Fourth Sunday of Advent December 20, 2015
Dear Parishioners,

We have arrived at the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the last partial week before the great Feast of the Incarnation. Otherwise known as the three days when most men will do all their Christmas shopping.

Christmas Eve is Thursday afternoon when many families will be with us, especially those with small children, when there will be five masses, the first of which begins at 4:00pm and the fifth mass of the evening will finish close to midnight. Friday morning, Christmas Day, will have many people as well, but more than likely fewer little children. By then the kids will be busy with toys and other gifts that have come from Santa or his helpers or from grandma and grandpa. The magic of Christmas morning with little kids is a memory maker that can sustain parents through a lot of challenges that occur during the rest of the year. In a quiet moment, in a flash, you can see your family on Christmas morning and remind yourself, ‘This is the reason why we deal with all the other stuff, and I wouldn’t have it any other way’.

My sister Laura is the oldest and she sometimes takes the responsibility of being the family memory keeper. Recently she came across a series of Christmas pictures from 1968. It’s always interesting to look back at your teenage self, (I had just turned 15), and to see your siblings as you so clearly remember them from childhood, oh so many pounds ago. Laura mounted the pictures on poster board and gave them to my father as a trip down the memory lane of Christmas, 1968. Laura was 17 that Christmas; my youngest brother had not yet been born. There are the piles of toys, everyone still in their pj’s, the happy child, the sulking teenager (did I mention I was 15?), the awkward, self conscious child and the dog. And what is the picture of my father? He’s zonked out in the recliner, dead to the world, while all this chaos is going on around him. He probably had less than two hours sleep to make sure that the parts all fit and that there were enough batteries and a hundred other details. That’s what dads do.

Last Sunday we had a tender moment at the 5:00pm Sunday liturgy. Fr. Charlie Rubey, the founder and director of L.O.S.S. (Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide) was the homilist. He spoke of mental illness and suicide and the compassion needed for the one in so much pain before the suicide and the ones in so much pain after the suicide. It was very powerful when all those who had been touched by suicide came forward to light a candle. The sheer number of people was heart breaking. Some people were there on purpose, others by accident, but all were touched by this very painful reality that sometimes remains unspoken yet profoundly present. The holidays can bring high stress and can place unrealistic emotional demands on families.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent is the Sunday to give yourself permission to lower your expectations, to choose to not add to the chaos more than can be helped, to step back and get a perspective of what all of this is supposed to be about. It’s supposed to be about celebrating Jesus being born. It’s about God’s love for the world being affirmed in history and in our own lives. It’s about grace following grace, love coming upon love. The rest is all secondary. Isn’t it?

Until the Breaking of the Bread,
Fr. David

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Remembering Our Loved Ones Serving in the Military

Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Sgt. Steven Foody, son of Tom & Sandra Foody

Specialist Sebastian Grabacki, son of David & Jan Grabacki

If you have a loved one serving and would like us to include them in our prayers please call the Parish Center Office or email treyes@stjohnofthecross.org.
Bishop Bob Barron will celebrate with us on Sunday, December 27 at our 9am Mass. Coffee and donuts will follow in the Parish Center after Mass.

There will be no parish babysitting in the rectory Garden Room during the 9am and 10:45am Masses on the holiday weekends, Dec. 27 and January 3.

A YEAR OF MERCY

GIVE DRINK TO THE Thirsty

In his great mercy, Jesus said, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.” (John 7:37–38) We are sustained by the drink, material and spiritual, that he gives us. We share with others. And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.” (Matthew 10:42)

Parish Center Office Holiday Hours

As always, our priests can be reached in an emergency by calling the parish office number 708-246-4404 and following the voice prompts.

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Parish News

Volunteers Needed on 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 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 Elizabeth Russell-Jones today via email. We are putting together a schedule so we have each exit covered.
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.

WHAT POPE FRANCIS SAYS ABOUT MERCY

Parish of St. John of the Cross
www.stjohnofthecross.org
Christmas Blessings

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A Blessed Christmas to you all.

My greeting comes at a time marked by sad and troubling news for our city, our nation and our world. The joyful news of Christmas competes in these days with stories of street violence in our city, of wars, conflicts and acts of terrorism throughout the world including in our own nation.

As people of faith, we must read these “signs of the times.” As we do, so Christmas gives us a proper perspective: the sadness of violence and war does not have the last word. God has come to save us, for we cannot save ourselves. The savior born to us raises us up from darkness and brings us into his own wonderful light.

One of the Christmas readings taken from Paul’s letter to Titus says this:

When the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us… Titus 3:4-5

We hear those words “because of his mercy,” especially as we celebrate the Jubilee of Mercy this year. The challenge for us is not just to believe that God is merciful, but also to believe that God is merciful to us and that God is blessing us with his mercy precisely at this very moment, and in the limited circumstances of our lives and relationships. When we accept that mercy, we will be transformed and become the merciful light of God in a dark and cold world. Then, our own works of mercy will, in turn, bring hope, healing, and renewal, just as God’s mercy has done for us.

May God bless you and your families with his mercy and enable you to be the hands of his mercy in our world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago

Six Steps to Surviving the Holiday Season After Loss by Donna Mebane

For years, I made my children listen to Bing Crosby as we decorated the Christmas tree. One day, I reasoned, I would be gone and I imagined them downloading ‘ol Bing and carrying on the tradition with their own children. When they got to the song, “Think of Me” they’d pause, shed a little tear, think of all the good times we had, and be sorry they complained incessantly about it so many years before. Three years ago, my youngest child, Emma, died. She was 19 years old. I no longer put up a Christmas tree. Perhaps someday I will again. But I know I will never, ever again listen to Bing Crosby.

I don’t presume that what I have done to get through three sets of holidays is right for others. Everyone’s grief is different, and so is their path to survival. My mother died on New Year’s Day. My sister is a nurse and plans to work. My dad wants to do everything exactly as it had been done when she was alive. My brother, the introvert, plans to stay home, alone with his own thoughts. Each person knows what he/she can handle and to the extent possible needs to create the space in which to handle it. The human being has an amazing capacity to keep standing … an amazing will to keep living. “I’d never survive the loss of one of my children,” I’d say knowingly whenever I’d hear about such a horror. “I’d simply curl up in a ball and die.” But I didn’t. I still wonder sometimes how it’s possible that I am still breathing. But breathe I do. Every day, countless times a day. The holidays are still the worst of times, perhaps because at one time they were the best of times. These things have helped me. I hope they help you whether you are grieving the loss of a parent, a friend, a beloved pet or heaven help you, a child.

1. Don’t ask too much of yourself. You are not yourself. In some ways you will never be again. If you had lost a limb, you would not expect to go on as you had before. The first year, I didn’t cook Thanksgiving dinner or shop for Christmas presents. I had other children, sure. But I didn’t have Emma and that defined me. I gave IOU’s for a family vacation to the other kids. It was easy and they were happy. If I had young children, I would have asked friends and family to shop for me. They would have. For that first year anyhow, they understood. Ask for help.

Continued on the next page….
You'll get it. People want to help. They can't bring your loved one back, but they'll do anything else they can. They'll be thankful they could do something meaningful for you.

2. Reshape traditions. We used to share what we were most thankful for over dessert at Thanksgiving. We used to eat at the dining room table for special occasions. We used to put up a Christmas tree and open presents in the same spot in our living room. We hung stockings on our coat rack because Santa was ridiculously generous with stocking stuffers and they would fall off the mantle. We used to buy chocolate covered strawberries for Valentines. They were Emma’s favorites. We stopped doing those things. But over time, we started doing other things. We go to Christmas brunch. We have selected new seats for present opening in the family room. We don't hang stockings, we don’t put up a tree, we don’t use the dining room. But we have created new traditions that make sense for the reshaped family we have become. We have begun to look forward to these traditions.

3. Find ways to include the ones you have lost. This Christmas, the first without my mother, I will make her favorite Christmas cookie which will forever now be dubbed Bobbie’s pecan bars. Last Christmas, I bought presents for Emma’s dad and siblings that were inspired by her – we see her in the shape of a star and a cardinal and, once you start to look, you see them everywhere. I wrote little notes in her voice. They were the hit of the holidays and all are proudly displayed in special places. I can’t wait to look for other Emma gifts this year. Spend part of the holidays looking for signs. You’ll see them. This year on Thanksgiving morning, I looked out the kitchen window and there were literally dozens of cardinals all over the garden and in nearly every branch of the tree we planted the first year in Emma’s honor. We laughed – yes, laughed – and speculated that Emma must have taught all of her friends to become cardinals too just so they could party at the Mebane house.

4. Say her name. Tell stories about him. One of the common reactions I’ve heard from friends who have suffered loss is that no one talks about the person they’ve lost. They somehow believe that not doing so will help ... that perhaps it will be too painful for you to hear their names. Of course it’s painful. But it’s even more so to pretend they never existed. I want everyone to remember every aspect of Emma. I want to hear the stories I know over and over. I want to discover stories I don’t know. I need to know she mattered to every person who ever knew her. Even after three years, her best friends still post on her Facebook and I answer every one of them usually thanking them for “keeping Emma in your heart.” People will take their cue from you. Talk about what you love most, miss most, makes you the saddest, makes you the happiest. Say her name and others will too.

5. Take time for you. I have found that I need much more “me” time than I did before Emma died. I get tired more often, especially after time with family and friends. I take naps frequently. I often leave work to take a walk or just sit by myself in the lounge. I’m not the conversationalist I used to be. I am comfortable with silence. Me time may be tough to find during the holidays, but it’s essential that you recognize when you need it and act on that need.

6. Allow yourself to be sad but also to experience joy. It’s okay to cry. Christmas will always make me sad – my mom’s death shadows memories of my own childhood; Emma’s death shadows the present and the children she will never have will shape the future. I plan for sadness and I embrace it when it comes. I sit down by myself and write a letter to Emma or listen to her favorite songs or replay the slide show we played at her funeral. I walk right into the pain rather than try to hold it off. But I try to embrace joy when it comes too and it does come. It will come for you. It may be filtered through the hole in your heart, but it will come. You will laugh again and it will likely be during a holiday when the love of family and friends can't help but make you smile. Your laughter, when it comes, will be the greatest gift you can give to others. They are taking their cue from you. Be authentic. To be anything else takes too much effort. 

May memories of your loved one bring you some happiness during this holiday season.
May we joyfully announce the Presence of the Savior by the goodness and generosity of our lives.

May we encounter the Christmas mystery of the Savior's Presence in joyful sharing among family and friends.

Background on the Gospel

On this the last Sunday before Christmas, our Gospel reading prepares us to witness Christ's birth by showing us how Jesus was recognized as Israel's long-awaited Messiah even before his birth. The Gospel turns our attention from the ministry of John the Baptist to the events that preceded John the Baptist's birth. The story of John the Baptist and his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah, are reported only in Luke's Gospel. Luke pairs the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, establishing John's early connection to the Messiah.

Our Gospel reading recalls Mary's actions after the announcement of Jesus' birth by the angel Gabriel. Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, her cousin, who is also with child. Elizabeth greets Mary with full recognition of the roles that they and their unborn children will play in God's plan for salvation. If we were to continue to read the verses that follow in Luke's Gospel, we would hear Mary respond to Elizabeth's greeting with her song of praise, the Magnificat. Both women recall and echo God's history of showing favor upon the people of Israel.

In Luke's Gospel the Holy Spirit helps reveal Jesus' identity as God to those who believe. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and sings Mary's praise because she bears the Lord. We sing these words of praise to Mary in the Hail Mary. Even John the Baptist to the events that preceded John the Baptist's birth. The story of John the Baptist and his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah, are reported only in Luke's Gospel. Luke pairs the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, establishing John's early connection to the Messiah.

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It is appropriate in this season of Advent that we consider the role of Mary in God's plan of salvation. Elizabeth describes Mary as the first disciple, as the one who believed that God's word to her would be fulfilled. Mary's faith enabled her to recognize the work of God in her people's history and in her own life. Her openness to God allowed God to work through her so that salvation might come to everyone. Because of this, Mary is a model and symbol of the Church. May we be like Mary, open and cooperative in God's plan for salvation. Loyola Press

Monday

Tuesday
1 Sam 1:24-28 1 Sam 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd Luke 1:46-56

Wednesday
Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps 25:4-6ab, 6-9, 10 and 14 Luke 1:57-66

Thursday
2 Sam 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29 Luke 1:67-79

Friday Christmas
Isa 52:7-10 Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 Heb 1:1-6 John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

Saturday
St. Stephen Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59 Ps 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17 Matt 10:17-22

Sunday Holy Family
Dear God, as I look through my gift shopping list, I hold up to you each person listed on it. Slowly, one by one, I ask that the fire of your abundant love burn within each of them. I pray that the gift I find for each person will bring joy into their life.

But, help me to keep a balance this season, Lord. Let me keep my buying in perspective, not to spend more than I need to or can afford. Let me not give in to the pressures of this world and not equate love with money spent. Let me always remember the many, many people who have so much less in material things. Help me to buy wisely, so that my choices will not burden those in other countries who are so deeply affected by this country’s economy.

And finally, loving God, help me to find time in the frantic moments of each day to become centered on you. Walking through a store, riding on the bus, hurrying down a street: let each of these times be moments when I can remember your incredible love for me and rejoice in it.

How do we prepare our hearts for you, Jesus?
Or do we understand our need to prepare? Are we more likely to hurry around once you’re here, trying to focus on this guest we weren’t expecting?

Will we be ready when you appear there in the manger? Or will our hearts and minds be so focused on our immediate struggles that we’re unprepared to receive eternal hope and grace?

Will we recognize you? Or will we be looking for a savior of our own making? One who is powerful maybe, who can rule the world? Will we be looking for a savior who looks like we do in race, culture, or religion?

Will we stop and gaze upon you, forgetting everything else for just a few moments? Or will we be too distracted by credit card bills, the fallout of family gatherings, the extra pounds we’ve gained, and all the things we want to buy and do in the coming year?

Will we journey through all sorts of weather and landscape just to get a glimpse of you? Or if it’s just too hard to get to the manger, will we flip through the TV channels one more time, get a snack, put on comfortable clothes, and get lost in consoling fantasies?

How will we prepare our hearts for the Christ Child?

Ignatian Spirituality.

You are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).
Over the centuries, the Church has been a beacon of light for many people. Sometimes, the light takes the form of solace in time of need. Other times, light comes as forgiveness, grace or conversion of heart. This light is conveyed through human beings. Our Baptism calls us to be bearers of Christ’s light to the world. This requires an openness on our part to allow Christ to work through us individually and collectively. When we do our part to be sources of light in the world, we diminish the effects of darkness.

Where can I be a source of light today?
Who brings the light of Christ into my life?

Jesus, light of the world, thank you for sending me forth into the world to be your light. Help me to put aside all that prevents me from letting your light shine through me.

Amen.
"We are all searching, and ultimately—whether we know it or no—we are searching for God. Ultimately, we are searching for the Ultimate, and the Ultimate is God. It is not easy, searching for God. The fact is that we do not really know what we're looking for or who we're looking for. Almost a thousand years ago, St. Anselm of Canterbury said, 'God is that greater than which cannot be thought.' Think about it. We can stretch our minds as high and deep and far as our minds can stretch, and at the point of the highest, deepest, farthest stretch of our minds, we have not 'thought' God. There is always a thought beyond what we are able to think. 'God is that greater than which cannot be thought.'

"God is, quite literally, inconceivable. And that is why God was conceived as a human being in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Because we cannot, even in thought, rise up to God, God stooped down to us in Jesus, who is 'Emmanuel,' which means ‘God with us.’"

Richard John Neuhaus

Fourth Sunday of Advent Imaginative Prayer

“All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means, ‘God is with us.’”

Preparation

As we begin this time of quiet prayer, I invite you to find a comfortable place to sit with your back straight and your legs planted on the ground. Allow yourself to notice your normal breathing. Breathe in. Breathe out.

Take a few moments and close your eyes, preparing yourself to listen to what God may be saying to you during this time of prayer. As you sit with your eyes closed, use these or similar words: “Here I am, Lord. Here I am.” When you are ready, open your eyes and pray.

The Visitor

Imagine you’re sitting on the sofa. It’s been a tiring day of meetings and appointments. You decide to sit on the sofa for a half an hour to catch your breath. As you sit there, you pick up your book from the coffee table. It’s about the saints. You’ve been reading one saint story a day during this season of Advent. You’re hoping to gain some insight into how these men and women lived and believed so you can bring that into your own life. But they all seem so heroic in a way you could never be. You open the book and allow it to take you anywhere. You settle in to read the section, but you hear someone at the door. I’m not expecting anyone, you think.

When you open the door, you see a young man standing there. He is looking down at the ground. He is holding his hands gently in front of him, his fingers wrapped around each other. Kids selling candy again, you think. “Can I help you?” you ask.


“No, you don’t. But I know you.” This is feeling a little creepy, you think. You begin to back up into the house. “Don’t be afraid. Please.”

You’re not quite sure what’s happening. You want to go inside, but something keeps you standing here. “What do you want to tell me?”

The man continues to look down. Slowly he raises his head, smiles, and says, “God wants you to bring his voice into your world. In the place you work, in your home, wherever you go, God wants you to bring his news of hope to all.”

“Is this a joke?” you ask him. “Who put you up to this? My brother?”

He continues to look down with peace and calm. He raises his face, and your eyes meet. He smiles, turns, and walks away.

“Wait a minute. You didn’t answer my question. Who put you up to this?”

He turns, looks at you and points to his heart, and then disappears into the rows and rows of houses.

Concluding Prayer

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
St. John of the Cross Parish congratulates the following families who had their children baptized in December.

In the top photo from the left is:
**Annabel Lorriane Bush** with parents Peter and Claudia,
**Jack Collins Matheney** with parents Wesley and Mary, and
**Chase Matthew Wroblewski** with parents Nicholas and Kacie.

In the bottom photo from the left is:
**Benjamin Dean Huska** with parents Eric and Sara, and
**Tucker Hoyt Wulf** with parents Theodore and Lindsay.

**Have a New Baby? Ready for Baptism?**
Learn about infant baptism at our parish. Call the Parish Center and ask for Theresa or Mary Beth weekdays between 9am and 4pm. Or go to our parish website under Sacraments.

*Christmas Concert*
Friday, December 4 at 7pm
Parish News

New Parish Directories Have Arrived!
Our new parish directories are available for pick up at the Parish Center after Mass this weekend or in the office during the week.

New Minister of Care Training
Ministers of Care bring Holy Communion to our parish homebound and those in area hospitals. The next training at the Carmelite Center in Darien will be Saturday, January 23 & 30 from 9am to 1pm. SJC covers the cost of training. Call Steve Weigand in the Parish Center to learn more.

New Parish Signs
Congratulations and thank you to Jonathan Krol of parish Boy Scout Troop 117. Jonathan recently completed his Eagle Scout project which involved removing the three old exterior wooden parish signs and building new signs with cedar timbers.

The Women’s Club would like to thank you for the support of our events throughout this past year. We wish you and your families a Blessed Christmas Season.

Katie Pruitt, Lee Rosenberg, Marie Gerkin, Tiffany White-Fox, Connie Madden, Heather McCarthy, Julie Misarti, Mellissa Timotic, Kelly Eikum, Margaret Hynes, Jenny Mazur, Lisa Dunneback, Jenny Data, Jennifer Miller, Sylvie Salazar, Jeannie Conkin, Denise Schollo, Jen Van Wyck, & Mary Beth Drafz

Julie Misarti and her mom work together preparing Luminaria kits which line the Parish Center Hallway. The Luminaria Sale is an annual fundraiser for the Women’s Club to help support its many charities.

New Parish Signs
Congratulations and thank you to Jonathan Krol of parish Boy Scout Troop 117. Jonathan recently completed his Eagle Scout project which involved removing the three old exterior wooden parish signs and building new signs with cedar timbers.

Thank you Scouts! Each year the Scouts donate the beautiful big Christmas wreaths that are hung above our church, school and Parish Center doors.

Joyful Again Workshop

Little Rock Scripture Study Begins 1.4.16
Letters from Prison
In these letters of encouragement, correction, and instruction written from prison, Paul lovingly inspires and challenges us to greater discipleship. In Philippians, Paul calls on the community to rejoice even when difficulties and struggles abound in life. Paul offers Jesus himself as the prime model to follow in his humility and obedience. Colossians and Ephesians have a number of striking similarities, including the depiction of the Church as the body of Christ with Christ as the head. Colossians, however, contains a great hymn of praise to Christ as the image of the invisible God, while Ephesians describes the Church as the spotless bride of Christ. Materials fee $15. 10 sessions on Mondays at 1pm.

Christmas Wafers are available in the Parish Center
The tradition of Christmas wafers or Oplatki originated in Poland during Early Christian times. This Christmas custom began with a simple white wafer baked from flour and water. The wafers are now designed to display Christmas images such as the Nativity. Oplatki are enjoyed by families typically right before the Christmas Eve meal. The entire family will gather around the table with the Oplatek. Generally the eldest member of the family will begin the ritual by breaking off a piece of the wafer and passing it to another family member with a blessing. This blessing can simply consist of what you desire for your loved one in the upcoming year – whether it be good health, success, or happiness. The purpose of this act is primarily to express one’s unconditional love and forgiveness for each member of his or her family.

St. John of the Cross Parish    www.stjohnofthecross.org    December 20, 2015    Page 10
Last Sunday the Spirito! Singers Ragazze Ensemble featuring girls in 5th–8th grade sang at our 9am Mass. Spirito! was sponsored by the YC Council.

Crossroads Calendar of Events
Jan. 2-4 Frosh-Soph. Retreat
January 10 Update Meeting
Home Group Meetings

Who Will Lead Our Teens?
We need one more couple to lead a Freshmen Home Group. Home Group leaders can be married couples, friends, or a parent/adult son or daughter team. Contact Katie Hayes at 708-246-4404, or Mary & Terry Stadler at 630-246-3838 for details.

Kairos 22

Teen Volunteers Needed
Any teens interested in serving Crossroads for some organizing projects on Tuesday, December 22 from 10am-noon, please text Katie at 630-220-0896 today!
We held the first band and choir concert of the year last week. It is a really great time for the students, staff and parents. Many of the students in our band and choir have never had a music lesson before this year and to witness their growth in just a few months is wonderful.

Each week, each of our grade levels have dedicated time in the science lab. While our eighth graders dissect frogs, the other grade levels participate in some pretty neat activities as well. This week, our fourth graders learned about volcanic eruptions in class and they had the opportunity to make their own volcanos erupt.

_The Dawn from on high will visit us, guiding our feet in the way of peace._

_Luke 1:78-79_
Share Christmas

Thank you to everyone who took part in Share Christmas by donating gift cards, food cards or gifts. Over 300 families and hundreds of individuals will know the joy of receiving and being loved through your generosity!! Pictured below are Bruce Harken, Cathy Laskey, and Mike Savage as they begin to deliver all the gifts to 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 parish.

Thank you to all the Share volunteers especially Lolly Maloney, Bruce Harken, and Cathy Laskey, Share Chairpeople.

Donations that will help make all the difference for others:

- Sign up to make simple brown bag lunches at your home for BEDS Plus Care. Contact Laurie Smillie at 708-246-6760 to provide lunches for Jan. 15, Feb. 5 or Feb. 19. Lunches typically include a sandwich, chips, crackers, fruit and dessert (a granola bar, pudding or jello cup). A great activity for all ages.
- New or gently used infant, toddler and children’s winter clothing for our new sharing parish, St. Gall. Donations can be brought to the Parish Center or YC office.
- New or gently used boots for men, women and children for those in need at the Sharing Connections in Downers Grove.

Thank You from Mary Queen of Heaven

Dear St. John of the Cross,

Rosa asked me to write to you and tell you how grateful the people of Mary Queen of Heaven are for all the food your parish so generously sent to our food pantry. She told me that another shipment is coming in tomorrow. Please tell your parishioners that the people are so happy to be receiving food from you. It is a difficult time for so many and now with the cold and the holidays money is stretched even more. So many families are now able to feed their children because of all the food you have sent. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Gratefully yours,

Monica Gieser
Mary Queen of Heaven Food Pantry

Last week, 12 SJC volunteers delivered 8 carloads of food to Mary Queen of Heaven from our food collection in the church narthex. Thank you for your generosity to those who are in need.

THE CALL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO CONSIDER A VOCATION may sometimes be a gentle voice stirring the soul or a personal longing in our hearts. It may be the urging of friends or spouses. It can also find birth in the invitation of pastors, deacons and parish leaders to pursue such an inquiry. No matter the source of our questions, each of us needs to be affirmed and encouraged to bring a call to a vocation to prayerful discernment. The Institute for Diaconal Studies (IDS) invites all men who feel the gentle nudge of the Holy Spirit to attend an Exploring the Diaconate session. It is a time to pray, discuss, and learn more about the discernment process and the formation program that aspirants and candidates pursue. Please join us, with your wives, if married, as we explore the potential of a vocation, engage in dialogue and pray in search of the next step. All are welcome to attend any of the sessions. No registration required.

Jan. 14, 2016 University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, 7:30-8:30 pm Location: Prist Center (201P) (847) 837-4564
Jan. 26, 2016 Queen of the Rosary, Elk Grove (Vicariate I), 7:30-8:30 pm Location: Rectory (847) 437-0403

For more information contact Fr. David Dowdle or Fr. Bill Vollmer.

Application Deadline for 2016-2017 Aspirancy Path is May 1, 2016.
The Hiddenness of God and the Darkness of Faith

When I first began teaching theology, I fantasized about writing a book about the hiddenness of God. Why does God remain hidden and invisible? Why doesn’t God just show himself plainly in a way that nobody can dispute?

One of the standard answers to that question was: If God did manifest himself plainly there wouldn’t be any need for faith. But that begged the question: Who wants faith? Wouldn’t it be better to just plainly see God? There were other answers to that question of course, except I didn’t know them or didn’t grasp them with enough depth for them to be meaningful. For example, one such answer taught that God is pure Spirit and that spirit cannot be perceived through our normal human senses. But that seemed too abstract to me. And so I began to search for different answers or for better articulations of our stock answers to this question. And there was a pot of gold at the end of the search; it led me to the mystics, particularly to John of the Cross, and to spiritual writers such as Carlo Carretto.

What’s their answer? They offer no simple answers. What they offer instead are various perspectives that throw light on the ineffability of God, the mystery of faith, and the mystery of human knowing in general. In essence, how we know as human beings and how we know God is deeply paradoxical, that is, the more deeply we know anything, the more that person or object begins to become less conceptually clear. One of the most famous mystics in history suggests that as we enter into deeper intimacy we concomitantly enter into a “cloud of unknowing”, namely, into a knowing so deep that it can no longer be conceptualized. What does this mean?

Three analogies can help us here: the analogy of a baby in its mother’s womb; the analogy of darkness as excessive light; and the analogy of deep intimacy as breaking down our conceptual images:

First: Imagine a baby in its mother’s womb. In the womb, the baby is so totally enveloped and surrounded by the mother that, paradoxically, it cannot see the mother and cannot have any concept of the mother. Its inability to see or picture its mother is caused by the mother’s omnipresence, not by her absence. The mother is too present, too all enveloping, to be seen or conceptualized. The baby has to be born to see its mother. So too for us and God. Scripture tells us that we live, and move, and breathe, and have our being in God. We are in God’s womb, enveloped by God, and, like a baby, we must first be born (death as our second birth) to see God face to face. That’s faith’s darkness.

Second: Excessive light is a darkness: If you stare straight into the sun with an unshielded eye, what do you see? Nothing. The very excess of light renders you as blind as if you were in pitch darkness. And that’s also the reason why we have difficulty in seeing God and why, generally, the deeper we journey into intimacy with God, the deeper we are journeying into Light, the more God seems to disappear and become harder and harder to picture or imagine. We’re being blinded, not by God’s absence, but by a blinding light to the unshielded eye. The darkness of faith is the darkness of excessive light.

A final analogy: Deep intimacy is iconoclastic. The deeper our intimacy with anyone the more our pictures and images of that person begin to break down. Imagine this: A friend says to you: “I understand you perfectly: I know your family, your background, your ethnicity, your psychological and emotional temperaments, your strengths, your weakness, and your habits. I understand you.” Would you feel understood? I suspect not. Now imagine a very different scenario: A friend says to you: “You’re a mystery to me! I’ve known you for years, but you’ve a depth that’s somehow beyond me. The longer I know you, the more I know that you are your own mystery.” In this non-understanding, in being allowed to be the full mystery of your own person in that friend’s understanding, you would, paradoxically, feel much better understood. John of the Cross submits that the deeper we journey into intimacy, the more we will begin to understand by not understanding than by understanding. Our relationship to God works in the same way. Initially, when our intimacy is not so deep, we feel that we understand things and we have firm feelings and ideas about God. But the deeper we journey, the more those feelings and ideas will begin to feel false and empty because our growing intimacy is opening us to the fuller mystery of God. Paradoxically this feels like God is disappearing and becoming non-existent.

Faith, by definition, implies a paradoxical darkness, the closer we get to God in this life, the more God seems to disappear because overpowering light can seem like darkness.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. www.ronrolheiser.com

Now on Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser
Mass Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Mass</th>
<th>Intention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, December 21</td>
<td>St. Peter Canisius</td>
<td>7:45am Kevin McGuire; Our Beloved Dead</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, December 22</td>
<td>Advent Weekday</td>
<td>7:45am Louis Trapp; Pat Mahoney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 23</td>
<td>St. John Kanty</td>
<td>7:45am Victor Godlewski; Joe &amp; Anthony Schillaci</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 24</td>
<td>Advent Weekday</td>
<td>7:45am George J. Zurowski; Margaret Cochran</td>
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<td>Thursday, December 24</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord</td>
<td>4:00pm John DenBesten; Dr. Norbert Mann</td>
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<td>Thursday, December 24</td>
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<td>4:15pm Rosemary Pickell; Robert Plechaty</td>
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<td>Thursday, December 24</td>
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<td>4:30pm James E. Purtell; Elizabeth G. Purtell</td>
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<td>Thursday, December 24</td>
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<td>6:00pm Alice &amp; Al Sobey; Deceased members of the Parker &amp; Weber families</td>
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<td>Thursday, December 24</td>
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<td>10:30pm Deceased members of the Cook &amp; Turlek families; Thomas Marshall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, December 25</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord</td>
<td>7:30am Deceased members of the Galvin &amp; Grogan families; Bruno Shukis</td>
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<td>Friday, December 25</td>
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<td>9:00am Lisa Witnynski; John Hogan</td>
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<td>Friday, December 25</td>
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<td>10:45am Deceased members of the Dowdle &amp; McCarthy families; Ramon &amp; Gloria Sanchez</td>
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<td>Friday, December 25</td>
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<td>12:30pm Walter &amp; Patricia Cebula; Chester Cebula</td>
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<td>Saturday, December 26</td>
<td>St. Stephen</td>
<td>8:00am Robert Plechaty; Kenneth Ochalla</td>
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<td>Saturday, December 26</td>
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<td>5:00pm Charles Sugrue; Special Intention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, December 27</td>
<td>Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary &amp; Joseph</td>
<td>7:30am Susan McGuire; Brigette Rose Newman</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 27</td>
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<td>9:00am Rita Gangi; Gaetano Guy Accettura</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 27</td>
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<td>10:45am Dave Woodward; Bob Kidder</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 27</td>
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<td>12:15pm Francis Reilly; Vandelinas Domanskis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, December 27</td>
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<td>5:00pm Reggie Cook; Dick Ryan</td>
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A note from our neighbor parish, St. Francis Xavier: All tickets for the 3pm and 5pm Christmas Eve Masses at the Sisters of St. Joseph Mother House have been issued. A ticket is required this year for admission to these Masses.

Pray for Our Sick

- Bobbie Misiora
- Alice Myers
- Roberta Ohlquist
- Maria Olson
- Marian Pascale
- Steve Pechous
- Maurice Redmand
- Keri Rohr
- Maureen Soules
- Michael Sullivan
- Theresa Vana
- Robert VanWhye
- Don Vollmer

Pray for Our Beloved Dead

- Gerald Shea, father of Courtney
- Sr. Therese Fenlon, IVBM
- Joseph Gowgiel, father of Michael
- Alicia Yaus, sister of John Hughes, niece of Bill and Sheila McLaughlin
- Louis R. Cross, uncle of Catie Poronsky

St. John of the Cross Parish

December 20, 2015

Page 15
The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Christmas Eve - Thursday, December 24
7:45am  Advent Weekday Mass

4:00pm Church
Combined Children’s Choir  Carol Prelude 3:30pm

4:15pm First Floor School Multi-Purpose Room
Carol Prelude 4:00pm

4:30pm Second Floor School Gym
Carol Prelude 4:15pm

6:00pm Church
Carol Prelude 5:45pm

10:30pm Church
Traditional Choir  Carol Prelude 10:00pm

Christmas Day - Friday, 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 the usual start at 12:15pm.

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

Holiday Mass Schedule
We will have our regular weekend Mass schedule on December 26-27 and January 2-3. During the week we will have our regular weekday Mass schedule except for New Year’s Day. There will be only one Mass on New Year’s Day at 10am.

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