

✠ ANNOUNCEMENTS

DECEMBER 24, 2006 - THE VIGIL OF CHRISTMAS - ADVENT IV

Our **Special Christmas Alms Collection** is being taken during all Masses today to benefit Fr. Eldred Leslie, an elderly, poor missionary priest in South Africa. He is faithful to the true Church and Mass, and lives in very difficult conditions. Please be generous! He can do a tremendous amount of good for his poor abandoned Africans; but only with your help. *"And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts..."*

1st Vespers of Christmas and Benediction are at **1:15 PM**.

NO 5:45 PM EVENING MASS

Sunday, December 24th - Christmas Eve Schedule - Evening

8:45 PM: The Office of Matins

10:45 PM: Carols

11:00 PM: Entrance of the Bishop,

Blessing of the Crib & Vesting

11:30 PM: Midnight Mass followed by

The Office of Lauds

A **Potluck Supper** follows Midnight Mass. If you are planning on coming, please bring a dish to share.

Monday, December 25th - Christmas Day

9:00 AM: Low Mass & Benediction, with String Quartet

11:00 AM: Low Mass with Carols

3:30 PM: Vespers of Christmas Day

Wednesday, December 27th - Feast of St. John, ApEv

Join us for a **High Mass at 11:30 AM** and the Blessing of Wine and Beverages - "The Love of St. John."

Thursday, December 28th - Feast of the Holy Innocents, Mm

There will be a **High Mass at 11:30 AM** followed by the **Blessing of Children** and a **party in Helfta Hall**, hosted by Bishop Dolan. All children of the parish are invited, Bishop Dolan will be reading to the children.

Friday, December 29th - Infant of Prague Novena

Our annual novena of Nine Fridays in honor of the Divine Infant opens this **Friday evening at 5:30 PM**. Come with confidence to honor our loving little King.

Sunday, December 31st - New Year's Eve - St. Sylvester I, PC

7:30 AM: Low Mass

9:00 AM: High Mass

11:30 AM: Low Mass

1:15 PM: 1st Vespers of the Circumcision

NO 5:45 PM EVENING MASS.

Monday, January 1, 2007 -

Feast of the Circumcision - New Year's Day

9:00 AM: High Mass

11:00 AM: Low Mass & Benediction

3:00 PM: Vespers of the Circumcision

(NO Evening Service)



The **Rosary Confraternity** will meet at **10:00 AM** in front of the **Auburn Avenue Abortion Clinic** to *pray the rosary* on **Saturday, December 30th**. A light breakfast will follow the **7:30 AM** Mass before proceeding to the abortion clinic.



\$2007 ROMAN CATHOLIC CALENDAR
This year's calendar - *The Mass and the Passion* - is available for purchase in the Book Store. The price is \$6.00. Every Catholic home should have a traditional calendar.



\$2007 COLLECTION ENVELOPES
The 2007 Collection envelopes are in the vestibule. Please pick up your envelopes today.

Halters

DECEMBER 31, 2006

7:30 AM John Wiesman, Kent Maki, Joe Andreotta, Tom Kamphaus
9:00 AM Jim Gebel, Richard Smith, Dale Wilker, Bernie Brueggemann
11:30 AM Bob Uhlenbrock, Kirby Bischel, Dennis Hille, Jim Kolenich

JANUARY 1, 2007

9:00 AM John Wiesman, Jim Gebel, Jim Kolenich, Richard Smith
11:00 AM John Seyfried, Kent Maki, Dennis Hille, Kirby Bischel

SERVERS

DECEMBER 25 - JANUARY 1, 2007

SERVERS: THE CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE IS POSTED IN THE SACRISTY - For weekday Masses, our regular servers are welcome and urged to assist us at the altar.

***TUE 12/26 5:00 PM HIGH:** Keaveney & _____

***FRI 12/29 5:45 PM HIGH:** Keaveney, Briggs, Bayer, Ritze

***SAT 12/30 7:30 AM LOW:** C. & T. Simpson

9:00 AM HIGH: Keaveney and/or Briggs.

***SUN 12/31 7:30 AM LOW:** D. & S. Brueggemann

9:00 AM HIGH: MCS: Joseph & A. Lotarski; AC: S. & S. Cozzens; TH: J. Lotarski; TORCH: B. Lotarski, T. Simpson, A. Richesson, G. Wnek

11:30 AM LOW: G. Miller, A.D. Kinnett

1:15 PM VESPERS & BENEDICTION: Miller

***MON 01/01 - NEW YEAR'S DAY**

9:00 AM HIGH: MCS: P. & A. Lotarski; AC: T. Simpson, B. Lotarski; TH: D. Poeppelman; TORCH: Cozzens Bros, A. Richesson, G. Wnek

11:00 AM LOW: G. Miller, C. Ritze

1:15 PM VESPERS & BENEDICTION: Miller

Collection Report

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2006 \$4742.00
FR. LESLIE: CHILDRENS' COLLECTION \$ 504.50

*Thank you for your generosity!
Remember St. Gertrude's in your will!*

✠ POETRY CORNER

MAGNIFICAT

BY FREDRICK H. STERNE

And He shall suckle at my breast,
And be upon my knee;
And He shall say His childhood prayer
And cuddle close to me;
And I shall tell Him bible tales
Seated upon the sod;
Ah, wonder, that my baby boy
Should be the Son of God!

Of me, the maid of low estate,
Messiah must be born,
And yet men gaze with ribald mirth
And evil eyes of scorn.
The kindly neighbors draw apart
To whisper words of blame,
And patient Joseph, sad at heart,
Must share with me the shame.

Yet He shall sit on David's throne,
Inviolable of old;
And He shall be the promised seed
Of whom the prophet told.
My soul doth magnify the Lord,
My heart doth sing for joy;
Oh, wonder, that the Son of God
Should be my baby boy.



JOSEPH

BY GRACE NOLL CROWELL

How weary and how tired they must have been,
Coming from Nazareth since the day's pale start,
Joseph with great responsibility,
Mary bearing earth's Savior 'neath her heart.
Nearing the village at the set of the sun,
The man must hasten for a place to rest;
He watched the woman with grave, anxious eyes,
Seeing her clutch a white hand to her breast.

Was she too tired? Had they come too far?
Had his love failed this gentle, precious one?
And now the crowded inn, the words:
"No room."

For Mary soon to mother God's dear Son!
Joseph was deeply troubled, could there be
No place in all this throng for them to go?
Then, suddenly, the stable and a hand
Bidding them enter, God had planned it so!

✠ ANNOUNCEMENTS (CONT'D.)

☞ SUNDAY CATECHISM CLASSES

Childrens' Catechism and Adult Catechism classes are suspended December 24th and 31st & January 7th. Catechism classes will resume on Sunday, January 14th. The children should, however, plan to attend the 9:00 AM Mass on January 7th so as to walk in the Procession and participate in 40 Hours.

☞ NEXT SUNDAY

Next Sunday is New Year's Eve.

1st Vespers of the Circumcision and Benediction are at **1:15 PM.**

NO 5:45 PM EVENING MASS

Set your missal: December 31st.

Within the Octave of Christmas, with the commemoration of St Sylvester I, PC. **PREP:** Nativity.

☞ THE VISITATION SOCIETY

The Visitation Society had a very successful meeting with Bishop Dolan highlighting several suggestions to make our visits to our sick and shut-ins more successful. Some of the suggestions are:

- Bring rosaries and offer to say a decade or two.
- Bring scapulars - either green or brown. Pin them on if necessary.
- Bring sacramentals. Please see Kathy Bayer or call at 513-779-0212 if you are in need of any.
- If you cannot make a visit, please send a card or make a phone call. Call Kathy for names, addresses and phone numbers.

☞ HOLY HELPER VOLUNTEERS

December 30th - Saturday: - General Cleaning: Katie Bischak, Wilker Family.

A very special thanks to all those who

came to help with the Christmas Decorating on Saturday, December 16th and for those who came to help set up the Nativity scene and do the "finish" work during the week before Christmas. You all did such a wonderful job, and relatively quickly! The church is beautiful - inside and out - it wouldn't be so if you all hadn't done your part.

A few people need special mention: Regina Gilliam for the delicious "meatless" chili she prepared for the workers on decoration day; to Connie Kamphaus, Katie Bischak and Deb Wilker and her girls for the invaluable help in early preparation, organizing and directing that went on prior to the Saturday decoration day.

Thank you and welcome to the new faces who helped on Saturday, as well as the "faithful regulars." Please believe that you are most deeply appreciated. My prayer for all of you is that you and your families have a most Holy and Blessed Christmas!

—Sr. Mary Magdalen



UPCOMING EVENTS

FORTY HOURS - JANUARY 5 - 7TH

The greatest feast of this season, because of its antiquity and theological importance—outranking even Christmas itself—is that of Epiphany, Christ's manifestation to the Gentile world in the person of the Magi. This beautiful feast we will solemnize this year as we keep Forty Hours on the weekend.

On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, January 5, 6, and 7th, Forty Hours

Devotion will be held at our church. Please plan to spend some time with Our Lord on these days. There are many hours when adorers are needed.

The Forty Hours' Devotion honors the time Our Lord's Adorable Body passed in the Holy Sepulcher, and obtains for the Church, as well as for each soul, all of the pressing needs of the day by this most efficacious prayer. Please plan to attend one or more of the special Masses, as well as to take an hour of Adoration where it is most needed: **Saturday afternoon from 3 - 5:00 PM, and Sunday from 1 - 5:00 PM.**

The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed after the 5:45 PM Mass on Friday evening. The moving and very touching Procession and Litany of the Saints conclude the opening ceremonies, and are repeated for the Mass of Reposition at 9:00 AM Sunday.

During the course of this exposition, if a visit is made to the Blessed Sacrament, there is granted an indulgence of 15 years. A plenary indulgence on each of the days of the exposition provided the faithful make their Confession and Holy Communion.

• January 5th: Opening of 40 Hours - First Friday

Confessions will be heard at 5:00 PM. The Infant of Prague Novena and the Sacred Heart Novena/First Friday Devotions will be said at 5:30 PM.

The solemn Opening of 40 Hours begins at 5:45 PM.

ADORATION WILL CONTINUE ALL NIGHT AND THROUGHOUT THE DAY ON SATURDAY.

Saturday, January 6th - Feast of the Epiphany - First Saturday

All our church workers and volunteers are invited to join us for a Benefactors' Brunch immediately following the Epiphany Mass.

7:30 AM Low Mass

8:10 AM First Saturday Devotions

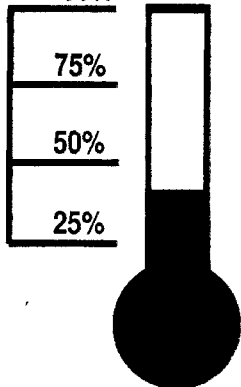
9:00 AM Solemn High Mass

The blessing of gold, frankincense, myrrh and chalk will follow the 9:00 AM Mass. The Home Blessing pack will be available in the vestibule.

ADORATION CONTINUES ALL DAY.

OUR GOAL

100%



DECEMBER RECTORY FUND FIGURES

December Monthly goal	\$5000.00
Received to date	\$2055.00
Percent of goal received	41.1%
Possible contributors	200
Contributors to date	46
Percent contributing	23.0%

Your support is needed and appreciated!

✠ THE CALENDAR

MON	12/25/06	NATIVITY OF OUR LORD CHRISTMAS DAY
	12:00 AM	Midnight Mass <i>For the People of St. Gertrude</i>
	9:00 AM	Low Mass & Benediction <i>Christmas Novena I</i>
	9:00 AM	Bishop Dolan's Private Mass <i>Vivian Bloemker's Intentions (Charlene A. Bloemker)</i>
	11:00 AM	Low Mass <i>Father Cekada's Intentions</i>
	3:30 PM	Vespers of Christmas
TUES	12/26/06	ST STEPHEN, PROTOMARTYR
	5:00 PM	N.B. (Special Time) High Mass <i>Christmas Novena II</i>
	6:15 PM	Vespers
WED	12/27/06	ST JOHN, APEV
	6:30 AM	Low Mass <i>†Mr. Bolte, Father of Gary & Ruth Ann Bolte (Tom Kunkel Family)</i>
	11:30 AM	High Mass, Blessing of Wine and Beverages <i>Christmas Novena III</i>
	1:30 PM	Vespers
THUR	12/28/06	THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MM
	11:30 AM	High Mass, Blessing of Children followed by The Childrens' Party, hosted by Bishop Dolan <i>Christmas Novena IV</i> Vespers to be Announced
FRI	12/29/06	ST THOMAS BECKET, BPM
		Father Cekada's Private Mass <i>Christmas Novena V</i>
	4:30 PM	Vespers
	5:15 PM	Confessions & Rosary
	5:30 PM	Opening of the Infant of Prague Novena
	5:45 PM	High Mass, Sacred Heart Novena, Benediction, Confessions <i>Thanksgiving to the Infant of Prague for Prayer Answered (MIM Joseph Andreotta)</i>
SAT	12/30/06	WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS
	7:15 AM	Confessions
	7:30 AM	Low Mass <i>Pro-Life (Rosary Confraternity)</i>
	9:00 AM	High Mass, Confessions <i>Christmas Novena VI</i>
	10:00 AM	Rosary at Abortion Clinic
	4:30 PM	Confessions
SUN	12/31/06	SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS - ST SYLVESTER I, PC
	7:30 AM	Low Mass <i>Our Children & Godchildren (Dan & Mary)</i>
	9:00 AM	High Mass <i>Christmas Novena VII</i>
	11:30 AM	Low Mass <i>For the People of St. Gertrude</i>
	1:15 PM	1st Vespers of the Circumcision & Benediction
		<u>NO 5:45 PM EVENING MASS</u>
MON	01/01/07	CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST - NEW YEAR'S DAY
	9:00 AM	High Mass <i>Christmas Novena VIII</i>
	11:00 AM	Low Mass & Benediction <i>Happy Birthday Sister Mary Magdalen (The Fathers)</i>
	3:00 PM	Vespers for the Feast of the Circumcision

much greater and more advantageous than the conquest of empires and the whole world could be? For Alexander the Great to have once curbed his anger on ever so small an occasion, would have been a far more glorious victory than all his conquests, even if his wars had been just. For nothing is so heroic as for a man to vanquish his passions, and learn to govern his own soul. Why then do not we take all necessary precautions to watch and to arm ourselves for these continual occasions? Why are not we prepared, and upon our guard to check all sudden sallies of our passions, and, under provocations, to show by silence, meekness, and patience, that we study truly to prove ourselves disciples of Christ?

—From Butler's LIVES OF THE SAINTS

✠ BISHOP'S CORNER

“’Twas the week before Christmas, and...” Well, here at God’s house, every single mouse of us was busy preparing for the great Mystery soon to be accomplished amongst us.



Last Sunday Father Thielen in the Sacrament of Penance drew more and more “rats” (can you think of a better term?) away from the sinking ship of their sins as the morning went towards noon. Sunday morning Confessions are as difficult for the Confessor as they are convenient for the penitent, due to the noises of Holy Mass (music and sermon especially) and sometimes stuffiness and heat. Still, the gift of God’s sacramental forgiveness is one we are happy to offer as often as we can on Sundays, making access to the Divine Doctor of Souls as easy as possible.

Meanwhile, back in Helfta Hall, close to \$1600 was raised in the Christmas Craft and Bake Sale, a wonderful charitable and cooperative event which speaks as well of your church spirit. I thank you all sincerely.

The last raffle tickets for the beautiful stained glass of the Miraculous Medal were sold in the vestibule. One of our most recent sponsors bought a ticket for his little godson, and tucked it in his diaper bag. He won! Congratulations, Matthias Brueggemann.

I really must congratulate all of our Christmas church decorators, who came seemingly in shifts, and did their wonderful work quietly and efficiently and almost in record time. This past week more willing hands decorated Helfta Hall, prepared the crib, arranged the poinsettias, and so much more. Many, many thanks!

May Mary reward you all, by preparing with her own loving hands, in the hall of your heart, a magnificent manger for Her Son, wonderful in dignity, and yet warm and cozy for the Child.

Pray with us tonight, and all week long!

A Blessed Christmas,

—Bishop Dolan

✠ THE MOST UNEXPECTED COMING OF CHRIST

The primitive martyrs rejoiced exceedingly in being called to suffer for Christ. If faith was as lively and active in us, and if the divine love exerted its power in our hearts, we should rejoice at all occasions of practicing meekness and patience, which we should look upon as our greatest happiness and pain. To forgive an injury, to bear well an affront, or to suffer with perfect resignation, patience, and humility, is a glorious victory gained over ourselves, by which we vanquish our passions, and improve in our souls the habits of those divine virtues in which consists the spirit of Christ, and the resemblance we are commanded to bear to Him. Occasions occur in almost all our actions; yet we lose them, and even suffer our passions to reign in them to the offense of God, the scandal of our holy religion, and the infinite prejudice of our souls. Do we consider that the least exertion of meekness, humility, or charity, is something

Sunday, January 7th - Feast of the Holy Family

6:30 AM Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

7:30 AM Low Mass

9:00 AM High Mass

Final Forty Hours Procession and Litany of the Saints follow the High Mass.

You are invited to a reception in honor of newly ordained Father Federico Palma, celebrant of the High Mass.

ADORATION CONTINUES ALL AFTERNOON.

4:45 PM Vespers

5:45 PM Mass & Closing Benediction of Forty Hours



5A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

A woman was out Christmas shopping with her two children. After two hours of looking at row after row of toys and hearing them ask for everything they saw on those many shelves, she was feeling the overwhelming pressure that so many of us feel during this holiday season, and was relieved when she finally made it to the elevator.

When the elevator doors opened, there was already a crowd of people in it. But determined to get this day over with, she pushed her way into the elevator, dragging her kids and packages. When the doors closed she couldn't take it any more and stated, "Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up and shot."

From the back of the elevator everyone heard a quiet voice respond, "Don't worry, we already crucified Him." For the rest of the trip down, the elevator was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

Don't forget this year to keep the One who started this whole Christmas thing in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word. If we all did it, just think of how different this whole world would be.

5QUOTE OF THE DAY

Resist your impatience faithfully, not only with reason, but even against reason, holy courtesy and sweetness to all, but especially to those who weary you the most.

—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

Suppose that we had been with the shepherds on the first Christmas night, huddling in our thin cloaks and shivering slightly from the cold, when suddenly the glorious host of angels appeared to us and announced to us the birth of the long awaited deliverer of our nation. Thrilled with joy that the goodness and kindness of God our Savior had at last appeared, we would have hastened to the cave in the hill and enthusiastically made our homage. We would have been fascinated by the aura of heavenly beauty and holiness about the mother and her Babe. We would have been mysteriously touched in the depths of our soul *when the Child extended His hands toward us, as if to embrace us in His love.*

We who live twenty centuries later can go to Bethlehem in our meditations. In a spirit of faith we can adore the Christ Child. We bring Him a greater understanding and appreciation than the shepherds could. All that they knew was that the Messiah, the deliverer, had come. How He would deliver His people and what the nature of the kingdom He would establish, they did not know. Nor did they suspect the immensity of the gifts He would bestow on them, nor the type of new life that would be theirs, nor that theirs would henceforth be a citizenship of heaven. We know all that. We know, moreover, to what lengths God our Savior has gone in order to save us. He lay an Infant in a wooden manger. He died in the prime of His manhood nailed to a wooden cross. And all for us!

As we kneel in spirit before the holy manger, we know that the hands which the Infant extends to us are the hands of Him who created the world. "For the Lord is a great God. In His hands are the depths of the earth. His is the sea, for He made it, and the dry land, which His hands have formed" (Psalm 94). He extends those hands to us in the same gesture in which they will be fixed on the cross, the gesture of divine mercy and love, the gesture of Christ's goodness to us. Who can count the blessings that have flowed to us from that gesture of Christ? Because He came to us and died for us upon the cross our lives are different. The spirit of Christ has penetrated civilization and emphasized the dignity and nobility of man. It has saved us from the degradation of a pagan existence. It has enriched our traditions and our literature. It has affected our way of thinking. Above all, it has saved us from subjection to the powers of evil and has given us a share in the very life of God. The outstretched hands of the

Infant of Bethlehem are a symbol of the divine gifts that have come to us: they have flowed through these hands.

But the Child in the manger stretches out His little hands, not only to give, but also to receive. How many of us forget this. We have taken all from Christ. How slow we are to give! How slow we are to offer Him adoration and worship, and above all, the pledge of complete submission of His plan of life and to His law regulating that life. We take so much; we give so little! We have received much from these hands. But when they ask from us in return, we spit on them by sin or brush them aside by indifference. Our destiny lies in these hands; yet we fail to put our lives into them completely. How many of us think that we are able to live without Christ. We are so used to living on our own, by our own resources and for our own purposes, that we do not even know the sweet joy of living with and for Him, of putting our lives in His hands.

We put our lives into His hands when we live up to all the obligations of our state of life and when we accept with resignation and peace the hardships and sacrifices that necessarily come our way. We are in His hands when we humbly trust His divine providence, confident that He loves us and always does what is good for us. We are in His hands when our lives are lived in a truly holy manner.

We cannot be indifferent to those inviting hands of Christ: inviting us to give to Him in order that He may give much greater gifts to us. We simply cannot be indifferent, for it will be those same hands on the day of judgment—hands pierced with the marks of nails—that will gesture our eternal destiny. The right hand will beckon to the just to come to eternal joy. The left will describe a gesture of rejection that will forever exclude the condemned from fellowship with Christ and His friends.

Our life, our hope, our success, our happiness are in the hands of this Infant Whom we adore in the Christmas crib. His hands invite us, they demand from us, but above all, they give to us. If we would only heed His invitation, give Him our life and our service and our obedience, and accept from Him the graces He wishes to give us, then indeed we would become saints. What greater motive could we find for throwing ourselves into the hands of Christ than that offered to St. Thomas the apostle: "Bring here thy finger and see My hands" (John 20:27). To see and to understand the print of the nails will ring from our hearts the loving surrender, "My Lord and my God."

✠ SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS FOR CHRISTMAS

FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
ST. LUKE (I. 26)

At that time: The Angel Gabriel was sent from God, unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel came unto her.

Let us learn from this Virgin how to bear ourselves, let us learn her modesty, let us learn by her devout utterance, above all let us learn by the holy mystery enacted. It is the part of a maiden to be timid, to avoid the advances of men, and to shrink from men's addresses. Would that our women would learn from the example of modesty here set before us. She upon whom the stare of men had never been fixed was alone in her chamber, and she found herself alone with angels. There was neither companion nor witness there, that what passed might not be debased in gossip: and the angel saluted her.

The message of God to the Virgin was a mystery, which it was not lawful for the mouth of men, but only of angels, to utter. For the first time on earth the words are spoken: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee." The holy maiden heareth, and believeth. At length she saith: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to thy word." Here is an example of lowliness, here is a pattern of true devotion. At the very moment that she is told she is chosen to be the mother of the Lord she at once declareth herself His handmaid. The knowledge that she was mother of God caused in the heart of Mary only an act of humility.

From the 2nd and 3rd Lessons of Matins for Ember Wednesday, from a Homily by ST. AMBROSE, BISHOP OF MILAN



SOME INSPIRING THOUGHTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS MATINS

[I]n the early ages of the Church every great Feast was prepared for by long Vigils; during which the people deprived themselves of their usual rest, and spent

the hours in the Church, fervently joining in the Psalms and Lessons which made up the Office which we now call *Matins*. The Night was divided into three parts called *Nocturns*. At dawn of the day they resumed their chants in an Office which was even more solemn than *Matins*: by the name of *Lauds*. This Service, which occupied a very considerable portion of the night, is still kept up, though at a time less trying to nature; *Matins* and *Lauds* are publicly recited every day in Cathedral and Monastic Churches, and privately by everyone in Holy Orders. They are by far the longest portion of the Divine Office. The want of the old spirit of devoted appreciation of the Liturgy has made the Laity indifferent to being present at the celebration of *Matins*. Thus, there are few places where people assist at *Matins* except on Christmas Night.

The Office of Christmas Night has always been said or sung with extraordinary solemnity. Firstly, it was so just, that the moments immediately preceding the Hour when the Holy Mother gave birth to her Jesus should be spent in the most fervent prayers and watchings! But, secondly, the Church is not satisfied tonight with saying her *Matins* — [...] she follows them by the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, so that she may the better solemnize the Divine Birth; and she begins her Mass at Midnight, for it was at that silent hour that the Virgin-Mother gave us the Blessed Fruit of her Womb.

In Rome, for many centuries—at least from the seventh to the eleventh—two *Matins* were sung, the first in the Basilica of St. Mary Major. They commenced immediately after sunset. There was no *Invitatory*. As soon as they were ended, the Pope celebrated the first, or midnight Mass. No sooner was it finished, then the people accompanied him to the Church of St. Anastasia, and there he sang the second Mass, or, as it was called, *of the Aurora*. Again the Pontiff and people formed a procession—this time it was to St. Peter's—and having entered the Basilica, the second *Matins* were begun. They had an *Invitatory*, and were followed by *Lauds*.

the other Hours having been sung, the Pope said the third and last Mass, at the hour of Terce, which is our 9 o'clock. [...]

How lively was the faith of those olden times! To people who lived unceasingly amidst the Mysteries of Religion, Prayer was a tie which knit them closely together, and made them pass hours in the Church without weariness. They understood the value of the Prayers of the Church; and the Ceremonies of the Liturgy, which complete the tribute of man's inward worship of his Creator, were not looked upon as, unfortunately, they now so often are, as a dumb show, or at best an unmeaning poetry introduced for effect.

[...] How often have not we ourselves been charmed at seeing the traditions of the old Church customs still kept up in some families... We have seen, and it is one of the most pleasing recollections of our childhood, one of these families seated together, after the frugal evening collation, round a blazing fireside, waiting for the hour to come when the whole house was to go to the midnight Mass. A plain but savory supper, which was to be eaten on their return home, and so add to the joy of holy Christmas Night, was prepared beforehand. A huge piece of wood, called the Yule-Log, was burning cheerfully on the hearth; it would last till the Mass was over, and warm the old men and the little children, as they came in chilled by the sharp frost. Meanwhile, till it was time for Mass, their conversation was upon the Mystery of this much-loved Night. They compassionated the Blessed Mother and the sweet Babe, exposed to the inclemency of wintry weather, and with no other shelter than that of a wretched stable. Then, too, there were the Christmas Carols, in the practice of which they had spent many a pleasant evening of Advent. The whole soul was evidently in these dear old melodies, and many a tear would fall as the song went on to tell how the Angel Gabriel visited Mary, and declared to her that she was to be Mother of the Most High God. And thus they spent the happy Eve, passing from conversation to song, and from one song

to another, and all was on Mary or Jesus, Joseph or Bethlehem. Cares of life were forgotten, troubles were gone, melancholy was a sin.

In many of our readers, these reminiscences will excite a feeling of regret that the miseries of the world around us make such Catholic customs as these unrealities: at all events, they will show how the holiest of feelings of religion may blend with the best joys of family and home. The lesson is worth learning though the examples that teach it are too Catholic for these rough times.

By James de Piane
For the *CATHOLIC VOICE*
(Excerpted from "The Liturgical Year" by Dom Gueranger, O.S.B.)

(How do you conduct your Christmas Eve at home? The good news is... we do offer Christmas Matins and Lauds at your church, and you are all cordially invited to come and spend a couple of hours with Our Lady, before the birth of her beautiful Child, in the reverent and solemn chanting of these Offices. You will be surprised, as you read over the text and listen to the restful chant, how wonderfully still you will become; while "all in stillness" awaits the coming of the Lord.)



THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN BETHLEHEM

The Third Joyful Mystery

Taken from *The Ages of Mary*, 1955

Meditation on the mysteries is an essential part of the Rosary. You do not gain the indulgences, nor do you say the Rosary, if your mind is not pondering the respective mystery. Without meditation on the mysteries you are praying Our Fathers and Hail Marys, which is a meritorious act, but you are not saying the Rosary.

One efficient way of complying with the essential requirement is to prepare a list of short facts and thoughts about each mystery, and then use only one of these points at each praying of that particular mystery. At the next praying of that mystery you take the next point in order, etc. In this way you go on learning more and more about the sacred mysteries of the life of Jesus and Mary, which is one of

the prime objectives of the Holy Rosary. The following list on the 3rd Joyful Mystery, chosen mostly from the writings of the mystics, omits the fundamental facts already known to you from the Gospel story of the Nativity. It is a supplement to your own basic list. Nor is it by any means exhaustive. All the sacred mysteries are literally inexhaustible.

1. At 6 o'clock one cold, wet, mid-winter morning Our Lady and St. Joseph set out from Nazareth to go to Bethlehem. Mary sat sidesaddle on the little donkey. St. Joseph guided the animal with his right hand, holding his staff with his left. Two bags hanging on the donkey's right side contained their provisions: some bread, fruit, and fish, and linens which Mary had provided for her baby.

2. 10,000 Angels, visible only to their Queen, marched along with them. Mary and Joseph alternated with the Angels in singing canticles and hymns of praise to God.

3. The first night found them in a lonely and windy valley. Our Lady asked Joseph to stop there, so he pitched their little tent under a large turpentine tree near a fountain. God miraculously warmed Mary, who suffered much from the cold, and she placed her hands in her husband's to share the warmth with him.

4. Averaging about 12 miles a day, they avoided the crowded caravan roads as much as possible. Approaching Jerusalem, they detoured around the city, although this took them much longer.

5. The last night they spent in a large farmhouse. The owner's wife, who was young and conceited, treated them coldly because she was jealous of Mary's beauty. 30 years later Jesus found her blind and partially paralyzed. He reproached her for her vanity and heartlessness and then cured her.

6. Mary knew the secrets of the souls she passed on the way. She prayed for them. She also assisted the sick whenever she met them.

7. They arrived at Bethlehem about 4:00 PM and went immediately to the government building. Joseph went in to answer the officials who were taking the census. He was asked his name and occupation. He told them he owned no

property, but lived from his manual labor. Mary waited with the women in the courtyard outside.

8. The sun was sinking when Joseph went looking for lodging. Practically all St. Joseph's relatives lived in Bethlehem, yet not one of them would give them lodging. Some even insulted him. Joseph became upset. Mary, however, knew that the houses and hearts of men were to be closed to them.

9. Finally Mary rested at the foot of a big tree. Many passers-by stared at the young girl in her long white dress and veil, with her hands folded on her breast and her head lowered.

10. St. Joseph returned about 9 o'clock. He was utterly overcome, crying with sorrow. Mary tenderly consoled him. Joseph told her of a shepherd's shelter outside the town. Mary answered, "*That will be perfectly satisfactory to me. Let us lovingly embrace poverty, dear Joseph, and go gladly wherever the Lord guides us.*"

11. Upon entering the bare grotto, which shepherds used as a stable, they knelt and thanked the Lord. Mary was filled with joy at being at last in this holy place. Out of humility and reverence she set about cleaning the cave. St. Joseph helped her and so did the angels. He built a fire, for it was very cold. Then both awaited the impending Nativity.

12. After they prayed again, Joseph filled the manger with straw and moss, and placed a white cloth over it. Then he withdrew to the entrance of the cave. From there he saw Mary on her knees, surrounded by flames of dazzling supernatural light. Filled with reverent fear, he prostrated himself on the ground, and was soon in ecstasy.

13. About midnight a channel of brilliant light came down from the highest heaven and terminated in sparkling fire surrounding the Blessed Virgin. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, the Infant God was born—*transfigured as on Mount Thabor.*

14. When the holy Mother of God saw that she was delivered—for her Child came forth without any pain or injury to her—she placed a cloth over His tiny body and adored Him saying: "*Welcome, my God, my Lord, my Son!*"

15. The transfiguration ended and the Divine Child was as one capable of suffering. He shivered with cold, stretched forth His arms to Mary, and cried.

16. His first words were, "Mother! Mary!" Mary clasped Him to her Heart, warmed Him against her cheek and breast, while thousands of Angels knelt in adoration.

17. About an hour after the Nativity, Mary called to Joseph. At the sound of her voice he came out of ecstasy, entered the cave and prostrated himself before the Divine Infant. Only at her bidding did he rise, take the Child in his arms, press Him to his heart—while tears of happiness coursed down his cheeks.

18. Then Mary sat on the ground with her Son on her lap. Joseph handed her the linens and she dressed her Baby. Then they placed Him in a manger.

19. Then an ox and an ass entered the stable, knelt down before the Divine Child, and breathed over Him as if to warm Him. Mary and Joseph cried at this scene.

20. For a long time they remained on their knees before the Christmas Crib. Then St. Joseph took some blankets and made a resting place for Mary beside the manger.



THE PRAYER OF THE DONKEY

BY CARMEN BERNOS DE GASZTOLD

O God, who made me
to trudge along the road
always,
to carry heavy loads
always,
and to be beaten
always!
Give me great courage and gentleness.
One day let somebody understand me—
that I may no longer want to weep
because I can never say what I mean
and they make fun of me.
Let me find a juicy thistle—
and make them give me time to pick it.
And, Lord, one day, let me find again
my little brother of the Christmas crib.

THE LORD HAS SHOWN HIS GREAT MERCY

Enkindle in your hearts ardent desires and burning wishes for Our Lord to come to you in the virtue of His charity, love of the Father, and of every human being. Say with the Royal Prophet, "I opened my mouth and panted." And your Savior will respond, "Surely I come quickly; you shall see Me very soon."

Your eyes at the Midnight Mass will gaze upon the elevated Host and your lips will utter, "My Lord and my God." A few minutes more and the little Infant will have come to you. His Immaculate Mother did not hold Him more truly in her arms that first Christmas midnight than you will have Him, heart to heart. Then all the love of that Infant Redeemer will be poured out upon you.

It's a thirst of the heart of every creature that desires to be loved, and the love which can alone satisfy that craving is the Divine Love. Let your heart delight in the love your God has for you, personally, individually. No soul ever in ardent fervor desires to unite herself to our Lord in Holy Communion, as our Lord desires to unite Himself to her.

So Holy Communion is a delight to your Infant Savior; because He loves you, oh, how immeasurably! He tells you in His heart to heart interview that He has become a little Infant so that you may love Him with a human love without fear. He wants you to confide in Him, approach to Him with a conviction that His Great Majesty is annihilated that you may no longer see in Him but a little Child, with a body and soul just as you have. And the mystery of love is this: that He unites His Body to your body and your soul to His Soul, so that yours may be a member of His very own.

This Christmas Holy Communion will unite you to our Lord, it is my prayer, more intimately than ever before in all your lives so that even the smallest of your actions may by this union be animated with divine Life — and all for the honor of the Father and the salvation of souls. May you participate in His life of charity, and may a divine light illumine you to see the depths and the heights of the charity of a God made Man to redeem that which was lost. You participate in the spirit and the immense charity of Christ so as to be born this Christmas to a new life of charity — for "he that abides in charity, abides in God."

"O little Child my only treasure, Thou appearest before me all radiant with love. I abandon myself to Thee. O Jesus, my little brother, I want no other joy than that of pleasing Thee. O my little King, give the virtues of Thy childhood."



—ST. THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS

ANNUNCIATION GRACE

BY MOTHER MARIE DES DOULEURS

Let us stay close to the Virgin, with the Angel whom she outshines.
There we are near to a wellspring,
We are near to the sun,
We are before the one who has accepted the fullness of light,
Whose innocence is so dazzling that it shines like the snow in the light of the sun.
We are before the simplest of souls,
Who has received grace without being afraid,
Who has looked upon Love and has dared to accept it,
Who has lifted her eyes to the Lord and been so wonderfully filled with joy at the beauty and power of God that she can think of herself no more.

Mary, the saint of saints,
The Queen, translucent abode of God;
Mary most simple.
Mary, the pure one of God — at her side the Angels are not wholly white.

The All-Powerful Lord has girded her with strength: Her strength, her robe of splendor, is her simplicity.

- She listens
- She understands
- She accepts
- She says so, and that is all.

By the purity of her intention she is wholly in God, and so God is wholly in her.
Such a soul as hers could overcome all, could conquer all.

- She is like a diamond
- She is like a golden arrow
- She is like a ray of the sun through the clear air.

How quickly she goes, how she ascends,
How swift she is, this humble Virgin whose throne is above all the heavens.

She rises like the mist when the sun appears;
She is the dewdrop absorbed by the heat...
She disappears from our eyes into the glory of Infinite Love.