

## REFLECTION



Today's teens are significantly more tolerant than their elders, according to a recent Pew Research Center study. Millennials—young people born between 1981 and 2000—think nothing of dating members of other races. One student summed it up: "People are people, regardless of their skin color, religion or culture. We have no reason to be fearful of anybody." At the same time, studies of college students show that they are about 40 percent lower in empathy than students of the previous two or three decades (see the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research).

Researchers suggested that the decrease in empathy is due to factors such as the numbing effects of violent video games, the impersonal nature of technology and the glib, harsh language that is standard on television and online. Schools find that they need to construct activities designed to enhance understanding and empathy, which go far beyond tolerance.

Today's Gospel brings to the fore the situation of Joseph, whose culture had little tolerance for a formally betrothed woman who was found to be with child by someone other than her intended. Joseph is a righteous man, faithful to all the demands of the Jewish law. The strictest interpretation of the law would call for the death of the apparently adulterous Mary (Dt 22:23-27). But Joseph is unwilling to denounce her publicly and searches for a way out. There cannot be a secret divorce; two witnesses are needed; and Mary's pregnancy cannot long be hidden.

Joseph's first solution is to avoid a public trial and divorce Mary quietly without declaring the reasons (see Dt 24:1). This solution would preserve Joseph's reputation, but Mary would still be exposed to public shame. The only way to preserve Mary's honor would be for Joseph to complete his marriage to her and adopt the child as his own. In order for Joseph to make this choice he has to shift focus away from concern about his own righteousness and reputation and turn empathetically toward Mary. Only when he can make her the center of his attention, allowing himself to feel her distress, can he make the divinely directed choice that will uphold her honor at the price of his own.

In so doing, Joseph mirrors the divine action of empathy with humankind manifested in the Incarnation. Just as the Holy One rectifies the broken relationship with humanity by becoming one with us, so Joseph rescues a dishonorable and potentially deadly situation by choosing to unite himself completely to Mary. Joseph exemplifies what their son Jesus will later teach his followers: one must go far beyond what the law requires in order to fulfill it truly.

This is what St. Paul calls "the obedience of faith" in his letter to the Romans. Obedience, as Paul elaborates later in this letter, is not blindly following commands but comes from hearing, "and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). In fact, the word obedience (*hypakoe*) comes from the same Greek root as the verb "to hear" (*akouein*). In the Gospel, Joseph's ability to hear with his heart the cries of his beloved Mary as well as the voice of our empathetic God leads to his faithful obedience. As Christmas approaches, it can be difficult for us to hear God's voice above the din of many demands. When we pause each day to listen attentively, our faithful obedience, like that of Joseph, can have world-changing power as it creates the space for the Holy One to be ever birthed anew in our midst as God-with-us.

## CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

### Christmas Eve Masses - Friday, December 24

4:00 PM (Children's Mass)  
 (Choir Practice 5:00 p.m Dec 22)  
 7:00 PM (Youth Mass)  
 11:30 PM (Midnight Mass)

### Christmas Morning Masses - Saturday, December 25

8:30 AM and 10:00 AM

### New Year's Eve Mass - Friday, December 31

7:00 AM only

### New Year's Day Mass - Saturday, January 1

10:00 AM only  
 5:00 PM (Sunday Mass)

#### Sunday Masses

7:00 AM  
 8:30 AM  
 10:00 AM  
 12:00 PM



Dear Friends,

Once again, the Joyful season of Christmas is here filling our hearts and souls with the song of the Angels, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Yes, the favor of our God rests on each one of you, and so I, along with Fr. Jacobo and the Staff here at St. Joseph's, come to you wishing you the Peace and Joy of Christmas.

It is about six months since I joined you in this parish family, and I am delighted to celebrate this Christmas with you. I thank you for your love for me and Fr. Jacobo, and for your dedication for this Parish. Wish you all the blessings of Christmas. May the Lord guard and protect you throughout the New Year.

With all the Blessings of St. Joseph our Patron,

Fr. Mathew Marankulam  
 and Fr. Jacobo Caceres



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### **CRAB FEED -- Date: January 21, 2011**

Tickets are available after each Mass at \$38, \$42 in 2011 **HELP WE NEED YOU!** If you would like to help, please call Cathy Treece at 449-4423. If you have any questions call Steve and Lynda Abeyta 447-837

### **December 24—Christmas Eve – Children’s Choir**

Children will be singing at the 4:00 p.m. Mass on Christmas Eve. All children who are interested in singing at that Mass are invited for a choir practice on Dec 22 at 5:00 p.m in the church. All are welcome. Please come.

**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.

**End of Year Statements** - This year we plan to send out contribution reports only to those who request one. If you need a copy of your contribution report, please put a note on your contribution envelope or give us a call at 447-2354 or e-mail us at rfoley@stjoseph-vacaville.org. Thank you.

### **St. Francis High School Seeking Coaches for 2 Spring Sports:**

Head JV Lacrosse Coach and Throws Coach for Track & Field Both positions start in early February and run through May. Interested parties are asked to please submit the Coaching Application available on the St. Francis website: [www.stfrancishs.org](http://www.stfrancishs.org). Questions may be directed to: Kolleen McNamee, CAA, Athletic Director (916)737-5025 or [kmcnamee@stfrancishs.org](mailto:kmcnamee@stfrancishs.org).



### **KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION FOR NOTRE DAME SCHOOL :**

Notre Dame School will accept applications for the 2011-2012 school year from January 4-31. These forms are available in the school office. Please bring a copy of the child’s baptismal certificate, birth certificate, immunizations records and a letter from your parish. Notre Dame School does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, or national/ethnic origin in admission policy or employment practices. For more information call the school office at 447-1460, office hours: 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

### **Faith Formation:**

FF Classes will be on Christmas break December 19th through January 2<sup>nd</sup>. All classes resume week of January 9<sup>th</sup>. Have a blessed Christmas!

### **READINGS FOR THE WEEK**

Mon. Is 7:10-14; Ps 24:1-6; Lk 1:26-38  
 Tues. Zep 3:14-18; Ps 33:2-3  
 Wed. 1 Jn 2:3-11; Ps 96:1-3,5-6; Lk 2:22-35  
 Thurs. Mal 3:1-4,223-24; Ps 25:4-5, 8-10,14; Lk 1:57-66

**Christmas Masses**

4:00 p.m.: Is 9:1-6; Ps 96:1-2,2-3,11-12,13; Ti 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14  
 7:00 p.m.: Is 62:1-5, Ps 89:4-5,16-17,27,29; Acts 13:17,22-25; Mt 1:1-25  
 11:30 p.m. Is 9:1-6; Ps 96:1-2,2-3,11-12,13; Ti 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14  
 8:30 a.m. Is 62:11-12; Ps 97:1,6,11-12; Ti 3:4-7 ; Lk 2:15-20  
 10:00 a.m. Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1,2-3,3-4,5-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18  
 Sun. Sir 3:2-7,12-14; Ps 128:1-5; Col 3:12-21; Mt 2:13-15,19-23

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Second Collection Last Weekend** - We collected a total of \$2,532.66. Thank you for your generous donations!



**FOOD LOCKER THANK YOU** - The St. Mary’s Food Locker would like to thank St. Joseph Parish for its generous support of the Food Locker this past year. This past Sunday we collected 3,155 cans and packages of food and through your monthly food donations, the Food Locker collected more than 22,165 canned and packaged food items for the year to help those less fortunate in our community. The next collection for the Food Locker will take place the weekend of January 8-9, 2011. Thanks for your ongoing support.

**RENT-A-SANTA**—The Knights of Columbus are again offering home, classroom, office visits, etc. by Santa Claus. For information or to schedule a visit, call Ken Gallagher at 446-7720. All proceeds go towards the Knights of Columbus charitable works.



**2011 Contribution Envelopes are available in the church Meeting Room. Please stop by after Mass and pick yours up.**

**The new 2011 Calendars are available in the Narthex.**

### QUESTION OF THE WEEK

**4th Sunday of Advent - Week of December 19, 2010**

**Theme:** Jesus is God made flesh. (Emmanuel = God is with us!)

**Question for Adults:** What experiences do you have of God "speaking to you" and directing your life and work? How does God speak to you in prayer?



**Question for Children:** When you pray, how do you hear *God's voice* in response?

### **MASS INTENTIONS**

Mon. 12/20 - 7:00 AM ----- Edmund Dumuk, R.I.P.  
 Mon. 12/20 - 7:00 AM ----- Charlene Owings, R.I.P.  
 Tues. 12/21 - 7:00 AM ----- Ritche Lei Campued, R.I.P.  
 Tues. 12/21- 7:00 AM ----- Kathleen Carr, R.I.P.  
 Wed. 12/22 7:00 AM ----- William Joseph Civetello  
 Wed. 12/22 7:00 AM ----- Salbert Ryan Lariosa  
 Wed. 12/22 - 8:15 AM ----- Intentions of the Beck Family  
 Thurs. 12/23 - 7:00 AM ----- Mary Bernal, R.I.P.  
Christmas Eve
 Fri. 12/24 4:30 PM ----- Children of the Parish  
 Fri. 12/24 7:00 PM ----- Youth of the Parish  
 Fri. 12/24 11:30 PM ----- Members of the Parish  
Christmas Day
 Sat. 12/25 - 8:30 AM ----- Peace  
 Sat 12/25 - 10:00 PM ----- Members of the Parish  
 Sun. 12/26 - 7:00 AM ----- Sick Members of the Parish  
 Sun. 12/26 - 8:30 AM ----- Members of the Parish  
 Sun. 12/26- 10:00 AM ----- Peace  
 Sun. 12/26—12:00 PM ----- Vocations to the Priesthood