



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

THE THREE TYPES OF CHRISTMAS - AND HOW TO CELEBRATE THEM EXCERPTED.

PUBLISHED BY DANIEL STAUDT ON JANUARY 1, 2025

buildingcatholicculture.com

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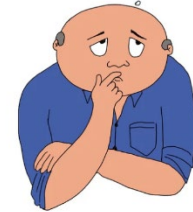
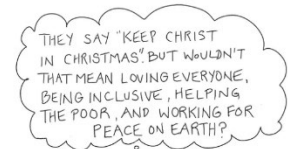
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THE EDITORS OF THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER'S 1ST SATURDAY NEWSLETTER ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE CONSISTENT QUALITY AND ACCURACY OF THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER'S 1ST SATURDAY NEWSLETTER AND AS SUCH RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REJECT 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.

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IN TERMS OF CHRISTMAS, CATHOLICS ARE FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE. WE DON'T NEED TO BE REMINDED HOW FAR WE'VE FALLEN FROM THE SIMPLE CELEBRATION OF CHRIST'S BIRTH: INSTEAD, WE HAVE COMMERCIAL COMPANIES MAKING A PUSH TO SELL US AS MANY PRODUCTS AS THEY POSSIBLY CAN. WE PUSH BACK WITH SLOGANS LIKE "NOT THE PRESENTS BUT HIS PRESENCE" AND HOLIDAY CARDS DECORATED WITH SACRED ART—BUT, IN ESSENCE, OUR CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS ISN'T RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM EVERYONE ELSE'S.

THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE YET ANOTHER ARTICLE ABOUT "KEEPING CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS." NOT THAT WE SHOULDN'T TRY TO RE-MAKE CHRISTMAS A MORE RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY—OBVIOUSLY, WE SHOULD. BUT THAT PHRASE—"KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS"—HAS BEEN PUT ON ENOUGH BUMPER STICKERS AND FRIDGE MAGNETS THAT IT'S BECOME RATHER MEANINGLESS. WHAT DOES KEEPING CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS EVEN LOOK LIKE? JUST GOING TO CHURCH ON CHRISTMAS AND KEEPING THE DECORATIONS UP THROUGH JANUARY?



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THE REASON WHY WE CAN'T JUST SAY "KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS" AND LEAVE IT AT THAT IS BECAUSE DOING SO FUNDAMENTALLY MISUNDERSTANDS THE WAY CHRISTMAS WORKS, AND, MOST OF THE TIME, THE ACTIONS WE ASSOCIATE WITH DOING THAT—LIKE SIMPLY ATTENDING CHURCH ON CHRISTMAS EVE OR DAY—DON'T EVEN ADDRESS THE PROBLEM WE'RE DEALING WITH. IF GOING TO CHURCH ISN'T ENOUGH, THEN, WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO? WE CAN ONLY ANSWER THIS QUESTION IF WE REALIZE THAT WE'RE MIXING UP TWO DISTINCT "TYPES" OF CHRISTMAS THAT DON'T REALLY GO TOGETHER. WE'RE TRYING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF ONE TYPE BY SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF ANOTHER TYPE—WHICH ISN'T GOING TO WORK,

BUT WHAT ARE THESE "TYPES" I'M TALKING ABOUT? CHRISTMAS IS JUST CHRISTMAS, RIGHT? IN REALITY, IT'S BECOME A BIG ENOUGH DEAL THAT THERE ARE THREE SEMI-DISTINCT CHRISTMASSES. WE, EVEN IN THE CHURCH, CELEBRATE TWO AT MOST—EVEN THOUGH THE THIRD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT. BY REALIZING WHAT THE PLACES OF THE FIRST TWO ARE, AND BY GIVING THE THIRD ITS PROPER PLACE, WE JUST MIGHT BE ABLE TO RESTORE CHRISTMAS TO WHAT IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

FEASTS FOR DECEMBER

THE FEASTS ON THE GENERAL ROMAN CALENDAR CELEBRATED DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER ARE:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3 FRANCIS XAVIER, MEMORIAL | 26 STEPHEN, FEAST |
| 6 NICHOLAS, OPT. MEM. | 27 JOHN, APOSTLE, FEAST |
| 7 SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT | 28 FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY, FEAST |
| 8 IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY,
SOLEMNITY | 29 FIFTH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS;
THOMAS BECKET, OPT. MEM. |
| 9 JUAN DIEGO (USA), OPT. MEM | 31 SEVENTH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS,
SYLVESTER, OPT. MEM. |
| 11 DAMASUS I, OPT. MEM. | |
| 12 OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE (USA), FEAST | |
| 13 LUCY, MEMORIAL | |
| 14 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, GAUDETE SUNDAY,
SUNDAY | |
| 21 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, SUNDAY | |
| 23 JOHN OF KANTY; O EMMANUEL, OPT. MEM. | |
| 25 NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS), SOLEMNITY | |

THE FEASTS OF ST. AMBROSE (DECEMBER 7), ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS (DECEMBER 14), ST. PETER CANSIUS (DECEMBER 21) AND HOLY INNOCENTS (DECEMBER 28) ARE SUPERSEDED BY THE SUNDAY LITURGY. ☐

OUR CENACLE CORNER

SEEKING A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
THROUGH MEDITATION OF PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURES

Be Not Afraid Only Believe
Mark 5:36

GOD TOUCHED ME

Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.

Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. — 1 Chronicles 16:24

WHATEVER YOU DID TO THE LEAST OF MY BROTHER

By MB, Written in December, 2013

"..... The natural dislocation will test all your hearts to be more caring for the needs of others." -- Mary, your Lady of Peace

AS THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF ADVENT APPROACHES, THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD JESUS BECOMES THE FOCAL POINT OF THIS CELEBRATION. CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR WILL BE DIFFERENT ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE VICTIMS OF PERSONAL TRAGEDY AND NATURAL DISASTERS. IN THE PHILIPPINES FOR INSTANCE, THE CENTRAL PART OF THE COUNTRY WAS HIT BY THE MOST POWERFUL TYPHOON (AS IT IS CALLED IN THE PACIFIC) EVER RECORDED IN HISTORY. THE TYPHOON HAIYAN/YOLANDA BROUGHT MISERY AND DISTRESS TO THOSE LEFT BEHIND AFTER THE TEMPEST. WHY THIS COUNTRY IN THE PACIFIC? THIS ONE ONLY GOD COULD ANSWER! THE SUBSEQUENT DRAMA OF LIFE TO EXTEND HELP TO THOSE SURVIVORS, THIS ONE WE CAN ANSWER!

THE MACRO LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE THAT EMANATES FROM THE DIFFERENT HEMISPHERES OF THE WORLD WAS TREMENDOUS AND UNPRECEDENTED! THE SIMPLICITY OF EXTENDING A HELPING HAND ESPECIALLY BY THE DEVOTEES OF THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER STRIKES ME AS HEART WARMING, WITH A SENSE OF BROTHERHOOD AND IF YOU WILL, A WAY HOW GOD HAS REALLY TOUCHED US ALL!

THAT TOUCH OF GOD NOT JUST THROUGH RITUALISTIC PRAYERS AND ACCLAMATIONS BUT THROUGH ACTIONS IS A SERVING EXAMPLE OF THE GOSPEL, OUR GOOD DEEDS WE HAVE EXTENDED TO THE LEAST OF OUR BROTHERS. I AM IN AWE AT HOW EACH DEVOTEE HAS SHARED THEIR TALENT, TIME AND MOST ESPECIALLY THEIR TREASURES TO BETTER THE LIVES OF THE SURVIVORS.

THE RESPONSE OF THE DEVOTEES TO FINANCIALLY AID THE VICTIMS OF HAIYAN, DID REFLECT THE WORKS OF GOD AS WE PULLED TOGETHER A TOTAL SUM OF \$1,800. WE HAVE PRACTICALLY DISBURSED THESE FUNDS THROUGH MEDICAL MISSION(\$800) IN WHICH ONE OF OUR DOCTOR DEVOTEES IS PARTICIPATING HIMSELF; PERSONAL ASSISTANCE (\$400) TO ONE OF THE DEVOTEES' FAMILY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTION (\$300) OPERATING IN THE PHILIPPINES. THE WORKS IN GOD'S GLORY CONTINUES FROM THE HEARTS OF THE DEVOTEES, WHEN ONE SUGGESTED THAT INSTEAD OF HOLDING THE CHRISTMAS PARTY AT ONE OF THE BANQUET HALLS, THE MONEY BE EARMARKED INSTEAD TO ASSIST IN THE RELIEF EFFORTS OF THE HAIYAN/YOLANDA VICTIMS IN THE PHILIPPINES.

IT IS NOT THE PRICE TAG THAT MATTERS IN THIS TIME OF CRISIS, BUT THE HEART THAT SPEAKS AND THE REFLECTION OF GOD'S ESSENCE ON HOW WE ARE TOUCHED NOT JUST BY THE DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS, BUT BY GOOD DEEDS WE EXTEND TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. THIS IS A TRUE TEST OF OUR DEEP RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD!!! ☐

THE THREE TYPES OF CHRISTMAS

1. SOCIAL CHRISTMAS

THE FIRST IS THE MOST OBVIOUS, AND IT'S THE ONE WE PRIMARILY THINK OF WHEN DECEMBER ROLLS AROUND. WE GO TO CHRISTMAS PARTIES AT OUR FRIENDS' HOUSES. WE TRAVEL TO VISIT OUR FAMILY AND "SPEND THE HOLIDAYS" WITH THEM. AND WHEN THE TWENTY-FIFTH SHOWS UP, WE GIVE EACH OTHER PRESENTS, GO TO CHURCH, SPEND TIME TOGETHER, AND EAT A SPECIAL MEAL. THAT'S CHRISTMAS, RIGHT? WELL—ACTUALLY, IT'S SOCIAL CHRISTMAS. IT'S A SECTION OF THE YEAR WE'VE SET ASIDE FOR PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY SO WE CAN ALL TAKE A BREAK FROM OUR JOBS, SPEND TIME TOGETHER, AND SHOW OUR APPRECIATION FOR EACH OTHER BY GIVING GIFTS. HISTORICALLY, IT'D ALSO BE A TIME FOR CHARITY, FOR PROVIDING FOOD AND MONEY FOR PEOPLE WHO AREN'T AS FORTUNATE. THINK ABOUT DICKENS' A CHRISTMAS CAROL: SCROOGE REALIZES THE TRUE VALUE OF CHRISTMAS (IT'S ACTUALLY MORE COMPLEX THAN THAT, BUT WHATEVER) AND DOES A BUNCH OF GOOD STUFF FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE AS MUCH MONEY AS HE DOES.

SOCIAL CHRISTMAS REQUIRES A CERTAIN LEVEL OF COMMERCIALISM, BUT THE CHRISTMAS WE'VE COME TO FROWN ON IS WHEN THE COMMERCIAL ELEMENT SWALLOWS UP THE SOCIAL. SOCIAL CHRISTMAS IS NOT AT ALL A BAD THING: IN FACT, IT'S A VERY GOOD ONE. SPENDING TIME WITH AND SHOWING OUR APPRECIATION FOR THE PEOPLE WE LOVE—AND FOR PEOPLE WHO AREN'T AS FORTUNATE—IS A WONDERFUL THING. IT ONLY BECOMES A BAD ONE WHEN IT'S DROWNED OUT IN THE FLASHING LIGHTS, GIFT ADVERTISEMENTS, AND TACKY CHRISTMAS MUSIC THAT'S ONLY INTENDED TO MAKE ARTIST'S ALBUMS SELL AS MUCH AS THEY CAN.

SO SOCIAL CHRISTMAS IS A VERY GOOD THING—AS LONG AS IT KEEPS COMMERCIALISM IN ITS PLACE—BUT WE HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT IT'S NOT THE SAME AS THE OTHER TYPES.

2. LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS

THIS IS THE ONE WE PROBABLY THINK OF NEXT AFTER SOCIAL CHRISTMAS. AT A VERY SIMPLE LEVEL, IT'S GOING TO CHURCH ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH OR TWENTY-FIFTH, SINGING SOME CHRISTMAS SONGS, AND LISTENING TO YOUR PASTOR'S REFLECTION ON THE NATIVITY SCENE. IF THE CHURCH YOU GO TO IS PROTESTANT, THAT'S PROBABLY ALL YOU GET. THE CATHOLIC LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS IS A LITTLE DEEPER THAN THAT: IT'S AN ENTIRE SEASON OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR, SPANNING

ALMOST TWO MONTHS (INCLUDING ADVENT AND USING THE OLD CALENDAR). IN TERMS OF SURFACE-LEVEL LITURGICAL ELEMENTS, THIS MEANS THAT THE MASS READINGS AND PROPERs ARE BASED AROUND CHRIST'S BIRTH, THE PRIEST'S VESTMENTS ARE WHITE, THE SONGS ARE FROM THE CHRISTMAS SECTION OF THE HYMNAL—AND THAT CRÉCHE GETS BROUGHT UP FROM THE BASEMENT AND PUT IN FRONT OF THE ALTAR.

THIS IS USUALLY WHAT WE MEANT WHEN WE SAY "KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS"—UNLESS WE'RE ALSO SUGGESTING MAKING YOUR HOUSE DECORATIONS RELIGIOUS-THEMED. BUT, USUALLY, WE'RE ENCOURAGING OURSELVES TO REMEMBER THAT THIS IS A CELEBRATION OF WHEN CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD, NOT A CELEBRATION OF GETTING THAT REALLY COOL STAR WARS LEGO SET, AND THAT WE SHOULD GO TO MASS, PARTICIPATE IN THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENTS OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON, AND GENERALLY JUST KEEP CHRIST'S BIRTH ON OUR MIND.

BUT LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS STARTS ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH, AND SOCIAL CHRISTMAS IS ALMOST OVER THEN—AND WITHOUT SOCIAL CHRISTMAS, LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS LOSES MOST OF ITS PUSH. IT'S NICE TO GO TO MASS ON CHRISTMAS, BUT WHEN THE CHURCH CHOIR SINGS "O HOLY NIGHT" ON JANUARY 4 . . . I MEAN, COME ON, CHRISTMAS IS OVER. THAT "HOLY NIGHT" WAS TEN DAYS AGO. AND CHRISTMAS IS OVER—SOCIAL CHRISTMAS. WITHOUT SOCIAL CHRISTMAS, WE DON'T GIVE MUCH MEANING TO LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS, AND THAT'S NOT REALLY OUR FAULT, BECAUSE THE TWO BLUR TOGETHER SO MUCH.

SO SOCIAL AND LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS ARE DIFFERENT THINGS. IF LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS WAS NOTHING MORE THAN CRÉCHES AND HYMNS, THEN THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE: IT WOULD COINCIDE MORE WITH SOCIAL CHRISTMAS. BUT THOSE ELEMENTS AREN'T EVEN UNIQUELY CATHOLIC (ALTHOUGH THAT'S WHERE THEY ORIGINATED), AND LIKE I SAID BEFORE, THEY'RE JUST SURFACE ELEMENTS THAT GIVE EVIDENCE TO "SOMETHING BENEATH," WHICH LEADS US INTO THE THIRD TYPE.

3. SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS

THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR IS A RECURRING SEQUENCE OF "SEASONS" THAT ANNUALLY CELEBRATES AND COMMEMORATES CERTAIN EVENTS AND PEOPLE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. THE SEASONS OF THE CHURCH, UNLIKE THE SEASONS OF THE YEAR, EXIST TO PROVIDE SPIRITUAL SUPPORT FOR THE LIVES OF THE FAITHFUL, AND, TO THAT END, THEY GIVE A MODEL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, THERE ARE TWO "PHASES" OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE (USING THE CARMELITE SPIRITUAL TERMINOLOGY): ARIDITY AND CONSOLATION. (OBVIOUSLY, IT'S MORE COMPLEX THAN THIS, BUT WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET INTO THAT.) SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION IS PROBABLY THE ONE WE'RE MOST FAMILIAR WITH: IT'S WHEN WE FEEL GOD "SPEAKING TO US," WHEN WE GET A TASTE OF THE REWARDS GOD HAS IN STORE, AND WHEN WE FEEL STRENGTHENED AND REFRESHED BY OUR PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL EXERCISES. SPIRITUAL ARIDITY, OR "DRYNESS," ON THE OTHER HAND, IS THE OPPOSITE: IT'S WHEN WE AREN'T ABLE TO FEEL GOD'S PRESENCE, WHEN OUR PRAYERS SEEM TEDIOUS AND FRUITLESS, AND WHEN WE WANT TO GIVE UP ON THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS WE'VE MADE. WHILE BEING FAR LESS PLEASANT, THE CARMELITE SPIRITUAL MASTERS MAKE IT CLEAR THAT ARIDITY IS THE MORE FRUITFUL PHASE: IT TEACHES US TO LOVE GOD FOR GOD'S SAKE, NOT BECAUSE GOD MAKES US FEEL GOOD; IT TEACHES US TO PRAY FOR PRAYER'S SAKE, NOT BECAUSE PRAYER MAKES US HAPPY.

BUT, CONVERSELY, SPIRITUAL ARIDITY ALLOWS US TO SEE SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION FOR WHAT IT IS, AND TO ENJOY IT MORE FULLY. THIS IS WHERE THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR COMES IN. THE CALENDAR SHOWS US BY EXAMPLE THAT CELEBRATION OF THE GIFTS OF THE CHURCH MUST BE PRECEDED BY PENANCE: JUST LIKE THERE CAN'T BE (TRUE) CONSOLATION WITHOUT ARIDITY, THERE CAN'T BE FEASTING WITHOUT FASTING.

WITH THIS IN MIND, BE IT KNOWN THAT LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS IS INSEPARABLE FROM LITURGICAL ADVENT: TOGETHER, THE FORM THAT FAST-FEAST DUO WE FIND ACROSS THE CALENDAR. BUT CALLING ADVENT A SEASON OF FASTING IS A LITTLE BIT OF A SIGH TOPIC. DOES THE CHURCH REALLY EXPECT US TO FAST IN THE DAYS LEADING UP TO CHRISTMAS? THE ANSWER IS YES: BUT NOBODY'S REALLY GOING TO SKIP MEALS AND TAKE COLD SHOWERS—AND IF THAT WAS ALL WE DID, WE'D PROBABLY BE MISSING THE POINT. WHY? JUST LIKE THE SURFACE-LEVEL ELEMENTS OF THE CHRISTMAS LITURGY, THE SURFACE-LEVEL ELEMENTS OF THE ADVENT LITURGY (THE SOMEWHAT NONEXISTENT PENANCE) ARE MEANT TO MANIFEST A DEEPER REALITY: ADVENT IS A SEASON THAT MODELS SPIRITUAL ARIDITY, WHERE WE'RE MEANT TO EXPERIENCE AND MEDITATE ON THE DRYNESS OF LIVING IN A FALLEN WORLD THAT NEEDS A SAVIOR. THERE'S NO CONSOLATION IN ADVENT; THE WHOLE POINT IS TO FEEL GOD'S ABSENCE. WE GO THROUGH THIS SEASON IN ORDER TO MORE FULLY EXPERIENCE THE CONSOLATION OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON, WHERE WE CELEBRATE GOD'S CONDESCENSION INTO HIS CREATION.

NOW WE ARRIVE AT THE FINAL TYPE: SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS, A PHASE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IN WHICH WE ENJOY THE CONSOLATION THAT COMES FROM GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE WORLD THROUGH THE EVENTS OF HIS NATIVITY AND EPIPHANY. CONSOLATION DOESN'T COME WITH ARIDITY, AND THE CONSOLATION OF CHRISTMAS DOESN'T COME WITHOUT THE ARIDITY OF ADVENT.

BUT WHAT DOES THAT REALLY MEAN? HOW ARE WE EVEN SUPPOSED TO EXPERIENCE THIS "CONSOLATION" AFTER THIS VAGUE "ARIDITY"? AND HOW DOES SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS CHANGE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE OTHER TWO TYPES? SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS, AS WE'VE POINTED OUT, IS INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES, AND THEIR PRIMARY MANIFESTATION AND DEVELOPMENT IS THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION. SO, DURING ADVENT, WHEN WE WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND SET ASIDE TIME FOR PRAYER (WHICH, HOPEFULLY, IS SOMETHING WE DO), WE SHOULD TAKE A MOMENT TO CALL TO MIND AND INTERNALIZE THE REALITY THAT WE LIVE IN A FALLEN WORLD THAT IS IN DIRE NEED OF BEING SAVED. AND WHEN CHRISTMAS COMES AROUND, WE CAN USE THAT SAME MOMENT (THREE OR FOUR MINUTES IS PROBABLY ENOUGH) TO SIMILARLY INTERNALIZE THE IDEA THAT GOD HIMSELF HAS ENTERED HIS CREATION TO BRING IT SALVATION THROUGH HIS PRESENCE, AND, IDEALLY, THIS OVERFLOWS INTO OUR SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK BEYOND PRAYER.

WHERE IT'S CONNECTED TO OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE, THE OTHERS ARE CONNECTED TO OUR "LITURGICAL" AND SOCIAL LIVES. LIKE WE SAW BEFORE WITH THE LITURGICAL-SPIRITUAL PARALLELISM, OUR SPIRITUAL AND LITURGICAL LIVES SHOULD MIRROR AND COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER—AND, IN THAT SENSE, SPIRITUAL AND LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS SHOULD GO TOGETHER. BUT OUR SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL LIVES DO NOT MIRROR EACH OTHER—AT LEAST NOT IN THE TYPES OF LIVES WE LIVE. WHEN WE MERGE THESE TWO TYPES OF CHRISTMAS IN OUR MINDS, THAT'S WHEN WE START TO SEE PROBLEMS.

LET'S ILLUSTRATE THAT. IT'S THE EVENING OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH OR THE MORNING OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH AND YOU START TO GET THAT SENSE THAT ALL THE FUN IS OVER—BUT THEN START FEELING GUILTY BECAUSE EVERYONE IN CATHOLIC CIRCLES IS SAYING "CHRISTMAS ISN'T OVER YET!" BUT THAT FEELING ISN'T UNFOUNDED, BECAUSE A CERTAIN TYPE OF CHRISTMAS IS COMING TO A CLOSE. SOCIAL CHRISTMAS, DEPENDING ON WHO WE ARE, STARTS SHORTLY AFTER THANKSGIVING AND ENDS ANYWHERE FROM CHRISTMAS NIGHT TO THE LAST NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY. AND THEN IT'S DONE. THAT TYPE OF

CHRISTMAS DOESN'T EXTEND TO FEBRUARY 2, AND IT'S MEANINGLESS TO TRY TO MAKE IT JUST BECAUSE WE FOLLOW THE CHURCH'S CALENDAR.

SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT ATTENDING CHRISTMAS PARTIES DURING ADVENT IS LIKE ATTENDING EASTER PARTIES DURING LENT. BUT I'M GOING TO MAKE THE BOLD CLAIM THAT IT'S OKAY TO GO TO CHRISTMAS PARTIES IN ADVENT—BECAUSE THAT'S WHEN SOCIAL CHRISTMAS IS HAPPENING. WHAT'S NOT OKAY IS TO CELEBRATE SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS DURING ADVENT: WE CAN'T ENJOY THE SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS OF A SEASON WHEN WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE PREPARING FOR IT WITH ARIDITY. ON THE OTHER END, IT'S NOT OKAY TO STOP CELEBRATING SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS WHEN SOCIAL CHRISTMAS ENDS: THE DINNER PARTIES ARE OVER, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'VE EXHAUSTED THE SPIRITUAL TREASURES THAT THE CHURCH HAS TO OFFER THROUGH THE ARRIVAL OF GOD INTO CREATION. IF WE CONTINUE TO MIX UP THE SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL ELEMENTS OF THE HOLIDAY, WE'LL ONLY HAVE A COUPLE DAYS—AT MOST—TO DELVE INTO THE CONSOLATION OF THE SEASON.

I'M WRITING THIS ON JANUARY 1. SOCIAL CHRISTMAS IS OVER—AND THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. BUT THE REAL CHRISTMAS IS JUST GETTING STARTED. □



“I am your Mother Mary. Stay together as one in prayer. My beads of rosary will put you together like the saints that held my rosary like everything matters. Do you have my beads in your pockets, ready to use as weapons of peace? The evil one is very cunning and is ready to devour, as you least expect, my children. Friends are not friends, if they talk ill of you or if you are not part of the rosary family.

Be the army that my Son Jesus want you to be. Ready to fight for faith. Be part of the white and yellow armies of rosary of peace and warriors against evil. Be as one, no division or rift but unification of LOVE, PRAYERS AND HEART FILLED WITH FAITH! Be honest to love my heart in full force, my children.

Be with me always! I love you, my children”

*Mary, Your Lady of the Rosary
10302025*

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

ST. STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR

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AND HIM I SAW, WHO BOW'D
HEAVY WITH DEATH UNTO THE GROUND, YET MADE
HIS EYES, UNFOLDED UPWARD, GATES TO HEAVEN,
PRAYING FORGIVENESS OF THE ALMIGHTY SIRE,
AMIDST THAT CRUEL CONFLICT, ON HIS FOES,
WITH LOOKS THAT WIN COMPASSION TO THEIR AIM.

IN THE DIVINE COMEDY, DANTE LOOKS UPON A TOUCHING SCENE: THE DEATH, BY STONING, OF A YOUNG MAN WHO, AS HE IS DYING, ASKS FOR FORGIVENESS FOR HIS PERSECUTORS. THE GREAT CHRISTIAN POET WAS STRUCK BY THE MEEKNESS OF ST STEPHEN, WHOSE MARTYRDOM IS RELATED IN ALL ITS GLORY IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. AS HE WAS BEING STONED, ST STEPHEN CRIED OUT, "LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM."

A YOUNG MAN FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

STEPHEN WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO FOLLOW THE APOSTLES. IT IS BELIEVED THAT HE WAS EITHER GREEK, OR A JEW EDUCATED IN GREEK CULTURE. WHAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT HE WAS GREATLY APPRECIATED BY THE COMMUNITY IN JERUSALEM THAT HIS NAME APPEARS FIRST AMONG THE SEVEN MEN CHOSEN AS DEACONS TO ASSIST THE APOSTLES IN THEIR MISSION. A MAN "FILLED WITH FAITH AND THE HOLY SPIRIT," WHO WORKED WONDERS AND MIRACLES – BUT SOME MEMBERS OF THE SYNAGOGUE STIRRED UP THE PEOPLE AGAINST HIM, WITH THE ELDERS AND SCRIBES SAYING HE HAD BLASPHEMED AGAINST MOSES AND AGAINST GOD. IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING PENTECOST, STEPHEN WAS HAULED BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN, AND ACCUSED BY FALSE WITNESSES OF PREACHING THAT JESUS WOULD "DESTROY THIS PLACE AND CHANGE THE CUSTOMS THAT MOSES HANDED DOWN TO US."

MARTYRDOM AND PRAYER FOR HIS PERSECUTORS

SAINT STEPHEN THEN GAVE A SPEECH – THE LONGEST RECORDED IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES – IN WHICH HE REVIEWED THE HISTORY OF SALVATION. GOD, HE SAID, HAD PREPARED FOR THE COMING OF JESUS, THE RIGHTEOUS ONE, BUT THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE HAD RESISTED THE HOLY SPIRIT, JUST AS THEIR FATHERS HAD PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS. STEPHEN CONCLUDED HIS SPEECH WITH THE WORDS, "BEHOLD, I SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." THIS FINAL PROCLAMATION COST HIM DEARLY. WITH A LOUD CRY, THOSE PRESENT CAST HIM OUT OF THE CITY "AND BEGAN TO STONE HIM."

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES SAYS THAT AMONG THOSE WHO APPROVED OF STEPHEN'S EXECUTION WAS SAUL, WHO PERSECUTED THE CHRISTIANS, BUT LATER BECAME THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES – ST PAUL. AS HE BREATHED HIS LAST, ST STEPHEN, IN IMITATION OF JESUS, PRAYED THAT GOD MIGHT RECEIVE HIS SPIRIT, AND PRAYED FOR FORGIVENESS FOR HIS MURDERERS.

DEVOTION TO ST STEPHEN

THE PLACE OF ST STEPHEN'S MARTYRDOM IS TRADITIONALLY IDENTIFIED AS BEING CLOSE TO THE DAMASCUS GATE IN JERUSALEM, WHERE TODAY THERE IS A CHURCH DEDICATED TO THE MARTYRED DEACON. CHRISTIANS IMMEDIATELY FELT A GREAT DEVOTION TO ST STEPHEN, A DEVOTION THAT ONLY GREW WHEN HIS RELICS WERE RE-DISCOVERED IN THE EARLY PART OF THE 5TH CENTURY. HIS LIFE AND MARTYRDOM ARE PORTRAYED IN COUNTLESS WORKS OF ART. STEPHEN IS TRADITIONALLY PICTURED WITH THE PALM OF MARTYRDOM, OR WITH STONES THAT SHOW HOW HE DIED. □

Upcoming Events

1ST FRIDAY DEVOTION DEDICATED TO THE HOLY SOULS

DECEMBER 5, 2025

IN LAS VEGAS:
THE CENACLE HOUSE
AT 2:30 PM

IN LOS ANGELES: VIA ZOOM
AT 8:30 PM

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION 1ST SUNDAY DEVOTION

DECEMBER 6, 2025

IN LOS ANGELES:
ST. ANNE'S CHAPEL
155 N. OCCIDENTAL BL.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90026
DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS AT 8:30 AM
MASS AT 9:30 AM

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

IN LAS VEGAS:
THE CENACLE HOUSE
AT 1:00 PM

1ST SUNDAY DEVOTION

DECEMBER 7, 2025

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

800 OUR FATHER DEVOTION

DECEMBER 20, 2025

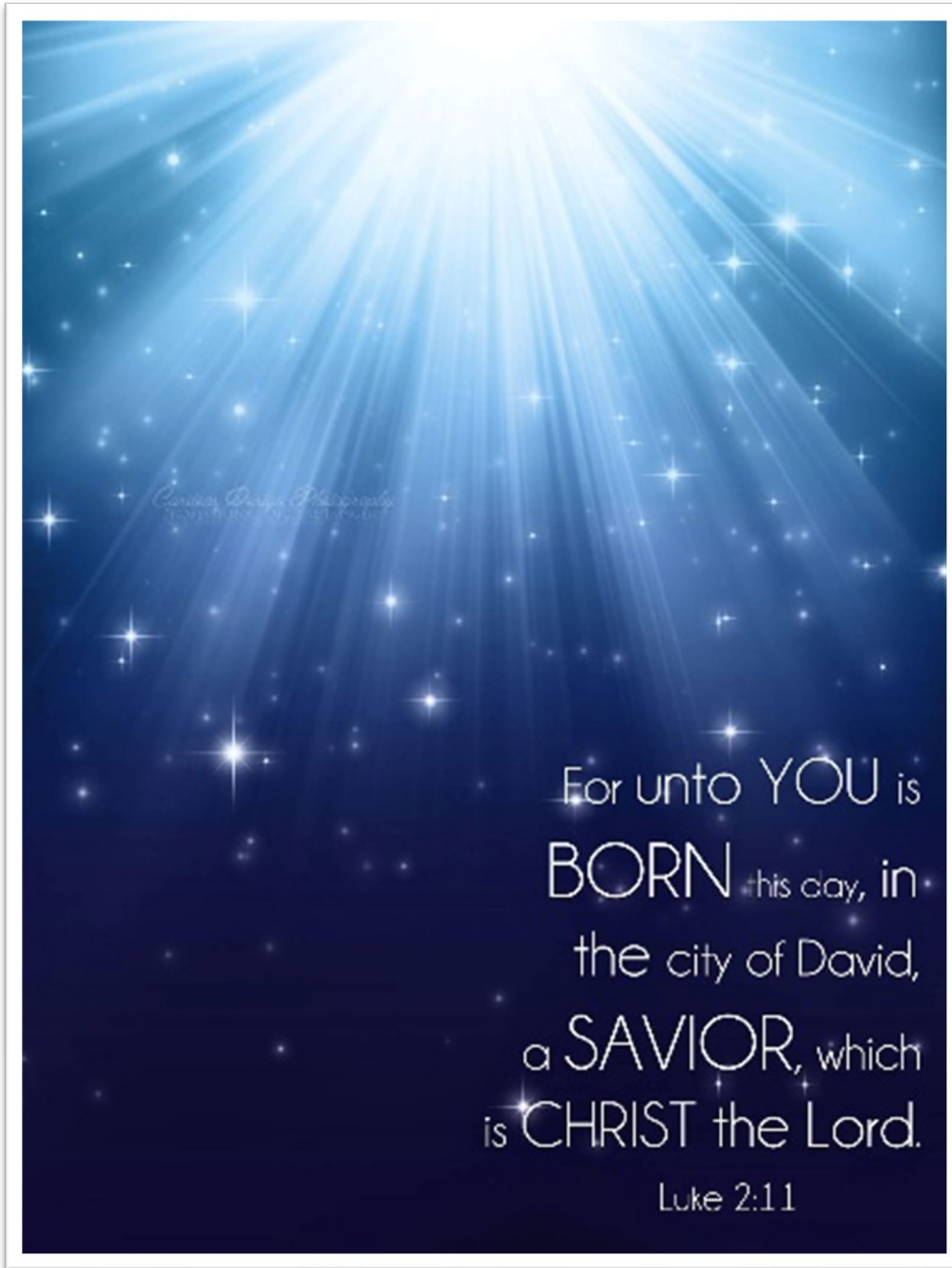
IN LAS VEGAS:
THE CENACLE HOUSE
AT 8:00 AM

IN LOS ANGELES: VIA ZOOM
AT 9:00 AM

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

TO ALL OUR DEVOTEES AND FRIENDS:

AS WE CONTEMPLATE ON THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER, THE WHOLE CHRISTENDOM IS AWAITING THE MESSIAH WHO WILL BECOME FLESH ON CHRISTMAS DAY!



CHRISTMAS WILL BE THE EPITOME OF THE DEFEAT OF SATAN, THE DECEIVER. TOGETHER, MAY WE HAVE OUR OWN EPIPHANY THAT THE LORD OF LORDS BE IN OUR HEARTS. NO PROPHET WILL EQUAL THE POWER OF THE INCARNATION WHEN THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND HE WILL DWELL AMONG US AND THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL HAVE THE GIFT OF LIFE AND THE TRUTH.

TO ALL THE DEVOTEES AND FRIENDS OF THE MINISTRY, LET US ALL BE REMINDED THAT THE POWER OF LIFE WILL ALWAYS PREVAIL ON THESE DAYS OF ADVENT AND EPIPHANY!

OUR LORD BABY JESUS IS BORN. MERRY CHRISTMAS AND MAY EVERYONE HAVE A PROSPEROUS AND BLESSED NEW YEAR IN 2026.

SINCERELY IN GOD'S LOVE,

VICTOR ARANETA
SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE
FATHER MINISTRY