

**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 people,  
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 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].

# 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.*



### SCHEDULE OF ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERVICES:

- December 21-22—regular weekend schedule
- Tuesday, December 24 —Christmas Eve Mass at 4:00 PM
- Wednesday, December 25 — Christmas Day Mass at 10:00 AM
- December 28-29 — regular weekend schedule
- Tuesday, December 31 — New Year's Eve Mass at 5:00 PM
- January 4-5 — Regular weekend schedule.

### 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. As noted in the Mass schedule of the Christmas Season, **there will be a vigil Mass on Monday, December 31<sup>st</sup> at 5:00 PM.** Please plan on joining us.



### NATIONAL SHRINE — SITE OF PILGRIMAGE FOR JUBILEE YEAR:

The U.S. bishops have designated the **Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception** in Washington, D.C., as a special pilgrimage site for the 2025 Jubilee Year.

A jubilee is a special holy year of grace and pilgrimage that happens at least once every 25 years. The pope can call for extraordinary jubilee years, such as the 2016 Year of Mercy, more often. During the jubilee, Catholics are encouraged to make a pilgrimage to Rome. For pilgrims who can't travel to Rome, the bishops usually designate a more local shrine as pilgrimage sites for the jubilee.

Visiting the basilica is a powerful way to take advantage of the grace of the jubilee. One grace that "pilgrims of hope" on the jubilee may obtain is the "jubilee indulgence." This grace is granted by the Holy Father to anyone who travels to any sacred jubilee site — whether in Rome, the Holy Land, or a locally designated sacred site. The National Shrine is the largest Roman Catholic church in North America and is dedicated to the patroness of the United States — the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title Immaculate Conception.



### 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 Szanislo, Tina Newton and Sharon Fedele** 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.



### FAITH EDUCATION — JANUARY DATES:

Faith Education is an important part of every person's formation. Please make sure that you have not forgotten this important responsibility. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM, on Sunday mornings**, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass.** Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility. **Meeting dates for January: 12 & 26.**

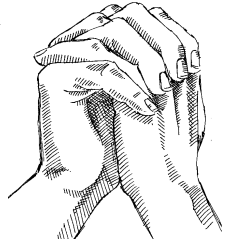


### PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

#### PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is seriously ill.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [\*09], Rosa [\*12] and Edwin [\*17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Debbie Langer, friend of Cindy Frimel, who was diagnosed with brain cancer.
- For Nada Kucmanic, who is seriously ill.
- For Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Father Ray Sutter, pastor emeritus of St. Matthias Parish, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Cathy Lough, friend of Cyndi Frimel, who is undergoing health struggles.
- For Dave & Elaine Tanaski, who are suffering with dementia and other health complications.
- For Nick Chiacchiarri, father of Mark Mark Chiacchiarri [\*94], father-in-law of Michelle Chiacchiarri [\*96], and grandfather of Aurelia [\*28], and Olivia [\*30] Chiacchiarri, who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Kip Apel, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Sabrina Kumar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Margaret Thompson, friend of Joyce Toth, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Father Tom Lemos, C.S.C., who is recovering from intestinal surgery.
- For Father Leo Polselli, C.S.C., who is hospitalized with blood clots in his lungs.
- For Brother Joe LeBon, C.S.C., who is critically ill and under the care of hospice
- For Nina Johnson, AVI employee, who is recovering from open heart surgery.



#### PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Pietro & Josephine Petrallia
- For Rose Marie Ripepi, grandmother of Gianna [\*18] and Vincent [\*22] Stafford
- For Amanda Impullitti, sister of Nick Impullitti [\*01], aunt of Joey [\*34], Jackson [\*36], and Quinn [\*39] Impullitti.
- For Leonard Klein, father of science instructor and coach, Jeff Klein, grandfather of Nathaniel Klein [\*12]
- For Cathy Kozelka, sister of Father Austin Collins, C.S.C.
- For Jack McLeod [\*54], father of John [\*85], brother of Norm [\*50], William [\*60], cousin of Michael [\*75] and John [\*77] McLeod, and great-uncle of JD [\*21], Teddy [\*21], JD '21, Sebyy [\*24] Fitzgerald.

### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you. Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord's invitation: "I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart." [Jeremiah 24:7].



**A YOUNG ADULT GROUP:**

The Young Adult group will be holding their next meeting at 11:45 AM on Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. We will be discussing what it means to be a “Wise Man” in today’s world. Location TBD, because the Chapel & the Lennon Boardroom will be used for taking down the Christmas decorations. Here is an opportunity to get together, share some time in faith, and also to support each other in life’s journey, as we continue to grow and become the people that God wants us to be. If you are interested and would like to be part of this new adventure, please join us at our next meeting, or contact Richard Jones, Stephanie Leonor, Joe Gurney, or Edwin Heryak. Of course, you can also contact Father John at the chapel if that would be easier for you. God bless you.



**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

- Monday:** Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66
- Tuesday:** 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79
- Wednesday:** 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
- Thursday:** Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22
- Friday:** 1 John 1:1-4, John 20:1a, 2-8
- Saturday:** 1 John 1:5-2:2, Matthew 2:13-18
- Feast of the Holy Family:** Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Colossians 3:12-21, Luke 2:41-52

**2025 CALENDARS:**

Calendars for the year 2025 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 2025 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.



**WEEKLY OFFERING:**

Baskets are located on the pillars just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the basket. Baskets will not be passed during the offertory time. Your offering will help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, you can request a printout of your offerings for the year to submit to the IRS. God bless you.

- Total Offerings: Saturday [12/14/24] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 85.00**
- Total Offerings: Saturday [12/15/24] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 495.00**
- Total Offerings: Monday [12/16/24] Advent Penance Service \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00**

**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — THURSDAY, January 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God’s word. It’s a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can’t come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God’s word.



**Our topic: What is the Jubilee Year**

Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting. Join us. You’ll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

**SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:**

Sunday, December 22: 4 <sup>th</sup> Week in Advent	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 23:	NO MASS
Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Eve	4:00 PM In Person & Live Stream
Wednesday, December 25: Christmas Day	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Thursday, December 26:	NO MASS
Friday, December 27:	NO MASS
Saturday, December 28: Feast of the Holy Family	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, December 29: Feast of the Holy Family	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:**

Again this year we will accept memorial donations to help defray the cost of flowers and decorations which we use in our chapel for the Christmas season. If you are interested in making a donation in memory of loved ones, please put the names of the loved ones along with your donation in an envelope, mark it “Christmas Flowers,” and either give it to Father John or drop it in the offering basket. Please keep the following people in your prayers: In memory of Pat Redmond, and the Blazek, Rezabek families. We will publish the names of your loved ones in the Bulletin as a memorial throughout the Christmas season.



**THE MYSTERY:**

God’s great freedom in giving himself to us represents a challenge and an exhortation to modify our behaviors and our relationships. It is the invitation which Jesus addresses to us each day. He calls us not to think according to the categories of “friend/enemy”, “us/them”, “those who are in/those who are out”, “mine/yours”, but rather to go beyond, to open our heart in order to be able to recognize God’s presence and action, even in unusual and unpredictable environments that are not part of our circle. —Pope Francis

**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 secret Santa gift exchanges, shopping and other preparatory activities 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

**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. We know that Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit. But what did she conceive? Was it but a fertilized ovum which in turn became an embryo?

When 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 that 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



**MARY, JESUS EXPERT:**

In the 1970's, if someone wanted to increase their tennis prowess, they would watch Chris Evert Lloyd's moves on the court. For the millions of little girls with the iconic "Dorothy Hamill" pixie and dreams of being an Olympic skater, it was all about finding every opportunity to see Dorothy Hamill perform the Hamill Camel. If you were looking to improve your pitching, you'd study Tom Seaver, Steve Carlton, or Jim Palmer. What drew people to them? They were experts. They had reached a goal most could only dream of achieving. If you wanted to get there as well, it made only sense to turn to role models of success.

So, it stands to reason if we long to uncover the path, learn the wisdom, and acquire the disposition of heart required to follow Jesus, we have but to look to one expert — Mary, his mother. By contemplating her principle virtues, actions, and devotion, we can reach unparalleled heights of faith.

There is no courage without fear. True courage is persevering with the task before you in the face of your trepidation. Mary, filled with grace, faced with many circumstances we may consider fearful — having to tell your betrothed about your pregnancy, escaping from a King determined to slay your newborn son, and being present at the foot of the Cross. Yet, her faith was unwavering. Mary teaches us courage in the trials of life. Where do you need Mary to guide you to be heroic?

Mary had just received the most incredible news of her life — really in the history of the world. Yet she didn't sit around in shock or contemplating the privilege of being chosen the Mother of God, nor did she head to the town well to spread her good news. Upon hearing her kinswoman Elizabeth is with child, goes in haste to assist her.

Compassion — the care and concern for another. The ability to recognize a need and respond without hesitation brings forth grace upon grace, as witnessed with Elizabeth's greeting when Mary entered the house — "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" [Luke 1:39-45]. Humble and pure of heart, Mary's love for others is present throughout scripture.

We'll see Mary's compassion exhibited again at Cana [see John 2] when Mary comes to the aid of the bride and groom and unselfishly relinquishes her private life with Jesus, while imparting one of her greatest lessons — "Do whatever He tells you." Will you allow Mary to reveal where your assistance is needed and, more importantly, how to respond with haste?

One minute you are looking at cute dresses for Easter; the next, your daughter is nowhere to be seen. Luckily, this feeling of panic lasts only a few seconds for most of us, when the child emerges from the clothing rack right next to us. But for Mary the horror of searching for her missing son lasted three days [see Luke 2]. Throughout those hours of travel and seeking for the child, Jesus, she put her hope in God. Although anxious, knowing with her whole heart that God is always in control and works all things for good, Mary surely experienced the peace that comes from trusting God.

Perhaps, in her many prayers those three days, Mary called upon the words of Psalm 80 as a prayer — "Once again, O Lord of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong."

Jesus is always found when we seek him — especially in our prayers. In what current situations can you put your hope in God and trust like Mary? Mary's expertise showed in how she lived out better than anyone the words spoken in Luke's Gospel: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

—taken from the writings of Allison Gingras, which appear on the internet

**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 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 Monsignor Joseph Pellegrino which appear on the internet

### 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



### SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — JANUARY 18<sup>th</sup>:

Our Savior Lutheran Church — across the street from the Chapel — has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help unloading the trailers and setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry serves clients from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**

Our Savior Lutheran’s Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. Please join us for a great experience.

**Please let us know in the Chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help.** This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

### YOU HAVE A PURPOSE:

You were put on this earth to shine your light so brightly that it illuminates the next person’s darkness.

