

SAINT DOMINIC PARISH

December 24, 2023

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Fourth Sunday of Advent

Deacon Terry Murphy

Today is the 4th Sunday of Advent – Stockings are hung by the chimney with care. It's only two days until the Boxing Day sales. But let's not rush past today – the 4th Sunday of Advent. The focus on this Sunday is *Love*. St. Francis advises that love lightens all difficulties and sweetens all bitterness. Jesus speaks to us in John's Gospel: 'I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another'.

It's really crazy, isn't it? Here we are listening to the same story, again. Who doesn't know how it is going to come out? The plot doesn't change from year to year. Every shepherd is in place; the star is shining on cue. No matter how predictable, we keep listening. We lean forward with anticipation, for somehow, despite the familiar details, we believe that this story is about us. What if the angel's message to Mary (the Lord is with you) is God's message to us?

According to Luke, this is what Gabriel told Mary, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.*"

Those are the elements of the story that we know. But somewhere, along the way, we have to think about what we don't know. And what we don't know is what happened after the angel left the room.

You know how it is... someone asks you a tough question, or you're faced with a difficult situation. Later, you slap yourself on the forehead and say, "I wish I'd said this..." You never think of the right – or clever – response at the time. It only comes later. "I wish I'd said that..."

Was that the way it was with Mary? "Why didn't I ask Gabriel this while I had the chance?" "Will Joseph stick around? Will my parents still love me? Will my friends stand by me or will I get dragged into town and stoned? Will the pregnancy go all right? Will the labor be hard? Will there be someone there to help me when my time comes? Will I know what to do? You say the child will be king of Israel, but what about

me? Will I survive his birth? What about me?"

All the angels in heaven couldn't possibly prepare Mary for what she would be experiencing. That's just not the way it works. You've got to go through it before you know what it's like. The only way you really can understand it is in hindsight.

It is hard for most of us today, who take our possible salvation in Christ for granted to appreciate the importance of this revelation that defined where the Jewish religion evolved into the Christian religion. Yet, it is the revelation of this most important mystery of God that we celebrate at Christmas: "*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*"

If we want to find ourselves in this ancient but life-giving tale, we need to look at the one who received this word of assurance: Mary – who has been called, 'the figure that is raised above all the figures of Advent'. In John, we may see our need to prepare the way of the Lord, but in Mary we see the even greater need to prepare Him room. In her, we see the response of love.

So, we have heard this story again, this time through the eyes of a woman of faith and unconditional love. Still there are questions, intellectual doubts that block our belief. Can we be like Mary who asked questions but did not wait until every doubt was answered before she risked herself in believing this fantastic story?

The times that I have shied away from trusting God for my future or from believing that God's Will was superior to my own plans and schemes, were not times of intellectual doubt, but fear. I was afraid that believing God might mean losing something, giving up my own comfort, or security or familiar lifestyle.

Love is not dwelling on what we do not understand, but being faithful to the light we are given. Love is not an act; it is a process. It is committing all we know of ourselves to all we know of God in Jesus Christ. Both will grow. As we know more of whom we are, there will be more to invest in a God who has come to us, and said, "*Fear not!*" Mary stands out as the greatest example of love, for she not only prepared the way of the Lord, she provided Him room!

PARISH LITURGIES

—FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT—

Christmas Octave: December 25–Jan 01

Tuesday, December 26 – St. Stephen the Martyr

8:30 am **NO MASS**

Wednesday, December 27 – St. John, Apostle & Evangelist

8:30 am + Eardley & Wynnes Riggs-Long

Thursday, December 28 – The Holy Innocents, First Martyrs for Christ

8:30 am + Kathleen Corona

Friday, December 29 - St. Thomas Becket

8:30 pm + Teresa Lori & Marisa Piccinini

—THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH—

Saturday, December 30 – St. Anysia

4:00 – 4:30 pm **Reconciliation**

5:00 pm **For:**

+ Darryl Ward, + Anna & Charlie Lewis, + Catherine & Frank Melia, Int. Fiona Shiels, Int. of Madelena Pinheiro, + José Pinheiro, + Elizabeth Reilly, + Tracy M. Wilder, + Riley Bolton, + Neil McCallister, + Holy Souls in Purgatory

Sunday, December 31

9:00 am For our

11:00 am Parish



Christmas Eve – Sunday, December 24, 2023

- **5:00 pm** (Carols begin at 4:30 pm)
- **7:15 pm** (Carols begin at 7:00 pm)
- **11:30 pm** (Carols begin at 11:15 pm)

Christmas Day – Monday, December 25, 2023

- **9:00 am**
- **11:00 am** (Christmas Pageant)

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God – Holy Day of Obligation

- Sunday, December 31, 2023 – **5:00 pm**
- Monday, January 01, 2024 – **10:00 am**

Note: the evening Masses on Dec. 24th & 31st do not fulfil the Sunday Obligation. These are separate obligations. The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, January 1st, is also a Holy Day of Obligation.

LOOKING TO DEEPEN YOUR FAITH?

God is calling you to a deeper relationship with Him!

Learn more about Jesus! Learn more about our Faith, ask questions! Truth will always stand up to scrutiny.

Please check out the links & resources page on our website (saintdominic.ca/links)

Or sign up to FORMED for free (signup.formed.org) and check out the videos, movies, audiobooks, children's shows and more!

You are always welcome here!



SANCTUARY LAMP

Our Sanctuary lamp will be lit this week for the Intentions of Fr. Ranjan D'Sa OCD

HAMILTON DIOCESE PRAYER CALENDAR

Monday, December 25	Christmas Day (Solemnity of The Nativity of the Lord)
Tuesday, December 26	Chancery Staff
Wednesday, December 27	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne (s.s.a.)
Thursday, December 28	The Holy Innocents
Friday, December 29	Rev. Edward Hinsperger
Saturday, December 30	Rev. Phillip Cook

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

May the peace and blessing of Christmas be yours and may the coming year be filled with happiness.

Fr. Ranjan D'Sa and Staff



Dear Friends,

We will soon celebrate the great *Solemnity of The Nativity of the Lord – Christmas*. Already Christmas cards are in the mail, Christmas music fills the airwaves, and Christmas décor can be seen on, and in, our homes. Christmas gifts are being exchanged. Choirs are practicing Christmas music and parishioners are beginning to decorate the churches in preparation for the Christmas liturgies. Advertisements throughout the diocese encourage Catholics to **“Come Home For Christmas”!** We want to welcome sisters and brothers who worship with us at Christmas, so all will experience the profound blessing of being a follower of Jesus Christ – the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, as Handel’s Messiah so beautifully proclaims!

At this darkest time of the year, *“Jesus is born in our midst; He is God with us. He comes to accompany our daily lives, to share with us in all things: our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears. He comes as a helpless child. He is born in the cold night, poor among the poor. In need of everything, he knocks at the door of our hearts to find warmth and shelter.”* (Pope Francis, Christmas Message 2022)

During these Christmas festivities, take time to recall your blessings and give thanks in quiet prayer. When caught up in the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations, be attentive to recognize the abundant presence of grace and goodness that surrounds you. The Lord reveals himself still in boundless acts of kindness and generosity. When you are aware of his presence through others, allow him to move you deeply, and to be generous in turn. His mercy works in and through us. As we are blessed by the goodness of others, so others are blessed by our generous acts!

The 1928 Nobel Prize winning Norwegian author, Sigrid Undset, wrote this beautiful reflection on Christmas. I offer it as a gentle gift of wisdom.

Our Lady of the Annunciation, pray for us!

Ex corde, *+ Douglas*, OMI



“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has come to his people and set them free. The Lord has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, born of the house of his servant David. Through the holy prophets God promised of old to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us, to show mercy to our forebears, and to remember His holy covenant...”

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Canticle of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79)

Take this time to invite Jesus into your heart. Live for Him and let Him love others through you. He came to us as a helpless child so that all may come to Him with all their heart, without reservation.



And when we give each other Christmas gifts in His name, let us remember that He has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, and the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans - and all that lives and move upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused - and to save us from our foolishness, from all our sins, He came down to earth and gave us Himself.

- Sigrid Undset



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Secretary: Mary Evans

Sacristan: Judi Kingry

Custodian: Peter Coffey

Parish Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
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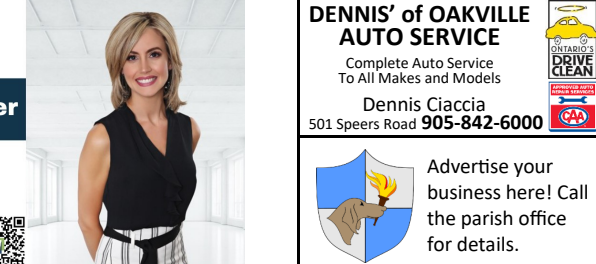


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