



# 1<sup>ST</sup> SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2021

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## WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME

*In this lifetime, I have learned that Christmas magic is powerful, but the power in our hearts is even more magical. Our ability to love one another, to renew our faith and bring hope into our lives and the lives of others, are the greatest of gifts to bestow and receive.*

*By Lillie Leonardi*

*Retired FBI Community Affairs Coordinator*

***"Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful." -- Norman Vincent Peale***

Growing up in a home overrun by nine siblings allowed for moments of great revelry. The hours spent with each other, sharing in the times at rest and at play, contain some of the best memories of my childhood. When I think of treasured moments that cascade across my mind, I am reminded of the impressions of Christmases past. The moments filled with the season of wonder and joy.

The decorating of the tree, writing letters to Santa, baking cookies while the pleasant aromas of almond and vanilla hung in the air, constructing the handcrafted gifts for those most loved and attending midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.



It was a time for families to gather and create new memories to hold dear to their hearts. In recalling past holidays, three words come to mind: faith, hope and love. The faith that there was a higher power who watched over us each and every day. The hope of a better today and the tomorrows still to come. The love of family and good friends preparing a meal and breaking bread as one. Although unseen, I felt the presence of a being greater than those around me. These three emotions were the reasons that this particular time of year filled my heart with such magic.

One of my favorite recollections is that of Christmas morning and the traditions that were integral to my family. Before my parents would allow their children to open up the presents from Santa, we were required to sing "Happy Birthday" to baby Jesus. Mom would always bake a layered cake and artfully script the words "Happy Birthday, Jesus." A single candle was placed on top. The entire family would gather around the tree and sing to celebrate the newborn's welcoming into the world. Each of us helped to blow out the candle while making a wish for what the new year would bring. My dad would then bend down and remove the cover -- a tiny blanket that protected the swaddling infant in the manger until Christmas morning -- from the figurine of the Christ child. We would all stand back and marvel at the meaning of it all. A child born unto the world

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# FEASTS FOR DECEMBER

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

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 Francis Xavier, Memorial  | 25 Solemnity the Nativity of the Lord, Solemnity |
| 5 Second Sunday of Advent, Sunday   | 26 Feast of the Holy Family, Feast               |
| 6 Nicholas, Opt. Mem.   | 27 John, Feast                                   |
| 7 Ambrose, Memorial   | 28 Feast of the Holy Innocents, Feast            |
| 8 Solemnity of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patronal Feast day of the USA, Solemnity | 29 Thomas Becket, Opt. Mem.                      |
| 9 Juan Diego (USA), Opt. Mem.   | 31 Sylvester I, Opt. Mem.                        |
| 11 Damasus I, Opt. Mem.   |  |
| 12 Third Sunday of Advent, Sunday   |  |
| 13 Lucy, Memorial   |  |
| 14 John of the Cross, Memorial  |  |
| 19 Fourth Sunday of Advent; O Root of Jesse, Sunday   |  |
| 21 Peter Canisius; O Dayspring, Opt. Mem.   |  |
| 23 John of Kanty; O Emmanuel, Opt. Mem.   |  |

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) is superseded by the Sunday liturgy. The feast of St. Stephen (December 26) is superseded by the feast of the Holy Family. . ☐

## THANK YOU

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

*Psalm 106:2*

*I thank God for The Spiritual Army of God the Father. Every prayer, cenacle, newsletter, experience, and person I have encountered has been a blessing. – Joyce*

*Thank you, Lord, for all the blessings and answered prayers for myself and my family. Thank you that what I face every day with your help, I was able to endure, overcome and prevail. Thank you in advance for Your strength, energy, and peace that will sustain and fill me. In Jesus name I pray. Amen - Gertrude & Family*

### OUR CENACLE CORNER

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

#### SUFFERING WE NEED TO ENDURE

COLOSSIANS 1:24

1 PETER 3:17

ROMAN'S 8:18

# GOD TOUCHED ME

*Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.  
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. — 1 Chronicles 16:24*

## WALK WITH FAITH, TRUST AND HOPE

*By Evelyn Pua*

*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord,  
thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)*

In January, 2021, my Digestive Doctor ordered an MRI. I have been under his care since November 2017 due to my pancreatic cyst which was benign. Should this MRI result still show the cyst as stable or diminished, then, my next MRI would be after three years. At my next visit three weeks later, he told me that the good news is that my pancreatic cyst has diminished. However, a lung nodule was seen so he sent a note to my primary care physician (PCP) to order the CT scan as written on the MRI report.

I went through all the tests needed: CT scan in February, PET SCAN in March, and lung nodule biopsy in a hospital setting in May. On May 11, while my husband and I were in Sedona, my PCP called and told me I have adenocarcinoma with large cells, Stage 1 on the lower lobe of my left lung and that she sent a referral request to my insurance for an oncologist. While waiting for the oncologist to call, my doctor ordered a thyroid ultrasound on May 18 since something was also seen in the PET SCAN. On May 24, I went to meet with the oncologist who said I need surgery. My insurance worked fast in assigning me to a cardio-thoracic surgeon and on June 23, I had my surgery at Desert Springs Hospital. This hospital is not close to our home but I did not complain because the surgeon is the Chairman of Surgery at that Hospital. God heard my prayers once again. Throughout this process, I was not worried and just surrendered everything to God. I just went with the flow with just my faith and trust in God and His promise of hope. I prayed for the doctors, the nurses, the medical staff as well as the care and maintenance staff who will be responsible for my surgery and the pre and post care. I prepared myself spiritually and physically, attending daily mass and praying more every day; and going to the gym every day for Zumba classes as well as walking 2 miles daily. I attended mass the day before my surgery and after mass, the priest gave me the Anointing of the sick as he prayed over me for about 30 minutes. My friends were all praying for me and the night before my surgery, they initiated a zoom rosary for my intentions.

On the day of my surgery, the medical staff were all cheerful and I was at ease and relaxed as I asked God to take care of me and surrendered myself to His will. The

next thing I remember was waking up to a nurse hugging me saying, "Tita, it is me, Lilly. I assisted in your surgery." This nurse is one of the parishioners at St. Sharbel who joins our 1st Sunday God the Father devotion. I felt then that God the Father was telling me I am with you and I am sending one of my devotees to be with you inside the OR.

They called in my husband to show him I was awake and then asked him to meet me at the ICU room where they would take me. I was in and out of sleep until I woke up in the ICU. My husband and two lady friends were there talking to me while I was still too weak to speak. I just nodded or shook my head to their questions. They had my phone and texted/emailed my close friends about my status. That evening, I was transferred to the Immediate Care floor. My feet and arms were painful but the surgical area was not. I found out that they numbed my left side from my breast to my waist and this numbness should last for 3 months. The nurses told me I should start getting up so my surgical wound will heal faster. So I asked them to stop giving me pain killers so I can be up and about.

April Araneta, another devotee of God the Father, happened to be in Las Vegas so she was one of my first visitors. She prayed the Divine Mercy while I responded whenever I could but kept falling asleep in between the prayers. Some friends visited and I was aware of their presence but I could not talk to them. My son arrived and stayed over the weekend but had to go back to work in L.A. because they just arrived from their two-week Hawaii vacation. He and his family came back during the 4th of July weekend and stayed in Las Vegas for 4 days. My grandchildren could not visit me since they are all under 18 years old so we just talked via Facetime.

Visiting hours were from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM and only two visitors at a time. My husband stayed with me the whole 12 hours and would wait outside if I have two visitors in the room. He asked everyone at the hospital if he could stay overnight but hospital rules would not allow it. The hospital staff was very kind and caring. If someone passed by my room and saw my call light on, they would come in and helped me even if they were not assigned to my room.

During my hospital stay, it was very difficult for me to pray but my husband always prayed the rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet and other prayers aloud and I would respond whenever I could but I kept snoozing since I was still feeling very tired. So my main prayer consisted of talking to God as a friend. On my fifth day at the hospital, I was moved to the Med Surg floor and so I thought that I would soon be discharged. That night, I talked to God asking Him for guidance. I told Him that everyone was telling me that I should go to a rehab place to continue my therapy and recovery. I asked Him if this was the best option for me since I had no idea what to expect. I further asked Him to make the decision and that I would go wherever He wants me to go.

On July 4, my nephrologist was talking more than she used to. Finally, she said that she would prefer that I go straight home and not go to rehab because of the COVID exposure. As she was telling me this, my mind was asking God if He was using my nephrologist to give me His answer. Unbeknownst to me, 3 days before July 4, the doctors were observing my white blood cell count since it was quite high. On July 5, the PCP finally told me that they were calling in an Infectious Disease doctor to find out why my white blood count was too high.

The Infectious Disease doctor came and asked me questions. He told me that with his experience, he can immediately tell if the patient has an infection. He said, "Your eyes are bright, your skin color is pinkish, your whole demeanor is active, you do not look like you have an infection. I will need to study your case." When I told my friend what he told me, my friend asked me if I was contented with what the doctor said. I told her that I am not worried a bit because I knew it was God raising my white blood cell count because He wanted me have my rehab at the hospital. The next day, the PCP told me that I would be having my rehab at the hospital while waiting for the infectious disease doctor to give his diagnosis and for my white blood count to go down to an acceptable

level. A CT scan was ordered but without contrast because my eGFR was quite low. The result stated there was no infection but my left lung looked different from my previous CT scans and X-rays. The surgeon, PCP and Infectious Disease doctor all said that because the lower lobe of my left lung was removed, it was natural for my upper lobe to move. My white blood cell slowly decreased to an acceptable level, and I was finally discharged on July 11, after staying at the hospital for 19 days.

While recovering at home, a nurse, CNA, and PT came to my house for three weeks. As of this time, I can do more activities but I am not fully recovered yet. My left side is slightly numb and I can feel the spasm once in a while as my left lung is still recovering. I had a chest Xray in August and the surgeon said it looks good so he discharged me from his care. Had a PET SCAN and blood work for Mutation Analysis and both tests stated no cancer detected. My eGFR went up to 60 which is a good result for my Stage 3 kidney disease. I had a thyroid biopsy in August, benign result. A shoulder biopsy in October, also benign. I had another PET Scan on November 23 and waiting for the result. A renal biopsy due to proteinuria is being scheduled in December. Since my hospital discharge, we already went on a 6 day tour to New England states in September and one week vacation at my son's home in Santa Clarita, CA in November.

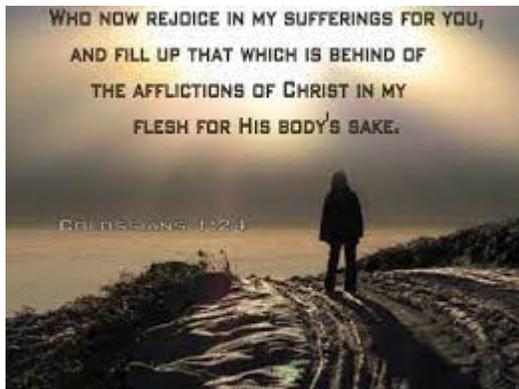
I have so much to be thankful to God for this new lease on my life and by faith and trust, I offer my whole life to Him. I hope to be fully recovered by end of December. Yesterday, during the 1st Sunday of Advent mass, I truly felt the meaning of the advent candles: hope, love, joy and peace. And on this day, a part of Mother Mary's message to Robert and me was, "Put God in your heart and you will see God the Father."□

# SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

## SUFFERING WITH OUR MOTHER

BY VICTOR H. ARANETA

When we offer ourselves to our Blessed Mother, we must be prepared to emulate the same sorrows that she went through because of her role in the salvation of humankind. As we look at



these sufferings, we, as creation of God, can only accept or reject these sorrows.

Our sorrows will definitely be physical and a lot of times intense. The enemy may even pursue that through spiritual dryness which some saints call it "darkness of the soul." So, how

do we face these lamentations, if you will? The only way is through acceptance and openness to God's will. Easier said than done. TRUE! As Saint Paul wrote "to be a disciple of our Lord and imitation of the Blessed Mother, the things that will happen in this world are nothing, compared to the greatness and glorification we will face in the world of everlasting life." Just like what the Blessed Mother promised St. Bernadette Soubirous "I cannot promise you a beautiful life in this world, but I will definitely promise you a beautiful life in everlasting company of my son, Jesus."

Should we accept that challenge if we undergo the same suffering that calls us to be holy? The difficulty to do so is very clear as we live in this mundane life of luxury that this world offers!

**Prayer:** O my Mother Mary teach us to be callous to the luxurious life that we face in this realm and teach us to accept things as they are and reject the promise of the enemy that will drag us to perdition. As we offer ourselves to you, ask your Son Jesus to open our hearts to accept our own crosses and you Mother, teach us to be steadfast on the sorrows we encounter as we offer them all to your Son through your intercession in the GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER, AMEN. ☐

## Upcoming Events

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> FRIDAY DEVOTION

DECEMBER 3, 2021 @ 9:30 PM  
IN LOS ANGELES: VIA ZOOM

IN LAS VEGAS:  
AT THE CENACLE HOUSE

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> SATURDAY DEVOTION

DECEMBER 4, 2021  
MASS AT 10:00 AM  
IN LOS ANGELES: VIA ZOOM

IN LAS VEGAS:  
AT THE CENACLE HOUSE

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY DEVOTION

DECEMBER 5, 2021  
IN LOS ANGELES:  
THE MONASTERY OF THE ANGELS  
DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS BEGIN  
AT 10:15 AM

IN LAS VEGAS –  
ST. SHARBEL CATHOLIC CHURCH  
LAS VEGAS, NV 89183  
MASS AT 9:30 AM  
FOLLOWED BY DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS  
AT THE CHAPEL

#### 2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION

IN LAS VEGAS:  
DECEMBER 18, 2021  
AT THE CENACLE HOUSE

IN LOS ANGELES:  
DECEMBER 18, 2021  
VIA ZOOM

## WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME

to serve as our savior. In our family, this act of reverence was significant to our religious beliefs and to all that my parents held sacred. At the time, I could not fully appreciate the significance of this family observance.

I am now mindful of what Christmas meant then and what it means in the present day. In my youth, one filled with the excitement of the jolly old elf and stockings hung by the chimney with care, Christmas carried an important meaning. I comprehended an air of great consequence because everyone seemed to be a bit kinder and more caring. The heartfelt sentiment was still remiss to me. With many days now gone by, the emotions attached to this special time have grown to include a kaleidoscope of faith, hope and love. A hope for a new beginning and a time of renewal, not only in a sense of religious traditions, but in those rooted to the spirituality of my soul. A soul that has come full-circle in its understanding of what Christmas means to me.

In this lifetime, I have learned that Christmas magic is powerful, but the power in our hearts is even more magical. Our ability to love one another, to renew our faith and bring hope into our lives and the lives of others, are the greatest of gifts to bestow and receive. Christmas is indeed a time for sharing in gift giving and celebrating, too. And yet, the greatest gifts are not those wrapped in fine papers or dressed in colorful bows. They are those given with an open heart, one wrapped in the lovely ribbons of faith, hope, and love. To quote Charles Dickens' classic tale, "A Christmas Carol," "I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year." Words of wisdom that should be echoed on this day and all the days yet to be. □



***"I am your Mother Mary.***

***Everything is happening for one purpose alone according to God's plan. These things may be happening in front of the world to see or behind as God wills it. Remember, my Son Jesus came, and no one knew that He is the Savior of the World except for a chosen few. Things are happening and every man will be surprised except for the chosen few.***

***Pray, pray, pray, that all truth may be revealed, and the false leaders will be revealed, as well. And their allies will be punished both by this world and by God's standards of justice.***

***Always be touched by my Son's presence in the Eucharist and spend your time with Him.***

***I love you, my children.***

***Mary, Your Lady of the Rosary***

***11062021***