

Merry Christmas

*"...this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
...the babe, the son of Mary."*





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THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD DECEMBER 25, 2016

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24—CHRISTMAS EVE

The Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

4:00PM Albert Catanio—Memorial

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25—CHRISTMAS DAY

The Nativity of the Lord

12:00AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Church
 7:30 AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Church
 9:00 AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Church
 10:30AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Church

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26

St. Stephen, the First Martyr

7:30AM Jeannine Light—6th Anniversary

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27

St. John, Apostle & Evangelist

7:30AM Frank Almonte—Memorial

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

7:30AM John Gardner, Jr.—Memorial

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29

Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

7:30AM Souls in Purgatory

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

7:30AM Jean & Mary Verri—Memorial

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31—NEW YEAR'S EVE

Seventh Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

8:30AM John Murphy—Memorial

Vigil Mass for the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

4:00PM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Church

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2017—NEW YEAR'S DAY

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

7:30 AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Church
 9:00 AM Robert Anderson—Memorial
 10:30AM Carlos & Rose Monti & Paul Amato—Memorial
 5:00PM Lillian Peterson—Birthday Remembrance

O, Come let us adore Him





Dear Parishioners:

Merry Christmas! This year we are blessed to have the great feast of the Nativity of our Lord on a Sunday. This means we've had an extra week of Advent prayer and preparation for Christmas. So celebrate the birth of our Savior!

Just weeks ago in Rome on the Third Sunday of Advent Pope Francis offered his greetings after the Angelus to the large crowd of Romans gathered at St. Peter's Square: *"Today my first greeting is reserved for all the children and young people of Rome who have come for the traditional 'Bambinelli' Blessing."*

The *Bambinelli* Blessing is a great tradition at which the Holy Father blesses Baby Jesus figures. Thousands of children gather in the square with the Baby Jesus figurines from their home Nativity sets held aloft. This year was no different and Pope Francis said to the children gathered for the blessing: *"Dear children, when you pray before your crèche with your parents, ask the Baby Jesus to help all of us to love God and our neighbor."*

The very tradition of setting up a Nativity in our homes and Churches goes back to 1223. Christmas was coming and St. Francis of Assisi longed to do something to help the people of the small Italian town of Greccio to feel close to the infant Jesus who was born for them in a stable in Bethlehem. The Saint knew these good folks would never have a chance to visit the Holy Land so he wanted to make the Nativity a real and personal experience for the faithful.

He persuaded a friend to bring straw, hay, an ox and an ass to a cave overlooking the town. There, St. Francis did the best that he could to recreate the scene within the stable at Bethlehem. The news spread throughout the neighboring countryside and so, on Christmas Eve, people came from miles around for Midnight Mass, all of them willingly climbing the steep and rocky hillside in the bitter cold.

As St. Francis was a Deacon, he sang the Gospel telling the story of the first Christmas. He hoped and prayed that the congregation would see his makeshift manger and imagine the Baby Jesus lying in the hay, with Mary and Joseph on either side.

One man later reported that, during the Mass, he had a vision in which he saw a baby asleep in the manger. As he watched, he saw St. Francis pick the baby up, holding Him very lovingly in his arms. The man understood this to mean that the child Jesus had been forgotten by many people, but through St. Francis, that Christmas night in Greccio, the Baby Jesus came to life in the hearts and minds of all those who saw the crib.

St. Francis later explained why he created the crèche, suggesting: *"I wanted to do something that recalled the memory of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of His infancy, how He lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by."*

In the spirit of such a religious pilgrimage inspired by Saint Francis, I invite you to enter on a journey on this

Christmas 2016, a journey to Bethlehem. We may not be able to make the physical pilgrimage to the land of the Savior's birth, but we can make the journey interiorly, that is, in our hearts, praying before the Nativity sets displayed in our homes and here at Church as spiritually we travel to Bethlehem to adore Him.

Our encounter with the Child of Bethlehem whose birth we celebrate this Christmas Day should fill us with great joy and renewed enthusiasm to live our Catholic faith. As we make our spiritual journey to Bethlehem to behold the face of God in Jesus Christ, I note that the word Bethlehem means *"House of Bread."* The child Jesus came not only to redeem us through His death and resurrection, but to nourish and sustain us with His very Body and Blood, as He does at every Mass we celebrate and each time we worthily receive Him in Holy Communion.

On behalf of Fr. Barrow, Deacon Dowd, and myself, we wish you all a Happy and Holy Christmas! May it be a time of great joy and hope, a time of renewed faith and love, for you and your family. May you grow ever stronger in your Catholic faith and in your relationship with our Lord and Savior born Christmas Day. As Pope Francis suggests, *"may the Baby Jesus help all of us to love God and our neighbor."*

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Be well. Do good. God Bless. Go Pats!!!

Father Healey



Why do we give gifts at Christmas Time?

Charlie Brown: "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" Linus van Pelt: "Sure Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about... And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this [shall be] a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men... That is what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown."

During the Advent season Americans will spend billions of dollars on Christmas gifts. A plethora of electronics, clothing, and knick-knacks will make it under the spruce, pine, or fir tree during this season. It is an interesting tradition that we take for granted (would it be a good Christmas if there were no presents under the tree?). It is a tradition that may be traced to the account of the three Magi in the Gospel of Matthew who brought their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (each representing a different facet of Christ as savior).

It is no doubt great to give and receive gifts; to anxiously watch as a gift you gave is opened and (hopefully) the expression of joy comes upon the face of the receiver. It is a wonderful opportunity to be selfless and to show love for another. It was always difficult for me to go to bed as a child on Christmas Eve. There is, however, the danger of gift giving for the wrong reasons. There could be the thought that if there are not enough gifts under the tree then the person (or parent) has failed to provide. In some cases a gift can substitute for expressing true affection and gratitude toward another. Or it can contribute to an unhealthy attachment to things in this life, rather than the healthy use of them. One of the more dangerous attitudes surrounding gift giving is entitlement (i.e. "I deserve this gift.").

A gift is something given freely and undeservedly. Gift giving is based on God's own gift to us of salvation, when He came down from heaven as Linus so beautifully quoted above. So that when we give gifts to each other, we imitate God's act of free and undeserved love toward us on that night He came down to earth.

If you have a question about the Catholic Faith , email your questions directly to Father Barrow at associate@olmparish.org

Weekly Collection

Collection results from last weekend are unavailable due to the bulletin printing deadline.

If you have been away on vacation or visiting another parish, we kindly ask you to please make up your missed budget envelopes. We depend solely upon your weekly support to meet our weekly parish expenses.

Thank you for your generous support!

Please remember Our Lady of Mercy Church in your will or estate.



SECOND COLLECTIONS

This Weekend: The Christmas Collection
Next Weekend: Building & Grounds Collection



Monday, December 26th
OLM Parish Office Closed

Friday, December 30th
OLM Parish Office Closes at Noon

Monday, January 2, 2017
OLM Parish Office is Closed
Please plan accordingly.

The OLM Parish Staff wish all OLM Parishioners a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Thank you for allowing us to serve you and for your support!



Religious Education NEWS

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to our OLM Religious Ed students, families, teachers and aides!

**Mickey St. Jean & Doug Green
OLM RE Directors**



Outreach Update

A Happy Christmas & New Year to all our OLM Outreach Benefactors! We are grateful for your support of our outreach to the poor and needy. God's Blessings for a Happy & Healthy New Year!

**Doug Green
OLM Outreach Director**



A Blessed Christmas and New Year to the OLM School faculty, staff, students and families. Enjoy the Christmas vacation and see you in 2017!

**Scott W. Fuller
Principal**

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www.olmschool.org

Nativity of the Lord



In comparison to the celebration of Easter which dates back to the second century, the celebration of Christmas is of late origin, dating back only to the fourth century.

No claim is made for December 25 being the actual date of Jesus' birth, but it is probably no accident that this celebration of the coming of the true light falls at a time of increasing daylight.

Expanding that symbolism, four separate, carefully chosen and crafted sets of readings and prayers are prescribed for the various times of celebration of this solemnity: vigil, midnight, dawn, and day.

The images contained in these readings and prayers journey from early hope to radiant fulfillment.



This bulletin insert was written by Marion Eagen, a liturgist and musician in the diocese of Scranton, Pa. © 2002 Resource Publications, Inc., 160 E. Virginia St. #290, San Jose, CA 95112, (408) 286-8505. All rights reserved.

New Year's Mass Schedule

*The Solemnity of Mary,
The Holy Mother of God*



New Year's Eve

Saturday, December 31, 2016

Confessions at 3:00PM

Vigil Mass at 4:00pm

New Year's Day

Sunday, January 1, 2017

Masses at 7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am

& 5:00PM

Peace
on
Earth.

A graphic with the text "Peace on Earth." in a stylized font, with a globe of the Earth in the center of the word "on". The text is arranged in a circular pattern around the globe.

Nativity Prayer

Let Your goodness Lord appear to us, that we made in your image, conform ourselves to it. In our own strength we cannot imitate Your majesty, power, and wonder nor is it fitting for us to try. But Your mercy reaches from the heavens through the clouds to the earth below. You have come to us as a small child, but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal love. Caress us with Your tiny hands, embrace us with Your tiny arms and pierce our hearts with Your soft, sweet cries.
—*St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)*

Christmas Dinner Prayer

Lord of All,
We give you thanks for your abundance, and for all the great things you have given us, especially the birth of Your Son on this day. We ask your blessing upon this food, and upon our friends and family. We also pray that in your great mercy, you would look kindly upon all those in need this day. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

