

From the Desk of Fr. Paulo....

December 24, 2023

SOLEMN FEAST of CHRISTMAS – NATIVITY of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Let the earth be opened
and bring forth a Savior!

Mele Kalikimaka to each and every one on this Solemn Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

Truly as we now enter one of the blessed and sacred day of our Faith, the Solemn Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the prophetic words of Isaiah spoken over 400 years are fulfilled and long-awaited Messiah now enter our hearts. **“For us a child is born, to us a son is given...” Isaiah 9:6.**

While we may still be busy with last minute tidying up of decorations, gift wrappings and one food to be prepared and shared with the ohana, may we not be found spiritually unprepared as the feast of Christmas feast dawn upon us in few days. It is first necessary that our hearts are spiritually prepared to welcome the Christ Child into our lives...into our ohana.

Truly with our hearts prepared by the spiritual journey of 4 weeks of Advent let us come and worship our Lord who for the love of us, humbly assumed the lowliness of our human flesh and so fulfilled the design God has formed long ago and opened for us the way to eternal salvation! **“Who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance...” Philippians 2:6-7.**

This Christmas 2023 as Catholic Christians let us be grateful to God that we are the recipients of God’s greatest Gift the Son of God sent to us to redeem us from our slavery to Sin. May the abundance of graces that this Christmas imparts may be ours and be welcomed by our hearts that are already cleansed and prepared.

Let us be open to embrace God more than ever before and look ahead to enter the coming New Year 2024 with greater trust and faith in the goodness of God for each one of us.

Though there may be different ways for all of us to grow and participate – live out in the spiritual riches bestowed by the Nativity of Christ, we are encouraged to do so by being good stewards and disciples. The life of stewardship lays out for us the spiritual paths of **TIME** and **TALENTS** that are not only individually beneficial to one’s path to conversion and renewal but most of all as one that can become blessing for the entire parish ohana of St. Rita.

Your participation in Stewardship of **TIME, TALENT and TREASURE**, no matter how small they may seem, are in truth important and indispensable for the well-being both spiritual and physical good of the St. Rita Parish ohana.

Through the past 6 months, though often they have been inconspicuous, yet through the **Time, Talent, and Treasure** of participating parishioners of St. Rita, the parish has been the recipient of much needed repairs, especially the Church building.

The mauka and Makaha sides of the Church has already received needed repairs and paintings while the Kapolei and makai side is presently being prepped up for painting.

None of the cost of repairs and paintings done for the Church building is taken from the St. Rita Building Fund Savings which is reserved solely for the construction of the New Parish St. Rita Gathering Center.

All repairs’ costs to the Church building or other buildings have been taken care thorough donations (Treasure) from the stewards, men, women, and friends of St. Rita parish who have been laboring (Time & Talent). Also, there is a Parish Repair and Maintenance Fund set aside for necessary upkeep of the parish properties.

Truly God’s gift of **TIME** is precious for through our brief earthy life we can be good Stewards to dispense our entrusted and God given **TALENT and TREASURE** in manner in praise and glory of God.

This coming **New Year 2024** everyone is encouraged to strive to live out our precious life (Time) in presence of God, by prayerful and committed participation in parish ministries, faithfulness to the Lord’s Day and in prayers, building up of ohana at home by quality time shared and in more desirous of spiritual growth our lives be filled with joy and peace God alone can bestow.

May our lives this coming **New Year 2024** thus be attentive to the exhortation of St. Peter **“But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.” 2 Peter 3:8.**

Finally, may gratitude be the guiding attitude always in our hearts toward God. “What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?” Psalm 116:12

MELE KALIKIMAKA!

Have a Blessed week in the Lord!

Fr. Paulo ofm cap.

Glory to God in the Highest

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORD OF LIFE: "O Blessed Mother, at the angel's word you went in haste to the aid of your cousin Elizabeth. Although pregnant yourself, you place her needs before your own. By your example of radical solidarity, teach us to reverence and protect those in need, without conditions or expectations. . . Obtain for us the grace to bring Christ to any expectant mother who is alone and afraid." .” **USCCB, Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities Prayer for Radical Soliarity** (www.respectlife.org/prayer-for-radical-solidairty)

WEEKLY READINGS

Dec 24 Sun: 4th Sunday of Advent

2 Sm:7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Ps:89; Rm:16:25-27; Lk:1:26-38

Dec 25 Mon: Christmas

Is:62:11-12; Ps:97: Ti:3:4-7; Lk:2:15-20

Dec 26 Tue: Saint Stephen, the First Martyr

Acts:6:8-10; 7:54-59; Ps:31:3cd-4, 6 & 8ab, 16bc & 17;

Mt:10:17-22

Dec 27 Wed: Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

1 Jn:1:1-4; Ps:97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; Jn:20:1a & 2-8

Dec 28 Thur: the Holy Innocents, Martyrs

1 Jn:1:5-2:2; Ps:124; 2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8; Mt:2:13-18

Dec 29 Fri: Fifth Day of the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

1 Jn:2:3-11; Ps:96: 1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6; Lk:2:22-35

Dec 30 Sat: Sixth Day of the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

1 Jn:2:12-17; Ps:96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10; Lk:2:36-40

NEXT SUNDAY READINGS:

Gn:15:1-6; 21:1-3: Abram and Sarah put faith in the Lord and gave the name Isaac to their son.

Heb:11:8, 11-12, 17-19: the descendants of Abraham and Sarah are “as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore.”

Lk:2:22-40: Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple to be consecrated. Simeon, a holy and pious man, took the child in his arms, and Anna the prophetess, gave thanks to God.

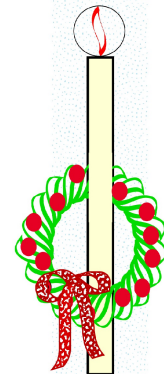
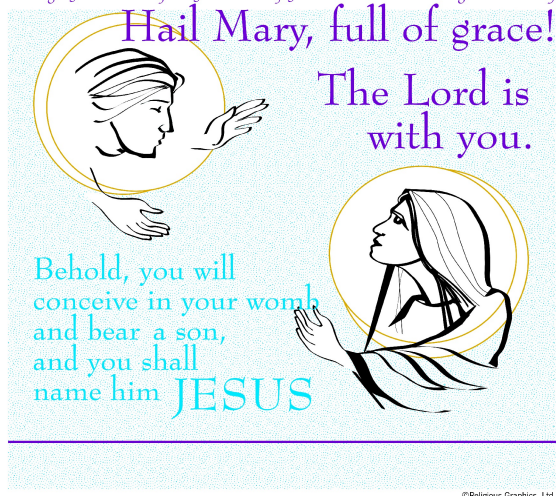
NOTES ON STEWARDSHIP

In today's Gospel reading we hear proclaimed the story of the Annunciation, when the angel of the Lord announced to Mary that she would give birth to Christ through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Mary allowed God's messenger to speak to her. She was attentive, not afraid to enter into a dialogue, then unconditionally obedient. Mary's acceptance of this mystery is a stewardship model for us. Good stewards remain open to the incursions of divine life into the normal course of their daily lives. How open are we to the promoting of the Holy Spirit in our own lives? What might we do this last week of Advent to be more attentive to the Lord? (**International Catholic Stewardship Council**)

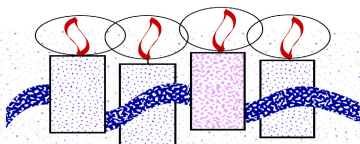
PARISH CALENDAR

Sat, Dec 23	5:00 p.m.	Mass
Sun, Dec 24	7:00 a.m.	Mass
	9:00 a.m.	Mass
	6:00 p.m.	Christmas Ohana Mass
	11:00 p.m.	Christmas Evening Mass
Mon, Dec 25	8:00 a.m.	Christmas Mass
	10:00 a.m.	Christmas Mass
	9:30-11 am	Food Pantry Closed
Tue, Dec 26	7:30 a.m.	Liturgy of the Hours/Rosary
	8:00 a.m.	Communion Service
Wed, Dec 27	7:30 a.m.	Liturgy of the Hours/Rosary
	8:00 a.m.	Communion Service
	9:30-11 am	Food Pantry Closed
Thur, Dec 28	7:30 a.m.	Liturgy of the Hours/Rosary
	8:00 a.m.	Communion Service
Fri, Dec 29	7:30 a.m.	Liturgy of the Hours/Rosary
	8:00 a.m.	Mass
Sat, Dec 30	7:30 a.m.	Liturgy of the Hours/Rosary
	8:00 a.m.	Mass
	3:15-4:00 p. m.	Confession
	5:00 p.m.	Mass
Sun, Dec 31	7:00 a.m.	Mass
	9:00 a.m.	Mass (Live Stream)
	5:00 p.m.	NO MASS

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin named Mary



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For unto us
a child is born
unto us a son is given

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



God Is Near

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
you radiate the light that overcomes
darkness
and illuminate the path to our salvation.
As you hasten to be born into our
broken world,
help us turn fully to you and
increase our longing for your presence.

Fill us with hope for your birth
and grant us patience and peace, Lord Jesus,
who lives and reigns with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Sunday, December 24, 2023

Attend to God's Time



Today's readings: 2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29; Romans 16:25–27; Luke 1:26–38. This year we dwell in the last week of Advent for only hours. Today's Scriptures put an exclamation mark on all the prophetic promises we recalled with the "O" Antiphons. As foretold in the Old Testament, and echoed in the words of the angel Gabriel, the savior will come through the line of King David and thus his house and kingdom shall endure forever.

For most households, these abbreviated final hours of Advent will be consumed with hurried preparations for

Christmas. Even so, attend to God's time. Remember to light the fourth candle on the Advent wreath, adorn the household nativity scene, and listen to your Advent playlist once more while cleaning, baking, or traveling. Our Advent texts, songs, and traditions are ripe with promise. Christ is coming. A savior will be born. The light will overcome the darkness. God's faithfulness will endure forever.

Today we turn the page from hopeful waiting to joyful fulfillment. Breathe in the miracle of God's love. Exhale a prayer of gratitude for all that is to come.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 25

Christ Is Born

Christmas Day is often filled with activity and goes by in the blink of an eye. Remember to pause and open your heart wide to Christ, who seeks a home there. Allow the light of a candle, the Christ figurine in your nativity scene, the circle of evergreen on your holiday wreath, and the shining eyes of children and the elderly to kindle your joy in the incarnation. *Today's readings for Christmas Mass at Dawn: Isaiah 62:11–12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11–12; Titus 3:4–7; Luke 2:15–20.*

Tuesday, December 26

St. Stephen

Today we honor St. Stephen, the first Christian to die a martyr for his faith in Jesus. A deacon in the early Church, Stephen served the needs of widows and the poor. His eloquent preaching drew many to Christianity as well as the violent attention of those opposing the memory of Jesus. Advent proclaimed that God reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. We celebrate Stephen and other martyrs this week for their utmost faithfulness to Christ and passing into the eternal life of heaven. *Today's readings: Acts 6:8–10; 7:54–59; Psalm 31:3cd–4, 6, 8ab, 16bc, 17; Matthew 10:17–22.*

Wednesday, December 27

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

Remembered as the beloved disciple, John gave the Church a Gospel, three epistles to the Christian community, and possibly the Book of Revelation. Stories recall that he lived a long life and in his later years, when he no longer had the stamina to preach, he routinely offered the most succinct homily, “My little children, love one another.” With these pithy words, he relayed the most essential message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Today's readings: 1 John 1:1–4; Psalm 97:1–2, 5–6, 11–12; John 20:1a, 2–8.*

Thursday, December 28

The Holy Innocents

Today's Scriptures return us to the events following the nativity of our Lord. Deeply threatened by the possible birth of the long-awaited messiah, King Herod ordered the murder of all boys under the age of two in Bethlehem and the surrounding region. This unimaginable scourge of innocent children has repeated itself over and over through the centuries and is a powerful reminder of our responsibility to protect life at every stage. *Today's readings: 1 John 1:5–2:2; Psalm 124: 2–3, 4–5, 7b–8; Matthew 2:13–18.*

Friday, December 29

The Presentation in the Temple

Ever faithful to their Jewish traditions, Joseph and Mary brought the child Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to be consecrated to God. Two holy elders, Simeon and Anna, recognized Jesus as the messiah. Their prophetic words proclaimed that all that had been foretold in the Scriptures would be manifest in the life of this tiny child. Joseph and Mary were amazed and returned home to raise Jesus in the faith of Judaism. *Today's readings: 1 John 2:3–11; Psalm 96:1–2a, 2b–3, 5b–6; Luke 2:22–35.*

Saturday, December 30

Relish the Days of Christmas

While the secular world charges ahead, our Church invites us to linger in the Christmas season. Together we savor the miraculous early moments of Jesus' life and the stunning reception he received from shepherds, kings, and holy elders alike. His earthly parents courageously protected him and immediately began to pass on their faith and honor their religious tradition. Resist packing away the religious imagery just yet. Instead, keep the nativity scene prominent, light Christmas candles, and ponder along with Mary the unexpected graces poured upon us. *Today's readings: 1 John 2:12–17; Psalm 96:7–8a, 8b–9, 10; Luke 2:36–40.*





THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Christmas Readings

The Incarnate Word

The lectionary designates different readings for the Masses for Christmas. Each of these readings shed light on God sending his Son into the world to be with us.

Christmas Vigil Mass

Name Him Jesus

Names mean something. The Gospel of Matthew locates Jesus' entrance into history by recounting his ancestry, name by name, generation by generation, all the way back to Abraham, with whom God first formed the covenantal relationship with humanity. With great specificity, Matthew tells us that the name *Jesus* means "savior." The One who came to save his people from their sins was born at a unique moment in history with a particular place in the genealogy of humankind. Matthew tells us that the name *Emmanuel* means "God is with us." Jesus came through the womb of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem two thousand years ago and dwells among us this Christmas and every moment of our lives. Let us make room in our hearts, homes, and lives for him. *Readings for the Christmas Vigil Mass: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:1-25.*

Christmas Mass during the Night

A Savior Has Been Born

The Scriptures assigned for the midnight Mass invite us to contemplate the incarnation through the lenses of past, present, and future. The prophetic promises of Isaiah take us back to the past when the coming of Christ was foretold. St. Paul bids Titus, and all of us, to live as Christ taught us while we wait for his coming again. Luke narrates the particularities of this historical birth of Christ and the miraculous proclamation of the heavenly host to the people of Bethlehem. We are invited into the midst of this wondrous

mystery and sent forth to announce the salvation of Christ to the ends of the earth with great joy: today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord (Psalm 96:1). *Readings for Christmas Mass during the Night: Isaiah 9:1-6; Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14.*

Christmas Mass at Dawn

Go Tell It

As dawn breaks, we recall the first witnesses of the incarnation and hear the succession of astonishing announcements that result. The angels announce the glorious news to the shepherds in the fields. The shepherds hasten to visit the holy family and share all the angels told them. From there, the shepherds continued to boldly witness the glorious news to all who would listen. Receiving their witness, we join in glorifying and praising God for all we have seen and heard. We ring bells, sing with exuberance, join in worship, light up our homes, fill our tables with plenty, exchange gifts, all the while witnessing this Good News with our celebrations. *Readings for Christmas Mass at Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20.*

Christmas Mass during the Day

Word Made Flesh

The Gospel of John, read at the Christmas Mass during the Day, heralds that the world was created through the Word and that the Word has entered the world. John proclaims that the work of all creation coalesced in the birth of Christ. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Then creation continued infused with Christ. In the story of creation and redemption, God is always moving toward us through the Word. We are summoned to turn our lives toward the Word and allow God to be manifested through us. On this holy day, we celebrate with joy that we share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity. *Readings for Christmas Mass during the Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18.*



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KEEPING THE SEASONS
ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2023-2024

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD



Glory to God in the Highest

Generous God,
you are the gracious giver of all gifts.
On this holy Christmas Day come
into our lives.

Give us the riches of your poverty,
show us the power of your weakness,
and teach us the joy of your humility.
Bless our homes and hearts as we
celebrate the birth of your Son
and join the angels in singing your
praises now and forever.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

December 25, 2023

House of Bread



Today's readings: Christmas Vigil Mass: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:1-25. Christmas Mass during the Night: Isaiah 9:1-6; Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14. Christmas Mass at Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20. Christmas Mass during the Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18. On the Nativity of the Lord, we prepare ourselves to hear with fresh ears the story of Mary giving birth in a stable and making a feeding trough into a bed for our Savior. The story of Jesus' birth proclaims that great things happen in the humblest of places. The name of the unremarkable town that hosted this miracle is

Bethlehem. In Hebrew, Bethlehem means "house of bread." What perfect symmetry that the One who will become our bread of life began human existence in the house of bread.

The account of the nativity also presents a marginalized group of people as the first to hear the Good News. Not only did the shepherds go "in haste" (Luke 2:16) to see the messiah, but with joy in their hearts, they proclaimed what they saw and heard. May we be open to hearing the Good News in unexpected ways and from unexpected people. With Mary, we acknowledge the "greatness of the Lord," who fills the hungry "with good things" and sends the rich "away empty" (Luke 1:47-53).