



Blessed Trinity

Weekend Magazine

Over 60 YEARS COURAGEOUSLY *Living the Gospel*

December 24, 2023 ▪ The Fourth Sunday of Advent

A short and beautiful Christmas prayer from St. Bernard of Clairvaux

The Cistercian reformer had a beautiful prayer that helps set the tone for a prayerful Christmas.

Born in the 11th century, Bernard of Clairvaux is known for his powerful reforms of the Cistercian order and his inspiring holiness of life. In fact, all his brothers and even his father later joined him in the monastery.

Bernard led a very austere life, dedicating every ounce of his energy to prayer and fasting. This facilitated a deep spiritual life, and he was later recognized as a “Doctor of the Church.”

Below is a short and beautiful prayer from St. Bernard that helps set the mood for a prayerful Christmas, gazing tenderly at the newborn babe lying in the manger.



*Let Your goodness Lord
appear to us, that we,
made in your image, conform
ourselves to it.*

*In our own strength
we cannot imitate Your
majesty, power, and wonder
nor is it fitting for us to try.*

*But Your mercy reaches from the
heavens through the clouds to the
earth below.*

*You have come to us as a small
child, but you have brought us
the greatest of all gifts,
the gift of eternal love.*

*Caress us with Your tiny hands,
embrace us with
Your tiny arms and pierce
our hearts with Your
soft, sweet cries.*

~ St. Bernard



PASTOR

Rev. Wayne C. Genereux

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Deacon Lionel Roberts,
Deacon Emeritus

CLERGY ASSISTANCE

Fr. Jack McDowell, OFM
Fr. Randall Roberts, OFM
Fr. Anthony Fortunato, OdeM
Fr. Victor Bartolotta

MASS SCHEDULE

Weekday Masses

Monday - Saturday 8:00 AM

Weekend Masses

Saturday Vigil at 4:00 PM

Sunday

8:00 AM, 9:30 AM & 11:30 AM

Follow the Sunday Mass on our
website, btsp.org.

Confessions will be held
Saturdays 2:45-3:45

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What Is Your Fiat?

Are you an anxious people-pleaser prone to overcommitting yourself? Welcome to the club! We have slogans, and for your convenience I've listed them here:

“Sounds great!” ▪ “No worries!” ▪ “Absolutely, I can do that, no problem!”

These are your go-to responses for when someone requests a favor that is a huge inconvenience, but you would rather die than disappoint. It's not *exactly* disingenuous — it's just a little neurotic. Again, welcome to the club.

You know who doesn't belong to this club? The Blessed Mother. For many reasons, I'm sure, but the biggest one is that she's always completely up-front. Take her response to the Angel Gabriel: “Let it be done.”

If there are more powerful words than these, I can't think of them now. And yet, as responses go, this certainly isn't an enthusiastic one. There was never a human creature more willing to obey God than Mary, full of grace, so it makes it all the more striking that her response to Gabriel is this reserved — and it makes it all the more certain that she means exactly what she says.

Let it be done.

Not: Yes, this is exactly that I asked for!

Not: Nope. This sounds awful. Count me out.

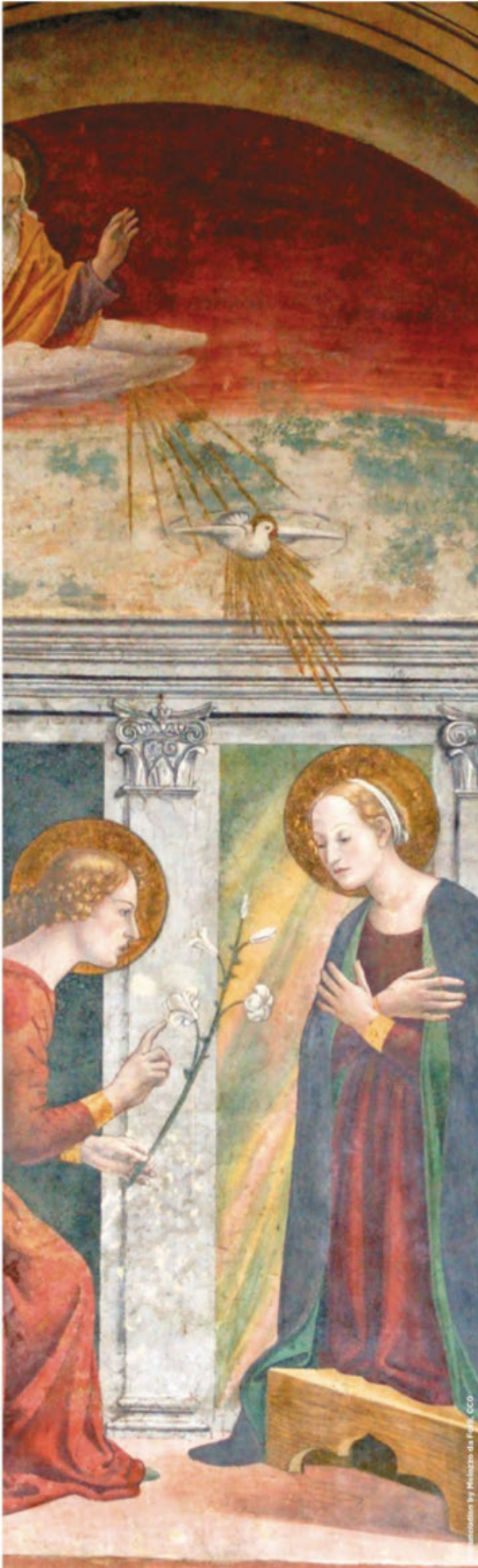
But precisely this: If God is asking, my answer is yes.

The Angel Gabriel visits us all, in a way, at some point or another, bearing news we did not expect. When we can say, in the face of that uncertainty, “Let it be done,” we are embracing our calling as disciples. We are becoming like Mary.

“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.” — Luke 1:38

By Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman ©LPi





December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 | Rom 16:25-27 | Lk 1:26-38

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” The angel Gabriel announces this in the Gospel today, and it is a phrase with which we are all familiar thanks to our recitation of the Hail Mary prayer. Although some may be comforted by such a message and its angelic messenger, it is troubling to Mary because the angel goes on to tell her she will conceive and bear the Son of God. Thinking practically, Mary is being told the impossible will happen – who wouldn’t be troubled? And yet Mary offers herself: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Despite her fear and trepidation, Mary went on to answer God’s call and do his will. Our Blessed Mother became a great example of fortitude at that moment, as she exemplified what it means to step outside of our own uncertainty and trust God completely. Although doing God’s will can be difficult at times, St. Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Romans that we can ask God for the strength to say “yes” in spite of our fears.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Up until today, December has probably been a whirlwind. Trees and lights, ornaments, parties and presents – all these things help to kick off “the most wonderful time of year” beginning soon after Thanksgiving. Come Dec. 26, however, for many, the decorations become a nuisance and Christmas trees are out on the curb for pickup. Thank goodness for our Catholic faith because for us, Christmas is just beginning! Mary didn’t say “may it be done to me” only to forget about it the next day. No, in the coming months, the Blessed Mother nurtured the baby Jesus in her womb, anticipating the arrival of her firstborn and the Son of God. And on that blessed Christmas night, her work as the Mother of God was only just beginning. So, as we anticipate the arrival of the Christ Child, we are joyful that *our* Christmas season continues until we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on January 8. Let us use this time to draw closer to God and make every effort in the new year to do his will.

SING *Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.*



Are You Hoping to Receive One of the Seven Sacraments With Us?

Matrimony

Congratulations on your engagement! Every Diocese in Florida requires at least six months preparation before marriage. Please call our Pastor, Fr. Wayne Genereux, at the Parish Office for an appointment before setting a date.

Baptism

We are honored that you would like to choose Blessed Trinity Catholic Church for the baptism of your child! We ask that you please call our Pastor, Fr. Wayne Genereux, at the Parish Office for information regarding the pre-baptism class before scheduling a baptism.

Office Hours

Monday—Friday 9-12 and 1-4
Closed for Lunch Noon to 1 pm

Journeying Through Grief

"Grief is not a sign of weakness. It is a tribute to the loved one who died, and a healthy response to our heart ache."

If you would like to be part of a Grief-Support "group" or you would prefer "one on one" support, please call Rachel between 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the parish office, 727-867-3663

Mass Intentions

Saturday, December 23, Advent Weekday

8:00 a.m. Sean Maloney Family (liv)

Saturday, December 23, Vigil for The Fourth Sunday in Advent

4:00 p.m. Gary Romani (dec)

Sunday, December 24, The Fourth Sunday in Advent

8:00 a.m. Dutilly Family (liv & dec)

9:30 a.m. Mass for Parishioners

11:30 a.m. Jordan Hunkin (dec)

Sunday, December 24, The Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

4:00 p.m. Romani & Daniel Families (dec)

9:00 p.m. John Cardinal Foley (dec)

Monday, December 25, The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

8:00 a.m. Carole Huff (dec)

9:30 a.m. Felix and Silvana Bellini (dec)

11:30 a.m. Angela Riskowitz (dec)

Tuesday, December 26, Feast of Saint Stephen, First Martyr

8:00 a.m. Kayla and Nathan Roberts (liv)

Wednesday, December 27, Feast of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

8:00 a.m. Mass for Vocations

Thursday, December 28, Feast of Holy Innocents, Martyrs

8:00 a.m. Helen Fegley Murray (dec)

Friday, December 29, Memorial of Saint Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr

8:00 a.m. Burdo Families (liv)

Saturday, December 30,

8:00 a.m. Carole Huff (dec)

Saturday, December 30, Vigil for Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

4:00 p.m. Merlene and Lionel Roberts
61st Wedding Anniversary (liv)

Sunday, December 31, Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

8:00 a.m. Richard Kraynak (dec)

9:30 a.m. Mass for Parishioners

11:30 a.m. Richard Kraynak (dec)

Blessed Trinity Scripture Classes

Blessed Trinity Scripture Classes will resume on Tuesday, January 9 from 10:00 am—11:30 am. They will continue with the series from Q Place, "Foundations for Faith."

Classes are held in Courtyard Hall and the books will be \$12. There are nine sessions. Bring a Bible. For further information and to confirm attendance, please call Barbara Townsend (727) 867-3605.



EVERYDAY STEWARDSHIP - RECOGNIZE GOD IN YOUR ORDINARY MOMENTS

The Journey

Advent comes along every year and will continue to do so until Jesus returns. As this season draws to a close, we can each ask ourselves, “Am I now any better a disciple of Jesus Christ and more of a steward of all my gifts than before the Advent season started?” I have been on this earth for 40+ years. I have had 40+ Advents to draw closer to God and to work on taking more seriously my baptismal call. Some have gone better than others, but I would like to think my spiritual life progressed at least a small amount during each of them.

Conversion is a process. Stewardship is about a way of living and it is about more than simply being generous when a situation calls for it. Stewardship and conversion go hand-in-hand and we are always moving closer to holiness in Jesus Christ. Living in this way takes practice and commitment. If this Advent didn’t go as you had hoped, remember is not really an end. It is just another step along your journey.

This Christmas, while you are giving and receiving gifts and hopefully spending time with those you love, may you take the time to cherish the true gift that came to us over 2000 years ago and continues to call us to this day: Jesus. Let us be grateful beyond measure for this gift above all gifts, let us continue on our journey, and let our lives give testimony to the one who leads us.

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS ©LPi

The Marriage Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving will take place at the Cathedral of St. Jude on Sunday, February 11 at 3:00 pm. This event honors couples throughout the diocese who will celebrate their 25th anniversary as well as those celebrating 50 or more years of marriage during the 2024 calendar year. To RSVP, please call our parish office by Tuesday January 16.

Weekly Offering

Weekend of 12/9-12/10, including
online giving 12/4-12/10

Offertory	7,724.00
Other donations	1,491.00
National Collections	534.00

“Life in the Spirit” Prayer Group

Monday evenings at 7:00 pm in
Courtyard Hall.

All are welcome!

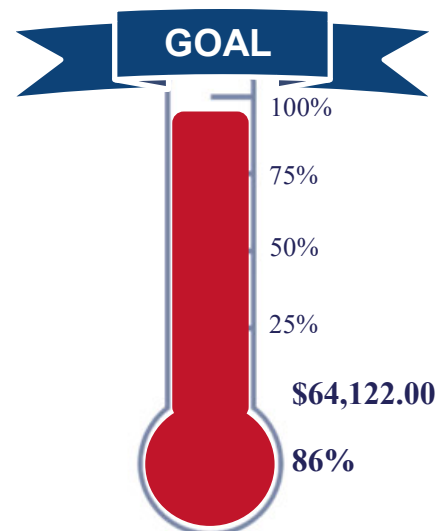
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Upcoming Events

Sunday, December 24 4th Sunday of Advent

There will be no coffee and donuts

4th Sunday of Advent Masses at 8:00 am, 9:30 am and 11:30am

Christmas Eve Mass at 4:00 pm Children's Vigil, Santa visits after the 4pm Mass

Christmas Eve Mass at 9:00 pm

Monday, December 25 ~ Christmas Day!

Christmas Masses at 8:00 am, 9:30 am, and 11:30 am

The parish office will be closed

Sunday, December 31

9:00 and 10:30 am Coffee and Donuts PH

Monday, January 1, New Years Day

Holy Mary Mother of God, Not a Holy Day of Obligation this year

The parish office will be closed.

Tuesday, January 2

7:00 pm Knights of Columbus Meeting PH

Thursday, January 4

6:00 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal MR

Saturday, January 6

5:00 pm Knights of Columbus
Fish n' Chicken Fry PH

Sunday, January 7, Epiphany of the Lord

9:00 and 10:30am Coffee and Donuts PH

Monday, January 8

7:00 pm "Life in the Spirit" Prayer Group CYH

Tuesday, January 9

10:00-11:30 am Scripture Class resumes CYH

Thursday, January 11

6:00 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal MR

Sunday, January 14

8:30-11:00 am K.O.C. Pancake Breakfast PH

Monday, January 15, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Parish office will be closed.

7:00 pm "Life in the Spirit" Prayer Group CYH

Tuesday, January 16

10:00-11:30 am Scripture Class CYH

Thursday, January 18

6:00 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal MR

Monday, January 22

7:00 pm "Life in the Spirit" Prayer Group CYH

Tuesday, January 23

10:00-11:30 am Scripture Class CYH

Thursday, January 25

6:00 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal MR

Friday, January 26

BT Social Group Meets @ Kahwa Coffee

400 45th Ave S, St. Petersburg 33705

Saturday, January 27

7:00 pm Knights of Columbus Sock Hop Dance PH

PH= Parish Hall, MR=Music Room, CYH= Courtyard Hall, CH=Church



Social Group

The Blessed Trinity Social Group is meeting regularly now. Please join us at the Kahwa coffee shop @ 400 45th Ave S, St. Petersburg, FL 33705 after the 8:00 am Mass on the Last Friday of each Month. Bring your ideas!

Please note our next meeting will be Friday, January 26th.

All are welcome!

Full-Time Cook Needed

The Missionaries of Africa Retirement Home in St. Petersburg, total of 8 men, needs a full-time cook Monday-Friday from 10:30 am to 6:30 pm. Health and pension benefits apply after a 3 month probation period. If you, or someone you know is interested, please send your resume to star30@verizon.net

Questions? Please contact Denise Starkey, 813-215-9535.

Everything you wanted to know about your faith

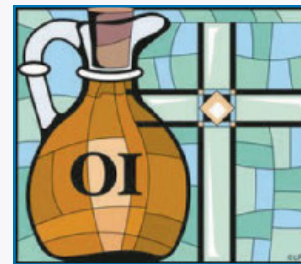
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Brown, Bob & Beverly
Christ, Kathryn
Cisek, Marilyn
Comeau, Teresa
Curtis, Sherlyl
Daniels, Joshua
Danielle, Carlo
DeZarn, Vickie
D'Azzo, Lina
Feltes, Chuck & Lauren
Ferrara, Antoinette
Fitzgerald, Dan
Gawlik, Frank
Gawlik, Sofia
Genreux, Carol
Grimberg, Carol
Hawkins, Barbara
Helbig, Len
Hoffman, Bette
Huff, Walt
Irvin, John

Joyal, Christina
Kindel, Helen
Kirchgeßner, Marie
Klima, Sue
Lanigan, John
Lashley, Diana
Lawler, Matthew
LeVan, George
Lewis, Cynthia
Maharne, Cecile
Manley, Jan
Manley, Paul
Matthews, Daniel
Mays, Susan
Membreno, Mary & Gus
Mesick, Phil & Nancy
Nagy, Matthew
Newcomb, Jeff
O'Connor, Mary
Oliphant, Sean
Parmigiani, Valerie
Powers, Jim
Preeper, Helen
Riley, Marie

Roberts,
Deacon Lionel
Romani, Angelo
Schulz, Ingrid
Shelby, Montez
Stankiewicz, Cy
Thompson, Susan E.
Vanderbeck, Cindy
Vanderbeck, Jay
Walsh, Thomas
Youngman, Ruth



Anointing of the Sick

To request the Anointing of the Sick for yourself or a loved one, please contact the parish office, 727-867-3663.

If you or a close family member would like to be added or removed from our prayer list, please contact the parish office at 727-867-3663.

THANK YOU! Johnnie Jones Plumbing

For all your great and professional work in my Home!!

Cecile Maharne



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Plenary Indulgence on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the "Nativity scene at Greccio"

From the 8th December 2023 till the 2nd February 2024 in every Franciscan church

27 October 2023

On the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the "Nativity scene of Greccio", the Apostolic Penitentiary granted a plenary indulgence to all the faithful who, from 8 December 2023 (Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary) to 2 February 2024 (Feast of the Presentation in the Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ) will visit a Nativity scene in a church entrusted to the Franciscan friars all over the world.

The Franciscan Family had forwarded this request to the Holy Father on the 17th April 2023, *"in order to promote the spiritual renewal of the faithful and increase the life of grace,"* as reads the petition sent to the Apostolic Penitentiary. *"By stopping in prayer in front of the nativity scenes",* the faithful may obtain the Plenary Indulgence under the usual conditions. *(Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff);* it is necessary *to devoutly participate in the jubilee rites, or at least to pause before the creche prepared there, spending an appropriate span of time in pious meditation, concluding with the Our Father, the Profession of Faith and invocations to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph as well as St. Francis of Assisi.*

Invocation to the Holy Family and Saint Francis of Assisi

Oh Good Jesus, contemplating this Nativity Scene, I ask you for the grace of forgiveness of my sins. You are the dawn from on high made flesh to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. You made your home among us and loved us to the point of giving your life for us. You did not come to condemn the world but to save it. Give me the grace of sincere repentance and the humility to recognize my frailty. Give me faith in your mercy and renew in me the joy of your salvation.

Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, teach us the joy of the humble and of those who believe in the promises of the Lord. Help us to proclaim the greatness of the God who accompanies and saves suffering humanity. You are the dawn of a new creation. You are Virgin made Church, you are Mother of grace and mercy. Listen to our plea with the tenderness of your immaculate heart.

Saint Joseph, just and faithful servant of the Lord. You are a holy and generous custodian. Do not take your care away from us, lost pilgrims in search of the true homeland. Protect the Church

from the snares of the evil one and teach us to trust in the One who gave his only Son to rescue us from sin, evil and death.

Saint Francis of Assisi, you who loved the poor and humble Christ so much that you wanted to relive in Greccio, with faith and devotion, the night of his birth in Bethlehem, intercede for us so that we can contemplate with a clean heart the beauty of the incarnation of the Son of God and the kindness of his gaze that calls us to a new life. Amen.

A Pastoral Letter on The 800th Anniversary of the Nativity Scene



St. Francis of Assisi in Greccio, Italy
Christmas 1223-2023



BLESSED TRINITY
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Dear Friends in Christ,

I am sharing with you a reflection about Greccio, Italy and the first re-enactment of the Nativity scene of our Lord on Christmas night in 1223 of our Lord's birth created by St. Francis of Assisi. I am grateful to the following Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist; Sister Mary Frances Traynor, FSE, Sister Agness Hutchinson, FSE, of the Assisi Center, and Sister Raffaella Petrini, FSE, the Secretary General of Vatican City State. Everyone has contributed to the Pastoral Letter. In addition, there are remarks from Pope Francis, and Pope St. John Paul II.

I recently returned from Rome and Assisi on a Pilgrimage with the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist. The FSE Mother House is in Meriden, Connecticut. I was honored to have the opportunity to celebrate Mass in their beautiful Chapel of St. John prior to going to Italy. We had about twenty-five pilgrims join us on our journey. While on Pilgrimage, I learned of the 800th Anniversary of the Nativity Scene in Greccio that we celebrate on December 25, 2023. We were able to climb the mountain and reach the destination where this historic event took place 800 years ago.

Let me share a few reflections to ponder as we gaze at our Christmas manger in our home and at Blessed Trinity Church.

Down through the centuries the nativity scene has captivated our attention during Christmas, as people from all over the world bring out their nativity scenes and display them in their homes and Churches. They share in the re-enactment of the Birth of

Christ. The Nativity Scene still captivates us today. St. Francis calls Christmas the “Feast of all Feasts.”

St. Francis stopped in Greccio, most likely on his way back from Rome, where on November 29, 1223, he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. (Francis wrote the final form of his rule at Fonte Colombo, one of the other hermitages in the Rieti Valley). Earlier, Francis had visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem.

It is possible that the “Poor Man of Assisi” had been struck by seeing the wooden pieces of the manger in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major. Today the relics of the manger are preserved just below the main altar.

Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire, “*to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay*” At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked.

On December 25, 1223, Friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up the Holy Night.

When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The

priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist.

In Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present. This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.

Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of St. Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvelous vision: one of those present who saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, everyone went home with joy.

With the simplicity of that sign, St. Francis carried out a great work of evangelization. His teachings have touched the hearts of Christians and continues today to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith. This is typical of St. Francis' unique charism of simplicity and poverty-centered spirituality.

During our pilgrimage we were privileged to visit Greccio during the 800th Anniversary Year of this sacred event. Let us be inspired by the words of Pope Francis during his visit to Greccio in 2019:

The rocks where St. Francis found inspiration for the first manger scene are an invitation to *rediscover simplicity*.

There is no need for many words here, because the scene before our eyes we need to grasp *what is essential*.

The crib reminds us to find moments of silence and prayer during our hectic lives. Silence is needed to contemplate the beauty of the face of the Child Jesus, the Son of God born in the poverty of a stable.

During the Pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II, he inaugurated the Christmas Tree and a life size nativity scene in St. Peter's Square beginning in 1982. Many artisans over the years have created beautiful life size Manger Scenes that touch the lives of so many pilgrims during Christmas. They come in silence to pray before the crib. Pope St. John Paul II said, "It is difficult not to be overcome by the eloquence of this event, we remain enthralled. We are witnesses of that instant of love which unites the eternal to history, the today which begins the time of jubilation and hope, for to us a son is given, and dominion is laid upon his shoulders (Is 9:6)."

This year the Christmas Nativity in St. Peter's Square evokes the first-ever life size manger scene which was originally created in Greccio, Italy on December 25, 1223.

Sister Raffaella Petrini, FSC states: In front of the crib and the tree, we are invited to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation with the same amazement of so many saints. The art that puts itself at the service of faith and its prime mysteries is represented precisely by the Nativity scene, which skilled hands have created with such care and talent. The tree, on the other

hand, represents eternal life and the hope of resurrection. Pope Francis explained the meaning in this way, “Even today Jesus continues to dispel the darkness of error and sin, to bring to all humanity the joy of the dazzling divine light, of which the Christmas tree is a sign and reminder. Let us allow ourselves to be enveloped in the light of His Truth.”

It is therefore the light that characterizes the season of Christmas, that light which Francis and Clare admired, and which Christ radiates on humanity. Standing before the symbol of light and hope, we pray that in this moment in which the pandemic of these past three years, the wars in the Middle East, Ukraine and other hot spots around the world, as well as the economic crisis are putting humanity to the test. There is an urgent feeling of rebirth and a desire for authentic fraternity that will accompany us in the New Year.

I am grateful to the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist and others who have contributed to this inspiring story. They join me in extending our best wishes for a Blessed Christmas season, and New Year.

Kind personal regards,



Father Wayne C. Genereux, Pastor

The Pastoral Letter has been edited by Fr. Wayne C. Genereux, Pastor of Blessed Trinity Catholic Church. Because several people were involved in the creation of the Pastoral Letter quote marks have been removed. However, credit has been given to the people who contributed to it.

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