

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for the fourth week in Advent ~

Lord Jesus,
with wonder and praise
we have gathered as a family
to await that voice which announces your
birth.

What wonders you work in our lives
as you become human, like us.
It is good to know that you walk with us every
minute.

There are so many choices we have to make,
so many adventures ahead of each of us.
Help us to listen well.

What praise is yours
as you reveal the depths of your love for us.
Take good care of the ones we love so much
as they walk with you on their own journeys.

Thank you for this wonderful season,
and for the gift of sharing it with special peo-
ple,

and for letting us know you better.
May we, like Mary, give you birth in our hearts
all the days of our lives.

We love you.

Amen.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560. e-mail: jbcsc@ix.netcom.com

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE:

On **Monday, December 21st**, at **7:00 PM**, we will celebrate our Advent communal **Penance Service**. This service will consist of scriptural reflections by those involved in the Christmas story. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to straighten the paths of our lives to ease the arrival of our God. Each of us needs to truly hear in our heart the message of John the Baptist: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be an opportunity for individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation following the service. Please join us.

**MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS:**

Christmas is always a very special family time of the year. You and your family are invited to join us for our Celebration of Christmas. **On Christmas Eve**, we will have a **4:45 PM Children’s Mass** and a **10:00 PM Community Mass**. **On Christmas Day**, a **Family Mass** will be celebrated at **10:00 AM**. We pray that you and your family are truly able to celebrate the very special blessing of God which is present in the incarnate Jesus. We would be honored if you would join us in discovering the give of our Savior.

**2016 CALENDARS:**

Calendars for the year 2016 are available for your taking. Besides having space for you to write your family appointments, the calendar also contains information about Mass and Reconciliation times here at Our Lady Chapel. We wish to thank the Schulte-Mahon-Murphy Funeral Homes for their generous donation of these 2016 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.

**THANK YOU:**

A special note of “thanks” goes out to all of you who participated in our **Giving Tree** and our **Adopt a Family** programs. Many families, in addition to literally hundreds of gifts for children from the giving tree were gathered again this year. Thank you and God bless each of you for sharing your life with someone else. A special thank you to **Patty Szanizlo, Tina Newton** and **Sister Bea** for all their hard work in coordinating these projects. Again, thanks to all who participated. As usual, your generosity in reaching out to others has been marvelous. Thank you. You are special.

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS:**

During this Christmas season, we would like to thank all those who have helped us by making memorial offerings. May our floral decorations and this season remind all of us of those special relationships which we hold close to our heart. Please keep the following people in your prayers: **In memory of Jean Sulowski, Rasoletti Family, Eleanor & Curtiss DeMarco, Blazek and Rezabek Families, Trzaska, Wieslaw and Sokolowski Families.**

If you would like to make a memorial offering, please place it in an envelope marked “Memorial Offering, Christmas Decorations” and give to Father John or place it in the offering basket. God bless all of you.

**SEEKING HOLINESS:**

Whatever mission God gives us — no matter how common it may appear — carries with it our potential sainthood. What God asks of us during our lifetime is the most appropriate and suitable means to our growth in holiness — whether our lives remain ordinary or take an extraordinary turn. —Julie Onderko

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Brother James Kane, C.S.C., who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Christina Parrilla, sister of Brother Carlos Parrilla, C.S.C., who is recovering from kidney transplant surgery
- For Brother Francis Affeletey, C.S.C., who is recovering from surgery following an accident.
- For Carol Yost who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Zio Romano who is very ill.
- For Pat MacCandlish who is recovering from neuro surgery.
- For Owen Timura, an 8 year old, who has been diagnosed with lymphoma
- For Jackie Goler who has been diagnosed with lymphoma
- For Jay Cusick who has been diagnosed with cancer.
- For Eddie Keating, brother of Kelly [‘83] and Karen [‘86], who is recovering from brain surgery.
- For Vickie Norris, kitchen employee, who is recovering from emergency heart surgery.
- For Becca Curry, a young mother, who has been diagnosed with lymphoma.
- For Kate Wilson, Niece of Brother Ken Kane, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Penny Morotto who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Justin Tarr who is critically ill with brain cancer.
- For Bun Riley, who is preparing for surgery.
- For Joseph Frantz [‘75], brother of Mark [‘65], David [‘66], Roger [‘69], and Peter [‘78] Frantz, who is critically ill.
- For Cindy Bernet who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Jim Spicer who is undergoing treatment for brain and lung cancer.
- For John O’Brian who has been diagnosed with a serious form of cancer.
- For Andy Sims who is recovering from spinal surgery.
- For Bill Slattery [‘77] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For John Burkey, uncle of Rachel Burkey, member of music ministry, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Annie Trivassos who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nicholas Zanella., who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Jan Botek, wife of Fred, mother of Fred [‘85], grandmother of Matthew [‘14], Jonathan [‘17] and Daniel [‘21] Botek, who is undergoing treatment for dementia.
- For Teddy Prusock, nephew of Lower School associate, Nina Prusock, who is undergoing neurological testing.
- For Jimmy Vickers, father of Lower School teacher, Caroline Holtz, who is seriously ill.
- For Brother James Gulnac, C.S.C., who is under hospice care for cancer.
- For Kay Yunker, aunt of Mary Schmidt, great-aunt of Maggie [‘12] Schmidt who is under the care of hospice.

CHAPEL 20th ANNIVERSARY NOTE CARDS:

Note Cards of the Vatican Treasure — Our Lady Of Gilmour — are also available for purchase. The card has a beautiful photo of Our Lady of Gilmour — taken by John Reid — on the front. The inside is blank for your message, and the back of the card has a description of the Vatican Treasure and it was brought to the Chapel, along with appropriate credits. **The Cards sell in packets of 5 for \$10.** The Cards are located in the chapel office and are available by contacting **Patty Szanizlo at (440) 473-3560 or at szanizlop@gilmour.org.**



PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Vince Jones, cousin of Brother Thomas Chady, C.S.C., who is under hospice care.
- For Terri Haliday who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Mark LaCasse, brother of Upper School Associate, Linda Wheeler, uncle of Molly [*06] Wheeler, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Charlie Grover who is recovering from spinal surgery.
- For Molly McKenna who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Charles Babbush, father of Jeffrey [*83] who is critically ill.
- For Ali Priest, who is undergoing treatment for a rare muscular disease.
- For Debbie Cappioni and Alice Bruce, great aunts of Patrick [*22], Daniel [*26], and former Gilmour student, Morgan Miklus, who are undergoing medical testing.
- For Thelma Bingaman, who is recovering from injuries sustained in a fall.
- For Peggy Hurley, relative of James [*10] and Connor [*13] Hurley, who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Sue Nyberg, godmother of Katie Leavitt, who is seriously ill with cancer.
- For Andrea Trivisonno who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Ryan Berger [*15], brother of Cameron [*17] who is recovering from injuries sustained in an accident.
- For Drew Franco, son of Brian [*90], nephew of Jeff [*88] and Kristin [*94] Kirkpatrick, who is struggling with a seizure disorder.
- For Michael Palumbo, father of Michael [*14], Marisa [*15], and former Gilmour student, Christian, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Todd Deranek, relative of Hayden [*28] and Hadley [*29] Bashein, who was seriously injured in an accident.
- For Maureen Kenner, aunt of Katherine [*09] and David Hasler [*13], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Colleen Lowman, grandmother of Rachel Burkey, member of music ministry, who is seriously ill.
- For Dennis Kavran, father of Dennis [*86] and Jennifer [*95], grandfather of Adam [*14] and Madeleine [*16] Miller, who is undergoing further treatment for cancer.
- For Donna Farkas who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Lexi Pappadakes, who is undergoing treatment for complications from surgery..
- For Rosemarie Lemieux who is ill.
- For Robert Heltzel [*65], father of Jennifer [*91] and Kathleen [*93] Heltzel, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Matt Barry [*13], brother of Tim [*12], who continues treatment for cancer.
- For Maria Ricci, friend of Linda McGraw, who is ill.
- For Jeff Warner, brother of Denise Calabrese, who is undergoing treatment resulting from a stroke and seizure.
- For Janice Feenstra, sister of Lisa Habe, aunt of Jack [*19] and Will [*20] Habe who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Phylis McGinley, grandmother of Middle school Head of School, Elizabeth Edmondson, great-grandmother of Mollie [*21] and Abigail [*23] Edmondson, who is seriously ill.
- For Mary Kampman, mother of Mark [*81], Matthew [*85], Dean [*86], and Douglas [*88] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Karen Wanders, mother of upper school Head of School, Jonathan Wanders, who continues in treatment and rehabilitation
- For Betty Herten, aunt of Hope [*13] and James [*15] Herten, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.



FAITH EDUCATION — DECEMBER 20:

Faith Education for this year continues. Our Sessions go from 8:45—9:45 AM, with the hope that our children would then participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass. Register your family for classes by contacting Patty in the Chapel Office [[440-473-3560]. If you have any questions, please call Patty in the chapel office. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility. Dates for December and January: December 13-20 and January 10-24-31.



SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, December 20: 4 th Week in Advent	10:00 AM
Monday, December 21:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Tuesday, December 22:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Wednesday, December 23:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Thursday, December 24: Christmas Eve	4:45 PM 10:00 PM
Friday, December 25: Christmas	10:00 AM
Saturday, December 26: Feast of the Holy Family	5:00 PM
Sunday, December 27: Feast of the Holy Family	10:00 AM

UPCOMING CHAPEL ACTIVITIES:

December 20 -----	Faith Education Session #12 Decoration of Chapel for Christmas Children’s Christmas Gospel Rehearsal	8:45 AM - 9:45 AM 11:30 AM 11:30 am—12:30 PM
December 21 -----	Advent Penance Service	7:00 PM
December 24 -----	Children’s Christmas Mass Christmas Eve Community Mass	4:45 PM 10:00 PM
December 25 -----	Mass on Christmas Day	10:00 AM
December 31 -----	New Year’s Eve Mass	5:30 PM
January 7 -----	Lower School Mass LS Parent Reception in LBR	9:30 AM Following Mass

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

Our days throughout this time are filled with many “Christmasing events”. We do tend to cram into the emptiness and longing of Advent, Christmas parties, as well as staff, faculty, and/or office dinners which can make the celebration of His birth clouded and distracted.

The prophet Micah speaks about Bethlehem as being “too small to be among the clans of Judah” [Micah 5:2-5]. This is not an unusual pattern in God’s relations with us. Small nations such as Israel, small men such as Abraham, Moses, Hosea, and Joseph, small women such as Sarah, Ruth, and Mary — all seem to form a constellation of heavenly stars. Always from and through the unimportant come the significant, the carriers, those who treasure the sacred. From and through these small come the great works — the wondrous and salvific.

And so the Prophet Micah sings of little Bethlehem: “from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.” The greatness of this “one Who is to come” is both His lineage and His labors. God seems to take the lowly, little, and least to do the great works of salvation; and it always results from their trusting the One Who calls — and not their own importance.

The prophet Micah has been encouraging the people of Israel about their future — the temple will be raised high on a mountain, and all nations will see her as a holy nation. From the little town of Bethlehem — the place of David, the great king of Israel — will come a special person to be the awaited-for great leader. This person will be of the line of David — and as with David, this “one” will bring back all of Israel into the kingdom that God had established them to be. From the smallest shall come forth the revelation of God’s greatness.

Luke’s Gospel is an intimate encounter between two women of faith. Both have trusted in the secrecy of pregnancy; both are moved to share their secret [Luke 1:39-45]. It is said that a person is as sick as their secrets. It seems that healthy secrets are those which will result in life, growth, and joyfulness.

Mary has been greeted by an angel and trusts what she hears in her soul. Elizabeth hears Mary’s greeting and trusts what she hears and feels within her body. Elizabeth greets Mary with a tender benediction: “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

Mary is pictured as having received a tremendous gift and promise. The first thing she is moved to do is to take care of her cousin whom she has heard is pregnant too. Reception implies grateful distribution. So much preparation for the great Gift of God’s impregnating the womb of this world.

People marvel at the process of birth. It is just too much of a kind of miracle — even in the midst of pain that leads to it. Christmas is like that — it too can be too much for us to handle and take in. Bethlehem, Israel, Mary, stable, manger, shepherds, you, me, us — all too small and yet all hold and behold the secret’s now being announced.

God has come to us according to what makes sense to our minds. Through our senses God has come to visit and stay. It does remain more than we can handle and yet God continues to give the Gift into our little hands, our little stables, our little mangers to hold and begin distributing. He came that we might have life and be freed to give it, and Him away in the life-long, life-giving visits we make in the lives of others. Christmas is for those of us who seek intimacy in life. Christmas grows us up.

—taken from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

GOD’S MANY GIFTS:

Some people come into your life as blessings; others come into your life as lessons.

—Blessed Mother Teresa.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Noel Ilg.
- For Sister Anne Mary Tholt, O.S.U.
- For John Debick, grandfather of DJ [‘09] and Matt [‘11] Debick
- For Achilles Rasoletti, father-in-law of Norma Rasoletti [Anniversary]
- For Jennifer Maginot.
- For Father Larry LaVasseur, C.S.C.
- For Bob Gecik, step-father of Deanne Carlson [‘95]
- For Sister Romanus Smith, C.S.C.
- For Roswitha Wyrwas, aunt of Janet Heryak, great aunt of Lillian [‘09], Rosa [‘12], and Edwin [‘17], Heryak.
- For Charles Cumming.
- For Rose Ghartey, mother of Brother Nathaniel Obbin, C.S.C.
- For Lajos Takas.
- For Bob Solen, grandfather of Trevor Harrington [‘19].
- For Sister St. Dominic Nudo, S.N.D.
- For Anna Marie Sepchinski, wife of Maintenance associate, Joey [anniversary].
- For Ernie Ernsberger.
- For Mary Lou Lawlor, grandmother of Resident associate, Alec Lawlor.
- For Sister Geraldine Wadowick, S.N.D.
- For Kenneth Lane, brother-in-law of Brother James Kumba, C.S.C.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For Jaylynn Wilcox, a 12 year old girl, missing since November 17.
- For an end to violence in our society.
- For the families who are grieving the loss of loved ones.
- For an end to human trafficking..
- For the unemployed.
- For those who struggle with family relationships.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For a special intention.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.

CHILDREN’S BULLETINS:

Each week, we are making available a **Children’s Worship Bulletin**. There are **two editions: [3-6] and [7-12]**. They are available on the table as you leave.

The Bulletin focuses on the readings for the week. These are wonderful tools for your children to learn more about the scripture readings for the week. We hope you will take them for your families or your grandchildren. Thanks.



FULFILLING THE PROMISE:

Was Jesus of Nazareth actually born in Bethlehem? Or is that just a theological way for Matthew and Luke to convey their belief that he was the Messiah? Although a majority of Scripture scholars still believe in the geographical accuracy of the gospel accounts, a significant minority question that part of the infancy narratives. Even a cursory reading of Matthew and Luke's narratives surfaces significant contradictions. Though both evangelists agree that Jesus was born in David's hometown, each has a different way to get Mary and Joseph to the town for the blessed event. Matthew presumes the pair already live there — the problem with this is that Matthew eventually must find a way to get them up to Nazareth. Luke, on the other hand, creates a Roman census to move this newly married couple from their home in Nazareth down to Bethlehem.



No one familiar with Jewish history can deny that the evangelists' focus on Bethlehem was rooted in their belief that Jesus was the Messiah whom their fellow Jews had been expecting for centuries. Because the original concept of Messiah revolved around Jewish kings — all descendants of David — the earliest biblical references to Messiah frequently mentioned Bethlehem. The prophet Micah is a good example — “You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times” [Micah 5:2-5]. In other words, we're waiting for a special descendant of David to arrive — someone who will return us to those glory days of old.

No wonder Jesus' first followers presume that, if Jesus were the Davidic Messiah, he, like his ancestor, would have to be born in Bethlehem. Yet those same followers also were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth offered much more than the vast majority of first century CE Jews expected of their Messiah. Among other things, as the author of our Hebrews passage mentions, he set up a new way of worshiping God [Hebrews 10:5-10] — “In holocausts and sin offerings you [God] took no delight. These are offered according to the law. Then Jesus says: ‘Behold, I come to do your will.’ he takes away the first to establish the second.” Jesus is a Messiah who taught that doing God's will was more fulfilling and righteous than carrying out all the minutiae of liturgical regulations. No one seemed to be expecting that kind of a savior.

Luke believes that those who follow such a unique Messiah have one basic task — to hear God's word and carry it out. He focuses on Jesus' mother as the person who constantly fulfills that responsibility. Notice that whenever Mary appears in Luke's gospel, there's always something mentioned about her fulfilling God's word. For instance, in the annunciation, Mary responds: “Let it be done to me according to your word” [Luke 1:26-38]. And when someone from the crowd later yells out to Jesus: “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!” he yells back: “Blessed rather are those who hear God's word and carry it out!” [Luke 11:27-28].

In Luke's Gospel for this 4th Week in Advent, Elizabeth is given the honor of mentioning Mary's special “messianic” characteristic — “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled” [Luke 1:39-45].

In some sense, it doesn't matter where Jesus was born. Because his earliest followers believed he was the Messiah, Bethlehem certainly had to come into the picture. But whether it was Bethlehem or Nazareth, it was essential for them to imitate those parts of his personality which were really messianic. Perhaps the big question today is how do we surface the word of God which contains God's will?

—taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet

START THE JOURNEY:

“Distance doesn't matter; it's only the first step that is difficult.”

—Marquise du Delfand

MARY'S ROLE IN THE CHRISTMAS MYSTERY:

Opening our hearts to mercy and justice brings joy. It only makes sense. Those who live grateful lives are happy people. Gratitude for God's multi-faceted mercy brings happiness and joy. Luke's Gospel for this 4th Week in Advent presents us with two of the most grateful women in human history. Mary says: “My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior” [Luke 1:38-45].

Mary is the New Eve. Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth tells us that Jesus — the New Adam — came to do God's will [see 1 Corinthians 15]. Mary — the New Eve — says: “Let it be done to me according to your will” [Luke 1:38]. Mary embraced God's will — she was full of joy. It's interesting that Moslems also recognize this. The Quran presents Mary as pure and sinless — that is, someone always obeyed God's will. Mary can help us find peace in our world today. Every January 1st, the Church observes World Day of Peace; it is also the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God. So we ask a woman important to both Moslems and Christian to pray for us — to find a path to peace.

Do not miss out on Mary. It is true that Jesus is the most important to us — He is everything. Perhaps we can express it this way: Jesus is like the sun and Mary is like the moon. Her glory is to reflect the light of Jesus. Without the sun we would soon die. But the moon also plays an important role. And how much great poetry and great beauty we would miss without the moon?

Luke's Gospel gives us a powerful reason not to miss out on Mary. Elizabeth exclaims: “Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” This was the reaction of St. Juan Diego when Mary appeared to him. He protested that he was so insignificant. Using his own idiom he addressed her as “My young lady, my daughter, the littlest of my daughters.” These words signify both respect and affection. And she said to him: “My son, the smallest, do not fear.”

You and I are little people. If we remembered that, how much useless anguish would we avoid? Recently a guy came to me all upset because of something President Obama said. I told him: “We are little people. Our job is to pray for the president.” Sure, we can vote, send a letter, even join a political party. But overall we will still be little people. I don't know about you, but I would feel great to hear Mary call me her littlest son. Our Lady of Guadalupe shows that Mary gives preference to the child neglected, hurting, and humbled. If you are feeling downcast, discouraged — come to Mary. This Christmas, come to Jesus. Bring your family members. And ask Mary to help you. Remember what Pope Francis said: “The Virgin Mary, cause of our joy, always brings us back to joy in the Lord, who comes to free us from so many interior and exterior slaveries.”

—taken from the writings of Father Phil Bloom., which appear on the internet.

AMAZON.COM:

Please remember that when you want to buy something from Amazon.com, you need to first go to www.ourladychapel.org and click on the Amazon logo at the bottom of the home page! Because of this simple step — and at no cost to the purchaser — Our Lady Chapel receives a percentage of all purchases that are made from Amazon.com. Ever since we have begun this program, we have consistently been receiving significant checks from Amazon that are being credited to help pay for chapel expenses. This affinity program remains in effect throughout the year, so we ask everyone to continue to remember to start your purchases at Amazon on the Our Lady Chapel home page! Thank you.

PEACE:

Peace is not just the absence of war. Like a cathedral, peace must be constructed patiently and with unshakeable faith.

—Saint John Paul II



PREGNANCY AND PERSONHOOD:

The story is told of an unbeliever accosting a Christian: “If I told you that an infant was born of a virgin in this city, would you believe me?” “Yes,” replied the Christian, “if he lived as Jesus did.” Have you ever wondered how a physician might handle Luke’s Gospel of the Visitation? [Luke 1:39-45]. If affirmative, you are in luck. I found an article by John Willke, MD. I found his thoughts in a paper titled *Mary’s Pregnancy*. The Church speaks thousands of words each week on abortion. “But how come,” you ask shrewdly. “The Gospel is silent on the question as to when human life actually begins.” But the fact is that it is not. Mary we know conceived of the Holy Spirit. But what did she conceive? Was it but a fertilized ovum which in turn became an embryo?

Then did the embryo become a fetus which only weeks or even months later developed into a person? Doctor Willke asserts that Luke’s Gospel answers those questions. He posits that Luke — a fellow physician — is telling us Mary conceived the person of the God-Man Jesus from day one of her pregnancy. Luke tells us that right after the angel’s visit Mary made an impromptu trip to her cousin Elizabeth out in the back country. The trip took almost a week. The young woman was pregnant about ten days. Did Mary believe she was pregnant? By faith, yes. She had said to the angel: “May it be done to me according to your word.” But she had no physical proof of her pregnancy. Humanly speaking, she had to wonder whether as a virgin she had truly conceived.

Traditionally we say Mary went out to help her older cousin during her pregnancy. But that is only half the tale. Some of her reasons for going out there were not quite that altruistic. Was her cousin pregnant she wondered as the angel had said? If affirmative, then the angel could be trusted as an authentic messenger from God. And so she herself would indeed be expecting a child. Breathlessly she reaches her cousin’s door. At six months, Elizabeth is obviously pregnant. The excited Mary concludes then she herself is pregnant. But Elizabeth had not been told of her cousin’s pregnancy. And after ten days Mary was hardly “showing.” Yet, Elizabeth impulsively shouts: “Blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord?”

At the time, Jesus was hardly the size of a pinhead and had only been just implanted into the lining of Mary’s womb. Yet His mother’s cousin was moved to call Him “my Lord.” So, Mary was hardly carrying a personless embryo that would become a fetus and then a person. Rather, Elizabeth was inspired to realize that in the early days of her pregnancy her cousin, says Dr Willke, “was already carrying the person of the God-Man Jesus.”

But the story is not done. In response to her cousin’s salutation, Elizabeth said: “For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.” Her babe was, of course, John. He would be known to history as John the Baptizer.

Thus, John, himself already a person, salutes not merely a ten day old personless embryo, but another genuine person. What is Luke’s Gospel telling us through Elizabeth and her unborn son John? Human life, “alive, sexed, and complete,” is present in every mother’s womb from the beginning of her pregnancy. The visit of the Christ to Elizabeth in the early days of His development is a far greater witness to the sanctity of human life, says Dr Willke, than all of the scientific facts and pictures that one can conjure up. Dr Willke concludes that every abortion then is the killing of a living, fully human being. Jesus has clearly taught us that abortion is wrong, he declares, by the decisive facts of His early days in Mary’s womb. We are in debt to Luke and John Willke — physicians both. Both doctors would remind us that though infants die by chance, they should never die by choice.

—taken from the writings of Father James Gilhooley, which appear on the internet.



because all our wounds and losses can be redeemed as part of a greater promise. The same holds true for our future. All our plans and schemes must reflect the wider plan of God and we, like Teilhard, should be prepared to live in great patience as we wait for the finished symphony.

Mary — Jesus’ Mother — is the pre-eminent figure of this. She shows us hope: Not only did she believe the promise, she became pregnant with it, gestated it, gave it her own flesh, went through the pains of childbirth to give it reality, and then nursed a fragile new life into a powerful adulthood that saved the world. In that, she needs imitation, not admiration.

Advent is the season for us to imitate Mary’s hope by, like her, gestating faith, God’s promise, into real flesh.

—taken from the writings of Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Song of Songs 2:8-14, Luke 1:39-45

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 1:24-28, Luke 1:46-56

Wednesday: Malachi 3:1-24, Luke 1:57-66

Thursday: 2 Samuel 7:1-16, Luke 1:67-79

Friday: Isaiah 9:1-6, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-14
Isaiah 62:11-12, Titus 3:4-7, Luke 2:15-20
Isaiah 52:7-10, Hebrews 1:1-6, John 1:1-18

Saturday: Acts 6:8-10;7-54-59, Matthew 10:17-22

Feast of the Holy Family: Sirach 3:2-14, Colossians 3:12-21, Luke 2:41-52

DRESSES FOR HONDURAS:

One of the nurses in our Gilmour Clinic is involved in a **dressmaking project** for the children of Honduras. They have devised a method of making sundresses out of common pillowcases, and then adorning them with other items for decoration. And that is where you come in. **If you have any old buttons, ribbon, ric-rac, lace or other sewing trim,** please bring them in. The group would like to collect these items to help decorate the dresses they are working on. This is an on-going project; the dresses will be sent to Honduras every time there is a mission trip. The next trip is scheduled for March of 2016. There is a **basket in the narthex of the Chapel** to collect any donations you may have. Thank you for your help!

**PRAY THE ROSARY:**

Please join us as we **pray the Rosary every Saturday at 4:25 PM** in the Eucharistic Chapel. In the words of Pope John Paul II: “The Rosary of the Virgin Mary is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of the third millennium, a prayer of great significance. It has the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety. Through the Rosary, the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.” Please join us.

**WISDOM:**

Do not think it impossible just because it has never happened.

—Friar Tuck

ADVENT — GESTATING HOPE INTO REALITY:

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, as even his critics admit, was a man of hope. Indeed his whole vision of things is generally criticized for being too hopeful. So, in trying to explain hope and advent, allow me a Teilhard story. Teilhard was a scientist, and a good one, but he was also a Christian, a priest, and a man whose ultimate vision of things was formed by the gospels. Central to his whole system of thought was his rock-bottom belief that ultimately all of history — cosmic and human — would come together in Christ into one community of life and love — as promised by Jesus and as summarized in Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus [1:3-10]. This vision was the wide framework within which he ultimately set his scientific theories. But he was surrounded by colleagues — both Christian and secular — who had a far-less hopeful view of things. One day he was challenged this way: "You have an enchanted view of history, believing that everything will one day culminate in a wonderful 'kingdom' of peace and love, but suppose we blow up the world in a nuclear war, what happens to your schema of things then?"

His response to that question is a textbook definition of hope: "If we blow up the world it would be a great tragedy because it would set things back millions of years. But history will still one day culminate in a kingdom of peace and love — not because my theory says so, but because God promised it, and in the resurrection has shown the power to bring this about, despite the things we do."

That's hope, to be able to say: "It might take a million years or so longer, but it will happen because God promised it."

By what is this characterized? Let's begin with a certain "via negative". Hope is not wishful thinking, natural optimism, or an educated theory based upon CNN. Hope is not the simple longing for something wonderful to happen to us — I can wish to win a lottery, marry the most beautiful person in the world, or score the winning goal in the world cup, but that isn't hope; it's pure wish. Similarly, hope is not optimism — a natural temperament, however pleasant, which is perennially upbeat and always sees the positive side of things. Finally, hope is also not a positive diagnosis based upon a shrewd assessment of the facts. Jim Wallis once quipped: "Put not your faith in CNN!" The same holds true for FOX News, MSNBC, BBC, CBC, NBC, ABC, ITV, SKY NEWS, and WORLD NEWS. One does not ultimately ground hope on whether the world situation seems to be improving or worsening. Hope does not go up and down like the stock market because, in the end, it is not based upon the empirical facts as these are reported on the news.

Hope is believing in the promise of God and believing that God has the power to fulfill that promise.

What is that promise? God has promised that history — our private histories, our communal history, and cosmic history — will one day come together in an ecstatic oneness — a heaven, a paradise, a community of life around Christ and in God within which there will be no tears and no death. This will not be a community of life focused on "food and drink", but one that takes its very breath from love, justice, peace, friendship, affection, and shared delight in a common spirit, the Holy Spirit.

And what power will bring this about? The power that God showed in the resurrection of Jesus — the power to bring a dead body back to life, to redeem what's been lost, to write straight with crooked lines, and to bring people together, despite and beyond hatred, sin, selfishness, mistakes, tragedy, resistance, death, and all that will ever be seen on CNN.

To live in hope is to live in the face of that promise and that power, and, in that light, to fundamentally shape both our memories and our future. As regards memory, to hope is to look back on our lives and see no need to count the losses, underline the hurts, play the victim, or stew in bitterness

**MARY — MODEL OF CHRISTMAS:**

Luke's Gospel [1:26-45] introduces us to a teenage girl from Nazareth in Galilee by the name of Mary. Committed to doing the will of God, she consented to being the mother of the Messiah and is now making a hasty trip of some 60 miles to visit her relative Elizabeth, who in old age is six months pregnant. When she arrives, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, blesses Mary, extolling her for her faith that God's word would be fulfilled.

Mary of Nazareth has been an important figure in Catholic spirituality throughout the whole history of Christianity. She has been a model and inspiration for various groups — vowed religious who dedicate their lives to prayer and service; mothers committed to raising their children; wives determined to hold their families together; and contemporary women interested in overcoming the injustices of patriarchy and sexism. Vatican II introduced a broader understanding of Mary as the model for the whole Church, and a guide for all men and women striving to be faithful disciples of Christ.

We can envision a Marian influence on Christians serious about following Christ. A man making a career change spent time in prayerful discernment, as did Mary, asking himself relevant questions about potential employers — including their ethical standards and social commitments. A single woman in her late twenties, who was feeling lonely and depressed without a husband, looked to Mary for guidance and decided to make the most of her life — enjoying her friends, advancing her career, participating in her parish, and serving her community. All this activity filled up some empty space, lifted her spirits, and provided her with a sense of meaning and purpose, which left her better prepared for a future relationship. Reflecting on the haste with which Mary went to visit Elizabeth, a young man who had completely ignored the Advent season, vowed to make the most of the few days before Christmas by setting aside time each day for spiritual reading and acts of charity.

What can you learn from the example of Mary of Nazareth, and how could you incorporate these lessons into your daily life?

—taken from the writings of Father Jim Bacik which appear on the internet

ALTAR SERVERS and LECTORS:

We continue to be in need of servers and lectors. **Any student who is in the 3rd [and up] grade is invited to become an altar server; any student who is in the 5th [and up] grade is invited to become a lector.** These are both wonderful ministries — a great way to serve God and the faith community. If you would like to take advantage



of these opportunities, **please give your name to Father John.** You do not have to attend Gilmour to be an altar server, lector, or to be involved in any other ministry at Our Lady Chapel. **Please call the chapel office [440-473-3560].**

BRINGING UP THE OFFERTORY GIFTS:

Would you and your family or group like to bring up the gifts at the offertory at Mass? In the past, our Council people have invited people to bring up the gifts, and we have found that many — if not most — of you like to be asked. But in using this method, we may be leaving people out, especially if it is done as a "last minute item". So, we are posting a sign-up sheet on the Easel in the narthex of the chapel. **If you or your family or group would like to bring up the gifts on a certain Saturday or Sunday — or if you are open to doing this at any time — please call the chapel office [440-473-3560].** We look forward to opening this beautiful experience to all in our community.



UNWRAPPING THE MYSTERY OF THE VISITATION:

We are entering the final phase of the Advent season. Luke's Gospel [1:38-45] presents with the beautiful story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, her cousin. Superficially there is no significant action — Mary simply visits her cousin, stays for a few days, and then returns home. What Luke gives us is the conversation between the two women — a conversation which is very revealing.

Mary is pregnant with Jesus and Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist — though further on in her pregnancy. Both have experienced an annunciation and a miraculous conception — Mary while remaining a virgin, and Elizabeth when she was already past childbearing age. God's decisive intervention in the history of the world is now well underway. The two women seem to be well aware of this; they fully realize that they are strategic players the great cosmic drama which is now unfolding.

As soon as Mary comes into view, the child leapt in Elizabeth's womb. This is a strange word — "leapt" or "jumped". A baby moves in the womb, this we know, but to leap is most extraordinary. Elizabeth actually tells Mary that the child within her leapt with joy. We are being told that the two children — even though enclosed in their respective mother's wombs — recognized each other. And John the Baptist — whose eventual role was to identify and proclaim the coming of the Messiah — is already doing this even though he is not yet born into the world. It is as if his whole existence is about this recognition. So although the account is ostensibly about the meeting of two mothers it is actually about the meeting of two unborn children.

Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, echoes this recognition by greeting Mary as "the Mother of my Lord". She recognizes the importance of the event, and expresses her joy and humility in being involved in the unfolding of God's plan by asking: "Why am I so favored?" The acknowledgement by Elizabeth of the importance of Mary and her role comes out in her exclamation: "Blessed are you among women".

Throughout the centuries, many other Christians have openly wondered why we Catholics honor Mary and give her so much devotion and proclaim her "blessed status". The answer lies in how Elizabeth addressed Mary. Her words are validated by the fact that they were uttered under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If Elizabeth expresses her honor and respect towards Mary at such a vital moment, then we can safely follow her and ought to hold Mary in equally high regard.

Joy permeates this entire exchange. The prophecy made to Mary by the angel concerning the birth of John the Baptist is fulfilled — "He [John] will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth" Luke 1:14]. The angel continues: "Even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit" [15]. This prophetic recognition by John of Jesus while both are in the womb is therefore under the direct inspiration of God and has been foretold by his messenger.

The infancy narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are worthy of deep study. These are more than just a collection of stories about the birth and early years of Jesus. Many scholars regard them as Gospels in miniature.

An important part of the early scenes in Luke's Gospel are taken up with the role of John the Baptist — his preaching and his task of preparing a way for the Lord, as well as his eventually the sending of his disciples to Jesus. These events are all prefigured here in this in the account of John leaping within his mother's womb in recognition of the Messiah.

And so there is reason to rejoice. This rejoicing comes about because John, Elizabeth and Mary realize that the events so long foretold are now coming to pass — the Messiah has arrived and is entering the world. And there is an even greater cause for joy — they realize that they are personally involved in these events.



million reasons why this or that sacrifice is too much for us. But Mary said, "Yes".

I love Denise Levertov's poem *Annunciation*. It embodies the hope of the world waiting for an answer from a young virgin. We all know the scene — the room, variously furnished, almost always a lectern, a book, a tall lily and an angelic ambassador, standing or hovering, whom she acknowledges.

We are told of meek obedience. No one mentions the courage.
The engendering spirit did not enter her without consent. God waited.
She was free to accept or refuse, choice integral to humanness.
Aren't there annunciations of one sort or another in most lives?

Some unwillingly undertake great destinies, enact them in sullen pride, uncomprehending.
More often these moments, when roads of light and storm open from darkness in a man or woman,
these moments are turned away from in dread, in a wave of weakness, in despair and with relief.
Ordinary lives continue. God does not smite them. But the gates close; the pathways vanish.
She did not wail, she only asked: "how can this be?" and gravely, courteously, took to heart the angel's
reply, perceiving instantly the ministry she was offered

To bear in her womb
Infinite weight and lightness; to carry in hidden, finite inwardness nine months of Eternity;
to contain in the slender vase of being the sum of power--in narrow flesh, the sum of light.
Then to bring to birth, push out into air, a Man-child needing like any other, milk and love —
but who was God.

This was the minute no one speaks of, when she could still refuse.
A breath unbreathed, Spirit suspended, waiting.
She did not cry: "I cannot, I am not worthy." nor, "I have not the strength."
She did not submit with gritted teeth, raging, coerced.
Bravest of all humans, consent illumined her.

The room filled with its light, the lily glowed in it, and the wings of the angel became iridescent.
Consent, courage unparalleled, opened her utterly.

And we have been saved because Mary trusted in God. We understand the importance of Elizabeth's words to Mary — "Blessed is she who trusted that the Lord's word to her will be fulfilled."

The meeting of Elizabeth and Mary is the pointing of the Old Testament to the New, the revelation of the Messiah to the people longing for a transformation, the message that we who have been chosen to make the Lord present in the world must, like Mary, say "yes" to God's plans. For God works his wonders in those who trust in him. —taken from the writings of Father Joseph Pellegrino which appear on the internet

CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR — BEGIN WITH MASS:

It has been a long-standing tradition here at Our Lady Chapel that we begin our New Year's Eve celebration by first coming to Mass before going out for the evening. This affords us a great opportunity to begin the New Year with a time of prayer and worship of God. **January 1st** is also a **Holy Day of obligation** — the **Feast of the Motherhood of God and New Year's Day**. In addition, our Holy Father, Pope Francis has asked all of us to pray intensely on January 1st for world peace. As noted in the Mass schedule of the Christmas Season, **there will be a vigil Mass on Thursday, December 31st at 5:30 PM.** Please plan on joining us.

**DIVINE LIFE:**

As the divine light grows brighter, it reveals what it contains — divine life. And divine life reveals that the Ultimate Reality is love.
—Thomas Keating

THE VISITATION:

As our world is bursting with excitement these last days before Christmas, the Church presents us with two expectant mothers, bursting with the excitement of their pregnancies. We refer to the scene as the “Visitation” [Luke 1:39-45]. Spiritual writers have often said that Mary’s first act as the mother of the Savior is to bring his love and kindness to her kinswoman, Elizabeth — the Visitation being an act of charity. There is far more to this meeting than that. After all, Elizabeth was the wife of Zechariah, a Temple priest whose rank was so high that he was chosen that year to be the priest to enter the innermost chamber of the Temple — the Holy of Holies. Certainly there were plenty of women around Elizabeth to help her through her pregnancy and childbirth.

This meeting of the two expectant mothers has a deeper significance than just being an example of charity. It is the Old Testament pointing to the New Testament — it is John within Elizabeth, leaping for joy, pointing to Jesus within Mary.

Let’s focus on each of these mothers.

First, consider Elizabeth. She was married into the heart of the Temple tradition. She, in her pregnancy, represents the best of the ancient chosen people of God. The Temple was a sign pointing to God. The ancient Hebrews struggled with the concept of constructing a Temple. Pagans constructed temples and limited their gods to their buildings. The Hebrews knew that God could not be limited to one place. But they wanted a place to honor God. They wanted a place that would hold a special presence of the One whom the universe could not contain.

Elizabeth’s body was like that ancient Temple. Her body contained the one who would point out the Lord to the world. John the Baptist, within Elizabeth, leapt for joy in the presence of Jesus within Mary. John, the last of the ancient Israelite prophets became the first of the Christian prophets pointing to the one he would later call the Lamb of God. John embodied and brought to a conclusion the Temple Tradition of Israel, the tradition of reminding the people that God is among them.

When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain in the Temple that separated the Holy of Holies was torn in two. Now everyone — not just the high priests like Zechariah — could experience the deepest presence of God. The Temple is no longer needed to point to the Lord. The Lord is among us. Our homes, our families, our parishes, our lives have been transformed into the new Temples of the Lord. We must keep our homes sacred and holy, for they are the dwelling places of the Lord. We must keep our bodies and our lives sacred and holy, for they also are dwelling places of the Lord. The Lord is not just among us — he is within us as he was within Mary that beautiful day when Elizabeth met her cousin.

Mary, the expectant young girl, was bursting with joy — not just for Elizabeth, but for the life within her. Mary did not just put up with the pregnancy. It wasn’t as though she had no choice but to deal with being pregnant. Like all good mothers she loved being pregnant. But more than any other mother, she enjoyed a unique possession of the Word of God within her. Mary proclaimed the *Magnificat* to Elizabeth — “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” Mary knew what the Lord was doing within her and for her. He was raising her up from being one of many young women to the one whom all ages would call blessed — “The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” She is the Blessed Virgin; the Mother of the Lord — “Who am I, that the Mother of our Lord should come to me?” asks Elizabeth.

God’s plan for the redemption of the world began with Mary. She was the woman of faith and the woman of courage who said “yes” to the Lord. Let’s go back to that moment when Mary agreed to become the mother of the Lord. It is the moment when the annunciation — the angel Gabriel’s message — was transformed into the incarnation — God took on flesh within Mary. Mary could have said “No.” She could have given a million reasons why she could not make this sacrifice, just as we give a



This joy just flow over into the lives of all Christians. In fact, our joy should be greater than that of Elizabeth and Mary because while they were there at the beginning, we have seen the fulfilment of all that was promised. We have witnessed — albeit at a distance — the working out of that great drama of the salvation of the world. They were involved in the beginning, but we have seen the end of the story. We are filled with deep joy and satisfaction that God has achieved his purpose and that the salvation of humanity was brought about through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is Good News and we rejoice in it.

Our problem is that we have lost the sense of the Good News. Advent has been a sober season; we have all been doing a bit of spiritual spring-cleaning. Many of us have already taken advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation — if we haven’t then there is just enough time to put that right. But in this final week of Advent, the tone of Advent has changed — it has stepped up a gear; now is the time to express some of this joy,

The values of Christ are love, goodness, truth, justice, hope, fidelity, service, and holiness; these are the qualities that ought to characterize our Christian life. Our joy is not that of an empty vessel making a lot of noise, but a deep, abiding, satisfying happiness and contentment in the knowledge that the victory has been won. While there is still much left to be done — many tribulations that we must yet endure — let us go forward in the knowledge and joy that will keep us faithful and true to Christ throughout our lives and in the life to come.

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister, S.D.S., which appear on the internet

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets will be passed during the “Preparation Rite” and will be brought to the altar as part of the Offerings to help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, your donations to Our Lady Chapel will be acknowledged so that you have a record for the IRS.

Total Offerings: Saturday [12/12/15] ----- \$ 2,278.00

Total Offerings: Sunday [12/13/15] ----- \$ 1,347.00

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP — THE EDGE:

December 20th we will decorate the chapel for Christmas. Lunch will be provided. Come and try us out. Come and find out what **the EDGE** is all about. If you have not joined us before, that’s OK. **Just call the office and let us know that you are going to be coming.** We ask you to do this because there will be food involved. Our EDGE Youth Group has a Faith-Service-Social component, and we look forward to your participation. All are welcome. **Following a break for Christmas, our next EDGE meeting will be on Sunday, January 10th when we will be sharing meaningful Christmas experiences.** Please join us for a wonderful experience.



IT'S TIME TO LET GO:

I'm someone who has always loved having a plan — always knowing the next step. I suppose it is not the plan I enjoy so much as the comfort of having control over my situations. Even as a little girl, I worried about the unknown — “But Mommy, what if it goes wrong? Then what?” My mom never wavered in her answer: “Now is not the time to worry” or “We'll cross that bridge when we get to it.”

And bridges there were. The bridges have been many — and there will continue to be many. Life is filled with events that that require leaps of faith, trusting in the unknown. A long time ago, a young peasant girl, in the town of Nazareth, took a leap of faith. That girl was Mary.

Mary was engaged to Joseph. The Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her she would conceive a child, and that child would be the Son of God [Luke 1:26-38]. We know the story so well that sometimes I think we forget the scandal of it. Though Mary was bearing the Son of God, to outsiders she was merely a pregnant woman out of wedlock. The punishment under Mosaic law for having a child out of wedlock was death.

Mary knew all of this, and yet, she was not worried about what others would think of her, what they would say, or how they would act. She did not ask for a sign or a plan. **She simply surrendered herself to God; she put her whole life into His hands, and trusted in Him.**

Throughout Advent, I often find myself thinking of Mary — of what she might have been thinking and feeling. I wonder how I would have responded if an angel appeared to me — would I be afraid, scared, confused? Would I wonder if God had made a mistake — “Surely, not I, Lord?” Or would I respond with grace and humility, as Mary did — “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

As the season of Christmas continues to draw near, I can only hope to be more like Mary — more grace filled, more holy, more obedient, more loving, more pure, and more patient. But most importantly, I aspire to trust in God as Mary did. **The power of faith in God is not that you are without questions, but that those questions do not prevent you from surrendering yourself to Him.**

When you do, God allows incredible things to happen. Now that I am older, I often turn to Mary — my heavenly mother — with all my “what ifs.” If I am quiet enough, in my heart I can hear her saying: **“now is not the time to worry, be at peace, trust in God.”** Mary's “yes” changed the world forever — what will your “yes” do?

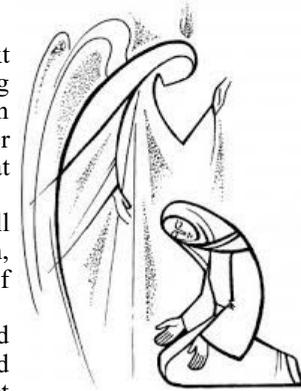
—taken from the writings of Caitlin Sica, an associate of the Bible Geek

LIFE TEEN:

December 20th we will decorate the chapel for Christmas. Lunch will be provided. Come and try us out. Life Teen meets right after Sunday Mass — from **11:30 AM—1:00 PM** in the **Lennon Board Room**. Life Teen is open to **all high school aged young people**. **Just call the office and let us know that you are going to be coming.** We ask you to do this because there will be food involved. We have a great deal of fun together and we grow in our faith at the same time. **Respond to your texts and/or emails, or call the chapel office [440-473-3560] to be notified.** We will be taking a break until after the New Year. **Following a break for Christmas, our next Life Teen meeting will be on Saturday evening, January 9th — our famous “game night”.** Festivities begin at **6:30 PM**. Please join us for a wonderful experience. Also please continue to remember all our teens and young people in your prayers.

PRAYER:

In prayer we discover what we already have. You start where you are and you deepen what you already have, and you realize that you are already there. We already have everything, but we don't know it and we don't experience it. Everything has been given to us in Christ. All we need is to experience what we already possess.

**EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS IS WRONG [KIND OF]:**

We are all familiar with the Christmas story — at least the cartoon/Vacation Bible School/Christmas TV special version of it. But — and this may be surprising — some of the most popular depictions of the Christmas story actually get a few things wrong. How well do you know the details of the Christmas story? It's time to separate the fact from the fiction, the donkeys from the kings, the innkeepers from the — well, non-inn keepers.

Here are 8 Nativity story details that probably never happened:

1. **Mary probably didn't ride a donkey on the way to give birth to Jesus.** I know that most popular depictions have Mary riding a donkey, but it is more likely that she and Joseph walked most of the way because they couldn't afford a donkey. That's right — Mary walked a long distance to give birth, like a total boss.
2. **When Joseph and Mary arrived, an innkeeper tells them there is no room at the inn.** Well, not quite! In the Gospels, there is no innkeeper. There is just no room for Mary and Joseph to stay [Luke 2:7]. Fun fact — the Greek word that is used for “room” is only used to describe one other place in the Gospels — the upper room where Jesus eats the Last Supper.
3. **Thankfully, there was a barn for them to give birth in. Or, was it a cave? Or a stable?** Actually, scripture never clearly says. The only definite detail is that the newborn baby Jesus was laid in a manger [Luke 2:7] — a feeding trough for animals.
4. **But after they arrived, it was a silent night, right?** Jesus was fully human and fully divine. A fully human baby cries — a lot. That first night probably wasn't so silent, but was filled with a lot of crying Jesus.
5. **Until those three kings showed up with gifts, right?** Well, there were three gifts — but scripture never mentions three kings. Scripture talks about three “wise men” or “magi” [see Matthew 2]. Tradition later revealed the names of the three individuals associated with the gifts, though — Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar. I know, all great baby names for your future children. They would've been advisors to kings — but not kings themselves.
6. **And they may not have made it to the manger, but instead visited Jesus when he made it to a house.** It would make sense that the magi would have arrived slightly later — especially since King Herod issues a decree to massacre any child under 2 — that age range would have been unnecessary if Jesus was still an infant when the magi showed up.
7. **Oh, and the “star” that the magi followed, may have not been a single star but a major heavenly event.** The Greek word “aster” that is translated “star” has a closer meaning to “celestial event.” This could've been a major eclipse, a supernova, or something else that caught the eye of the trained magi. Basically, it was the biggest celestial event of all time.
8. **OK, fine, I get all that — but please tell me that there were at least some animals around there so I don't feel like my entire nativity scene is a lie.** Yeah, there might have been some — but it is more likely that wherever Mary and Joseph were staying, the keeper of the household cleared out a space for them — which meant clearing out animals, too. So, as heartbreaking as it is — Jesus, Mary, and Joseph did not have a sleepover with a donkey. However, it is also known that people back in that time kept animals in their homes with them.

It is good to have our facts about the Christmas story straight — but even more important to remember that Jesus is at the center of the Christmas story. It is all about Him. The details only help to paint a more vivid picture of who Jesus was and what Jesus came to do — save you and me. Want to know more about how it all really went down? Read the first couple of chapters of Luke and Matthew's Gospel.

BONUS FACT: At no point did Santa ever visit the baby Jesus. The real St. Nicholas lived about 300 years after Jesus' death. Sorry Santa.