

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD  
PAPAL MASS  
HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all" (Tit 2:11). The words of the Apostle Paul reveal the mystery of this holy night: the grace of God has appeared, his free gift. In the Child given to us, the love of God is made visible.

It is a *night of glory*, that glory proclaimed by the angels in Bethlehem and by ourselves as well, all over the world. It is a *night of joy*, because henceforth and for ever, the infinite and eternal God is *God with us*. He is not far off. We need not search for him in the heavens or in mystical notions. He is close at hand. He became man and he will never withdraw from our humanity, which he has made his own. It is a *night of light*. The light prophesied by Isaiah (cf. 9:1), which was to shine on those who walked in a land of darkness, has appeared and enveloped the shepherds of Bethlehem (cf. Lk 2:9).

The shepherds discover simply that "a child has been born to us" (Is 9:5). They realize that all this glory, all this joy, all this light, converges to a single point, the *sign* that the angel indicated to them: "You will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Lk 2:12). This is the *enduring sign* for all who would find Jesus. Not just then, but also today. If we want to celebrate Christmas authentically, we need to contemplate this sign: the frail simplicity of a tiny newborn child, the meekness with which he is placed in a manger, the tender affection with which he is wrapped in his swaddling clothes. That is where God is.

With this sign, the Gospel reveals a paradox. It speaks of the emperor, the governor, the high and mighty of those times, yet God does not make himself present there. He appears not in the splendor of a royal palace, but in the poverty of a stable; not in pomp and show, but in simplicity of life; not in power, but in astonishing smallness. In order to meet him, we need to go where he is. We need to bow down, to humble ourselves, to make ourselves small. The newborn Child challenges us. He calls us to leave behind fleeting illusions and to turn to what is essential, to renounce our insatiable cravings, to abandon our endless yearning for things we will never have. We do well to leave such things behind, in order to discover, in the simplicity of the divine Child, peace, joy and the luminous meaning of life.

Let us allow the Child in the manger to challenge us, but let us also be challenged by all those children in today's world who are lying not in a crib, caressed with affection by their mothers and fathers, but in squalid "mangers that devour dignity". Children who hide underground to escape bombardment, on the pavements of large cities, in the hold of a boat overlaid with immigrants... Let us allow ourselves to be challenged by those children who are not allowed to be born, by those who cry because no one relieves their hunger, by those who hold in their hands not toys, but weapons.

The mystery of Christmas, which is light and joy, challenges and unsettles us, because it is at once a *mystery of hope and of sadness*. It has a *taste of sadness*, inasmuch as love is not accepted, and life discarded. Such was the case with Joseph and Mary, who met with closed doors, and placed Jesus in a manger, "because there was no place for them in the inn" (v. 7). Jesus was born rejected by some and regarded by many others with indifference. Today too, that same indifference can exist, whenever Christmas becomes a holiday with ourselves at the centre rather than Jesus; when the lights of shop windows push the light of God into the shadows; when we are enthused about gifts but indifferent to our neighbours in need. This worldliness has kidnapped Christmas; we need to liberate it!

Yet Christmas has above all a *taste of hope* because, for all the darkness in our lives, God's light shines forth. His gentle light does not frighten us. God, who is in love with us, draws us to himself with his tenderness, by being born poor and frail in our midst, as one of us. He is born in Bethlehem, which means "house of bread". In this way, he seems to tell us that he is born as *bread for us*; he enters our life to give us his life; he comes into our world to give us his love. He does not come to devour or to lord it over us, but instead to feed and serve us. There is a straight line between the manger and the cross where Jesus will become *bread that is broken*. It is the straight line of love that gives and saves, the love that brings light to our lives and peace to our hearts.

That night, the shepherds understood this. They were among the marginalized of those times. Yet no one is marginalized in the sight of God, and that Christmas, they themselves were the guests. People who felt sure of themselves, self-sufficient, were at home with their possessions. It was the shepherds who "set out with haste" (cf. Lk 2:16). Tonight, may we too be challenged and called by Jesus. Let us approach him with trust, starting from all those things that make us feel marginalized, from our limitations and our sins. Let us be touched by the tenderness that

saves. Let us draw close to God who draws close to us. Let us pause to gaze upon the crib, and relive in our imagination the birth of Jesus: light and peace, dire poverty and rejection. With the shepherds, let us enter into the real Christmas, bringing to Jesus all that we are, our alienation, our unhealed wounds, our sins. Then, in Jesus, we will enjoy the taste of the true spirit of Christmas: the beauty of being loved by God. With Mary and Joseph, let us pause before the manger, before Jesus who is born as bread for my life. Contemplating his humble and infinite love, let us simply tell him: Thank you. Thank you because you have done all this for me.

Welcome to St. Ann's Parish

**Our Vision Statement:** to be a Christ-centered community of missionary disciples.

**Our Mission Statement:** to work and pray to be a welcoming, Eucharistic community that spreads the good news of Christ. We each strive to share our gifts within and beyond the parish for the glory of God.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR  
JAN. 2ND TO JAN 8TH, 2017

- Monday**  
9:00am Beverley Goodrick, int.
- Tuesday**  
7:00pm Brian & Frances McNeil, int.
- Wednesday**  
8:00am Frank Bauer, rip.
- Thursday**  
8:00am Arthur Seibel, rip.
- Friday**  
8:00am Mona Webber, rip.  
7:00pm Ian Currie, rip.
- Saturday**  
9:00am Jose Fromont, int.  
5:00pm Freda Lemieux, rip.
- Sunday**  
8:00am Jordan Simpson, rip.  
10:00am Joseph Mussio, rip.

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PARISH OFFICE IS CLOSED ON MONDAY JANUARY 2ND.  
MORNING MASS WILL BE CELEBRATED AT 9AM.

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THIS WEEK AT ST. ANN'S

MASS will be celebrated at Bevan Village on **Tuesday, January 3rd at 2:00 p.m.**

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL MEETING: **Thursday, January 5th at 7:00 p.m.** in St. Peter's room.

ONE BODY IN CHRIST PRAYER MEETING will resume on **Thursday, January 5th at 7:30 p.m.** in St. Joachim room.

First Friday ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT will be held on **Friday, January 6th beginning with Prayers for Vocations at 8:30 a.m.** ending with Benediction at 6:45 p.m. and then Mass at 7:00 p.m. Please come and spend some quiet time with our Lord in prayer and thanksgiving.

WELCOME ALL KIDS ages 3 to 5 and children from grades 1 to 4 to our Kids for Jesus Program held on **Saturday, January 7th from 10:00am-12:00 pm.** in St. Joachim room.



PANCAKE BREAKFAST will be prepared by the Knights of Columbus next **Sunday, January 8th after the 8:00 & 10:00 am** Masses.

FEAST DAYS & READINGS  
JAN. 2ND TO JAN. 8TH, 2017

**Monday-St. Basil & St. Gregory**  
1 John 2:22-28; John 1:19-28

**Tuesday**  
1 John 2:29; 3:1-6; John 1:29-34

**Wednesday**  
1 John 3:7-10; John 1:35-42

**Thursday**  
1 John 3:11-21; John 1:43-51

**Friday**  
1 John 5:5-13; Mark 1:4-5,7-11++

**Saturday-St. Andre Bessette**  
1 John 5:14-21; John 2:1-12

**Sunday-Epiphany of the Lord**  
Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a,5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY AND VESPERS on **Sunday, January 8th at 3:00 p.m.** in the Sacred Space at Abbotsford Regional Hospital.

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MOMS & TOTS GROUP will begin again on **Monday, January 9th at 9:00 a.m.** in St. Monica's lounge.

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PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING: **Tuesday, January 10th at 7:45 p.m.** in St. Monica's lounge.

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MEN'S SILENT RETREAT with the priests of Miles Christi using the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. **March 24-26, 2017** at the Abbey in Mission. Cost is \$210; space is

limited and we have sold out the last 3 retreats. Contact Jody [adultfaith@stannsabbotsford.ca](mailto:adultfaith@stannsabbotsford.ca)

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20th Annual Winter GALA DINNER  
Saturday, January 21st

St. Ann's Parish Centre  
Adults \$35/Children 5-13 \$10/under 5 Free  
Tickets available at the Parish Office

Hosted by the 4th Degree Knights of Columbus Chief Dan George Assembly. **Proceeds to the Poor Clares**

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PAINT NITE—January 28th with 2 sessions 2:00 p.m. & 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Gym, Chilliwack. Different painting at each sitting.

2pm paint—Mellow Meadow register online at <http://paintnite.com/pages/event/view/Vancouver/1137879>

6:30pm paint—The Breeze <http://paintnite.com/pages/events/view/Vancouver/1132283>

Open to all ages including Minors. Questions?? Call Pat 604-792-7715.

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Please remember in your prayers the repose of the soul of GILBERTE HACKWELL whose Funeral Mass will be celebrated on **Thursday, January 5th at 11:00 a.m.**

Our profit from our Christmas Market 2016 is \$13,073.72.

