

Rev. Nigel R. Mohammed, pastor

Ms. Judith Anne Waddleton, trustee

Lt. James J. Carroll, esq., trustee

12/24: Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord. Mass will be celebrated at **4PM, 7PM bilingual (Spanish/English).**

12/25: The Nativity of the Lord, Holy Day of Obligation. Mass will be celebrated at **8AM, 10AM, & 12PM.**

12/18-23: *Simban Gabi continues.* Weekdays at 7PM, Sunday at 5:30PM.

...the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream...

Bible Study for 12/18/16

A guide to help get the most out of God's Word.

Is 7: 10-14; i.e., Book of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 10, verses 10 to 14.

Rom 1:1-7; i.e., Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans chapter 1, verses 1 to 7.

Mt 1: 18-24; i.e., the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 1, verses 18 to 24.

~ Can you find these passages in a Bible? Studying and praying with the Bible begins by knowing how to find your way around the Bible.

Is 7: 10-14

See 12/04/16 edition for a recap of Isaiah and role of a prophet. A short but juicy passage, super-significant to the message of Incarnation; i.e., Christmas. Who is Ahaz? King of Judah from 735BCE to 715BCE. Judah was locked in battle with neighboring nations such as Syria and Israel, because of Ahaz's refusal to enter into an anti-Assyrian alliance with them. Assyria was considered one of the superpowers of that time. If Ahaz was not with his neighbors against Assyria, then he was for Assyria and its atrocities. Isaiah's prophecy reminds all that violence and the threat of violence do not create peace; only people who believe in peace can bring about a peaceful community, nation, and world. So the only sign from God will be the birth of a child. In the Incarnation, God accomplished his part, now, peace is wholly in the hands of humanity.

Rom 1: 1-7

See 12/04/16 edition for a recap of some essentials regarding Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans. The passage contains important terminology and striking imagery. Who or what is an Apostle? Is there a difference between an Apostle and a Disciple? Paul does not use the word 'gospel' to refer to one of the four Gospels we hear proclaimed in church; his letters were written earlier than the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. What do you think 'gospel' means in the context of Paul's letter? The passage is didactic; i.e., a teaching, read through it slowly, paying attention to punctuation, in order to comprehend what Paul's teaching is. Ponder the extreme imagery of a *slave of Christ Jesus*. As stated before, Paul is writing to a specific community, yes, but the Church has meditated upon and studied his letters because of their catholic quality. Like those of the Roman Church in Paul's time, all Catholics, in all churches, at all times have *received the grace of apostleship; are called to belong to Jesus Christ* (not to ourselves); and *are called to be holy*. How can we respond to these this Christmas?



Way back when WWOR Channel 9 broadcast the mass on Sundays and I was a deacon serving at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Newark, I had my first and last brush with showbiz; I was asked to serve the Christmas mass with the then Auxiliary Bishop of Newark, Arthur J. Serratelli. Pre-recorded several weeks, if not months, before Christmas, through the magic of television the studio space was set up to look like a small chapel, complete with altar, pulpit, pews and kneelers, and a heavily made-up congregation, dressed in warm and festive Christmas garb. When I got to the studio I was told to report to 'make-up', a fruitless endeavor in my case, and as I was seated in the make-up artist's chair, I remember her going on about how important religion, and especially Christmas, are, for children. I had heard people say, *Christmas is for children*, before, taking it to refer to the fact that a lot of Christmas gifts are toys and games intended for children; and to the belief amongst some shopping/ decorating harried adults, that only when we are children can we truly experience an unadulterated excitement and anticipation at the coming of Christmas. If Christmas is for children, then what about the other 73% of the human population? Is Christianity so specialized, so narrowly appealing, that it can only be experienced when we are between the ages of 0-18? Do the mascots of Christmas like Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman, Ebenezer Scrooge, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, the Grinch and company convey a message that can only be appreciated and acted on by children? Of course not. Christianity and the Christmas message are relevant to all ages, in all places, at all times. It is the Christian, and especially Catholic, conviction, at Christmas time, that God does



Mt 1: 18-24

See 12/4/16 for a recap of the Gospel of Matthew. This weekend we are given a passage from the Gospel of Matthew that Bible scholars include in what is called, in scholarly circles, the Infancy Narratives; accounts of Jesus' birth and early childhood. For most of us, much of the religious imagery that surrounds Christmas; the Star, Magi, Shepherds, the Manger, the 3 Kings, etc. are images taken directly from the Infancy Narratives, so it would be well worth our while to read and learn something about these passages of Scripture as we near Christmas. For those who would like to add some reading to their Christmas spiritual exercises, **An Adult Christ at Christmas**, by Fr. Raymond E. Brown, an acknowledged authority on studying the Bible, gives some wonderful insights into the Narratives as well as much food for thought.

In studying and praying with Infancy Narratives, several things should be kept in mind: they can only be found in 2 of the 4 canonical Gospels, Matthew and Luke. Mark, the earliest of the written Gospels, does not contain an account of Jesus' birth, an adult Jesus is the start of His Public Ministry; John, the latest of the 4, begins with genesis not birth, *In the beginning was the Word...* (Jn 1:1) They are different in Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, the most Jewish of the Gospels, the angel appears to Joseph. In Luke, sometimes referred to as the Gospel of woman, it is Mary. Matthew contains the genealogy of Jesus, the gift-bearing Magi, aka 3 kings, following the star, their encounter with Herod, the massacre of the Innocents, and the Holy Family's flight from Egypt. Luke contains the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist as well as the birth of Jesus; Mary and Elizabeth's encounter; the census, the necessity of the manger because of no room at the inn; angels praising God on high; visitation of shepherds; the circumcision; presentation in the Temple, Simeon and Anna, and the finding in the Temple, to list just a few. There is also a genealogy in Luke that is markedly different to that in Matthew. Much of what we see at Christmas pageants is a hodgepodge of elements taken from both Gospels.

not speak to only a chosen few, but to all, adults especially, since we are the ones shaping the world that today's children will inherit tomorrow.

One of the reasons for this errant thinking has to do with the 'Disneyfication' of our culture, and Christmas, in particular. In such a context, Christmas is a time when there can be no show of signs of sadness, suffering, or pain; only lights and gifts and gaiety; if only for the day. While there is something to be said for putting our own feelings aside out of care and concern for others, this does not mean that we have to cover over the negatives of life in colorful wrapping paper; many an addiction has its roots in such behavior. More importantly for Christians, such an approach seriously misrepresents the Christmas message, a message which, though shot through with ultimate joy, is filled with quiet anxiety, and the difficult challenge of self abandonment to the utterly unknown. Both Mary and Joseph experienced confusion and anxiety, if not fear, at what was taking place, hence the angel in both annunciation scenes says to them, *do not be afraid*. They were itinerants if not immigrants, living precariously in a land ruled by Caesar, a foreign tyrant, where despots like Herod had the authority, and used it, to instigate mass murders, even targeting children. They had to navigate the cultural taboos of their own people; Matthew and Luke make it a point of stressing that their marriage had not been consummated at the time that Jesus was conceived, and they both knew it, Mary says in the Gospel of Luke, *How can this be since I have no relations with a man?* In a tight knit, family oriented community, where everybody knew everybody and everybody's business, this was a very dangerous time, especially for Mary. The law for becoming pregnant by someone other than a spouse was death by stoning; this is one of the reasons why Joseph's 'yes' to God was as necessary, if not as key, as Mary's; both her life and the life of Jesus were in Joseph's hands. Matthew points out that he was *unwilling to expose her to shame*. For a story that is often represented in pop culture as a children's fairy tale, the Christmas story, as it has come down to us through the Gospels, is filled with very adult details and serious themes that have resonated with human beings for hundreds of years. Children and adults are still being slaughtered by the Herods' of today, pictures of them can be easily googled online. Even in today's society, I have encountered young women and men who would rather commit suicide than be found with child. 2,000 years after the birth of the Christ, raising and providing for a family is still as much of a challenge now as it was then. Make no mistake, Jesus is the Reason for the Season and so Christmas will always be for children, **and** for adults.

Safeguarding Children and Addressing Abuse

The Archdiocese Reports all Allegations of Abuse

The Archdiocese of Newark takes very seriously any and all complaints of sexual misconduct by members of the clergy, Religious and lay staff of the Archdiocese. We encourage anyone with knowledge of an act of sexual misconduct to inform the Archdiocese immediately so that we may take appropriate action and provide support to the victim.

Although the Archdiocese immediately reports all abuse allegations to the appropriate County Prosecutor, it also encourages victims to independently report such matters to the Prosecutor.

Individuals who want to report an allegation of sexual misconduct to the Archdiocese may do so by calling the Victim's Assistance Coordinator of the Archdiocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection at (201) 407-3256.

The phone numbers for the County Prosecutors within the Archdiocese are:

Bergen - (201) 226-5689
 Essex - (973) 753-1121
 Hudson - (201) 795-6400
 Union - (908) 965-3879

Schedule of Masses December 19th-25th, 2016			
Day	Time	FOR	BY
Mon 12/19	9 AM	Rosalina & Giuseppe Leone	Mr. & Mrs. Angelo Tango
Tues 12/20	9 AM	Walsh Family	James Walsh
Wed 12/21	9 AM	Christina Burke	Fr. Nigel
	7 PM	Special Intention	OL Perpetual Help Group
Thurs 12/22	9 AM	Sister Agnes Canavan	Ruth Cullen
Fri 12/23	9 AM	Rosemary Pelle	Family
Sat 12/24	9 AM	Charles B. Gerrity	Madeline
	4 PM	For the People of the Parish	God
	7 PM	For the People of the Parish	God
	Midnight	For the People of the Parish	God
Sun 12/25	8 AM	For the People of the Parish	God
	10 AM	For the People of the Parish	God
	12 PM	For the People of the Parish	God

Sanctuary Gifts December 18th-24th, 2016		
Gift	For	By
Altar Wine	Ann Picone	Fr. Nigel
Altar Bread	Alexander Aitken	Fr. Nigel
Sanctuary Lamp	Joseph Piezzo	"Nanna" Madeline
Altar Candles	Silvio Paciello	Mirna Paciello

LET US PRAY FOR THE SICK

AnnMarie Williams, Constance Czegular, Rosemary Perduto, Juliet Nawrocki, Doreen Busacca, Kathleen Link, Orlando Basile, Marie Carlson, Patricia Kucinski, Frank McNamara, Jennifer O'Connor, Donna Tuzzo, Matt Bolger, Lawrence Shin, Lupe Pena, Frances Kearns, Josephine Cermak Rowan, Steve & Rachel Mastin, Diane Shea, Joseph Callandrillo, Humberto Quintana, Javier Vega, Jennifer Moloughney, Antoinette Maddi, Carol Jordan, Anthony Biggio, Sammy DeLeon, Shane Quinn, Alice Daly, Sadie Krieger, Dianne O'Sullivan, Carl Carlson, Larry Bello, Miyuki Campbell, Diane Albert, Meghan Connaughton

WEEKLY PLANNER

SUNDAY 12/18

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MASS - 8AM, 10AM, 12PM

5:30 PM- Simbang Gabi

MONDAY 12/19

3:30 PM-4:30 PM Legion of Mary-Cent Hall

7 PM- Simbang Gabi

TUESDAY 12/20

12:15 PM Bingo-Cent Hall

7PM- Simbang Gabi

WEDNESDAY 12/21

7PM- Simbang Gabi

THURSDAY 12/22

9:30 AM- Holy Hour/Eucharistic Adoration

7PM- Simbang Gabi

FRIDAY 12/23

No hay bingo.

7PM- Simbang Gabi

SATURDAY 12/24

VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Mass: 4:00 PM, 7:00 PM

SUNDAY 12/25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Mass: 12AM, 8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM



BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE



The use of the Christmas tree is relatively modern. Its origins are found in the medieval mystery plays that depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle that symbolized Christ, the Light of the world. According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the Solemnity of Epiphany. The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing.

In the home the Christmas tree may be blessed by a parent or another family member, in connection with the evening meal on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time on Christmas Day.

When all have gathered, a suitable song may be sung.

The leader makes the sign of the cross, and all reply "Amen."

The leader may greet those present in the following words:

Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.

R/. Amen.

In the following or similar words, the leader prepares those present for the blessing:

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

One of those present or the leader reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example, [Titus 3:4](#) (lines 4-7) or [Ezekiel 17:22](#) (lines 22-24 4; I will plant a tender shoot on the mountain heights of Israel.)

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

R/. Thanks be to God.

The intercessions are then said. The leader says:

Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

After the intercessions the leader invites all present to say the Lord's Prayer.

The leader says the prayer with hands joined:

Lord our God,
we praise you for the light of creation:
the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.
We praise you for the light of Israel:
the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures.
We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:
he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,
who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Lord God,
let your blessing come upon us
as we illumine this tree.
May the light and cheer it gives
be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.
May all who delight in this tree
come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R/. Amen.

The lights of the tree are then illuminated.

The leader concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now
and forever.
R/. Amen.

The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

—From *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*



Christmas Calendar 2016-17

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
<p>December 25</p> <p>On this day when we celebrate Our Savior's birth, meditate on the infancy narrative from Luke's Gospel.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Today is the feast day of our first martyr, St. Stephen. Pray today for Christians and religious minorities throughout the world, who suffer persecution and even death because of their faith.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>"For his nativity on both sides was marvelous: divine without mother, human without father" (St. Augustine, <i>Tractate</i> 33.2 on John 7:40 ff.). Read the Discussion about the Origins of the Messiah in John's Gospel.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Today, as we remember the Holy Innocents put to death by King Herod, pray a Rosary for life and meditate on the glorious mysteries.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Today we remember St. Thomas Becket, who was martyred for defending religious freedom. Pray for the protection of our religious freedoms.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Today in honor of the Holy Family, and on every Friday, join others in ongoing prayer and sacrifice for the protection of life, marriage, and religious liberty.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>"Memory is related to past time, hope to future. . . . We love, persuaded by faith that the past was as it was, and by hope expecting the future." —St. Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, 2.2</p>	
<p>January 1</p> <p>Today, on the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, on which we also observe the World Day of Peace, attend Mass and pray for peace in our communities.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Today, we remember Sts. Gregory Nazianzen and Basil the Great, who once wrote, "Do everything possible to make yourself worthy of the Kingdom. Do not disdain the invitation you have received" (Basil the Great, Exhortation to Baptism, 7-8).</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Meditate today on the Most Holy Name of Jesus. "Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil 2:9-10).</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Remember today our first native-born North American saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton, whose journey of faith points to "the reality that in all of us there is a longing to know God and to draw closer to him" (USCCA, p. 2).</p>	<p>5</p> <p>St. John Neumann understood what it meant to follow God's will with his whole heart and soul. Knowing he was meant to be a priest but denied ordination in his diocese because of the overabundance of priests, John traveled from Bohemia to New York City to be ordained. Pray today for vocations to the priesthood.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>St. Andre Bessette: "For him, believing meant submitting freely and through love to the divine will. Wholly inhabited by the mystery of Jesus, he lived the beatitude of pure of heart, that of personal rectitude." (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, October 17, 2010)</p>	<p>7</p> <p>"We help, we lead others to Jesus, with our words and our lives, with our witness" (Pope Francis, Address, September 27, 2013). Pray today for the New Evangelization.</p>	
<p>8</p> <p>Today, on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, National Migration Week begins. Pray for the protection of refugee families fleeing persecution that they may find refuge and comfort.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Today, is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord and the end of the Christmas season: "He was not baptized because he needed to be purified, but so that he might bring sanctity to the waters themselves" (St. Gregory Nazianus, Oration 29, 19-20).</p>						<p>"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." —Lk 2:14</p>

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