

Calendar

Monday

DECEMBER 24
Advent Weekday
2 Sm 7:1-5,
8b-12, 14a, 16
Lk 1:67-79

Tuesday

DECEMBER 25
Christmas
Is 52:7-10
Heb 1:1-6
Jn 1:1-18 or
Jn 1:1-5, 9-14

Wednesday

DECEMBER 26
St. Stephen,
The First Martyr
Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Mt 10:17-22

Thursday

DECEMBER 27
St. John, Apostle
and Evangelist
1 Jn 1:1-4
Jn 20:1a and 2-8

Friday

DECEMBER 28
The Holy Innocents,
Martyrs
1 Jn 1:5-2:2
Mt 2:13-18

Saturday

DECEMBER 29
Fifth Day in the
Octave of Christmas
1 Jn 2:3-11
Lk 2:22-35

Sunday

DECEMBER 30
The Holy Family of
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or
1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28
Col 3:12-21 or
Col 3:12-17 or
1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24
Lk 2:41-52

Dear Padre,

Our parish is big into nighttime services. We have the Advent vespers and, of course, Midnight Mass. Is there a reason for doing these services at night?

Both Advent vespers and Midnight Mass center on our expectation of Jesus coming into our midst as the Light of the World. The vespers prayer is usually celebrated at dusk, as day is turning into night. The service proclaims that the darkness of night will not conquer the Light of Jesus. Christian tradition holds that the ecclesiastical day begins at sunset, in accord with Genesis 1:5: "Evening came, and morning followed—the first day." Vespers, or the Office of Evening, is the first hour of the new Church day.

Both the vespers and the Mass at midnight call us to embrace a new beginning, which is Jesus the Light. This imagery is especially appropriate considering the arrival of the winter solstice. In the beginning of Advent, the nights grow progressively longer. Then, right before Christmas, the winter solstice marks the light's reclaiming of the world.

In the early centuries of Christianity, people from the countryside would gather on Christmas Eve in the warmth of the great monastery church. They would go to confession, be forgiven, sing of the newborn Savior, and participate in the Eucharist. After Eucharist, they would join in a great feast that lasted until sunrise. When you celebrate at Midnight Mass this year, recall that you are proclaiming that Jesus the Light has conquered the darkness again—this year and forever.

—Fr. Paul J. Coury, CSsR
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A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus keeps knocking on our doors, the doors of our lives. He doesn't do this by magic, with special effects, with flashing lights and fireworks. Jesus keeps knocking on our door in the faces of our brothers and sisters, in the faces of our neighbors, in the faces of those at our side.

—Meeting the homeless, Washington, DC, September 24, 2015

Our Parish COMMUNITY

December 23, 2018

Fourth Sunday of Advent (C)

Mi 5:1-4a

Heb 10:5-10

Lk 1:39-45

True Love Means Sacrifice

God is often present in the little, hidden things of life. Take for example the small town of Bethlehem. This place barely appeared on the maps of the time. Yet in this dull town, overlooked by all, God wished to be born. God isn't into bling.

Look at the ray of light in the painting that shines from the upper left window directly down onto Mary's womb. She carries in her the Light of the World, but it happened in a way unknown to anyone. He is the Light of the World, shining to catch our attention, but he does so in silence, humility, and intimacy.

There is a second aspect of the Incarnation to learn here. Christmas was about a real sacrifice. Mary and Jesus offered their very selves. Hebrews says it wasn't an animal or a wheat offering but Jesus' very body and blood. The same for Mary, as it was her life, her virginity, her very intimacy, that she was opening to God when she agreed to be the mother of the Lord. It's easy to be generous when it doesn't touch too close to home.

So try not to look for glitz and externals this Christmas but for God's hidden presence. And imitate Jesus and Mary by giving of your very self. It's not about a fast, a donation, or extra prayers—as good as

those Advent practices are. But all of this prepares us to give our very selves to him in trust through the hidden acts of love of every day.

— Fr. Mark Haydu, LC



Piece: Annunciation, 1427
Artist: Gentile da Fabriano
Location: Vatican Museums

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For Reflection

What hidden acts of love can you offer during this upcoming Christmas?

Are there ways you can point out to your children God's presence in the little things?

We have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 10:10