St. John of the Cross Parish

5005 S. Wolf Road Western Springs, IL 60558 • Parish Office: 708-246-4404 • stjohnofthecross.org

Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2014

“...our mission is to love as Christ loved and to proclaim the Good News...”

from our Parish Mission Statement

Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I say, rejoice.
Indeed, the Lord is near.

Entrance Antiphon
Prayer for our RCIA Catechumens and Candidates

Almighty God, look upon your servants,
Nicole, Mick, Eric and Ellin,
as they begin the process of being counted
among the members of your Church.
Teach them through this time of preparation
in coming to know Christ, the love of God,
the mysteries of our faith, the way of the Gospel,
the grace of the sacraments and the importance
of their relationship with you and the Church.
Send down upon them and their sponsors
your Spirit of guidance and wisdom
as they journey together in faith.
We thank you for these whom you have called
and we await their joining us around
the table of the Lord.
Through the power of the Holy Spirit, assure them
of the prayers and support
of the St. John of the Cross faith community.

Senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests have spent their lives ministering to others, often for little, if any, pay. Their sacrifices now leave their religious communities without adequate savings for retirement and health care. Your gift to the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious supports the day-to-day care of roughly 35,000 senior religious, providing necessities such as prescription medications and nursing care. Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

Catholic Relief Services
Typhoon Hagupit Emergency Appeal

Catholic Relief Services teams and partners are already traveling to the Philippines, an area hit for the second year in a row with a typhoon. Please keep the Filipino people in your prayers. Donations may be sent to:

ATTN: Typhoon Hagupit Emergency Appeal
Catholic Relief Services
3525 S. Lake Park Avenue
Chicago, IL 60653.
Our Advent journey continues this weekend as we celebrate Guadete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent), or as the children of my friends called it “Pink Sunday.” It marked a time held tradition in the life of my friend’s family when they would put up the Christmas tree and decorate the house. To this day, their grown children still refer to the Third Sunday of Advent as Pink Sunday. Guadete is the Latin word for Rejoice. You will notice that the candle being lit and processed in at the beginning of Mass is pink or rose colored, and the celebrant in Mass may wear a rose colored vestment. The origins of Guadete Sunday and the use of rose as its liturgical color go back to a time when Advent was known as St. Martin’s Lent – a Forty day period of fasting in preparation for Christmas. At that time in our history as a Church, Advent was seen as a penitential season. Because of its focus on rejoicing on the coming of Christ, the penitential practices associated with Advent were suspended on Gaudete Sunday so that the joy of our redemption could be celebrated. Though the tradition of Guadete Sunday in the use of a rose candle and vestments, our current liturgical theology holds that Advent is a time of joyful anticipation and preparation for Christ’s coming at the end of time and commemorating his first coming in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago.

Our parish has much to rejoice about on this Sunday. We rejoice for the caring, thoughtful and loving hearts of so many people who in a spirit of generosity are being Christ for others in their participation in Share Christmas. Today is also the feast day of the patron saint of our parish – St. John of the Cross (December 14). St. John of the Cross was born in Fontiveros, Spain in 1542. His father died when John was young. At the age of 20, John joined the Order of Carmelites. John of the Cross desired to live by the original and stricter rule of the Carmelite Order than he was currently living in the hopes that he might draw closer to God. With St. Teresa of Avila they founded the Discalced Carmelites. Because of this he was seen as rebellious by other Carmelites. To teach him a lesson, the Carmelites had John imprisoned for nine months in the tiniest and darkest of cells. It was during this time that John wrote some of his greatest spiritual poetry such as “The Living Flame of Love” and “The Dark Night of the Soul.” John believed that prayer is a tool that could help people become more loving toward others. Long considered to be one of the greatest poets of the Spanish language, St. John of the Cross died on December 14, 1591. He was canonized a saint on December 27, 1726.

All parishioners are invited to a creative presentation on the Life of St. John of the Cross in the Parish Center after the 9:00 a.m. Mass this weekend. Please take the time to attend this presentation to learn more about our parish’s patron saint. Hospitality will follow the event.

Rejoicing on this Third Sunday and feast of St. John of the Cross I share with you my favorite quotes of St. John of the Cross.

“At the evening of life you will be examined in love.”

“Whoever does not seek the cross of Christ doesn’t seek the glory of Christ.”

“Where there is no love, it is for you to bring love.”

“Let all find compassion in you.”

“The soul’s center is God.”

“Well and good if all things change, Lord God, provided we are rooted in you.”

“The soul of one who loves God always swims in joy, always keeps holiday, and is always in a mood for singing.”

Fr. Bill
Living the Gospel

After saying clearly who he is not (“Christ or Elijah or the Prophet”), John does say who he is: “I am the voice of one crying out in the desert.” “Voice”: the audible revelation of self. “Crying out”: testifying to core convictions. “Desert”: place of barrenness and desolation as well as a place of testing and growth. So who is John? He is the one who testified to the Presence of Jesus. So must we.

Testifying with conviction comes to greater fullness when we ourselves have been tried in the various “deserts” of our daily living. Testing confronts us with choices, and making good choices attunes us to Christ’s Presence to us in so many ways. It’s easy and comfortable to recognize Christ in the expected places and ways. When we enter the peace of a church, for example, we expect to find God. When we sit and pray in our homes, we expect to find God and have our prayers answered. All this is good. However, living the Gospel means that we take up the mission of Christ ourselves, that we ourselves are to be Christ for others. Especially during these final days before Christmas when everyone is so busy, we can forget that our mission is like John’s: to testify to the Light by crying out its Presence in our midst. We do this by how we respond to those around us: take time to listen to the one hurting, visit those who might be forgotten, do with a little less ourselves so others might have more, take time to pray, remember to give thanks, offer a helping hand, reorganize our priorities, praise the God in others.

©Living Liturgy.

May we grow in our conviction that Christ is the Light of the world and testify to his saving power. May we prepare for Christmas by being voices crying out that Christ is among us.

Readings for the Week

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<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Num 24:2-7, 15-17a Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9 Matt 21:23-27</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Zeph 3:1-2, 9-13 Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23 Matt 21:28-32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Gen 49:2, 8-10 Ps 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7b, 8, 17 Matt 1:1-17</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Jer 23:5-8 Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19 Matt 1:18-25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Judg 13:2-7, 24-25a Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17 Luke 1:5-25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Isa 7:10-14 Ps 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6 Luke 1:26-38</td>
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<td>4th Sunday of Advent</td>
<td>2 Sam 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29 Rom 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38</td>
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“I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord!”

The spirit of the Lord God is upon us! We like Isaiah and John the Baptist must bring glad tidings of Jesus to the lowly. Through our baptism and confirmation we received the same calling they did. We too must come out of our own desert and proclaim God’s Word to others.

How do we do this?

First we can proclaim Christ in our own homes, to our own families. One way is by leading Advent prayers around the dinner table or our Advent wreath.

Second, we can proclaim Christ to our relatives and friends. Again, one simple way is to send Christmas greetings.

Finally, we can proclaim Christ to friends, relatives, and neighbors who have become inactive in their faith. A simple way to do this is to invite them to go with us to Mass during Advent or on Christmas Day.

Here’s an interesting statistic...Two thirds of the thousands of Catholics who return to the faith each year do so because a neighbor, a friend, or a relative invited them to return. We must all reach out and become involved.

Today’s scriptures invite us to become an Advent people. They invite us to find Christ in our lives so that we can help others find Christ in their own lives. They are invitations to become a light in the darkness of our world.

This is Christ’s own personal message to us in today’s readings. Now it is up to us to do something about it.

Excerpts used with permission. M. Link.
Our parish communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be this Tuesday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m. in Church. In this sacrament of healing we experience the gift of God’s boundless love, mercy and compassion. Paul Coutinho S.J. in his book *How Big Is Your God?*, writes that “Reconciliation is acknowledging the wonderful God whom I have just encountered and acknowledging that I am aware of my own shortcomings and weaknesses, which are obstacles to deepening my relationship with God.”

It is God’s love and our response to that love that helps us to see our sinfulness and brings us to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. One of the most comforting things about communal reconciliation is that we can recognize that we are not the only ones that struggle with our shortcomings and weaknesses. Communal reconciliation also touches upon the reality that the effects of sin touch all, but greater than this is that we are all touched profoundly by the love of God. Through this sacrament we are not only renewed and healed, but challenged to extend that same mercy and forgiveness toward those who have hurt us and to forgive ourselves as well. Forgiven by God, we are liberated to be forgivers as the words of the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi say: “It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.” An examen based on the principles of Ignatian Spirituality is included below.

At this celebration we will have the opportunity to further prepare ourselves for the sacrament through the proclamation of the Word of God, prayers, song, and a communal examination of conscience. After which, all will have the opportunity to celebrate individual confession with one of the several priests present. After silently praying a communal prayer of penance, individuals may leave. All adults and children are welcome to attend.

### Preparing for Confession with an Advent Examen

As you pray this Examen bring the fruits of your reflections to confession.

1. Begin by taking in a deep breath, taking in God’s love, the light of Christ, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Exhale all your worries, your challenges, and your fears.

2. During this time of Advent let us reflect on what we can do to prepare for the Lord. What joy have you found today? Where have you felt God’s love? What have you done today to prepare the way for Jesus being born into this world for you?

3. Now think about your day as if looking at it through the eyes of a child; what do you see? Did something surprise you? Was it something someone said to you or something you are grateful for? What did you recognize as gifts (thinking about the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh brought to Jesus)? Thank God for the gifts he has given to you today.

4. Take a moment to reflect on the times today when God was especially present to you. Recognize your feelings in those moments. How did you prepare your heart for God’s presence in the coming of Jesus? Where did you feel God’s loving arms wrapped around you the way Jesus felt Mary’s arms? How did you prepare yourself to experience God’s love, forgiveness, and hope?

5. Now take a moment to think about the times when God seemed to be hidden. Where did you struggle to see the Messiah in your life—the way some failed to recognize the birth of the Messiah when Jesus was born? When may you have seen the need for love and didn’t respond (maybe like the innkeeper), or the opportunity for forgiveness and you walked away? How was your heart prepared? Ask God to forgive you for anything that moved your heart away from God’s love and recognizing the birth of Jesus in you. And ask God to help you to open your heart and become the person that God created you to be.

6. Finally, prepare for the hope of Jesus Christ in your life. Think about what you are hopeful for, what you are looking forward to during Advent and the Christmas season. Is your hope like that of a child on Christmas morning? What gifts will you share to be hope for someone else? Ask God to bless all in your life as you prepare the way of the Lord, and ask God to be with you today and every day.

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*God never tires of forgiving us*

“How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another “seventy times seven” (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!” - Pope Francis
Prayer

Richard Rohr Advent Meditation

“Come, Lord Jesus,” the Advent prayer, means that all of Christian history has to live out of a kind of deliberate emptiness or chosen non-fulfillment. Perfect fullness is always to come, and we do not need to demand it now. This keeps the field of life wide open and especially open to grace and to a future created by God rather than us. This is what it means to be “awake,” as the gospel urges us (Matthew 24:42)! We can also use other words for Advent: aware, alive, attentive, alert, and awake are all appropriate! Advent is above all else a call to full consciousness and a forewarning about the high price of consciousness.

Prayer: Come, Lord Jesus!

How Does Hope Shape Us?

A driving dynamic of Advent is hope. If we had nothing to hope for, there would be no point to this season. The original hope was for a child to be born who would bring justice and peace to the world and who would heal the rift between humanity and God. But that larger hope is filled with smaller ones—daily hopes that can shape us as people.

Some hopes will shape our relationships. The Christ Child grew to be a man who embodied forgiveness and generosity. A life of hope sees the good in others, is patient with their shortcomings, and tenaciously envisions them at their best.

Some hopes will shape our life work. The promised Messiah proclaimed God’s realm of justice and mercy. No matter what jobs we do or work positions we hold, as hopeful people we maintain fairness and integrity as short-term and long-term goals. We make our work matter for the common good.

Some hopes will shape our character. Jesus exemplified hope that cultivates true interior freedom. A hopeful person cannot continue in anxiety, grasping, need for control, and habitual anger.

How is hope visible in your life? Where has it faded?

By: Vinita Hampton Wright. Used with permission. Ignatian Spirituality

Simple Care

This week, plan to make a single phone call. Just one call, to one person you care about. The purpose? To express your appreciation and concern.

The person you call could be a family member, someone from church, a person in your neighborhood, a coworker, a friend you don’t see often enough, or someone else you know through a shared interest or organization.

You will call to say, essentially two things:
I appreciate you and what you’ve done for me or meant to me. I want to know how you’re doing, because I care about what happens in your life.

And, to keep it simple, be quite up front about this call. You can begin by saying, “I’m calling because the holidays are coming up, and this time of year reminds me of all the good people in my life, and you’re one of them. I don’t want to take a lot of your time right now because I know everybody’s busy, but I just want you to know that your friendship has been a great gift through the years.”

At some point, add something like this: “How are you, anyway? Will this holiday season be a relaxing one for you, or will it be one of those challenging years we all have from time to time?”

I guarantee, if you open such a phone discussion, it will probably have an encouraging effect. It doesn’t have to be a long discussion, and if all you manage to do is leave a voicemail message, that will give this person some encouragement too.

Yes, it can be even nicer to make a lunch date or coffee break for such a discussion, but that could be difficult to schedule. Keep the goal reachable!

By: Vinita Hampton Wright. Used with permission. Ignatian Spirituality
We, the undersigned, are gathered here today for a historic initiative to inspire spiritual and practical action by all global faiths and people of good will everywhere to eradicate modern slavery across the world by 2020 and for all time. In the eyes of God, each human being is a free person, whether girl, boy, woman or man, and is destined to exist for the good of all in equality and fraternity. Modern slavery, in terms of human trafficking, forced labor and prostitution, organ trafficking, and any relationship that fails to respect the fundamental conviction that all people are equal and have the same freedom and dignity, is a crime against humanity. We pledge ourselves here today to do all in our power, within our faith communities and beyond, to work together for the freedom of all those who are enslaved and trafficked so that their future may be restored. Today we have the opportunity, awareness, wisdom, innovation and technology to achieve this human and moral imperative.

Pope Francis and global religious leaders signed a statement at the Vatican condemning modern slavery on December 2nd. Locally, the Sisters of St. Joseph have highlighted liberating those enslaved by human trafficking as part of their mission. Go to the Sisters website (http://www.csjoseph.org) to find out more information and see how you might support this ministry. Following is the Universal Declaration Against Slavery.

Ecumenical Relationships Development
The ministers of the different churches in the Village are trying to build relationships between themselves and among their congregations. We are in the brainstorming phase of planning, trying to build on the October experience of sharing our histories. The meeting will be on January 13th from 3pm—4pm. If you have an interest in developing relationships with our fellow Christian brothers and sisters, please contact me. Whether you can make the meeting or not, I’d like to find some parishioners who have a particular passion for ecumenism. Let’s see what might be possible to share with one another. Fr. David

The Eucharist in Scripture
Little Rock Scripture Study Group
Beginning Monday, January 5th from 1pm-3pm for six sessions all are invited to study the biblical foundations of the Eucharist. Eucharist in Scripture emphasizes the importance of meals shared in faithful fellowship as part of our covenant relationship with God. Old Testament meals and promises provide the foundation for gospel meals with Jesus, culminating in the Last Supper as understood by Paul in Matthew, Mark and Luke. "Breaking bread" in Acts and the Bread of Life discourse in John are examined carefully. Class materials fee: $15.
An Advent Gift

Through the wonderful generosity of a parishioner, St. John of the Cross Parish gave parish families a special gift last weekend, “The Glory of the Incarnation,” a CD of homilies by Fr. Bob Barron that celebrates the great feasts of the Christmas season. Look for your CD at church exits or in the parish center office as supplies last.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. Alleluia, alleluia.

Upcoming Programs at The Well in LaGrange

Mark your calendar to join us for the next two parish sponsored programs at The Well during the month of January. Both programs are free to our parishioners. Just call the parish center to register.

From Dinosaurs to Star Trek:
The Evolution of Hope for a Threatened Planet
Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 10am-Noon
Speaker: Pat Bombard, BVM
Pat holds a Doctor of Ministry from CTU and a MA in Religious Studies from Mundelein. She offers workshops and retreats on emerging trends in spirituality and leadership.
Some scientists speculate that an asteroid striking Earth ended the 160 million year reign of the dinosaurs. Today some say human-caused environmental destruction is the lead cause of Earth’s present great extinction. Do we have any better chance at changing the course of history than the dinosaurs? The answer to that question lies in the path of conscious evolution—a very personal journey from despair to hope that each of us can and must take. Together we will share stories of our learnings on the journey thus far.

On a Clear Winter’s Eve. . .
A Circle of Kindred Spirits Consider Slowing Time
Monday, January 26, 2015 from 7-9pm
Speaker Barbara Mahany
Barbara Mahany is an author and journalist with job experience as a reporter/writer at the Tribune and a pediatric oncology nurse at Children’s in Chicago. Her new book: Slowing Time: Seeing the Sacred Outside Your Kitchen Door, was selected as a top 10 religious book by Publishers Weekly.
Barbara Mahany explores Winter, the Season of Deepening. The long dark winter weeks, not long after the Nativity and then Epiphany, invite us to draw deeper inside this Ordinary Time, to begin anew, to spark a winter’s dream, to marvel in the quietude that the New Year brings. Blessings and lessons abound in these snow-blanketed weeks as we commit again to the dream of all who we can be. Together we will partake of that, and sip something warm, besides. Books will be available for purchase and a book signing.

Advent Wreath Prayer for Week 3

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
Thank you to everyone who took part in Share Christmas, making Christmas special for others! Thank you to those who bought gifts and made donations, to our Manna sales reps, to our sign up volunteers, to those who helped sort, load and deliver the gifts, to our parish elf and Santa, and to our wonderful chairpeople—Bruce Harken, Cathy Laskey, and Lolly Maloney.

More examples of parishioners sharing in the mission of St. John of the Cross Parish . . .

Every Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter a generous parishioner donates 100 turkeys which are brought to our sharing parishes and other community centers throughout the city. Pictured to the left is a SJC volunteer helping to distribute the turkeys.

Members of our parish choirs donated pillows and blankets to Catholic Charities for the refugee family from the Sudan.

YC Catechist, Theresa Reyes, and her 7th grade home group students assist at the Helping Hand Christmas Party last Saturday. Parishioners baked cookies for the party and for the LaGrange Community Nurses Christmas Walk.
Volunteers Needed for Christmas Eve & Christmas Day
We are looking for parishioners who are willing to help us greet and welcome the many parishioners and visitors who will attend Mass at St. John of the Cross Parish on December 24 and December 25. Through the wonderful generosity of a parishioner, we will also be handing out a special Christmas gift book to every family: Walking with Pope Francis: 30 Days with the Encyclical The Light of Faith to inspire prayer and renewal. If you and members of your family would like to help out at the Christmas Mass you plan to attend, please contact MJ Martin or Elizabeth Russell-Jones today via email. We are putting together a schedule so we have each exit covered. mjmartin@stjohnofthecross.org or erussell-jones@stjohnofthecross.org

This simple gesture of welcome, wishing others a Merry Christmas and sharing a small, prayerful gift is a way to let the light of Jesus shine through you, bringing God to others.

Lord God,
We pray that our voices become one with the voices of all your sons and daughters, that our common prayer for peace may be the beginning of change that removes anger and hatred, bringing your limitless love and unconditional forgiveness into our homes, our schools, our community, our nation and our world.
We ask these things in the name of Jesus, love incarnate.
Amen.

Walking with Pope Francis

Jesus, my light, shine through me.

Learn more about opportunities to live out God’s call for all people to support justice and peace throughout the world.
www.chicagopeaceandjustice.org
In celebration of Computer Science Education Week, many of our students joined other students across the nation in an “Hour of Code.” The “Hour of Code” is an introduction to computer science designed to teach children the basics of programming.

Our Second Grade students held their annual “Breakfast with Baby Jesus.” Each year, the students gather in the chapel for a prayer service and donate baby items to CareNet. The students’ families always provide CareNet with many necessities for their clients and babies that need our help. Not only did the Second Grade hold a prayer service, but they made Christmas cards for the troops. It was a very busy week for these children as they also received the Sacrament of First Reconciliation last Saturday.

This Week at SJC

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Dec. 15</td>
<td>Liturgy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues. Dec. 16</td>
<td>Preschool Prayer Svc.</td>
<td>10:15am</td>
<td>School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. Dec. 17</td>
<td>Kindergarten Play</td>
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<td>School Gym</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. Dec. 17</td>
<td>Preschool Prayer Svc.</td>
<td>10:15am</td>
<td>School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. Dec. 18</td>
<td>Preschool Parties</td>
<td>10:15am</td>
<td>School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. Dec. 19</td>
<td>Christmas Parties</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
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Questions or to Purchase Contact:
Jennifer Miller 708-246-4454 or miller@sjc.pvt.k12.il.us
Send check payable to SJC
708 51 Street
Western Springs, IL 60558
Family Advent Day

1st grade YC students welcomed their parents last weekend to an Advent Family Event. They created beautiful Advent Calendars for their homes and attended a moving Advent Prayer Service with Fr. Bill on Sunday and Deacon John Schopp on Monday. Advent blessings to all of our families.

Remember to complete the Family Home Lesson and turn the last page in for credit. The lesson can also be found on the home page of the YC website.

YC Schedule

| Classes K-6 | 10:15-11:30am | Sunday, Dec 14 |
| FFC         | 6:15-7:30pm   | Monday, Dec 15 |
| Jr Hi Sm Groups 7 & 8 grades | Noon-1:30 pm | Sunday, February 1 |
| Special Needs | Dec 14 in homes | Sunday, Dec 14 |

The YC Office will be closed December 22 to January 2!

yc@sjcross.org * 708-246-6760
www.stjohnofthecross.org/yc

Calendar of Events

December 14
Frosh/Soph. Retreat Team Meeting, 10:30-noon
Update Meeting, Noon-1:30 p.m.

December 22
Kairos Christmas Party, 6:00-10:00 p.m.

Summer Work Tours and Conferences

All parish high school students are invited to join our summer work tours and conferences. Adults are needed too! Work tours include Habitat for Humanity in WV, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in KY, a local tour to Our Lady of Charity in Cicero, and new this year, NPH in Guatemala.

Conference opportunities include the Youth Leadership Conference in Romeoville, Notre Dame Vision Conference, Cultivation Ministries Peer Ministry Retreat in East Troy, WI and the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis.

Visit our website, www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/work-tours/ for information and registration forms. Applications for the Guatemalan tour must be postmarked by Monday, December 15!

The tour and conference experience is a journey, and not simply a week away. All participants will attend formation meetings where the themes of the experience, Community, Prayer, Service and Simplicity, will be introduced. Save the date for our first meeting, Saturday, February 28 from 1:00-3:00pm.

1 Adult Home Group Leader Needed

Our freshman home groups have begun meeting, but one leader is still in need of a partner. Contact our Home Group Coordinators, Terry and Mary Stadler, at stadler2@hotmail.com for details.
In his book on the Sabbath, Wayne Muller brilliantly juxtaposes two descriptions: “Jules and Olivia are in their fifties, and even though their children are grown, they love to celebrate Shabbos. Every Friday night before the Sabbath meal, they draw a warm bath and, together, take off their clothes and bathe. This is their ritual cleansing, part of their marriage covenant, preparation to receive the Sabbath bride. But more than this, it is also a time for intimacies, and confession.

Each unclothed and open to receive the other, they each put a hand to the other’s heart, and ask if there is anything they need to say, any confession, something lingering in the heart that, left unsaid, would hinder a full and joyful Sabbath. On some nights, there is little to say. On other nights, words must be spoken aloud that have lived in secret. Who can imagine what lovers must share, when seeking a pure heart and an honest Sabbath? For thirty years, such honesty comes to this: two beings, warm and close, bathed in love.”

“Confession – it is said – is good for the soul. Before mass, Catholics practice confession, a ritual cleansing before receiving the gift of communion. Not to receive punishment or even absolution, but rather to speak what must be brought out from darkness, if we are to receive the light.” (Wayne Muller, Sabbath, Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy, N.Y., Bantam Books, 1999, p.198)

Roman Catholics are familiar with confession, the sacrament of reconciliation. However, in recent years, the practice of confession has suffered, and pretty massively, from neglect. Less and less people are going to confession and, those who do, are going less frequently. Many people aren’t going to confession at all and those who are going are, by and large, going only twice a year, at penitential services just before Christmas and Easter. This is a far cry from a time when most Catholics would go to confession at least once a month or even once a week.

There’s a sad irony in this: People are beginning to neglect the practice of confession just when, for the first time, we are learning from the experience of the therapeutic community that, for some things, there is no help, and there can be no help, outside of a searingly honest and detailed telling of our sins, addictions, fantasies, and foibles to another human being.

An honest confession is a non-negotiable step in any healing process. What healing programs have discovered – just when so many of us inside church circles are forgetting it – is that, good as it is, it’s not enough just to be contrite silently in our hearts. Full healing can only take place when we express that contrition not just to God in the secret recesses of the soul, but when we also speak it out, and in detail, to another human being.

What’s at issue, as Muller’s brilliant juxtaposition highlights, isn’t, radically, forgiveness itself, or even absolution. Sincerity of heart and touching the Body of Christ inside of family and community, particularly Eucharistic community, as the gospels show us, leads to the forgiveness of our sins. But that alone doesn’t enable us to come to the family table, the Eucharistic table, to our circle of friends, to our communities, and to our marriage beds with hearts that aren’t carrying things that block deeper intimacy and deeper joy.

As well, there is a certain grace, a key one needed to come to grips with our addictions and bad habits, that can, as anyone who has ever been addicted to anything knows, only be entered into when we openly and honestly bring into the light what, until then, has lain hidden in the dark, however sincere our contrition about it. We cannot transform our lives by willpower alone, we also need grace and community and both of these, at a point, depend upon the type of transparency that can only come about by honest confession.

D.H. Lawrence once wrote a poem he entitled, Healing, that goes this way:

I am not a mechanism, an assembly of various sections.

And it is not because the mechanism is working wrongly, that I am ill. I am ill because of wounds to the soul, to the deep emotional self and wounds to the soul take a long, long time, only time can help and patience, and a certain difficult repentance, long, difficult repentance, realization of life’s mistake, and the freeing oneself from the endless repetition of the mistake which mankind at large has chosen to sanctify.

One of the mistakes that too many of us have chosen to sanctity is the misguided belief that there are things that we do in the dark that need never be brought to the light, that private sincerity alone is enough, and that we can continue to grow in intimacy with our loved ones without, regularly, putting our hands on each other’s hearts and speaking aloud those things that have been lived in secret.

Ron Holheiser, OMI
Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24
7:45am Advent Weekday Mass

4:00pm Church
Children’s Choir, Carol Prelude 3:30pm
4:15pm First Floor School Multi-Purpose Room
Carol Prelude 4:00pm
4:30pm Second Floor Gym
Carol Prelude 4:15pm
6:00pm Church
Carol Prelude 5:45pm
10:30pm Church
Traditional Choir, Carol Prelude 10:00pm

Christmas Day—Thursday, December 25
7:30am Church
9:00am Church
Contemporary Ensemble
10:45am Church
Traditional Choir
12:30pm Church
5 Alive! Teen & Young Adult Choir
This Mass begins 15 minutes later than usual.

There will be no 5:00pm Mass on Christmas Day.

At each Mass on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, music will be led by a cantor, organ, and/or piano and various instruments in addition to the choirs noted above.

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
New Year’s Eve and Day
Wednesday, December 31 5:00pm
Thursday, January 1 10:00am

Sacrament of Reconciliation
Tuesday, December 16 7:00pm
Parish Reconciliation Service

Saturday, December 20 at 8:30am
Individual Reconciliation

Holiday Mass Schedule
We will have our regular weekend Mass schedule on Saturday and Sunday, December 27-28, the Feast of the Holy Family. Our regular daily Mass will be at 7:45am on weekdays and 8:00am on Saturdays.
A Look Ahead.....

Monday, December 15, 2014
9:15am School Liturgy
9:30am Spiritual Journaling
10:30am Christian Meditation
2:30pm Adoration
6:15pm YC Classes
7:00pm Boy Scouts

Tuesday, December 16, 2014
7:00pm Advent Reconciliation Service

Wednesday, December 17, 2014
Noon Ladies Bridge
2:00pm Christian Meditation
7:00pm Chicago Catholic Scripture School
7:00pm RCIA

Thursday, December 18, 2014
9:00am Women's Club Flourish
2:15pm Market Day Pick Up
7:30pm Men's Club Board Meeting

Friday, December 19, 2014
7:00am Christian Meditation

Mass Intentions

Monday, December 15
7:45 Martin Kauchak; John Libby, Sr.

Tuesday, December 16
7:45 Our Beloved Dead, John Joseph Wheelihan

Wednesday, December 17
7:45 Coretta Spalo; George Zurowski

Thursday, December 18
7:45 Gloria Joslyn; Madeleine Cronin

Friday, December 19
7:45 Gloria Oechsel; Gus & Nena Perez

Saturday, December 20
8:00 Deceased members of the Williams Family;
   Deceased members of the Klein & O’Sullivan Families
5:00 Richard Farkenthal; Michael Powers

Sunday, December 21
7:30 Stephen Siedlaczek; Eva Guttierez
9:00 Thomas Dobry; Jim McNaughton
10:45 George Jakicic; Robert Pickell
12:15 Deceased members of the Maier & Gora Families;
   Peter Shannon
5:00 Joseph D. Kusper; Tepen Chao

Extended individual confessions will be offered after the morning Mass on Saturday, Dec. 20 with
the opportunity for private or face-to-face confession. Our parish offers the Sacrament of
Reconciliation every Saturday throughout the year after the 8am Mass.

Try for Our Sick

Bernice Chwierut, mother of Sharon Zandell
Mary Ann Matysik, mother of Peggy Anderson, Meg LaFond,
   Dan, Michael, and Mark
James Houston, father of June Taylor, grandfather of Jake,
   Ryan, and Danny
Benjamin Thomas “Mike” Reidy, husband of Kay, father of
   Ann Smith, Liz Weldon, Meg Pound, Sarah Heinz, and
   Kate Dulla, grandfather of 16
Herb Nilles, husband of Jane
Rita Gangi, sister of Guy Gangi

Pray for Our Beloved Dead

Lord God, your love and mercy bring joy beyond
telling. Let us live always aware and alive to the
happiness you bring. Amen.
Advent Morning of Meditation
Entering into Silent Prayer: Waiting
A DVD presentation by Jean Vanier, philosopher, theologian, author, and founder of the L'Arche Communities for people with disabilities.

All are invited:
Those who meditate, and those who want to learn to meditate.

Saturday, December 20
9:00-11:30 a.m.
Hospitality 8:30 a.m.
Parish Center

Free will offering accepted. Registration requested but not required. mary105105@gmail.com or 708-246-5108
The Morning of Meditation is sponsored by the Christian Meditation groups at St. John of the Cross Parish.
Information on Christian Meditation is available at wccm-usa.org and wccm.org.