

DECEMBER 24, 2017

Scripture Reflection

Not until 2023 will Christmas Eve again fall on the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The proximity of these two solemnities highlights the theme of today's readings---the revelation of God's mystery. The biblical word "mystery" is not about a puzzle to be solved or something impossible to understand. Rather it concerns a magnificent thing that will now be revealed in the last days to those who have faith.

In the First Reading, David desires to build a house for God, but through the prophet Nathan, God tells David that he never asked for a house and planned always to dwell among the people as he did during their desert wanderings. God promises to build a house (or a dynasty) for David and to give him a son who will be an everlasting king and whom God will treat like his own son. What astonishing favor David receives from God!

The Gospel builds upon the imagery of this David story. The angel Gabriel tells Mary that she is God's favored one and that she will give birth to a son who "will be called Son of the Most High" and who will be given "the throne of David his father" (Luke 1:32).

Mary recognized intuitively that God's longed-for salvation was beginning and that she would have a mission in its fulfillment. Her famous question, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" is more about clarity than confidence: How exactly is God going to get this done? At some point in this dialogue, Mary realized that Gabriel's message was what she had been praying for all her life. At that moment, divine grace led her mind to understand that a mysterious pregnancy was the fulfillment of her prayers. We too must be ready for an answer to our prayers. Whether we pray for ourselves or for others, all of us have longings we bring to Christ. As we complete our journey to his crib, let us trust the same grace that enlightened Mary so that we can recognize the fulfillment of those prayers.

- **God showed favor to David and to Mary. Can you name God's favor to you?**

AT HOME with the WORD 2018, Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, pg. 25. AMERICA MAGAZINE, "How Long, O Lord?" Michael R. Simone, S.J., December 1, 2017.

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Christmas Card

Holy Trinity Catholic School has enclosed a Christmas Card for Cathedral Parishioners.

Christmas Message

At Holy Trinity Catholic School, we carry Christmas in our hearts all through the year by sharing the values of respect, compassion, and service to our Blair County community. In this season of giving, we are truly thankful and humbled by the continued support of our wonderful school. Our Holy Trinity Catholic School family would like to wish you a Merry Christmas filled with peace and joy, and a very blessed New Year.

First LEGO League

We are excited to announce that Holy Trinity Catholic School has a team participating in First LEGO League. First LEGO League offers hands-on problem solving, programming experience, project based learning, real-world application of math and science concepts, along with the discovery of fun in science and technology.

STREAM Program

Through the STREAM program, students are designing their own innovative solution to a current real-life problem and engaging with their community. They are also designing, building and programming autonomous robots that perform a series of missions. Students are going to present their learning discoveries at a regional tournament in Johnstown on February 24th.

Closing and Delay Information

It is the policy of Holy Trinity Catholic School to close or delay school whenever the Altoona Area Schools are closed due to severe weather conditions. When it is necessary to close school, the announcement will be made by phone through PowerSchool Messenger, along with notification on the ACCESS channel and local TV stations. This procedure is also followed in case of delayed school openings or early dismissals due to road conditions.

Cathedral Parish Office

The Parish Office will be closed on Tuesday, December 26. Regular office hours will begin on Wednesday, December 27, from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM. Thank you.

THE CHURCH OF ALTOONA-JOHNSTOWN

THE CATHEDRAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

ONE CATHEDRAL SQUARE, ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA 16601-3315

CHURCH OFFICE: 814-944-4603

CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS:

The process of formation for those seeking God through membership in the Catholic Christian community.

INFANT BAPTISM:

Arrange in advance for pre-baptismal instructions.

CONFIRMATION:

Ninth, tenth and eleventh grade students are invited to participate in the Confirmation Preparation Process.

RECONCILIATION:

Wednesday: 7:00 PM, Saturday: 12:30 PM.

Communal Penance Services: Advent and Lent.

ANOIDING OF THE SICK:

Communal celebration Easter Season.

MARRIAGE:

Arrange nine months in advance. Couples expected to participate in pre-marriage preparation program.

DEVOTIONS:

Novena of the Miraculous Medal - Monday 7:45 AM.

Charismatic Prayer - Monday 7:00 PM.

Evening Prayer within Eucharistic Exposition -Advent and

Christmas, Lent and Easter Seasons - Sunday 6:30 PM.

Eucharistic Adoration - First Wednesday - 12:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Eucharistic Day - Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM:

September through April: Pre-Kindergarten thru 12.

Sunday morning 8:30 AM - 9:45 AM

Pre-Kindergarten thru 8.

Sunday evening 6:15 PM - 8:30 PM

Grades 9 thru 12.

WEB: WWW.ALTOONACATHEDRAL.ORG

FAX: 814-942-4337

E-MAIL: ALTCATHEDRAL@DIOCESEAJ.ORG

EUCCHARIST:

Sunday: 5:00 PM (Vigil)
8:00 AM
10:00 AM
12:00 Noon
5:00 PM

Holyday: 5:30 PM (Vigil)
8:00 AM
12:00 Noon
5:30 PM

Weekday: 6:45 AM
8:00 AM
12:00 Noon
Saturday: 8:00 AM
12:00 Noon

Most Reverend Mark L. Bartchak, Bishop

Reverend Monsignor Robert C. Mazur, Rector

Reverend Father Dennis M. Kurdziel, Parochial Vicar

CHRISTIAN INITIATION TEAM - 944-4603

CATHOLICS RETURNING HOME - 944-4603

MAIL MINISTRY TO ELDERLY, HOMEBOUND,
SERIOUSLY SICK, AND GRIEVING - 944-4603

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Web: www.holytrinitycatholic.school

Altoona Campus (Pre-K thru Grade 4) - 381-7011

Hollidaysburg Campus (Pre-K thru Grade 4) - 695-6112

Middle School Campus (Grades 5 thru 8) - 942-7835

BISHOP GUILFOYLE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Web: www.bishopguilfoyle.org - 944-4014

DIRECTORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Chris Laraia - Pre-K thru 8 - 312-7317

Jean Koury - 9 thru 12 - 949-2777

Religious Education Office: Sundays - 943-7424

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRY

Leslie C. Thayer, MM, CAGO

Music Ministry Office - 944-2044

E-mail: lthayer@dioceseaj.org

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE CITY OF ALTOONA SINCE 1851

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 24, 2017

Readings: 2 Sm 7:1-5,8-12,14,16; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38

MASS INTENTIONS

December 25, Monday: NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Sunday - 5:00 PM - Vigil

Midnight Mass

8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 12:00 Noon

NO 5:00 PM MASS

December 26, Tuesday: St. Stephen, First Martyr

Readings: Acts 6:8-10,7:54-59;Mt 10:17-22

6:45 AM No Mass

8:00 AM Leroy & Irmina Helfrich (Estate)

12:00 PM Rose & Mike Ciavarella (Jennifer Plutko)

December 27, Wednesday: St. John, Apostle & Evan.

Readings: 1 Jn 1:1-4; Jn 20:1,2-8

6:45 AM Marcella Glowgowski (M & D Hanekamp)

8:00 AM Anna Mercer (Paul & Family)

12:00 PM Billy & Patty Geis, Christmas (Family)

December 28, Thursday: The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

Readings: 1 Jn 1:5-2:2; Mt 2:13-18

6:45 AM Monsignor Thomas Madden (Estate)

8:00 AM Frances Pagliaro (M/M Joe Boito)

12:00 PM David Arnott (Larry & Stephanie Tonello)

December 29, Friday: St. Thomas Becket, Bp. & Martyr

Readings: 1 Jn 2:3-11; Lk 2:22-35

6:45 AM Dec. Michael & Ella Gibbons Fam. (Irwin Fam.)

8:00 AM Phyllis DiTosti (Joseph Dzurenko)

12:00 PM Todd Craig (Cathedral Parish)

December 30, Saturday: 6th Day Octave of the Nativity

Readings: 1 Jn 2:12-17; Lk 2:36-40

8:00 AM Elizabeth Smith, Birth. (Mary Lysinger Fam.)

12:00 PM Joe Tomlinson (Randy & Jean Koury)

Vigil: Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

Readings: Sir 3:2-6,12-14; Col 3:12-21; Lk 2:22-40

5:00 PM Nozzie & Jenny Calabrese, Christmas (Fam)

**NO 5:00 PM MASS ON MONDAY,
DECEMBER 25, CHRISTMAS DAY**

Advent of Christmas Concert - Thank You

Thank you to all who attended the Advent of Christmas Concert last Sunday afternoon. The support of our benefactors and those who contributed to the free-will offering is deeply appreciated.

Advent Evening Prayer

with Exposition and Benediction

On the Sundays of Advent and Christmas season, we will gather at 6:30 PM to pray the Hours of the Church. Families are encouraged to make this a part of their Advent and Christmas prayer. We are the Parish Family of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, and all those with a deep love of the Eucharist are invited to be present before the Sacrament in exposition on the altar. Please join us for Evening Prayer December 31, Feast of the Holy Family, at 6:30 PM.

Advent Giving

Cathedral Parish prepares baskets of food for needy families at the conclusion of Advent for the celebration of the Christmas holidays. Bins are placed at the three doors of the Cathedral to collect non-perishable food items, paper products, cleaning items, and personal care products. Please remember to bring in your donations the Sundays of Advent so we can serve the poor in our community. Paper products, laundry and cleaning products, and personal care items cannot be purchased with food stamps. Also, remember to place winter coats that are in good condition on the clothes rack located near the front doors of the Cathedral. Individuals have already contacted the Parish for heavy coats to wear throughout the upcoming winter weather.

Gifting the Cathedral Parish

As wills and insurance policies are established with your attorney, or financial advisor, remember the Cathedral Parish as a beneficiary of your estate. Perhaps you would like to direct your gift to a particular ministry or project at the Parish. Please realize that Mass Stipends go directly to fulfilling that canonical wish and do not aid the financial life of the Parish.

2018 Religious Art Calendar

Everyone is invited to take home with you the religious art calendar for 2018. The monthly pictures contained in the annual calendar are again exquisite. Please hang your calendar in a prominent place in your home for all, family and visitors, to appreciate the monthly art and the feasts and memorials of the year. The ushers will have the 2018 calendars for you at the Cathedral doors following Mass. We are grateful to Bob and Jean Jones for their gift. Jones Funeral Home has provided this annual gift for many years. Thank you!

OFFERTORY COLLECTION

Sunday, December 17, 2017 - \$8,023.00

Christian Initiation - Inquiry Sessions

Are you interested in the Catholic Church? Do you know someone who might be interested in seeking information about our Catholic faith? Today the Cathedral Christian Initiation Team will meet in the Seton Suite at 11:00 AM with all those seeking information on the Catholic Church.

Christmas Flower Memorials

Please remember to have your Christmas Flower Memorial envelope returned to the Parish Office by **Monday, December 18** to assure that your memorial will be listed in the Christmas bulletin. If you have misplaced this envelope, just place the name of your loved one on any envelope marked "Christmas Flowers."

Monthly Eucharistic Adoration

Cathedral Parish will offer our monthly adoration before the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesday, January 3, from 12:30PM until 8:00PM. Plan ahead to make time for quiet prayer before the Sacrament of Life. Please pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life from among the members of the diocesan family. Adoration is a rich opportunity for deepening our spiritual life and our relationship with the Lord.

Weekend Retreat

The Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus invite girls in grades 7-12 to a weekend retreat, Stepping Stones to Prayer, from January 12-14, 2018. The retreat will be held at Saint Joseph Convent, 1872 Munster Road, Portage. The weekend begins Friday at 6:00 PM and ends on Sunday at 1:00 PM. Please register by Wednesday, January 10 by contacting Sister Jacinta sisterjacinta@gmail.com or 814-886-4459. Meals will be provided. Suggested donation \$35.00.

Liturgical Reflection ...

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

The word of God at the time of death reminds believers of the promise of life. The biblical readings proclaim to those gathered the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and encourage the living to give witness to the Christian life. The living word of God provides those mourning the opportunity to hear God speak to them in their needs, sorrows, fears, and hopes.

Order of Christian Funerals, 1998/1989, General Introduction, Number 22.

2017, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Liturgy Office, 925 South Logan Boulevard, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania 16648.

Calendars of Prizes 2018 Are Here!

Calendars of Prizes 2018 are being sold at the Cathedral Square door after all Masses. Each calendar costs \$20.00. There is a \$10.00 daily prize; an additional \$1,000.00 in special monthly prizes awarded throughout the year; and a grand prize of \$5,000.00. Due to the state regulations for small games of chance, it is necessary that all one thousand tickets be sold. Otherwise, the parish will lose money on unsold tickets. If you have a favorite three digit number, call the Parish Office (944-4603) weekdays between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM to check on availability or stop at the Cathedral Square door after Mass. These make great Christmas gifts that last all year!

Volunteering at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Parish

Would you like to volunteer your time and talent to the Cathedral Parish but do not know how to obtain the mandatory state and diocesan clearances? Every employee and volunteer must fulfill all clearances needed from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown to participate in parish activities. Every parish and church-associated activity are required to meet these standards as we uphold our commitment to protecting God's children and youth. Cathedral Parish is offering assistance to fulfill all clearances at the Altoona Public Library on Saturday, January 13 from 9:00 AM through 1:00 PM. Free help to fill in the forms and to view the training films will be provided. The Parish will cover any costs needed for these required clearances. For more information, please call the Cathedral Parish Office at 944-4603 or Chris Laraia at 312-7317.

Please remember our sick in your prayers.