



## The Manger and Cross Point to the Same Truth

By Constance T. Hull

Two nights ago, my husband asked me to help him put something in the garage. It was there—out of earshot of our daughter—that he told me that he is coughing up blood again. His new medication is not working as we had hoped it would and he needs to go back on prednisone until we can figure out what to do about his chronic illness moving forward. We both know another flare up means more unseen irreparable damage to his lungs. There we stood on a dark, cold Advent night... the Cross we carry as a family grows heavy once more.

The Cross casts its long shadow over the manger where the Christ-child lays. The same is true for each one of us, even in the midst of the joys and festivities of the season. This reality is more tangible for all of us at different periods in our lives. We come face-to-face with the Cross when we are called to shoulder the burdens of chronic or terminal illness, the loss of a loved one, unemployment, loneliness, poverty, infertility, or any other affliction. It is in those times when we see that Christmas wouldn't matter without the Paschal Mystery.

It would be impossible to accept the painful reality that my husband—over the course of a few years or decades—will slowly drown in his own blood, if it were not for the joy of the Incarnation and the love shown to us on the Cross on Good Friday. Christmas only makes sense in the light of Calvary and Easter morning. The manger and the Cross point to the same truth. That Christ came to die for us, so that we could have eternal life and to free us from the bonds of sin and death.

It was not so much that His birth cast a shadow on His life, and thus led to His death; it was rather that the Cross was there from the beginning, and it cast its shadow backward to His birth. Ordinary mortals go from known to the unknown submitting themselves to forces beyond their control; hence we can speak of their “tragedies.” But He went from the known to the known, from the reason for His coming, namely, to be “Jesus” or “Savior,” to the fulfillment of His coming, namely, the death on the Cross.

The invitation the Christ-child extends to us each Christmas, is to walk the same path to Calvary. In the mysterious gift of the Incarnation, we come to see what love will cost us. It will cost us everything. This is the road to joy and the ultimate way to happiness: to die-to-self.

Christ entered into the world in poverty on a cold, dark night in a cave. He invites us into that poverty of spirit in our daily lives as we learn to be emptied of our own wants and desires so that we can give everything over to God.

Each time my husband tells me that he is coughing up blood, I am reminded of the heavy Cross we have been given. God shows me that my plans and my ways are not His own. It's the same reminder that I'm given each time I want another child, but I once more have to accept that it is not God's will. It's the reminder I am given every time I must battle to offer up every ounce of my suffering for priests. Our lives are not our own. This life is about surrendering in love to the Cross.

To go to the Christ-Child in the manger in the dead of night, to walk that lonely road to the cave, is to be willing to surrender our entire being to Him. We cannot enter into the mystery, awe, wonder, and joy of Christmas without giving ourselves fully to God. The joy we experience in this life and the next is dependent upon how much we are willing to give over to God. He pours His infinite love into us, but we are the ones who must choose to accept it and what is required in that Divine Love. The cost is high in our Fallen state because love is the Cross.

Standing on that cold December night with my husband in the middle of Advent, reminded me that the pilgrimage to the manger, requires a willingness on my part to surrender everything to God on the Cross. Advent is a time of waiting and preparation, but we can only be prepared for the joy of the Incarnation in the measure that we give ourselves over to Christ. We must say “yes” to our own Crosses. We must remember that Christmas is not separate from Good Friday. They are unified in purpose and in the person of Jesus Christ.

Let us take these final days of Advent to surrender our lives more fully to Christ. May He fill us with the comfort, strength, and peace we need to make our pilgrim way to the manger at Christmas no matter the Crosses we are asked to carry in this life. He is always with us, especially on dark nights when the weight of the Cross threatens to knock us to the ground. He is walking with us in these final Advent days and He will be waiting for each one of us in the manger at Christmas.

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### MASSES & SERVICES

Saturday Anticipated Mass: 5pm  
Sunday Masses: 9am, 11am, 5pm

#### Mon – Wed Masses: 8am

Thurs Mass & OLPH Novena:  
8am, 7pm

1st Thurs: 8am Mass/Novena,  
12pm Mass/Novena/Healing  
Prayer

Fri, Sat & Holidays: 9am Mass  
Fri in July & August: 8am Mass

Children's Mass: 9am 1st Sunday  
of the month Oct-June

Children's Liturgy: 11am

All Sundays except the 1st Sunday  
from Sept- June

#### Reconciliation

Saturday 4pm - 4:45pm

#### Adoration

Saturday 9:30-10am

#### OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 9am-4pm

#### CLERGY & STAFF

##### Pastor

Babu Mathew, CSsR

##### Associate Pastor

Joseph Horo, CSsR

##### Office Manager

Virginia Fong

##### Pastoral Coordinator

Bertilla Watanabe

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##### Youth Ministry Coordinator

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## OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH

December 22, 2019

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

## Jesus Longs For the Manger of Your Heart

Dear Parishioners,

It is surely a struggle in the final days of Advent to keep a sense of prayerful anticipation about the coming of our Lord at Christmas. There is still a long list of things to be done. Perhaps spending a moment in prayer to remember that not everybody is going to have a joyful Christmas could be one way to keep ourselves grounded.

Wars don't necessarily cease, family quarrels don't get resolved just because it's Christmas. However, the fact that our Lord has come close to us in the Incarnation gives us reason to be hopeful.

Pope Francis is encouraging all of us to set up a nativity scene inside or outside our homes. In the simplicity and poverty of the manger, he said, "the Nativity scene is an artisanal image of peace," a reminder needed in a world where "every day many weapons are manufactured, and many violent images are put before our eyes and hearts."

"While the ruin of humanity arises from everyone taking their own path, in the Nativity scene everyone moves toward Jesus, the prince of peace," the pope said. "Around him, in that grotto lit by tenderness, harmony is rediscovered. There we find very different people gathered together – Magi and shepherds, kings and the poor, little ones and the elderly."

He said: "The manger Jesus longs for is your heart so that he can give you his unshakable peace and eternal life. This is what will change the world." Putting up a Nativity scene is like opening the door and saying, "Come in, Jesus," he said. "This invitation we make to Jesus to enter our lives makes his closeness concrete. Because if Jesus lives in us, we are reborn. And if we are reborn, it truly is Christmas." Warm wishes for a blessed Christmas!

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Babu Mathew, CSsR

## Prayer from St Alphonsus Christmas Novena

O Jesus, my Savior! I realize that you, who are my God, lived for many years unknown and was looked down upon in poverty because of your love for me. How, then, can I desire the pleasures, honors and riches of the world? Although they are not bad things, I renounce them all, and I want to be your companion here on earth – poor like you, humble like you, and despised like you. Then I hope to one day enjoy your company in heaven. After all, what can the kingdoms or the treasures of earth amount to? My Jesus, you will be my only treasure my only Good.

I greatly regret the many times in the past that I have disregarded your friendship while satisfying my own desires. Now I repent with all my heart. From now, I would be willing to die a thousand times over rather than destroy my relationship with you. My God, I want to offend you no more. I want to love you always. Help me be faithful to you for the rest of my life.

Sweet Mary! You are the refuge of sinners. You are my hope. Amen.

May the Lord come in; he is king of glory. - Psalm 24



## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S MASS SCHEDULE

### CHRISTMAS NOVENA

Redemptorist Christmas Novena  
Monday Dec 16 – Dec 24  
Will be prayed at all Masses

### CHRISTMAS MASSES

Tuesday December 24  
4pm Family Mass  
(Families with young children)  
7pm Youth-led Mass  
11:45pm Caroling  
12am Midnight Mass  
Wed December 25  
9am Mass  
11am Mass  
4pm Youth-led Mass

### NEW YEAR'S MASSES

(Holy Day of Obligation for Solemnity of Mary)  
Wednesday January 1  
9am Mass  
11am Mass



## NEWS & NOTICES

**Weekly Collection:** Sunday Mass Offering Dec 14 & 15: \$6,384.20. Offering for the Needy: \$190. Archdiocesan Youth Ministry: \$95. Youth Cookie Fundraiser: \$700. Christmas Offering: \$270. Thank you for your faith-filled generosity.

**2020 Sunday Offering Envelopes:** 2020 Sunday envelopes are ready for pick up this weekend in the church foyer. Please make sure you pick up the right box as some names may be similar to yours and addresses are not printed on the label. If your envelope box is not in the foyer, please contact the parish office.

**NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT USE YOUR 2020 ENVELOPES UNTIL 2020 AND DO NOT USE YOUR 2019 OR ANY PREVIOUS YEAR'S ENVELOPES IN 2020.**

**Project Advance Report:** Thank you to all who have donated to Project Advance. We have received \$105,454 in pledges with participation from 151 donors. If you have not made your donation yet, please consider making a sacrificial offering to Project Advance. Donations for a 2019 tax receipt should reach the parish office by 30 December to allow time for processing.

**RCIA Sponsors:** We are looking for sponsors to support this year's catechumens in RCIA. A sponsor's role is to accompany the catechumen in their spiritual journey through prayer and faith-inspired friendship. If you can speak Mandarin or Cantonese, it would be helpful as well. You will not be expected to attend RCIA sessions except on some important dates. Just make some time for sharing the faith! Please email Bertilla if you have questions or if you'd like to help: [bwatanabe@rcav.org](mailto:bwatanabe@rcav.org).

**St Patrick's Regional Secondary Open House:** If you are thinking of St Patrick's Secondary, you are welcome to attend the school's Open House on Monday, January 13, 2020, 6:00 pm, at the School Gym.

**Annual Mass For Life:** Pro-Life Mass and Prayer vigil with Archbishop Michael Miller on Saturday Dec 28 (Feast of the Holy Innocents). Rosary at 11:30am. Mass at 12:10pm at Holy Rosary Cathedral. Reception to follow.

**Women's Faith Study - St. Catherine of Siena:** In her mere 33 years St. Catherine of Siena left such a rich legacy that she is named a Doctor of the Church. She used her 'feminine genius' to address the problems the world presented her. Join us as we gather weekly for 9 weeks for fellowship, encouragement, and to learn more about this great female Doctor of the Church. This study will run at the John Paul II Pastoral Centre in Vancouver every Friday from Jan. 10 through March 13, with the exception of January 24 (no study this night). Register online at [rcav.org](http://rcav.org)

**Fiat: Women's Discernment Group:** The Fiat Women's Discernment Group will have our annual snowshoe trip on Saturday, Jan. 11. Meet for 9 a.m. Mass at Christ the Redeemer Parish in West Vancouver and then carpool up to Cypress Mountain. We'll snowshoe the Bowen Lookout trail, enjoying fellowship and fun and having a picnic lunch at the viewpoint. Bring snowshoes (available for rent on the way up the mountain), water, lunch, and dress for the weather. We plan to return to Vancouver by 3 p.m. Check Vocations Vancouver on Facebook to arrange carpools, borrow snowshoes, etc., or contact the Vocations Office at 604-443-3254 or by email at [womensvocations@rcav.org](mailto:womensvocations@rcav.org) to RSVP or for more information.

**St. Mary's Padre Pio Group Meeting:** Come and join us on the next prayer meeting on Saturday, Jan. 4th at 9:30 a.m. until 11 a.m. at St. Mary's Church in Vancouver with special guest Vernon Robertson.

**PROJECT ADVANCE** Live gratefully,  
give generously.

You can make a donation to Project Advance by filling out the pledge form you received in the mail or using the detachable envelope on the leaflet. You can also go to [www.rcav.org](http://www.rcav.org). Just indicate that your parish is OLPH.



## Stewardship Reflection

*"When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home." (Matthew 1:24)*

Putting our complete trust in the Lord without expecting anything in return. Striving to put God first in all things and follow Him wherever He may lead us. As we prepare for the birth of our Lord, pray for the strength and courage to be a model of discipleship, just as Joseph was.

Stewardship Office, Archdiocese of St. Louis

## CALENDAR

DECEMBER/JANUARY

### Youth Cookie Sale



The cute mailbox tins of Christmas shortbread are the only ones left from our Youth Ministry fundraiser, and yes, they are going fast! Grab a tin for a friend or your family at only \$10, a \$5 discount! Please email Theresa at [olphyouthmin@gmail.com](mailto:olphyouthmin@gmail.com) to reserve a tin and make pick-up arrangements.

### 40 Hours Adoration

Our parish is hosting the 40 Hours Adoration from Monday Jan 13 – Wed Jan 15. Exposition will begin at the end of morning Mass and continue till 7pm. We will need at least two people to be present every hour on these three days. We would very much appreciate your commitment to sit in silent prayer before the Lord. Sign-up sheets will be in the foyer in the new year.

### Digital Story-Telling Workshop



Come join a workshop on creating memories for yourself, family and friends! During this 10-week workshop, participants will produce a 5 to 10-minute video on some aspect of their lives or family. With the guidance of an instructor from Simon Fraser University and assistants, and using your own photos and other images combined with a short audio narration, you can bring alive an incident or aspect of your life story to share with future generations. No specialized knowledge of computers is required; just a basic familiarity. The workshop is designed for seniors (55+). 10 Tuesdays, 1:00 – 3:00 pm, starting on January 21, 2020. Fee: \$ 50.00. Location: Madonna Room. For further information, contact Silvana Carr at 604-261-6635, [sicarr@telus.net](mailto:sicarr@telus.net)

## Santa's Workshop and Christmas Celebration

Thank you, friends and parishioners, for coming together to help with Santa's Workshop. Canned foods, baby diapers and detergents were on top of the list of donated items. We also received \$63 worth of gift cards. A celebration with Caribbean steel drums by Kenrick Headley added a hint of the tropical to the festivities. Special thanks also to the volunteers who helped set-up, prep and serve the lunch.



## Redemptorist Associates' Retreat Focuses on Mary

By Bertilla Watanabe

The virtues of Mary and how we should imitate them were highlighted by Redemptorist Associates of our parish Advent Retreat last weekend. The virtue of humility was placed higher than all the others... without it, the others cannot thrive. It is the foundation and guardian of all virtues. It is no wonder then that Mary was hailed by the Angel Gabriel as one who is full of grace.

Another characteristic of Mary presented at the Retreat was Mary's love for prayer and solitude. St Alphonsus tells us that Mary revealed to St Bridget; "I thought of nothing but God, nothing pleased me but God," which meant that her soul was in a state of constant contemplation of God. As part of the retreat, a beautiful sculpture of Mary and Jesus carved from the olive wood of Bethlehem was passed around to each person to inspire them to make Mary the model of their daily living and to trust in her loving intercession for us at all times and especially during our trials and tribulations.



## PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS



## A Selection of Christmas Prayers

### Prayer Before Opening Gifts

Let me just for a moment, Lord, hold this time in my heart. It is about mysteries and gratitude, unknowing and wrong sizes, snippets of ribbon and screams of delight. Help me to remember the immense love you have for each of us in this room. With each gift that is opened, no matter how perfect or not, let me feel again the many ways you gift us each day, especially with your presence in our hearts and the presence of each other in our lives.

### Prayer before Christmas Dinner

God of all gifts, we thank you for the many ways you have blessed us this day. We are grateful for each of those who are gathered around this table. We ask you to bless us and our food and to bless those we love who are not with us today. In our gratitude and love, we remember your humble birth into our lives and pray for those who are without enough to eat. We remember the stable in which you were born and pray for those who have no place to live. We remember your challenging message of caring and giving and we pray for peace in families and nations throughout the world. We bless you and give you thanks in your Spirit who brings our hearts to life on Christmas Day and always. Amen.

### Prayer of Gratitude for Loved Ones

I think about my family, my relatives, the neighbors, people with whom we will spend this day. Dear Jesus, as I look at their faces and remember their stories, there are feelings of gratitude and some fear and anxiety. Thank you for these loved ones and please forgive me for the ways I have been less than accepting and loving. Please heal the wounds, division and conflicts that stand between us and help me to remember how dearly you love them. I only want to remember that you have come to save us all.

### Celebrating Christmas after the Loss of a Loved One

God of compassion, there is such a hole in my heart! Today should be a day of joy, but I feel only the emptiness and loss of someone so beloved. While the world celebrates around me, I remember Christmas celebrations of the past and I long to have my loved one with me. I bring my sorrows to you, Lord, like some odd gift of the magi and dump them at your feet. In my blind tears I wonder if anyone can possibly understand the depth of my sadness. Yes, you can. You sent your son to be with us in our deepest sorrows and I know that even though I might not feel it at this minute, you are here with me, grieving with me, caring for me in my sadness and loving me. Dearest Lord, help me to turn to the one I miss so much today and speak. Help me heal the loss of our parting and help me not to regret the things I didn't say. Sorrow tears at my heart, but today I ask that my loss soften my heart and make me more compassionate with everyone I meet.

[www.onlineministries.creighton.edu](http://www.onlineministries.creighton.edu)