First Sunday of Advent    November 29, 2015
Dear Parishioners,

An American holiday, the Thanksgiving weekend, is frequently the transition to the beginning of the liturgical year, the season of Advent. I hope you and your family had a wonderful Thanksgiving celebration. The liturgy of Thanksgiving morning is enjoyed by a full church whose agenda is the same as later in the day: to gather with others who are grateful for all the gifts that reveal the love of God and to share a meal. Gratitude and sharing: a pretty good definition of an eternal reward.

The liturgy of Advent has a very different focus. In fact it has a triple focus: the coming of the Christ in history, the birth of Christ today in our lives and the Christ who will be at the end of time. With those three as the foci, Advent has temptations of nostalgia, immediate satisfaction and denial.

When the liturgy focuses us on the birth of Christ it frequently becomes tangled in our memories of childhood celebrations of Christmas. If we have happy childhood memories the temptation is to try and recreate them or selectively to filter out whatever the challenges might have been at the time. Our hearts can long for a simpler time when life was not as complicated as it is now. Which is why we need the second focus of the season, the birth of Christ in our lives today. It is an antidote to nostalgia and roots us in the here and now. St. Ignatius challenged his followers to find Christ in all things. The demands of the present can blind us to the presence of Christ in this moment of time, in all time.

Focusing on the future is fraught with temptation to magical thinking. These pesky problems of my life today will all magically disappear and everything will be wonderful. The wounds of the past will be magically healed and their pain simply will end. Contemplating the ultimate future of creation and my own eternity is the same as believing in 'pie in the sky.'

Advent orients us to the reality of faith and the revelation of divinity in human presence. Rooted in human history, the experience of our lives is transformed by the grace of God that enters history in humility and need: a new born baby. What a miracle! What a glimpse into the identity of the creator! What an awesome privilege to be alive emotionally, physically and spiritually! What a gift and invitation: to become a co-creator with the One who is, who was and who always will be.

The great themes of Advent, of preparing and waiting, of the darkness being conquered by the Light, are found in the key figures of Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary. We have the accident of the calendar that gives us nearly four full weeks between now and Christmas. Use this time to get to know the hopes and dreams, the fears and suffering of Isaiah, John and Mary. By entering into their story you can see how God enters more deeply into the story of your life. May you become so filled with gratitude for all the gifts in your life that you will have to share your faith with friends and family, with the stranger and the unbeliever.

Until the Breaking of the Bread,
Fr. David

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Mental Illness and Suicide
Fr. Charley Rubey, Director of L.O.S.S. (Loving Outreach to Suicide Survivors), will concelebrate our Sunday 5pm Mass on December 13th. Father Rubey will speak about mental illness, suicide and the L.O.S.S. Program at the homily and also at a gathering after Mass in the Parish Center. L.O.S.S. is a free program of Catholic Charities that supports adults and children who are grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide.
Background on the Gospel

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, which is also the first Sunday of the new liturgical year. The Advent season includes the four Sundays that precede Christmas. Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of the Lord. In this season, we recall two central elements of our faith: the final coming of the Lord in glory and the incarnation of the Lord in the birth of Jesus. The key themes of the Advent season are watchful waiting, preparation, and justice.

In this new liturgical year, the Gospel of Luke will be the primary Gospel proclaimed (Lectionary Cycle C). Today's Gospel is taken from the last chapter before the passion narrative in which Jesus is teaching in the Temple. We hear Jesus speak to his disciples about the need for vigilance and prayer as they wait for the coming of the Son of Man in glory. This passage marks the conclusion of a lengthy dialogue in which Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, warns about the persecution and tribulations to follow, and identifies the signs that will signal the coming of the Son of Man in glory.

The community for whom Luke wrote his Gospel may have believed that they were already experiencing some of the events Jesus described. Most scholars believe that Luke's Gospel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. At the time, many Christians interpreted this event as an indication that Jesus' second coming was near.

Though Jesus predicts a time of destruction and fear, Jesus indicates that others will be frightened; Jesus' disciples are not to fear, but are to stand tall. Yet Jesus does not promise deliverance from anxiety or tribulations. He encourages his disciples to pray for strength. The early Christian communities did not find consolation in the promise of a utopia, nor should we. Instead, we find in our Christian faith the means by which we witness to God's unfailing love for us in all circumstances.

Jesus' predictions about the end times may sound dire, but in the next paragraph Luke tells us that people woke early to listen to Jesus' teaching in the Temple area. In his person and in his message, those who heard Jesus found strength and consolation. Like the first Christians, we may encounter events and circumstances that could lead us to despair. Through prayer, however, we find strength and consolation in Jesus' words and in his continuing presence with us to endure all things and to witness to the action of God in our world.

Living the Gospel

Right now, today, tribulations, wars, natural calamities are upon us. Jesus tells us not to fear what calamities might do to us, but to be "vigilant" for his coming. He comes with redemption not only in glory at the end of time, but right now, today. We are redeemed—renewed and made whole in our relationship with God—by God's altogether new act on behalf of humankind: our "redemption is at hand." We are vigilant for Christ's coming not because of fear of the calamities that might assail us, but because our "redemption is at hand." God's love story narrated to us through the divine Son Jesus Christ is not about the kind of love we might read in romance novels, but is a holy love emanating from God's very being. Holy love is the opposite of selfish love. Holy love is possible when there is a right relationship between God and us, measured by our right relationship with each other. Holy love is the caring exchange between Person and person whose regard for the other is at the very center of the relationship. We are redeemed by God's holy love.

Vigilance for the many ways Christ is present to us involves self-emptying for the sake of the other. This means that our focus is not on our own wants and needs, but on the Christ who chooses to be intimately present to us. It means that we are able to see the Christ who dwells in the other. Holy love is the giving of self that brings us to "stand erect" by choosing to be in right relationship with God and others.

May we faithfully witness in our lives that Christ is already present among us, loving us into salvation. May we grow in discerning the signs of redeeming love within and among us.

Lifelong Learning

St. John of the Cross Parish
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We know his life on this earth began in the womb, at the moment of his conception. And, so we know that the first part of his journey among us - the first part of the Word of God taking flesh and dwelling among us - was nine months in his mother's womb. But, we rarely reflect on this part of the presence of “God with us.”

From the moment that - “by the power of the Holy Spirit” - the life of Jesus began in Mary's womb, Jesus became one with us. He didn't magically appear as an adult. He began his life journey as a tiny, bundle of cells. We can imagine those cells multiplying so quickly, day by day and week by week - silently, imperceptibly. But, this human life was already “God, made one of us.” No one could imagine God could be human. And, now we can imagine our God coming among us in this developing, new life - so small, so dependent, so powerless. We can feel the gratitude welling up within us as we contemplate the unseen journey of Jesus being “knit” in his mother's womb (Psalm 139).

Though Son of God, he is becoming Son of Mary. We can imagine that he is taking on her flesh, her cells, her shape, her looks, her heart. It is so slow, and yet, so planned. It is a journey which none of us can remember, but which every one of us took, to become who we are. And, now we contemplate that profound solidarity with us which our Savior began - even in the womb, for us. Already, this sense we have of his entry into our experience helps us remember that he shared our human journey and we never need to feel alone, on any part of our journey. He became one of us by taking on the very way we enter this world. This transition to a life born into this world, and the continuing journey of a child, a young person, and finally as an adult, is one Jesus made, for us. And, in these moments, as we contemplate this mystery and its meaning for us, we grow in gratitude for that first coming and we grow in our longing for our relationship with Jesus to develop in intimacy and love.

Our praying is helped by our imagination. In this case, we are imagining something we know happened, but for which we have not usually had a visual image. We begin by naming our desire here. We ask to be blessed with the gift of hope. We long to be renewed in a sense of God's love for us in Jesus - by this coming here and now, where we need him the most. The promises which were fulfilled in this new life stir our hearts to have faith in those promises in the most challenging times of our journey today. This imaginative prayer allows us to pray more deeply, “Come, Lord Jesus. We await your coming. Come, O Lord.”

In this contemplation, we want to slow down our reflection and enter into the details and to acknowledge the silence, the slow growth, the precious reality of our Lord and Savior's taking on life as a human being. If we begin by imagining Jesus' foot in the womb, we can begin to savor, with wonder and awe, the reality of this gift. We can picture Mary washing this little foot, right after giving birth to Jesus and laying him in the manger, unconcerned about the lowliness of that place. We can imagine that this tiny foot became the foot which walked our earth. With this foot, he learned to walk. Perhaps this foot was sandaled most of his life. Perhaps this foot was stubbed on the carpenter's bench in Joseph's workshop. This is the foot which left home and headed to the Jordan to be baptized by John. Of course, the sinful woman taught us about gratitude for his mercy by kissing and crying on this foot, and drying it with her hair. This foot stumbled along the way to his Crucifixion, where this foot was nailed to a cross - all for us.

We can imagine his hands growing in the womb, slowly becoming the hands which first touched Mary's face and Joseph's beard. This little hand developed into the hand that learned to be a carpenter, a person with a trade, for others. With this hand, he embraced children and offered his tender touch to the sick and sinners. We remember this would become the hands with which he washed his disciples' feet as an example for our life of union with him. We know one day that he took the bread and the wine in this same hand and, giving thanks to God, gave it to his disciples, saying “This is my body. This is my blood.” And, the next day, the now adult, outstretched hand was nailed to a cross - all for us.

Continued on the next page...
As we contemplate Jesus, growing in the womb, becoming our servant Savior, it is touching to imagine his developing face. This profile of a face in the womb is the merest suggestion of the growth of the human face of our God with us. At this point, he would already be taking on his mother’s features and developing her eyes. He’d have her nose, her chin, her ears and eventually, her hair. On this face in the womb are the smallest signs of reacting to stimuli, even pain. This face would one day give joy to the shepherds, the first of his people to see it, and the Magi, the first of the gentiles to look upon him. When he was a baby, he must have cried and felt hunger and he must laughed and smiled a lot. We can imagine the developing face of the child of Nazareth, the Jesus who smiled at his friends, even though the rumors swirled that he was illegitimate. We can give thanks for the face which looked up to heaven at his Baptism and saw the sky opened, with that powerful affirmation from God, his Father, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.” And the loving face of Jesus, which developed slowly and inevitably, was the face which tenderly interacted with many who had the privilege of seeing it in his lifetime. This is the same face which was spat upon and was covered with blood from the mocking crown of thorns, all for us.

Pause for a moment to reflect upon his heart, which developed, just like our hearts did, but which became not only the organ which pumped blood to invigorate the rest of his body, but which became the very image of his self-sacrificing love. We speak of the heart as the center of our emotions and feelings and the source of our loving. This little heart became a heart big enough to love sinners, the sick, the marginal. This heart was “on fire” with compassion and mercy. The heart of Jesus, which began beating in the womb of Mary, was eventually the sacred heart which was pierced with a lance on the cross and which, in the eyes of faith of John the Apostle and Evangelist, poured out the blood and water of the sacramental life of the Church which sustains us now. Into that wound in his side, the Risen Lord invited Thomas to put his hand and to believe. He told us that we are blessed who have not seen with our eyes, yet believe.

"he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary" Nicene Creed - the New Roman Missal

Creighton University

Lord, Jesus,
open our eyes to await your coming to us with expectant hope.
Just as Mary was expecting to deliver you into this world,
we hope to receive you into our hearts.
We are deeply grateful for the human way you came to us,
the deep solidarity with all of humanity you have revealed to us.
We give you thanks for the love you showed us on earth
and in the Eucharist and the Sacraments
which continue to nourish us and sustain us.
We feel closer to you and
we ask for the further graces we need
to open our hearts to your healing mercy and love.
Come to us, O Lord.
This past week we celebrated Thanksgiving. Eucharist means “thanksgiving,” and in the liturgy, we as a community express thanks at many levels. For example, in the Gloria we offer a song of praise that not only thanks God for taking away sin, but also adores God’s own being.

An especially striking aspect of thanksgiving at the Mass is the constant, generous, mutual exchange between God and us during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. That generosity’s first movement begins with God. We thank God for the gifts that we are able to offer to be consecrated. Without God’s first having given us “the fruit of the earth,” we could not offer back to God “the work of human hands,” the elements of bread and wine.

When the celebrant lifts up the gifts, we lift up our hearts as gifts to God, too. We remember that to give thanks is both “right and just.” After the consecration, we are thankful for the presence of Christ in the consecrated host—Christ who is gift. But that gift of the Body and Blood of Christ also makes us increasingly a gift to God, as what is consumed transforms us, and we become more and more Christ’s body.

This back-and-forth exchange of gift from God to God, and back again, characterizes ordinary life as well. Everything that we have is a gift, whether material goods like fresh air, clean water, and healthy food; the gifts of family and friends; or natural talents that we might possess. We are asked to offer these gifts to God, wholly and without reserve. “Take, Lord, and receive.” When we make the offer of all that we have and are to God, we find that we are never left empty for long. Rather, God always makes a generous return, even offering the presence of God’s self to us—sometimes in place of the other, more limited goods that we thought we desired but that do not truly satisfy.

Why is God so generous? In the eyes of God, we are cherished children. God desires to transform us, too, so that we who are already gifts to God can increasingly become people who are gift for one another.

We can give thanks for God’s many gifts to us and make a full return of them to God, knowing that God’s generosity and cherishing of us never end. Ignatian Spirituality.

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Richard Rohr Meditation

Kingdom people are history makers. They break through the small kingdoms of this world to an alternative and much larger world, God’s full creation. People who are still living in the false self are history stoppers. They use God and religion to protect their own status and the status quo of the world that sustains them. They are often fearful people, the nice proper folks of every age who think like everybody else thinks and have no power to break through, or as Jesus’ opening words put it, “to change” (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17).

Why do we love and admire kingdom people like Mary and Joseph, and then not imitate their faith journeys, their courage, their non-reassurance by the religious system? These were two laypeople who totally trusted their inner experience of God and who followed it to Bethlehem and beyond. Mary and Joseph walked in courage and blind faith that their own experience was true—with no one to reassure them they were right. Their only safety net was God’s love and mercy, a safety net they must have tried out many times, or else they would never have been able to fall into it so gracefully.

Prayer:

Come Emmanuel, God with us!

“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from...the anxieties of daily life and that day catch you by surprise like a trap” Luke 21:34-35.

We are so easily distracted from our God. This world makes demands on us and those demands are seemingly constant. Committing ourselves to the direction of God is hard work, but it is not impossible. The commitment to the way of the Lord may be made each night before sleep and each morning as the day begins. All we need to do is focus our attention on God’s work in our lives. Think it. Speak it. Act. It.

What are the demands that distract me from God?

What is their worthiness?

Gracious God, remind me that I am never alone.

Through your grace heighten my awareness that you and your way are all I need. Amen.
This Sunday evening (November 29) we celebrate the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming with those to be baptized and to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church through the RCIA. By celebrating these rites, these men and women are publicly declaring their intention to enter into a formal relationship with the Church, learning our ways and particularly in our Catholic Christian lifestyle. We, the Church, in turn, accept their commitment and pledge our support throughout their journey of faith. For those preparing for baptism, this rite makes them official members of the Church. They are given an official title and a role to play in the Church, that of “catechumen” which means “one in whom the Word of God echoes.”

The rites of the Catholic faith are filled with symbols and symbolic actions. There are a number of important symbols that the Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming makes us of. The first is a door. The door or threshold of the Church is an important symbol in many Catholic rites. Doors symbolize transitions and new ways of life. For Christians, Christ, the Good Shepherd and the gate for the sheep, is the most important door, because “whoever enters through [Christ] will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture” (John 10:9). But doors are also liminal spaces, in-between places that are neither here nor there. Even though Christ has died and risen to save us from death, we still live in the in-between time until Christ comes again to welcome all creation through the doors of the kingdom of God.

In the Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming, those wishing to answer God’s call are met at the threshold of the Church by the baptized and are ritually welcomed to enter into the Church’s doors. To enter into Christ also means entering into his dying and rising, for he said, “whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Those who answer God’s call will need to learn how to let do and die to their old ways of life, and this will often be painful and difficult. But the cross is also the sign of our salvation. So in the Rite of Acceptance and Welcoming, the Church consecrates, sets apart and makes holy, those who are committing themselves to following Christ by signing their bodies with the cross.

In order to learn how to take up the cross of Christ each day of their lives, these catechumens and candidates will need to be nourished by the Word of God, for “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). In the Scriptures that they will hear every Sunday in the Mass, God speaks, and in the Gospels, Christ proclaims to all those assembled that God’s promises last forever. No matter what things the catechumens and candidates will encounter, suffering, pain, obstacles, doubt, fear, sin, death, God will never leave them. God’s love through Christ never fails.

Where we encounter Christ and his love most clearly is in the assembly. When God’s people gather on Sunday to proclaim the Scriptures, offer prayers for the world, and remember Christ in the sharing of a meal, the Eucharist, Christ is truly present. It will be through the assembly, the faith community of St. John of the Cross, that the catechumens and candidates will learn how to live as Christ. The assembly models for them how to die to selfishness, how to forgive others, how to preach the Good News, and how to live in hope through the Holy Spirit. The catechumens and candidates will depend on the Spirit of God found in the faith community of St. John of the Cross to apprentice them into a life of discipleship.

Because they are not yet baptized and are not yet in full communion with the Catholic faith, our catechumens and candidates cannot yet participate in the prayers of the faithful. These prayers are the Creed, the General Intercessions, and the Eucharistic Prayer which climaxes in Communion. Therefore, after the homily, the catechumens and candidates, accompanied by a RCIA catechist are sent forth to feast on the Word of God, to reflect on how God is continuing to call them in this part of their faith journey, and to discern how they are to respond.

This evening the St. John of the Cross welcomes Rob, Randy and Shler as catechumens and Marla, Amy, Marti, and Sarah as candidates into the Period of the Catechumenate. Let us continue to pray for them as they respond to God’s invitation and journey of faith.
Oregon Trail - Identity Retreat
There are a couple of spots open for the Frosh./Soph. retreat January 2-4 at Dickson Valley Camp in Newark, IL. Get more information and register online at www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/retreats/

Harvest Saturday Success
Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers from SJC, St. Gall and St. Mark, we were able to deliver over 1,000 boxes of food to St. Thomas of Canterbury, Pillars, St. Mark, Port Ministries, Midwest Workers, St. Francis Xavier, St. Cletus, and Mary Queen of Heaven.

St. John of the Cross Parish congratulates Christine and Jason Funke with baby Amelia Grace, and Carleen and Brian Kniebel with baby Lainey Rose and her big brother.

St. John of the Cross Parish congratulates the Garrity family on the baptism of their baby, Brendan John Garrity held by his godmother with parents Brigid and Daniel Garrity on the right.
In November, many of the classrooms study the saints. Our fifth graders work between their Religion and Language Arts classrooms to prepare a saint report along with a banner focusing on their chosen saints. Our fourth grade students also write a booklet that discusses a chosen saint, while, our eighth graders hold a prayer service that focuses on their confirmation Saint.

We also spend time this month being thankful for the gifts that we have been given. Our first graders present a readers' theatre on Thanksgiving and many of our classrooms’ design projects adorn our hallways with thanks during the month of November.

Lord Jesus,
your words are a lamp for our steps and a light for our path.
Open our eyes to your presence and action in our lives and our world.
Guide our efforts to participate with you in the coming of your Kingdom of justice, love and peace.
Amen.

The staff of the Youth Catechesis Office is grateful for all the wonderful families that entrust us to walk with them as they guide their children to grow in faith! Blessings to your families from ours.
Lacking the Self-Confidence for Greatness

We all have our own images of greatness as these pertain to virtue and saintliness. We picture, for instance, St. Francis of Assisi, kissing a leper; or Mother Teresa, publicly hugging a dying beggar; or John Paul II, standing before a crowd of millions and telling them how much he loves them; or Therese of Lisieux, telling a fellow community member who has been deliberately cruel to her how much she loves her; or even of the iconic, Veronica, in the crucifixion scene, who amidst all the fear and brutality of the crucifixion rushes forward and wipes the face of Jesus.

There are a number of common features within these pictures that speak of exceptional character; but there’s another common denominator here that speaks of exceptionality in a different way, that is, each of these people had an exceptionally strong self-image and an exceptionally strong self-confidence.

It takes more than just a big heart to reach across what separates you from a leper; it also takes a strong self-confidence. It takes more than an empathetic heart to publicly hug a dying beggar; it also takes a very robust self-image. It takes more than mere compassion to stand before millions of people and announce that you love them and that it’s important for them to hear this from you; it also takes the rare inner-confidence. It takes more than a saintly soul to meet deliberate cruelty with warm affection; it also requires that first you yourself have experienced deep love in your life. And it takes more than simple courage to ignore the threat and hysteria of a lynch mob so as to rush into an intoxicated crowd and lovingly dry the face of the one they hate; it takes someone who has herself first experienced a strong love from someone else. We must first be loved in order to love. We can’t give what we haven’t got.

Great men and women like St. Francis, Mother Teresa, John Paul II, and Therese of Lisieux are also people with a stunning self-confidence. They have no doubt that God has specially gifted them and they have the confidence to publicly display those gifts. The sad fact is that many of us, perhaps most of us, simply lack sufficient self-image and self-confidence to do what they did. Perhaps our hearts are just as loving as theirs and our empathy just as deep, but, for all kinds of reasons, not least because of how we have been wounded and the shame and reticence that are born from that, it is existentially impossible for us to, like these spiritual giants, stand up in front of the world and say: “I love you – and it’s important that you hear this from me!” Our tongues would surely break off as an inner voice would be saying: “Who do you think you are? Who are you to think the world needs to hear of your special love?”

Truth be told, too often it isn’t virtue that’s our problem; it’s self-confidence. Mostly we aren’t bad, we’re just wounded. William Wordsworth once said something to the effect that we often judge a person to be cold when he or she is only wounded. How true.

Thankfully God doesn’t judge by appearances. God reads the heart and discerns between malice and wound, between coldness and lack of self-confidence. God knows that no one can love unless he or she has first been loved, and that very few, perhaps no one, can publicly display the heart of a giant, the courage of a hero, and the love of saint when that big heart, courage, and love haven’t, first, been felt in an affective and effective way inside of that person’s own life.

So what’s helpful in knowing this? A deeper self-understanding is always helpful and there can be a consolation, though hopefully not a rationalization, in knowing that our hesitancy to step out publicly and do things like Mother Teresa is perhaps more rooted in our lack of a healthy ego than in some kind of selfishness and egoism. But of course, after that consolation comes the challenge to throw away the crutches we have been using to cope with our wounds and our crippled self-image so as to begin to let our heart, courage, and love manifest themselves more publicly. Our tongues won’t break off if we speak out loud about our love and concern, but we will only know that once we actually do it. But, to do that, we will have to first step through a paralyzing shame to a self-abandon that up to now we haven’t mastered.

And there’s a lesson in this too for our understanding of ego within spirituality. We’ve invariably seen ego as bad and identified it with egotism; but that’s over-simplistic because spiritual giants generally have strong egos, though without being egotists. Ironically too many of us are crippled by too-little ego and that’s why we never do great things like spiritual giants do. Egoism is bad, but a healthy, robust ego is not.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio.
Kolbe House Advent Email Retreat
Kolbe House, the Jail Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago, invites all to participate in their 9th annual Advent email retreat, beginning on November 30, 2015. Every Monday during Advent, participants will receive an email that contains a short reflection written by Kolbe House staff and volunteers and a detainee. If interested in participating in the Advent email retreat, please send an email to kolberetreat@aol.com with your first and last name. If you prefer, you can also participate in our retreat by visiting the Kolbe House website at www.kolbehouseministry.org. To receive a hard copy of the reflections by mail, please call Gloria at 773-247-0070 and give her your mailing address.

SFX Masses at Motherhouse Chapel
This year due to overcrowding and fire codes, St. Francis Xavier has been asked to issue tickets for the 3pm and 5pm Masses held at the Sisters of St. Joseph Chapel. They will issue 800 tickets for each Mass to parishioners. Please tell your friends and others who may be considering going to the Motherhouse for Christmas Eve Mass that tickets will now be required.

New Parish Directories
Directories will be distributed in the Parish Center after Masses on the Dec. 12-13 weekend. Additional directories will be available in the Parish Center office during the week.

Parish Sponsored Program at The Well
On Monday, December 7 from 7-9pm Avis Clendenen will present an insightful program at The Well entitled: The Wizard at the Well: Oz in Advent and Advent in Oz which will focus on being at home with ourselves as we journey through Advent. Because this is a program sponsored by SJC, the $25 cost is waived. Simply call the Parish Center to register. The Well is located at 1515 W. Ogden Avenue in LaGrange Park next to Nazareth Academy.

Other Advent programs at The Well:
- Listening for God; The Practice of Advent: December 5 from 9am-Noon  Cost $30
- Welcoming the Adventing Christ: November 30 from 7-8:30pm or December 1 from 9:30-11am Cost $15
To register and learn more about these two programs go to csjthewell.org

This being the season to give thanks, the Fest Planning Committee would like to thank all of our parishioners, extended family and friends who volunteered and attended this past summer's St. John of the Cross Festival. Because of all of you, it was our most successful Fest ever!

Planning has already begun on next year's event. The Committee is considering several ideas for improvements that will make next year's Festival even more enjoyable.

Details on next year's fun will be provided in the bulletin in the months ahead. In the meantime, please be sure to mark your calendar for the dates above and make your plans to join us for SJC Fest 2016!

Interfaith Career Network
Go to www.interfaithcareer.org for complete program details.
- Attaining and Retaining Employee Referrals Thursday, December 3 from 7-9 pm at St. Cletus.
- Improve Your Job Search Using LinkedIn and Twitter Tuesday, December 8 from 7-9 pm at St. Cletus School
- Career Resource Center Wednesday, December 2 from 7-9pm First Baptist Church of La Grange

CatholicVote Speaker at SJC
All are invited all to hear speaker, Brian Burch, President and Co-Founder of CatholicVote.org (CV) on Thursday, December 10 at 7:30pm in the Parish Center. CV, a national faith based advocacy organization in Chicago, was founded to organize, inspire and mobilize the Catholic vote through education, legislative advocacy, and direct political action. Inspired by Saint John Paul II's call for a New Evangelization, CV seeks to evangelize with a hope-filled message that is both faithful to the Gospel and the heritage of America's best political traditions. Mr. Burch has appeared on FOX News, CNN, and has been covered in the Washington Times, Wall Street Journal, MSNBC, Newsweek and other national publications. CV has received national attention for its online viral videos helping to grow the organization to 500,000 in less than 4 years. Sponsored by the Men's Club.
The Women’s Club invites you to join us:
“Grace Reflected… Make Space for Joy”
Come experience an evening of spiritual enrichment, community & cheer during this Advent Season!
Special Guest: Laura Field
Spiritual Director from Old St. Pat’s
Thursday, December 10th
7:00 – 9:00pm
Western Springs Village Club
4221 Lawn Avenue
Please RSVP by 12/6 to marie@gracereflected.com
Questions: Call Marie Gerken (630) 235-7035
This event welcomes women of all beliefs so bring a friend!
Refreshments and light snacks will be served (suggested $10 donation)

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, the Women’s Club would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to St. John of the Cross Parish. We are forever grateful for your support of our mission throughout the year.

Our mission is based on enriching the spiritual and social well-being of the women of our parish. At the same time we count on your support to attend, volunteer, and help plan our events. If we didn’t have your support, our programs would not raise enough revenue to generously donate to our charitable organizations or fund our Fr. McDonnell Scholarship fund.

This Thanksgiving we pray that God will bless you and your family with an abundant health and happiness.

Light the way for family & friends this Christmas...

Begin a holiday tradition your children will love!

LUMINARIA KIT FUNDRAISER

Each Luminaria Kit includes 5 white bags, 5 long burning candles and enough sand to assemble your luminaries. Free home delivery seniors! Order by December 7. Pick up at the Parish Center on Sunday, December 13 from 10am-2pm. Drop off your order at the Parish Center (forms are in the office) or order online on the parish website. If you are a senior, be sure to include your address for delivery. Call Heather McCarthy 312-543-2682.
Outreach

This Rule points us in a clear direction. Let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves. In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us. The Golden Rule also reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development. Pope Francis

Merry Moms Bring Holiday Cheer!
A group of moms in our parish would like to help you get your home ready for the holidays. If you or someone you know is elderly or sick or alone, this spirit-filled group of moms will put up your inside Christmas decorations and then come back after the holidays to pack them back up. The Merry Moms welcome anyone who would like to join their efforts too! Call JoAnn McGarry today to schedule the Merry Moms to visit your home or to help the Moms. 847-562-6095.

Ways You Can Give to Help Others
Christmas cookies are needed for the LaGrange Community Nurses Association Holiday Open House on December 5. Drop off cookies at the Parish Center lobby on December 3 and 4.

New or gently used boots for men, women and children in need at Sharing Connections of Downers Grove. Boots may be placed in the drop box in the Parish Center lobby.

New or gently used fall and winter infant, toddler and children’s clothing for families in need at St. Gall, our new sharing parish. Bring your donations to the YC office or the Parish Center.

Postage Stamps for Kolbe House to enable those in prison to send Christmas Cards to their families. Bring stamps to the Parish Center or put them in the Sunday Offertory Collection basket at Mass.

Nonperishable food brought to the church narthex during November and December will be delivered to Mary Queen of Heaven. Family favorites include canned vegetables (corn, peas, green beans), cereal, tuna, boxed mashed potatoes, stuffing, pasta, pasta sauce, rice, and baby food.

Give the gift that keeps giving!
Each year parishioners help our brothers and sisters at our Sharing Parish, Holy Cross, in Jinja, Uganda through the Livestock for Life Program. Your donation supplies a hen, goat or pig (and training) to a specially selected family. The animal provides income for the family and the church.

You may purchase on-line with your credit card or drop off a check with the form below to the Parish Center. Each gift is $40.

Livestock for Life Gift
Your Name: ____________________________
Address: ______________________________
_____________________________________
Phone: ________________________________
Email: ________________________________
Number of Cards: __________
Amount Enclosed: __________

Drop off at Parish Center. You will receive your gift card in mail.

The Share Christmas experience at St. John of the Cross Parish is a strong and beautiful tradition that will fill your heart with joy as you make someone else’s Christmas special!

Our gifts are delivered to the following grateful recipients in the Chicago area: Blessed Sacrament Church, Little Brothers/Friends of the Elderly, St. Thomas of Canterbury, Santa Maria Addolorata, St. Thaddeus, St. Mark, St. Agatha, St. Gall as well as families in our own parish community.

Join in on the fun! Sign up for Share Christmas continues today after all Masses and through next weekend.

For your convenience our parish Scrip reps will be available in the church community room for you to purchase food and gift certificates. Cash, checks or credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover) will be accepted. A 3% convenience fee will be applied to credit card purchases.

What can I buy?
- An unwrapped gift for a child (infant to 18 years old)
- A food gift card from Jewel or Wal-Mart for a Christmas meal
- Gift cards for families from Sears, Wal-Mart, Kohl’s, Target or JC Penny
- Food and gifts cards for a Christmas meal and presents for a family

Please note, providing gift cards for our recipient families allows them to select the sizes and colors that more closely meet their needs. Similarly, providing food cards lets them choose food based on their ethnicity, family preferences and health/allergy concerns. Whether you choose to provide a store bought individual gift, or a gift or food card, know that your generosity will make all the difference in Christmas for our grateful recipients.

Donations can also be made on our parish website at www.stjohnofthecross.org. Click on the Giving tab and direct your donation to the Special Collections link to choose Share Christmas. Your gifts will be used to purchase food and gift certificates.

Drop off Days are December 7, 8, and 9 between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the Parish Center. The gifts will then be delivered to the parishes on Saturday, December 13th. If you have a van or small truck or if you are free to help load and deliver, please call us. Questions can be directed to Lolly Maloney at 630-261-5675 or lollymaloney@gmail.com or the Parish Center.

Find us ready Lord...not standing still.
Find us working and loving and doing your will.
Find us ready Lord...faithful in love and building the kingdom that’s here and above!
### Mass Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Intention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, November 30</td>
<td>St. Andrew</td>
<td>Living Intention</td>
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<td>Tuesday, December 1</td>
<td>Advent Weekday</td>
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<td>Wednesday, December 2</td>
<td>Advent Weekday</td>
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<td>Thursday, December 3</td>
<td>St. Francis Xavier</td>
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<td>Friday, December 4</td>
<td>St. John Damascus</td>
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<td>Saturday, December 5</td>
<td>Advent Weekday</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 6</td>
<td>Second Sunday of Advent</td>
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All parishioners, parishioner groups, and ministry groups are invited to carry the Advent candle at the beginning of each Sunday Mass throughout the Advent Season. Each week a parish volunteer or volunteers will carry the lit candle before the opening procession and place it on one of the hooks around the Advent wreath. If you are interested in participating in this ritual please sign up on the sheet outside of the sacristy. Contact Fr. Bill with any questions.

**Pray for our Sick**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean Allen</td>
<td>Marguerite Kohut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guido Arquilla</td>
<td>George Kojima</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therese Bonneau</td>
<td>Carol Martin</td>
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<td>Mildred Fitzgerald</td>
<td>John Martin</td>
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<td>Lynn Jeffery</td>
<td>Alice Myers</td>
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<td>Don King</td>
<td>Roberta Ohlquist</td>
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<td>JoAnn Klein</td>
<td>Marian Pascale</td>
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<td>Steve Pechous</td>
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<td>Maurice Redmand</td>
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<td>Keri Rohr</td>
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<td>Maureen Soules</td>
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<td>Michael Sullivan</td>
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<td>Theresa Vana</td>
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<td>Robert VanWhye</td>
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<td>Don Vollmer</td>
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**Wedding Banns**

Meghan Callaghan & Patrick Gillespie

**Our Beloved Dead**

Charles Macke, husband of Irene, father of Charles, Kenneth, Alicia, Laurance, grandfather of Liza and Terry

Chuck Freehill, brother of Anne Zick

Eileen Quinn, mother of John, grandmother of Charlotte, Maria and Catherine

For staff emails go to our parish website

http://www.stjohnofthecross.org/leadership/parish-staff/
Join us as we kick off the holiday season with a festive luncheon held at the William Tell Terrace Room, 6201 Joliet Rd. in Countryside. Convenient parking is available in the west corner of the lot. Please rsvp by Monday, Dec. 7. No refunds after this date. Tickets are $25 per person for lunch, a glass of wine and an entertaining program. Entrée Choice: Pot Roast, Chicken Marsala or Tilapia. Please indicate entrée choice and name of guest below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Circle Entrée Choice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pot Roast  Chicken  Tilapia</td>
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<td>Pot Roast  Chicken  Tilapia</td>
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<td>Pot Roast  Chicken  Tilapia</td>
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<td>Pot Roast  Chicken  Tilapia</td>
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Phone: ________________________________

Total Enclosed: $______________

Any questions can be directed to Gerri Mazzone 708-246-0721.