



MUSIC FOR THE LITURGY

Sunday, December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Gathering: Come, Come, Emmanuel

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 85)

Show us your kindness, O God. Show us your kindness, O God.

Preparation Waiting In Silence BB 51

Mass Parts Mass For Christ The Savior

Communion Take And Eat BB 364

Recessional: Ready The Way BB 63

✠ PARISH TITHING ✠

Our Parish needs to take in \$9700.00 each week in order to make ends meet. This amount represents an adjusted budget offertory of \$8500.00 per week plus the combination of budgeted Property and Fuel second collections (\$4800.00 per month divided into 4 weeks or \$1200.00 weekly). Your weekly contribution helps ensure that the Parish remains a vibrant community. Please remember to submit your weekly gift even if you will be away. Consider signing up for electronic giving (see below). Especially in these trying times, your Parish depends on your responsible stewardship and support!

**COLLECTION AMOUNTS FOR
DECEMBER 17, 2023
WILL APPEAR IN NEXT WEEK'S BULLETIN**



Out of respect for the Lord and in consideration of fellow parishioners, please remember to silence or turn off your cell phones during Mass. Thank you!



PLEASE HELP US!

As you leave church, kindly take your Bulletin with you - or return it to the basket at the entrance of the Church, return your music book and Mass card to their proper place, and pick up after yourself as you leave. Thanks for being attentive and respectful! F. Albert.



St. Luke the Evangelist is now on Facebook! Go to www.facebook.com/stlukenh.org/ or **St. Luke the Evangelist Parish – Newton/Plastow** and give us a Like! Please invite fellow parishioners & friends to do the same.

Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish uses **Parish Giving** to provide parishioners with an opportunity to make your offertory and other contributions through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Parish Giving is a simple, secure, and convenient way to manage your stewardship without weekly envelopes and without worries. This program is available to parishioners at no cost. Log on to the St. Luke the Evangelist Parish website at <http://stlukenh.org>, click on the Parish Giving logo, and follow the easy registration instructions.

UPCOMING SECOND & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

December 24	No Second Collection
December 25	Christmas and Needs of Parish
December 31	No Second Collection

Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on Income

Annual Income	5% Commitment annually/ weekly	3% Commitment annually/ weekly
\$100,000	\$5,000/\$100	\$3,000/\$60
\$75,000	\$3,750/\$75	\$2,250/\$45
\$60,000	\$3,000/\$60	\$1,800/\$36
\$50,000	\$2,500/\$50	\$1,500/\$30
\$40,000	\$2,000/\$40	\$1,200/\$24
\$30,000	\$1,500/\$30	\$900/\$18
\$25,000	\$1,250/\$25	\$750/\$15
\$15,000	\$750/\$15	\$450/\$9

Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on a Percentage Increase

Your Current Offertory Contribution	25% Increase	30% Increase	40% Increase
\$75.00	\$93.75	\$97.50	\$105.00
\$50.00	\$62.50	\$65.00	\$70.00
\$40.00	\$50.00	\$52.00	\$56.00
\$35.00	\$43.75	\$45.50	\$49.00
\$30.00	\$37.50	\$39.00	\$42.00
\$25.00	\$31.25	\$32.50	\$35.00
\$20.00	\$25.00	\$26.00	\$28.00
\$15.00	\$18.75	\$19.50	\$21.00
\$10.00	\$12.50	\$13.00	\$14.00
\$5.00	\$6.25	\$6.50	\$7.00

CLOTHING DRIVE

Kimberly's 18th Annual Holiday Give Away!!!

I'm back!!! Despite having a toddler now and baby #2 on the way, I'm preparing for another collection!!! We will be collecting clothing and nonperishable food items on **January 6 and 7** at Holy Angels Church in Plaistow (in the Parish Hall), from **12:00 to 4:00 PM** each day. We are accepting CLEAN clothing of any size, any season, any decade. Any donations of socks or underwear must be new and packaged. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to volunteer, please contact me at: kimberly-andrade@comcast.net. Thank you so much for your continued support throughout the years. I couldn't do it without you!

God bless,
Kimberly Clenord

MASS SCHEDULE FOR SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

This year, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God is NOT a holy day of obligation. However, for those who want to celebrate the feast, Masses will be held on:

Sunday, December 31 at 4:00 PM in Plaistow
and on
Monday, January 1 at 9:00 AM in Newton

PARISH OFFICE CLOSED

The Parish Office will be closed on Monday, December 25, Tuesday, December 26, and on Monday, January 1.

MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH

Did you know that all Catholics are required to be married in the Church as a condition of the validity of their marriage?

Any Catholic married in a civil ceremony (JP) or in any religious ceremony other than a Catholic one (unless specifically excepted by the Bishop) is not living out the Sacrament of Marriage in its fullness according to the teaching of the Church. Contact Father Albert in the Parish Office for more information and assistance – there are ways in which your situation may be resolved!

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

If you would like an "end of year" financial statement of your contributions to the parish for 2023, **please call Jackie** at the Parish Office at 603-382-8324. **Financial Statements are issued on a request only basis.**

NEW HAMPSHIRE CATHOLIC APPEAL

Thank you on behalf of Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish for making a donation to the New Hampshire Catholic Appeal. If you have not made a donation to the Appeal, you can do so by filling out a donation envelope found in the pews or at the church entrance. You can make an online gift by visiting www.catholicnh.org/about/get-involved/giving/nhca/. You can also use your smartphone with the QR code below.

Our Parish target is \$46,740.00. **As of November 13, 2023, we have reached our goal!** Thank you again for your support of our NH Catholic community and these important diocesan ministries.



GIVING TREES

Thanks to all who took ornaments from the Giving Tree this year. You have helped to make the Christmas season brighter for children of the community and for many people who are struggling to make ends meet. Your generosity is truly appreciated!



WHILE AWAY THIS WINTER...

We appreciate all of you who remember to send in your Parish Offertory during the Winter even when on vacation or visiting other parishes. Thank you for remembering that our expenses also continue through the Winter months. We invite others to consider doing the same before or even after you return home.

✠ WEEKLY CALENDAR ✠

Monday, December 25
PARISH OFFICE CLOSED

Tuesday, December 26
PARISH OFFICE CLOSED
NO DAILY MASS IN PLAISTOW

6:00 PM Grief Share Group *Plaistow*

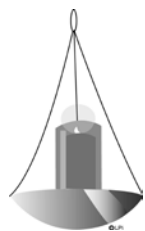
Wednesday, December 27
Holy Angels Church Open
All Day For Prayer

Thursday, December 28
NO ADORATION IN NEWTON

Saturday, December 30
3:00 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation *Plaistow*

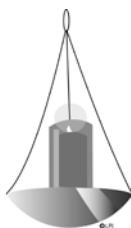
PRAYER LINE

St. Luke's offers a prayer line as a resource for those seeking prayer assistance. To submit your prayer request please call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 314 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.



The Sanctuary Candle in Holy Angels Church will burn this week in loving memory of **Deceased Members of the Fogel Family and Frank Kelcourse** by Elaine Kelcourse

The Sanctuary Candle in Mary, Mother of the Church will burn this week in loving memory of **Suzanne Busch** by the St. Vincent de Paul Society



✠ MASS INTENTIONS ✠

Saturday, December 23 ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent
2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38 (Vigil)

4:00 PM Joyce Gauthier by Sr. Lorraine Aucoin, pm
Plaistow

Sunday, December 24 ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent
2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38

8:00 AM Dexter Cronin by Tom and Cathy Cronin
Newton

10:00 AM Priscilla Aro (Birthday Remembrance) by her children and grandchildren
Plaistow

Sunday, December 24 ~ The Nativity of the Lord
Is 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Mt 1:1-25 (Vigil)

4:00 PM People of the Parish
Plaistow

6:30 PM People of the Parish
Newton

Monday, December 25 ~ The Nativity of the Lord
Is 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18

9:00 AM People of the Parish
Newton

Tuesday, December 26 ~ Stephen, the First Martyr
Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Mt 10:17-22

No Mass

Wednesday, December 27 ~ John, Apostle & Evangelist
1 Jn 1:1-4; Jn 20:1a, 2-8

6:30 PM Norma Amshey (Month's Mind)
Plaistow

Thursday, December 28 ~ The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
1 Jn 1:5-2:2; Mt 2:13-18

8:00 AM All Souls Intentions
Newton

Friday, December 29 ~ Thomas Becket, Bishop & Martyr
1 Jn 2:3-11; Lk 2:22-35

No Mass

Saturday, December 30 ~ Sixth Day Within the Octave of The Nativity of the Lord

1 Jn 2:12-17; Lk 2:36-40 (Day)
Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 2:12-21; Lk 2:22-40 (Vigil)

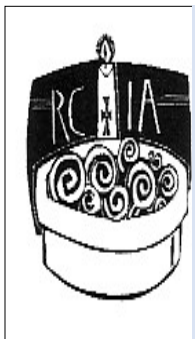
4:00 PM People of the Parish
Plaistow

Sunday, December 31 ~ The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 2:12-21; Lk 2:22-40

8:00 AM Wallace and Francis Antczak by the Burge family
Newton

10:00 AM Rochelle Justin by Charlie and Lisa Angwin
Plaistow



WELCOME IN CHRIST!

Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish invites all to a deeper love of Jesus and to a fullness of communion with the Church. The **rites of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)** is a process where adults and older children are welcomed into the Catholic Church. Some have never been Baptized, others never received Eucharist or

Confirmation, and others arrive at our door after a long faith journey.

Do you know someone who is thinking about becoming part of our Catholic community? Are you the non-Catholic spouse of a parishioner who is wondering about full communion with the Church? Are you an adult Catholic who for whatever reason, "missed" one or more of the sacraments of initiation while growing up? Do you have children over 7 years of age who were never Baptized, or older children who "missed" sacraments?

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (and its adapted form for children) welcomes all kinds of people into the Catholic family. The RCIA is for any adult who is: unbaptized and recognizes a need for spirituality in their life, or Baptized and raised in another Christian tradition but interested in learning about the Catholic faith, or Baptized in the Catholic faith, but never received any formal religious training.

Children of all ages are welcome and participate in age appropriate meetings for their RCIA experience.

Contact Father Albert or Cathy Smith in the Parish Office at 603.382.8324 for more information.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

The Compassionate Friends provide support for bereaved families after the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling—any age, any cause. Visit our website at www.tcfnewburyport.org.

VITA NOVA – MEN’S RETREAT

Join other Catholic men for fellowship and spiritual growth as they explore *Surrendering To Divine Providence* on **January 5-7, 2024**. For more information, go to www.vitanova.org/catholic-mens-retreat.

FOR OUR RECORDS

We need your help to keep our records current. If there are any births, deaths, marriages, moves, or address changes in your family, please notify the Parish Office at 603-382-8324 or by email at jtremblay@stluketheevangelist.net. If you're new to our parish, registration forms are available at the entrances of both churches. Registration forms can also be found on our website at <http://stlukenh.org>.

ADORERS NEEDED AT ADORATION

We are truly blessed to have times for Adoration of Our Lord in our Parish. This time of prayer and intercession is not only a source of great grace for the individual but is a great source of grace for us as a parish family. We have many who have made the commitment to spend an hour each week with our Eucharistic Lord. Adoration takes place each Thursday in Newton from 8:30 AM to 8:30 PM. We also need people at all times so we can have 2 people at each hour. If you can commit to one hour a week in Adoration of our Lord, or if you can be a substitute, please contact Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305, or email her a csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

The Church in Plaistow is open all day on Wednesdays for people to stop by and pray before the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.

HOLY ANGELS CEMETERY CLOSED

Holy Angels Cemetery in Plaistow is closed from December 2023 until Spring 2024. This decision comes as result of the real dangers of snow and ice in the Cemetery and the costs to Parishioners to inter during the winter months. Please contact the Parish Office with any questions.

✦ PARISH DIRECTORY ✦

Parish Office 603-382-8324
Parish Prayer Line 603-382-8324 x 314
St. Vincent de Paul Society 603-382-8324 x 315
St. Luke's Food Pantry 603-819-4949
Preschool 603-382-9783
Presentation of Mary Convent 603-382-2744

Fr. Albert Tremblay fr.albert@stluketheevangelist.net
Cathy Smith csmith@stluketheevangelist.net
Joyce Szczapa jszczapa@stluketheevangelist.net
Jackie Tremblay jtremblay@stluketheevangelist.net
Val Barczak mvmbarczak@comcast.net
Parish Council parishcouncil@stluketheevangelist.net



MONTHLY FOOD DRIVE

**Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus
St. Jude Council #6617**

The Knights of Columbus and Saint Luke the Evangelist Food Pantry would like to thank our parishioners for the ongoing support to feed those in need. Over the last two months, support has been provided to 135 families. That represents 118 children under the age of 18 and 111 adults over the age of 60, for a total of 370 individuals served. Shopping lists and bags are provided on the 3rd week of every month with the general collection of non-perishable items happening the following (4th) weekend. Food donations can also be left in the plastic totes at the rear of either church or brought to the Parish Office any time they are open. Prefer not to shop? Gift cards or checks can be made out to Saint Luke Food Pantry anytime. Your generosity and support are greatly appreciated!

**KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
HAPPENINGS**

Thank You: Thank you to Knight Jim Edwards who donated a 12 foot Christmas Tree to Mary Mother of the Church in memory of his special friend, Suzanne Busch, who recently passed away.

Pasta For A Purpose: The Knights had a goal to raise \$1,400 to buy a new freezer for our food pantry. The event on November 18th was a huge success and we beat the goal by a wide margin. Thank you to Chef Rudi for a great meal and to all the volunteers, those who attended, and those that made donations. Vivat Jesus! (Jesus Lives)

**THE KNIGHTS OF
COLUMBUS
ST. JUDE COUNCIL
#6617**



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

A Men's AA Step Meeting is held on Sunday mornings from 7:00 to 8:00 AM at the St. Luke the Evangelist Parish Hall (Holy Angels.) Masks are required. Bring your own coffee. For more information, call Joe at 617-921-9899.

CURSILLO

If you have a desire to know Jesus more closely, a Cursillo is for you. The Cursillo weekend is a short course in Christianity. The purpose of the weekend is to facilitate a meaningful personal encounter with Christ and his body, the Church. Cursillo weekends are being offered at the Sarto Center in Hookset, NH. To find out more, contact Mark Collopy at 603-833-7341 or explore www.nhcursillo.org.



GIVE BACK REUSABLE BAG PROGRAM

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, has been chosen by **Shaw's**, 4 Plaistow Road, Plaistow, NH to participate in the *Give Back Where It Counts Reusable Bag Program*. For the entire month of December, for every \$3.00 bag purchased at **Shaw's in Plaistow**, they will donate \$1.00 to St. Vincent de Paul. The bags will be displayed near the self-checkout or ask a customer service representative for help.

**St. Vincent
de Paul
Society**



Your "Dropped Dollar" Hard At Work

Thank you for your continued support of the St. Vincent de Paul Society! Please know that your "dropped dollars" are being used wisely to help the poor in our area. Your generosity does not go unnoticed.

Drop-a-Dollar in the St. Vincent de Paul box on your way out of church. Remember ~ 100% of your donation is used to help those who need a hand up, not a handout.

Our next meeting on **Wednesday, January 17 at 7:00 PM**. We meet downstairs in the Church Hall in Plaistow. **New members are always welcome!**

If you seek assistance or need information about the St. Vincent de Paul Society, call 603-382-8324 x315.

**Hear, O LORD, and answer me
for I am poor and needy.**



A reflection for the Fourth Sunday in Advent Year B

In this day and age parenting is no easy task! More than one parent has lamented, “When they were under my control things were fine; as soon as they go to school, we lose them.” How parents ought to form their children in good values is an open question, but all agree that as the children grow there will be frequent clash of wills (the “terrible twos” is all too real!). The desire of parents is that the children grow in their obedience so that they learn the family spirit and grow into

adults who make known by the way they live the good values taught them. The gospel this Sunday is the story of Mary’s visitation to Elizabeth. Here we have two adult women who, as the story unfolds, exemplify for us the same threefold dynamic parents try to instill in their children: obedience, spirit, make known.

Mary “sets out” to visit Elizabeth in obedience to Gabriel’s command. Elizabeth, too, is pregnant according to the word of Gabriel, so the meeting of these two women naturally promises something unusual! Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and the Son of God became incarnate; Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit” and announced the presence of her Lord. Mary and Elizabeth both receive the Holy Spirit, are obedient (“hear” and respond), and have annunciations (Mary, that she would conceive Jesus; Elizabeth, that her Lord was present).

On this day before Christmas we are gently led into the depths of the Christmas mystery. Jesus’ incarnation was no Hallmark card. Already on this Sunday we are reminded that his life was one of obedience to his Father “Behold, I come to do your will” (second reading) that meant offering his body for our salvation. Mary and Elizabeth show us the way to our being overshadowed by the Spirit, obedient to God’s will, and our own living as disciples who announce the nearness of our God. Our entry into Christ is through the Holy Spirit and obedience. We define ourselves in relation to our Lord through obedience. But always our encounter with God leads to annunciation of God’s presence.

Obedience, Holy Spirit, annunciation: here is the depth of the Christmas mystery. The beginning of Jesus’ life is the be-inning of our own new life in Christ.

God’s plan of salvation is fulfilled by Christ’s obedience to the Father’s will. The way the mystery moves from annunciation to fulfillment is by obedience. The same dynamic defines our Christian way of living: we are overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in baptism when, in the midst of the Christian community, the Lord’s presence is announced. But our own annunciation only comes to fulfillment when we spend out lives being obedient to God’s will.

Think about this: doing God’s will is an incarnation and annunciation! The circumstances of our obedience won’t be so spectacular as Mary’s and Elizabeth’s; but our obedience is no less fruitful. In our helping hands, God is present. In our visits to the sick and elderly, God is present. In our disciplining and forming our children, God is present. In all our daily dying to self, God is present. This is “incarnation” - God is present. This is the depth of the Christmas mystery: our obedience.

KNIGHT LINE

December 2023

What's happening with your Knights of Columbus, St Jude Council #6617
Our Mission: Assist Those In Need and Help Support Our Parish

A Message from our Grand Knight Peter Richards:

As we gather to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, your Knights of Columbus, Council #6617 want to wish each of you a Holy Christmas and to thank you for your support through out the year. It was so nice to welcome many back to our St Patricks Day and Pasta with a Purpose dinners. Not only did we raise funds to support the St Luke's Food Pantry and the other charities we support, we as a parish were able to come together again in person to enjoy good food, entertainment and fellowship.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Vivat Jesus - Peter Richards GK

Look what we accomplished in 2023

- **28th annual St Jude Open** – Another sell out and a huge financial success to assist those in dire financial need in our local community.
- **Tootsie Roll Drive** – To assist the mentally and physically challenged in our local community – top 3 in NH for fundraising.
- **5 Blood Drives** - Hosted two in Newton NH, three in Atkinson NH
- **4 Scholarships** – Awarded to two Council Brothers grandkids and one each to Sanborn and Timberland High School Seniors
- **Food Pantry** – Financial support of the pantry and giving tree, monthly food drive, food baskets, helping to purchase two new freezers and assisting to load and unload food.
- **Fund Raising Meals** – Irish Festival and Pasta for a Purpose, supporting our St Luke Food Pantry and the other charities we support.
- **Weekly Rosaries** – We pray weekly for peace, respect life and other intentions.
- **People Helping People** – yard clean ups, rides, small to large projects – installing special steps for an 11 year old in Plaistow suffering from cancer to get in and out of her above ground pool and installing a handicap ramp for a disabled single Mom in Kingston.
- **Parish** – Donation for new convection oven for the Preschool Kitchen
- **Pregnancy Care Centers (local)** – Provide financial support
- **Respect Life** – Participation in various programs
- **Haven NH** – Promoting their services and financial support
- **Mother's and Father's Day Remembrance**
- **Stations of the Cross** – Hosted the Stations of the Cross followed with a Soup Supper
- **Memorial Mass** – To remember our deceased Brothers
- **Social Events** – Council BBQ, Christmas Party and honoring long time volunteer, Charlie Manes and his wife, Claire
- **Plaistow Pumpkin Fest** – Handing out candy and collecting food for the St Luke Food Pantry
- **Seminarian Support** - Provide financial donations

Get to Know Us

In this issue we introduce you to our Council:



Our founder the Blessed Father McGivney saw a need to help those in his parish and surrounding communities who were struggling. Because of this Father McGivney was inspired to create a band of Catholic men, devoted to the principles of charity and unity – helping those in need. More than a century later, his legacy has been lived out in the hearts, minds, and helping hands of his Knights of Columbus. Where there is a need, there is a Knight. Today, there are more than 2 million members of the Knights of Columbus in more than 16,000 local councils located in more than a dozen countries around the world.

The Knights of Columbus, St. Jude Council #6617, is one of those councils that supports the parish of St Luke the Evangelist Parish. We were chartered on September 15, 1974 with 30 members and Norman Dumont serving as the first Grand Knight. Named after St. Jude of Thaddeus, who is the Patron of Hopeless Causes, Saint Jude is invoked in desperate situations, stating that the faithful should persevere in the environment of harsh, difficult circumstances, just as their forefathers had done before them.

With the merger of Mary, Mother of the Church and Holy Angels parishes in 2007, the two Knights of Columbus councils also joined together into one under the St. Jude Council name. Over the years the membership has grown to 100 + brothers and the good works we provide for our neighbors in need has done the same.

In 2024 the Knights of Columbus, St Jude Council #6617 will celebrate our Golden Anniversary. Over those 50 years we have put our faith into action. What we have accomplished is remarkable, by following our Order's principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism. We are fortunate to have such a giving and caring group of people in and associated with our Council. We ask for your continued support and prayers as we do what God has put on our hearts to do.

Pray, Discern, Join

Do not deceive yourself by just listening to his word;
instead, put it into practice
James: 1:22

DISCOVER YOUR MISSION, BECOME A KNIGHT

For more information talk to a Knight. Join us and participate in one of our many events. Help is always welcome, and you do not need to be a Knight to participate. Sit in on a Knights Business Meeting to meet and learn more about what we are all about. Meetings are held on the first Monday of the month at 7 PM and take place in the Parish Hall at Holy Angels Church in Plaistow.

Ready to join or would like more information? Contact:

Peter Richards, Grand Knight
603-382-4315
pmrpjs6@comcast.net

Dan Sullivan, Financial Director
603-770-4803
dans49@comcast.net

You can now join online - www.kofc.org/joinus



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Advent (B)
December 24, 2023

How Can This Be?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

The reading from Samuel assures us that the leader we are awaiting will be of the royal house of David. We presume this means personal power and political leadership, and recognition of this from others.

The Gospel turns us in a different direction. In Luke 1:34, Mary asks, "How can this be?" This question can be understood in two different ways. One means: How is it going to happen? The other suggests: You've got to be kidding! When told she will bear a child, this virgin asks: How is this going to happen? Her visitor explains the unfolding of an unbelievable event. While stories in pagan religions described how gods took

on human form, such wondrous events supposedly happened in royal families—not in the life of an unassuming girl promised to a modest carpenter. In the Incarnation, a singular historic event, Mary did not say: "You've got to be kidding!" She replied: "If that's what you want, I'm willing."

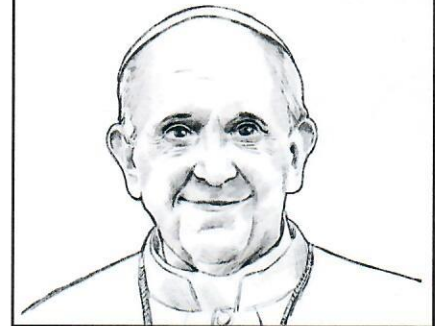
Advent readings have traced God leading the people to salvation and a new way of living, to an outline of an individual chosen by God to lead them, to the realization that this leader will be a descendant of David. However, none of this happens as we might expect. Rather, it unfolds in such an unpretentious way that many people did not even realize it was happening. Who could blame anyone for saying: You've got to be kidding! But God was not kidding.

Now we are ready for Christmas. †

A Word from Pope Francis

[H]ow often our life is made up of postponements....Today, on the threshold of Christmas, Mary invites us not to postpone, to say "yes"....Every "yes" costs something...but it still costs less than what that courageous "yes" cost her, that prompt "yes", that "let it be to me according to your word," which brought us salvation.

ANGELUS, ROME, DECEMBER 20, 2020



Sunday Readings

2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16

The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.

Romans 16:25–27

Now to him who can strengthen you...through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever.

Luke 1:26–38

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

The salvation story is not what anyone expected.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Where is God working in your life?
- What is your prayer this Christmas—for yourself and for others?

The Greatest Present

Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

Have you ever had the embarrassing experience of showing up without a gift at a gift-exchange Christmas party? “The Little Drummer Boy” reminds us of our awkward and embarrassing empty-handed arrival. In the well-known Christmas carol, he comes to the stable in Bethlehem, sees the Christ Child and is overwhelmed by the solemnity of the moment. Who wouldn’t be with so many angels, shepherds, and kings?

Then the kings place their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh before the King of Kings, and the drummer boy blushes, “I have no gift to bring.” At first, it’s awkward, but then he has a flash of genius: “I have no gift to bring,” he sings, that is, except for me and the beating of my drum: “Rum pum pum pum.” The



little drummer boy understands that his simple playing is enough of a gift for the babe. Showing up is plenty.

Isn’t that what Emmanuel (“God with us”) is all about? God shows up and is present, and there is no greater gift. He’s the

gift that changes the world and us forever. And just as God’s presence in the world is meaningful to us, our presence can change the lives of others because the gift of true presence is greater than any other.

Many people are lonely, a feeling that often intensifies during the Christmas season. Show up. Be truly present in another’s life this Christmas and into the new year. You are anything but empty-handed; your presence is your gift. †

From *Liguorian*, December 2013

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, so that the world may know peace and every mother’s child is safe, we pray—Be born in us, be born in our world.

The Redemptorists

Signs of the Season—Part IV: Wrappings

Paige Byrne Shortal

My friend made gift-wrapping into an art form. When our children were little and there were many packages, Mary would come over and wrap with me. She made it fun. We’d put on Christmas music, and I would prepare the packages and gift tags while she wrapped each beautifully, complete with homemade bows. One year, I even snuck in her gifts to be wrapped—which she finally noticed with mock outrage

and genuine amusement on Christmas morning.

Wrapping gifts is a fitting custom as we celebrate the Incarnation. Jesus did not just come wrapped as a human being—like God in disguise. He fully took on human form. Our wrapping is integral to who we are, but it is not the whole story; the wrapping is only waiting to be opened. Inside the little child is a wise person trying to be heard. Inside the woman an intelligent leader with a vision for a better world. Inside the man a gentle

heart with a longing for peace. Inside the elder a youngster with boundless energy. Inside the homely person a beauty hoping to be discovered. Inside the sinner a saint, longing to be good. Inside the dying person the hope of new life. And inside each person the indwelling of God. The indwelling of God!

That’s what Christmas is all about—the birth of Jesus into our hearts so that we humble believers may be Christ-bearers to this waiting, needy world. Merry Christmas. †



WEEKDAY READINGS

December 25–30

Monday, Nativity of the Lord (Christmas):
Is 52:7–10 / Heb 1:1–6 / Jn 1:1–18 or
1:1–5, 9–14

Tuesday, St. Stephen:
Acts 6:8–10; 7:54–59 / Mt 10:17–22

Wednesday, St. John:
1 Jn 1:1–4 / Jn 20:1a, 2–8

Thursday, Holy Innocents:
1 Jn 1:5–2:2 / Mt 2:13–18

Friday, Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 2:3–11 / Lk 2:22–35

Saturday, Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 2:12–17 / Lk 2:36–40

Bringing Home
the Word 
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