

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Dear Parishioners,

"Mary set out with haste to the hill country of Judea ... to the house of Elizabeth."

I am struck by the sense of journey that the Gospel of today's Mass emphasizes. The imagery of the external journey may well be a symbol for the internal journey of faith that Mary had to go through in order to be faithful to God's call in her life.

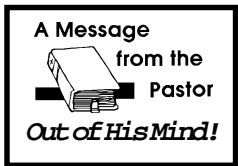
On a human level, this was all new and uncharted territory for the young girl from Nazareth. She must have been overwhelmed by the events that happened to her that first advent season, while she was waiting for God's plan to take shape in her life. She must have wondered how God was going to help her through the confusion and the doubts that would assail her while she waited for God's purposes to be done. She must have had some level of fear that she would be misunderstood, that she would make bad decisions, that she wouldn't be able to handle all the confusions and difficulties that God put into her life.

And yet, at the same time, there had to be a profound trust in the goodness of God and the purposes of God. Mary must have went about her daily activities with the basic conviction that if she did the best that she could, God would be with her. And this conviction must have grown in her life through all the decisions that she had to make and through all the trials that she had to face.

I don't think that Mary was spared from much of the worries, fears or uncertainties that the rest of us go through in life but I do think that she must have developed a strong life of prayer and a continuous pattern of self-denial so that she was able to discern well the decisions that God asked of her.

This is our task as well! We all have to wait on the Lord and trust in the Lord so that we make the right decisions in life, so that we continue to "overcome evil by the goodness of our lives", so that we continue to act in life and face the challenges of life with an attitude that is formed by prayer and self-denial and so that we may not be overwhelmed with life and all that happens in it. This is our spirituality... as it was Mary's... as it has been for people throughout the ages. We either learn from life to trust, to love, to forgive, to be compassionate or we become self-centered, mean, hard and bitter. God deliver us from this path and direct us to the path of His spirituality, the path of Advent waiting and Advent hoping.

Fr. Dan



We extend a warm welcome to everyone and are happy that you are able to join us in our celebration of the Eucharist.

If you are new to St. Mary Parish, please fill out the form found on the front of this bulletin, return it to the Parish Office and we will be happy to mail you a registration packet. If you have recently moved, please let us know.

Reconciliation Liturgy

Monday, December 22, 2003

Our main Advent Liturgy of Reconciliation is scheduled for this coming Monday at 7:00 p.m. We encourage all of our parishioners to use this opportunity for preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.

Parish Office Holiday Schedule



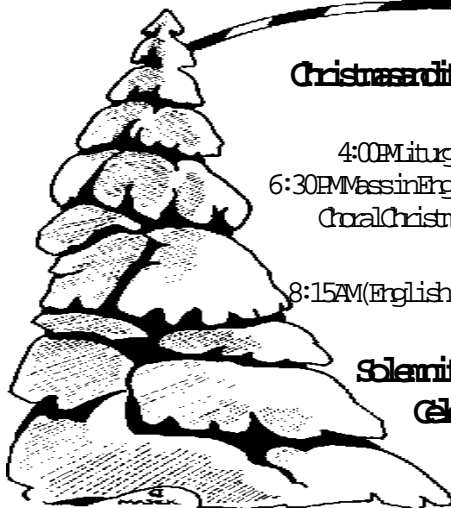
The Parish Office will close at 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Day the Parish Office will be closed all day so that the staff can enjoy the holiday with their families.

On Friday, December 26, the Parish Office will be open only for the convenience of the priests' appointments. Regular business will resume on Monday, December 29.

We extend to you and yours a very happy and holy Christmas.

The flowers in the church this weekend have been donated by Chauncy & Rosalie Russo in memory of the Deceased Members of the Russo and Mucci Families.



Christmas Eve Celebrations of the Eucharist

Christmas Eve

4:00 PM Liturgy especially for families and children

6:30 PM Mass in English 8:00 PM Vigil Mass (Bilingual)

Ornamental Christmas Program and Carols begin at 10:30 PM

Christmas Day

8:15 AM (English) 9:45 AM (Spanish) 11:30 AM (English)

New Year's Day

Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God

Celebration of the Eucharist

10:00 AM (Bilingual)

Cuarto Domingo de Adviento

21 de Diciembre de 2003

Estimados amigos de Gilroy:

Paz y amor en esta temporada les deseo a todos en sus hogares y que la gracia abundante de Dios les prepare a recibir la Navidad, con la sencillez y la seguridad que nos han enseñado aquellos que han escuchado la Buena Noticia de parte de La Iglesia y la han seguido con fidelidad en su trabajo diario y la han amado profundamente.

En este Domingo, ultimo de Adviento, la Iglesia nos urge a prepararnos y preparar nuestros hogares con un ambiente de luz y de alegría, en el que le enviémos a Jesús ese mensaje de que le esperamos con ansia y sobretodo desde lo profundo del corazón que es bienvenido, que estamos listos esperando ver brillar la luz que viene de lo alto y que nos ha de indicar donde descubrir la faz de aquel que viene a salvarnos del pecado.

La Navidad como he repetido muchas veces, no es un tiempo de gastar y gastar, lo que tanto nos cuesta ganar, sino el tiempo de esperar ese gran regalo que Dios nos da y que es su propio Hijo, es la contemplación de ver como la Madre Virgen concibe con tanto amor y tanta seguridad al saber que Dios mismo le favorece de una manera especial, al fin que se muestre a todos los hombres la plenitud de los tiempos. María es por excelencia un modelo de que es lo que debemos hacer mientras llega su amado Hijo, ella continua trabajando y socorriendo a quien esta en necesidad, en el Evangelio propuesto para nuestra reflexión Lucas 1, 39-45, la encontramos en ese viaje a través de las montañas de Judá, a fin de llegar a donde vive su prima Isabel y ayudarle a preparar la llegada de su hijo, Juan el Bautista, así, María es la mujer que hace de su vida una oración permanente y de esa oración vida misma, María no se queda en la contemplación sino que trabaja el amor contemplado, lo expresa en su vida diaria, al grado que despierta esas expresiones de amor y de fe que nos enseñan las Sagradas Escrituras.

Nosotros hoy somos invitados a través de ese extraordinario ejemplo, a ser embajadores del amor de Dios, ante las personas que más lo necesitan, que pueden ser nuestros empleados, amigos, conocidos, vecinos, familiares, o tal vez nosotros mismos, necesitamos abrir ese canal de comunicación con Dios, que llene nuestra vida con la esperanza que viene del Nacimiento de Jesús, porque, si no estamos llenos de su amor, entonces, no podemos llevar ni descubrir nada, a través de su amor admirable.

Amigos, no gasten, lo que no tienen, den un poco de ustedes, el mejor regalo es dar lo mejor de nosotros mismos, el gran regalo de dejar de beber y tomar drogas y ponerlo en la mesa de Navidad como un regalo a los que tanto nos aman y esperan de nosotros. Dejar nuestra incomprensión, nuestro mal humor, nuestros deseos de la carne que acarrearán el que traicionemos el amor de esposo, esposa e hijos y digamos desde nuestro silencio a la familia que perdone nuestra infidelidad y que Jesús ha nacido en nuestro corazón y que cuidaremos cada día que pasa el crezca sano y salvo y como María y José, le llevaremos diario al Pesebre de nuestro hogar y de cada semejante cercano. Les deseamos FELIZ NAVIDAD ! Un abrazo sincero para cada uno de ustedes y nuestra humilde oración dirigida a Dios por sus necesidades y sus familiares y amigos.

Dios venga y llene de bendición y amor cada uno de sus hogares, Feliz Navidad !

P. Francisco

*Estimados feligreses,
¡¡¡Feliz Navidad!!!
Que son dos palabras tan
usadas en estos días,
se hagan realidad en usted
y su familia.
Este es el deseo sincero de
los padres
Dan, John, Francisco y
Peter*



Les damos a todos la más cálida bienvenida y nos alegramos con los que nos visitan y se unen con nosotros en la celebración de la Eucaristía este fin de semana.

Si usted es nuevo en esta comunidad parroquial, le invitamos a llenar la forma incluida en este boletín y le enviaremos por correo el paquete de membresía.

Flores "Noche Buena"

Necesitamos muchas flores conocidas aquí como las "poinsettias" o "Noche Buena" para decorar la iglesia y la capilla. Le agradeceríamos que nos las trajera el Martes 23. También nos puede donar dinero en efectivo para que nosotros las compremos.



Flowers
for
Christmas

Once again, we would be happy to accept your offering of poinsettias to decorate our church and chapel for the Christmas Season. We ask that you bring your donations as close to December 23 as possible to ensure their freshness. Donations of money are also being accepted for the decorations.

St. Mary School Office: (408) 842-2827

Happy Holidays!

The students, faculty and staff of Saint Mary School extend wishes for a happy and holy Christmas and all the best in the New Year. The School Office will be closed from December 19 at 1PM until school resumes on Monday, January 5, 2004 at 8:15 a.m.

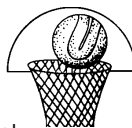
Catholic Schools: A Faith-Filled Future

If you are considering sending your child to our parish school in 2004-05, it's not too early to begin making plans! If the pattern of the last several years continues, there will be limited openings in some grades. St. Mary's is a parish school and our parish supporting families are a priority. This "parish supporting" designation is achieved by your "regular participation in the life of the parish, especially celebrating weekly mass and sharing a real gift on a consistent basis through the Offertory System." Translated, that means if you are registered and have envelopes-use them; if you don't have envelopes, register, request envelopes and begin to use them now! To be considered "parish supporting", there should be a record of at least one year. Please phone the school office in January for specific information about the school and our registration process for 2004-05. And make plans to visit us during Catholic Schools Week on Tuesday, January 27, 2004 from 10:00 a.m. to Noon.

REGISTRATION FOR 2004-05 IS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28 AT 10:30 A.M. IN THE GYM. MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND!

Time to Start Training for Alumni Basketball

While the family is gathered for the holidays, remind them about the St. Mary School Annual Alumni Basketball Tournament, scheduled for Saturday, March 27 (Friday, March 26 also if we have women's teams). Men's teams will be limited to the first 8 that apply after January 6, 2004. For more information, phone Tournament Chair Frank Campanella ('63) at 847-7325 or Vicki in the Development Office at 842-8425.



Tree of Hope



St. Mary's "Tree of Hope" brought a ray of comfort and light to hundreds of needy men, women and children. Without your endeavors we could not reach the number of people we do.

Your gifts of toys were given out through our Community Christmas Sharing, which St. Joseph Family Center sponsors each year for approximately 525 families and 2,000 children.

You provided Christmas gifts of sweatshirts, sweaters and underwear to our families at the Armory. No one was left out.

We didn't have food under our tree this year, but that didn't stop you—you brought it directly to our food rooms, along with your generous checks.

Your Christmas gifts help all year around and bring hope to the most needy.

God bless you and thank you for caring.

The Staff of St. Joseph Family Center

Catechetical Ministry

Office: (408) 847-2652

Catechetical Ministry would like to wish all of our children and their families a holy and blessed holiday season. There will be no classes on December 28, 29, and 30.

We look forward to seeing all of you on January 4, 5 and 6, 2004 when classes will resume.

Parents are reminded to continue with their child's preparation at home for First Reconciliation. The children will celebrate the Sacrament on Tuesday, January 20 at 7:00 p.m. for 5th-8th grades and on Saturday, January 24 at 10:00 a.m. for 2nd-4th grades.

A parent meeting for First Eucharist Preparation is scheduled for Thursday, January 8 at 4:00 p.m. and then again at 7:00 p.m. It is important that you attend one of these meetings. Mark your calendars and PDA's now!!

YOUTH NEWS There will be NO Youth Group this Sunday so the youth can enjoy their Winter Break.

The Youth and Adult Leadership wish you a Happy and Holy Christmas Season and thank you for your support in their various activities throughout the year.

Bake Sale

The youth that are planning to participate in next year's Mexico Mission Trip are sponsoring a Bake Sale this weekend. Delicious home-baked goodies along with See's Christmas Candy will be available for sale after the 5:00 p.m. Saturday Mass and the 8:15 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Sunday Masses.



The Mission of St. Mary Parish

Many Hands Make for
Light Work...

Thank you to all the volunteers that came to help us clean and decorate the church/chapel for the Advent Season. Your help was greatly appreciated. Nowwww....

Volunteers are needed to help clean and decorate the church/chapel for the Christmas Season. Please join us in the church, Saturday, December 23 from 10:00 a.m. until we're done. We could use as many people as possible to help. If you can help, just stop by and we'll put you to work!

Thanks a million from your Church Environment Committee!

Cookies for the
Homeless



Home baked cookies, brownies, breads are needed for the homeless that will be staying at the Armory this holiday season. Isabel Cadei will collect the baked goods at her home, 7761 Rosanna Street on Tuesday, December 23 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Please make sure the baked goods are cooled before packing them. Thank you in advance for you generosity.

Gift Store

Still looking for that last minute Christmas gift? Stop by the C.L.A.S. Gift Store, open on Sunday mornings after the Masses, this is the perfect place to find that gift. The store is fully stocked for the holidays so come on by!

Readings for
The Fourth Week
of Advent



Monday: Sm 1:24-28 Ik 146-56
Tuesday: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Ik 1:57-66
Wednesday: Sm 7:1-5 Ik 1:67-79

St. Mary Catholic Community, guided by Jesus' living Spirit, seeks to lovingly celebrate Jesus' presence in our worship and in our lives, to create a welcoming Church, to develop strong lay leadership, to deepen our understanding of our faith, to reach out in ministry to all our sisters and brothers. We rely on God's grace to accomplish this mission.

2004 Offertory

Envelopes

The Offertory Envelopes for 2004 have arrived and are now available in the Parish Office. Due to illness, the inability to find volunteers to help distribute the envelopes and vacations we have not been able to organize the envelopes for distribution after the Masses. So we ask you to stop by the Parish Office when it is open to pick up your envelopes.



Christmas
Mailing

The St. Mary Parish Christmas Schedule was mailed to all registered households last week. If you did not receive one, then 1) you haven't yet registered in the parish or 2) you have recently moved and not yet informed us of your new address. If either of the above is the case, please call the Parish Office to register or to update your address.

Social Justice

"In our time, there are so many needs which demand a compassionate response from Christians. Our world is beginning a new millennium burdened by the contradictions of an economic, cultural, and technological progress which offers immense possibilities to a fortunate few, while leaving millions of others not only on the margins of progress, but in living conditions far below the minimum demanded by human dignity. How can this be?"

-Pope John Paul II, Novo
Millennio Inante

Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic Fraternal Organization for men. Our Gilroy Chapter meets on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month. All young men from age 18 up are invited to learn more about and participate in our local chapter. Please call Frank Borge, 842-4357, for more information.

Masses for the Week

An offering to the work of the Parish has been made in memory of, or on behalf of, the following persons who are hereby included in the special prayers of our community at our daily Masses this week.

December 2003

Mon	22	7:15am	Vittorio Del Rosso	
		8:30am	Nilda Rocha Furtado	
Tue	23	7:15am	Manuel Silveira	
		8:30am	Ellen Filice	
Wed	24		Christmas Eve	
Thu	25		Christmas	
Fri	26	9:00am	Leon Palao I †	Albert & Mary Angelino
Sat	27	8:30am	Louis Codiga (A)	

(A) Anniversary of Death

(MM) Months Mind

