

Link to Liturgy



4th Sunday of Advent The Birth of Jesus Christ Came About

Lessons and Discussions

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“...he was a righteous man”

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“Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.”

Page 12 – Mary Ever Virgin

“Through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.”

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“God is with us.”

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“took his wife into his home.”

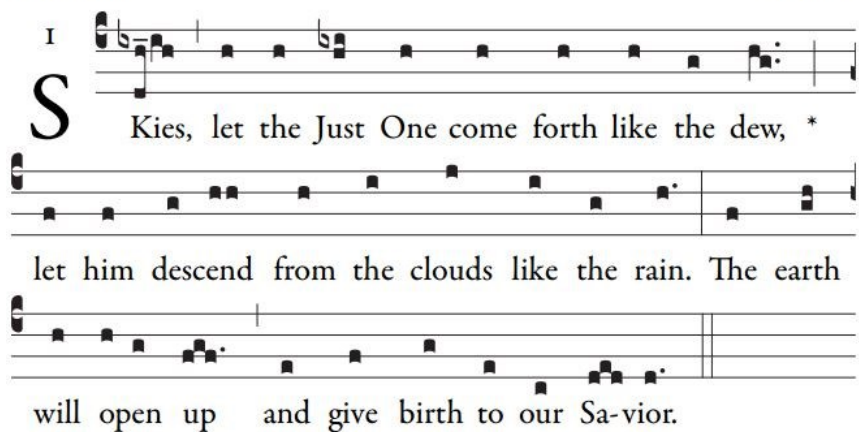
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Entrance Antiphon (Is 45:8) – Roman Missal

Should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred. Another song can be substituted, but should have the same theme; this should not be the norm.

Rorate celi *Is 45: 8*



I
S Kies, let the Just One come forth like the dew, *
let him descend from the clouds like the rain. The earth
will open up and give birth to our Sa- vior.

Source: <http://www.ccwatershed.org>

Alternate options:

Hymns

Come, O Long Expected Jesus
Hail to the Lord's Anointed
Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
Savior of the Nations, Come

Praise Songs

Prepare the Way
Never Let Go

Remnant

Big Gulp

Collect – Roman Missal

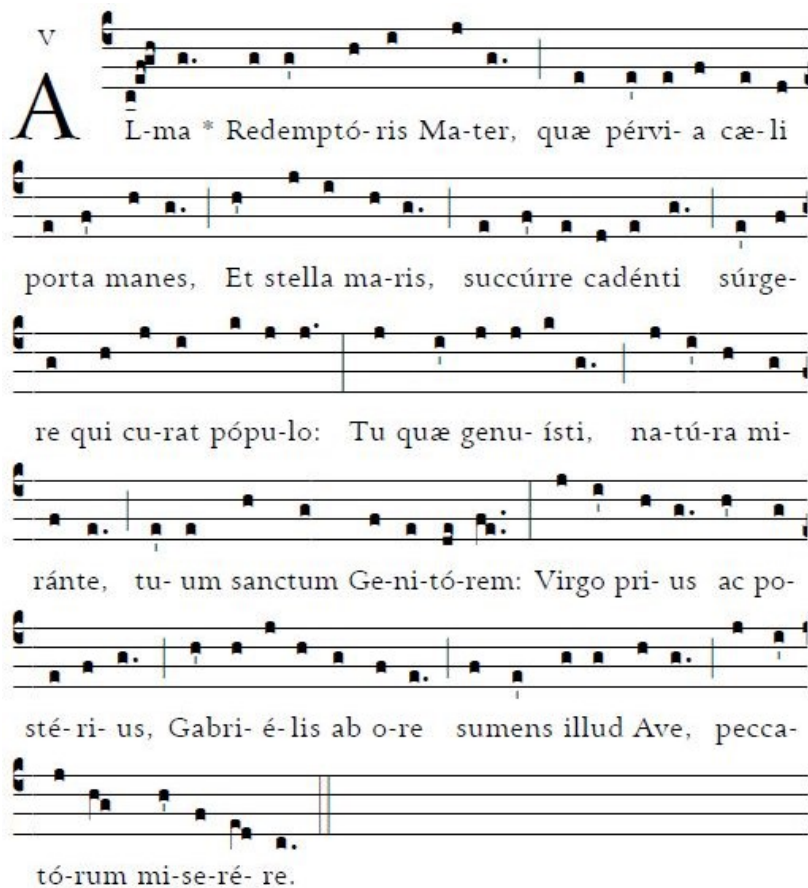
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,

and Cross, be brought to the glory of His resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

“The End” Notes

- [1] 2 Samuel 7:12-17
- [2] John 19:27
- [3] NAB pg. 12 Matthew's Gospel
- [4] Isaiah 7:12
- [5] Jeremiah 29:11
- [6] Psalm 16; Thursday Night Prayer; The Liturgy of the Hours
- [7] Matthew 1:24
- [8] In Conversation with God pg. 162
- [9] http://www.frtommylane.com/homilies/year_a/advent4.htm
- [10] Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1 May 2013
- [11] Life of Saint Benedict from the Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great
- [12] Rule of Saint Benedict
- [13] Ephesians 4:26-27
- [14] Scott Hahn; The Biblical Vision of Pope John Paul II
- [15] Isaiah 7:14
- [16] Saint Cyprian
- [17] St. Jerome Biblical commentary Gospel of Matthew pg. 67
- [18] Proverbs 3:5-6
- [19] <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07706b.htm>
- [20] CCC 499
- [21] St. Augustine, Sermon 186, 1: PL 38, 999
- [22] Lk 1:38
- [23] CCC - 510
- [24] Archbishop Joseph Raya, Theotokos *Bearer of God* p. 17
- [25] pg. 40-41
- [26] Weimer's *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v. 11, pp. 319-320; v. 6. p. 510.
- [27] *Zwingli Opera, Corpus Reformatorum*, Berlin, 1905, v. 1, p. 424.
- [28] <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/quickquestions/keyword/virginity>
- [29] Saint Ambrose
- [30] Archbishop Joseph Raya, Theotokos *Bearer of God* p. 14
- [31] Bechtel, F. (1907). The Brethren of the Lord. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved November 25, 2010 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02767a.htm>
- [32] Patrology, 1:120-1
- [33] *Mary: Ever Virgin*; <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/mary-ever-virgin>
- [34] Archbishop Joseph Raya, Theotokos *Bearer of God* p. 24
- [35] Divine Intimacy pg. 84
- [36] Code of Canon Law - 1061 §1.
- [37] Isaiah 1:3
- [38] CCC - 486
- [39] Ephesians 1:8-10
- [40] The Order of the Mass, Eucharistic Prayer II
- [41] Abbot Gueranger, O.S.B.; *The Liturgical Year*; Book I, Advent
- [42] Matthew 19:24
- [43] Source: <http://www.mamalisa.com>; introduction and song

Marian Antiphon – Alma Redemptoris Mater


V
A L-ma * Redemptó-ris Ma-ter, quæ pérv- a cæ-li
 porta manes, Et stella ma-ris, succúrr- e cadénti súrge-
 re qui cu-rat pópu-lo: Tu quæ genu- ísti, na-tú-ra mi-
 ránte, tu- um sanctum Ge-ni-tó-rem: Virgo pri- us ac po-
 sté-ri- us, Gabri- é-lis ab o-re sumens illud Ave, pecca-
 tó-rum mi-se-ré- re.

Alma Redemptoris Mater (English Translation)

Loving mother of the Redeemer, open door to heaven and star of the sea, come quickly to the aid of thy people, fallen indeed but striving to stand again. To nature's astonishment thou wert the mother of thy holy Creator without ceasing to be a virgin, and heard from Gabriel that greeting: "Hail." Have pity on us sinners.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made know by the message of an angel may, by His Passion

may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Gospel Reading – Matthew 1:18-24 – Daily Roman Missal

NOTE: *In the Roman Catholic Tridentine Lectionary this Gospel is read at the Christmas Vigil Mass (12/24)*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
 - Glory to you O Lord

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us."* When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Spiritual Reading

From Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.

St. Joseph's whole life may be summed up as a continual adherence to the divine plan, even in situations, which were very obscure and mysterious to him. In our life, too, there is always some mystery, either because God is pleased to work in a hid-

den, secret manner or because His action is always incomprehensible to our poor human intelligence. Therefore, we need that glance of faith, that complete confidence which, relying on the infinite circumstances wills our good and disposes everything to that end. Only this loving trust will permit us, like Joseph, always to say our “yes” to every manifestation of the divine will, a humble, prompt, trustful yes, in spite of the obscurities, the difficulties, the mystery...Let us obey with the simplicity of St. Joseph, understanding that God can employ any person or circumstance to make us know and execute His divine will...”

Responsory

Listen to the word of the Lord, you peoples, and proclaim it to the ends of the earth;

– say to the far-off islands: Our Savior is coming.

Proclaim the good news, let it be heard; tell it to everyone, shout it aloud.

– Say to the far-off islands: Our Savior is coming.

St. Joseph - A man of humbleness and obedience – Lesson and Discussion

“...He was a righteous man”

In this Sunday’s Gospel, St. Joseph is the central figure and a virtuous example for all of us. As the husband of Mary and soon to be stepfather of our Lord, he took on all the responsibilities of the head of a family. More importantly, he had the privilege of being the earthly head of the holiest family ever. We honor Saint Joseph for his responsibility, humility, and devotion to God.

Who was St. Joseph? Everything we know of St. Joseph comes from Scripture. The Gospel’s of both Matthew and Luke trace Joseph’s lineage back to King David. **Why is that important?** This is important because it fulfills God’s promise to David that He would establish His kingdom with his own flesh and blood.[1]

Joseph was a simple carpenter who worked hard and earned a modest wage. We see in the Gospel that he was betrothed to Mary but planned on breaking off their marriage due to her pregnancy. However, Joseph believes the angel of the Lord who appears to him, choosing to take Mary as his wife and raise the Son of God. We are unsure when Joseph died, but the Church teaches that he had passed before the Crucifixion. Joseph is not

Lover of poverty,
Model of workmen,
Glory of home life,
Guardian of virgins,
Pillar of families,
Solace of the afflicted,
Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of demons,
Protector of Holy Church, pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

V. He made him lord over his house,

R. And the ruler of all his possessions.

Let us pray.

O God, who in Thine ineffable providence didst vouchsafe to choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of Thy most holy Mother: grant, we beseech Thee, that we may have him for an intercessor in heaven, whom we venerate as our protector on earth. Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

for the Christ Child. We honor Joseph for taking Mary into his home, as his wife. In the devotion of Las Posadas we imitate Joseph by taking the Blessed Virgin, Queen of the Heavens into our home and by taking her in, we take in Jesus, her Son.

Families may use the booklet on the main page as a guide praying each night from Dec. 16 until the vigil of Christmas (Dec.24). Not only should families open their homes but it is good that the parish also host a night to allow more people to attend.

Some components of Las Posadas include: making and setting up luminaries at the host's home, singing, praying the joyful mysteries of the Rosary, a short teaching on scripture, veneration of the Christ Child, great food and drink.

Popular Devotion—Litany of Saint Joseph

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
 God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
 God, the Holy Ghost,
 Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.
 Saint Joseph,
 Illustrious Scion of David,
 Light of Patriarchs,
 Spouse of the Mother of God,
 Chaste guardian of the Virgin,
 Foster-father of the Son of God,
 Watchful defender of Christ,
 Head of the Holy Family,
 Joseph most just,
 Joseph most chaste,
 Joseph most prudent,
 Joseph most valiant,
 Joseph most obedient,
 Joseph most faithful,
 Mirror of patience,

mentioned in any of the Gospels as being present at the Crucifixion. While on the Cross, Jesus tells John “Behold your mother” and we are told “from that hour the disciple took her into his own.”[2] If Joseph were still living, Jesus would not have given Mary’s care over to St. John. The Church sees this act of giving Mary to St. John as his mother and giving John to Mary as her son as the giving of Mary as mother to all disciples. Thus we dare to call the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church.

Why would St. Joseph divorce Mary? Joseph is described in the Gospel as a righteous man, a devout observer of the Mosaic Law.[3] According to the Law, he and Mary’s betrothal was the first binding step in their marriage. Once Mary was found to be with child, Joseph made the compassionate decision to divorce her quietly and save her from a shameful exposition. He knew if he were to expose Mary in public that she could be held to a trial and possibly stoned to death. This was his intention until the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

MOVIE - “The Nativity Story”- POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 1:54 to 10:00 (8:06)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHf6aGcrhQ>
 Mary has just returned from her cousin Elizabeth and is now at the point in her pregnancy where she is showing. How does everyone react, her mother, her father, and Joseph? Would it be so easy to trust in God’s plan, even if the message of the plan came from an angel? Both Mary and Joseph would have to face the fear of what people would think and say about their unique situation. **How do we face the fear of what will people think, what will people say, what will people do, when we choose to follow God’s plan?**

Why did St. Joseph choose to believe his dream? St. Joseph believes his dream because the angel echoes Isaiah “She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”[4] Mary is the fulfillment of a prophecy that Joseph would have known, being a devout Jew. However, even Satan can quote scripture. It is ultimately St. Joseph’s humility and faith in God that gives him the wisdom to accept and follow the angel’s orders. Joseph was a “son of David,” and would have been familiar with Isaiah’s prophecy that the Messiah would come from the “house of David.” Joseph had confidence that God had a plan for his life. He participated with God’s plan in two important ways: by lifting his mind to God in

prayer and by constant hope and trust in God's plan no matter how strange it might seem.

How do we know for sure God has a plan for us? We know with confidence that God has a plan for our lives because He tells us that he does. "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." [5] Psalm 16 reads, "O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup; it is you yourself who are my prize. The lot marked out for me is my delight: welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!" [6] God's plan for each of us is to attain heaven and eternal union with Him. We reach that goal by the unique heritage and path that God has set out for each of us. We can take Saint Joseph as an example of living a life through obedience and trust in the plan God has marked out.

How did St. Joseph follow through with the dream? Saint Joseph followed through with immediate obedience to the commands of his dream. We live in a society today that preaches the value of individuality, freedom, and independence in our actions. On the contrary, the more obedient we are to God means the more freedom we have, the more we truly know ourselves, and the holier we can be. This is because He is our designer who knows best how we are to achieve the purpose he made us for. When a commander of an army gives an order to his troops, they will follow it blindly. Why? Because those troops know and trust their superior to do what is best for them. We understand that God's plans for us do not only affect us, but those God has placed in our care. In the case of Saint Joseph, God's plans for his life also affected the lives of our Blessed Mother and of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We can learn a great deal from St. Joseph just by seeing his actions. Saint Matthew tells us, "When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him..." [7] St. Joseph did not wake up and begin to question it for days on end wondering if this was to be done or not. He got up and immediately acted.

How did St. Joseph respond to God's call for his life? St. Joseph responded by immediately doing what was asked of him, St. Joseph fulfilled his life's mission, his vocation. We are all born into this world with a specific purpose, a vocation from God that only we can do to the fullest. "Joseph fully accepted his vocation, to which he was remain faithful until death. His worldly mission was to be the head of the Holy Family." [8] In 1870, Pope

The Innkeepers...

You can go now and, Don't bother us
Because if I get upset, I'm going to beat you.

The Pilgrims...

We come tired, From Nazareth
I am a carpenter, Whose name is Joseph.

The Innkeepers...

Your name doesn't concern me, I'm going to sleep
Because I already told you, That we don't have to open up.

The Pilgrims...

I've asked you for lodging, Dear innkeeper
Because the mother is going to be, The queen of the heavens.

The Innkeepers

Then if she is a queen, Who requests it
How is it that at nighttime, She's traveling so alone?

The Pilgrims...

My wife is Mary, Queen of the heavens
And mother who's going to make, The divine oath.

The Innkeepers

You are Joseph, Your wife is Mary
Come in travelers!, I didn't know it.

The Pilgrims...

May God pay gentlemen, For our charity
And may the heavens overwhelm you, With Happiness!

Everyone...

Happy (or blessed) is the house, That shelters today, The pure virgin, The beautiful Mary.
Enter holy pilgrims, Receive this haven, That although it's a poor dwelling

The dwelling...

I offer to you from the heart.

Las Posadas is a good way for families and parishes to keep wait

dered to return to the towns of their ancestor's birth. Since Joseph was a descendent of King David, his ancestral town was Bethlehem, the "town of David". And so, he took his expecting wife, and made the journey.

Thanks to the census, they were far from the only ones traveling. All the inns were completely full and they couldn't find lodging. Eventually an innkeeper let them stay in his stables.

Nowadays, throughout Mexico where they celebrate Las Posadas, children parade through their towns. The adults carry candles following the children. The leader of the parade is a child dressed as an angel. A little girl plays Mary, a boy plays Joseph and three others play the Wise Kings. They follow the angel. The other children dress as shepherds and shepherdesses following behind.

The procession goes from "inn" to "inn" asking for shelter. They really go from house to house. They sing a song called *Villancicos para pedir posadas*. The procession on the street asks for shelter. The people in the house sing back that no, there's no space in their inn. Finally one innkeeper tells them they can stay in the stable. The doors are open to all at this final house and a big party begins! Everyone says a prayer, and then eats, drinks and is merry! A star shaped piñata, representing the star of Bethlehem, is part of the party.

Here's a loose English translation of the song they sing in Mexico for Las Posadas.

[For side by side English and Spanish text see the booklet on the main page]

Searching for an Inn Carols

The Pilgrims...

In the name of the heavens, I request lodging from you,
Because she cannot walk, My beloved wife.

The Innkeepers...

This is not an inn, Go on ahead
I can't open up for you, In case you're a crook.

The Pilgrims...

Don't be cruel, Give us charity
That the gods of the heavens, Will give it to you.

Pius IX decreed that we should honor St. Joseph with the prestigious title, patron of the Catholic Church.[9] St. Joseph is also recognized as the patron of fathers, expecting mothers, travelers, against doubt and hesitation, workers (in particular carpenters), and of the dying. In May of 2013 Saint Joseph, spouse of Mary, was added to Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV. "The faithful in the Catholic Church have shown continuous devotion to Saint Joseph and have solemnly and constantly honored his memory as the most chaste spouse of the Mother of God and as the heavenly Patron of the universal Church. For this reason Blessed Pope John XXIII, in the days of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, decreed that Saint Joseph's name be added to the ancient Roman Canon. In response to petitions received from places throughout the world, the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI deemed them worthy of implementation and graciously approved them. The Supreme Pontiff Francis likewise has recently confirmed them. In this the Pontiffs had before their eyes the full communion of the Saints who, once pilgrims in this world, now lead us to Christ and unite us with him." [10]

STORY – Saint Placid[11]

Once while Saint Benedict was in his room, one of his monks, the boy Placid, went down to get some water. In letting the bucket fill too rapidly, he lost his balance and was pulled into the lake, where the current quickly seized him and carried him about a stone's throw from the shore.

Though inside the monastery at the time, the man of God [Benedict] was instantly aware of what had happened and called out to Maurus: "Hurry, Brother Maurus! The boy who just went down for water has fallen into the lake, and the current is carrying him away."

Maurus asked for the blessing and on receiving it hurried out to fulfill his abbot's command. He kept on running even over the water till he reached the place where Placid was drifting along helplessly. Pulling him up by the hair, Maurus rushed back to shore, still under the impression that he was on dry land. It was only when he set foot on the ground that he came to himself and looking back, realized that he had been running on the surface of the water. Overcome with fear and amazement at a deed he would never have thought possible, he returned to his abbot and told him what had taken place.

The holy man would not take any personal credit for the deed but attributed it to the obedience of his disciple. Maurus, on the contrary, claimed that it was due entirely to his abbot's command. In this story God performed a miracle because of a holy command (Saint Benedict) and holy obedience (Saint Maurus). The actions of both Saint Benedict (abbot) and Saint Maurus (monk) reflect the fruits of following a rule of life. Saint Benedict's rule states, "To obey in all things the commands of the abbot, even though he himself should act otherwise." [12] To live this rule means that each monk must have trust and obedience and each abbot must be prayerful to know God's will and courageous to command God's will. In our life we will be put in charge of others as well as be in the charge of others, in both cases the virtue of obedience is necessary.

How can I be more obedient to God? How can I be more obedient to my parents and other authority figures in my life? When have I, like Saint Maurus, been obedient without hesitation, without questions, what was the result?

[See also Link to Liturgy Lesson – Obedience

Why would St. Joseph be the patron of the dying? Since St. Joseph died before Jesus' ministry, we believe that St. Joseph died with Jesus and Mary by his side. This is the way we all would like to leave this earth, in the grace and presence of our Lord and our Mother. Those who are blessed to receive the Last Rites of the Church have both our Lady and our Lord with them as they breathe their last. We know from the Gospel that St. Joseph lead a righteous life, so he must have been at peace when he died. There is a prayer in the Church called, Prayer for a Happy Death. It seems to be a strange thing to pray for until you understand that the focus of this prayer is really not on death but on life. "O God, Who hast doomed all men to die, but hast concealed from all the hour of their death, grant that I may pass my days in the practice of holiness and justice, and that I may deserve to quit this world in peace of a good conscience, and in the embraces of Thy love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

What does this prayer for a happy death tell us about how we should live life? In this prayer, we ask that God allow us to live our lives in the practice of holiness and justice. We should want to have the peace of good conscience. Saint Paul tells us, "The sun must not go down on your wrath; do not give the devil

counted by men! Thou art upon this earth of Thine, and men set Thee down as nothing! And yet, all this excitement of the enrollment of the world is to be for nothing else but this, that Mary, Thy august Mother, may come to Bethlehem, and there give Thee birth! O ineffable mystery! How grand is this apparent littleness! How mighty this divine weakness! But God has still lower to descend than merely coming on our earth. He goes from house to house of His people: not one will receive Him. He must go and seek a crib in the stable of poor dumb beasts. There until such time as the angels sing to Him their hymn, and the shepherds and the Magi come with their offerings, He will meet 'the ox that knoweth its Owner, and the ass that knoweth its Master's crib!' (Is. 1:3) O Savior of men, Emmanuel, Jesus! We, too, will go to this stable of Bethlehem. Thy new birth, which is tonight, shall not be without loving and devoted hearts to bless it. At this very hour, Thou are knowing at the doors of Bethlehem, and who is there that will take Thee in? Thou sayest to my soul in the words of the Canticle: 'Open to me, my sister, my beloved! For my head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night!' (Song of Songs 5:2) Ah! Sweet Jesus! Thou shalt not be refused here! I beseech Thee, enter my house. I have been watching and longing for Thee. Come, then, Lord Jesus, come! (Revelation 22:20)" [41]

In the Incarnation, Jesus takes on the form of his creation and is unrecognized in His Divinity by men. May the Incarnate Word help us decrease in the eyes of men, and increase in the eyes of God! Jesus became little upon entering Earth, may we become little and so enter the Kingdom of God and thus fit through the eye of the needle. [42]

Las Posadas [43 – Lesson and Discussion

"Took his wife into his home."

Las Posadas starts on December 16th and goes on until Christmas. Las Posadas literally means "the inns". The festival is based on a reenactment of Mary and Joseph trying to find lodging at numerous inns and being turned away.

The story behind the festival is...

When Mary was pregnant with Jesus, she and Joseph were living in Nazareth. At that time, Israel was a province of the Roman Empire. Rome's governor, Herod, conducted a census, in order to levy a new tax. As part of the process, all citizens were or-

In today's introit we pray, "Skies, let the Just One come forth like the dew, let him descend from the clouds like rain. The earth will open up and give birth to our Savior." The Son of God comes forth not as a thunderstorm or downpour, but rather gently as dew and rain. This image of dew fall is a reminder of the manna that fell like dew to nourish the Israelites as the wanderers in the desert. This image of dew is also used in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass when the priest prays, "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." [40] As the earth opened up and gave birth to our Savior, may our hearts open up and receive this birth with urgency and joy.

Slowly men began to recognize and accept the Jesus as their Savior through Divine revelation. In the same way, many men do not recognize Jesus today, even though He has been completely revealed. Each Christian has been given the gift of Grace, which enables him to have Faith in Jesus as Lord. In the soul of each person, the plan to fully understand the mystery of Christ is fulfilled by Christ Himself and takes place in the "fullness of time" of each person's life. The Christian is called to evangelize, as one who hears and believes after finding the Savior, proclaiming Christ's life to all.

VIDEO - "Zeitgeist 2012: Year In Review" - POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 2:45

http://youtu.be/xY_MUB8adE

We search for many things each year. **Do we search for Jesus Christ?** We count many events, things, and people among our Top 10. **Does Jesus Christ make our list?** The world was in waiting four thousand years for its savior. Has the world forgotten their savior after only two thousand years?

"Let us contemplate our blessed Lady, and her faithful spouse Joseph, leaving the city of Jerusalem, and continuing their journey to Bethlehem, which they reach after a few hours. In obedience to the will of heaven, they immediately repair to the place where their names are to be enrolled, as the emperor's edict requires. There is entered in the public register, Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth in Galilee. To his name, there is, doubtless, added that of Mary, spouse of the above-named Joseph. Perhaps they enter her as a young woman, in the ninth month of her pregnancy. And this is all! O Incarnate Word! Thou art not yet

a chance to work on you." [13] In other words, we should be at peace with our conscience and not want to go to bed, let alone die, without examining our conscience and working out the problems, anxieties, and sins that are in us.

Do you trust me? – Lesson and Discussion

"Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home."

"Do not be afraid" This phrase was the theme of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. "We should have known, from his first words as pope that the world was in for something different. He began with 'Be not afraid,' the exhortation of prophets and angels--and God himself--uttered whenever history had taken a momentous turn (see, for example, Genesis 46:3 and Luke 2:10)." [14] This phrase, spoken by the Angel to Saint Joseph, did mean a momentous turn both for the life of Saint Joseph and for all of humanity. Saint Luke speaks of the angel, bringing God's message, sent to Our Lady. Saint Matthew tells of the angel, bringing God's message, sent to Saint Joseph. Both parents are notified of the child's greatness and both parents respond with trust. The responses of Mary and Joseph are examples for us on how to respond to the message of God.

We all put our trust in a lot of things everyday. We trust that our alarms will wake us up in the morning, we trust our vehicles will start right up and drive smoothly, we trust our electronic devices to work properly every time, and we trust labels on products to give us the most accurate and factual data. **What are some other things that we trust on a daily basis?** And yet, when it comes to trusting God, the Creator of all of these things, do we fully trust him?

ACTIVITY – Labels

Take a Snickers bar or a can of beans. Ask everyone, "How many of you think this is really a Snickers bar or how many of you think this is a can of beans?" What if it is really a can of corn and someone, tricking you, took the corn label off and replaced it with a bean label? What if someone carefully opened a Snickers wrapper and slipped a Milky Way bar in the Snickers wrapper? Sometimes, when we begin to doubt too much, we become skeptical and fear that people are tricking us.

Why might it be difficult to trust in God? It is difficult for us to wait, we want to hear right back. Each Advent season we are asked to wait in anticipation for the coming of Jesus. In one

sense, it is hard to take this seriously since we already know that Jesus came to the earth, and praise God for that! However, we forget that for four thousands years the people waited for the promised Messiah. Each week of the four weeks of Advent represents 1000 years of the four thousand years of waiting. We heard in the first reading, they waited and waited and some grew weary. They grew so weary they begin not trusting God, and doubting his promises. So the Lord gave them an even better understanding of what was to come by stating He was to be born from a virgin, and He shall be called Emmanuel.[15] Trust is the key to accepting all the grace and strength God's wants to give us. **How was it that Saint Joseph was so strong? How was it that he kept Mary as his wife? How was it that he escorted and protected the holy family to Egypt and then back?** He trusted! The strength Joseph had in life was in proportion to the trust he had. Those who have great trust will be given faith and strength. "He [Christ] protects their faith and gives strength to believers in proportion to the trust that each man who receives that strength is willing to place in him." [16]

When we have to wait to receive an answer, we can become discouraged, and completely miss when the answer does finally come to us, just as almost everyone did when Jesus came into this world. Jesus tells us the story of the five virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom.

[See Link to Liturgy Packet Cycle C - OT32 - Waiting and Watching

The five wise virgins took not only lamps but oil too. They would only bring oil (fuel) if they thought they might be waiting a while, and thus needed to be prepared to wait patiently. It was the five foolish ones who did not bring oil that had to go out and buy more oil. When they left, guess what happened? The bridegroom came. This happens all the time

TV AD "Wrigley's Extra Gum" – POP CULTRE CONNECTION – 0:30

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjeD_G0mOK

In this commercial the ladies gum wears out and while she is looking for another piece she missing the once and a life time view of the whale. **Does our patience or our trust wear out?**

Music - Garth Brooks - Unanswered Prayers Lyrics - POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 3:29

have a guardian who would provide for and protect them. The validity of the marriage of Mary and Joseph is determined by the Judaic law of their time, not the Code of Cannon Law which determines the validity of Catholic Marriages today. It is true that "a valid marriage between the baptized is called *ratum tantum* [only valid] if it has not been consummated; it is called *ratum et consummatum* [valid and consummated] if the spouses have performed between themselves in a human fashion a conjugal act which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring, to which marriage is ordered by its nature and by which the spouses become one flesh." [36]

In the Divine Praises we say, "Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse." This title and description of Saint Joseph is beautiful because it shows how Mary and Joseph were devoted to God's plan and united in love. They cannot be separated. Even in this prayer Joseph is connected to Mary "her most chaste spouse" and connected and sharing in the virtue of her chastity.

[See also Link to Liturgy Lesson - Holy Mary, Ever Virgin Part II

Not yet counted by men – Lesson and Discussion

"God is with us."

Isaiah prophesied, "An ox knows its owner, and an ass, its master's manger; but Israel does not know, my people has not understood." [37] The creator of the world is coming but no one knows. All citizens have been summoned by the census but the one citizen and reason for the census is not accounted for.

"The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is 'Christ,' that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples." [38] Each Monday at Vespers the Church prays, "God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ. A plan to be carried out in Christ, in the fullness of time, to bring all things into one in him, in the heavens and on earth." [39] At the time of His birth, men did not count Jesus as Divine.

scripture verse were sons of another Mary, who was also a disciple of Christ.[31] In Matthew 23:8, Jesus tells all of us to call each other “brothers”. So, we see that there is not a singular way to translate what the Greek is intending. It is the Church’s position on this passage that the “brothers” did not come from the womb of Mary.

Was Mary a consecrated virgin? If she was a consecrated virgin, why would Joseph marry her? There is a document that was written soon after Mary’s assumption (around 120 AD) called the *Protoevangelium of James*. This writing proves “the perpetual and inviolate virginity of Mary before, in, and after the birth of Christ.”[32] Mary’s parents, Anne and Joachim, presented Mary at a young age to the temple. Mary consecrated herself to God and prayed and worked in the temple. “A life of continual, devoted service to the Lord at the Temple meant that Mary would not be able to live the ordinary life of a child-rearing mother. Rather, she was vowed to a life of perpetual virginity. However, due to considerations of ceremonial cleanliness, it was eventually necessary for Mary, a consecrated “virgin of the Lord,” to have a guardian or protector who would respect her vow of virginity. Thus, according to the *Protoevangelium*, Joseph, an elderly widower who already had children, was chosen to be her spouse. According to the *Protoevangelium*, Joseph was required to regard Mary’s vow of virginity with the utmost respect. The gravity of his responsibility as the guardian of a virgin was indicated by the fact that, when she was discovered to be with child, he had to answer to the Temple authorities, who thought him guilty of defiling a virgin of the Lord. Mary was also accused of having forsaken the Lord by breaking her vow. Keeping this in mind, it is an incredible insult to the Blessed Virgin to say that she broke her vow by bearing children other than her Lord and God, who was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit.”[33] Joseph’s role was also to protect Mary and Jesus as “this was the only way for the Mother and Child to be able to live in peace, and not be stoned to death according to the law of Moses.”[34]

How could Mary and Joseph be married, but not consummate their marriage? Wouldn’t that make their marriage invalid? Mary and Joseph, due to their unique role in Salvation History, also had a unique marriage. They were given the great responsibility to care for and raise “the greatest of His [God’s] works: the Incarnation of the Word.”[35] Mary and Joseph lived in a culture where it was necessary for consecrated virgins to

<http://youtu.be/hKqZjgIfxe>

God hears all our prayers but because His will is perfect, He answers prayers according to His holy and perfect will. When a prayer is not answered according to our wishes, this is not a “no” but rather a “yes” to the holy and perfect will of God. Prayer helps us to know and align our will with God’s will. In the song, he sings of how he wanted to be with one girl, but God said no. Still trusting in God, the man ended up being with the woman he was suppose to be with in the end. The man was praying for a wife, and God led him to her, it just wasn’t the woman he thought it would be. **Has there been a time where you might have had an “unanswered” prayer or where God did not grant that prayer? Did he bring something along even better for you?**

Why are we cautious in trusting God right away? It is understandable, being cautious in trusting others. When it comes to God and putting our faith and trust in him, we can be just as (or even more) cautious than we would be with anyone else. There is an American proverb that says, “He who hesitates is lost”. St. Joseph, in today’s Gospel, does not hesitate. He puts his full trust in God’s message. By not hesitating the Old Testament was fulfilled and the fullness of Salvation could be fulfilled![17]

VIDEO - “Barry Sanders: #1 Most Elusive Running Back” - POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 4:30

<http://youtu.be/hsFhZy9oxu>

If Saint Joseph were a running back, he would have been Barry Sanders. Barry Sanders did not hesitate, when running the ball. When he saw and opening, a hole, he did not hesitate to hit the hole to move immediately. Barry Sanders said the key to his success was that he reacted. Saint Joseph trusted, and reacted to the will of God without hesitation. He (St. Joseph) reacted quickly, obedience without hesitation. **What makes us hesitate in doing God’s will? Are there times when, if we hesitate in doing God’s Will, we miss out and get tackled by our enemy, Satan?**

MOVIE TRAILER - “National Treasure” - POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 1:21

<http://youtu.be/7yS1i9Zq3H>

In this quick trailer of the movie we see a woman who at first Benjamin Gates plan saying, “Did Big-foot take it?” At the end of the movie however, we can see that she does believe and ends

up trusting in him. Through small and large acts of obedience throughout our life, we grow in faith and trust in God.

With God, we know He will never let go. He is like a father standing in the water with outstretched hands who asks us to jump in, and promises to catch us. We may be scared and cautious but if we fully trust Him, we will dive into the water. As it says in Scripture, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.”[18]

Mary Ever Virgin – Lesson and Discussion

“Through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.”

The Incarnation is a doctrine of the Christian faith. The Incarnation is the mystery and the dogma that the Word became Flesh. This dogma implies three things: Jesus is truly Divine, Jesus is truly human, and both of these realities are truly united in the Person of Jesus Christ. This means that Mary bore in her womb he who is true God and true man, Jesus. Thus, one of the names we give to her is Theotokos (Gk. God-bearer) and yet there is a great mystery surrounding Mary as Mother, Ever-Virgin.[19]

What does the Church teach about Mary’s virginity? Mary’s perpetual virginity is a Dogma of the Catholic Church. The Catechism states, “...Christ’s birth ‘did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it.’ And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as the ‘Ever-virgin.’”[20] The Catechism goes on to say, “Mary ‘remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin’[21] with her whole being she is ‘the handmaid of the Lord’[22]”[23] “Mary conceived the Lord *in a virginal way* which means without human intervention...The One, who, in the beginning, established the laws of human conception and birth, alters them now for his own conception and birth, combining in Mary the two most splendid glories of womanhood, virginity and motherhood.”[24]

How could her virginity be preserved before, during, and after birth? The Catechism of the Council of Trent states, “This was the work of the Holy Ghost, who, at the conception and birth of the Son, so favored the Virgin Mother as to impart to her

fecundity [fertility, fruitfulness], and yet preserve inviolate her perpetual virginity.”[25]

The Protestant reformers believed in the perpetual virginity. Martin Luther wrote, “It is an article of faith that Mary is Mother of the Lord and still a virgin. ... Christ, we believe, came forth from a womb left perfectly intact.”[26] And as the Swiss reformer Zwingli, wrote, “I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin.”[27]

Why does it even matter if she was a virgin forever? As Fr. Vincent Serpa so eloquently puts it, “Besides the fact that the Church has taught that Mary was always a virgin from its earliest days before the New Testament was even written, it continues to do so today because of what this fact says about Jesus. From the cross Jesus shared his Mother with us all. But her womb was a tabernacle for him alone. We wouldn’t think of using the tabernacles in our churches to house anything but the Eucharist because it is the sacred body of Christ; so too with Mary’s womb. It’s all about who Jesus is. Mary is special because of how much more he is special. She is all about him!”[28] Mary was consecrated, set aside. Just as a chalice at Mass is set aside, consecrated to hold only the precious Blood of Jesus, so to Mary was set aside to hold Jesus and her womb would never hold anything else before or after. It would be sacrilegious to put Kool-Aid or any other drink in a chalice that is set aside and consecrated. “The Virgin’s womb swells, but the door of chastity remains shut.”[29] Jesus is the gift, wrapped in the chaste and pure Mary.

Mary remains a virgin because she achieved the unity for which we were all made. “When Mary surrendered to the creative action of God, she must have experienced the fullness of satisfaction and the most perfect ecstasy possible to a human being on earth. No further physical pleasure, nor any other happiness from any human source would ever have added to that fullness.”[30]

Doesn’t scripture say (Matthew 13:55) Jesus had brothers and sisters? When looking at the Greek word for brother, ‘adelphoi,’ it has a very wide range of meanings. It may be used to mean one’s brother, but it could also mean one’s blood relations or kinsmen. We also know the names mentioned in this