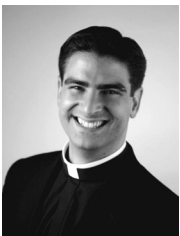


## The Christmas Proclamation

The Twenty-fifth Day of December,  
when ages beyond number had run their course  
from the creation of the world,  
when God in the beginning created heaven and earth,  
and formed man in his own likeness;  
when century upon century had passed  
since the Almighty set his bow in the clouds  
after the Great Flood,  
as a sign of covenant and peace;  
in the twenty-first century since Abraham,  
our father in faith,  
came out of Ur of the Chaldees;  
in the thirteenth century since the People of Israel  
were led by Moses  
in the Exodus from Egypt;  
around the thousandth year  
since David was anointed King;  
in the sixty-fifth week of the prophecy of Daniel;  
in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;  
in the year seven hundred and fifty-two  
since the foundation of the City of Rome;  
in the forty-second year of the reign  
of Caesar Octavian Augustus,  
the whole world being at peace,  
Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,  
desiring to consecrate the world  
by his most loving presence,  
was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
and when nine months had passed since his conception,  
was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judah,  
and was made man:

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.



Dear Friends in Christ,  
The Christmas Proclamation, traditionally sung before the beginning of midnight Mass, gives us a context for the birth of Jesus Christ, situating the Nativity within the framework of salvation history. It makes reference not only to biblical events but also to the Greek and Roman worlds, pointing to Christ's birth as the summit of both sacred and secular history.

The Proclamation also shows us that Our Savior came into the world at a particular point in history, in a particular place in the globe, to a particular family and people. Jesus, the incarnation of God, is not an abstract idea of a Deity, separated from His Creation, uninvolved in human history, and unaware of human joys and sorrows. No, Jesus came to share in our life and so to redeem it, to share in **all** of it that He might redeem **all** of it, and so open

the way for us to share in the divine life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the meaning of Christmas, not presents, colored lights, special foods, songs old and new, or even being with family. Those things do lend a celebratory note to the occasion, but it is all to remember that God Himself, in His immense love for us, in tremendous humility, came to be one of us, to lead us to eternal life with Him.

While it is important that Jesus was born in a specific time and place, Christ is not restricted to that particular point in history, that particular place in the globe, that particular family and people. He came for **all** of us, and He died for **all** of us: wherever we might be, whenever we might be, whoever we might be. His presence in the world continues now, through His Body, the Church, the family of believers who together continue carrying on His mission. We are each essential members of Christ's Body, His arms, legs, heart, lungs, in our world today. That is why our faith can never be one of "Jesus and me" alone; that is why communal prayer and worship is so important; that is why we work together to be instruments of God's love.

One line from the Christmas Proclamation stands out to me at this time: that Christ's birth happened "the whole world being at peace." That is certainly not the case today. Not only do we have high-profile wars in Ukraine and the Near East, there are many less-publicized conflicts throughout the world and others threatening to get started. There are clashes between countries and within nations and even churches.

We might easily get overwhelmed just contemplating all these conflicts. What can I possibly accomplish from my corner of Maryland to help resolve so much chaos, disorder and turmoil in the world?! We start with ourselves: making sure that we have invited the Prince of Peace into our hearts, our families and our community, and seeking to let Him use us as instruments of His mercy. May the Prince of Peace make a true home in your heart, and lead you always closer to Himself. May He make all men and women witnesses of truth, justice, and brotherly love, and enlighten our rulers that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace. May all peoples of the earth become as brothers. May longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always over us all.

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." — Isaiah 9:6*

Yours in Christ Jesus,  
Fr. Marco

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT / CHRISTMAS

## MASS Intentions

December 25 — December 31

<b>Monday</b>	Is 52:7-10/Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6/ Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18
<b>12:00 am</b>	<b>All IHM Parishioners</b>
<b>10:00 am</b>	<b>All IHM Parishioners</b>
<b>1:00 pm</b>	<b>All IHM Parishioners</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Ps 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 1/Mt 10:17-22
<b>5:30 pm</b>	<b>Anthony Russo (D)</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12/ Jn 20:1a and 2-8
<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>Billy Riddell (D)</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	1 Jn 1:5-2:2/Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8/ Mt 2:13-18
<b>5:30 pm</b>	<b>Lily Orduña (S)</b>
<b>Friday</b>	1 Jn 2:3-11/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6/ Lk 2:22-35
<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>Michael Bailey (D)</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	1 Jn 2:12-17/Ps 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10/ Lk 2:36-40
<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>Maria Aurora and Bill Martin (L)</b>
<b>4:00 pm</b>	<b>Gina Sarmina (D)</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	Sir 3:2-6, 12-14/Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5/Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17/Col 3:15a, 16a
<b>8:30 am</b>	<b>Kimberly and Theresa Frazier (D)</b>
<b>11:15 am</b>	<b>All IHM Parishioners</b>
<b>1:00 pm</b>	<b>Josephina Perez and Herminio Mercado (L)</b>

**COME HOLY SPIRIT! COME!** New Wednesday Morning Bible study begins January 14 for seven consecutive meetings until February 28. Come join us as we return to *The Wild Goose: Discovering a Deeper Relationship with the Holy Spirit*, a study by Fr. Dave Pivanka, TOR. Learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how important a role the Holy Spirit has in our lives. Each class will be held in the IHM large classroom on Wednesdays from 10 am to 11:30 am. All are welcome. If interested, please call Nancy Baysinger at 240-298-4713 soon so that materials may be ordered in time.

**SECOND COLLECTION** next weekend is for the Building and Maintenance Fund. Please be generous in support for this collection!

**FORMED** To sign up for Formed, the premier site to access Catholic Media online, go to [www.formed.org](http://www.formed.org) and press "sign up" and then enter the ZIP code of the parish "20653", follow the directions to create an account, and then enjoy!

**WARM NIGHTS** Great News! Immaculate Heart of Mary will once again be hosting the WARM Nights guests from the evening of January 14 through the morning of January 21. We are in need of monitors for three shifts through the night and a hot breakfast and dinner each day. Please prayerfully consider volunteering to serve the homeless of St. Mary's County. If you would like additional information or want to sign up, contact Marcie McLaughlin at (240) 298-1462.



**FIRST TUESDAY COFFEE** The next First Tuesday Coffee will be held on Tuesday, January 2 from 9 until 11 am in the Parish Hall. Please bring a friend and a non-perishable food item for the Food Pantry.

**MASS INTENTIONS** may be requested at the parish office during regular office hours (M—F, 8 am—4 pm) in person or by phone (301-863-8144 x11), or by e-mailing [julian@ihmrcc.org](mailto:julian@ihmrcc.org). Your desired date may not be available. We now have the ability to accept Mass intention stipends online (but only **after** the date has been accepted by the office).



### PLEASE PRAY

#### THAT THE SICK MAY BE RESTORED TO FULL HEALTH

Audrey Somers, Kathleen Floyd, Jane Kenyon, Linda F. Gieser, Ralph Gough Sr., Betty LePore, Joseph, Rylee Corliss, Alan Stapanon, Ruby Garcia, Mia Garcia, Matthew Riddell, Marie C. Williams, Kaylee Klier, Wanda Slater, Enedina Melendez, Hector Perez, Josephine, Glenn Thompson III, John Worrell, Jim Makin, Carmen Colby, Gary Green, Grace Miedzinski, Bruce Riddell, Katelyn Corliss, Robert Weaver, Devlin Rich, Ana Gates, Dennis Berg, Alejandra Spargo, Lisa and Paul Crowe, Adele Bavani, Violette Ghalbouny, Helen Pearson, John Flynn, Michael Briscoe, Patricia A. Louis, Susan Marie Hollis, Norma Jean Jubeck, Melva Coates, Frances Roof, Jayne C., Dcn. Barnes, Claude Clark, Coleen Corliss

*Please note: names will remain on this list for two months, unless otherwise notified. To keep a name on the list, please resubmit by contacting [bulletin@ihmrcc.org](mailto:bulletin@ihmrcc.org), or call the Parish Office.*

### PAPAL PRAYER INTENTION FOR DECEMBER

We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.

Follow us on



# DECEMBER 23, 24, & 25, 2023

**EXPLORING THE CATHOLIC FAITH?** If you are curious about the Catholic Church and want to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ (or simply to know who he is), we invite you to participate in the process known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (or RCIA). It is an opportunity to explore the Catholic faith, prepare for the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation, and become part of the family of the Church. Starting to participate does not mean a definitive commitment.

Sessions in English meet on Sunday mornings at 11:15 am. Sessions in Spanish meet on Tuesdays at 7 pm. Please contact the parish office at 301-863-8144, [rcia@ihmrcc.org](mailto:rcia@ihmrcc.org) (English), [deaconjuan@ihmrcc.org](mailto:deaconjuan@ihmrcc.org) (Spanish).

**ALREADY CATHOLIC BUT NEED FIRST COMMUNION OR CONFIRMATION?** If you are an adult who was baptized Catholic but have not received First Communion and/or Confirmation, consider participating in the process known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (or RCIA). It is an opportunity to develop your understanding and practice of the Catholic faith, prepare for the sacraments, and deepen your life of prayer and your relationship with God.

Sessions in English meet on Sunday mornings at 11:15 am. Sessions in Spanish meet on Tuesdays at 7 pm. Please contact the parish office at 301-863-8144, [rcia@ihmrcc.org](mailto:rcia@ihmrcc.org) (English), [deaconjuan@ihmrcc.org](mailto:deaconjuan@ihmrcc.org) (Spanish).

## BE A STRATEGIC GRANDPARENT WORKSHOP

Grandparents can have a wonderfully positive effect on their grandchildren's faith life. Join us for a virtual workshop on 5 evenings: February 22 and 29, and March 7, 14, and 21 from 7 pm to 8:30 pm to see how to be strategically successful in sharing your faith with your grandchildren. Call the Archdiocese of Washington Office of Family Life at 301-853-4499 for more information, or e-mail [signup@ihmrcc.org](mailto:signup@ihmrcc.org) to receive the registration link (it's too long to include in the bulletin). You will receive an automated response with the link.

**BULLETIN DEADLINE** Please email your submission to [bulletin@ihmrcc.org](mailto:bulletin@ihmrcc.org) by Wednesday at 10 am prior to the Sunday of publication. All entries are subject to editing.

**FIRST FRIDAY AND FIRST SATURDAY DEVOTIONS** The next First Friday Mass is January 5. We will have Mass at 9 am and 5:30 pm. First Saturday Mass is at 9 am on Saturday, January 6. All three Masses will be followed by confessions and Eucharistic Exposition.

**ALTAR FLOWERS/SANCTUARY CANDLES** If you would like to donate the Altar Flowers or Sanctuary Candles in memory or for special intentions of a loved one, please call the Parish Office or email at [cindy@ihmrcc.org](mailto:cindy@ihmrcc.org).

## EVENTS CALENDAR

Mon: All Day  
Tues: All Day

## December 25 — December 31

Office Closed  
Office Closed

**NEWS FROM THE VATICAN:** Many of us have seen certain news this week coming from the Holy See (Vatican). This particular week's bulletin is not the most appropriate in which to address that news. We also need time (in short supply this week) to read and analyze the actual document (available at <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/12/18/0901/01963.html#en>) instead of relying on other people's (mis)interpretations. We hope to address it next week.

**PARISH OFFICE CLOSED** On Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26. Merry Christmas!

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY MASS** This year Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala will celebrate the Annual Wedding Anniversary Mass to honor the Vocation of Marriage on Saturday, February 10, 2024, 10 am at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. This Annual Mass is a celebration of the living vocation of all couples who provide a Catholic witness to the beauty of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Couples must register with the parish office by January 27, 2024 to attend the Mass and/or receive a certificate from Cardinal Wilton Gregory in honor of their anniversary year.

**FAITHFUL GENEROSITY AT CHRISTMAS TIME** Please remember Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in your gift-giving plans this Christmas and at year-end. Traditionally, many of have used the Christmas envelope for this purpose. You can also make your Christmas gift conveniently through our website at [giving.ihmrcc.org](http://giving.ihmrcc.org). Parishioners and friends over 70 1/2 years old can also take advantage of making a year-end gift from their IRA through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), avoiding those income taxes and supporting our parish ministry. This would be arranged by contacting your IRA trustee/manager. More information is also available at this link <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/reminder-to-ira-owners-age-70-and-a-half-or-over-qualified-charitable-distributions-are-great-options-for-making-tax-free-gifts-to-charity>.

**LAZARUS COMMITTEE** Are you looking for a way to support grieving families in our parish? Consider joining the Lazarus Committee, a group of volunteers who prepare and serve meals after the funerals of active and registered parishioners. This is a meaningful ministry that offers comfort and fellowship to those who have lost a loved one. To learn more or to sign up, please call Pat at 240-925-0021 or Linda at 240-298-5264. Thank you for your generosity and compassion.





Getty Images/Kam Gebhardt

December 24, 2023

Written by  
THE  
FAITHFUL  
DISCIPLE

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 | Rom 16:25-27 | Lk 1:26-38

### **GROW** AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” The angel Gabriel announces this in the Gospel today, and it is a phrase with which we are all familiar thanks to our recitation of the Hail Mary prayer. Although some may be comforted by such a message and its angelic messenger, it is troubling to Mary because the angel goes on to tell her she will conceive and bear the Son of God. Thinking practically, Mary is being told the impossible will happen – who wouldn’t be troubled? And yet Mary offers herself: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Despite her fear and trepidation, Mary went on to answer God’s call and do his will. Our Blessed Mother became a great example of fortitude at that moment, as she exemplified what it means to step outside of our own uncertainty and trust God completely. Although doing God’s will can be difficult at times, St. Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Romans that we can ask God for the strength to say “yes” in spite of our fears.

### **GO** EVANGELIZE

#### PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Up until today, December has probably been a whirlwind. Trees and lights, ornaments, parties and presents – all these things help to kick off “the most wonderful time of year” beginning soon after Thanksgiving. Come Dec. 26, however, for many, the decorations become a nuisance and Christmas trees are out on the curb for pickup. Thank goodness for our Catholic faith because for us, Christmas is just beginning! Mary didn’t say “may it be done to me” only to forget about it the next day. No, in the coming months, the Blessed Mother nurtured the baby Jesus in her womb, anticipating the arrival of her firstborn and the Son of God. And on that blessed Christmas night, her work as the Mother of God was only just beginning. So, as we anticipate the arrival of the Christ Child, we are joyful that *our* Christmas season continues until we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on January 8. Let us use this time to draw closer to God and make every effort in the new year to do his will.

**SING** *Angels, announce with shouts of mirth  
Christ who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.*