

REFLECTION



In some cultures, a woman who has been widowed or who loses a child wears black for a year or more, signaling her mourning. Her face, too, wears the marks of grief. The sparkle in her eyes gives way to ready tears and her gait becomes heavy from sorrow. Such is the image of the city of Jerusalem in today's first reading.

Baruch, a disciple of Jeremiah, characterizes the devastated city as a woman in mourning for her exiled children, who have been forcibly taken

away from her. The prophet declares that it is now time for Jerusalem to exchange her robe of mourning and misery for a brilliant new mantle. Her new cloak is spun from justice and glory from God. If she despaired for her children, thinking God had forgotten them, the prophet insists that "they are remembered by God."

The humiliation of their forced march into exile on foot will be undone by their being carried back aloft, as if they were royalty. The heights of despair and the depths of depression will be leveled out. It is not that the suffering is forgotten, or that anything could go back to being the way it was before the tragedy, but now the divine gift of joy settles over the grieving mother as rebuilding life out of the ruins begins. The returnees are led by God's light, and their companions are mercy and justice.

Divine mercy embodies God's motherly care, as she grieves with all who mourn and acts with compassion to bring relief for all who suffer. Divine justice is the setting aright of all relationships: with God, self, others and the whole of the cosmos. With these two companions come healing, restoration and the chance for a new beginning.

In the Gospel, there is a similar invitation to a new beginning announced by John the Baptist. The narrative starts on an ominous note, as John's ministry is set against the backdrop of the Roman imperial rulers. By listing Tiberius Caesar, the emperor; Pontius Pilate, the governor; Herod, Philip and Lysanias, the tetrarchs; and, finally, Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests who colluded with the Roman authorities, Luke is not simply displaying an interest in history. He is reminding his hearers of the omnipresent imperial power that kept the inhabitants of Palestine in fear and grief at many levels. He foreshadows the terror of John's execution and of Jesus' crucifixion by introducing Herod and Pilate before these two prophets have even spoken their opening words.

Luke's hearers already know the end of the story. It is in this context that we hear John's invitation not only to turn away from personal choices that impede God's coming, but also to collective repentance and a turn toward divine mercy. Any desire for revenge, any attempts to try to retaliate with violence must give way to forgiveness on the part of the victims. This forgiveness invites repentance on the part of the offenders. Using Isaiah's words, John first speaks in imperatives: prepare and make straight the way. But then the verbs shift to the passive voice, implying that it will be the coming one himself who will do the filling in of the valleys and leveling of the mountains, straightening out winding roads and smoothing the rough ways.

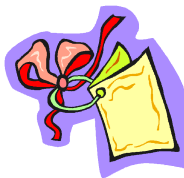
The Jesuit Refugee Service affirms to accompany, serve and defend the rights of vulnerable and often forgotten people.

For them and for us, his coming does not eliminate these challenges along life's path but fills us with saving joy, justice, forgiveness and mercy as we open ourselves to the great things God has done and continues to do for us.

- America Magazine, December 2009

ST. JOSEPH ADVENT PROJECTS

Advent Gifts Due Back Next Weekend



All Advent Project Gift Tag items needed for the poor, homeless and Vacaville Convalescent Rehab Center residents are due back no later than next weekend, December 12/13. Please bring stuffed animals, socks, undies, coats and food items for the Food Locker to the Church

entrance/Narthex and deposit in or near the marked receptacles.

- Green Christmas Dinner Gift Envelopes should also be returned with your donation by next weekend to help feed the hungry of our community. Please place the green envelopes with your cash or check donation (checks made payable to St. Joseph's) in the Offertory collection baskets.
- Baby Bottles for the Alpha Pregnancy Resource Center Change Collection will be distributed this weekend after all Masses at the Church exits.
- Parishioners are asked to fill the bottles with spare change and donations and return by January 2/3. If you have baby bottles from last year please return them at this time so Alpha can reuse them for future fundraisers.



If you would like to help with the stuffed animal delivery/visit to Vacaville Convalescent Rehabilitation Center (VCRC) on Thursday, December 17 @ 10:30 a.m. we welcome and need your help. Please call Dana Gregg @ 446-3868.



The food collection to benefit St. Mary's Food Locker will be next weekend, December 12-13. Food items needed include: boxed cereals, individual packaged instant oatmeal, canned soups, canned chili and peanut butter. Please remember those less fortunate in our community.

THANK YOU - The Thanksgiving food collection to benefit St. Mary's Food Locker brought in a total of 371 canned and packaged food items. Thank you to all who contributed to the drive.

CRAB FEED

ST. JOSEPH CRAB FEED

January 22, 2010

Tickets after all Masses this weekend and every weekend through December. Ticket prices are \$38 now and \$42 after January 1, 2010 so get your tickets now while they are on sale. There will be a sign-up sheet at the ticket table for those who would like to help with the Crab Feed. We are also looking for silent auction items and raffle gifts. Please call Lynda and Steve Abeyta (Crab Feed Chairs) at 447-8377 if you have any questions.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



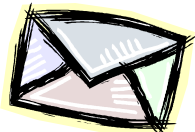
Holy Day Mass Schedule - On Tuesday, December 8 we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We will have Masses at 7:00 AM, 9:00 AM and 7:00 PM.

Bilingual Mass In Honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe

- The Mass for the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe will be celebrated at 5:00 PM on Saturday, December 12th in Spanish and English. The Rosary will be prayed in Spanish every evening at 7:00 PM the week of December 7-11 in the Chapel for those interested. We will sing the Mananitas and then pray the Rosary at 7:00 AM on Saturday, December 12th.



Lifeline - Are the upcoming holidays giving you the blues? Often the joy of the holiday season is replaced with stress or sadness due to unrealistic expectations, financial or time limitations or family turmoil. The Lifeline Ministry is here to help you during difficult times. We offer confidential one-on-one meetings as a free service to parishioners & friends in the community. For more information, please call (707) 447-2354.



2010 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES will be available to pick up in the Meeting Room beginning *next weekend*. We will do our best to arrange them in alphabetical order. Due to the large number of unused envelopes this past year, we have reduced the

number of envelopes we purchased. If your envelope number was 751-1000, you will be reassigned a lower number for 2010. If you have any questions, please contact Denise Jones at the Parish Office at 447-2354.

Marriage and the Mystery of the Incarnation - Today more than ever people are asking if it is possible to make a lifetime commitment in marriage. But the Catholic Church has a vision of marriage that can sustain a couple through good times and bad. Join us as Bishop Jaime Soto reflects on the upcoming pastoral letter of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on marriage in light of the Incarnation we celebrate during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Friday, December 18, 2009 at the Radisson Hotel, 500 Leisure Lane, Sacramento - check in 11:30-12:00 Noon, lunch at 12:00 noon. Cost is \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Mon. Is 35:1-10; Ps 85:9,10-14; Lk 5:17-26
 Tues. Gn 3:9-15,20; Ps 98:1-4; Eph 1:3-6,11-12; Lk 1:26-38
 Wed. Is 40:25-31; Ps 103:1-4,8,10; Mt 11:28-30
 Thurs. Is 41:13-20; Ps 145:1,9-13; Mt 11:11-15
 Fri. Is 48:17-19; Ps 1:1-4,6; Mt 11:16-19
 Sat. Zec 2:14-17; (Ps) Jdt 13:18,19; Lk 1:26-38
 Sun. Zep 3:14-18; (Ps) Is 12:2-6; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Catholics Come Home - Get ready.... Catholics Are Coming Home! This Advent, as we prepare to strengthen our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, we remember our call to share our faith with one another.

We remember the words of St. Peter who tells us "to always be ready to give witness to the reason for our hope" (1 Peter 3:15). Sharing our love for Jesus Christ and spreading the Good News is a necessary part of our life in Christ. Between December 18 and January 31, the Diocese of Sacramento will be part of a *Catholics Come Home* commercial campaign, and powerful video ads will air on most all Sacramento and Chico/Redding TV channels. We encourage each of you to invite those who may not be practicing their faith (or who may have never encountered Christ) to join us for the Holy Season of Christmas. We lovingly invite all those who have fallen away, to come home, to find healing, answers and support. There is always a place for you here. Please visit CatholicsComeHome.org for more information.

Second Collection Next Weekend - Retirement Fund helps senior religious. "As expenses continue to increase and economic difficulties tighten our income, we appreciate more and more the help of the Retirement Fund," notes a woman religious. Your tax-deductible donation supports the care of elderly and frail religious and helps to provide such basic necessities as prescription drugs and medical services. Please give generously to next week's collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious.



Please consider the purchase of a Christmas Poinsettia in memory of a loved one. These flowers will decorate our church during the Christmas season. Names of loved ones and donors will be acknowledged in a bulletin insert. The cost is \$20. Please cut out this box and return it to the Parish Office with the name and your payment.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA

In Memory Of: _____

Donor's Name: _____

MASS INTENTIONS

Mon. 7:00 AM ----- Salud Magayanes, R.I.P.
 Tues. 7:00 AM ----- Antonio & Rosa Matsumiya, R.I.P.
 Wed. 8:15 AM ----- Int. of Ferraro Family
 Thurs. 7:00 AM ----- Bernard Gale, R.I.P.
 Fri. 7:00 AM ----- Henry Moreno, R.I.P.
 Sat. 8:15 AM ----- Charles Gawley, R.I.P.
 Sat. 5:00 PM ----- Daniel & Jay Winters, R.I.P.
 Sun. 7:00 AM ----- Members of the Parish
 Sun. 8:30 AM ----- Sick Members of the Parish
 Sun. 10:00 AM ----- World Peace
 Sun. 12:00 PM ----- Vocations to the Priesthood