

A Reflection from Fr. Joseph

The Vatican is not usually recognized for its innovation. Usually when the Holy Father speaks, it is to reaffirm some belief or practice of the past rather than proposing some change for the future. But recently, things began to change, starting with Christmas. For the first time in its history, the Vatican has replaced its traditional manger scene, in St. Peter's Square, with a radically new one. And by doing so, it has turned a lot of heads and raised a lot of questions.

The traditional manger scene is based upon the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel we hear at the midnight Mass. In it, Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of the worldwide census; Jesus is born in a stable and laid in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn, and the angels appear to shepherds in the fields announcing the Savior's birth. We all know that story. But some of us might not know that there is an alternate version of Jesus' birth which comes from the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew's Gospel, Joseph and Mary do not travel to Bethlehem. Joseph receives a message from an angel to take Mary as his wife. When he does so, Jesus is born in Joseph's home. Now it is this version, Matthew's version, that the Vatican has chosen to be its Christmas scene.

So, if you were to travel to Rome and go to St. Peter's square, what you would see is baby Jesus with his mother in Joseph's home. You would see Joseph's carpentry shop where he works. Now you might find an angel or two, but no shepherds, and no manger. When the Vatican was questioned about the reason for this change, it gave a very incomplete explanation. "It's time for a change." I think you would agree with me that this is a totally inadequate explanation to justify a change which has altered centuries of tradition. So, the question is "Why move from Luke's Gospel to Matthews's Gospel? Why move from a stable to a carpentry shop?"

Because the whole meaning of the feast we celebrate tonight is that Jesus must move from the manger to our home. As exotic and romantic as it may be, to picture Jesus surrounded by shepherds and sheep, it is more important to find Jesus where we live, where we work, and yes at times where we relax with friends over a few drinks (I prefer cognac, lol). The Gospel of Matthew challenges us not to keep Jesus in a manger but to bring him into our lives, to bring him home.



Now, what does it mean to bring Jesus home? It means to make His priorities our priorities, and His priorities are all about the people. Putting people first, forgiving our enemies, caring for the weakest among us, those are Jesus' priorities. If we are to bring Him home, they must be our priorities as well. And that is not easy. I suppose it is for this reason that many people, at this time of the year, choose to keep Jesus in the manger. They love to look fondly upon the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay, and in a manger far faraway.

The Gospel of Matthew calls us in a different direction. It invites us to take Jesus home. It calls us not to leave him in the little town of Bethlehem, but to bring him to our town, to bring him into our lives. It calls us not to keep him away in a manger, but to let him rule our hearts and to fill our hearts with love, forgiveness, and service. Let us open our hearts and let him in. For only those who do so will know the true joy of this season and the wonder of Christ's birth.

May God come to reside in your heart, in your life, and in your family. Merry Christmas!

DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Mon. Dec. 26th** - ST. STEPHEN, feast
Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Mat. 10:17-22
- Tue. Dec. 27th** - ST. JOHN, feast
1 john 1:1-4; John 20:2-8
- Wed. Dec. 28th** - THE HOLY INNOCENTS, feast
1 john 1:5-2:2; Mat. 2:13-18
- Thurs. Dec. 29th** - 1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35
- Fri. Dec. 30th** - FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Mat.2:13-15, 19-23
- Sat. Dec. 31st** - 1 John 2:18-21; John 1:1-18
- Sun. Jan. 1st** - Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21



MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

- Sun. Dec. 25th 9 am Mass for the int. of the Montello Fmly.
11 am Mass for the int. of the Biagioni Fmly.
2 pm Mass for John Lui, R.I.P.
5 pm Mass for parishioners
- Mon. Dec. 26th 8 am Mass for Esther Baldasso, R.I.P.
- Tue. Dec. 27th 8 am Mass for the int. of Benito Viduya
- Wed. Dec. 28th 9 am Mass for Maria Oi Wong, R.I.P.
7:30 pm Novena Mass
- Thur. Dec. 29th 8 am Mass for Francisca Falcone, R.I.P.
- Fri. Dec. 30th 8 am Mass for Gus Huggan, R.I.P.
- Sat. Dec. 31st 9:00 am Mass for
5:00 pm Mass for
12:00 am Mass for

PARISH ENVELOPES FOR 2017

Have you picked up your new set of parish envelopes for 2017 from the tables at the entrance of the church? They are arranged in alphabetical order. Anyone wishing envelopes for 2017, is asked to call the parish office at 604-434-6700.



ALTAR SERVERS

Please check your schedules for the New Year's Masses.

Dear St. Jude's Parishioners,



Although my time as your pastor was very short, only 16 months, I was still able, in this short time, to come to know you and learn from you. During this time, you have supported me and worked with me. I was able to fulfil my duty as your pastor because of you, because of your faithfulness to Christ and his Church. I enjoyed so much being your pastor because of your support and love. It was your help that made my life and my work easier.

Now, I have stepped down as your pastor because of my health, but I know very well that you continue to pray for me. It is your prayer that strengthens me and encourages me to do my best to serve the Church. Your support means so much to me. I would like to use this opportunity, this Christmas, to say thank you to all of you for your love, your care, your encouragement and your support. May the coming Christ at Christmas enlighten your life and your heart. May the Emmanuel (God is with us) bless you with his many blessings and remain with you and your family forever. May your family become a place for Christ to be born in, and a manger that holds the Infant Lord, the King of Kings.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Fr. Joseph.

PROJECT ADVANCE

“Live gratefully, give generously”

Thank you so much to everyone who gave to our annual Project Advance appeal this year. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and support. **Please be reminded that the deadline to fulfill your pledges is December 31st.**

SCHOOL NEWS

- **Bottle Drive:** Jan. 3rd to 6th. Save your empties! (cans, bottles, tetra packs). Drop off from 8:30 to 9 am and 2:30 to 3:15 pm in the school cafeteria. We appreciate your support.



- **Kindergarten Registration:** If you have a child who will be turning 5 in 2017 and entering Kindergarten, please notify the school so they will add their name to the list.

NEW YEAR'S DAY SCHEDULE OF MASSES

Dec. 31st - Holy Hour at 11:00 pm followed by refreshments
Jan. 1st - New Year's Day Masses at 9 & 11 am and 5 pm

ARCHDIOCESAN NEWS

Up-Coming Events

Stewardship Reflection

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said this about Christmas: “Joy is the true gift of Christmas. We can communicate this joy simply: with a smile, a kind gesture, a little help, forgiveness. And the joy we give will certainly come back to us .??. Let us pray that this presence of the liberating joy of God shines forth in our lives.” Let us take that joy and share it with others; let us take that joy and change our lives and the lives of others. When we say “**Merry Christmas**” let us mean it with every fabric of our being.

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Archbishop's Annual Mass for Life

Join us as we celebrate life on Wednesday, Dec. 28, at Holy Rosary Cathedral. Rosary begins at 11:30 a.m. and Mass is at 12:10 p.m. Reception to follow in Holy Rosary Hall (donation of finger foods gratefully appreciated). “May we defend it and promote it from conception to its natural end.”

Rise Up: Called By Name

Rise Up is a conference for young adults (aged 18-35) hosted by Catholic Christian Outreach, a Canadian university student movement. If you are a young adult then you are invited to come to Rise Up. Join us from Dec. 28/16 to Jan. 1/17 at The Westin Bayshore, Vancouver. For more info visit www.cco.ca/riseup or call CCO at 613-736-1999.

Bursaries available from CHABC

The Catholic Health Association of BC will be awarding two bursaries valued at \$250 each to two 2017 graduating students who are enrolled in Catholic secondary schools, or who are members of BC or Yukon parishes and enrolled in public secondary schools, or who are home-schooled. Students are asked to submit a 500-word essay that demonstrates an awareness and understanding of the significance of **Spirituality in Health Care**. Submissions must be received on or before March 10, 2017.

Eight voices. Twelve days.

Come experience the fullness of Christmas with a concert of beautiful choral and organ music. From the sounds of Orlando Gibbons, to favourites by Sir David Willcocks, to a new carol by Thomas Hewitt Jones, join MOTET Chamber Choir and celebrate this most wonderful time of the year as we take you on a musical journey to Epiphany. Admission by donation. All ages welcome. Saturday, Dec. 31 at 2:00 p.m. at Sts. Peter & Paul Church, Vancouver

As our office is now closed for the Christmas holidays, we take this opportunity to wish each and everyone of you peace, joy and happiness this Christmas Season. May the blessings of Christmas be with you throughout the New Year 2017. We will re-open on Tuesday, Jan. 3rd.



