



The Catholic Community of Divine Savior

Family Faith Focus

Volume 8, Issue 21

December 22, 2019

Dates to Remember

- December 22: Fourth Sunday of Advent — **Children's Liturgy of the Word, 10:30 AM Mass**
- December 24: Christmas Eve — Carols at 3:00 PM Family Mass at 3:30 PM
- December 25: The Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord — Masses at 8:00 & 10:30 AM
- December 29: Feast of the Holy Family

Mary Shows Us the Way

Mary is our model of how to prepare for Christmas. The Word comes in the celebration of Christmas to knock once again at the heart of every Christian. Each of us is called to respond, like Mary, with a personal and sincere "yes," placing oneself fully at the disposal of God and of his mercy, of his love. How many times Jesus comes into our lives, and how many times he sends us an angel, and how many times we don't notice because we are so taken, immersed in our own thoughts, in our own affairs and even, in these days, in our Christmas preparations, so as not to notice him who comes and knocks at the door of our hearts, asking for acceptance, asking for a "yes" like Mary's?

—Pope Francis

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Matthew 1: 18-24

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.

For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Christmas Blessings

Dear FCFF Families,

May Jesus, our Divine Savior, be the center and focus of your Christmas celebration, reminding you of the wonder and awe of God's love made present in the birth of His Son.

We look forward to your participation in the beautiful liturgies of this holy season as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child who came to bring God's love and salvation to all people.

Know that you have our prayers and best wishes for a Blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with hope and happiness. God bless you!

Father Rich LoBianco, Ms. Mary Coban, and all of our Catechists —

Mrs. Linda Vogt, Ms. Karen Jarosz, Ms. Christina Mikucki, Mrs. Fiona Tanny,
Mrs. Nicole Ludston, Ms. Joan Sipiora, Mrs. Theresa Magnelli, Mr. Jim Bielanski
Mrs. Domenica Duszynski, Mrs. Sharon Kumiega



Sunday Gospel Connection: December 22, 2019

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle A

Matthew 1: 18-24

Gospel Background: Finally, on this the Fourth Sunday of Advent, our Gospel Reading permits us to begin our contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation we celebrate at Christmas: "Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about" (Matthew 1:18).

The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus from Joseph's perspective. Today's Gospel passage is the second movement in this story. In the preceding verses of the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel, the Evangelist has listed the genealogy of Jesus, tracing his lineage through King David to Abraham. In the chapter to follow, Matthew tells of the visit from the Magi, the Holy Family's flight into Egypt, and Herod's massacre of the infants in Bethlehem. (The other stories which we associate with Christmas, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the angel and the shepherds, are found in the Gospel of Luke).



We must not gloss over too quickly the difficult circumstances described in today's Gospel. The way that Joseph and Mary face these circumstances tells us much about these holy people and their faith in God. Joseph and Mary are betrothed to be married. This is sometimes described as an engagement period, but it is more than that. Betrothal in first century Jewish culture was in fact the first part of the marriage contract. A breach of this contract was considered adultery. Mary is found to be with child. If adultery is proven, the punishment might be death. Joseph has rights under Mosaic law, but chooses to act discreetly in his plans to break the marriage contract, so as to protect Mary. Then God intervenes.

The message of the angel of the Lord given to Joseph in his dream tells us much about the child that Mary bears and his role in God's plan. He is conceived by the Holy Spirit. His name will be Jesus, which in the Hebrew means "Yahweh saves." He will be the fulfillment of the prophecy heard in today's first reading from Isaiah: ". . . The virgin shall be with child . . . and shall name him Emmanuel [God with us]."

Joseph does as the angel of the Lord directs. He takes Mary to be his wife and accepts the child in her womb as his own. Joseph and Mary are both cooperative with God's plan. They are both models for us of what it means to be faithful servants of God.

Family Connection: Joseph and Mary are our models for family life and for service of God. Even when the circumstances seemed unclear, Joseph trusted God. Healthy family life is built upon trust, trust in God and trust of one another.

Spend some time talking as a family about the importance of trust in your family life, including the ways in which the children trust the adults in the family as well as the ways in which the adults trust the children. Then read today's Gospel. Talk about Joseph's trust of God and reflect together on how your family trusts in God.

Pray together that your family life will be built on trust, as was the family life of Joseph and Mary. Pray and sing together an Advent song, such as "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

For more information and Sunday Connection resources visit:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/fourth-sunday-of-advent-cycle-a-sunday-connection>

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A JESUIT MINISTRY

The Nativity of the Lord

Luke 2: 1-14

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled.

This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear.

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Christmas Season Mass Schedule



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24

CHRISTMAS EVE

3:00 PM Christmas Carols

3:30 PM Family Liturgy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Liturgies at 8:00 & 10:30 AM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

Vigil Liturgy

Saturday, December 28, 4:00 PM

Sunday Liturgies at
at 8:00 & 10:30 AM

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

4:00 PM Vigil Liturgy

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1

NEW YEAR'S DAY SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

9:00 AM Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

Vigil Liturgy— Saturday, January 4, 4:00 PM

Sunday Liturgies at
8:00 & 10:30 AM

Sunday Gospel Connection: December 25, 2019

The Nativity of the Lord

Luke 2: 1-14

Gospel Background: During the Christmas season, our liturgy invites us to consider the birth of the Lord from many vantage points. As we begin this season, it is useful to remember that the stories of Jesus' birth and childhood are found in only two of our Gospels, Matthew and Luke. Throughout this season, we will hear stories from both Gospels. Those Gospels tell different but complementary stories about Jesus' birth, highlighting items of theological importance about the Incarnation and the salvation that Jesus brings.



On this day, the Feast of Christmas, we are given the details of Christ's birth as found in the Gospel of Luke. Here we learn about the census that brings Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born. We also hear about the angel's announcement of this good news to the shepherds. In these details, we find two of Luke's particular concerns: (1) to locate the coming of Christ in the wider framework of salvation history as good news for all people, Gentiles and Jews, and (2) to show the Lord's favor upon the poor and lowly.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is born as one of the poor. Laid in a manger in a stable, because there was no room at the inn, he comes into the world through obscure and surprising means. Yet, as the angel proclaims this good news to the shepherds, this infant is announced as the Messiah and Lord. In the song of the angels, all are invited to give glory to God for this miraculous birth, in which God comes to share our humanity.

The angels sing that Jesus' coming brings peace. Yet there is little in the details of this Gospel that gives evidence of peace. Jesus is born as a traveler away from home, born in a stable in a crowded city under the occupation of foreigners. The appearance of the angel to the shepherds frightens them. When the angels proclaim Jesus' birth as the harbinger of "peace on earth," the evangelist Luke clearly wants us to take the long view. The shepherds are invited to claim a faith that will enable them to see this infant as a sign God's promise of a messiah. It is through such faith that one finds the peace of which the angels sing.

Family Connection: Christmas has come to be associated as a season of peace. This association and our familiarity with the Christmas story sometimes make us forget about the difficult circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth. As a family, gather around your nativity and carefully read Luke's story of Jesus' birth, Luke 2:1-14. Recall that the manger you see in the nativity set is not in a house, but a stable. The animals you see might have been noisy and may even have smelled unpleasant. Joseph and Mary were far from home in a city that was crowded and under the occupation of foreigners. The shepherds may have been unclean from their time in the fields. Invite each family member to say one thing about the Christmas story that makes an impression upon them.

Conclude by praying together for people in today's world who may experience circumstances like those found in the story of Jesus' birth. Pray for those who are far from home, those who live in fear, those who live in need. Sing together one or more Christmas hymns, such as "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" or "Angels We Have Heard on High."

For more information and Sunday Connection resources visit:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/nativity-of-the-lord-christmas-midnight-mass>

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Be with us

Emmanuel,
soon we will celebrate your birth,
the day God came crying and laughing,
a child in our midst.
On this day we celebrate that you are with us,
you have always been with us,
and you want all people to be with you.
Help us entrust our lives to you, to belong
to you alone.

Be with us as we answer your call to be
humble and holy.
Keep us as your brothers and sisters,
as children of your Father,
no matter how often we step away from you.
Stay always by our side
so that we will be with you forever in
your kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 22, 2019

Fulfillment



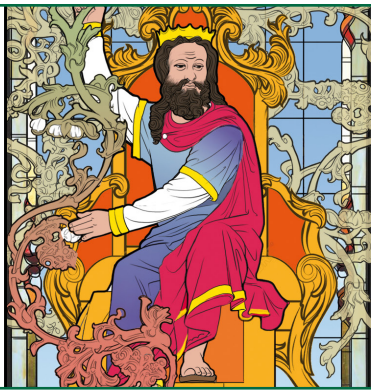
Today's Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4, 5–6 (7c, 10b); Romans 1:1–7; Matthew 1:18–24. When King Ahaz and the people of southern Israel were under attack, the king sought help from a foreign power. The prophet Isaiah told him to trust in God instead. Isaiah even offered proof of God's protection, but the king refused it. Ahaz probably suspected that if he trusted in God, his life would change in a way he would not like.

Like King Ahaz, Joseph found himself in what looked like an impossible situation. Even if he discreetly divorced Mary, everyone would find out why. Unlike King Ahaz, however, when Joseph is given the chance to entrust himself to God's plan, he takes it. He bravely brings his betrothed into his home. By doing so, Joseph fulfills two prophecies.

He receives the sign promised to an ancient king, and he incorporates the unborn child of the virgin into his family line, the line of King David.

Although Ahaz failed to trust in his Lord, God vowed to remain with his people. God's enduring presence takes a startling turn in the house of Joseph, for the child is more than a son of David; he is also, as St. Paul writes, "Son of God in power." The child is Emmanuel, God living in the midst of his people as one of his people.

Yet this child belongs not only to Jews, but to everyone. And everyone belongs to him. In Jesus, God fulfills his plan of salvation. In Jesus, God calls us to entrust ourselves to him, to become holy, and to belong to him forever.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 23 Elijah Returns

Our Old Testament ends with the prophecy that Elijah will return to prepare people for God's arrival. It would be several centuries, however, before someone would again speak for God. When John the Baptist began his prophetic ministry, people believed that God was at last speaking to them. The unusual elements of John's birth point to the new era that is about to begin. Find or draw an image of John the Baptist and use it to reflect on the ways people of his era might have reacted to him. *Today's Readings: Malachi 3:1–4, 23–24; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 8–9, 10 and 14; Luke 1:57–66.*

Tuesday, December 24 Peace

King David united Israel, brought the nation peace, and upheld God's covenant. God's promise that a descendant of David would reign forever is part of God's promise to bring peace to the world. By calling Jesus the "son of David," we acknowledge that Jesus is the "daybreak from on high" who will "guide our feet into the path of peace." Pray for all the nations of the world, especially those that are in the deadly grip of violence. *Today's Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29; Luke 1:67–79.*

Wednesday, December 25 God's Goodness

When God created the world, he saw that it was good. Sin plunged the world back into darkness, but God did not give up on his creation. Instead, he prepared to bring light to the world once again. Today we celebrate God's advent in our world. We celebrate his affirmation of the goodness of creation and his promise that "all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God." Look for the goodness in each moment of this day. Thank God for the goodness that surrounds and fills you. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 52:7–10; Psalm 98:1, 2–3, 3–4, 5–6; Hebrews 1:1–6; John 1:1–18.*

Thursday, December 26 St. Stephen, the First of Many

The light has come into the world, but not everyone wants to hear about it. Jesus warned his followers that they would face persecution. Stephen was the first to face persecution: he was brutally killed for proclaiming the Gospel. Thousands have given their lives since then. Their courage shows the unwavering light and truth of the Incarnation. Place the names or images of Christian martyrs you admire by your nativity set. *Today's Readings: Acts of the Apostles 6:8–10; 7:54–59; Psalm 31:3cd–4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17; Matthew 10:17–22.*

Friday, December 27 St. John, Evangelist and Apostle

Although St. John does not include stories about Jesus' birth in his Gospel, he emphasizes that Jesus is God's Son in the flesh. Those who believe that Jesus is the fullest and most perfect revelation of God enter into communion with his Father. Through this fellowship with God, all who believe will enter eternal life. St. John longed for people to believe that Jesus was truly God-in-the-flesh, and he rejoiced when they did. Celebrate the Incarnation by praying the Angelus today. *Today's Readings: 1 John 1:1–4; Psalm 97:1–2, 5–6, 11–12; John 20:1a and 2–8.*

Saturday, December 28 The Holy Innocents

The joyful, uplifting stories surrounding the birth of Jesus come to us mostly from the Gospel according to Luke. St. Matthew's stories foreshadow Jesus' passion and death. We're reminded of the threat that looms over Jesus as we hear how King Herod goes to horrific lengths to eliminate a potential rival. Not only did King Herod walk in darkness, he even tried to destroy the light itself. Confess the ways you still walk in darkness, and ask God to forgive you and bring you back into the light of Christ. *Today's Readings: 1 John 1:5–2:2; Psalm 124:2–3, 4–5, 7b–8; Matthew 2:13–18.*

