With the many political, social, and moral problems we face in our society and in our world today, the proverbial question we might be asking ourselves is “Does Christmas mean anything today?” or “Why is the original story — the baby in a manger, shepherds, wise men, angels — important, if at all? May I invite you to consider a few reasons why the original Christmas story matters?

Firstly, the Christmas story is important because it is . . .

**A Story of Hope and Survival**

The world Jesus was born into was one of great pain and oppression. Rome ruled. Corrupt tax collectors burdened the people; it was far from a perfect world! But then, why would Jesus come into a perfect world? Why would a perfect world need a Savior? In the midst of social and cultural challenges, the Christmas story offers us hope and encouragement toward survival, hope of new life linked to someone greater than ourselves.

Secondly, the Christmas story is important because it is . . .

**A Story of a Family**

Christmas is a time for family gatherings, especially here at St Josephs. We gather here not only once or twice a year but every Sunday to reconnect through our social and spiritual stories. No matter how technical our world may become, we still need to connect to people and to our faith. Joseph and Mary had their share of family challenges, and so do we. With God’s help, Jesus’ family overcame major obstacles. And so can our family.

Thirdly, the Christmas story is important because it is . . .

**A Story of Love**

Jesus’ followers taught that His conception and birth were part of a divine plan to bring us genuine peace, inner freedom, and self-respect. Jesus explained, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). We are now part of the greatest love story ever told! Our family here at St Joseph’s has done an extraordinary job in bringing that love to others in your involvement here every Sunday and in the many ministries in which you are involved in.

Perhaps you are becoming aware of the importance of the Christmas story in your own life. I hope you can celebrate this Christmas knowing you are a member of His family here at St Joseph’s; that as we come together as a faith community to celebrate our Lord’s birth, we once again show the world that this event is still, and always will be, meaningful.

From home to home and heart to heart, from one place to another, may the warmth and joy of Christmas bring us closer to each other. On behalf of all the staff here at St Joseph’s Catholic Church and School, I’d like to wish you, your family, and your friends a blessed and holy Christmas.

Father Mike
A Journey into the Homeless Outreach Ministry

What a year it has been, and I certainly couldn't have done it alone. It has been a year of faith and thanks for the many partners who have helped to enrich the lives of our homeless brothers and sisters in downtown Jacksonville. I became a Catholic this year after completing the R.C.I.A. class at St Joseph's. My first course of action, after I was enrolled in the class, was to find a place within the church or community where the Lord could best use the talents He has given me. I saw two sentences in the bulletin about a meeting for homeless outreach around January. I was unable to attend the meeting, due to my work schedule, and inquired how I could become involved, only to learn that the program was suspended due to need for both a location and a director. Over the course of the next few weeks, my heart was heavily burdened about this reality. How could we not continue this ministry? What does this say to our homeless community about our witness for God? Our Lord's commandment found in John 13:34 to “... love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” kept playing over and over in my mind. God would not leave me alone.

As part of our progression through the R.C.I.A. process, we were asked to choose a saint's name for our Easter Vigil service and acceptance into the church. I was eagerly awaiting this date and my first Eucharistic celebration. It took no thought at all as to which saint I most related to: Saint Francis of Assisi. The prayer of St Francis says, “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy...” Imagine, for a moment, the lives of our homeless community and how much despair, doubt, sadness, and darkness they encounter each and every day. Not only do we offer food for the body, we also offer the love of God and food to nourish the spirit by both word and deed as part of this outreach ministry. The discontinuation of this program was not an option. God laid this on my heart for a reason, and I knew He must know what He was doing. I knew I had to act. I approached the previous directors and Deacon Chris about taking on this project myself. I had a crash course on the prior workings of the outreach and I was off and running, and PRAYING most of all.

God knew my heart and my intent, and He was off and running, too! With the assistance of many hands, we had a new location secured by Holy Thursday and had scheduled the resurgence of the outreach ministry to begin April 20 – what a whirlwind. What a wonderful gift God gave me for my entrance into the church at Easter Vigil as a new Catholic! He would also work through our ministry to give additional gifts to our brothers and sisters downtown. There are many hands involved in the completion of a single outreach each month. We have members of our own church with whom I work hand-in-hand. There are others I may never know, who pray for us and donate anonymously. Other fellow Christians and deacons join us from St Justin Martyr Orthodox Church. Most importantly, we have the hand of God.

It never ceases to amaze me how many times, during the preparation of each event, a wrinkle of one sort or another will arise; however, I continue to have faith that this ministry is truly meant to be, and God always finds a way behind the scenes. I recall one specific month we were extremely low on food donations. Quite unexpectedly, at the last minute, a ladies group decided they would donate sandwiches, eggs, snacks, and fruit in quantities exceeding our regular needs. The homeless community ate quite well that weekend. The donations were always unexpected to me, and I never knew from what source the food would come, but God knew. Speaking of food donations, I retrieve bakery donations at 10:00 p.m. on the Friday night before our outreach each month from the Reedy Branch Publix. Those pastries and baked goods are always a treat, as they are not a regular staple. Nigel, the bakery manager, is a kind and good-hearted man, and is happy to assist me with the project each month. There was one particular week in which a circumstance beyond his control arose, causing donations to be unavailable to us. Before he called me, he worked tirelessly behind the scenes to find a substitute bakery manager to help me and make baked goods available because he felt so strongly about our cause. Nigel called to give me the news and the alternate store location close by. God touches so many, without me even knowing it, to continue this program.

I remember praying for two days about the rainy season approaching and how much I would love to provide rain ponchos to each person who visits us downtown. We had received few donations after requests had been made, and I certainly did not have the funds to do this myself. Then, I received an unexpected email regarding the Vacation Bible...
School. They had been collecting funds and had been studying Exodus. The Jews had been homeless in the desert and God had provided. The children elected to donate their funds this year to the Homeless Outreach in honor of this year’s studies. I had already found the appropriate ponchos online, and guess how much money I received from VBS? You guessed it – enough to cover the cost of the rain ponchos if I contributed only six dollars! Another answered prayer . . . and the ponchos arrived in time for the next distribution downtown. This was the only time to date where it was sprinkling rain at the time we arrived, so the ponchos went to immediate use.

In July, when we delivered the ponchos, we received a large number of requests for cloth bags. This would become my next project. Before I could even get the first notice in the bulletin, I received a lovely cash donation from the Council of Catholic Women at St Joseph’s, covering not only the cloth bags, but also toothpaste for each person that month; donations for the latter item had been lower than usual. Another answer to prayer, and it was delivered to the folk downtown the very next month!

God continues to lay need on the hearts of folks behind the scenes, followed by the urgency to act. They help in ways that can only be imagined! I can’t do it all myself and, quite frankly, I wouldn’t, even if I could. Why not? Because I would be depriving others of a blessing God has for them and an opportunity to serve and to fulfill His commandment, “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” What we do for the least of these, we do for Christ. The homeless community is certainly viewed as the least of these. To many people, they are the forgotten, the invisible, the useless, the burdensome, an inconvenience, a blight on society, and even dangerous. To God, they are still His children and worthy of His Son’s death. Who are we to judge? But for the grace of God, any one of us could be right there in the same situation.

The stories of the homeless people downtown are not always what you might expect. Yes, there are those who have succumbed to substance abuse, but there are others with different stories. There are some who are mentally challenged and, for one reason or another, they do not fit into the current system of government help. There are others who have lost their homes due to current, unforeseen, economic circumstances they never thought possible and are living in their vehicles. Others have suffered abuse, and their self-esteem is so low they feel there is no way out. I can tell you, we constantly hear “thank you” and “God bless you for coming here each month.” When I serve the baked goods and ask them to grab a plate and napkin, some are ashamed to do so, as they say they are too dirty, and would I mind handing them one instead as they would hate to touch it and accidentally get anything of mine dirty. When I tell them I don’t mind at all, and they are welcome to choose their plates and select whatever items they would like me to serve them, the smiles on their faces followed by, “Are you sure?” makes it all worth it. What a blessing it is now, as their trust in me has developed, to have them come up to me with a specific need or struggle and ask me to pray with them right there.

You see, you can’t imagine what power words and actions of simple kindness do for someone’s self-worth. We are social creatures and long to be accepted. By our acceptance of them through such a simple act, we open a door to show them how God accepts them and sent His Son to die for them, even as they are. It’s such a miracle and a humbling experience. The action of serving someone in a situation which we cannot begin to imagine unless we have walked in their shoes, places so much into perspective, and then causes us to act on those revelations daily. It’s not the possessions, talents, or the extra time we have, but what we do with them that make us who we are for God, and those acts glorify Him.

Mark Twain said, “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born, and the day you find out why.” The “why” for us as Christians is to love others as Christ has loved us. Find every opportunity to make the most of that commandment and the area within the church or the community where God leads you to apply your gifts and your talents to glorify Him and to love others. If that place is the Homeless Outreach Ministry, I would welcome you with open arms. If not, may God bless you in whatever area He may lead you.

In Christ,
Melanie Poyer
Catholic Men! Most of us, myself included, have walked by the Knights table in the gathering space or on the patio, attempting to avoid eye contact with the guys who are pushing membership in the Knights of Columbus. Our reasons (or excuses) vary, but often revolve around another time commitment to complicate our lives. I had the honor several years ago of being a charter member of a Council in Erie, Pennsylvania, and transferred my membership when we moved to Jacksonville in 2012. It’s one of the best things I ever did.

The name of the organization confuses some people. The Knights of Columbus was founded for Catholic men in 1882 by Father Michael J. McGivney in New Haven, Connecticut. Father McGivney recognized the need to provide for families of the deceased, which was common due to the lack of work safety rules we take for granted today. In the beginning, Father McGivney and his fellow Knights “passed the hat” to benefit widows and orphans. He also wanted to prevent Catholic men from entering secret societies whose membership was markedly anti-Catholic. Father McGivney was declared Venerable in 2008, the first step to sainthood.

Today, the good works of the Knights are guided by four Principles:

- **CHARITY**: Our Catholic faith teaches us to “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Members of the Knights of Columbus participate in community activities such as food drives, Special Olympics, and Respect Life drives. There is no better way to experience love and compassion than by helping those in need, a call we answer every day. Last year, the Knights’ individual Knights gave a total of 10 million hours of their time to local endeavors.

- **UNITY**: Knights know that we can accomplish far more as a group than any of us could individually, so we stick together and support one another. That doesn’t mean we always agree or there is never a difference of opinion. It does mean we count on the support and encouragement of our brother Knights as we work to make life better in our parish and community.

- **FRATERNITY**: The Venerable Michael J. McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus, in large part, to provide assistance to the widows and children left behind when the family breadwinner died – often prematurely. He created a fraternal organization that has become a top-rated insurer as an integral part of the Knights.

- **PATRIOTISM**: The Knights are active in many other countries, including Canada, Mexico, Cuba, the Philippines, Poland, and many others, but the Order emphasizes the importance of being patriotic citizens. They believe in devotion to God and country, and in standing up for both.

Since the founding in 1882, the primary mission of the Knights has been to protect families from the financial ruin caused by the death of the breadwinner. From that humble start, the Order has grown to include top-rated life insurance, long-term care insurance, and retirement products. Personally, I worked for 40 years for a major insurer in the northeast which had a life insurance affiliate. The cost, benefits, availability, and (best of all) low pressure of the Knights’ own trained agents, however, convinced me that their life insurance products were clearly superior. In fact, if you’re considering long-term care insurance, the Knights’ program is unmatched. Knights’ Life is top rated by insurance rating organizations, and cash values are enhanced by regular payment of dividends. It is the best and largest insurer you’ve never heard of.

A concrete example of the attitude and work of the Knights occurred in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. On September 12, the very next day, the Knights established a $1 million Heroes Fund. Checks for $3,000 were presented to the families of all full-time professional law enforcement, firefighter, and emergency medical personnel who lost their lives at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Member or not, Catholic or not, believer or not, all received checks, mostly hand-delivered.

Please call Grand Knight Frank Johnston at (904) 910-4689 or Membership Director Damien Gauthier at (251) 406-9114. It is a conversation that will cost you nothing, and one you will never regret.
A Special Christmas Eve

Every Christmas season, our volunteers look forward to helping make not only Christmas day very special, but also the entire Christmas season for all of the people we serve. There is very special warmth in the hearts of mostly everyone during this time of year. Each year, I am reminded of a very special time in my life when my parents taught all of us the true meaning of Christmas. It is a story that is very close to my heart, yet I know that just about everyone reading this has a similar story, for Christmas is a very special time of year, and our hearts are overflowing with God's love. Stories like the one you are about to read are plentiful because the birth of Jesus brings us all an exquisitely simple message of love and hope.

It was Christmas Eve morning. Mom and I were in the Kitchen cooking. We were preparing a dish to take to my grandparents' house that evening. Christmas Eve was a very busy time at our house. We used the morning hours to make a birthday cake for Jesus. All of the children took part in the preparation, baking and icing of this cake. Mom and I, and my sister, Kathy, helped Mom prepare the food we would take to our grandparent's home. And then, all of us had an especially fun time – we trimmed the Christmas tree. After our visit to our grandparents, we all went to midnight Mass. When we came home, all five of us fell into bed, and Santa came for a visit. This particular year was a little different.

My Mom and Dad loved our friends and tried to make them feel at home in our house. On this Christmas Eve, my brother invited his best friend, Jimmy, to help us trim the tree. Dad was in the room with the children telling stories and asking everyone how they felt about the coming of Christmas. I walked into the room and found Jimmy sitting on Dad's lap, his face filled with tears and his voice very soft. “What’s wrong?” I asked. Dad replied, “Everything is going to be fine.” He told me he would need my help, and he would talk to me a little later.

When Dad walked into the kitchen, I could see the determination on his face. “Helen,” he said to my Mom, “We have to do something about Jimmy and his family.” It seems that Jimmy told my dad that his family wasn't going to celebrate Christmas this year. Jimmy’s dad was out of work, and there was just not enough money. Dad said, “I will go out and find a tree; the rest of you, do your best to make this Christmas special for all of them.” This meant my mother would go into her favorite mode of helping others, and showing her children what the spirit of Christmas was all about.

It only took a few hours for the plans to be made and everything put in place. Dad did indeed find a tree. It was beautiful. Dad told us that the man at the Christmas tree yard found it after he was told the story of Jimmy's family. We knew there was no need for decorations because Jimmy's family always had a beautiful display every year. Mom gave each child an early present and told them that Santa wanted us to share them this year. And so, without even looking, each one of my brothers and sisters gently removed the gift card and rewrote another to make sure Jimmy and his siblings would each have a toy. My two-year-old brother, Dave, helped my other brother and sisters build a huge plate of Christmas cookies, and Mom covered the party casserole she had just taken out of the oven so we could take it to our neighbors.

We waited until it was dark. Then Mom, Dad, my sister, Kathy, and I quietly went across the street and left everything on Jimmy's porch. Mom left a note telling the family she would be bringing a Christmas meal the next day. All of us prepared to go to my grandparents for an evening of fun and celebration. “Wait!” my brother Rick shouted, “I'll be right back.” Rick ran into the basement, while all of us waited in the car. Soon he came out carrying an old Nativity Set. It was a bit worn and weary. “Mom, Dad,” he shouted, “We can't let them celebrate without the reason for it all.” So we climbed out of the car, and Mom and Dad did their very best to spruce it up. In the end, it looked beautiful. We placed it with the other gifts and went on to our celebration. I remember that Christmas because it taught me how sometimes we forget what Christmas is truly about. Gifts are only a small part of it. It is the message, “I love you,” that is its true meaning.

At Mandarin Food Bank, we try to make the holidays special for all of our clients. We have a small army of men, women, and children who show up at each holiday giveaway day to help make the day special for our clients. But that is only the tip of the generosity. We have dedicated donors who conduct food drives; purchase turkeys; donate gift cards, food, and money; or take angels from a tree to help their fellow neighbors. Men come from the Rotary Club and the Knights of Columbus. Students come to serenade us and carry baskets. Our food bank volunteers prepare hundreds of baskets, bags of produce and bread and sweets, as well as serve coffee and hot chocolate and cookies to those who wait in line. Our Christmas Giveaway Day is filled with joy!

This Christmas Season, please share your own Christmas giving story with your family and friends. We are very grateful for all you do to help us make the season special for the needy neighbors we serve. God Bless you all. We wish you a most joyous Christmas and a New Year filled with peace.
A Picture Speaks a Thousand Words

By Thomas Meyung
Charitable Arts Ministry

Art has traced the story of life beginning with the crude drawings etched by the earliest of man on stones and walls of caves. Over the centuries, it was refined by the masters to become a detailed history of creation and understandable to all without the need for words.

One might say the Catholic Church, although not yet established, was foretold by the prophets when they spoke of the coming of Jesus Christ. The various forms of art have created a picture-history of the church, beginning with the birth of Christ, His life, His death, and His final ascension into Heaven. The history of the Catholic Church, as depicted by the past masters, not only describes the life of Christ, but also His Holy Family, His angels, the saints and all of God’s creations.

One morning, while placing some of my artwork in the garage, I realized my God-given talent was not being shared with others but was being stored away for no one to see. I thought, this is not what God intended, and it was at this time the idea to establish an Art Ministry occurred to me. After discussing the idea with my wife, I spoke with Father Chris Hoffman, pastor of Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church located in Port Orange, Florida, and explained to him my idea of establishing a ministry of art and some of the reasons I felt such a ministry would honor God’s request we perform acts of charity for those in need. Father Chris welcomed the idea and, with his approval, the first Charitable Arts ministry was formed.

Once the ministry was established and active for eleven months, a silent auction Art Show was presented to the parish members on Advent Sunday, December 2, 2012. Of the 134 works of art donated by ministry artists, 52 were sold before and after the three Sunday Masses. The proceeds were donated to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. In addition to the Art Show, many of the 34 ministry members donated their time and talent to complete the refurbishing of the outside Stations of the Cross by taking down the Stations; cleaning, repainting, and sealing them; and overseeing the re-hanging of each in time for the Forty Days of Lent.

One of the ministry members who winters down here in Florida approached me and expressed her desire to establish an Art Ministry in her home parish located up north, and asked me if it would be alright to name the ministry the same as the one at Our Lady of Hope Church. I thought it was a great idea and expressed to her, maybe someday, a Charitable Arts Ministry would be established at many more Catholic Churches since there will now be two such ministries.

Upon moving from Port Orange and returning to Jacksonville and St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, my first priority was contacting Father Dan after being away for the past ten years. After meeting with him and being up-dated on the past and new constructions which are now part of the parish, I expressed my desire to establish an Art Ministry at Saint Joseph’s. After explaining what the ministry will do and how it fulfills our obligation to perform charitable acts for the less fortunate, Father Dan gave his approval to establish the third Charitable Arts Ministry.

The purpose and intent of these ministries is for artists to share their talent for all to enjoy and to perform works of charity by donating their works of art in order to raise money for those in need. The proceeds will be donated to a Saint Joseph’s Catholic Church charity or other Catholic charity.

In addition to supporting charitable causes, the ministry members also donate their time and talent to the repair and refurbishment of art items on the church property. The first such project completed by the ministry members, with help from two members of the Knights of Columbus, was the repair and repainting of all the saint garden signs located on the main church grounds.

The ministry’s first effort to raise money will be in conjunction with the CCW Fashion Show, in which ministry members, if they wish, will have the opportunity to display their art in the Main Church gathering area or outside, weather permitting.

The Charitable Arts Ministry is open to all artists, be they beginners, amateurs, or professionals. The type of art medium includes painting, pottery, ceramics, sculpturing, jewelry, and stained-glass art.

For more information or to become a member, contact Tom Meyung at (904) 403-1058.
Parish Medical Mission Update . . .

In the ten years our parish has been involved in medical missions to Honduras, our medical professional parishioners and parishioner helpers have served the health needs of many poor people in Honduras, especially in the poor mountain villages of the Yoro Province. By the time we return home from Honduras on February 9, 2014, we will have given health care to over 23,000 poor people in those ten years. Praise God!

This coming mission journey to Honduras will be ten days, starting on Friday, January 31. Once again, we have been asked to extend our humanitarian mission work by visiting a poor village on the coast which is in dire need of health care, especially for babies and mothers. Our medical team gives health and dental care in the villages to over 400 people daily, and sometimes we help over 600 poor people in one day. After two days at the coast, we will once again go to the mountain province of Yoro. With God’s help, we have made much progress in improving the health care of the poor people in the over 45 rural villages we have served over the years in various parts of Honduras.

On these yearly missions, we need more medical professionals and non-medical helpers to join our teams. You do not need to speak Spanish to join our team. Please refer to the 2013 Easter Edition and the 2013 Participation Sunday Edition of Reflections for complete mission information.

We also need the help of other ministers to continue our efforts in this medical mission work. Over 75% of the Honduran population live in great poverty. Please pray for them. The need is great for good health care in Honduras, and we are happy to be a part in God’s plan to help our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

One wonderful ministry assisting us is our very own CCW. They collect toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste for our medical mission. Other SJCC ministries make rosaries for us to give to the poor. Many parishioners donate money to help us buy medicines for the poor people of Honduras. We thank everyone for their help. Without your help, we could not have a mission. You are indeed our faithful “at-home” missionaries. We thank God for your efforts and ask Him to bless you.

We desperately need a ministry to donate new reading glasses, as we distribute over 600 pair per mission. The older people need these glasses to read their Bibles and prayer cards, sew, mend fishing nets, and make repairs to the few items they own.

Your continued prayers that our Parish Medical Mission team will be blessed by God with time, talent, and treasure from our “at-home” missionaries is vital! YOU can join our team by sending us forth with donations and prayers. It is not too late to join us for this upcoming mission. Call Greg today for more info at 904-262-0002.

Currently, proceeds from our fund raising for our upcoming 2014 medical mission are down from past years. We have reached 50% of our goal of $10,000. We need your help! Our goal each year is to raise $10,000 through donations to buy much needed, vital medicines for the poor people. Can you help us now? Our need for funds is great, so please consider helping the poor children and adults of Honduras. Each medical mission to Honduras costs about $25,000 including the $10,000 for the medicines.

Please pray for us and our medical mission. If you are able to assist with any donations, please contact Greg Hemsoth at ghemsoth@comcast.net or 904-262-0002. You may also mail a check made payable to: Friends of the Missions, Inc., 2643 Tacito Trail, Jacksonville, FL 32223. “Friends” is a 501 (c) (3) Not-For-Profit group, and your donation is tax deductible. You will receive a thank you letter for tax purposes and a Mass will be said for you. Thank you, in advance, for helping us.

Has anyone in Honduras prayed for you and your intentions? We do that daily for the people who send us donations. Any amount is welcome, and it is only used to buy medicines for the poor people. Our average donation is $35, so we need another 150 people donating $35 each for us to have enough to buy all the medicines we need.

We also offer sponsorships for our mission. To sponsor the entire mission, the donation amount is $2,500. To sponsor one day of the mission, the amount is $500. Perhaps your company, community group, or ministry would like to sponsor part of our humanitarian medical mission. You may select the day you want, starting January 31 through February 9. We love praying for our donors and sponsors.

Our team will be commissioned as missionaries at the noon Mass on January 12 by Fr. Mike and Dcn. Chris. We invite all of you to attend, as we are officially sent forth to serve the Lord by serving His poor people.

If you have any questions, please contact Greg soon as we are finalizing our plans for this medical mission to Honduras. Please note, we are still accepting medical professionals, dentists and nurses for our mission team. Our last team meeting will be held Sunday, January 12, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Cody Center. You’re welcome to come, ask questions, and get involved with helping people in a poor, third-world country to receive better health care.

Thank you for your caring hearts and for helping the Lord to do His work with the poor people, our brothers and sisters in Jesus, the Christ. Gracias for your help!
Hello fellow parishioners. My name is Tanya Wood. I am restarting the Kateri Circle ministry here at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church. St. Kateri Tekakwitha, also known as Lily of the Mohawks, was the first Native American saint! She is considered the patron saint of people who love nature and work to preserve the environment. St. Kateri was canonized on October 21, 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI, and her Feast Day is celebrated every July 14.

The Kateri Circle is a gathering of parish members trying to emulate the life of St. Kateri through spiritual, social, and educational means. Our first meeting was this past November. Because we are starting small, we meet every other month for just one hour. We will have gathering events throughout the year between meetings. I would like to have an Elders Story Time for one of our social gatherings, so I am in need of Elders to share their stories.

Membership is open to all persons and families, Indian and Non-Indian, who will work toward the group’s objective.

People from neighboring parishes are also welcome.

I am an Oneida Indian, and my reservation is located in Oneida, Wisconsin (next to Green Bay). I am originally from Oneida, New York. My father served as Chairman (Chief) for the Oneida people for two terms. My desire is to continue learning the traditions and way of life of my native people and to live as a Catholic. My hopes are, through this group, we may grow in our faith and knowledge and, therefore, deepen our love and awareness of our heritage, culture, and beliefs.

For more information about this ministry, please contact me at smtwood@aol.com or 904-237-1579. Please check the St. Joseph’s weekly bulletin for upcoming events.

The Red Mass was held in Immaculate Conception Church in downtown Jacksonville, October 22, 2013, with Bishop Felipe J. Estévez presiding. At this twenty-fourth annual Red Mass of the Diocese of St. Augustine, Father Michael Morgan was presented the award for Law and Spirituality for 2013 by the president of The Catholic Lawyers Guild. This is a very high honor from the lawyers and government workers in Jacksonville. Congratulations Father Mike.

The St. Joseph’s Choir, with Frank Deprosopo directing, sang the Mass and looked quite stunning in their red attire.

Congratulations Father Mike!
Respect-Life Committee News

**LIFE CHAIN** – About thirty-five people braved the drizzly, steamy weather to join us for the Life Chain on Sunday afternoon October 6. This is considerably less than we have had in previous years, but we were competing with the Fall Festival and the threat of rain. Father Morgan and Bishop Estévez joined us on the sidewalk while we prayed the Rosary, and Deacon Chris Supple presided over prayers at Eucharistic Adoration in the school’s chapel. We prayed fifteen decades of the Rosary out at the street and prayed and sang in the physical presence of Our Lord in the chapel. We closed the event with Benediction and a blessing from Deacon Chris.

Life Chain is a national event with several locations here in Jacksonville. It is primarily a public demonstration to awaken the conscience of the people, but for us it tends to be more of a spiritual event.

**MARCH FOR LIFE, Saint Augustine** – The March for Life Saint Augustine 2014 will take place Saturday, January 18. This annual event is the largest pro-life demonstration in the southeast and draws thousands of pro-life supporters from all over Florida and parts of Georgia. For an event like this to really touch people’s hearts, we need each of you out there to swell the ranks and to make a powerful pro-life statement. The Respect-Life Committee challenges every St. Joseph’s ministry, club, prayer group, and CRHP team to come as a group and help represent our parish. We will meet behind Prince of Peace Church on the Mission Nombre De Dios grounds at 11:00 a.m. Look for our large banner. Please contact us at the number below for more information. Look to the bulletin for more information as the event draws near.

**SATURDAY MORNINGS** – The St. Joseph’s Respect-Life Committee peacefully prays in front of the All Women’s Health Center at 4331 University Boulevard South every Saturday morning from 8:00 until 9:00 a.m. Our presence on the sidewalk is the last chance to change a mother’s mind and to save both her and her unborn baby. And, it does happen. Recently, we had a lady with two small children in her car stop and tell us she had planned to have an abortion several years ago, but when she arrived at the clinic, she saw us there with our signs and decided she could not go through with it. She thanked us profusely before driving away. If you would like join us, and perhaps save someone’s life, meet us out on the side walk or contact us and we can arrange to meet at the church and car-pool to the site.

**STAND FOR LIFE, January 22, 2014** – Come join Catholics United for Life in a peaceful protest against the 1973 Roe v Wade decision which legalized abortion. This annual demonstration takes place from noon until 1:00 p.m. at the Federal Courthouse, 300 N. Hogan Street, and draws several hundred people from parishes throughout the diocese. For over ten years, the St. Joseph’s Respect-Life Committee has been very well represented. If you care to join us, we will meet in front of the main church at 11:00 a.m. to car-pool to the Skyway station on Kings Avenue; from there we ride the tram, which is free now, across the river to the front of the courthouse. It takes a little longer getting there and back, but parking is easy and it is a pleasant ride across the river.

Many Stand for Life participants choose to attend a 10:30 a.m. Mass at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church and then walk a quarter mile to the courthouse from there.

The Respect-Life Update is a free monthly newsletter. If you would like to subscribe contact the committee at tookernc@att.net or call Russ and Carron Tooke at 268-3349.
I was reading the book of Tobit and came across the familiar passage where Tobias and the angel, Raphael, were setting out on their journey. The last sentence of the verse reads “... and the young man’s dog was with them” (Tobit 5:16, RSV). Later in the story, as Raphael and Tobias were running ahead of their party on their return to Tobias’ home, we are told, “... and the dog went along behind them” (Tobit 11:4, RSV). After being mentioned twice, one would expect there to be some significance to the dog but, after exhaustively researching the subject (I googled it), I’m sorry to report there appears to be no credible explanation for the critter.

My wife and I always laugh when we read these verses and have come to refer fondly to the book of Tobit as, “A Boy and His Dog.” Some commentators suggest the inclusion of the dog is to add color or even credibility to the story, but why should the author be concerned with adding ancillary color to a story already fairly technicolored? The writer serves up danger, intrigue, heroism, love, exorcism, and metaphysical combat – what color could a dog possibly add? (An odor maybe, but not color.) As far as credibility, it is hard to imagine the writer of divinely inspired scripture depending on a dog to make the story more believable. Why not Tobias’ mother reminding him to take along his good staff and pack an extra tunic, or his father suggesting the travelers stick to well-traveled paths and beware of giant malevolent fish in the Tigris River?

Most commentaries I found online either assign no particular significance to the pooch or ignore it altogether. One protestant commentator, despite rejecting the book as uncanonical, nevertheless felt compelled to comment on it. He suggested the dog is simply a carryover from an earlier folktale or perhaps, in some way, represents the persistent nature of man’s sins. That, of course is ridiculous. If a dog was going to represent anything it would be trust and loyalty – not sin. If Tobias had a cat, well then maybe.

Speaking of canine trust and loyalty, when we were young, my sister, Patty, and I were enlisted to feed our neighbor’s chickens while he was out of town. Accompanied by our family dog, Candy, we strolled over to the house and up the side stairs to the second story porch where the chickens were penned up. When we opened the cage, one of the chickens, seeking to be feral, suddenly shot out past us and flew over the porch railing into the yard below, her beady little chicken eyes fixed on the sanctuary of the woods beyond. In desperation, one of us (I’ll say it was Patty – funnier that way) shouted out, “Get her Candy!” The dog instantly followed the chicken off the porch. The hang time before the plunge was probably sufficient for Candy to begin doubting the wisdom of unquestioned trust and loyalty. She hit ground with a solid thud, flattening out spread-eagled, reminiscent of Wile E. Coyote. We just knew she was dead but, with the resilience found only in mutts and drunks, she scrambled to her feet and tore off after the hen. It was probably unreasonable for us to have assumed our dog would calmly run down the stairs to pursue and harmlessly capture the bird but, in the heat of the chase, the stairs were forgotten and, after a fall like that, Candy was in no mood for harmlessly capturing.

Okay, so the dog and the chicken anecdote was completely irrelevant, but I’m trying to fill out a page here. Anyway, Tobias’ dog, for a supposedly bit player in the biblical drama, manages to be copiously represented in religious art. Nearly every painting depicting Tobias and Raphael has a rather goofy looking mongrel tagging along, waiting for somebody to toss a ball, drop a bit of food on the ground, or sic it on an errant chicken. Yes, the dog has not only been immortalized in art but has worked its way into modern culture. “Toby” continues to be one of the most common names for a dog. Considering dogs were not particularly esteemed by the ancient Hebrews, I’m not sure if either Tobit or Tobias would have been flattered.

Like every other serious biblical commentator, I concur there was probably no particular reason for the dog’s cameo appearance. Perhaps this is just the way things happened and the author was trying to be thorough in describing events as he recalled them. The dog was there and therefore gets a mention. Whatever the reason for his appearance, I’m fond of dogs and I’m glad he’s there.
Christmas as Aunt Ine’s

Young Adeline Smith was the epitome of an Aztec artist. She could decorate any room beautifully. Born May 1, 1863, in a small backwoods town in Florida called Anthony, she grew up with the knowledge of showing respect to her elders and employers. Though this young girl was very poor, her persona exemplified the Golden Rule: to treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. If asked to scrub baseboards, she did; rake a million leaves, she did; pick an extra bushel of peas, she did; wash the small children, she did, and with a song in her heart. In return, her “white lady” would give Adeline very decorative items to beautify her humble home.

Adeline never had electricity nor running water. What she had was a great love for Christ and a strong will of permitting Him to live in her heart. She loved to cook and share with others. As a young adult, Adeline married a man named William Jackson, whose personality was so determined he was nicknamed Napoleon. They had four children together. After the misfortune of losing her daughter, Julia (my maternal grandmother), she raised my mother from a newborn.

Adeline’s big heart earned her admiration from the less fortunate. They knew they could depend on her for support. A descendant of the South-Carolinian Cherokee, she was a maven of herbal arts. Many people came to her for medicinal healings. Due to Adeline’s generosity, the people of her small community dubbed her as “Aunt Ine,” an endearing nickname for someone so cherished.

Though this great benevolent spirit of hers lasted year-round, nothing brought it out more than the Christmas season. She simply lived by the Golden Rule.

Her well-to-do employers constantly gifted her with laced table cloths; baroque shelf cloths; porcelain trinkets consisting of Christmas Santa’s, a small nativity scene, and cherubic children playing on a sled; as well as the lovely oriental chimes on the front porch. Mother recalled, dancing with the wind from the many trees.

To prepare for the Christmas season, Adeline’s husband, William, carefully selected a new pine tree for decorating and, after nailing a board cross-stand underneath, the children were free to decorate with colorful ornaments (given and home/school made) and, for the final touch, yards and yards of pretty ribbons.

Adeline deliberately waited until Christmas Eve to make the front-door wreath. She carefully selected a small branch from each tree in their backyard and arranged them, intertwined with ribbons, on a circular wire. The fresh smell of the large pine-tree wreath and the succulent dinner menu, along with home baked cakes, pies, and cookies, greeted all family and guests on Christmas Day. Everyone eagerly anticipated Christmas at Aunt Ine’s! Then, every January, Mother removed the wreath ribbons for her hair.

Mother described Adeline as a woman who enjoyed serving those less fortunate, despite her own lot in life. Like Jesus, who came to earth to comfort the poor, my great grandmother found it important to nurture others the best she could. She exemplified the spirit of Christ; the spirit of giving throughout the entire year.

Merry Christmas.
Happy and Prosperous 2014.
Love and Peace.

The Pill or Trust

By Russ Tooke

Last year, a Jacksonville woman died unexpectedly from a blood clot following routine plastic surgery. The family is suing the physicians involved, claiming the doctors knew the woman was using oral contraceptives. The lawsuit claims it is well known by medical practitioners that oral contraceptives increase the risk of fatal blood clots, and standard medical practice dictates oral contraceptive use be discontinued four weeks prior and two weeks following elective surgery. Apparently, in this young woman’s case, she was not advised to discontinue hormonal oral contraceptive use prior to surgery.

Okay, so, if you are going to undergo surgery, you should stop taking the pill four weeks before and two weeks after surgery. That may be fine for elective surgery but how about someone who is popping these pills and then finds herself faced with emergency surgery, from an accident or some other urgent medical need. How safe is the pill then?

Several woman’s websites, including Planned Parenthood and Teen Magazine, typically start right off saying that “the pill is safe” and then list a wide range of possible but “unlikely” side effects. A fourteen-year-old reader wrote Teen Magazine asking if birth control pills were dangerous and was told that the pill is safe for most women. They did warn against blood clots, migraines, and cancer but suggested the pill may actually be helpful for some health problems. They recommended the young lady consult her doctor. Of course, there was no suggestion that maybe this child seek guidance from her parents, or maybe she should not have being sex at fourteen.

The National Institute of Health reports an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and blood clots, but, they argue, pregnancy carries higher risks of these conditions than any hormonal contraceptive currently on the market. The NIH warns women should carefully weigh the threat of pregnancy against the risks of contraception. What is not explained, but should be obvious, is a pregnant woman is typically under fairly close medical observation and may only be at risk for a short time. A woman taking contraceptives may, at best, see her doctor annually and is usually exposed to the health risks of contraceptives for many years.

Despite the possible health risks of contraception, which is very much down-played by government agencies and the medical industry, there is a more serious reason to not contracept. Pope Paul VI knew what he was talking about when he wrote Humanae Vitae. Contraception profanes the sacred gift of sexual intercourse, turning it from its procreative and unifying purpose to mere entertainment. He correctly predicted women, instead of being respected and loved companions, would become objects for sexual enjoyment, and accordingly, marriage would suffer. Look at the proliferation of pornography and the widespread destruction of the family; who could deny the pope was right? Contraception is not only unhealthy, it is morally wrong.
Focus on Faith

Tom and the Crèche

By Georgia MacLean

Tom thought it was very exciting to watch the large group of men working on St. Joseph’s front plaza, setting up a Christmas crèche. They laughed and joked as they went about putting the wooden roof and stable together. The ten-year-old knew the story about the birth of Jesus and was wishing that he could help when one of the men yelled, “Hey kid, can you give me a hand with this hay?” Tom ran over quickly and helped him carry the bale of hay under the roof of the stable they were making.

“I haven’t seen you around before. Who is your father?” Tom pointed vaguely to the church door, then followed a man through the opening, then followed a parishioner through the opened door.

If the people knew he lived in the church at night, they might do something so he couldn’t stay there. Tom had found the place right after his mother had been hit by a car at the corner of Old St. Augustine and Greenland Roads. The pair had been running away from the gas station where he and his mother had ordered sandwiches and a drink but didn’t have the money to pay for them. He could still remember how hungry they had been. They had been homeless for a long time now and getting food was hard.

When the car had hit her, she yelled to him to run and hide. Tom hid behind the bushes and masonry wall, just a short way from the corner. He watched as the police and an ambulance came and took his mother away. He knew his mother would find him after she was fixed up. She always did. He ate the sandwich, drank the coke, and saved the cup as he didn’t know if he would soon find another one. He just had to find a way to stay nearby this place so she could find him. And he had, though a couple of days had gone by and she had not returned.

He saw that a really big church was part of the plaza and noticed some people going in. Realizing that the church was unlocked, he entered by the same door they had used. He figured he could hide in there until his mother came back to get him.

The church was huge and would actually make a good place to spend the night, for he had everything he needed. Exploring, he even found a couch to sleep on, good clean water to drink, and a bathroom where he could wash! There was a big box filled with food. People brought food almost every day for the Food Bank; at least, that was what it said on the side of the box. There was another place in the lobby where people left clothes. There were blankets too.

In the two days he had been waiting for his mother, he had outfitted himself with jeans, shirts, and shoes. There were some dresses his mother could wear. People had also left soap, shampoo, tooth brushes, and tooth paste. There was enough food in the box to feed an army, he thought. There were cookies; fruit in containers; small cans of wieners, tuna, chicken, and vegetables; and drinks. Off the hall, by the bathroom, was a kitchen. He found a can opener which he would be sure to clean and put back in the same place. He wished he and his mom had found this place before she was hit. The only thing was, his mother was gone, and he had nobody to tell him goodnight or to hug him. There were a lot of red lighted candles which he later pretended were fairies watching over him.

Perhaps the men working outside were still there, Tom thought, so he placed a stopper at one of the many side doors of the church and went back outside to watch them. The same man who had asked him to help with the hay was now working with putting the animals around the inside of the stable.

“Kid, can you hold up the camel so I can get the cow set up near the sheep?” The animals looked so real Tom was tempted to get up on the camel. Soon the men had almost everything arranged, except for Baby Jesus.

“What is the baby?” Tom asked.

The man replied, “He will not be put into the cradle until Christmas Eve night.”

“Do you mean he will be real?” asked Tom.

“I don’t think so,” replied the man. “It will be a statue like these of Joseph and Mary.”

“So, this is just like a play?” Tom wondered where the real Jesus was, if anywhere.

“This scene is two thousand years old, and it is not just any old play. This is a celebration and remembrance of the birth of our Lord.”

The display was soon finished, and Tom disappeared around to the dark side of the church to the door he had left open so he could get back in after the men locked the front doors. Everything was cleaned up and ready for tomorrow.

Tom had been so excited by all the hustle and bustle, he found it hard to go to sleep. About an hour later, he decided to go back out and look at the crèche again. He propped the door open, went around front, and was walking around the crèche when he heard something sounding like a cat. Trying to find the cat, he followed the sound around to the front of the stable, keeping in the shadows.
All of a sudden he noticed that Baby Jesus had already come and he was real! He was lying in the cradle and was squirming around and making a mewling noise like a cat. Tom could not understand what was going on, but he decided he had to watch out for Baby Jesus until someone came. He was overcome with strong love and, though he did not know the word, compassion.

A truck came in to the parking lot and parked in a spot right in front of the plaza. Tom tried to hide both himself and the baby because he didn’t know who it was. A man got out of the truck and came towards them. Tom could see it was the same man who had asked him to help.

“I just felt something wasn’t right,” he said.

“Look,” Tom exclaimed. “Baby Jesus came early.” The man stood there wondering how this real baby had gotten there. He realized the infant was a newborn who had been abandoned. The cry was so weak, if the boy hadn’t been there, he probably wouldn’t have heard it. He had thought something was not right about the boy and decided to come back. He picked the baby up and pulled out his telephone at the same time. Examining the baby, he saw it was not a boy.

“Who are you calling?” asked Tom. “That has to be Baby Jesus and I can watch him until his mother comes back.”

“Sorry, son,” said the man, “this is not Baby Jesus, it’s a little girl.”

“Well, I think I can take care of her,” Tom replied. “I have been taking care of myself for a long time, so I think I can take care of her.”

The man looked down at Tom and realized what he had previously thought about Tom was, in reality, true. The kid was living on his own. Where, he thought, was he living? He looked too well cared for to be living on the street, although his hair was pretty shaggy. He recognized the jacket the boy was wearing as his own son’s from last year. He knew it was the same one, for his son’s name had been embroidered on the pocket by his wife. They had recently left the jacket in the box of clothing in the lobby of the church.

“Son,” said the man, “you have to tell me where you live.” Tom knew that he was caught out and sat down on the ground.

“I live here,” he said, “inside the church.”


“It’s easy,” said Tom. “I sleep on the couch in a dressing room, wash in the bathroom, eat the food left in that big box, and I have found great clothes in the stuff left by people for the street people. That’s why I know I can take care of her because there are a lot of baby clothes and food left there too.”

“I know you want to do that,” said the man, “but there is a lot more to it.”

The man’s call was answered then and he said, “We have a problem down at the church. Someone has left a newborn baby in the manger.” He looked down at Tom and said, “I also have a young boy here who is lost.” He didn’t want to tell the whole story because he didn’t know what the boy’s history really was. Maybe it was a Moses story.

“I think I know why the baby is here, but why are you here?” asked the man. “You need to tell me so I can help you. Trust me and trust in God. I think you do trust God because you are here. You probably just saved this little girl’s life.”

Tom decided he could trust the man and told him the whole story about his mother getting hit by a car at the corner and his finding the hiding place in the church.

When the police car drove up, the patrolman knew the man and they called the station and found out that Tom’s mother had passed on as a result of being hit by the car. They hadn’t known her son had been with her and had been unable to locate any family. There was no way to find out about the baby.

“Well, we will get this sorted out,” said the patrolman. “Meanwhile, I can take the baby over to the Divine Mercy House until after the investigation. They know how to take care of a newborn. But the only thing I can do for you is to take you down to the station until we find out what to do with you.” Tom was devastated at the loss of his mother. He started weeping disconsolately. Now he was really alone.

“Officer,” said the man, “You know, I have a boy about this kid’s age. What do you say about him coming home with me until you or your people decide what to do with him. I can’t see him sitting in temporary lockup overnight.” This was a very cool man, Tom thought.

After checking with his supervisor, the patrolman said Tom could go home with the man until the state took over. Tom was relieved and dried his eyes on his shirt. He knew that he would miss his mother forever. He also knew that God had found him a home.

When the investigation was over, the man and his wife were able to adopt both Tom and the newborn. No one knows if they lived happily ever after, but if you trust in God, you know they did.
As I am sitting down to write this reflection, the government shutdown is approaching a week and a resolution to the dilemma does not appear to be on the horizon. I can only hope and pray, by the time this is published, things will have returned to the “normal” governmental gridlock which is all too common these days. Regardless of whose side one favors, the seemingly constant political animosity is itself a manifestation of deeper spiritual ills. When surveying the modern world, we stumble upon an interesting dichotomy. On the one side, due to the incredible advances in technology, we are faced with a shrinking world. The speed with which information and communication travels is shaping human events in ways previously unimaginable yet, in spite of the new-found means of rapid communication, we seem, as persons, to be drifting into isolation at the same rapid pace. Don’t believe me? Next time you’re in a restaurant, look around to see the number of people who are staring at their phone instead of interacting with the person(s) at table with them. In a nutshell, while the technological revolution thunders on, there is another more silent phenomena occurring which seems to be a general lowering of mankind’s nobility; a slow dying of the culture, a reduction of the human person to their more base elements and qualities, a drifting into isolation.

One of the unintended consequences of the advances in science and technology is a rise of atheism and agnosticism. So many folks are under the impression science will sooner or later explain away all the mystery, thus driving the final nail in the coffin of religion. This drifting away from a God-centered society to a science/technology-centered society is the reason, as a people, we are drifting further apart, becoming more polarized as opposed to drawing closer in light of our shared humanity. I came across a quote from the late Pope John Paul II which I believe sheds a great deal of light on the subject at hand.

“The Disciple of Christ is constantly challenged by a spreading ‘practical atheism’ – an indifference to God’s loving plan which obscures the religious and moral sense of the human heart. Many either think and act as if God did not exist, or tend to ‘privatise’ religious belief and practice, so that there exists a bias toward indifferentism and the elimination of any real reference to binding truths and moral values. When the basic principles which inspire and direct human behavior are fragmentary and even at times contradictory, society increasingly struggles to maintain harmony and a sense of its own destiny. In a desire to find some common ground on which to build its programs and policies, it tends to restrict the contribution of those whose moral conscience is formed by their religious belief.”

As we approach the Christmas season, inevitably, the so-called “war on Christmas” will be seen again as various anti-religious groups protest Manger scenes on public land and retailers forbid employees from saying “Merry Christmas” all under the guise of tolerance and the desire not to offend, but in all reality, this is simply the concrete evidence of what John Paul taught above. Secular forces are seeking to drive religion and faith further and further into the shadows. It seems the only acceptable form of bigotry left is against Christianity. No one in the public light dares mock Islam or Judaism, yet Christ is mocked as if He still hung upon the Cross. In spite of His sacrifice and outpouring of love and forgiveness, our Blessed Lord still receives the same hatred and scorn in our modern days which was reined upon Him some 2000 years ago.

The questions that lie before His disciples of the 21st century are: How do we respond to the secular forces which seek to drive us back into the catacombs from whence we emerged? How do we bring the light of Christ into a world which desires darkness? The first step is to look, not outward at the darkness we see around us, but rather, gaze inwardly, allowing the light of Christ to drive out the darkness which still remains in our souls. I am reminded of the words of the Risen Christ to the disciples, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me even so I send you.” Do we have the inner peace of the Resurrection inside of us? Do we carry around resentments and harbor grudges? If we fail to dwell in the peace and love of the Holy Spirit, then we cannot spread the joy of Christ to the world. The reason we, as people, are moving into isolation in spite of the uniting aspect of technology is the lack of true inner peace and tranquility. The visible hostility in the world is simply a physical manifestation of the internal hostility raging in the souls of those who have driven God out. The more the world drives God out, not only of society, but from within personal lives, the more we, as Christians, must invite Him in.

This Christmas, look to the tranquility of the nativity, gaze upon the simplicity and humility into which our Lord came forth, and take in the perfect peace of that moment. As Catholics, we have the most priceless gift of the Holy Eucharist. In that infinite treasure, our Lord is reborn in us with each reception. We are drawn into the mystery and glory of Bethlehem as we approach Christ in Eucharistic adoration. This Christmas, ask Jesus for the gift of peace, the gift of inner harmony and joy that is your Baptismal birthright. Seek out the great healing sacrament of Reconciliation; ask the Lord to free you from the inner effects of sin and pray for the healing of those you have harmed through sin. Make this Christmas one in which the Lord is reborn in you so, through His loving and guiding hand, you can bring His light to the world.

I will leave you with some excerpts of the prayer of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity.

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, let me entirely forget myself that I may abide in You, still and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity; let nothing disturb my peace nor separate me from You, O my unchanging God, but that each moment may take me further into the depths of Your mystery! Pacify my soul! Make it Your heaven, Your beloved home and place of Your repose; let me never leave You there alone, but may I be ever attentive, ever alert in my faith, ever adoring and all given up to Your creative action. 

O Consuming Fire, Spirit of Love, descend into my soul and make all in me as an incarnation of the Word, that I may be to Him a super-added humanity wherein He renews His mystery; and You O Father, bestraw Yourself and bend down to Your little creature, seeing in her only Your beloved Son in whom You are well pleased.

2 John 20:21 Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament
“An angel of the Lord declared unto Mary . . .”

As we anticipate and then celebrate during the Christmas season, angels so naturally enter the mix! However, why do we not recognize the reality of their role in each of our lives, everyday of our lives? After all, “For God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:11). Are you attentive and mindful of insights that the Holy Spirit of God provides you through your holy guardian angel(s)? Exploring the sacred scriptures may help us to be “tuned in” with how this may occur.

Let’s leap from Psalm 91 to explore some New Testament angel scriptures regarding Mother Mary, also those surrounding God’s care, as with Joseph’s concerns, and the shepherds, and three kings, and Jesus’ safety in fulfilling the Father’s designs for His life and ministry. Then, when we pray, we might see how these “foot soldiers of the Lord,” are especially commissioned to attend to us too.

An angel invites Mary to become mother of our Redeemer (Luke 1:26-38).

An angel assures Joseph so he does not have to “put her away quietly” but rather take her as his wife (Matthew 1:19).

An angel announces Jesus’ birth to shepherds in the fields tending their sheep. Then the skies were filled with heavenly hosts praising God and singing in adoration and praise (Luke 2:8-14).

An angel warns three astrologers, foreigners, to return home by another route, releasing them of Herod’s command to report back to him (Matthew 2:12).

The angel warns Joseph to take “the child and his Mother” to a safe place (Matthew 2:13).

Then, again, the angel assures Joseph that it is now safe to return home with his Holy Family where the child Jesus will mature in wisdom, in age, and in grace (Matthew 2:19-20).

We pray in the Divine Office of the Church: “Lord, extolled in the heights by angelic powers, You are also praised by all earth’s creatures, each in its own way. With all the splendor of heavenly worship, You still delight in heaven resound in the heart of every creature on earth.”

So, yes we are mindful of angels in Advent and throughout the season of Christmas. However, don’t you think it makes sense to call upon them throughout our lives too? So, move over, make room for that angel – an angel for your every concern – to play a daily role in the life you live for God’s glory, in Jesus’ Name.

Why would we ever choose to proceed on our journey through life forgetting the Lord’s constant assurance that angels have been given to attend to our every concern? So we pray, “God our Father, Creator, Source of our being, in Your loving providence you send your holy angels to watch over us. Hear our prayers, defend us always by their protection and insights. Let us share Your eternal Life with them forever. We ask this though our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.”

Grandma’s Corner

By Barbara Crawford (a.k.a. Grandma)

Christmas is here once again, with busier schedules, family gatherings, and, of course, presents for the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren on our minds. It’s a challenge trying to find just the right gift; something educational but fun, practical yet definitely not socks or underwear (I always hated to get gifts like those as a child) or the dreaded Christmas sweaters, where I matched my siblings in some way. Those gifts usually came from a “distant” relative with good intentions, yet I wanted a particular doll or toy that was totally impractical and which I rarely received.

I was the youngest in my family, My brothers would say I was spoiled, yet I didn’t feel that way. They helped with yard-work and I helped Mom with housework: washing clothes, hanging them on the line, folding laundry, ironing, helping fix and clean up after dinner, making beds, dusting, etc. Doing your chores was expected and demanded. You were part of a family and earned your keep; there were no free rides. Allowances were small, but bought weekly candy bars (my favorite) or you could save for something special. I am sure that these experiences are still a part of many of today’s young families. I have seen my grandchildren helping out, and I definitely encourage their efforts to lend a hand. I, too, like to help out but often feel I’m in the way, so if I’m not the cook, I try to keep the young one’s from getting underfoot by playing with them, reading a book, going for a walk, helping set the table, or whatever comes to mind. Christmas is a time for family, young and old, but mostly for the children. I enjoy watching their sense of wonder. What could be in that package? What’s making that jingly sound? What is that wonderful smell? Gingerbread? Christmas cookies? Roasting turkey? Fresh bread? Christmas stirs lots of unforgotten and cherished memories we share when we are gathered together.

May your Christmas be truly blessed!
Most of us, in our lifetime, live through five, six, or even seven papal reigns. My own memory extends from Pius XII [1939-1958], John XXIII [1958-1963], Paul VI [1963-1978], John Paul I [1978], John Paul II [1978-2005], Benedict XVI [2005-2013], to Francis I [2013-]. During that time, the pope has been transformed from a monarchical, remote, and majestic figure to a more approachable person, who now rides in a pope mobile, kisses babies, makes phone calls, pays his lodging bill, and cancels his own newspaper subscription. This is far removed from an earlier time when the faithful kissed the pope's shoes. Until the brief reign of John Paul I, the pope was carried aloft in a sedia gestatoria (portable throne). Likewise, the papal tiara is no longer used. In recent times, a Polish Thomist philosopher (Pope John Paul II) was followed by a German Augustinian theologian (Pope Benedict XVI), who was succeeded in March 2013 by our new Pope Francis, the first Latin American, the first Jesuit, and the first pontiff named Francis.

In Francis, we have a compassionate and humble man, an Argentinean of Italian heritage, who lives simply and speaks gently from the heart. He is in love with Christ and wants us to be filled with the same love. His humility was manifested when he was elected, “I ask for your prayers. . . . I am a sinner, but I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He has no lavish image and refers to himself as Bishop of Rome. Francis is interested in adding a crucial and critical pastoral element he perceives to be lacking in the Church. He is friendly and charming and speaks to the whole world in the manner of a parish priest. He rejects a Catholicism that is legalistic, puritanical, and condemning. He wants a gospel that is lived in a compassionate, forgiving, and Christ-like manner. The Church must reach out to the poor, the rejected, and the forgotten. There must be a “new stimulus to international activity on behalf of the poor.” We should focus on the growing inequality that ruins lives and breaks spirits. To be a “church for the poor,” the issue of poverty must be placed at the very top of the political agenda, establishing poverty alongside abortion as a pre-eminent moral issue faced. Children are dying of hunger. Both abortion and poverty countenance the deaths of millions of children.

At Assisi, in an address to the poor, he said: “Many of you have been stripped down by this savage world that does not give jobs, that does not help, that does not care about children dying of hunger.” Recently, after a ship carrying refugees from Syria and Eritrea sank off the island of Lampedusa with several hundred persons drowned, Pope Francis sent his almoner, Archbishop Krajewski, to bless the bodies recovered from the ocean, to visit survivors, and distribute aid for their immediate needs.

Francis is not minimizing evil but is focusing on something else – the Encounter with Christ. Conversion to the living Christ is the source and wellspring of a deeper moral life. The Encounter comes first, and then ethics born of the Encounter. The proclamation of the saving love of God comes before moral and religious imperatives. Pope Francis represents no departure or divergence in doctrine. He is not telling us to cease prolific activities or to promote contraception. His difference lies in emphasis and deportment and not in doctrine.

Francis has undertaken a demystification of the Papacy introducing a softer tone and greater simplicity. “Heads of the Church have often been narcissists, flattered and thrilled by the courtiers. The court is the leprosy of the papacy,” he told journalist and atheist Eugenio Scafatti. In particular, his lack of interest in lavish vestments; his avoidance of the papal palace as his residence in favor of the modest Domus Internazionalis Paulus; payment of his bill at the Domus after his election; use of an inexpensive automobile; cancellation of his newspaper by a long-distance call to Argentina; washing the feet of a woman and several non-Catholics on Holy Thursday; bowing to Queen Rania of Jordan; and a style of celebrating Mass far removed from the ars celebrandi of Pope Benedict. His popularity is overwhelming. There were several million people at World Youth Day in Brazil. He attracts people and is warm and non-judgmental. In referring to homosexuals, he commented, “Who am I to judge [a gay person]. . . . Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?”

Pope Francis has made use of a new genre of papal speech that is informal and not overly concerned with precision. Major interviews were given to La Civiltà Cattolica, a Jesuit publication, and to La Repubblica, edited by atheist Eugenio Scafatti. 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in a “volcanic flow of ideas bound up with each other.” The criticism has been made that much of this output lacks precision and context. In adopting this new communication format, some have pointed out that a danger lies in a departure from the precise and carefully-crafted writing of his predecessors in their encyclicals. This informal, “off the cuff,” impromptu style of speech has led to misinterpretation as the popular media have selected fragments of remarks which lack elaboration, qualification, and context. The distinction between magisterial and conversational are lost on many readers and listeners who encounter his thought in such fragmentary form.

While John Paul II and Benedict emphasized theology and doctrine, Francis is focused on pastoral care. His two immediate predecessors were trained academics and systemic thinkers. Yet Pope Francis is no neophyte with a licentiate and Ph.D. in theology and has served as provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina. He was appointed Archbishop of Buenos Aires (1998) and Cardinal by John Paul II in 2001. He is fluent in four languages.

The following sources are available for further information:
- America: National Catholic Review
- Inside the Vatican – Robert Moynihan
- News.va
- Chiesa-espresonline.it
- Catholic World Report
- EWTN News
- New Liturgical Movement
- Whispers in the Loggia
- The Court Jester
- First Things: In the Square
- Rorate Caeli
- What Does the Prayer Really Say?
- Hermeneutic of Continuity
- Catholic Herald -UK
- National Catholic Register
- Catholic News Service
- Zenit

“Spreading the Good News of Our Savior”

FAITH IN WORDS AND DEEDS!
The reason God sent his only begotten Son into this World

Listening to the recent message of Pope Francis, we hear that everyone is to spread the good news of Jesus among all people, especially fallen away Catholics, inactive Catholics, and those who need to hear and understand God loves them so much. We are to welcome them to our faith; Acts 18:9: “Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent.” In Mark 16:15, we read the great call: “Go into all the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creation.”

What is the gospel message? It is the good news of the birth and life of Jesus, the Son of God, born unto the Virgin Mary. He performed miracles and dwelt among us. His light was overwhelming. The prophets of old predicted He would die a gruesome death, which Jesus fulfilled. But as Jesus Himself had testified, on the third day, He would be resurrected, and He was – and He is alive today. The good news is that He was born and He died for all of us. He took our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty of death, so we can live and enjoy the benefits of being righteous before our Father. He is not a God made of wood or stone or iron. No! He is a God who made wood and stone and iron and, most importantly, He made you and me. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation to everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek.” The disciples went daily to the synagogues and public squares to preach that the Messiah had come, though they knew the message would not be welcomed by some religious and the learned people whose hearts were not ready for the truth. They knew there was and is power in the gospel and that those who were seeking God would be compelled and touched to receive the message of good news and therefore receive Jesus. And they were right to have faith in this simple gospel message because the Bible tells us, and history books concur, thousands upon thousands believed, repented, and were transformed each time the message of the good news of Jesus was preached by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Many folks have asked me, “What is your role as a missionary when you go to Africa each year?” And I say I follow the voice of God: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). I live by these words: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ ‘Here am I,’ I said; ‘send me!’” (Isaiah 6:8). A missionary is one sent by Jesus, as He was sent by God. The great dominant note is not the needs of men, but the command of Jesus. The source of our inspiration in working for God is to follow Him, not to lead. The tendency today is to put our aspirations in front of us and to make it all about our own conceptions of success. In the New Testament, the inspiration is the call we receive from the Lord Jesus. The idea is to be true to His Word, to carry out His enterprises, to follow Him.

Personal attachment to the Lord Jesus and His point of view is the one thing that must not be overlooked. In missionary enterprises, the great danger is that God’s call is effaced by the needs of the people until human sympathy absolutely overwhelms the meaning of being sent by Jesus. The needs are enormous, the conditions so perplexing, that it causes the mind to falter and fail. The challenge to the missionary does not come from the fact that people are difficult to save, or that backsliders are difficult to reclaim, or that there is a wedge of callous indifference. Rather, it comes from the difficulty of maintaining your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the face of so many needs. “Do you believe that I can do this?” (Matthew 9:28). Our Lord puts this question to us steadily; it faces us in every individual case we meet. The one great challenge for me is – Do I really know my Risen Lord? Do I know the power of His indwelling Spirit? Am I wise enough in God’s sight and foolish enough according to the world to bank on what Jesus Christ has said? So I go by the methods laid down by our LORD: “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations…” (Matthew 28:18-19).

Ella Simmons

Dedicated to Charles N. Simmons III
Death Leaves a Heart Ache No One Can Heal
True Love Leaves Memories No One Can Steal
**OUR LORD SPEAKS TO THE WORLD THROUGH SAINT FAUSTINA**

During one of our weekly meetings of the Eucharistic Apostles of the Divine Mercy, while we were reading quotes of Jesus speaking to St. Faustina in her Diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, someone realized that He is also speaking to all of us in a very personal way.

By our reading of the Diary, we can “listen in” on the conversations between St. Faustina and Jesus Christ. By studying the contents and relating them to our own life’s problems, pains, and sufferings, we can be helped in our own spiritual walk.

As we read the Diary, He is there, He is real. He is also talking to us. We hear about the mercy and love of God. We hear about how to live our lives through His Words of Wisdom. We can grow closer to Jesus, and gain fresh insight into His unfathomable mercy and love which He has for all of us, and learn to trust completely in Jesus Christ so we may always proclaim His words, “Jesus, I trust in You.”

The Diary of St. Faustina is the record of her life experience – the journey of her soul. She was graced by a special communion with God, and the Diary expresses her conviction that this communion with God ought to be the center of our own lives. Since the 1940’s, the Marians of the Immaculate Conception have shared this conviction and have undertaken the promulgation of God’s mercy throughout the world, particularly as it has been proclaimed by St. Faustina.

A reader of the Diary, after just a superficial skimming, may be struck by the simplicity of the language and even by the spelling and stylistic errors, but we should not forget that the author of the Diary had but a limited elementary education. The theology alone, which is found in the Diary, awakens in the reader a conviction of its uniqueness; and if one considers the contrast between St. Faustina’s education and the loftiness of her theology, the contrast alone indicates a special influence of Divine Grace.

Mother Speranza, who founded the Sanctuary of The Most Merciful Love in Collevalenza, Italy, the site of numerous pilgrimages, wrote the preface of the Diary. When she was asked about the writings of St. Faustina, she said “The writings contain a wonderful teaching. But reading them one must remember that God speaks to philosophers in the language of philosophers and to simple souls [like ourselves] in the language of simple ones, and only to these last does He reveal truths hidden from the wise and the prudent of this world.”

We, as Eucharistic Apostles of the Divine Mercy, are so fortunate, for as we read the Diary, we are among these simple souls who can gain extraordinary wisdom from the reading of its contents and can hear the voice of God from its reading.

For those who may not be familiar with the Diary of Saint Faustina, an example of what we may read when we experience God’s words from within the Diary is as follows: “My Secretary [St. Faustina], write that I am more generous towards sinners than toward the just. It was for their sake that I came down from heaven; it was for their sake that My Blood was spilled. Let them not fear to approach Me; they are most in need of My mercy” (Diary 1275).

The Eucharistic Apostles of the Divine Mercy meet every Tuesday morning from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon in the Cody Room, on the second floor of the Cody Center. For more information, please contact Jim and Barbara Wasel at 262-4555.

**Ask Father Mike**

**Q** When Does the Christmas Season Start?

Judging by the number of Christmas trees put out to the curb on December 26, many people believe Christmas Day ends the Christmas season. They couldn’t be more wrong. Christmas Day is the FIRST day of Christmas. The period of feasting continues until Epiphany, the 12th day after Christmas, and the Christmas season proper continues until the feast of the Presentation of the Lord – February 2 – a full 40 days after Christmas!

What most people think of as “the Christmas season,” the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas, roughly corresponds to Advent, the period of preparation for the Christmas feast. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. It’s meant to be a time of preparation; of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and repentance. In the early centuries of the Church, it was observed by a 40-day fast, just like Lent, which was followed by the 40 days of feasting in the Christmas season.

In our world of instant gratification, however, we don’t want to wait until Christmas to eat a Christmas cookie; much less fast or abstain from meat on Christmas Eve! Still, the Church gives us this season of Advent for a reason; and that reason is Christ. The better we prepare ourselves for His coming on Christmas Day, the greater our joy will be.
“For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Mathew 25:35-36).

Poverty is all around us. On every street corner stands a person with a sign that reads, “I’ll work for food.” How many of us drive by, not even bothering to notice? Or if we do notice, we automatically judge them because they are poor. Many of us label them as alcoholic or drug addicts, but we don’t know what really happened to them. Who are we to judge if we don’t even know their story?

How many people in our country go hungry every year? According to feedingamerica.org, 46.5 million people were living in poverty in 2012. That is more than fifteen percent of our population. This is a growing problem we can no longer just overlook and ignore. What are we, as individuals, doing to help? So many of us just sit around and wait for someone else to make the first move or to help first. What are we waiting for? There are many things normal people, like you and I, can do to make a difference.

One thing we can do is donate money to charities. There are many different charities across the United States which deal with serving the poor. Some examples are Catholic Charities, Feeding America, and End Poverty. These charities can take the money you donate and use it to buy food for hungry families. This is a fast and easy way to help poor families get food.

Another way that you can help the poor in our country is by volunteering with your church or organizations near you that feed the poor. For example, this past summer, I volunteered at Cathedral Parish in St. Augustine to help feed the poor. Every Wednesday night, we would set up tables and set out food we had prepared for them to eat. One time, I made a gigantic tub of banana pudding. During the evening, we would help to serve the poor people. There was also a place where they could get clothes, shoes, and other necessities. Feeding the poor made me realize they are people, just like me, but they have just had some bigger challenges in their lives. What really made me sad were the children I saw, because I realized they wouldn’t have the same opportunities with their lives that I have had. Volunteering to feed the poor is a great way for people to give their time to others.

The last way, which is probably the simplest thing to do, is to stop when you see them on the side of the road and offer them food. Every time you see a poor person on the side of the road, just think about what Jesus would do. The best thing you can give them is food. We keep extra bags of chips and granola bars in our car so, when we see a person on the side of the road, we have food to give them. We also buy five-dollar gift cards from fast-food restaurants to give to the poor, so they can go and get themselves something to eat.

If each and every person set their minds to doing an act of kindness of feeding the poor, then we could help feed the poor all across the United States. All we have to do is take a little time out of our day. As Mother Teresa once said, “If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one.” We can help to stop hunger one person at a time.

Serving the Poor
If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?
Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.
1 John 3:17-18

“In Bethlehem of Judea”

It was a common ancient belief that when a king was born, a new star appeared in the sky. In the Gospel of Matthew, 2:1-2, we read: “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.’”

Modern science and astronomy tell us it all began with an almost invisible spark of energy. We believe that spark came from the creative power of our God. The energy of that spark exploded and eventually became everything material that exists. The sheer magnitude of God’s handiwork is far beyond our capacity to absorb. The sun is one of one hundred or more billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy. The Milky Way Galaxy is just one of about one hundred billion galaxies in the universe. Some galaxies are so distant from earth that their light takes billions of years to reach us. To cap it off, light travels at 186,000 miles per second. All of this leads to a big question. If the result of God’s creative hand is beyond our grasp, how can we ever achieve a comfort zone of understanding and having a relationship with Him?

God is always in charge, and His love and mercy know no bounds. He has revealed Himself in terms we truly can understand. He became one of us in the person of Jesus. In the person of Jesus, God actually entered our space and time. He came to live as a creature in His own creation. He lived our life and spoke our language. In Jesus, God gave us a window to Himself.

So, what do we see through this window? In chapters 14 and 15 of John’s Gospel, Jesus reveals the Father to us through His words: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me . . . whoever has seen me has seen the Father. . . . The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. . . . If you love me you will keep my commandments . . . whoever loves me will be loved by my Father . . . love one another as I have loved you.” The complete New Testament is the story in full.

Christmas is the Feast of the Incarnation. The meaning, the message, the consequence of the Incarnation is a reality for ongoing prayerful reflection and lifestyle discernment.

Isabella Horning

Tom Kelly
New Parishioners

We are pleased to welcome the following new members of our parish family who registered between August 13 and November 25, 2013.

Thomas & Mary Adam
Kyle & Ericka Adams
Lazaro & Amorelys
Angel-Bello
Justin & Shannon Arkin
Tara Baer
Brett & Erin Baitutat
Stephen & Jennifer Barnhart
Zaida Barrera-Morales
John & Jennifer Beamer
Robert & Daniela Bennett
Jose & Mana Bonyuet
Cuong & Phuong Do Bui
Nico Bula
Chris & Sherill Christopher
Christopher & Bobbie Cooper
Russlan Cruz & Greisy Sosa
Cursit & Caroly Lee
Dinah Diaz
Abelardo & Dripps
Almir & Megan Durmic
Amy Ernharth
Jorge & Cristina Estevez
Lisbel Fernandez-Landrian
Brian Fess
Lindsey Fettig
Johanna Floresca
Jonathan & Katherine Ford
Andrew Schreiner
& Paige Gardner
Cathy Gates
Florjan & Margrete Gjura
Zachary & Stephanie Gonzalez
Pat Gossett
Thomas Suzanne Guido
Brian Hall
Damien & Christina HARDER
Thomas Hewitt
Johnny & Loretto Hilton
Donna Hymes
Kenneth & Mary Kelsey
Aaron & Pamela Kennedy
Michael & Ivy Lee
Wilfredo & Elisa Luna
Steven & Jennifer Matthews
Blake & Sarah McCrea
Blandon Molina
John & Anna Moyer
Larry & Donna Jean
Muchmore
David & Etana Murawski
Dainel & Mary Nicholas
Christopher & Rebecca Parfato
Claudia Piedad
Ryan & Colleen Potts
Daniel Riddleberger
Javier & Olga Rojas
Phil & Sheila Roop
Angelo & Julia Santos
Stephanie Schaap
Tresa Schenck
Shirley Simeoli
Ruben Sosa
& Paula Sanchez
Allison Spellberg
Dennis & Doris Sullivan
Mildred Vail
John & Jessica Valenzuela
Silvia Vazquez
Matthew & Tammy Vu
Marissa Wächtka
Danielle Wesley
Omar & Raisa Zaldivar
Allison Zayas-Bazan
Jazmine Zwerin

CHRISTMAS SERVICES & MASSES

RECONCILIATION
Parish Penance Service and Confessions
WED., Dec. 18 7:00 p.m.
Confessions
FRI., Dec. 20 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
SAT., Dec. 21 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS MASSES
Vigil of Christmas – Christmas Eve
TUE., Dec. 24 3:00 p.m.
5:00 p.m. Children's Mass
7:00 p.m.
Midnight Mass
(Lessons & Carols - 11:00 p.m.)
Christmas Day
WED., Dec. 25 10:00 a.m.
Noon

NEW YEAR’S MASSES
Solemnity of Mary Vigil - New Year's Eve
TUE., Dec. 31 5:30 p.m.
Solemnity of Mary - New Year's Day
WED., Jan. 1 10:00 a.m.
7:00 p.m.

PARISH CALENDAR

JANUARY
4 FFC Epiphany Party
6 SJ5/Duval Classes Resume
7 St. Johns Classes Resume
8 PREP/Clay Classes Resume
9 SJ5 Early Release
10 K of C Spaghetti Dinner
12 CCW Chili Cookoff
16 SJ5 Academic Fair and Home/School Meeting
20 No School
(Martin Luther King Day)
26 MLK Ecumenical Service
27 Baptismal Seminar
Catholic Schools Week Begins

FEBRUARY
2 Boy Scout Sunday
K of C Basketball Free-Throw
5 SJ5 Early Release
9 Men’s Club Big Breakfast
24 Baptismal Seminar
15 Confirmations
17 No School
(Principals’ Day)

MARCH
1 Starry Nights Art Auction
3 Parish Council Meeting
5 SJ5 Early Release
6 No School
8 BSA Mulch Madness
9 Daylight Savings Begins
14 No School
(Prime Osborne)
15 No School
(Prime Osborne)
21 K of C Lenten Fish Fry
22 SJ5 Spring Play
23 DOSA Religious Awards Ceremony
24 SJ5 Spring Play
(Prime Osborne)
28 Eucharistic Congress
(Prime Osborne)
29 Eucharistic Congress

APRIL
2 SJ5 Early Release
5 No School
9 SJ5 Field Day
13 PALM SUNDAY
14 SJ5 Good Friday
16 SJ5 Holy Saturday
17 HOLY THURSDAY
18 NO SCHOOL
19 St. Anne’s Circle
Easter Egg Hunt
20 EASTER SUNDAY

St. Joseph's Reflections is the newspaper of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Jacksonville, Florida. It is published in celebration of Easter, Participation Sunday in September, and Christmas.

The mission of St. Joseph's Reflections is to build community by informing and educating parish members, strengthening the bond between them, inviting and inspiring their participation in parish ministries and activities, and encouraging and supporting their outreach to the Jacksonville community.

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