

December 22, 2019

SHARING THE GIFT OF MARY AT CHRISTMAS!

SHARING THE GIFT OF MARY AT CHRISTMAS! What is this Special Gift of Mary? It is JESUS HIMSELF. When Mary says YES to the Angel Gabriel, she gives herself totally to GOD and by doing so; she gives us THE PERFECT GIFT Jesus, the Son of God! CHRISTMAS IS A TIME TO SHARE GIFTS. THE PERFECT GIFT OF HOPE, JOY AND LOVE IS JESUS HIMSELF.

Over the last three weeks of ADVENT, as a parish we chose to focus on MARY and how she can help us to prepare for receiving the JOY OF CHRISTMAS. You recall the way we presented to you the two-part course: "THE GIFT OF MARY: SEE ADVENT THROUGH THE EYES OF MARY". We just completed those two sessions: December 5 and 12. Both were well attended (about 50 parishioners each time), and one could feel the Joy of Advent: the anticipation of the COMING OF JESUS at Christmas.

The presentations were based on "An Advent Retreat with Mary" by Dr. Brandt Pitre author of "Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary". It was refreshing to imagine how Mary, a Jewish young girl felt about the dramatic encounter with Angel Gabriel (Annunciation) and then with her cousin Elizabeth (Visitation). We also had excellent discussions in small groups. Small groups are always a good way to share but also to make new connections. Even if you could not attend "The Gift of Mary", I encourage you to meditate on the mystery of Christmas and ask Mary to help you see the baby Jesus through her eyes and with her heart. Some Christmas cards are amazing painting representations of Mary and Baby Jesus. Meditate on them: can you feel Mary's joy and peace, can you feel Jesus' total abandonment to Mary, can you look at Mary's face and Jesus' face and how they glow in divine light...

Through the Advent Season, we have had a series of readings from the prophet Isaiah. We know that Isaiah always announces the coming of Jesus "the Messiah" long awaited by the Jewish people. We can find in Isaiah a great source of reflection on the mystery of the Incarnation and on our own journey from earth to heaven. Read Chapter 2: 1-5 "*Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways and we may walk in his paths. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!*" Or read Isaiah 9:1-6 "*The people who walked in darkness have seen a GREAT LIGHT... You have brought them abundant JOY and GREAT REJOICING ... for A CHILD IS BORN UNTO US, A SON IS GIVEN US ... They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-hero, Father-Forever, PRINCE OF PEACE. His dominion is vast and FOREVER PEACEFUL.*"

CHRISTMAS is also a TIME TO GIVE THANKS TO GOD!

Take a few minutes to think about the blessings you and your family have received since last Christmas, and be GRATEFUL TO GOD. I for one am grateful to God for having given me one more year to serve you, to pray with you (in good times and in bad times), to celebrate the Eucharist as a parish community, to hear confessions, to baptize children, marry young couples, bless homes of new parishioners, feel part of a wonderful family of families... We have embarked on the implementation of the third and final Phase of our capital campaign. We also began 12 months of celebrating our 40th anniversary. We plan to have all church improvements completed by April 2020, in time for the major celebration of our Parish Feast Day with Archbishop Wilton Gregory on May 24.

Just a few more days before we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that this Christmas will be for everyone a time of JOY. I pray that we will all REJOICE at the coming of Jesus. We can rejoice with Mary's cousin Elizabeth, who is the first to recognize Mary as the mother of God: "*Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does it happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb (John the Baptist) leaped for JOY*" (Luke 1:39-46). We can join Mary in her beautiful response to Elizabeth: "*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. My spirit REJOICES in God my savior*" (Luke 1:47). Yes, we can imagine that we are present at this encounter between Mary and Elizabeth, an encounter filled with the HOLY SPIRIT.

On behalf of Fr. Ben, Deacon Rich, Deacon Bill, Sister Rosario and all our staff, I would like to wish you all a MOST BLESSED CHRISTMAS! Remember to keep MASS and CHRIST in CHRISTMAS! Every Mass is Christmas, Christ's Mass. Every Mass, we celebrate the BIRTH OF CHRIST, but also His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Remember that THE MASS IS HEAVEN ON EARTH! May you all and your families find the JOY OF HEAVEN, the JOY OF BEING WITH GOD, as you participate in one of our Christmas Masses (Christmas Eve: 5 pm, 8 pm, 9:30 pm Spanish or Midnight, and Christmas Day: 8:30 am, 10 am, 11:30 am Spanish and 1 pm French).

COME LORD JESUS! COME! COME LORD JESUS!

One in Christ,  
Fr. Alain