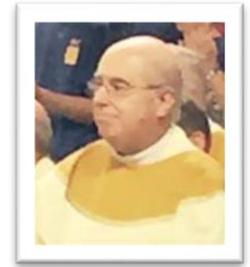


Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 18, 2016



Honoring Joseph on this Fourth Sunday of Advent

I don't know how many of you have had the opportunity to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC. But it's a wonderful place to spend some time during the Advent and/or Christmas Season. I'm thinking especially of the medieval art section – and of course the incredibly beautiful Christmas crèche scene. And at the center of course two very important people who in today's Gospel make a life-changing decision.

There aren't too many paintings depicting the engagement and marriage of Mary and Joseph. A 14th century master Italian painter by the name of Daddi did a very small one on wood, not canvas. He called it, "The Marriage of the Virgin." I mention it because in today's Gospel of Matthew, in the final verse, Joseph finally makes that life-changing decision - to take Mary into his home as his wife.

In the Middle Ages, Christians wondered how Mary and Joseph met and became engaged. Maybe you've wondered about that yourself. Since no one really knew, a story was concocted to explain how they came to meet and marry. Daddi's masterpiece tells the story. In his painting eligible men are invited to bring a wooden pole or rod to the Temple to meet Mary. If a flower appeared at the end of a pole or rod the man who brought it would become Mary's husband. Of course, Joseph was holding the pole on which the flower appeared. The astonished Joseph moves forward slowly to take a shy and beautiful young Mary as his wife. It's a wonderful made up story.

The fact is that somehow Joseph and Mary did meet and become engaged, but before they married and began living together. Then something happens, or should I say a fact comes to light. Mary is pregnant. This tears Joseph apart because he knows he is not the father. The Gospel tells us that Mary was found with child through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph does not want to hurt the woman he loves. The law and the public will see Mary as an adulteress. With help of an angel, Joseph makes a life-changing decision, a self-less choice. He makes Mary his first priority, not his own reputation. He puts her honor above his own by deciding to marry her and adopt the child as his own.

On this 4th Sunday of Advent, as we light the 4th and final candle on our Advent Wreath, we honor in a special way the man whose statue stands to the right of his wife in our church. A man who committed himself to doing God's will, not his own!

Msgr. Larry Bronkiewicz



Pastor



MASS READINGS & INTENTIONS

MONDAY, December 19

Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a/Lk 1:5-25

7:00 AM Rick Koch

12:00 PM Irene Gilchrist

TUESDAY, December 20

Is 7:10-14/Lk 1:26-38

7:00 AM Mary Mills

12:00 PM Nenay Schultz

WEDNESDAY, December 21

Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a/Lk 1:39-45

7:00 AM Robert Pagnucco

12:00 PM Digby W. Barrios

THURSDAY, December 22

1 Sm 1:24-28/Lk 1:46-56

7:00 AM Helen M. Rella & Franes M. Cali

12:00 PM Frederick Forster

FRIDAY, December 23

Mal 3:1-4, 23-24/Lk 1:57-66

7:00 AM Carey Depuy

12:00 PM Les DiLisio

SATURDAY, December 24

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16/Lk 1:67-79

8:00 AM Thomas Murphy

Christmas Vigil Readings

Church: 4:45, 6:30 PM, 10:30 PM

NBRC: 3:30 PM, 5:30 PM, 6:45 PM

SUNDAY, December 25

Is 52:7-10/Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

Church: 7:00 AM, 8:45 AM

NBRC: 10:00 AM, 11:15 AM, 12:30 PM

2016 DONATIONS

Remember St. Mary Parish this Christmas!

The end of the month is approaching. There is still time to make donations for the 2016 tax year. You can do it easily with *Online Giving*. Go to www.smcr.org to sign up and make giving a snap!

Contribution Tax Statements

Contribution Tax Statements will be mailed out in January 2017 to all Parishioners who contributed to our Parish Offertory this year. All contributions must be received by December 31, 2016, in order to be acknowledged for 2016 tax status.



GOD'S PLAN FOR GIVING

WEEKLY YEAR-TO-DATE

December 11, 2016 \$25,186 \$1,198,676

December 13, 2015 \$26,855 \$1,166,225

Retired Religious

December 2016 \$6,546

December 2015 \$2,745

Immaculate Conception

December 2016 \$3,018

December 2015 \$5,273

This week's second collection, Hospitality House

Next week's second collection, Facilities Repair



Please remember our sick in your prayers, especially Theresa Avento, Joseph Barone, Mary Jo Calamai, Megyn Caldwell, Patti Capilli, Dina Casavecchia, Bill Casey, Emmy Jane Jones, and Luke Whitbeck. (For the sake of privacy, only immediate family members may add someone to our prayer list. Individuals will be removed monthly unless we are otherwise notified.)



Wedding Banns

II. Daniel White and Susan Thomas Bray

Candle Intentions



Church Sanctuary Candle

is Burning in Loving Memory of Claire Walsh

Adoration Tabernacle Candle

is Burning in Loving Memory of Margaret Gillespie & Jason Wagner

A Church Altar Candle

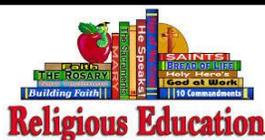
is Burning for the Intentions of Peter O'Rouke

A Church Altar Candle

is Burning for the Intentions of Peter O'Rouke

Hall Sanctuary Candle

is Burning in Loving Memory of John and Dolores Wagner



GIFTS FOR ALL: Liturgy of the Word for Children with Special Needs began Sunday, November 13, at our 10:30am Mass in our Parish Hall, and is scheduled for the following dates: December 18, January 8 and January 29. Please see our website for future dates. We need more volunteers for the following positions: Special Ed Teacher, Peer Witnesses and Music Minister. Please call Pat Postiglione, Director of Religious Education (438-6538), or Sharol Signorelli (438-2302) for more information.

RESPECT LIFE COMMITTEE



Among the vulnerable for whom the church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this.... "Precisely because this involves the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person, the church cannot be expected to change her position on this question... It is not 'progressive' to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life..."

— Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii Gaudium](http://www.smcr.org/respect-life)
www.smcr.org/respect-life



DEFENDING OUR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Let us pray that the new Administration when revising the Health and Human Services health care mandate reinstates the Church's inalienable right to exercise its First Amendment right to freedom of religion.

If you haven't done so already, please voice your opposition to the federal health care mandate by calling U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell at 202-205-5445, and your newly elected representatives. Let them know that the mandate is in violation of our First Amendment right to religious freedom.

20th ANNIVERSARY



Saint Mary School
 RIDGEFIELD
Faculty Friday

Each Friday of the school year, we highlight a member of our faculty or staff. These "Faculty Friday" interviews are short introductions to our teachers and staff, their philosophies, and what makes SMS so special. You can view Faculty Fridays on our Facebook page or our website www.smsridgefield.org About Us/Faculty Friday.

Saint Mary School is currently enrolling students in select grades of Preschool through Grade 8 for the 2016-2017 school year, as well as accepting applications for the 2017-2018 school year. For more information, or to set up a tour, please contact Anna O'Rourke at (203) 438-7288, or visit www.smsridgefield.org.

FREE CHRISTMAS EVE MASS TICKETS

If you received free tickets to any Christmas Eve Masses and no longer need them, please drop them off at the Parish Office so we can pass them along to another family. Thank you!

FAITH FORMATION CORNER

Reading the Bible (cont'd)



Today's Catholic is called to take an intelligent, spiritual approach to God's Word in the Bible.

Additional pointers for more fruitful Scripture reading:

Get the whole story!

When selecting a Bible, look for a Catholic edition. A Catholic edition will include the Church's complete list of sacred books along with introductions and notes for understanding the text. A Catholic edition will have an imprimatur notice on the back of the title page. An imprimatur indicates that the book is faithful to our Catholic teaching.

The Bible isn't a book. It's a library.

The Bible is a collection of 73 books written over the course of many centuries. The books include history, prophecy, poetry, challenging letters to struggling new faith communities, and believers' accounts of the preaching and teaching of Jesus. Knowing the type of book you are reading will help you understand the literary tools the author is using and the meaning the author is trying to convey.

(continued next week...) www.usccb.org

CATHOLIC ACTION

Volunteers Needed



Elders in our community need YOUR help. We need the following at Congregate Housing, Prospect Ridge:

- 1. **BINGO CALLERS** - 1 (or 2) needed. Wednesdays 1-2:30pm, once a month.
- 2. **LUNCH SERVERS** - 3 or 4 needed. Weekdays 11:45am-1:00pm, 2x/month. You can choose the days to volunteer.

CONTACT: Suzanne MacAvoy for info and to volunteer, sdmacavoy@hotmail.com H 203 438-7056

St. Peter's Run



Please join our Catholic Action Team prepare and deliver lunches to the children of our Sister Parish, St. Peter's, Bridgeport on Saturdays. As there are no soup kitchens open in

Bridgeport on the weekends, food support is greatly needed for the families of our Sister parish, especially during the winter months. We ask that you consider providing a bag lunch meal to about 200 children of St. Peter's who are enrolled in their Religious Ed program. Reimbursement for the cost is available. Thank you for considering serving Christ through the poor. Please go to this link to sign up <http://bit.ly/2eZYCtf> or go to www.smcr.org.

DONATE: Food Pantries

During the month of December, all food collected goes to Dorothy Day Hospitality House. Suggested food items include cereal, pasta, canned food, vegetable oil and baby food. Also needed: full-size toiletries. Thank you!

Mass of Remembrance

A Mass of Remembrance for the loss of a child will be held on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, Wednesday, December 28, 2016 at 7 p.m. at St. Ann Parish in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. Father Perter Lynch, pastor, will celebrate the Mass. More info, email OfficeofFaithFormation@diobpt.org



You Can Play an Important Role in Our Ministry

Do you know someone going through a difficult time who could benefit from the focused care, encouragement and support of a Stephen Minister? If you know of someone who is hurting, talk to one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders, Mary Ann O'Grady – 203-438-5610 or Jack Hughes – 203-665-0054. They can talk with you about how we can connect the person you know with one of our Stephen Ministers. Reach out and show your care.

PILGRIM VIRGIN



The Advent Season is here. To honor the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, consider inviting the Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima to your home to pray the Rosary daily, a wonderful Marian devotion. The message from heaven for us is more urgent than ever to pray for world peace and the conversion of sinners. To invite the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima to your home contact Elma Stoveken at 203-894-1341.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

O = permanent or substitute adorer urgently needed.
X = 1 additional adorer needed.
Empty boxes = there are 2 or more adorers.

	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
12M-1am	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1am-2am	X	O	O	X	O	X	X
2am-3am	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
3am-4am	O	X	X	X	X	O	X
4am-5am	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
5am-6am	X	X			X		X
6am-7am	X		X	X	X		X
7am-8am	X		X	X	X	X	X
8am-9am				X			X
9am-10am	X	X		X	X	X	X
10am-11am	X			X		X	X
11am-12N	X						X
12N-1pm	X				X	X	X
1pm-2pm	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
2pm-3pm	X	X	X	X		X	X
3pm-4pm		X	X	X	X	X	X
4pm-5pm	X		X	X	X		X
5pm-6pm	X		X	X	X		X
6pm-7pm	X			X	X	X	X
7pm-8pm	X						X
8pm-9pm						X	X
9pm-10pm	X	X			X	X	X
10pm-11pm			X	X		X	X
11pm-12M	X		X		X	X	X

"I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word." St. Luke's words of long ago never grow old. Allow Jesus into our hearts & souls as Mary did that day & experience the needed comfort, guidance & strength that we all long for in our lives. Spend a scheduled hour with Jesus each week in our Adoration Chapel. To sign up, call Bill or Monica @ 914-533-2832. God bless you.

EVERY Thursday evening, 7-9pm, in our Adoration Chapel, the Chaplet of Mercy, 7 Sorrows of Our Blessed Mother and 15 decades of the Rosary are sung and prayed. Please join us!



ST. MARY PARISH MEN'S MINISTRY

Membership in the STMMM is a lifetime invitation to come whenever you can! Once a member always a member. Come join us any Saturday @ 6:30AM for bagels, coffee and fellowship. Perhaps your spiritual life needs a tune-up. Come and see how Jesus' teachings can enrich your life and the life of your loved ones. stmmm.org

MARQUETTE COUNCIL OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS



Don't you want to be the best role model for your child? The easiest way is to share the faith with your children by spending time with them and "walking the talk." Connect the words to action! Join the Knights of Columbus for the opportunity to serve our church and community together WITH your children. We are looking for Dads and their kids to help us throughout the year. Contact John McNicholas at jmpmcnich@yahoo.com or visit www.kofc245.org for more info.