us to Christ in the manger, although his mother Mary and Joseph, caring for his foster-son, help round out the scene. But if we were to select a patron for today, perhaps it might be appropriate for us to imagine an anonymous shepherd, summoned to the birthplace by a wondrous and even disturbing vision in the night, a summons from an angelic choir, promising peace and goodwill. A shepherd willing to seek out something that might just be too unbelievable to chase after, and yet compelling enough to leave behind the flocks in the field and search for a mystery.

On the day of the Lord's birth, let's let an unnamed, "non-celebrity" at the edge of the crowd model for us the way to discover Christ in our own hearts—somewhere between skepticism and wonder, between mystery and faith. And like Mary and the shepherds, let's treasure that discovery in our hearts.

Reflection

The precise dating in the Scripture readings for today sounds like a textbook on creationism. If we focus on the time frame, however, we miss the point. It lays out the story of a love affair: creation, the deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, the rise of Israel under David. It climaxes with the birth of Jesus. Some scholars insist that from the beginning God intended to enter the world as one of us, the beloved people. Praise God

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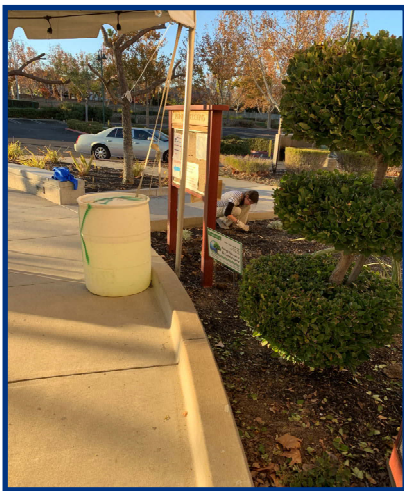


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