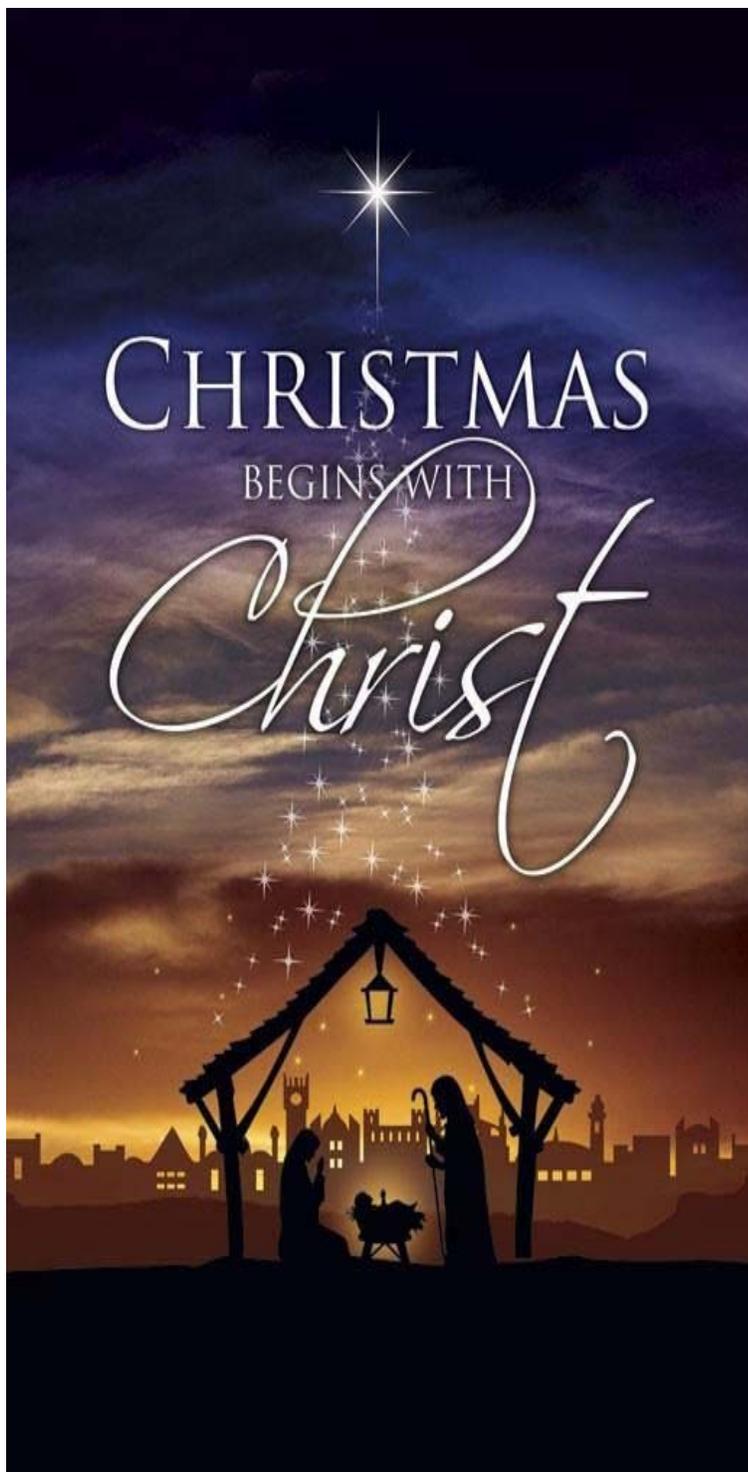




1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

December 2017



The Birth of Peace

*The world is filled with fear today
Anxiety and strife.*

There're hurting people.

There're hurting hearts

But there's hope for every life.

Christmas isn't just for fun.

It's the day that hope began.

Peace was born,

A need was met

With the birth of the I Am!

Let us worry less and focus more

On the power of God's hand.

The birth of Christ,

The light of life,

And the Peace for every man.

LUCINDA BERRY HILL

ADVENT OF PEACE – SEASON OF REPENTANCE

Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio
www.crossroadsinitiative.com

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THE EDITORS OF THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER'S 1ST SATURDAY NEWSLETTER ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE CONSISTENT QUALITY AND ACCURACY OF THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER'S 1ST SATURDAY NEWSLETTER AND AS SUCH RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REJECT OR EDIT THE CONTENT OF ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR PUBLICATION. EDITING MAY INCLUDE, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO, CHANGES TO GRAMMAR, SYNTAX AND STYLES, REMOVAL OF OFFENSIVE CONTENT AND REMOVAL OF PERSONAL NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION. SUBMISSION OF YOUR ARTICLE SIGNIFIES YOUR AGREEMENT TO THE TERMS AFOREMENTIONED.

Christmas is a joyous celebration of the birth of Peace. So why does the Church precede the feast of December 25 with a somber season of fast and penance?

Christmas cards speak about it. Christmas carols sing about it. Even the angels at Bethlehem proclaimed it. "Peace on earth." "The lion shall lie down with the lamb." (Isaiah 11). "Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever" (Psalm 72).

The coming of the Messiah obviously has something to do with the advent of peace.

Peace according to the Bible

But we need to examine the biblical notion of peace. For it is not quite the peace that some have in mind. It is not niceness or political correctness. It is not just the absence of armed conflict or "peaceful co-existence." It is rather right relationship between people that flows from right relationship with God. Pope Paul VI said that "if you want peace, work for justice." Justice, however, is not just fair laws and political rights, but the interior justice that the bible calls righteousness.

The world is obviously not at peace, because human hearts are not at peace. We are all pulled in opposite directions by competing desires and torn apart by loyalties to different gods.

Spiritual Warfare

So before the Prince of Peace can usher in a season of tranquility and refreshment, the forerunner must come with his stern message of warfare. The enemies of peace will not just lie down of their own accord. They must be put down. Peace is a fruit of victory.

The warfare, of course, is not against flesh and blood, but against sin and idolatry, the terrorists that make peace impossible. Hans Urs von Balthasar said it quite well: we must take sides with the truth against ourselves. The Holy Spirit that the messiah offers to us will empower us to live in perfect harmony (Romans 15:6). But he comes not only as light, but as cleansing fire. In the light of the spirit, we must honestly and fearlessly look at our lives and give him permission to burn away the impurities. This may hurt a bit, but His is a refiner's fire, and His aim is to make us pure gold.

Repentance, Penance and Change

This is why the joyous season of Christmas is preceded by a sober season of purple vestments, the color of repentance. The Greek word in the New Testament translated as "repentance" is "metanoia." This literally means a change of mind or a transformation of thinking. Repentance starts with an act of the intellect and a change of heart whereby we allow our values to be more influenced by God's truth than the babble of the media.

The world will not take any time out of the shopping days before Christmas to attend to these things. The true Christian attitude towards holidays is simple . . . first the fast, then the feast. The world's approach is quite different . . . first the feast, then the hangover.

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OVERVIEW FOR THE MONTH

www.catholicculture.org

The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, which is celebrated on December 8. The first 2 days of December fall during the liturgical season known as Ordinary Time and are represented by the liturgical color green. The next 22 days fall during the liturgical season of Advent and are represented by the

liturgical color purple. The remaining days of December mark the beginning of the Christmas season. The liturgical color changes to white or gold — a symbol of joy, purity and innocence. ☐

FEASTS FOR DECEMBER

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of December are:

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---------------------------------|
| 3 | First Sunday of Advent, Sunday | 23 | John of Kanty, Opt. Mem. |
| 6 | Nicholas, Opt. Mem. | 24 | Fourth Sunday of Advent, Sunday |
| 7 | Ambrose, Memorial | 25 | Christmas, Solemnity |
| 8 | Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patronal Feast day of the United States of America , Solemnity | 26 | Stephen, Feast |
| 9 | Juan Diego (USA), Opt. Mem. | 27 | John, Feast |
| 10 | Second Sunday of Advent, Sunday | 28 | Holy Innocents, Feast |
| 11 | Damasus I, Opt. Mem. | 29 | Thomas Becket, Opt. Mem. |
| 12 | Our Lady of Guadalupe (USA), Feast | 31 | Holy Family, Feast |
| 13 | Lucy, Memorial | | |
| 14 | John of the Cross, Memorial | | |
| 17 | Third Sunday of Advent, Sunday | | |
| 21 | Peter Canisius, Opt. Mem. | | |

The feast of St. Francis Xavier (December 3) is superseded by the Sunday liturgy. The feast of St. Sylvester I (December 31) is superseded by the Feast of the Holy Family. ☐

CENACLE CORNER

*Seeking a deeper relationship with God
through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

THE SPIRITUAL MATERNITY OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

By Fr. Roger Landry

"How does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" This question asked by St. Elizabeth in the Visitation ought to be asked by each of us today on this great feast of the Patroness of America, Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary identified herself to St. Juan Diego in Tepeyac as the "Mother of God" and then later as our "Merciful Mother" and she came there as a woman on a mission. A specific type of mission. She's pregnant with Jesus seeking to bring him to others.

In the Gospel, we see what she does as soon as she became pregnant by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit: she went with haste to care for her cousin Elizabeth, forming her embryonic son to be the itinerant missionary he would become before he even had developed the tiniest of feet. And when she arrived in Ein Karim, Jesus blessed his in utero cousin John the Baptist in the womb, preparing him for his own mission as the precursor of the Messiah. Likewise in the first reading from the Book of Revelation, we see Mary pregnant once again, this time with the Church — we know it's the Church because she "wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth," something that didn't happen in Bethlehem, but certainly happened on Calvary as Jesus announced to her that she was to be the mother of the human race — seeking to help bring to birth in all of God's children the image of her Son Jesus. Mary seeks to do for us what Jesus entrusted her to do as he was dying on the Cross: to help bring her Son to birth in us.

When Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego 485 years, when she imprinted her image in his tilma, she did so as a pregnant Aztec princess, a symbol that she was about to give birth to her son here in our continent, in our hemisphere. Christianity had arrived in Mexico just a short 10 years before but there were relatively few converts because most of the indigenous people were turned off by the conquistadors than turned on by the Franciscan missionaries to the Lord both groups claimed to believe in. But after her appearance and seeing the image of this mestiza woman — which was a harmoniously beautiful mix between Indian and Spanish features, showing the compatibility of the Gospel being announced by the Spanish Franciscans and the Indian nature — there started to be converts by the millions. Ten million came to the faith in just the next decade.

When the Blessed Mother appeared to Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill on December 9, 1531, he was a simple, humble, 57 year-widower known for walking with his head down and shuffling his feet. He had been baptized

only seven years before by the Franciscan missionaries. He soon became a fervent believer. Every Saturday and Sunday he would walk 15 miles each way to Mass. As he

was journeying one cold Saturday morning, he heard a voice calling from the top of a hill, "Juanito," "Dieguito," "Come here!" He scaled the rocky slope, where at the top he saw the Blessed Virgin Mary arrayed in splendor. Our Lady announced she was on a mission of mercy and wanted him to be her emissary to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga of Mexico City to have him build a church on Tepeyac Hill. She said, "Know, know for sure, my dearest,

littlest, and youngest son, that I am the perfect and ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the God of truth through Whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near us, the Lord of heaven and earth. I want very much to have a little house built here for me, in which I will show Him, I will exalt Him and make Him manifest. I will give Him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassion, in my help, in my protection: because I am truly your merciful Mother, yours and all the people who live united in this land and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, who love me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships and sufferings. And to bring about what my compassionate and merciful concern is trying to achieve, you must go to the residence of the Bishop of Mexico and tell him that I sent you here to show him how strongly I wish him to build me a temple here on the plain; you will report to him exactly all you have seen, admired and what you have heard. Know for sure I will appreciate it very much, be grateful and will reward you. And you? You will deserve very much the reward I will give you for your fatigue, the work and trouble that my mission will cause you. Now my dearest son, you have heard my breath, my word; go now and put forth your best effort."



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HOLY INNOCENTS, SELFISHNESS AND ABORTION

*An Excerpt of the Homily By Fr. Randy Sly on 12/28/2016
Catholic Online (www.catholic.org)
Published in Living Faith*

In the Octave of Christmas, just after celebrating life we remember death. On this, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, we remember the young boys aged two and under who were slaughtered at the order of Herod the Great to make sure a rival ruler would not live.

The magi, who traveled from the East to seek the newborn King of the Jews, told Herod about their mission. From this point on Herod would do anything in his power to make sure he maintained his place of authority. He stopped at nothing, including the extinction of every male child that was two years of age or younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding region to assure no other king could arise. Prophecy or no prophecy, he was not going to let even God spoil his reign.

When you think about the slaughter of these innocent children and the continuing slaughter of the unborn through the horrors of abortion, it becomes clear that they come from the same supreme act of selfishness. Even though Herod heard the message coming from the prophets of his own people, he had no desire to align his heart with the purposes of God. Knowing the Messiah would be coming forth, he chose to attempt a counter-attack for the purposes of God. How futile, yet still he tried and innocent lives were lost in the process.

During this horror, can you imagine the weeping and wailing of the mothers in Bethlehem? The soldiers came through and strategically combed the town as well as the surrounding region, killing every boy that met the criteria?

For those of us who have fought the good fight in the pro-life trenches against the culture of death, this feast day and the souls of these innocent children have always meant a great deal. As martyrs, they remind us that, in our fallen world, there are many who will stop at nothing to maintain the status quo, even if it means the death of a child. St. Matthew does not tell us how many children died for Christ, but whatever the number, they are considered the first martyrs for our Lord.

Recently, another massacre of innocents took place in Connecticut. The nation and our leaders were highly

outraged, as well they should have been. For some selfish and sick reason, Adam Lanza, killed twenty children and six adults before taking his own life. We should be upset! In fact, according to a story by the Associated Press, 561 children have been murdered between 2006 and 2010. But that number does not include another group of children who will not grow to adulthood - the unborn who were killed through abortion. We are approaching 56 million children, since 1973.

The mission Our Lady of Guadalupe gave to St. Juan Diego shows us how Mary sought to give birth to her Son in his hemisphere. It wasn't merely bringing people to baptism and the sacraments. It was incorporating them into her Son's saving mission. It was helping them to continue her own work of bringing Christ to birth in others. When she identified herself to St. Juan Diego, she said, "I am truly your merciful Mother" and she wanted a place built where she could "hear [her sons' and daughters'] weeping, their complaints and heal all their

sorrows, hardships and sufferings." In this kairos of Mercy, she wants to show herself to be our merciful Mother, to hear our sorrows, hardships and sufferings, and to help us to become like Juan Diego's, facilitating her doing that for so many others. St. Juan Diego's vocation story shows us all how each of us, no matter how unworthy we think we are, are asked to cooperate in this missionary work of Christ — Mercy incarnate — and his Merciful mother.

At the vigil for the Sandy Hook shooting victims, President Obama stated, "We can't tolerate this anymore. These tragedies must end. And to end them, we must change. We will be told that the causes of such violence are complex, and that is true. No single law -- no set of laws can eliminate evil from the world, or prevent every senseless act of violence in our society. "But that can't be an excuse for inaction..."

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GOD TOUCHED ME

A FOUNT OF BLESSING

*What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?
(Psalm 116:12)*

By E. Pua

Pilgrimages and regular tours, for me, used to be the same "sightseeing" experience with a very slight difference -- that is the sites visited. Yes, I felt in awe at the Holy Sites visited and had spiritual experiences as I prayed at the different sites. However, after I left the place, my enthusiasm stayed there too -- another place of interest recorded in my memory. In fact, when I first saw the itinerary, I mentioned to Alice that we have already been to most of the places. And Alice's response was: "Yes, the same places, but we could have a different spiritual experience." I shrugged my shoulder to that response. However, after this pilgrimage, I realized she was right.

This time, the effect of the visits to the Holy Sites reinforced spiritual lessons already learned and the whole pilgrimage became a test -- like an actual driving test, only it was a test of my spiritual life. Sometimes or rather most of the times, I fully well knew I have flunked.

First lesson is about faith. Without faith, how could I have believed that the house of Mother Mary was transported to Loreto, Spain by the angels who made a heart-shaped hole as they carried it; that the painting of Jesus on the ceiling of the Holy Stairs inside the Holiest of Holies was painted by the angels; how could I have believed in the miracles of the Holy Infant Jesus of Prague; in the apparition of Jesus to St. Faustina; in the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Medjugorje; in the healing of my left shoulder bursitis as I touched the tomb of St. Pio of Pietrelcina; how could I continue to trust God through all the challenges I have encountered?

Second, "Be not afraid" of issues and challenges, of death, of anything because "the answer is in the Cross" (as mentioned by the nun at the Divine Mercy Shrine) and in our acceptance of God's will. In fact, when we have trials and tribulations, we should feel honored that Jesus has given us the privilege of sharing His passion, the "redemptive suffering." This lesson was constantly reinforced to me when we visited the museum of Blessed John Paul II where his first words as pope, "Be not afraid" was displayed on the wall; in the Gospel reading during the mass in Medjugorje; as I climbed Apparition Hill, and every time we prayed the Scriptural Rosary of the first Glorious Mystery.

Going up Apparition Hill (which I was privileged to do on the second day after I tried and failed to do on that first

rainy day), I first noticed the rocks and the quite steep hill. As I was climbing, the rocks and hill became a blur. Instead, I saw life -- the rocks being our issues and challenges as we journey to heaven, which was the top of the hill. The rocks prevented us from slipping down to where we started -- in much the same way that our trials and tribulations become our stairway to heaven. As I continued climbing with the help of Robert, my husband, we tried to look ahead to find an open trail only to find out that it was worst. It was less rocky but harder to walk on because of the mud. Yes, the rocks hurt our feet but those rocks broke our fall. Praying the rosary as we climbed the hill helped us in our determination to continue going up, in spite of our huffing and puffing. Here, I pondered: if healthy eating and constant exercise keep our bodies fit, then constant prayer and doing good deeds keep our souls fit.

As we got up closer, we had a view of the crucifix. Looking at the cross and straining as my eyes tried hard to embrace the cross, I regained more strength to keep on climbing. In front of the cross, we stopped and prayed the "Prayer Before the Crucifix." Then, to our right, we saw the statue of Mother Mary, the Queen of Peace. Since we were the last to get there, our group was already waiting for us in front of Mother Mary's statue and we all prayed together -- (we extend our appreciation and gratitude to them for waiting). In front of Mother Mary, I felt an indescribable joy, inner peace and serenity. I did not want to leave. I felt like I was "in heaven." Since we were still reeling from this wonderful feeling, it was Romy who reminded us to have our picture taken -- thank you, Romy.

This was the first trip that my husband and I were always together. Previously, we would make an agreement that wherever direction one of us would want to go, the other does not need to follow. At the outset of this pilgrimage, we had that same agreement again. However, the Lord willed us to be together most of the time.

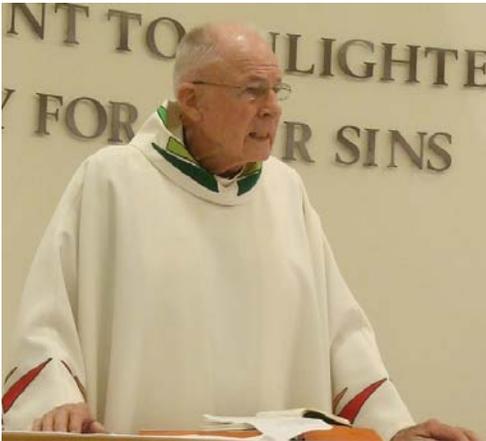
Finally, my patience and humility were tested during the whole trip. On those days I flunked, I know I have emerged learning something new -- God's way of refining my heart through the Holy Spirit.

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SPIRITUAL ARMY NEWS DISPATCH

OUR SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR FR. LAWRENCE MURPHY, S.J. SIGNS OFF

The Spiritual Army of God the Father Ministry's 1st Spiritual Director, Fr. Larry Murphy has passed on last October 17, 2017 at Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, Los Gatos. He was 90 years of age, a Jesuit for 65 years, and a priest for 53 years. Fr. Murphy obliged to celebrate our Masses on 1st Saturdays and Sundays for the past ten years until he retired in 2011.



We can easily approach Fr. Murphy for a quick confession, blessings of water and other objects and most of all, a sacred Mass in the comfort of our homes.

We remember him as a priest who didn't mind driving a little bit to say a Mass for the Ministry. Not a single request has been turned down by Fr. Murphy to anoint or visit the sick.

Father you have been a role model for our spirituality and for that we thank you! You will be sorely missed!

SAVE THE DATE

Save the Date for the Holy Infant Jesus celebration on January 20, 2018. This event will be held at St Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church at 1111 Michael Way, Las Vegas, NV 89108. Liturgical celebration starts at 12:30 PM. followed by procession and Holy Infant Jesus Dance Petition and Thanksgiving (Sinulog) to the Lavoy Hall where lunch will be served. The afternoon will include a program with surprise numbers, dance and more Dance Petition and Thanksgiving (Sinulog).

The image of the Holy Infant Jesus will travel from Los Angeles to Las Vegas on the day before Thanksgiving to mark the upcoming Feast Day celebration. He will be making visits at the homes of the Las Vegas devotees and friends who are eagerly awaiting His arrival. Visits will be limited to three days at each home to accommodate more homes to be visited. After the celebration, He will be going back to Los Angeles. □

UPCOMING EVENTS

TOY DRIVE FOR THE LOS ANGELES CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

PLEASE DROP OFF
YOUR NEW UNWRAPPED TOYS
EVERY 1ST AND 3RD SATURDAYS
AT THE CONVENT OF THE SISTER
DISCIPLES OF THE DIVINE MASTER

PILGRIMAGE TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, MEXICO

DECEMBER 9-13, 2017

DAILY ACTIVITIES AND OTHER
INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE AT
WWW.SPIRITUALARMYOFGOD.ORG

THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON POTLUCK & GIFT EXCHANGE IN LOS ANGELES

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2017
CONVENT OF THE SISTER DISCIPLES
OF THE DIVINE MASTER
1:00 – 3:00 PM

CHRISTMAS PARTY

IN LAS VEGAS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2017
11:00 AM – 3:00 PM
BANQUET ROOM | D'PINOY JOINT
6820 W. FLAMINGO ROAD
LAS VEGAS, NV 89103
CALL EVELYN @ 702 274 4315
FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

INFANT JESUS CELEBRATION

JANUARY 19-21, 2018
SAINT FRANCIS DESALES
LAS VEGAS, NV

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

SEEKING INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS THROUGH THE BIBLE

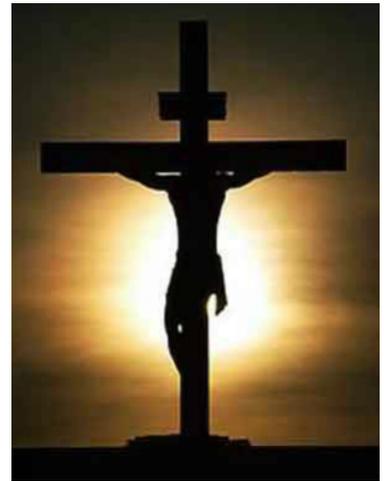
THE CROSS

*To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light,
and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins
and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. (Acts 26:18)*

By Son Helper

Although crosses adorn our church, steeples and their likeness are printed, woven, or worn in variety of fashionable way -- only a vague knowledge of the true meaning of the Cross comes to mind. What really happened at the cross? What does it mean to someone today? Is it all that important? At the cross of Christ, the three mortal enemies of humankind -- sin, death, and the devil -- were confronted and defeated by the Son of God. Jesus took our sins upon Himself at the cross. He bore God's judgment of death on our behalf, as our substitute. God's uncompromising wrath against sin was satisfied. We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, from the dominion of sin to the dominion of God.

The next time we look at a cross, wear it around our necks, or see its imprint, remember that sin was judged, death slain, and the devil conquered in Calvary. □



*Open your hearts with sincerity
before my Father.
God knows what is in your hearts
and will take that burden
and replace it with
LOVE AND JOY.*

Jesus of Nazareth

11182017

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

THE 800 OUR FATHER DEVOTION

The Spiritual Army of God the Father acknowledges with thanks our generous December sponsors of the 800 Our Father Devotion. We are grateful that we have merited their partnership and support in providing a venue of spirituality and fellowship for the devotees of God the Father.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Robert & Evelyn Pua

Los Angeles, California

Alice & April Araneta | Myles Avanzado

Marinella DeLeon

FOR PRAYERS HEARD AND PETITIONS GRANTED

Thank you, Eternal Father, for Your Will that transformed our sorrow into joy, our tears of anguish into tears of thanksgiving. Our physical and spiritual re-creation, through Your Healing Hands, kept us enclosed and revived in our hope for renewed lives as we look up to the heavens praising You, in Jesus' most Holy Name, through the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother, and of the angels and saints.

I am thankful for the October and November newsletter articles from Son Helper. I am thankful for the newsletter. And very thankful for the October God Touched Me article.

- Joyce

O, loving, kind, generous and merciful Eternal Father, thank you for the life that you've given Gary and I to share and making us instruments of your immense love and saving grace for mankind, in Jesus' most Holy Name and through the power of The Holy Cross Prayer.

Gary and I will love and reverence You with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Through Jesus and Mary, we come to do Your Will and with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and protection of St. Michael The Archangel, help us to remain faithful and obedient to You, God The Father, for we love, honor, and know You as our Almighty Eternal Father!

- Maria Sheets

This Christmas season we thank Our Eternal Father in heaven for all the blessings He has bestowed on us this year.

May He continue to touch each and every one of us in the Ministry, the challenges and graces we receive in our every day endeavor and relationship with others.

Lastly, I personally thank you for all the support you have extended to the Ministry through your continuing efforts to have our spiritual camaraderie so binding amongst us with God being the center of this ministerial relationship.

With all these, I thank you very much! SALAMAT PO!

*In God's Love,
Victor Araneta*

Continued from Page 2

ADVENT OF PEACE – SEASON OF REPENTANCE

Fast before the Feast

Let's do it right. Let's get everyone in the family to confession this Advent. Daily prayer is a must. Fasting from the din of radio, TV and internet and more time in God's word can go a long way towards driving out the darkness and burning off the dross in our lives. And try this little Advent custom. In our house, the crèche scene is set up early in Advent but the manger remains empty. We get some bagged straw from the craft shop. As often as anyone does a hidden work of penance or charity, he or she may place a piece of straw in the manger to prepare a comfortable place of rest for the infant King. The goal? To fill the manger by Christmas Eve.

Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio is a professor of theology, a father of five, business owner, and professional performer. Marcellino D'Ambrosio (aka "Dr. Italy") crafts talks, blog posts, books, and videos that are always fascinating, practical, and easy to understand. He is a TV and radio personality, New York Times best-selling author, speaker, and pilgrimage host who has been leading people on a journey of discovery for over thirty years.

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THE SPIRITUAL MATERNITY

Obedying simply and immediately, he headed in his simple peasant's outfit to the episcopal residence, where he was forced to wait for hours in an outdoor courtyard. Eventually the bishop received him, treated him with kindness, but basically, despite Juan Diego's obvious sincerity, as a little deluded. Juan Diego left feeling like a complete failure. Returning at once to Our Lady on Tepeyac Hill, he said that he had struck out. "I beg you, Noble Lady," he implored, "to entrust this message to someone of importance, someone well-known and respected, so that your wish will be accomplished. For I am only a lowly peasant and you, my Lady, have sent me to a place where I have no standing. Forgive me if I have disappointed you for having failed in my mission."

Our Lady smiled tenderly on him and said, "Listen to me, my dearest son, and understand that I have many servants and messengers whom I could charge with the delivery of my message. But it is altogether necessary that you should be the one to undertake this mission and that it be through your mediation and assistance that my wish should be accomplished. I urge you to go to the Bishop again tomorrow. Tell him in my name and make him fully understand my disposition, that he should undertake the erection of the teocalli (temple) for which I ask. And repeat to him that it is I in person, the ever Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, who send you." We see here that Mary didn't, strictly speaking, need Juan Diego. She could have appeared to the Bishop himself. But she wanted to incorporate him in this saving mission. Likewise

she wants to involve each of us, no matter how unqualified we feel or may in fact be.

So after that second meeting with our Lady, Juan Diego went with trepidation to see the bishop a second time. He feared what the bishop's overprotective servants might do to him. They greeted him with ill-concealed exasperation. He was told the bishop was busy with more important matters. He told them he was willing to wait — and did, for several hours in the frigid outdoor courtyard. When he finally met the bishop again, he repeated, with fervor and tears, the message of Our Lady entrusted to him. The bishop asked some questions. Though moved by Juan Diego's sincerity, he wasn't going to build a church in a desolate spot on the basis of one native's unsubstantiated word. To test the message, the bishop asked him for a special secret sign from Our Lady. Juan Diego left at once to ask for the sign. Arriving back at Tepeyac, the Virgin told him to return the following day to receive the sign to bring the bishop: "That is fine, my youngest and dearest son; you will return here tomorrow so that you may take the sign he asked for. Then, he will believe and no longer doubt or be suspicious of you; and know, my dear son, I shall reward your care, work and fatigue in my behalf. Go now; tomorrow I shall be here waiting for you." That sign turned out to be Castillian roses, which had not yet been introduced to Mexico, growing on the top of a stony hill in frigid December temperatures. Juan Diego was instructed to bring them back to the bishop in his tilma, or outer parka. When he returned to the bishop, as he opened up his tilma, the bishop saw the roses from his native Castille, the sign he was seeking. He and everyone else also saw something even more miraculous: some of the roses had melted into the tilma and produced the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe: our Lady, dressed like a pregnant Aztec princess, was giving witness that she was ready to give birth to Christ among the Mexican people.

For me one of the most impressive elements of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and an incredible sign of its authenticity is what has happened when they've done modern scientific tests on the tilma. Various tilmas like it of maguey-fiber (ayate) fabric have been made as controls and they all begin decomposing, even behind glass, after about 20 years, and yet the image itself is present without any decomposition after 484 years. Studies have been done about how an image could get and stay on a tilma like that, showing that it defies human means; infrared studies have shown that there was no trace of paint at all and that the fabric hadn't been treated with a means to receive paint. And my favorite is what has been discovered with regard to the eyes. With high-tech zooms magnifying the image 2500 times, it's been discovered that 13 highly detailed figures are present in the iris and pupil of her eyes, in the left and right eyes, as would happen when human eyes reflect the objects before them. The figures seem to be all those

who would have been present in the Bishop's room when Juan Diego unfurled the tilma, including the Bishop himself, shown as a balding, elderly man with a white beard, matching portraits of him at the time. Such optical information would be impossible for anyone to paint, not only because of the microscopic detail but also because the science of the eye and how images are processed in reflection (the Purkinje effect) not known at the time. At a theological level, it shows that the Blessed Virgin always has us in the apple of the eye. She's looking at all of us now with love. We're not only in her eyes but in her heart. She really is our merciful mother.

And just like she gave birth to Jesus among the Mexicans in the 1530s, so she wants to give birth to Christ within us, to teach us how to relate to him within us like she did as he was growing within her. And she has that chance here at Mass, particularly daily Mass, which is how she appeared to St. Juan Diego. It's here that she gives us a chance to enter into communion with her Merciful Son and together with him, united with her and all the saints, offer to the Eternal Father Christ's body, blood, soul and divinity, in expiation for our sins and the sins of the world stretching from the beginning to the end of time! ☐

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HOLY INNOCENTS, SELFISHNESS AND ABORTION

I couldn't agree more. Now, however, it is time for Catholics and other Christians to join together and form voice reminding our leaders that this same impetus should be focused on the victims of abortion as well. I want our leaders to shed a tear for the unborn as well.

So, why the duplicity? Why is there a holocaust of babies that goes on within a society that decries the shooting of other children? Widespread selfishness. These children would have been rivals for the attention mothers and fathers wanted to give to other interests and desires. Such challenges cannot be tolerated and so the child must go.

What a parallel today, as so many of our leaders have joined the genocide bandwagon to maintain the affections of the voting populace from the culture of death.

It would seem that those slaughtered by Herod are sharing that day with many others throughout the centuries. These are children who were killed because they were an inconvenience, a competition for time attention and love. Or in the case of Sandy Hook Elementary, simply school children who fell within the rifle sight of evil. So how can we best honor these tiny martyrs?

Honor their sacrifice by our life and witness

First, we can make their sacrifice worthwhile through our commitment to Christ. Obviously, they did not die in vain, yet each one who honors Christ with his or her life and witness gives greater value to their offering.

As Paul said to the Romans, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present yourself as a living sacrifice unto God which is your reasonable service of worship." (Rom. 12:1) There's an old saying that the only problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps trying to climb down off the altar. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to Christ and not let convenience and comfort dull our spiritual senses. Jesus reminded us of the work we must do to maintain the seed of His Word in our hearts. In the parable of the soils, it is the garden of the heart and, more particularly, the soil found there that must be cultivated. Depending on what our hearts are like, there is seed choked off by the weeds of other "stuff" found there, seed dried up due to the hardness and seed stolen by enemies of life.

Walk in the Light as He is in the Light

The children were not willing martyrs nor unwilling. They simply had no voice or decision to make. They were not only tiny martyrs; they were surprised by martyrdom. While Herod was preparing for the slaughter, Joseph was warned to take Mary and the child to Egypt and wait. For all his cunning, the ruler had miscalculated the fact he was dealing with the God of the universe.

Just like Herod, we can forget that God is God and we're not. He not only can inspire prophecy, He can make sure it comes true. "How good it is to remember that through the sacraments we, too, participate in the supernatural dimension of the living God.

During his homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany in January of 2011, Pope Benedict XVI stated, "Herod is an unsympathetic figure to us, one we instinctively judge negatively because of his brutality. Yet we should ask ourselves whether there is not perhaps something of Herod in us too..."

"We must remove all idea of rivalry from our minds and hearts, the idea that giving space to God is a limit to the self. We must open ourselves to the certainty that God is omnipotent love, which takes away nothing, which threatens nothing. Quite the contrary, He is the only One capable of offering us the chance to live a full life and to experience true joy.

Walking in the light of our Lord's teachings and trusting in His sacrifice for our sins form two key portions of our life in Christ. These are not simply tokens of information from one who is enlightened; we remain enlightened by what had taken place.

Speak for those who cannot speak

St. Quodvultdeus, a bishop, wrote many centuries ago, "The children die for Christ, though they do not know it. The parents mourn for the death of martyrs. The child makes of those as yet unable to speak fit witnesses to himself."

While the innocents had loving mothers and fathers, there was no one in authority who would or could speak for them. They were seen as property not persons and Herod

wanted desperately to rid himself of a potential competitor for the crown.

For today's society to take seriously the cause of the unborn, we have to rise up as a unified voice. This is paramount. Every year at the March for Life, I am astounded by the sheer number of participants - particularly among the young. I'm floored by the enthusiasm of those who attend. The number is exponentially higher than what the mainstream media reports. With all of this, however, we still need more voices from every face of Christianity working together. The culture of death needs to know this is not a feeble declaration; that there are many who speak for the unborn. This is the key!

"How great a gift of grace is here! To what merits of their own do the children owe this kind of victory? They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ. They cannot use their limbs to engage in battle, yet already they bear off the palm of victory. The death of these tiny martyrs should stir us to action. They were innocent as were those killed at Sandy Hook Elementary and in other violent attacks. The 56 million who have died through abortion share this same status of martyrdom. To them especially we owe a debt to continue to stand for Life no matter what. One-third of a generation has been killed and the shedding of blood hasn't stopped.

"A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more." Jeremiah 31:15 □

Father Randy Sly is the Associate Editor of Catholic Online and a priest with the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter (<http://usordinariate.org>) established by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, through the Apostolic Constitution "Anglicanorum coetibus."

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A FOUNT OF BLESSING

Overall, each day in every place we visited in this pilgrimage was equally incomparable. It was money well spent. I felt God's love for and through everybody in the group. After almost a year, I am still reeling from it and would not like to get out of that feeling. I thank God daily for giving me the privilege of joining and allowing me to experience His great love for us and for reinforcing my love for Mother Mary. I also thank God for allowing me to get acquainted and make friends with the other pilgrims, for giving me my prayer buddies (Loida whose name I picked and Ben who picked my name) and Robert's (Glenda whose name he picked and Frank Lim who picked his name) who we continue to pray for daily, for the generosity of MariPaz to all of us, for having Victor and Alice as our coordinators (they prepared the meditation booklets and planned activities for our trip), for our Spiritual Director, Fr. Sabino, who helped us get tickets to attend the midnight mass officiated by Pope Benedict XVI inside St. Peter's Basilica, for our tour guides, and for directing our coordinators to 206 Tours. Sounds like an Oscar awardee? Yes, my heart oozes with thanksgiving to God for this spiritual privilege of great magnitude.

And the test of my spiritual life continues □

Editors' Note: We are republishing this article in the hope that on our upcoming Our Lady of Guadalupe pilgrimage, we do not look at it through the eyes of a tourist; instead, let us be pilgrims in the true sense of the word. Let us seek God and feel what He wants us to learn.

DEVOTION SCHEDULE



THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER

cordially invites you to the following devotions:

IN LOS ANGELES:

1st Saturday Devotion

The Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | 501 N. Beaudry Avenue | (213) 250-7962
Holy Mass starts at 8:30 A.M. | 1st Saturday Devotional Prayers follow.

Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the Month | The Monastery of the Angels | 1977 Carmen Avenue on Gower | (323) 466-2186
12:30 P.M. - Rosary to the Father | 1:15 P.M. - Holy Mass
2:00 P.M. - Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

800 Our Father Devotion – December 16, 2017

at the Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | starting at 8:30 a.m.
Please call Victor at (213) 385-7798 if you wish to become a Sponsor of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion.

IN CHINO HILLS:

Sacred Heart Devotional Group for Departed Souls

Every 1st Friday of the Month | 16657 Tourmaline Street | Chino Hills, CA 91709
Devotional Prayers start at 8:30 P.M.

IN LAS VEGAS:

Sacred Heart and Precious Blood of Jesus Devotion for Departed Souls

Every 1st Friday of the Month
at The Cenacle House in The Enclave 8455 W. Sahara Avenue #172 | Las Vegas, NV 89117
Devotional Prayers start at 2:30 P.M. Fall and winter schedule starting November will start at 2:00 P.M.

1st Saturday Devotion

at Saint Frances de Sales Parish | 1111 Michael Way | Las Vegas, NV 89108 at 8:00 AM
Devotional Prayers follow.

and

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117 at 1:00 PM
Cenacle will be at 10:00 AM before the devotional prayers.

Please call Evelyn at (702)274-4315 for entry to The Enclave or for more information.

Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the month from 2:00 to 3:30 P.M.
at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117

800 Our Father – December 16, 2017

*Please call (702) 274-4315 for
dates and venues for the coming months or for more information or if you wish to Sponsor the Devotion.*

Mother of Perpetual Help Novena & Rosary Prayers

Every Wednesday of the month after the 7:30 AM Mass (*except during the Holy Week*)
St. Francis de Sales Parish | 1111 Michael Way | Las Vegas, NV 89108

IN THE PHILIPPINES

2000 Hail Mary Devotion - Metro Manila Area

Letty Rollan has organized the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion in various areas of Metro Manila through the members of the "Mother Butler." Please call her U.S. Vonage phone (510) 779-6652, text her at Manila #916-384-9300, and/or call her Manila landline 939-4677. Mention Mila Lumba's name to be recognized.