

Our Lady of the Desert Catholic Church



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Padre: Victor C. Yakubu,
Administrador Parroquial

Padre: Julius Kayiwa, Vicario Parroquial

Confesión el Sábado:
Por cita en (Español y Inglés)

Rosario el Sábado: Y Letanías de la Santísima
Virgen María—3:20pm

Misa el Sábado: (Vigilia) / Inglés 4:00 p.m.

Rosario el Domingo: Y Letanías de la Santísima
Virgen María— 9:40am

Misa el Domingo: Español /10:00 a.m.

Liturgia en los Días de la Semana

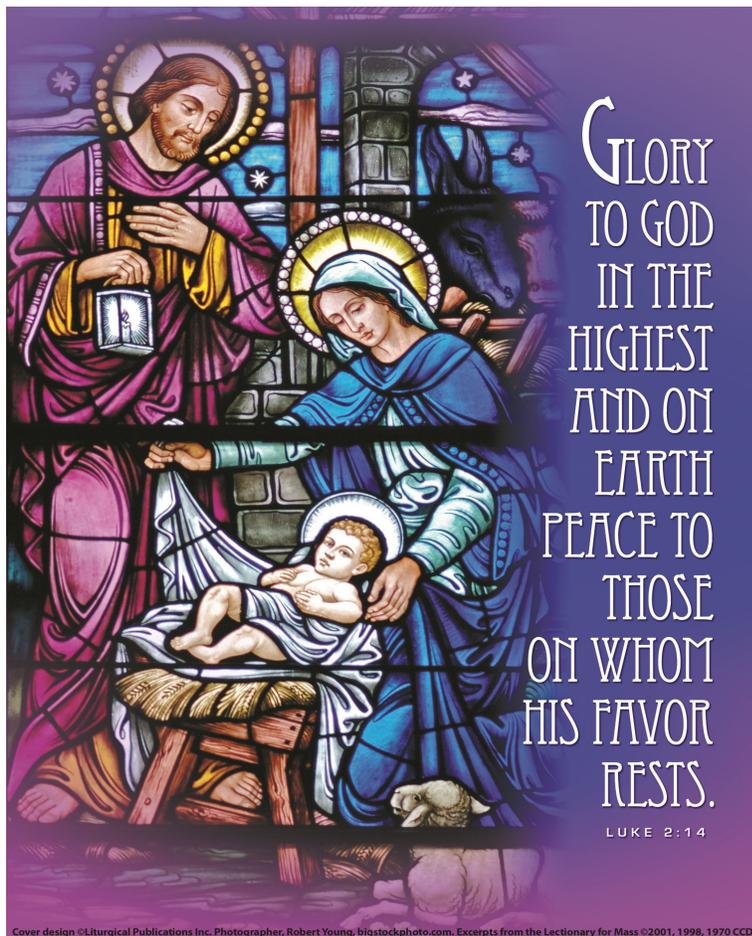
Cada Día a las Doce: Angelus/Regina Caeli

Lunes: Adoración 7:00am y Misa a las 7:30am

Martes, Miércoles Jueves, Viernes:
Adoración 7:30am y Misa 8:00am

Viernes: a las 6:00pm Rosario Reina de la Paz con
Adoración

Sábado: Adoración: 7:30am y a las 8:00am
Misa en Honor de Virgen María



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December 25th, 2022

Rev. Victor C. Yakubu, Parochial Administrator
Rev. Julius Kayiwa, Parochial Vicar

Confession on Saturday:

By appointment English/Spanish

Saturday Rosary: With Litanies of the Blessed Virgin
Mary - 3:20pm

Saturday Mass (Vigil): English -4:00 p.m.

Sunday Rosary: With Litanies of the Blessed Virgin
Mary—9:40am

Sunday Mass: Spanish 10:00am

Liturgy of the Weekdays

Every day at Noon: Angelus/Regina Caeli

Monday: 7:00am Adoration & Mass 7:30am

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday:
Adoration 7:30am & Mass 8:00am

Friday: At 6:00pm Rosary of Queen of Peace with
Adoration

Saturday: Adoration: 7:30 a.m. & 8:00 a.m. Mass
In Honor of the Virgin Mary

The Nativity of the Lord: Year A

The Grand Illusion

Fr. Mark Suslenko

We are easily misled. Media stories often leave us wondering what really happened. Faked photos of astounding things go ‘viral’ and many believe they are real. The internet can be a confusing and often misleading place to find what is true. Is what we are seeing or hearing the truth or simply some illusion created by an imaginative or devious mind? We tend to follow the masses and are easily convinced of something’s authenticity when it is seemingly verified by a majority of folks. This is the case for fashion trends, the latest figures of speech, philosophies or social styles. We need a yardstick to measure whether what we are buying into is authentic, trustworthy, and real or just something trendy and illusory. Perhaps we do not need to be too careful about the trustworthiness of matters like fashion and style, but we certainly ought to be when it comes to understanding ourselves as human beings. The World Wide Web may affirm what we want to hear, but it cannot tell us who we really are.

Who are we? To what reliable and trustworthy source do we look to understand ourselves? We live in a consumption based, disposable world. If something breaks, we buy a new one. In our materially dependent world, it is easy to cast aside the permanent in favor of the changeable and replaceable. Everything becomes fluid. What worked yesterday is replaced with a new and improved version tomorrow. We fill our lives with business. Often feeling stressed, what is immediately before us is enough to attend to. It is no wonder that many choose not to explore deeper existential questions. Human life runs the risk of being viewed with the same lens as everything else: disposable, replaceable, and changeable.

However, there is one interesting fact about life that is most certain: none of us chose to be here. We simply are. Taking the world at face value, one can certainly conclude that human life is just a random affair. Make the best of it, get whatever you can, avoid hardship and suffering. Soon enough, the ride will be over. Is this true? “But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God.” (John 1:12-13) Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, a birth that reveals God’s greatest accomplishment. Today humanity knows that it is not here by some random act or by pure human choice but because of a magnificent and wonderful Divine blessing. The humble birth of Jesus Christ shows the world that every human being is a unique, incredible, blessed and infinitely loved child of God. God wants us to be who we are! There is no way that the world can reveal this eternal truth to us. All the world can do is offer us illusions and myths that entertain us but do not redeem us.

Much of the violence we see in the world occurs at the hands of people who do not know they are loved. Loving well can only happen when a human soul first knows that it is loved by God and then realizes his or her sacred obligation to love others. Rooting the gift of love in God is the only way to perfect it. Sadly, due to centuries of sin and error, human love has been distorted and the unloved and unaccepted now walk among us. Consider what life would be like if Advent’s peaceful and harmonious vision could be tasted just a bit as we walk through this world. Life would look so different if we only believed, with our whole hearts, minds, and souls in God’s vision for who we are meant to be. Harmony, gentleness, and peace would more easily be found. Christmas would not be something we simply celebrate, but actually live.



If a person takes their cues about who they are solely from the secular world, they will most certainly be lost. Many people aren’t willing to give up on the whole “god-idea” but are very reluctant to invest themselves completely into specific ideologies, conceptions, and theologies about God. Hence, we find the growing popularity of the phrase “spiritual but not religious.” Instinctively they realize there is something more to who they are but are hesitant to commit to what precisely that is. Given the growing popularity of this illusion, it is no wonder why in many parts of the world, including here, institutional Christianity is in decline. Yet, in the midst of all that captures and intrigues us in our self-created virtual worlds, this longing for the anchor of faith that makes sense of it all still pulses within each soul.

In order for the birth of Christ to have power and effectively mean something, it cannot be something that is just celebrated once a year. We have to completely buy into what God is saying to us today and find the courage to allow it to change our lives. How do we live the incarnation? Do we really have faith that God became one of us in Jesus Christ? If we do, we will see that it is a game changer for sure. A real living faith in the incarnation means that our lives need to change. Our priorities have to shift, how we understand our identities in God becomes clearer, our life goals, and our souls all take on a crisper importance. As we sing Silent Night, O Holy Night, Joy to the World and Hark the Herald Angels Sing with fervor these next couple weeks, we also ought to be thinking about how all this talk can translate into greater action.

Christianity is in decline. That is for sure. There is a reason why people are no longer finding faith, hope and love within our walls and in our lives. The birth of Christ will not fit into a neat little box like those we find under our Christmas trees. It never did and it never will. The incarnation is always carried forth by the creative and rejuvenating power of God’s Holy Spirit. The message today confirms that God never abandons his people, he is always with us. And so, God is with us even in the confusing moments of where the tides of life are bringing us today. The silence is not really silent as it speaks softly to us and always calls. There are people, who may not call themselves Christian, who are living the Beatitudes and the unconditional love taught and embodied by the Son of God. There is something instinctual about the incarnation. God does not leave his people.

If the systems around us, both secular and religious, are losing their effectiveness and relevance, then what are we going to do about it? This question needs to be at the heart of dialogue in the Church’s magisterium, dioceses throughout the world, every parish in every town and in every home. We have been given the gift of a message today that God wants the world to hear. If it remains just a pious sentiment with little relevance or purpose, then the sights, sounds, and smells that lift up our souls today will soon become a nostalgic memory. Trusting in the guidance that led that first star to Bethlehem, we have to trust that if we can remain open and listen, God will bring us where we need to be. We need to trust. Faith inspired Joseph and Mary to leave their home, love brought them to Bethlehem and hope was brought into the world. People need this. People need to believe in the Gospel. People need a Church that can bring that Gospel into the world. People want what is real.

— Fr. Mark Suslenko

WEEKLY PRAYER

READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 25, 2022

- Sunday:** *Vigil:* Is 62:1-5/Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29 (2a)/Acts 13:16-17, 22-25/Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25 *Night:* Is 9:1-6/Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13/Ti 2:11-14/Lk 2:1-14 *Dawn:* Is 62:11-12/Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12/Ti 3:4-7/Lk 2:15-20 *Day:* Is 52:7-10/Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 [3]/Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
- Monday:** Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Ps 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17/Mt 10:17-22
- Tuesday:** 1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12/Jn 20:1a, 2-8
- Wednesday:** 1 Jn 1:5—2:2/Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7b-8/Mt 2:13-18
- Thursday:** 1 Jn 2:3-11/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6/Lk 2:22-35
- Friday:** Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17/Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5/Mt 2:13-15, 19-23
- Saturday:** 1 Jn 2:18-21/Ps 96:1-2, 11-12, 13/Jn 1:1-18
- Next Sunday:** Nm 6:22-27/Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8 (2a)/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21

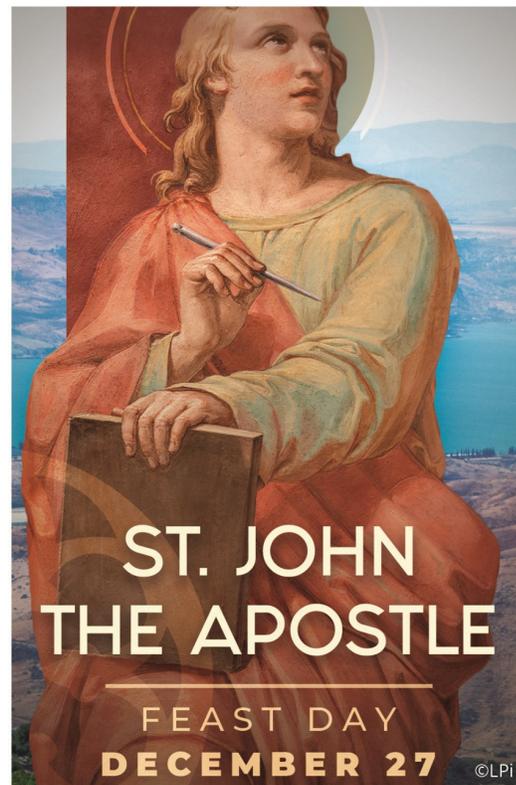
OBSERVANCES FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 25, 2022

- Sunday:** The Nativity of the Lord
- Monday:** St. Stephen, First Martyr
- Tuesday:** St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
- Wednesday:** The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
- Thursday:** St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr
- Friday:** Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
- Saturday:** St. Sylvester I, Pope; New Year's Eve
- Next Sunday:** Mary, The Holy Mother of God, National Migration Week, New Year's Day, World Day of Peace

LIVE THE LITURGY

Inspiration for the week

The true meaning of Christmas is not found in the twinkling lights, the beautifully adorned trees, or the exchanged gifts. It is revealed when we find God along the way of our lives, especially when we feel displaced, desperate, and alone. Fleeing from their home, Joseph and Mary cautiously made their way through the uncertain, complex, and dark paths to a longed-for place of safety and welcome. Not sure where to lay their heads, they created makeshift preparations for the birth of their child, the Son of God. God, who always was, is, and will be, without beginning or end is the one constant in life who sees us through difficult and scary times. Jesus is the light, which enlightens everyone, and comes into the world to show us the truth. It is joyful good news that calms our fears and allows us to go forth into the nighttime of our lives, courageously. This is the meaning of Christmas. We are never lost or alone. God is with us, loving us and leading us where we need to be.



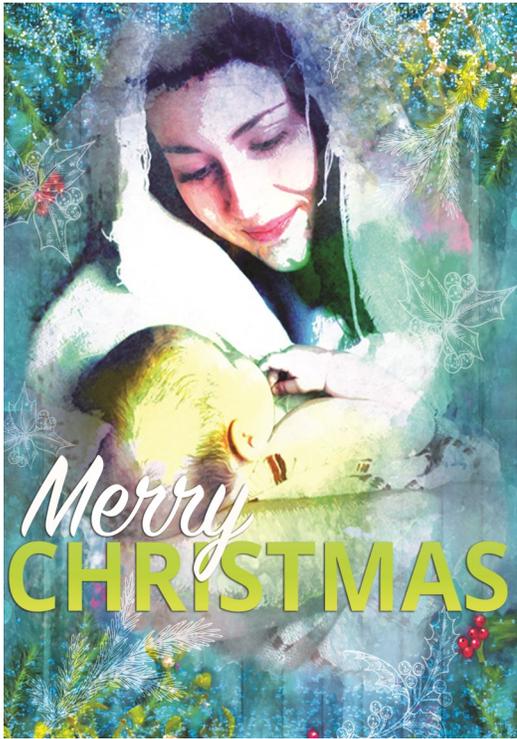
SAINT OF THE WEEK

Saint John was one of the Twelve, part of Jesus' inner circle, among the few that witnessed the Transfiguration, the raising of Jarius' Daughter, and the Agony in the garden at Gethsemane. He and his brother James were the sons of Zebedee and Salome. When Jesus called them, they left their father mending nets and followed him. Jesus called the brothers "Boanerges," meaning "sons of thunder" — they were passionate in their faith and Jesus had to rebuke them for their fiery zeal on more than one occasion. John, the younger brother, possibly the youngest disciple, was the only one present at Jesus' death.

Saint John the Apostle is traditionally thought to be the author of the fifth Gospel, the three Epistles of John, and the Book of Revelation. However, there has been some debate among scholars from antiquity to the present. Tradition also gives him the title Beloved Disciple and John's Gospel sees him seated next to Jesus at the last supper and the one to whom Jesus gives the care of Mary at the crucifixion.

Although Church tradition says that John survived the other disciples, living a long life, much of it is steeped in myth and legend. Some say he retired to Ephesus after the crucifixion with Mary and remained there until he died. But in other traditions he is more active. For a time he remained in Jerusalem with the other disciples, then founded churches in Asia Minor. In a legend of his persecution, during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, John is taken to Rome and thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil but preserved from death. He is then exiled to the island of Patmos where the Book of Revelation was written.

Most accounts agree that after his exile and the Assumption of Mary he returned to Ephesus where he died sometime after 98, during the reign of the Emperor Trajan.



Masses

Vigil Christmas Mass: Saturday, December 24th at 4:00 pm

Christmas Mass: Sunday, December 25th at 10:00am

Vigil New Years Mass: Saturday, December 31st at 4:00pm

New Years Mass: Sunday, January 1st at 10:00am

WHY DO WE GIVE GIFTS AT CHRISTMAS?

Great events in and of themselves are not tangible. They occur in life but leave no mark behind, nothing that someone could come across and know that something significant occurred. So we mark the event with monuments, holidays, gold watches or plaques, making a meaningful event tangible and memorable.

Gifts at Christmas do the same thing. They mark the occasion of the birth of Jesus, communicating a bit of the joy of the day by allowing us to be both giver and receiver. Gift-giving sets aside the day as special and different. The special foods, customs, decorations, and gifts all help focus our attention on the importance and meaning of the day and at the same time allow us to share personally in its joy and happiness.

In giving gifts, though, we can share in the meaning of Christmas in a significant way. We imitate God in sharing with others. We give

a bit of ourselves to others in the gifts we give, just as God gives us the gift of his Son. No wonder we often say that the best gifts are those that come from the heart. Given in love, these presents are wrapped in the best covering of all.



GOSPEL MEDITATION

ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

As we age, time seems to pass more quickly. Years seemingly fly by as one holiday flows into the next, January quickly becomes December and life maintains its hectic pace. What do we accomplish in all of that busyness? Perhaps technology is responsible for some of the frenzy, keeping us isolated in our social media worlds, communicating through texts rather than in person, and always connected to world events. We're over stimulated in many ways by information, noise, opinions, and ideologies. Yet, we still find the time to decorate our homes, purchase gifts, and plan Christmas gatherings. We know, however, that the true meaning of Christmas is not found in twinkling lights, beautifully adorned trees, perfectly set tables or exchanged gifts. We are being called to something deeper and more authentic.

Christmas reminds us to look for God along the way of our lives and not get distracted by the illusions around us. Our world's complexity can leave us feeling displaced, desperate, alone, neglected, and unimportant. Joseph and Mary felt that way



too. In the midst of all that captures and intrigues us in our self-created virtual worlds, is this longing for the anchor of faith to keep us grounded and make sense of it all. Only faith can give us the perspective to see what truly matters in life. We discover our divinely blessed humanity. The uncertain and challenging journey to Bethlehem gives way to the tender moments of birth and its embrace. Christmas softens us and slows us down a bit. It shows us Jesus as the light who enlightens everyone. It shows us the truth.

The faith that comes from Christmas calms our fears and allows us to go into the nighttime of our lives courageously. We are never lost or alone. We need to stop and savor more of life's moments before they slip away in time. God is with us, loving us, and leading us where we need to be. God is born again and again in every soul willing to give birth to His presence. God connects us and provides us with a place where we feel safe and welcome: home. Merry Christmas!

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

- Lk 2:10-12

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