

The

Net

Christmas 2016

Worker



The Newsletter of
St. Peter
the Apostle Parish,
River Edge,
New Jersey

EDITOR

Pam Lobley

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Ana DiBisceglie

CONTACT INFORMATION:

pambill22@verizon.net

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

By Maureen Senzamici

The Rosary is a beautiful prayer which allows us to enter into the humanity and divinity

of our Lord. Meditations center around one of four sets of mysteries: joyful, luminous, sorrowful and glorious. The joyful mysteries are most uplifting and especially meaningful during the season of Advent when we await the birth of our Lord.

THE FIRST JOYFUL MYSTERY, the Annunciation, is described in Luke 1:26-38. In this mystery, Mary, a Jewish maiden from Nazareth pledged to be married to Joseph, was visited by the angel Gabriel. Gabriel greeted Mary by saying, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God." Gabriel then shared that Mary was to become pregnant and give birth to a son named Jesus, the Son of the Most High. Naturally, Mary was confused and questioned Gabriel as to how this could be, but she was reassured that this was God's plan. Gabriel also shared that Mary's cousin Elizabeth, older and thought to be barren, was in her sixth month. Gabriel's words concluded with the great acclamation of faith, "For nothing is impossible with God." Mary consented, "May it be done to me according to your will."

The first mystery illustrates Mary's strong role on our faith. Mary was the first to speak the words Jesus taught to His disciples, "Thy will be done." Through her words and actions, Mary

showed complete trust in God's will. This mystery also speaks to God's reverence for women for the Incarnation, the greatest event to occur in human history, happened as a result of one woman consenting to God's will.

THE SECOND JOYFUL MYSTERY, the Visitation between Mary and her cousin, Elizabeth, is described in Luke 1: 39-56. Mary "hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea", and upon hearing Mary's greeting, "the baby leapt in [Elizabeth's] womb." Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" Mary then proclaimed the Magnificat in which she joyfully reflected that her soul "magnified the Lord" and she humbly accepted her role as part of God's promise to his beloved Israel. Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months.

This second joyful mystery celebrates the wisdom of two saintly women, illustrates the value God places on human relationships and demonstrates that we serve a God of miracles. While Mary was assured by Gabriel's words, it would be natural for her to have needed someone with whom to share this event. Through the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist, was aware of Mary's role in salvation history. Indeed, we remember Elizabeth's words whenever we utter the Hail Mary. That God's power is infinite is illustrated in the fact that a maiden and a barren woman beyond her childbearing years were chosen to bear the Savior of the world and the greatest prophet.

THE THIRD JOYFUL MYSTERY, the birth of Jesus, is described in Luke 2: 1-20. A decree for a census was issued, and David, as a

descendent of Joseph, was required to return to Bethlehem. As there was no room at the Inn, Mary gave birth to the Savior of the world in a stable. Angels appeared to terrified shepherds and announced, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." The shepherds "hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in a manger." The shepherds proceeded to tell the Holy Family what they had heard of this child and praised God.

The third mystery beautifully illustrates God's love for "all the people." Jesus's birth was both humble and extraordinary. Angels proclaimed this joyful news to shepherds, who were considered to be neither learned nor rich. The shepherds left their flocks and shared what they had been told by angels. Scripture indicates, "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." We have to believe that this visit had a profound impact on Jesus for throughout His ministry, He referred to Himself as a shepherd.

THE FOURTH JOYFUL MYSTERY, the presentation, is described in Luke 1:21-38. In accordance with Jewish law, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. While there, the Holy Family was met by two prophets, Simeon and Anna. It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until seeing Christ. Upon seeing Jesus, he took him in his arms and stated, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. My eyes have seen your salvation." Simeon's words were both glorious and ominous. Simeon prophesied that Christ would be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" and also would "cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and be a sign that will be spoken against." Anna, a widow and prophetess, "gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem." Mary and Joseph "marveled at

what was said about him."

The fourth mystery illustrates that God is far more concerned with faith than He is with power. Simeon was described as "righteous and devout" and his faith allowed him to recognize the Savior in an infant of poor parents. As a widow, Anna would have been especially vulnerable in her society yet she remained faithful. Scripture indicates she "never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." Throughout His ministry, Jesus emphasized the importance of caring for the widows and orphans.

THE FIFTH JOYFUL MYSTERY, that of finding Jesus in the temple, is described in Luke 2:41-50. When Jesus was twelve years old, He and His family went to Jerusalem for the annual celebration of the Feast of Passover. Jesus "stayed behind in Jerusalem" after the feast was concluded; however, his parents did not realize this until after traveling for a full day. They returned to Jerusalem where they found Him three days later "in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers." When Jesus was questioned as to why He had acted so, he responded, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

The fifth joyful mystery provides us the only account of Jesus's childhood aside from the infancy narratives. The Bible indicates, "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers." Clearly, Jesus was aware of his divinity yet his humanity was revealed in the fact that a mistake about Christ's whereabouts, perhaps due to a parental miscommunication, had occurred. The fact that his anxious parents found him after three days in Jerusalem foreshadowed how He would rise from the dead on the third day after being crucified in the same city.

These mysteries are uplifting in joyful times and consoling during difficult periods. Remembering that the first words angels spoke to Mary and to the shepherds were, "Do not be afraid" reassures us of God's infinite love for humanity. During this season of Advent, we can pray to respond to

Christ's coming by completely trusting God as did Mary, by seeing the gift of God in another as did Elizabeth, by leaving our plans in response to God's call as did the shepherds, by being focused on God as were Anna and Simeon and by marveling at Christ as did Joseph. Finally, these joyful mysteries truly remind us of the true meaning of Christmas, that God showed His love for the world by sending a precious, vulnerable, poor infant to be one of us.

A BOUNTIFUL THANKSGIVING DINNER

Angela Davis, a parishioner here at St. Peter's, brings us this uplifting story of her Thanksgiving.

As followers of Jesus, who was undeniably the kindest, most forgiving, most compassionate man who has ever lived, we are each invited and challenged to walk in His footsteps, to model His behavior, to see others as our brothers and sisters through the eyes of Jesus. In recent readings from the Gospel of Matthew, we have been reminded that Jesus would leave 99 sheep to go to find the one lost sheep. Who are the "lost sheep" in our lives, our society? In another passage, Jesus beckons those who are "weary and carrying heavy burdens." Are not those who have been driven to immigration-weary and carrying heavy burdens? Can we as followers of the Lord lighten their burdens? The people of Thomas Jefferson Middle School decided to try.

Early on Thanksgiving morning, the school was buzzing with activity. Principal Angela Davis and Assistant Principals Nina Odatalla and newly-appointed Assistant Principal Justin Avery, in collaboration with a Teaneck District Administrator, Thomas Jefferson faculty, support staff, and family volunteers, were hosting Thanksgiving dinner for members of the local community and beyond. The food, beverages, and decorations were donated by Thomas Jefferson Middle School faculty and staff, local businesses that provided traditional American fare as well as both Kosher and Halal food. Members of the school community were

especially grateful for donations from Roman Italian Restaurant (New Milford), Balthazor Bakery (Englewood), Sammy's New Bagels (Teaneck) and Bimbo Bakeries (Totowa and Clifton). There were turkeys, chicken, ham, macaroni and cheese, salads, yams, lasagna, Kosher penne vodka, Halal turkeys and a variety of foods to honor each person's dietary restrictions and tastes. Eighth-grade science teacher, Mrs. Paulette Szalay's family, owns a turkey farm and very generously donated eight turkeys, which faculty chefs prepared and carved for their appreciative guests.

The cafeteria was beautifully decorated with lovely table settings, autumnal floral arrangements (generously donated by Eisele's Nursery and Garden Center (Oradell) and balloons – which were a huge hit with the younger children. The mood in the Thomas Jefferson cafeteria was upbeat and festive. Teaneck families and a group of Syrian families sponsored by the International Rescue Committee organization were served by volunteers. The Syrian families who attended this festive celebration had been displaced from their homes as a result of the civil war in Syria. Both Ms. Davis and Iman Charaf welcomed the all of the guests and spoke about their shared humanity. Volunteers included staff members' families, as well as Thomas Jefferson students. There was also a group of young men who are Thomas Jefferson and Teaneck High School graduates.

Through Matthew's Gospel, Jesus also reminds us that He is "gentle and humble of heart." How would He respond to those who are poor, homeless, lonely in our communities? I believe we would each agree that our world is broken in so many ways and so many places. There is war and prejudice, violence and stereotyping, misunderstandings and unwillingness to see – really see – the "other," whether or not the "other" is of the same culture, the same religion, the same worldview as that which we espouse. It is this landscape that we, as followers of Jesus, are asked to walk. And it is this landscape that administrators, faculty members and friends of

the Thomas Jefferson Middle School Community entered on Thanksgiving Day, 2016.

Because of the generosity of so many good people and the abundance of food as the day drew to a close, there were ample leftovers that we were able to donate to a local Fire Department in Teaneck who were hosting the Fire Department Battalions. We also donated fifty plates of food to the Abyssinian House in Harlem http://www.adcorp.org/websites/adc/images/Human_Services/Abby_House_11-16-14.pdf and two large bags of bread were donated to the St. Francis bread line on 31st Street in New York City. <http://www.stfrancisbreadline.org/>

Ms. Davis, her faculty, family, and friends, with many other volunteers, were grateful for the opportunity to bring about a spirit of unity and community as together they celebrated Thanksgiving, 2016. As they and we continue to strive to be the people the Lord is calling us to be, to clothe ourselves with kindness and compassion, we turn to the Lord to thank Him for calling us to walk with Him and ask Him to continue to guide us, challenge us, and walk with us.

Two Christmas Poems

(Pam Lobley)

I was looking around for a poem or two to include in this issue. I came across "Room For Me" by Lucille Crumley. I became curious about her and of course, Googled her, and that led me to another of her poems and to a wonderful Christmas website. "Mrs. T's Christmas Kitchen" is a blog that is a year round celebration of Christmas at www.mychristmaskitchen.blogspot.com. Check it out, it is full of ideas both useful and inspiring. Merry Christmas!

Room For Me

The stable wall was small.
Low was the wall.
Shepherds were there.
Kings brought jewels rare.
Animals sleeping. Angels watch keeping.
But there's room in the stable for me.

*The cross towered high.
Soldiers stood by.
Mary kneeled there.
Friends bowed in prayer.
Three mortals died. The heart of God cried.
But there's room at the Cross for me.*

The streets are narrow;
even the sparrow is counted in throngs. There
are angels with songs.
Saints of all ages, apostles and sages.
But there's room in His house for me.

Lucille Crumley

Love Tucked In

When your gifts are wrapped
And gaily ribbon tied,
Please remember to enclose
A lot of love inside.

The gift may be quite simple;
But love tucked in with care
Can change it to a priceless thing --
An offering, rich and rare.

The gift itself may soon be worn --
Its usefulness be past;
But of this you may be sure
That love tucked in will last.

Lucille Crumley

***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
From The Staff of The NetWorker***