

Church of St. Theresa

A Caring Community Reaching Out To One Another in Christ

2855 St. Theresa Avenue, Bronx, New York

SUNDAY MASSES

Saturday at 5:00pm,
Sunday at 7:30am, 9:00am(Italian),
10:30am(Family Mass) 12:15pm ,
1:30PM(Spanish) & 5:00pm

WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday thru Saturday 8:00am & 9:00am

DEVOTIONS

Miraculous Medal & St. Theresa Novenas
after Monday morning Masses
St. Anthony Novena after Tuesday
morning Masses.

Thursday 12 Noon Mass
& Eucharistic Adoration

Exposition & Benediction of the
Blessed Sacrament First Friday 7:30pm
to 8:30pm followed by silent adoration
until 9:00pm.

CONFESSION

Saturdays from 4:00pm to 5:00pm
and by appointment

BAPTISMS

Baptisms take place most Sundays
after the 1:30pm Mass.

We ask parents to attend the Baptism
preparation meeting. Register at the
Rectory for the meeting. The date of
the Baptism will be discussed at the
Baptism meeting.

MARRIAGES

Call the Rectory at least six months in
advance of the wedding date to make an
appointment with parish clergy.



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Rev. Robert Imbelli, Weekend Associate
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WEBSITE: www.sttheresachurchbronx.org
E-MAIL: rectorystc@aol.com

SCHOOL: 718-792-3688
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: 718-792-8434

FROM THE DESK OF FATHER DERIVAN:

Today we celebrate the final Sunday of Advent. We light the fourth candle of the Advent wreath, mindful of the fact that the light of Jesus has grown brighter in our hearts as we prepare to celebrate His birth. In just a few days, Christmas will be here. Let us make sure that we are ready, spiritually ready for Christmas. Let us make sure that our hearts, our homes and our lives are ready to welcome Christ the Lord.

Here before our altar today is the empty stable. In a few days it will be graced with the figures of shepherds and sheep, donkey and ox, Angels and kings, and of course Mary and Joseph, all ready to receive the Newborn King. But that will be in a few days. Today the stable is empty. I have always felt that the empty stable is a beautiful symbol, one we do well to reflect on and to learn from. Let me draw three lessons from the empty stable and ask you to reflect on them in this final Sunday before Christmas.

First, we look here at the empty stable and we realize that it represents the world which is empty without Christ. We have a lovely custom which we use with the children. It is a ceremony of placing the figures in the stable, pretending each of them could talk. "I am The shepherd," says one, "I await the One who will shepherd all the world." "I am an angel," says another, "I proclaim the glad tidings of the Savior's birth." Each figure is brought up and placed in the stable and then the stable seems full. But it is not. The figure of the Infant Jesus is not there and we tell the children that if Jesus is not there, the stable is still empty. There may be shepherds and angels and even Mary and Joseph, but without Jesus it's still just this—an empty stable. And so too, dear friends, is our world and so too is our heart. If Jesus is not in our world, if He is not welcomed into the stable of our heart, then our heart is empty and we are empty. We need the Lord Jesus Christ. Our retired Pope Benedict has said so beautifully, "Born in the poverty of the stable, Jesus comes to offer to all that joy and that peace which alone can fulfill the expectations of the human soul." Without Jesus, we are just an empty stable. With Jesus, our stable, our life, is filled with the joy and peace which comes from Jesus alone.

Second, we look at the empty stable and we realize that our heart must be open like the empty stable. In a very real sense, we hear about the empty stable in the gospel today. Now the gospel does not mention the stable at all. It tells us of Our Blessed Mother Mary. In a very real sense, Mary was like the empty stable—she was ready and open to receive Christ her Lord. In fact, when we think of all those good people who welcomed Christ on the first Christmas, they too had hearts open like empty stables to welcome the Son of God. Good St. Joseph, faithful shepherds, wise men-kings, all had opened their hearts to welcome Christ. And so must we. We must remove the clutter that can occupy our hearts, the sins and imperfections, the world concerns and the silly distractions. Pope Benedict uses a similar image when he says that while we await the Birth of Jesus, we must clothe ourselves in clean garments. We must clothe the soul, not the body. We must dress not in fine clothes, but in good works to welcome Christ the Lord. Let us make the stable of our life empty and ready. Let our stable, our heart, be dressed with the clean garment of goodness and faithfulness and loving service.

Third, as we look at the empty stable, we realize that for only a short time was the stable adorned with shepherds and Wise Men, angels and the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Shortly after Christmas, it became empty again. It went back to being what it was—an animal's stall. And the lesson is this: the stable is not Christmas. Christ is Christmas. We must remember that Jesus is no longer in the stable of Bethlehem. He is in every heart, in every home, in this whole world which belongs to Him. Pope Benedict says, "It is the task of us Christians, with the witness of our life, to spread the truth of Christmas which Christ brings to every man and woman of good will." The empty stable gives us a mission—the mission of proclaiming Jesus to others, the mission of helping them to find Christ in the stable of their lives.

Let that be our task in these final days before Christmas. Let us help others, members of our family, neighbors, friends, everyone, let us help them to make of their hearts a stable of welcome for the Lord Jesus Christ. I was given this poem on a Christmas greeting card. It pretends to be a letter from Jesus to us. Let it be our prayer as we look at the empty stable today:

If you look for Me at Christmas,

*You won't need a special star
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,
I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me
Amid the celebrations -
You'll have to look beyond the stores
and all the decorations.
But if you take a moment
from your list of things to do
And listen to your heart, you'll find
I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with,
you're the reason that I came,
And you'll find Me in the stillness
as I'm whispering your name.*

Love, Jesus



**Merry
Christmas!**
*and a
Blessed New Year*

St. Theresa School has been very busy during the ADVENT Season, our families have donated to the Food pantry, the coat drive, toy drive , and the Giving Tree.

Our families have been very generous in contributing to those in need. The students made Christmas Cards for our Veterans and they were mailed to Washington D.C. The teachers and the students discussed how grateful they were to the Veterans for protecting them and their freedom.

The Faculty, Staff and Mrs. Fanelli wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

POPE BENEDICT'S REFLECTION ON THE
EMPTY CRIB:



Following a beautiful and firmly-rooted tradition, many families set up their crib immediately after the feast of the Immaculate Conception, as if to relive with Mary those days full of trepidation that preceded the birth of Jesus. Putting up the crib at home can be a simple but effective way of presenting faith, to pass it on to one's children. The crib helps us contemplate the mystery of God's love that was revealed in the poverty and simplicity of the Bethlehem Grotto. Saint Francis of Assisi was so taken by the mystery of the Incarnation that he wanted to present it anew at Greccio in the living nativity scene, thus beginning an old, popular tradition that still retains its value for evangelization today. Indeed, the crib can help us understand the secret of the true Christmas because it speaks of the humility and merciful goodness of Christ, who "though he was rich he made himself poor" for us (2Cor 8: 9). His poverty enriches those who embrace it and Christmas brings joy and peace to those who, like the shepherds in Bethlehem, accept the Angel's words: "Let this be a sign to you: in a manger you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes" (Lk 2:12). This is still the sign for us too, men and women of the third millennium. There is no other Christmas.

Pope Benedict XVI



LOOKING AHEAD—OUR CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE:

This week, of course, be celebrating the beautiful Feast of the Birth of Our Savior. We want to review for you our schedule of Masses for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day so that you can properly prepare to celebrate this feast day. Remember that, above all, Christmas is a **Feast Day**, one which we celebrate at Mass with Our Lord Himself.

Our schedule of Christmas Masses is as follows:

Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24th—Vigil Mass at 5:00PM with the children's presentation of the Nativity story.
Christmas Eve Midnight Mass—12:00AM, preceded by the Choir's Christmas welcome at 11:30PM.
Christmas Day, Friday, December 25th—Masses follow our Sunday schedule—7:30AM, 9:00AM(Italian), 10:30AM(Family), 12:15PM, 1:30(Spanish) and 5:00PM.

Please bring to the attention of neighbors and friends. Remind them to "Come Home for Christmas."



A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Almighty God and Father of light,
a child is born for us,
and a son is given to us.
Your eternal Word
leaped down from heaven
In the silent watches of the night,
and now your Church
is filled with wonder
at the nearness of her God.
Open our hearts to receive His life
and increase our vision
with the rising of dawn,
that our lives may be filled
with His glory and His peace
forever and ever
AMEN.

Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee

Lord Jesus Christ,

You have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees him.
Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal; and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing

So that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for Ever and ever. Amen



Please note our new policy regarding arrangement for Masses

Arrangements for announced Masses for which a specific date and time is given and which will be listed in our bulletin are to be made during the regular Rectory hours Monday thru Friday from 7:30AM to 4:30PM or by calling the Rectory at these times. Stipend for an announced Mass is \$25.00 for Saturday evening or Sunday Masses and \$20.00 for weekday Masses. If you wish to arrange for an unannounced Mass (which we send to the missions) to be brought to a Funeral Home, this can be done at the rectory any day, Sunday through Saturday, from 9:00AM to 9:00PM. Stipend for an unannounced Mass with card is \$15.00.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRIESTS AND DEACON:

On that first Christmas night two thousand years ago, these holy words were proclaimed by the Christmas angel to the faithful shepherds, “today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.” For two thousand Christmases ever since, Christians have gathered in churches throughout the world, from the simplest of chapels to the grandest of cathedrals, to remember those same holy words.. And notice the angel proclaims that the Savior is born for you. Yes, the Lord Jesus was born for the whole world, to save the world from sin and death. That of course is true. But it is equally true that the Lord Jesus was born for each one of us, for you and for me. He was born for us not as one great mass of humanity; He was born for us even as He would die for us individually, personally, one by one, person by person. The power of the angel’s words has held true throughout the ages and the angel proclaims his words to every person in this house of God today, “A Savior is born for you who is Christ and Lord.”

Christians for twenty centuries have tried to remember that message. Priests have tried to proclaim in homilies and sermons for all those years what exactly it means that Jesus was born for each one of us. But sometimes the greatest lessons are not taught in words, but in visible things. And that is the reason for one of our most beautiful Christmas customs, the Christmas manger, the stable of Bethlehem. The history behind the Christmas manger is a beautiful one. Almost eight hundred years ago, a holy man of God wanted to teach the people in the Italian town of Greccio that Jesus the Savior was born for each of them. That holy man was the great St. Francis of Assisi. Not long before he died, Francis asked a friend to help him teach the Christmas lesson, not in words but in visible things. One of Francis’ friars, Friar Thomas of Celano, wrote about why St. Francis did what he did, “The Child Jesus had been forgotten in the hearts of many; but, by the working of his grace, he was brought to life again through his servant St. Francis and stamped upon their fervent memory.” And so Francis said to his friend, “I wish to do something that will recall to memory the little child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and a donkey standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed.” And so Francis had his friend build a replica of the manger of Bethlehem. Listen to Friar Thomas; description:

“The manger was prepared, the hay had been brought, the ox and the donkey were led in. There simplicity was honored, poverty was exalted, humility was commended, and Greccio was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem. The night was lighted up like the day, and it delighted men and beasts. The people came and were filled with new joy over the new mystery. The woods rang with the voices of the crowd and the rocks made answer to their jubilation. The whole night resounded with their rejoicing. The saint of God stood before the manger, uttering sighs, overcome with love, and filled with a wonderful happiness.”

It is said that a man saw a little child lying in the manger, and that Francis picked up the child as if from a deep sleep and held in his arms the Child Jesus and that Francis proclaimed. “My brothers and sisters, behold the Savior of the world.” Francis could well have added, “Today a Savior is born for you who is Christ and Lord.”

St. Francis wanted to teach the lesson of Christmas and how well he taught it! The Christmas manger has become the most precious of Christmas traditions, in churches and in homes. It is precious because it teaches us the meaning of Christmas. We must admit that sometimes we can be distracted

From the real meaning of Christmas. It is sad that we need reminders that Christmas is about Christ, not about ourselves; that Jesus is the “reason for the season,” and that Christmas is far more than a “happy holiday” it is the holy day of Jesus’ birth, that birth which was for us. But when we look at the manger enacted the scene of Christmas in the town of Greccio to make people look at the manger and even more to make of their hearts a manger for the Lord. We too must look at the manger. And as we look we can hear the angel’s word said to us, “Savior is born for you, who is Christ and Lord.”

Dear friends, each of us must take this Christmas message and live it and proclaim it. So many people do not understand that Jesus was born for them, that He loves them, that He died for them, that He welcomes them with open arms. Our Christmas challenge is to bring that message to them. If you do, you are giving them the greatest of Christmas gifts. You are giving them Jesus, and when you give Jesus, you give them everything.

Eight hundred years ago the town of Greccio, with St. Francis’ help, became another Bethlehem. May we make our homes, our community, our world another Bethlehem too. May we help people to come to Bethlehem and find Christmas, the real Christmas, Jesus’s Christmas. May we help them to understand that today and every day, “A Savior is born for you who is Christ and Lord.”

A blessed Christmas!

Father Thomas B. Derivan	Father Joseph Ligory
Father Robert Imbelli	Msgr. Neil Graham
Father Thomas D’Angelo	
Salesian Fathers—John Serio, Bill Feruzzi, and Abraham Feliciano S.D.B.	
Deacon Anthony Cassaneto	Deacon Hartley Bancroft





ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI THE CHRISTMAS CRIB

The following passage was written by the biographer of St. Francis, Friar Thomas of Celano, describing the first Christmas Crib:

Francis' highest intention, his chief desire, his uppermost purpose was to observe the holy Gospel in all things and through all things and, with perfect vigilance, with all zeal, with all the longing of his mind and all the fervor of his heart, "to follow the teaching and the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ." He would recall Christ's word through persistent meditation and bring to mind his deeds through the most penetrating consideration. The humility of the incarnation and the charity of the passion occupied his memory particularly, to the extent that he wanted to think of hardly anything else.

What he did on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ near the little town called Greccio in the third year before his glorious death should especially be noted and recalled with reverent memory. In that place there was a certain man by the name of John, of good reputation and an even better life, whom blessed Francis loved with a special love, for in the place where he lived he held a noble and honorable position in as much as he had trampled upon the nobility of his birth and pursued nobility of soul.

Blessed Francis sent for this man, as he often did, about fifteen days before the birth of the Lord, and he said to him: "If you want us to celebrate the present fast of our Lord at Greccio, go with haste and diligently prepare what I tell you. For I wish to do something that will recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed." When the good and faithful man heard these things, he ran with haste and prepared in that place all the things the saint had told him.

The day of joy drew near, the time of great rejoicing came. The brothers were called from their various places. Men and women of that neighborhood prepared with glad hearts, according to their means, candles and torches to light up that night that has lighted up all the days and years with its gleaming star. At length the saint of God came, and finding all things prepared, he saw it and was glad.

The manger was prepared, the hay had been brought, the ox and ass were led in. There simplicity was honored, poverty was exalted, humility was commended, and Greccio was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem. The night was lighted up like the day, and it made, and it delighted men and beasts. The people came and were filled with new joy over the new mystery. The woods rang with the voices of the crowd and the rocks made answer to their jubilation. The brothers sang, paying their debt of praise to the Lord, and the whole night resounded with their rejoicing. The saint of God stood before the manger, uttering sighs, overcome with love, and filled with a wonderful happiness. The solemnities of the Mass were celebrated over the manger and the priest experienced a new consolation.

The saint of God was clothed with the vestments of the deacon, for he was a deacon, and he sang the holy Gospel in a sonorous voice. And his voice was a strong voice, a sweet voice, a clear voice, a sonorous voice, inviting all to the highest rewards. Then he preached to the people standing about, and he spoke charming words concerning the nativity of the poor king and the little town of Bethlehem.

Frequently too, when he wished to call Christ Jesus, he would call him simply the child of Bethlehem, aglow with overflowing love for him; and speaking the word Bethlehem, his voice was more like the bleating of a sheep, His mouth was filled more with sweet affection than with words.

The gifts of the Almighty were multiplied there, and a wonderful vision was seen by a certain virtuous man. For he saw a little child lying in the manger lifeless, and he saw the holy man of God to up to it and rouse the child as from a deep sleep. This vision was not unfitting, for the Child Jesus had been forgotten in the hearts of many; but, by the working of his grace, he was brought to life again through his servant St. Francis and stamped upon their fervent memory. At length the solemn night celebration was brought to a close, and each one returned to his home with holy joy.

Later, the place on which the manger had stood was made sacred by a temple of the Lord, and an altar was built in honor of the most blessed father Francis over the manger and a church was built, so that where once the animals had eaten the hay, there in the future men would eat unto health of soul and body the flesh of the lamb without blemish and without spot, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in highest and ineffable love gave himself to us, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God, eternally glorious, forever and ever. Amen. Alleluia, Alleluia.

Here ends the first book about the life and acts of Blessed FRANCIS."

Thomas of Celano, Vita prima


*For unto us
a child is born*
©LPI

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

Lk 2:10-12



THIS WEEK'S ALTAR BREAD IS IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
FR. MICHAEL VASTI, ANTOINETTE & MAURO VASTI
LOVE, MARGIE PRIMIANI



PLEASE PRAY FOR THE RECENTLY DECEASED
MEMBER OF OUR PARISH AND HIS FAMILY
JOSEPH GIORDANO

CHRISTMAS PRAYER OF POPE ST. JOHN XXIII

Child of Bethlehem,
Grant that we may share with all our hearts in this profound
Mystery of Christmas. Put into our hearts your peace for which
we sometimes seek so desperately and which you alone can give
us. Help us to know one another better and to live as brothers and
sisters, children of the same Father. Reveal to us also your
beauty, holiness and purity. Awaken in our hearts love and
gratitude for your infinite goodness. Join us all together in your
love and give us your heavenly peace. Amen.



PRAY FOR THE SICK OF OUR PARISH:

Phyllis Caruso, Benedetta LoCicero, Peter Corbo,
Maryann DiBattista, Daley Gribbon, Sean Howell,
William Keenan, Frank Maiorana, Maryann Maiorana,
Diane Martino, Joe Martino, Theresa Martino, Tina Maskara,
Vincent Mastrogiovanni, Jeannete Montalbano, Isabelle O'Brien,
Marie Russillo, Toni Spahr, Florence Valentine, Irene Vesely.



SATURDAY DECEMBER 19, 2015

5:00PM Raffaele Porco

SUNDAY DECEMBER 20, 2015

7:30AM Parishioners of St. Theresa

9:00AM Anella Giuliano

10:30AM Marty Cervellione

12:15PM Benedetta LoBalbo

1:30PM Parishioners of St. Theresa

5:00PM Luigi, Rosina & Louis Porco

MONDAY DECEMBER 21, 2015

8:00AM Kathleen Martensen

9:00AM Deceased Members of DeJohn, Ferraro & Remeny
Families

TUESDAY DECEMBER 22, 2015

8:00AM Louis Russo

9:00AM Marty Cervellione

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 23, 2015

8:00AM Rosina, Luigi, Francesco, Assunta & Pasquale Porco

9:00AM Alfio & Teresa Morello

THURSDAY DECEMBER 24, 2015

8:00AM Carmelina Frangella

9:00AM Iulian & Cioffi Families

12:00PM Simone Dilluvio

Midnight Christmas Intentions

FRIDAY DECEMBER 25, 2015

7:30AM Christmas Intentions

9:00AM Christmas Intentions

10:30AM Christmas Intentions

12:15PM Christmas Intentions

1:30PM Christmas Intentions

5:00PM Christmas Intentions

SATURDAY DECEMBER 26, 2015

8:00AM Chigo Chishibanji

9:00AM Simone Dilluvio

5:00PM Carmela, Benjamin & Albert Gregoria

SUNDAY DECEMBER 27, 2015

7:30AM The Parishioners of St. Theresa Parish

9:00AM Angelo & Abbondanza DelGrosso

10:30AM Sylvia Conte

12:15PM Richard Lent

1:30PM Maria Hernandez & Milton Anton

5:00PM Catherine Sbanio

REMINDER – If you have a Sunday Mass offered for a loved
one and are present at the Mass and would like to bring up the
Offertory Gifts to the Altar, please let one of the ushers know
before the Mass begins.



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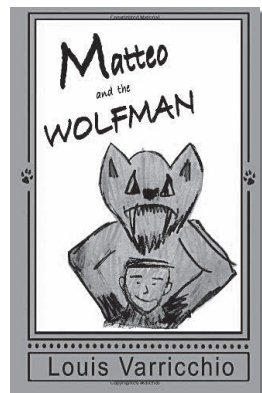


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in the morning's before school, even
though his mom tries hard to explain
why he should. Well, he is in for a real
surprise and is about to learn his
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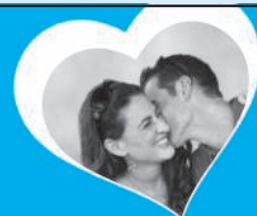
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