

Parish Newsletter
For
12 December 2021



**THE THIRD SUNDAY OF
ADVENT**

*From Father Robert – Reflecting On The
Gospel*

In the gospel a shout is heard: urgent, loud, seeming at first to be discordant with the joy of the other readings. John the Baptist is with us again, a lean and eager man, his life pared down to essentials by his wilderness experience, his tongue sharpened by silence. Listening to his prophetic and passionate words, the crowds wonder if he might be the long-awaited Messiah. They come to John with their practical questions: “What is it that we should do?” they ask, and John has practical answers for them. He does not suggest that they disassociate themselves from their everyday lives, but rather that they be converted to just living and sharing in their ordinary relationships. John does not call them into the desert but urges them to be sensitive to the wilderness of poverty around them and among them, responding by clothing the needy with their extra cloak and sharing food with the hungry.

There is nothing of elitism in the Baptist’s ministry. In the crowds are two of the most despised groups in Palestinian society: tax

collectors and soldiers, both of whom worked for the Roman occupying force. The tax collectors are not told to resign, but to stop exploiting the people; the soldiers (probably police who served as security guards for the tax collectors) are not commanded to leave the force, but to avoid violence, intimidation, and grumbling about their pay – they at least get a wage. One way the imperial system of Rome or any global power then or now can be changed is through a change of heart of those within it or concerned about it, or through informed, responsible voting for or against it. This is gospel “people power.”

John comes to us this Third Week of Advent as the awakener of our sense of social justice, the one who points to the clutter of selfish concerns and materialism that can suffocate our practical love for our sisters and brothers in the stale air of indifference or greed. We are called to be concerned not only with the material clothing of the naked, but also with covering with love the naked vulnerability of someone in need. Feeding the hungry is not only about the soup kitchen, but also about nourishing one another with our compassionate concern. How can we, individually, or in our families, parishes, or other communities, respond today to John the Baptist? How can we plan ways in which we can give Christmas back to the ones to whom it really belongs: the homeless, the refugees, the elderly, the sick, the hopeless young people, those with disabilities, all of whom are so often discarded like our cast-off Christmas wrapping paper?

It is not easy to hear prophetic voices over the outer noise of the shopping centers or the inner noise of our rehearsals of what still needs to be done by Christmas Eve. Yet these are the days when we are encouraged by Isaiah, whose song is today’s

responsorial, to take at least some time to be water-drawers as well as shoppers. In a few moments of prayer or sacred reading, we can reach into our inner depths where the well of salvation flows and drink joyfully and confidently from its sustenance. Or we can draw water so that we may quench the thirst of a sister or brother for companionship, for compassion, for something to hope for – and discover that, in our so doing, God renews the springs of His grace within us.



What do you think John the Baptist’s answer would be if you asked him, “What should I do?”

When in your life do you feel, as the psalmist says, most “confident and unafraid?”

It’s “Gaudete” Sunday. How are you balancing the material demands of secular consumerism with Paul’s call to “Have no anxiety at all”? Are there areas of your day when you can focus on putting “everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,” in a request to God?



The students of our Faith Formation Program will participate in and present “Las Posadas” for the parish on Sunday,

December 12th, at 4:00 P.M. You are most welcome to attend.



I am very proud of the leadership and members of our Filipino Community who have decided to have Simbang Gabi this year, even though our parish hall is not yet ready for events. A major change in its observance and celebration is that the liturgies will take place at 7:00 p.m. each evening, beginning on Wednesday, December 15th through Thursday, December 23rd. Both Fr. Moses and myself will be presiding and preaching along with several guest Filipino priests from our diocese. Simbang Gabi is for all parishioners to join our Filipino sisters and brothers to help us prepare for the Christmas Feast. I hope you will come for one or more liturgies and experience this wonderful tradition.



Once again today you will encounter The Giving Tree in the center of the narthex as you arrive for liturgy. Unlike previous years, the tree does not have paper ornaments on it indicating age-appropriate gifts for the children of our adopted parochial school of St. Peter Martyr in Pittsburg. Instead, we are inviting parishioners to purchase Gift Cards from Target in the amount of \$25.00 which will then be given to the children for Christmas. Please bring the Gift Cards and place them in the offering baskets by today, December 12th, so that we are able to distribute them in time for Christmas. Many thanks for your continued support and generosity to our adopted parochial school.

And since there are no Advent Paper Ornaments, I hope you will join us in making the tree our Parish Family Christmas Tree with an ornament made by you with the photograph of you and your family in the center. Help us make our tree come “alive” with the smiles and good wishes for all those who call St. Ignatius of Antioch their spiritual home.



Our Christmas Season Environment

Once again, we invite you to join us in helping to provide the environment for Christmas and its season by making a donation to provide the garlands, wreathes, panels of decorative cloth that adorn our Icons, the Christmas Trees, candles, artwork, and poinsettias.

Donations may be made either **In Honor Of** or **In Loving Memory** of family members, loved ones, and friends. Please be sure to mark your contribution envelope accordingly. Your support enables the members of our Art & Environment Committee to transform our sanctuary to support our prayer from Christmas Eve all the way to the conclusion of the Christmas Season on January 9th. As always, we are deeply grateful for your continued generosity and support.





Friday, 24 December 2021, Christmas Eve: 4:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist
The Children of our Faith Formation Program tell the Story of Christmas through Word and Song

9:00 p.m. The Eucharist of Christmas Night: Procession (No Incense), Cantors and Organ

Saturday, 25 December 2021, Christmas Day: 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
Procession, Cantors and Organ (No Incense)
No 4:00 p.m. Liturgy

Sunday, 26 December 2021, The Feast of the Holy Family; Holy Eucharist at 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Procession, Cantors and Organ (No Incense)

Friday, 31 December 2021, The Vigil Eucharist for The Solemnity of Mary, Mother Of God, New Year's Eve, 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, 1 January 2022, The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, New Year's Day, The World Day of Prayer for Peace; Holy Eucharist 11:00 a.m. Procession (No Incense), Cantors and Organ

Saturday, 1 January 2022, The Solemnity of The Epiphany, 4:00 p.m. Vigil Eucharist Cantors and Organ

Sunday, 2 January 2022, The Solemnity of the Epiphany, Holy Eucharist at 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Procession (No Incense), Cantors and Organ, The Procession of The Three Kings

Saturday, 8 January 2022, The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Vigil Eucharist 4:00 p.m. The Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Sprinkling Rite; Cantors and Organ

Sunday, 9 January 2022, The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Holy Eucharist, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Procession (No Incense), The Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Sprinkling Rite; Cantors and Organ; The Conclusion of the Christmas Season.

Justice Corner by Carolyn Krantz, Pastoral Associate

Guadete Sunday is the time that we ring out and bring out the joy of our knowledge that Christ is coming. He is with us as we move forward into 2022. The readings continue the justice theme. We know what to do to make Christ present: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sick, and so on. We announce Jesus in stark ways. "His winnowing fan in in His hand" as He clears the floor of all that is not true to His Word. He wipes away every tear to prepare for His final coming in glory.

There is a confusing statement in the Gospel of John: "Darkness and light are the same!" I reflect on this when I see the suffering in the world. How can suffering and joy be in the same breath? How can we rejoice when all the mess is still in the barn and the "winnowing fan" has not yet cleared the floor of our hearts? Only through an understanding that suffering and joy are united as one experience in His coming. The martyrs went to their death rejoicing

that they were worthy to suffer for His Name.

There are times that suffering takes over. Grief seems unending. But in the Presence of Christ, the light shines through. We rejoice that we can suffer with Him. Darkness and light are two parts of one life, one experience, when we join with His life in the present moment. It takes a lot of living to come to that understanding.

On the first Tuesday of Advent, Rev. Jackie Hooke from Holy Rosary came to tell us about hope. She made it clear that hope is about “keepin' on keepin' on,” even when we cannot see the next step. When Tulle fog surrounds our car, we have to trust that the road is still there. When suffering overcomes our life, we can trust that God will guide us through to the end.

Zephaniah says, “Do not be afraid.” and the Epistle says, “Dismiss anxiety.” Hard to do in the middle of the world's troubles and the events of our lives. One can only trust that the road continues under our feet, if one knows that Christ is with us in the dark and in the light. He is coming soon to free us of all our concerns. He is with us even now.

So that is why we can rejoice. In prayer, we experience “God's peace and understanding guarding over our hearts and minds.” (Phil. 3:7) His light does not eliminate the cracks, but allows us to embrace them. We look outward and are absorbed by the beauty of nature and the kindnesses of others. The bare trees will bloom again. We are held up by sharing how each of us continues in the midst of the pain in our lives. Look around at Mass. See the gray hairs and know that you are with other faith filled folks who know how to suffer through and come to joy. Yes, He is coming and is already among us! See the young families who are raising their

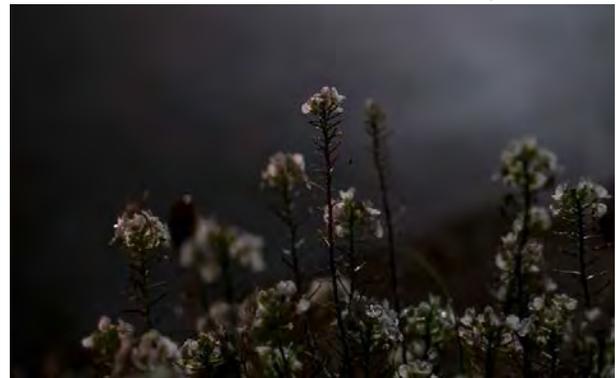
children in hope. See the youth who are enduring more suffering than their years seem to warrant. Yes, He is coming and is already here!

We celebrate another feast today: Our Lady of Guadalupe. Her words to Juan Diego echo the same sentiments. “Do not be afraid...Am I not your Mother?” She cares for us and brings the Christchild forward again this Christmas. Her words echo those of her Son as we go forward with the knowledge of His sure and certain coming!

Monday, December 6th, 2021

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Nine: Mystical Hope The Gift of Confidence

Father Richard describes the gift of confidence, which arises not from our ego or efforts, but from the foundational goodness of God.

When we are confident, we believe in a deep way that life is good, God is good, and humanity is good. We become safe and salutary people for others. We do exciting and imaginative things because we are confident that we are part of a story line that is going somewhere, and we want to be connected to something good. This is what modern secularism cannot offer us.

Theologically speaking, we identify the virtues of *faith, hope, and love as participation in the very life of God*. We don't achieve this by will power; we already participate in it by our deepest nature. It is not occasioned by perfect circumstances. In fact, most of the people I know who have great faith or hope live in difficult circumstances.

True confidence is really a blending of both faith and hope. I don't understand the alchemy of that union, but I know when it is present and when it isn't. It often feels like something which I have accidentally discovered, something given from nowhere, something that participates in Someone Else's life. It is of an entirely different nature than natural virtues like temperance or patience, which we gain through practice. I think that is why we pray for hope, wait for it, and believe in it, leaving the ground fallow until it comes. Those who do such things *know* that it does come and is always given—and all they can do is thank Someone.

The good news is that there *is* a guide, a kind of inner compass—and it resides within each of us. As the Scriptures put it, “the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). This Holy Spirit, described in John's Gospel as an “advocate” (John 14:16), guides all of us *from home and toward home*. The Holy Spirit is entirely *for us*, more than we are for ourselves, it seems. She speaks in our favor against the negative voices that judge and condemn us. This gives us all such hope—now we do not have to do life all by ourselves, or even do life perfectly “right.” Our life will be “done unto us,” just as happened with Mary (see Luke 1:38).

Optimism is a natural virtue and a wonderful gift of temperament when things are going well, when we think tomorrow will be better than today. Yet Christian hope has nothing to do with the belief that tomorrow is necessarily going to be better. Jesus seems to be saying that if even one mustard seed is sprouting, or one coin found, or one sheep recovered (see Luke 15)—that is reason enough for a big party! Even a small indicator of God is still an indicator of God—and therefore an indicator of final reason, meaning, and joy. *A little bit of God goes a long way*.

Returning to migrant hotspot of Lesbos, Pope Francis chides world leaders for an 'indifference that kills' 'Self-interest and nationalism lead to disastrous consequences,' says Francis in Greece

5 December 2021
by [Christopher White](#)

[Vatican](#)



Pope Francis greets a child as he visits with refugees at the government-run Reception and Identification Center in Mytilene, Greece, Dec. 5, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

LESBOS, Greece — As he returned to an island that has become a symbol of Europe's refugee crisis, Pope Francis on Dec. 5 chided world leaders for their "cynical disregard" of the plight of migrants. The pope's visit was brief and his message direct: Indifference kills.

"Stop ignoring reality, stop constantly shifting responsibility, stop passing off the issue of migration to others, as if it mattered to no one and was only a pointless burden to be shouldered by somebody else," Francis pleaded during his return visit.

Over the last decade, hundreds of thousands of refugees escaping violence across the Middle East have passed through Lesbos, many seeking permanent relocation in Europe. When Francis [first visited in April 2016](#) — and memorably brought back 12 refugees back to the Vatican — [1.3 million people](#) sought asylum in Europe that year.

"History teaches us that narrow self-interest and nationalism lead to disastrous consequences," said Francis during his two hours on the island.

As he spoke against a backdrop of refugee shelters along the shores of the Aegean Sea,

Francis cited the global vaccination campaign and the fight against climate change, saying that while these efforts are at times stalled, he believes forward progress is being made.

"All this seems to be terribly absent when it comes to migration," he said. "Yet human lives, real people, are at stake!"

Two days ago during his [visit to Cyprus](#), Francis criticized the use of barbed wires and likened the treatment of migrants to the torture in concentration camps. In Lesbos, where barbed wire fences had also been erected around the refugee camp, Francis turned to the words of a Holocaust survivor to again press his case.

"When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders become irrelevant," Francis said, quoting the [late Elie Wiesel](#).

At the time of his last visit, more than [5,000 migrants](#) had died that year at sea as they attempted to cross from mainland Turkey over to Greece.

"Let us stop this shipwreck of civilization," urged Francis on Sunday.

"The Mediterranean, which for millennia has brought different peoples and distant lands together, is now becoming a grim cemetery without tombstones," he lamented. "This great basin of water, the cradle of so many civilizations, now looks like a mirror of death."

When Francis visited in 2016, Lesbos was home to the largest refugee camp in Europe until arsonists [set fire to it in 2020](#), further crippling its already homeless population of 12,000.

At the newly built Reception and Identification Center on the island, where Francis spoke directly to its 2,200 residents, the pope said he refused to forget their plight. Prior to his speech, the pope spent nearly an hour walking the perimeter of the camp, often clasping the hands of small children and occasionally offering a "thumbs up" while posing for photographs.

As refugee families from Afghanistan, Syria, the Congo and elsewhere gathered under a white tent, Francis said he was "here to see your faces and look into your eyes. Eyes full of fear and expectancy, eyes that have seen violence and poverty, eyes carved by too many tears."

He begged others — especially political leaders of wealthy countries — not to turn away from their suffering.

"Let us combat at its root the dominant mindset that revolves around ourselves, our self-interest, personal and national, and becomes the measure and criterion of everything," Francis said.



Refugees stand outside their shelters as Pope Francis visits the government-run Reception and Identification Center in Mytilene, Greece, Dec. 5, 2021. (Vatican Media/CNS)

In a direct criticism of a [recent proposal](#) by some European leaders to erect fences to keep migrants from their borders, Francis

said it was "distressing to hear of proposals that common funds be used to build walls."

"Problems are not resolved and coexistence improved by building walls higher, but by joining forces to care for others according to the concrete possibilities of each and in respect for the law," he said.

Instead, the pope said the root causes of violence and conflict that have forced migrants to leave their homelands should be addressed.

"Why do we fail to speak with equal vehemence about the exploitation of the poor, about seldom mentioned but often well-financed wars, about economic agreements where the people have to pay, about covert deals to traffic in arms and the trafficking of weapons?" he asked.

"The remote causes should be attacked," he continued, "not the poor people who pay the consequences and are even used for political propaganda."

Massimiliano Signifredi of the international Community of Sant'Egidio, which [has welcomed](#) nearly 200 refugees from Lesbos to Italy, told NCR that while Lesbos is geographically in Greece, the plight of migrants is "very far from the consciousness" of most Europeans.

Francis' return to the island, he said, "shows that refugees are in the heart of the church." "Shake us from an individualism that excludes others, to awaken hearts that are deaf to the needs of our neighbors," Francis said as he concluded a rousing address meant to stir the consciences of global leaders and Catholics alike.

"I ask every man and woman, all of us," he said, "to overcome the paralysis of fear, the

indifference that kills, the cynical disregard that nonchalantly condemns to death those on the fringes."

After departing Lesbos, Francis will [return to Athens](#), where on Sunday afternoon he will celebrate the first papal Mass in the Greek capital in two decades before returning to the Vatican on Monday.



Christopher White
Christopher White is the Vatican correspondent for NCR. His email address is cwhite@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: [@CWWhiteNCR](https://twitter.com/CWWhiteNCR).

Simple Advent Revisited: In darkness, discovering peace in candle hour

6 December 2021
by [Brenna Davis](#)

[Spirituality](#)



Second week of Advent—Reflection
Monday, 6 December 2021

REFLECT

That was the start of a practice I've taken to calling Candle Hour. An hour before I go to bed, I turn off all my devices for the night. I hit the lights. I light a candle or two or three — enough to read a book by, or to just sit and stare at the flame, which, by drawing oxygen, reminds me I need to breathe, too. ... Candle Hour doesn't even need to last a full hour, though; sometimes it lasts far longer. I sit until I feel an uncoupling from the chaos, or until the candle burns all the way down, or sometimes both. ... At night, by candlelight, the world feels enduring, ancient and slow. To sit and stare at a candle is to drop through a portal to a time when firelight was the alpha and omega of our days. We are evolved for the task of living by candlelight and maladapted to living the way we live now.

Julia Scott, [Letter of Recommendation: Candle Hour](#), The New York Times
On the second Sunday of Advent, we lit on our Advent wreath the Bethlehem Candle, which represents faith. Lighting candles during this season of darkness (in the Northern Hemisphere, at least) reminds us of our call to be light in the world and is a symbol of hope of the light and promise of abundant life that comes from Jesus.

In a world that has many bright lights (or screens) that compete for our attention, we take time in Advent to reorient ourselves to natural candlelight and the light of our faith. We also remember that living by candlelight helps us to experience time as nature intended. Artificial lighting allows us to extend the day instead of trusting the rhythm of the earth and of our bodies to rest and restore ourselves when darkness falls. Living in this way, in sync with nature, is an act of humility because we trust that although our work in the world is unique and important, it can wait until the sunrise as

we leave whatever we had hoped to accomplish in God's hands for the night.

To honor this sacred vision of time, I invite you into an experience that I learned about a few years ago from an opinion piece in The New York Times that has captivated my imagination and that has helped me to slow down at the end of my day: candle hour. The practice is deceptively simple and is described in the quoted excerpts above.

For a period during the pandemic, when it felt particularly hard to connect, a friend and I committed to doing a 10-minute "candle hour" in our own homes each evening before bed. Sitting alone in my room, I felt at peace and connected at a level that has escaped me for most of this time of pandemic.

I invite you to join this practice along with everyone else who reads this. We will be in community in our solitude. As the sun slips below the horizon, avoid turning on lights or using electronics the hour before you go to bed. Sit and stare at a candle, read, pray, stretch, shower or do whatever it is that will help you unwind and slow down by candlelight. If you don't have a candle, simply get comfortable and sit in the darkness. Notice the paradox of abundance in the emptiness and spaciousness of time.

ACT

When the sun sets today, practice a "candle hour" for whatever period of time you desire before bed.



Thank you to all the parishioners who supported our 16th Annual St. Nicholas Dinner this year. Thank you for participating in the St. Nicholas Raffle, Silent Auction and/or the Drive-Thru Dinner. All proceeds from these activities will go to the Building Expansion Project Fund.

A special thank you to the **Social Events Committee** who donated raffle baskets, auction items, provided appetizers, set up and decorated for the cocktail party and helped with the drive-up dinner. Thank you to **Jane and Chip Sharpe, Brian and Vicki McCoy, Emily Douville, MaryAnne Douville, Maryann Peddicord, Lesley Eubanks, Mary Proznick, Reggia Desmond, Bob and Marla Plurkowski, Shelli Daviess, Clem Bushman.**

Thank you to **Catherine Vidaurri, Dave Costanza and Jane Sharpe** for providing delicious appetizers for the cocktail party. It was once again fun to share in drink, food and conversation in PERSON!!

A big thank you to the **Knights of Columbus** who helped us set up, take down and provided security. Thanks to **Steve Rojek, Bill Barbanica, Brian McCoy, Don Benson, Rich Confetti, Marc Douville, Clem Bushman, Bob Plurkowski, Phil Hadsell and Grand Knight Chip Sharpe.**

A huge **thank you** to **Father Robert** (aka St. Nicholas) who brought the SPIRIT and LOVE of St. Nicholas to our parking lot gathering. His presence added joy and fun to our celebration!

And last, but certainly not least, a thank you to **Zandonella's Catering** who provided our wonderful dinner. We are so grateful for their continued support and dedication to St. Ignatius of Antioch Church and our Social Events Committee.

We look forward to our St. Nicholas Dinner 2022 in our new hall and kitchen where we will once again have the beautiful table settings and fun activities. But until then. . . keep St. Nicholas in your heart and share his love and generosity with others!

*Marla Plurkowski, Social Events
Committee Chairperson*

Jesus is the divine gift that keeps on giving

6 December 2021
by Clare Knowles

Spirituality



In past years, I have struggled with the concept of Advent. It can feel disorientating to be in a season of preparation for the coming, next Dec. 25, of Christ who already came 2,000 years ago and whom we are expecting to come again at some unknown point in the future.

More recently, I have settled into a present-moment focus during Advent. I believe that Christ came in the past and will come again in the future, but the main purpose I find in Advent is to remind me that Christ is coming now. He is coming into the world today through every person who is willing to cooperate with God's saving grace.

Our Creator, whose holy name is "I AM" (Exodus 3:14), wants to meet us in the "now" of our lives. If I am living in the past or fixated on the future, I may miss the gift of God's grace in the present. Therefore, the Advent liturgies urge me to "stay awake" to God's presence in every moment "praying at all times" (Luke 21:36).

If I am awake, I cannot fail to notice that the world needs the light of Christ more than ever. Gathering storms of war, terrorism, inequality, ecological crises and a pandemic threaten to overwhelm humanity in my lifetime. It is easy to become discouraged by so much bad news.

However, the angel Gabriel's message that "nothing will be impossible to God" (Luke 1:37) is as true now as it was two millennia ago. It is not my own strength I must rely on, but God's power working through me. So, when God calls, if my self-doubt stands in the way, I can affirm with John the Baptist "someone is coming . . . who is more powerful than I am" (Luke 3:16). The Light of the world needs ready and willing channels.

Mary, the mother of Jesus is the exemplary channel, and it can be especially fruitful to meditate on her vocation during the season of Advent. As she received the Holy Spirit and brought the savior to birth, so, in a spiritual way, I can be inspired by the Word of God and, in carrying it out, make Christ visible in the world. St. Francis of Assisi called his followers to this way of living the Gospel, modeled on Mary's role in the Incarnation. He wrote:

We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others.

St. Bonaventure, who succeeded St. Francis as a leader and teacher in the order, based an extended reflection on this insight. His treatise "Five Feasts of the Child Jesus" guides us in stages through the process of receiving an inspiration from God and putting it into practice.

Bonaventure meditates on this action of God breaking through our lives in parallel with Mary's journey to the nativity and presentation of Jesus in the Temple. I find this little spiritual guidebook valuable during Advent because it gives an immediate personal relevance to the Gospel stories we hear leading to the birth of Christ. As Meister Eckhart reflected:

What good is it to me if Mary gave birth to the Son of God fourteen hundred years ago and I do not also give birth to the Son of God in my time and in my culture?

To know how God wants me to do this each day, I need to ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance and listen deeply in my heart to God's word. What I hear may be confirmed by prayerful discernment with my

companions, or by signs and circumstances in my life. For example, at this stage in my life, I have discerned that God is asking me to write.

This requires me to receive a message from the Holy Spirit, get it down in words on a computer as a complete body of work and then present it to the world. In a spiritual sense, this can feel like conceiving and giving birth to a word from God. Although it is not painful and exhausting like physical labor, it can be all-consuming mentally. As Bonaventure points out, the process of spiritual maternity also requires courage and determination. If I allow myself to be overcome by fear and self-doubt, the message I have been given will never see the light of day.

He highlights the importance of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, whose faith encouraged her to value and nurture the gift of God — "blessed is the fruit of your womb." He advises us similarly to keep company with spiritual friends whose belief will help us to persevere in the labor God has given us, so that Christ will be brought to birth through us. I thank God that I have in my life such companions of mature faith, my "Elizabeths."

The Lord gives us every possible help to receive Him into our world. During Advent, the question is: Are we ready for Christ now? For me, the main focus of this season is not that Christ came in the past or will come in the future but that He is coming — a continuous present. He is the divine gift that keeps on giving. So, I pray always to be open the Spirit and able to respond with Christ: "Here I am! I am coming to obey your will" (Hebrews 10:7).



Sister Clare Knowles

Clare Bernadette Knowles is a Franciscan Missionary Sister of Littlehampton. She entered the community in 1999 after working in copy editing for a printing firm, and after first profession she worked as a secretary at the Franciscan International Study Centre. With a graduate degree in Franciscan theology, she was novice formator, worked in formation ministry, served as a general councillor of the FMSL, and later as mother general of the congregation. Currently she is based in Hastings in Sussex, England, accompanying sisters in preparation for final vows.



Thank You Volunteers

Once again, we thank all those who volunteer in so many and varied ways to help the parish:

Those who arrive early each Saturday morning to clean and prepare both the sanctuary and bathrooms for the weekend and the week ahead: **Jean Rogers, Adaugo Nnaji, Angela Bueno, Al Cosce, Carole Miller, Mercy Osborne, Rose Salamanca, and Steve Rojek.**

Those who helped with the preparation of the Christmas Letter: **Joe and Carol Fanfa,**

Bernice Campbell, Melodye Costanza, Clem Bushman, Marguerite Bloomfield, Gloria Olvera, Tony and Claudia Gumina, Carole Miller, Lorraine Lohmeier, and Bev Iacona.

Those who volunteer in the parish office: **Alicia Perez, Lorraine Lohmeier, Bev Iacona, Melodye Costanza;** those who assist Estrella Rusk with accounting, recording, and banking.

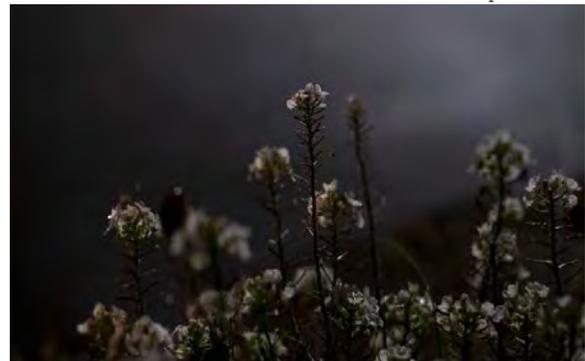
Our Parking Lot Security Team: **Steve Rojek, Dave Simpson, Tony Gumina, Don Benson, and Jose Perez.**

All those who serve in Liturgical Ministry: **Lectors, Ushers, Greeters, Altar Guild, Liturgy Committee, Art & Environment Committee, Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Servers, Adult Acolytes, Cantors and Choir.**

Tuesday, 7 December 2021

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Nine: Mystical Hope

The Christ Mystery

Richard writes about how the coming of Christ is far more than the birth of a baby. The Christ Mystery is nothing less than a cosmic hope for history:

The Second Coming of Christ that history is waiting for is not the same as the baby Jesus

or even the historical Jesus. The historical Jesus was one man, and Christ is not his last name. *The Christ* includes the whole sweep of creation and history joined with him—and us too. We call this the Cosmic Christ. We ourselves are members of the Body of Christ and the Cosmic Christ, even though we are not the historical Jesus. So we very rightly believe in “*Jesus Christ*,” and both words are essential.

The celebration of Christmas is not a sentimental waiting for a baby to be born, but much more *an asking for history to be born!* (see Romans 8:20–23). Any spirituality that makes too much of the baby Jesus is perhaps not yet ready for real life. God clearly wants friends, partners, and images, if we are to believe the biblical texts. God, it seems, wants mature religion and a free response from us. God loves us as partners, with mutual give and take, and *we eventually become the God that we love.*

All of us take part in the evolving, universe-spanning Christ Mystery. Jesus is a map for the time-bound and personal level of life, and Christ is the blueprint for all time and space and life itself. Both reveal the universal pattern of self-emptying and infilling (Christ) and death and resurrection (Jesus), which is the process we have called “holiness,” “salvation,” or just “growth,” at different times in our history. For Christians, this universal pattern perfectly mimics the inner life of the Trinity in Christian theology, which is our template for how reality unfolds, since all things are created “in the image and likeness” of God (Genesis 1:26–27).

The power of the biblical proclamation is that it clearly invites us into “cooperation” (Romans 8:28), free “participation” (Philippians 3:10), and the love of free and mature persons in God (Ephesians 4:13). We

can apparently trust ourselves to grow because God has done it first and foremost. The Christ we are asking for and waiting for includes our own full birth and the further birth of history and creation. Now we can say “Come, Christ Jesus” with a whole new understanding and a deliberate passion!

Franciscan theologian and scientist Ilia Delio affirms the intrinsic hope and loving responsibility of Christian faith in an evolutionary universe:

We must suffer through to something higher, something more unified, more conscious, more being in love. Hope must be born over and over again, for where there is love, there is hope. Christian life is birthing love into greater unity; it is our contribution to a universe in evolution. We point the way to something more than ourselves, something up ahead that we are now participating in, where heaven and earth will be renewed (Revelation 21). [1]

Archbishop Cordileone reveals he's not vaccinated for COVID-19, drawing sharp criticism

3 December 2021

by [Brian Fraga](#)



San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone speaks with patrons during a visit to St. Anthony's Dining Hall in San Francisco's Tenderloin district Nov. 6. Cordileone has revealed he is not vaccinated for COVID-19. (CNS/David Maung)

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone has revealed he is not vaccinated against the coronavirus and suggested — incorrectly — that the inoculations the federal government approved to prevent COVID-19 "are not really vaccines."

"We think of a vaccine as a shot that gives you immunity to a disease for life or at least for a very long time. And these actually don't give any immunity at all. They give protection," Cordileone [told The San Francisco Chronicle](#) Dec. 1.

Cordileone, an archconservative prelate who is no stranger to controversy for his outspokenness on culture war issues like abortion and same-sex marriage, also told the newspaper that his "immune system is strong," and that his personal physician had told him "it's probably not necessary for me to be vaccinated."

"I'm stepping into another controversy, I guess," Cordileone, aged 65, told the Chronicle.

The archbishop's comments, which echo conservative skepticism about the COVID-19 vaccines often amplified in right wing

media, sharply contradict guidance from Pope Francis, who [last summer urged people to get vaccinated](#) and [has expressed exasperation](#) with anti-vaccine skeptics.

Cordileone's statement also drew criticism from some San Francisco residents and Catholics in the Bay Area, as well as public health experts who accused the archbishop of spreading dangerous misinformation about the available vaccines to prevent COVID-19.

"He's just wrong. That's my first point. The second is that this bad, ill-informed advice that he's putting out there could lead to people dying unnecessarily. We just have to counter that with the truth," said Dr. [Philip Landrigan](#), director of the Program for Global Public Health and the Common Good at Boston College.

Cordileone told the Chronicle that is "not an anti-vaxxer." In a statement provided to NCR, the archbishop said he previously advised people to consult their [physicians when he joined California's other Catholic bishops in urging people to get vaccinated](#).

"It is also important to make that decision based on as complete and accurate scientific information as one can obtain," Cordileone said in the statement. "That is what I have done in my own case. It is always a very personal decision."

Cordileone also noted that the Archdiocese of San Francisco in October [posted a Q&A](#) regarding the COVID-19 vaccines on its website. He added that the archdiocese "has consistently followed protocols" to protect the local community.

"This includes staying home if one is feeling ill, which I would certainly do in my own case," Cordileone said. "And, as I have also

emphasized, we all have a responsibility for the common good, and so should take all reasonable precautions to protect public health, regardless of vaccination status."

The archdiocese does not require vaccinations to attend Mass, according to a [June 14 memo](#).

'Seeing this selfishness from an archbishop is as disturbing as a Christian stepping over a homeless person with no regard for human life.'

—Edna Mira Raia, San Francisco resident
The archbishop's reassurances did not satisfy San Francisco residents like Edna Mira Raia, a local theater artist.

"Seeing this selfishness from an archbishop is as disturbing as a Christian stepping over a homeless person with no regard for human life. I wish leaders would check their priorities in the name of sparing humanity some hypocrisy," Raia told NCR.

Joseph Murphy, a former employee in the San Francisco archdiocesan chancery, told NCR that he was "furious" with Cordileone, whom he accused of "setting a bad example" for his flock.

"It is disturbing that the shepherd of one of the most prominent archdioceses in the world would claim his own alleged strong immunity is sufficient reason to shun the vaccine," said Murphy, the former music coordinator at the National Shrine of Saint Francis of Assisi in San Francisco.

"The archbishop's stand is unwise and dangerous in the interests of public health," Murphy said.

Cordileone had recently traveled across the country to attend the U.S. bishops' meeting in Baltimore from Nov. 15-18, where he was

in close contact with hundreds of other prelates, as well as journalists and various diocesan and conference staffers. Like other bishops, Cordileone wore a mask throughout the event, but took off his mask when speaking on the floor of the gathering. The bishops' conference [did not impose a vaccine mandate](#) for attendees of their event, and instead required those coming to sign a waiver to "forever release" the conference and its leadership from any legal liability related to exposure, infection and spread of COVID-19.

Cordileone's revelation comes as the omicron variant is raising concerns about a new wave of infections, hospitalizations and deaths and as U.S. President Joe Biden announced new efforts to encourage vaccinations and booster shots. After Cordileone's comments to the Chronicle, the San Francisco Health Department urged city residents to get vaccinated [in an interview](#) with a local television outlet.

San Francisco county is 77% fully vaccinated, according to a New York Times [database](#). The county has a current daily average of 55 cases and 3 people hospitalized per 100,000 people, the database says.

Landrigan, from Boston College, accused the archbishop of "basically misleading his flock."

"People who are unvaccinated, if they get COVID, they have a 10 times greater risk of hospitalization and death than vaccinated people," Landrigan said. "Some of them might have said their immune system was strong, some might not have had any comment on their immune system, but the facts speak for themselves."

Landrigan also pushed back against Cordileone's claims that the vaccines manufactured by Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson "are not real vaccines."

"What a vaccine is, is material that's put into the human body to stimulate the immune system to trigger the production of antibodies to protect against a disease, and that's exactly what these vaccines all do," said Landrigan, who added that the coronavirus "does not respect politics."

"It's always very worrisome when a public figure puts out scientific misinformation, whether it's [Archbishop] Cordileone in San Francisco or Aaron Rodgers with the Green Bay Packers," said Landrigan, referencing the NFL Pro-Bowl quarterback who also recently sparked controversy [for making dubious claims](#) about COVID-19 and vaccines.

"When a public figure with a big following puts out bad information, unfortunately some people will believe it," Landrigan said. "They may not get vaccinated, and as a consequence of the bad information that they've been given, they could die. And that's just wrong."



Brian Fraga

Brian Fraga is NCR staff reporter. His email address is bfraga@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter at [@brianfraga](https://twitter.com/brianfraga).

Wednesday, 8 December 2021 *Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary*

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Nine: Mystical Hope

Cosmic Hope

Richard's love for the Trinity finds inspiration from the Franciscan mystical scholar St. Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274), who viewed all reality as coming from, participating with, and returning to God. Such a cosmic vision is mystical hope at its best!

Bonaventure's vision is positive, mystic, cosmic, intimately relational, and largely concerned with cleansing the lens of our perception and our intention so we can see and enjoy fully. He shows little interest in a reward/punishment frame for history.

He starts very simply: "*For [none] can have understanding unless [they] consider where things come from, how they are led back to their end, and how God shines forth in them.*" [1] For Bonaventure, the perfection of God and God's creation is quite simply a full circle, and to be whole the circle must and will complete itself. He knows that Alpha and Omega are finally the same, and the key holding it all together in unity is the "Christ Mystery," or the essential unity of matter and spirit, humanity and divinity.

In Bonaventure's world, the frame of reality was still big, hopeful, and positive. He was profoundly Trinitarian, where the love always and forever flows in one positive and forward direction. That was both his starting point and his ending point. Most of Christian history has not been Trinitarian except in name, I am sad to report. It has largely been a worship of a Jesus who was extracted from the Trinity—and thus Jesus apart from the eternal Christ, who then became more a harsh judge of humanity than a *shining exemplar of humanity* "holding all things in unity" (see Colossians 1:17–20).

Today the Catholic Tradition celebrates the feast of the "Immaculate Conception" of Mary, who is the feminine archetype of a human woman carrying such wholeness from the very beginning of her life. This is esoteric for many, but it is really quite profound in its declaration!

God, for Bonaventure, is not an offended monarch on a throne throwing down thunderbolts, but a "fountain fullness" that flows, overflows, and fills all things in one exclusively positive direction. Reality is thus in process, participatory; it is love itself. God as Trinitarian Flow is the blueprint and pattern for all relationships and thus all of creation, which we now know from contemporary science is exactly the case.

I regret to say that there has been a massive loss of hope in Western history, a hope still so grandly evident in Bonaventure in the 13th century. His God was so much bigger and more glorious than someone to be afraid of, or the one who punished bad guys—because his cosmos was itself huge, benevolent, and coherent. Did his big God beget an equally big and generous cosmos? Or did his big cosmos imply a very big God? You can start on either side. For many today, awe before the universe leads them to

reverence whoever created this infinity of Mystery and Beauty.

Simple Advent Revisited: Is your treasure in a department store, or somewhere else?

8 December 2021

by [Brenna Davis](#)

[Spirituality](#)



Second week of Advent theme— Money

Wednesday, 8 December 2021

REFLECT

What do we worship? The Gospel of Matthew warns us, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mt. 6:21). All too often our treasures lie tucked away in the department store sale ...

We need to look at our patterns of consumption and reevaluate the ways we use that resource called money. In addition, as Christians we are compelled to see if these patterns align with Biblical teachings and living a Christian life.

Evy McDonald, "Spending Money as if Life Really Mattered" from *Simpler Living, A Compassionate Life*

As we explore this week the relationship between money and simplicity, and whether the way we accumulate and spend money reflects our values, we ask ourselves the important question: "Where is my treasure?" As Christians we are called to center God and love of neighbor in our lives and to avoid false idols, such as money.

Additionally, how and where we spend our money demonstrates what we value. Do we support small businesses or large corporations? Do we consider the life cycle of a product, or how people's lives might have been affected by the extraction, production, selling and disposal of a product?

ACT

This week, make note of how you spend your money. As you make purchases, ask yourself the question, "Does this purchase align with my values?"

View the [Advent Simplicity Calendar](#) for a simple pledge you can state out loud or in prayer to spend money in ways that align with your values.

Pope Francis evangelizes very differently than US conservatives

8 December 2021

by [Michael Sean Winters](#)

[Vatican](#)



Refugees stand outside their shelters as Pope Francis visits the government-run Reception and Identification Center Dec. 5 in Mytilene, Greece. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Pope Francis delivered a strong rebuke to Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, Bishop Robert Barron, auxiliary of the same archdiocese, and groups such as "Catholic Answers" and EWTN in a Dec. 4 [speech](#) to the clergy, religious and seminarians of Athens, Greece.

OK, that is not precisely accurate. The pope did not mention any American clergy or organization during his talk in the Cathedral of St. Dionysius. But, in a deeper sense, it is profoundly true.

Here is the specific part of the Holy Father's speech that seemed to show the difference between his approach to evangelization and that found among most conservative U.S. Catholics. Calling an attitude of acceptance essential to evangelization, the pope said such an attitude "does not try to occupy the space and life of others, but to sow the good news in the soil of their lives; it learns to recognize and appreciate the seeds that God already planted in their hearts before we came on the scene. Let us remember that God always precedes us, God always sows before we do. Evangelizing is not about filling an empty container; it is ultimately about bringing to light what God has already begun to accomplish."

The pope recalled St. Paul's visit to Athens and what he said at the Areopagus. "He did not tell them: 'You have it all wrong,' or 'Now I will teach you the truth.' Instead, he began by accepting their religious spirit. ... He draws from the rich patrimony of the Athenians. The Apostle dignified his hearers and welcomed their religiosity. Even though the streets of Athens were full of idols, which had made him 'deeply distressed,' Paul acknowledged the desire for God hidden in the hearts of those people, and wanted gently to share with them the amazing gift of faith."

The pope finished with a phrase he often uses. Speaking of St. Paul, he said: "He did not impose; he proposed."

This is the pedagogy of accompaniment. It can scarcely be labeled "heretical" or "confusing," as some conservatives are wont to do. It is rooted in the example of St. Paul. And, as we know from all the biographies of the pope, and from watching him these past years, it is a pedagogy that has allowed him to engage the culture in arresting and profound ways.

Compare this with the way Gomez denigrated social movements in a recent [speech](#), calling them "pseudo-religions," influenced by ideas and theories that are "profoundly atheistic," akin to the Manichaeans in some, unflattering aspects and to the Gnostics in other, and, finally, that they are "also Pelagian, believing that redemption can be accomplished through our own human efforts, without God." If I could borrow a phrase from Spiro Agnew, the Gomez speech placed him among the ["nattering nabobs of negativism."](#)

A faith-filled life is attractive to others in a way that can be called contagious.

Or consider Barron. Back in 2012, he recorded these comments about ["effective evangelization."](#) I have trouble imagining Francis using that adjective, but no matter. Barron shows a video of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan entering St. Patrick's and says: "He knows a great secret. The secret is the most effective way to evangelize is to share the contagious joy of being a friend of Jesus Christ."

Now, I do not disagree with that. A faith-filled life is attractive to others in a way that can be called contagious. But Barron then adds a comment that struck me when I first heard it — and strikes me still — as manipulative: "That's the opening move." Opening move? It is not only a one-way street, it is a one-way street in which the evangelizer is orchestrating the encounter entirely. Listen to the rest of the video and see if this manipulateness is not evident.

You can go to the [website](#) of Catholic Answers, or watch almost any show on EWTN and you will find a similar approach to evangelization: We have the answers, and if people were not so easily duped by the evil of the world, they would recognize that we have the answers, embrace our answers, and submit.

Barron may have more joy in that video than Gomez managed in that dour speech, and both are more nuanced and complicated than most shows on EWTN, but the foundational problem is the same: There is no sense that God is already at work in the life of the other person, and the faith is presented as a series of propositions to which people are expected to give their assent.



Pope Francis arrives to lead a meeting with bishops, priests, religious, seminarians and catechists at the Cathedral of St. Dionysius Dec. 4 in Athens, Greece. (CNS/Paul Haring)

To be sure, there are people who respond to a highly propositional approach. In his masterpiece *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh has the novel's narrator, Charles Ryder, express wonderment at his friend Sebastian's Catholic faith. "No one had ever suggested to me that these quaint observances expressed a coherent philosophic system and intransigent historical claims." Waugh, like the novel's narrator, certainly conceived of the faith to which he converted as a "coherent philosophic system." But Francis — and Popes Benedict XVI, John Paul II and Paul VI before him — conceives of the faith less as a system of thought and more as a way of life that springs forth from the event of Jesus' death and resurrection.

I confess I vacillate between the more affective and the more rationalistic poles of Catholicism. There really are "intransigent historical claims" at the heart of Catholicism and I get anxious when people treat the "coherent philosophic system" that characterized post-Tridentine Catholicism like putty or simply discard it as if it no longer had value.

Still, the greater danger is always the idolization of a particular iteration of Catholicism. Intellectual vacuity is a

problem, but the creation of idols is a violation against the First Commandment. Before I read the text of the pope's speech, I received an email from a priest friend, who wrote to me about his work with some young people in a coalition of groups that support immigrants in which he is the only faith leader in this mix.

"I have come to treasure these young people. And they know it," he wrote. "Lately, they have opened spaces for me to offer reflections. We shared a Henri Nouwen text one time. Recently, I gave them a Václav Havel quote on hope. Slowly they have opened a spiritual aspect that had been closed. The other day they were wishing somebody Happy Hanukkah. On another day, one of them called on me and said how pleased she was as a Catholic to have 'our priest' with us. To me this is what accompaniment means. No sermons, no Communion texts, just staying in the room, affirming them. I see the human person is fundamentally spiritual and will open to that when the ground is open to them. Why are the restorationists so afraid of this secular world?"

He finished with a quote from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "[Aurora Leigh](#)":

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
Our wonderful pope did not literally take off his shoes when he greeted the migrants on Lesbos, or the Orthodox bishops in Athens and Nicosia, but he did so affectively. He reaches out to people like they are "afire with God." He looks out on the world and sees more than doom; he sees an earth "crammed with heaven." He spreads the Gospel — he evangelizes — every time he spreads his arms to embrace another person as the child of God they already are.



Michael Sean Winters

Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.

Thursday, 9 December 2021

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Nine: Mystical Hope

A Metaphysics of Hope

For as the heavens reach beyond earth and time, we swim in mercy as in an endless sea.
—Psalm 103:11

Cynthia Bourgeault explores the idea that mystical hope is something that arises from within us, not as a result of our own effort, but as a fruit of our ability to consciously abide in what she calls “the Mercy” of God. Bourgeault writes:

We ourselves are not the source of that [mystical] hope; we do not manufacture it. But the source dwells deep within us and flows to us with an unstinting abundance, so much so that in fact it might be more accurate to say we dwell within it. . . .

The term I will use to describe this embodying fullness is “the Mercy.” It is the water in which we swim. Mercy is the length and breadth and height and depth of what we know of God—and the light by

which we know it. You might even think of it as the Being of God insofar as we can possibly penetrate into it in this life, so that it is impossible to encounter God apart from the dimension of mercy...

The mercy of God . . . is unconditional—always there, underlying everything. It is literally the force that holds everything in existence, the gravitational field in which we live and move and have our being...

Mercy is God’s innermost being turned outward to sustain the visible and created world in unbreakable love...

Mystical hope would simply be what happens when we touch this innermost ground [within our own selves] and it floods forth into our being as strength and joy. Hope would be the Mercy—divine love itself—coursing through our being like lightning finding a clear path to the ground...

In this new positioning, the underlying sense of corporateness [oneness] is physically real, for that “electromagnetic field of love” is the Mercy—and the Mercy is the body of Christ. Through this body hope circulates as a lifeblood. It warms, it fills, it connects, it directs. It is the heart of our own life and the heart of all that lives.

Hope’s home is at the innermost point in us, and in all things. It is a quality of aliveness. It does not come at the end, as the feeling that results from a happy outcome. Rather, it lies at the beginning, as a pulse of truth that sends us forth. When our innermost being is attuned to this pulse it will send us forth in hope, regardless of the physical circumstances of our lives. Hope fills us with the strength to stay present, to abide in the flow of the Mercy no matter what outer storms assail us. It is entered always and

only through surrender; that is, through the willingness to let go of everything we are presently clinging to. And yet when we enter it, it enters *us* and fills us with its own life—a quiet strength beyond anything we have ever known.

Friday, 10 December 2021 *Anniversary of Thomas Merton's Death*

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Nine: Mystical Hope

Hope Beyond Our Lifetimes

Theologian and Carmelite sister Constance FitzGerald identifies hope as a profound freedom to accept God and reality as it is. She takes inspiration from the work of St. John of the Cross (1542–1591):

This dynamic of being able to yield unconditionally to God's future is what John of the Cross calls *hope*, a hope that exists without the signature of our life and works, a hope independent of us and our accomplishments (spiritual gifts or ordinary human achievements), a hope that can even embrace and work for a future without us. This theological hope is completely free from the past, fully liberated from our need to recognize ourselves in the future, to survive, to be someone. [1]

This gift of hope is what allows author Victoria Loorz and others to embrace a "post-doom" spirituality [2] which is large enough to face climate crises and not be driven to despair. Grounded in the Gospel,

such hope affirms that love is stronger than death. Loorz writes:

Post-doom spirituality...accepts the fullness of our reality: the tragedy as well as the beauty. This spirituality moves into—and then eventually beyond—grief and repentance toward a deeper, more courageous, compassionate, and spiritual aliveness...

Facing the reality that we're standing on a precipice right now, as a species and as a whole planet, is sobering, to say the least. But facing what is real opens the heart to grief, which somehow opens the heart to love even more deeply...

When you reconnect with the alive world in a more compassionate way, and when you realize that the whole world is a living system that can only thrive when death makes room for new life, you may feel a calm settle into you. You may find yourself with the energy that comes from love to embrace the whole story, including the necessary emptiness and loss...

When we look toward what has been lost with the climate crisis or other ecological damage that our species has inflicted, we do still need to strive toward repair, but the cure is within our own mentality. The mentality that love really is as strong as death (like the beloved says to the lover in [the] Song of Solomon) compels us to regard those of us who remain—forests, polar bears, wilderness, people—with fierce love, looking toward how we can all live our highest quality of life together as beloved community, no matter what.

We do not need to minimize or overlook the pain and tragedy we encounter as we live in this time of interwoven crises. Eventually, when we recognize that the pain is directly

connected with our love, we can embrace it. We can move into actions of restoration that are firmly planted in love.

On the power and promised protection of La Virgen de Guadalupe

10 December 2021

by [Steven Salido Fisher](#)

[Spirituality](#)



The story of La Virgen de Guadalupe as I know it begins at my abuela's bedside.

"*Reza a la Virgencita para que te proteja,*" she would say as she pointed to the portrait hung above the headboard of her bed in her Mexico City home.

This Virgin is no blue-eyed and pale-faced Mary swaddling a baby. She is a *princesa* Nahuatl. Handsome. Pregnant. Her cloak, cerulean and star-studded with the night sky, envelops her body with folds cascading onto a crescent moon held by an angel.

At the end of the day, with the company of my sister and brother, our abuela lulled us

into the mysteries of the rosary under La Virgen's gaze. As my siblings hummed *Santa Marias* beside me, our hands clasped firmly on the bed's quilt, I'd slouch my posture and begin counting the stars on La Virgen's cloak, eager for the moment my abuela would relieve me of our post.

Little did I know I chose one form of prayer for another. To lose my attention in La Virgen's image became its own act of devotion; to return her gaze an act of prayer.

Back in Chicago, she was yet another export of a Mexican family immigrating to the United States. Virgen de Guadalupe prayer cards would suddenly appear in places least expected throughout our home: creased into hand-me-down wallets, glove compartments, between the pages of an old cooking magazine. One day, I found her tucked beneath a sandwich in my lunch box. "*Para que te ayude durante el examen,*" my mom's note said.

At every corner, La Virgen de Guadalupe reminded us of her promised protection now and at the hour of our death. Today, I carry a stack of prayer cards in the pockets of my coat to give to Spanish-speaking patients I meet at the hospital.

One day, a patient asked for two prayer cards. "One to give to the surgeon, just in case," he grinned.

On another night, I met a family of nine tucked into the hospital room of their deceased mother, her hands cradling the prayer card of La Virgen as her adult children prayed and sang over her body, a single nurse hovering between them with a box of Kleenex. The tenderness of their voices invited me to sing and cry with them.

When my own abuela finally died in the middle of this pandemic, my family boarded a plane for Mexico City.

For many months, she had lain in the bedroom where she taught me to pray. In this room, her body became more bones than body and her breath softer and quieter than the flutter of a butterfly.

I did not cry at her funeral nor sang when we visited the Basilica of La Virgen de Guadalupe in her honor. Instead, I found myself wondering what photograph of her would best honor her life on my Día de Muertos altar. "Too soon," I thought to myself.



In the Basilica of La Virgen de Guadalupe, Mexico City (Steven Salido Fisher)

All around me at the basilica, other pilgrims orbited the Virgin's portrait in constant procession. Gifts of flowers and candles and prayers and songs were brought and prepared, set at the floor. It is here that women and men inch their way inside on their knees and teach their children to give thanks, as my abuela once taught me. A cyclical universe of recitations revolved across each rosary bead with a pulse that whispered, "*Dios te salve, Maria.*" I have to start it in English to catch the words in Spanish. "*Santa Maria, Madre de Dios ...*"

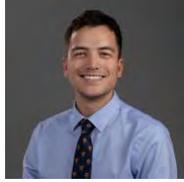
Our return flight to the United States inevitably led to a long line at customs. A family behind me complained loudly that their vacation in Cancun was too short, and by the time I reached the front of the line, the customs officer asked me the reason for my trip, to which I could only respond with one word: "Family."

When the taxi finally returned me to my apartment, I opened my suitcase and saw all that I inherited from my abuela. I picked up her blouse and buried my face in its embroidered flowers. Her imperfectly described smell of Chapstick and frankincense and orange peels blossomed into the air, and it's like I'm back at her bedside praying to La Virgen with her, counting the stars on La Virgen's own cloak. This scent I realize will soon be lost forever, and finally I begin to cry.

My abuela told me La Virgen is always watching us from the sky to protect us. But I cannot tell you why some stars begin to fade and vanish from the night completely. I cannot tell you why a star that has burned for millennia all of a sudden sinks into the weight of its own gravity and no longer pierces our light-polluted sky.

But I do know that a prayer card can only weigh as little as .16 ounces. I take one of La Virgen from my pocket in the hospital and, fumbling my phone case open, I slip it inside to carry with me daily. It is in an act of daily remembrance and burden and prayer for others I hope to be capable of and never forget.

"Protect me," I ask La Virgen and I place my phone back in my coat pocket.



Steven Salido Fisher

Steven Salido Fisher is a hospital chaplain at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

Simple Advent Revisited: Poverty of many maintains the luxury of others

10 December 2021

by Brenna Davis

Spirituality



The Moumbi luxury apartments overlook the Paraisópolis Favela in São Paulo, Brazil. (Shutterstock/Caio Pederneiras)

Second week of Advent theme— Money

Friday, 10 December 2021

REFLECT

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will

have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

-Mark 10: 21-22

"In this world, human beings live at each other's expense, and the affluence of the few is proximately related to, and supported by, the poverty of the many. This interdependence of rich and poor is something Americans are tempted to overlook, since so many Americans are in fact prosperous, but it is as true today as it was in earlier times: the vast multitudes of people on the face of the earth are consigned to poverty for their whole lives ... Their hardships in great measure make possible the comfort of those who are not poor; their poverty maintains the luxury of others; their deprivation purchases the abundance most Americans take for granted."

-William Stringfellow, *Dissenter in a Great Society: A Christian View of America in Crisis*

Jesus tells the rich young man that the way to eternal life requires giving up his money and worldly possessions. Jesus loves the young man as he tells him this, which seems to be a clear sign that Jesus has empathy for our human tendency to make an idol out of money. Money in itself is not evil, but when it becomes our focus, it takes away our freedom to love our neighbor and to be in right relationship.

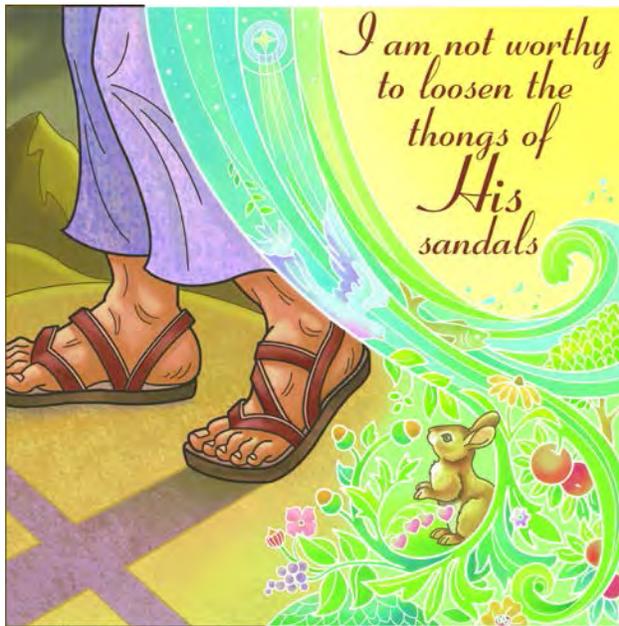
Extreme wealth is often accumulated through the violation of the dignity and rights of people living in poverty and the destruction of the earth. While the young man believes that he has kept all of the commandments, if he were to think critically about how he amassed his wealth, he would probably realize that he had broken other commandments in his dealings with workers

and possibly even in how he acquired his land.

Jesus invites the young man into freedom and right relationship with the earth and his neighbors in this parable. How are you being called to freedom from the idol of money this Advent?

ACT

Select one spending habit that you could change that would help you to better live in right relationship with your global neighbors and the earth (e.g., switching to completely fair-trade coffee, making changes to your investment portfolio or buying second-hand clothing or electronics).



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Recruitment Family Coordinator

Lumen Christi Academies Mission

Lumen Christi Academies is an independent, culturally diverse network of PK-8 Catholic schools with campuses in Oakland and Contra Costa County. Centered in Christ and rooted in social justice, Lumen Christi Academies develops the whole person through a collaborative experience that is dynamic, innovative, and accessible to all.

Position Overview

In partnership with the Lumen Christi Academies Schools Executive Director and LCA Schools Leadership, the Recruitment Family Coordinator will work to broaden parent engagement, foster a collaborative relationship with the greater community and help streamline recruitment efforts across the network of schools. Through the continued development of community relationships, the Recruitment Family Coordinator will provide ongoing formation as well as learning opportunities to our parent communities. The Recruitment Family Coordinator will also focus on strengthening and building leadership capacity within the LCA Schools.

Primary Responsibilities

Community Relations

- Hold the vision for creating a warm, welcoming, and safe environment for parents.
- Foster positive working relationships with the principal, pastor, and parent leaders at each LCA school site.
- Support, strengthen and expand existing community relations and partnerships to aid in furthering the Mission of the LCA Schools.
- Interface with students, parents, and all members of the school community.
- Invite the community at large to expo type events showcasing student work
- Create and send out all calendars, newsletters, emails and calls to families and community partners as appropriate.
- Attend community events hosted by local churches, and other related organizations to develop a strong presence within the community to drive interest and promote the school.
- Invite local community leaders to tour the campus and schedule opportunities for community leaders to meet with school leadership and connect further with the school.
- Provide the voice of parents in school by obtaining and communicating feedback and pertinent information to the administration.
- Support with translation as needed.



Recruitment Family Coordinator

Formation and Learning Opportunities

- Assess the needs of parents at each school site by conducting surveys. Collect and analyze data to help with developing school, parent, and family goals.
- Utilize outside partnerships and community contacts to provide ongoing learning and formation opportunities for parents.
- Hold monthly parent meetings focusing on:
 - Development
 - Recruitment training to market the school
 - Develop student and parent ambassadors to assist with community outreach and recruitment of students.
- Lead the planning and organizing of:
 - Open House/Prospective Family Information Nights
- Plan and Coordinate parent trainings in collaboration with and to be executed by principal or other staff members.
- Recruit outside volunteers to host workshops according to the needs of the parent community.

Recruitment

- Develop a marketing plan for engaging and recruiting families.
- Coordinate and host parent tours.
- Work alongside financial aid faculty coordinator.
- Meet with parents, one-on-one or small groups, to build relationships and encourage assistance with recruitment.
- Provide support with open house enrollment and admissions process.
- Support the management distribution of enrollment forms for new and returning students.
- Create service opportunities to streamline recruitment efforts.
- Assist with translation of materials as needed.



Recruitment Family Coordinator

Essential Qualifications

This position will interface with a wide range of audiences and requires the ability to easily maneuver between diverse groups and build relationships to advance the Lumen Christi Academies Schools mission. Knowledge of development and recruitment strategies and the ability to enhance community relations and engagement, both in the wider community and within the parent community. An understanding of and experience working with underrepresented groups and sensitivity for the needs of multicultural communities. Ability to communicate effectively, both verbally (including oral presentations) and in writing; establish and maintain effective working relationships with parents, school leadership, pastors, vendors, and the public. Strong interpersonal skills, creativity, decision-making, use of discretion, teamwork, negotiation, service orientation, and public relations. Foster a sense of partnership and trust among various communities. Bilingual in Spanish a plus.

Experience

Minimum 3-5 years of experience in development, fundraising, recruitment, or other similar area. Bachelor's degree in Marketing, Public Relations, or other associated field of study. Leadership and/or management experience including liaison and community building, program development, and supervision or any equivalent combination of education and experience which demonstrates the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the above-described essential duties.

Compensation and Benefits

This is a full-time, exempt position which will require some weekend and evening work. Compensation according to diocesan scale (E-5 \$65-\$75K) depending on experience and qualifications. Full diocesan benefits including medical, dental/vision, diocesan sponsored retirement at 8% of salary, life insurance, short/long term disability and other diocesan benefits.

Interested candidates please submit letter of intent and resume to:

**Department of Human Resources
2121 Harrison Street, Suite 100
Oakland, CA 94612**

Or email at: gespinoza@oakdiocese.org

Deadline to apply: January 7, 2022

What is Redistricting and Why Should You Care About Redistricting at BART? Tune into the meeting and hear what the Redistricting consultants have to say about the process.

Below is the link to agenda materials for the meeting and the zoom link. We hope to see you there. For any questions, you can contact me on the number below or redistricting@bart.gov

<https://bart.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=A&ID=907236&GUID=5B433416-C0C0-413E-B603-4F6D636296F9>

You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

When: Dec 1, 2021, 01:00 PM Pacific Time (the US and Canada)

Topic: Redistricting Committee

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89593310947>

Jacqueline R. Edwards, CMC, CPMC

District Secretary

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MEALS on WHEELS
DIABLO REGION



WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

A few hours twice a month will keep a senior from going hungry! Meals on Wheels Diablo Region needs volunteers to deliver grocery bags on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month to seniors in Antioch and Pittsburg. The Grocery Bag Program, a partnership of MOW Diablo Region and the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, provides groceries to seniors who can cook simple meals but can't travel to the food bank.

To learn more, contact **Casey Claibourne** at **925.448.3695** or **cclaibourne@mowdr.org**. To sign up to volunteer, apply online at **<https://www.mowdiablregion.org/deliver-meals>** or contact **Lee Davenport** at **925.954.8736** or **ldavenport@mowdr.org**.