

...Continued from the front cover.

The first four words that the angel speaks to the shepherds and to Zechariah and to Joseph and to Mary are words that each of us should relish and remember for the rest of this year and throughout the New Year. Christmas is a lot of things but more than anything else it is a reminder to all of us: A reminder that God is with us and because of that we have nothing to fear.

And so I say to all of you today. If there is anyone here who is afraid that life is going to be too hard for them, hear the words of the angel Gabriel, "Don't be afraid." If there is anyone today who is worried that following God's will is going to be too much for them, listen to the words of the angels, "Don't be afraid." If there is anyone here today who worries that God has left them for any reason, listen to the words of Jesus, "Don't be afraid." Worried about family? Don't be afraid. Worried about money? Don't be afraid. Worried about your health? Don't be afraid.

Do not be afraid. Those **four words** sum up the message of Christmas. These are the words that make this day radiant with the love of Jesus. Christ is our light and our life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the wonder counselor, the God hero, the prince of peace. And he is the one who reminds us on this holy night: I am with you always. Do not be afraid.

-Fr. Tom Clegg, Pastor

## Kids' Corner Activities

**The Birth of Jesus** SUNDAY KIDZ



MROO  1  
NGEAL  4 5  
BYBA  2  
NBOR  6 3

You will find the baby lying in a \_\_\_\_\_  
Luke 2:12  1 2 3 4 5 6

"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."  
Luke 2:12

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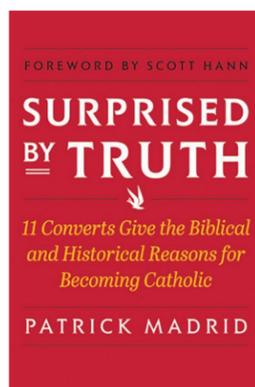
**Christmas** SUNDAY KIDZ



Start Finish

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## Merry Christmas from St. John Paul!



We hope you enjoy your gifted copy of the book, *Surprised by Truth!* To appreciate the gift of our faith, this book includes eleven personal conversion accounts unlike any you've ever read; they're packed with biblical, theological, and historical proofs for Catholicism. Each year thousands of Atheists, Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, and Pentecostals are being surprised by Catholic truth – and these converts give you all the reasons why they chose to become Catholic!

We also have developed a Book Study Discussion Guide to help you reflect and integrate the messages found in *Surprised by Truth*. Use this as a tool in your own prayer life, or gather a group to meet with to discuss and share. The Discussion Guide can be found on our website under the Discipleship Tab.

For today in the *city of David*  
a *Savior* has been born *for you*  
who is *Messiah* and *Lord*

Luke 2:11

## Dear Friends,

A few years ago a Midwestern newspaper published a request to readers to submit photos of their child's first visit with Santa Claus. They thought it would be a great photo display: little children looking wide-eyed at the jolly old man. When they received the pictures, however, many of them were pictures of children scared to death. Picture after picture showed youngsters crying and bawling, shrieking and howling, struggling to get away from the man in the red suit.

I would imagine these same youngsters will get over their fear of Santa. And when they are older, I imagine they will, at some point in their life hear the story of Christmas as recorded in Luke's Gospel. They will hear of shepherds who have had a pretty frightening experience themselves. Luke tells us that they come face to face with an angel of the Lord—"The glory of the Lord is shining around them. AND THEY WERE STRUCK WITH GREAT FEAR." (Luke 2:9)

Although I don't always want to admit it, there have certainly been times in my life that I have been afraid. I would imagine that the same is true for most if not all of you. A couple of years ago I received a letter from a friend of mine in Indianapolis. I witnessed their marriage about 18 years ago. She wrote, "Fr. Tom, I'm not sure our marriage can survive. I'm just afraid this might be the end." We all have our fears. How will I get through the death of my spouse of more than 50 years? What will I do now that my son or daughter is in trouble? How long will the money last now that I'm out of work?

I would imagine the parents of those little kids in the pictures pulled them off of Santa's lap and told them the same thing the angels told the shepherds: "It's okay, don't be afraid." Do not be afraid. In Luke's Gospel that phrase is spoken four times in the first two chapters of his Gospel. Do not be afraid. It is the most dominate phrase in the New Testament. The words "Do not be afraid" or some variation there of is heard over 25 times in the gospels alone. ...Continues on the back.

St. John Paul II  
Mission Statement  
Building God's  
Kingdom by growing  
disciples and making  
disciples through  
love of God and  
neighbor.

St. Joe Hill Campus  
2605 St. Joe Rd. West

St. Paul Campus  
216 Schellers Ave.



Come Worship with Us!

Every Weekend

Saturday 4 pm St. Paul  
Sunday 7:45 am & 9:30 am St. Joe Hill  
Sunday 11:15 am St. Paul

## Christ in our Community - Reborn in our Youth

It doesn't really matter how old you are...Christ is always working in your life! The key is to have a heart that is open to all that Christ has for you. Our high school youth are a great testament and witness to what can happen when we say YES and open our hearts. Here are some of their insights from the past year:

"Attending Marian University's Missionary Discipleship Institute (MDI) changed my life! For the first time I realized I had gifts and talents that could make a difference in my church community. I developed a Mission Plan so that I could bring back to St. John Paul II what I learned at MDI! Leading programs and helping other teens connect with Jesus is a mission I am on!"

"Confirmation Small Group was so much more than I expected it to be! I went from having to go to looking forward to going. Meeting at the coffee shop and discussing and sharing important topics of faith opened my heart in ways I never could have imagined. When I celebrated Confirmation in October, I was ready! Ready to be sealed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and see those gifts more readily in my life."



The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) gathers 21,000 teens/chaperones from all around the United States and the world. We had five youth attend as well as our Hands Across Haiti ministry in the service area of the Village. Here are some insights from our youth delegation:

- ⇒ In Reconciliation, I felt like was speaking directly to God.
- ⇒ The workshop 'The Dreams I've Never Had' helped me realize I'm never as alone as I think, and after, I really felt like I wasn't alone.
- ⇒ Going to NCYC was a very good opportunity to strengthen my connection with God and to reflect on my relationship with God.
- ⇒ I've realized how important prayer is, no matter how big or small.
- ⇒ I really took advantage of Adoration as a way to talk to God personally.
- ⇒ I now feel more active in my prayer life, and I feel that God is with me now more than ever.
- ⇒ The Holy Spirit truly worked its way through me. The Mass was one of the parts that impacted me the most, as the song "Reckless Love" overwhelmed me with God's love and the Holy Spirit truly flowed through me.



## Alpha—Food. Talk. Discussion.

Here's what some Alpha participants shared about Christ coming alive in them through their experience.

"Alpha helped break some of the misconceptions I had formed over the years. One such, why would someone care enough about me to want to save me? It was a question that I never thought I had received an answer to before. It was hard for me to believe in a love that could be that strong." - Mike H.

"The small group discussions have been the more amazing aspect of Alpha. The videos provided the opportunity for us to open up; to each other and to God." - Lynell C.

"I was religious but had some questions. After attending the session I have found inner peace and my questions have been answered. It has made my faith grow and my journey with God and my husband ten times better. I have learned so much and as a young adult feel closer to God than I have ever before." - Emily W.

"Alpha has made me realize that everything I do is because of Jesus. I used to be confused of the statement "I found Jesus." I would think "was he lost?" Now I realize that those people who "found" Jesus can live a more productive and content life. The Alpha program gave me the realization that everyone needs Jesus in their life for different reasons." - Jane W.

"I have always had the feeling that I was missing something, that I had a need that was not being satisfied or that there was a hole in me that was not being filled. This hole created a deep sadness and a feeling of loneliness that reached into all parts and relationships in my life; it put a limit and a barrier on my ability to love and be loved. Alpha helped me to experience the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, enabling me to start filling in this hole and tearing down this barrier." -Steve M.



## Learn – Serve – Lead – Succeed

St. John Paul II School PreK-8th Grade  
812-246-3266 stjohnpaulschool.org



You're invited to our  
**Open House**  
January 26  
Noon-2pm



## Join us at Alpha!

Wednesdays 6-8 PM  
March 4-May 13  
St. Joe Hill Gym  
Free Dinner and Childcare.  
Register by February 19 at:  
[stjohnpaulparish.org/alpha](http://stjohnpaulparish.org/alpha)

Join us for our first  
**Youth Alpha Series**  
8th grade—12th grade  
Same time, same place,  
Different room.  
**Bring a friend!**