



ST LUKE'S & ST IGNATIUS

Oxon Hill

25 December 2022



CONFESSIONS

Saturday 9-9:45 am

in the chapel

(in the church on 1st Saturdays)

3:30-4:15 pm

in the church

Tuesday 6:30-7:30 pm

in the church

MASSES

Saturday 4:30 pm [anticipated]

Sunday 8 am, 9:30 am, 11 am

Daily Mass *in the chapel*

Monday-Friday at 9 am

Saturday at 10 am

(First Saturdays in the church)

HOLY HOURS

*confessions &
eucharistic adoration
in the church*

Tuesday 6:30-7:30 pm

First Saturday 9 am

(followed by Mass at 10 am)

2315 Brinkley Road ♦ Fort Washington, MD 20744

Christmas and the Eucharist

Of the many subjects that we could talk about on Christmas day, I thought the most appropriate would be to speak on Christmas and the Eucharist. There are many aspects to their relationship, but I believe that there are mainly three: (1) both Christmas and the Eucharist are facts; (2) both reveal a mystery; and (3) both are meant to teach us a profound and not easily learned lesson.

Christmas, first of all, is a fact of history. In a point of time and at a definable place the God of heaven and earth was born of a woman, and came to live among us as man. It is a fact that the infinite God became, unexplainably, a finite creature. It is a fact to which historians attest but which we know is no mere statistic of history; it is, rather, a fact planned by God from all eternity. This is the fact of Christmas: the Word actually became Flesh.

What is the fact of the Eucharist? It is that the same Jesus Who was born on earth not only became man but remains man. He not only came into the world, He is in the world. In a word, He came to stay. The Eucharist is Christmas prolonged, because faith tells us that once God became man, He decided to remain man. From all the reaches of past eternity, God had only been God. But having once taken on human flesh, into now the future reaches of eternity, God will always remain man. And this God-Man is here; Bethlehem is wherever there is a Catholic Church or chapel in which Christ is present. These are the two facts that we commemorate on Christmas day.

But Christmas and the Eucharist are not only facts, they are also mysteries. What is the mystery of Christmas? The mystery is the humanly incredible reality of why God became man. He did not have to. God did not even have to make the world, and within the world, He did not have to make us. Except for the love of God, we are all empty unoccupied spaces on earth. But, having decided to make the world and to make us, God also decided that once man had sinned, He would redeem man. God might have redeemed man by an act of His divine Will; He chose not to do so. He chose, rather, to become man, so that as man He might not only, by some fiat of His human freedom redeem us, but might have a mortal flesh and a soul capable of suffering. In a word, the mystery of Christmas is the mystery of God's love that chose to take on our human form in order to show His love for us by suffering.

The only ultimate reason for Bethlehem is Jerusalem; the only reason in God's mind for becoming a Child was so that He might, as man, die on the Cross. In a word, the mystery of Christmas is the mystery of God's unfathomable love that wants to suffer. God took on human flesh so that He might be able to endure pain. That is the mystery of Christmas, the mystery of God's love, in order that loving, He might endure the Cross.

What is the mystery of the Eucharist? It is the same. You would think that God's love would have been satisfied with His becoming man and as man living, suffering and dying for our sins. And having once died, rising from the dead and returning as man to the Father from whom He came. But no, the mystery of God's love is that He invented a way of showing His love for us not only by being with us and near us but God even invented a way of being inside of us. All of this tells us a lot about what love means.

Love wants to show that it loves. It is not satisfied with sentiments or words. Love wants to prove its love in deeds; better, it wants to show its love in pain. Love wants to be near the one it loves, to be united with the one it loves. All of this is hidden behind the mystery of the Eucharist, made possible by the mystery of Christmas, because these two mysteries are really one. The Eucharist is merely an extension, a continuation, of what happened 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. Because Mary gave birth to the Son of God, we now have the Flesh of the Son of God near us, with us, and when we receive Him in Communion, within us.

Finally, what is the lesson? The lesson of Christmas and the Eucharist must be obvious by now. God does nothing in vain. He did not choose to become man nor does He remain man in our midst except that He wants to evoke from us something of the same kind of love that He showed during His life on earth and still shows us in His life in the Eucharist. Jesus Christ gives us His Flesh and Blood to adore, worship and nourish our souls on, so that we might live with His life. What He wants us to do therefore, and this is the lesson, is to love Him as He has been loving us.

How has He been loving us? First of all, He loves us in simplicity. Is there anything more simple than a child, or anything more simple than the round wafer of the Eucharist? God wants us to love Him in simplicity. Above all, we must have no duplicity with God. He wants our whole heart, not just part of it. We are to love Him, therefore, simply, unqualifyingly, totally.

God wants us to love Him humbly. Is there anything more lowly than a baby? They are speechless, helpless; they must be fed and carried from place to place. And is there anything more unpretentious than what seems to be a piece of bread and a sip of wine? Yet as we know, real humility is always greatness hiding itself out of love. What a hard lesson for us to learn, to love this God of ours humbly.

We are to love God and, allowing Him to do with us as He pleases, we are to love God obediently. When God came into the world, He came as Scripture tells us, obedient first of all to His Father's Will; then, as a Child and through His growing manhood, He was obedient to His mother Mary and to Joseph. In the Eucharist, too, He is totally submissive. The moment a duly ordained priest pronounces the words of Consecration, Jesus Christ comes down on the altar, He

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS *All who are suffering or sick and all caregivers who minister to the sick:*

Easter Thompson, Finn Prada, Fr. Gus Peters, Cate Mueller, Don Seward, Chelsea Ransom, Lorraine Killion, Marie Norment, Theresa Koshut, Jackie Windsor, Jack Figel, Sonya Estrada, Dave Hoppe, Barbara Manning, Andy, Paula, and Marian Luther; Jackie Chancio, Carolyn Grimm, Mark Mangione, Richard Thompson, Harold Joyce, Levi Harris, Joanne Newsom, Anne Marie Whittaker, Greg and Felicia Yohe, Joe Coleman, John Hogan, Danny Hart, Amy Howard, Mary Morehead and family, Curtis Bailey, Leondre Massey, Sister Constance Ward, Mark Anthony Turner, Rachel Fisher, Patricia Ransom, Beverly A. Woods, Kerianna Prather; C.M., C.A., E.D., E.G., W.B., and J.M., H.G., and J.G.

Please call or email the office to add a name to the prayer list. **Before calling, please be sure you have spoken to the person for a member of his family about adding the name—we do not want to inadvertently disregard someone's desire for privacy.**

obeys. This is our faith. And perhaps this is the hardest lesson to learn, to love God obediently. It means, as we know, obeying God not only interiorly or according to our own understanding or interpretation of God's Will, it means obeying God as that divine Will is explained and interpreted for us by His very fallible and weak human creatures.

These are the lessons that God wants us to learn from Christmas as a historical event and from Christmas as a perennial reality because, as you see, the Eucharist is Christmas. Believing in Christ's Real Presence, we have the grave responsibility of invoking, in faith, this Jesus, begging Him, pleading with Him that He might grant those graces—if need be, miraculous graces—that the sinful world He came to redeem so desperately needs. Jesus redeemed the world, but it is not redeemed unless we cooperate with His grace. And we must cooperate with His grace not only for ourselves, but for the whole world, so that Jesus' coming into the world will not, for any soul, have been in vain.

—a homily by Servant of God John A. Hardon SJ [-2000]

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY, THE 1ST OF JANUARY, is the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God. We will observe the usual Sunday Mass schedule.

**THE ST. IGNATIUS LADIES OF CHARITY
WOULD LIKE TO INVITE**

the generous parishioners of St. Ignatius and St. Luke to an Epiphany Party on Sunday, January 8, 2023, after the 11 am Mass (about 12:30 pm) in the school auditorium. We need to say thank you to all who have funded our many endeavors for the past year. Every time we asked, you responded. Come on January 8 and let us serve you.

MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday, 24 December

(O Virgo Virginum)

10 am deceased religious of the parish +

THE VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY

4:30 pm in thanksgiving [R. Coller]

10:30 pm pro populo

Sunday, 25 December

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9 am Florian Norbert Hofer + [month's mind]

11 am Andres Gamboa

Monday, 26 December

Stephen, the First Martyr

9 am in thanksgiving [S. White]

Tuesday, 27 December

John, Apostle and Evangelist

9 am Emily Guinivan

Wednesday, 28 December

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

9 am Rafael F. Madan +

Thursday, 29 December

Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr

9 am Jose Manlapaz +

Friday, 30 December

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

9 am Sebastiano J. Lo Presti

Saturday, 31 December

Sylvester I, Pope

10 am Joseph and Story Jones

Anticipated Mass for MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

4:30 pm pro populo

Sunday, 1 January

THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

8 am Michael Lawrence +

9:30 am Ida Hounsou

11 am Yolande Caron

St. Ignatius Finance Council

Jackie Chancio ♦ George Hendrix
Joseph Somerville ♦ Clifford Woods

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historic
ST IGNATIUS
CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. John Vidal, pastor
Rev. Jason Catania, parochial vicar
Rev. David Ousley, assisting priest

Joint Pastoral Council

Joseph Chancio ♦ Rosemary Coller
Michael Taylor ♦ James Guinivan
Ada Okafor ♦ Elizabeth Shivone
Cesar Andaya ♦ Connie Somerville
Patrick Delaney - *ex officio*
Susan White - *ex officio*

St. Luke's Finance Council

Patrick Delaney *Co-chair* ♦ Dave Hoppe
David Lewis ♦ Franco Madan

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