

**For The Bulletin of
December 20, 2015**

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

From Father Robert

The phrase “gone, but not forgotten” is associated with songs, movies, a television show episode, a novel, a poem. It is different from another well-known phrase, “out of sight, out of mind.” These sayings address a common enough human experience: absence and presence. When someone is not immediately at hand, do we forget or remember that person? The answer to this question rests largely on how important this person is for us. The more love we have, the more this individual is present to us. Physical proximity is not the measure of presence; attentiveness (even in absence) and love are. Today’s gospel addresses the reality of both absence and presence.

Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth and they were present to each other in a most extraordinary encounter. Clearly also present and active was the Holy Spirit Who overshadowed Mary to conceive the Savior of the world, inspired Elizabeth to praise Mary and the “fruit of her womb,” and prompted the unborn John to leap for joy. The Holy Spirit brought an intensity to each encounter that augured the singularity and significance of all these happenings. Mary didn’t simply “set out” to visit Elizabeth; she went “in haste.” Elizabeth didn’t simply say “Hello” to Mary, but “cried out in a loud voice” the blessings of Mary and her unborn infant. John didn’t simply give a gentle kick in

Elizabeth’s womb at this encounter, but “leaped for joy.”

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, quickly approaching our celebration of the birth of the Son of God, we need to open ourselves to receive this same intensity from the Holy Spirit. This same Holy Spirit overshadows, inspires, and prompts those of us who believe to “set out” “in haste” to touch others with divine Presence. Elizabeth blesses Mary because she “believed” that God would fulfill in her all that the angel Gabriel had said to her. Now so must we believe that God fulfills in us all the goodness and love that is promised.

Absent from this account is any sense that either woman resisted God’s invitation to cooperate in the work of salvation. Absent from this account is any sense that either woman said “no” to God’s will, even when that will was surely not clear, not within the boundaries of normal expectations, not easy to accept. Salvation is the convergence of God’s will and our own will. Like Mary and Elizabeth, we must make any “no” to what God asks of us absent from our lives. Mary and Elizabeth show us the way to *our* being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit by their offering their own bodies in cooperating with God’s plan of salvation. So must we offer ourselves with the same willingness, with the same love response, with the same eager desire for divine Presence within and among us. This divine Presence is never gone, never absent. We cannot ever forget that.

Living The Paschal Mystery

God's plan of salvation is fulfilled by Christ's obedience to the Father's will. Think about this: doing God's will is an incarnation of divine Presence! The circumstances of our self-giving won't be as spectacular as Mary's and Elizabeth's, but our own giving ourselves over to God's will is no less fruitful. In our helping hand, God is present. In our visits to the sick and elderly, God is present. In our disciplining and forming our children, God is present. In all our daily dying to self, God is present. This is incarnation: God is present. This is the depth of the Christmas mystery: we, too, incarnate divine Presence!

As we prepare to bring the brief four week Season of Advent to a conclusion, how have these days and weeks helped you to prepare to celebrate the Christmas Feast once again?

- I feel the Holy Spirit overshadowing me by...inspiring me when...prompting me to...
- My believing looks like Mary's when...like Elizabeth's when...
- I leap for joy because of the birth Christ when...

About Liturgy: Announcing The Christmas Mystery

Opportunities for us to announce the Christmas mystery abound. Here are two "clusters" of possibilities.

First, with respect to the ritual "tangibles." The way we enhance the sacred space for Christmas, the music we choose, the way people are greeted (especially those who have been away from the church) all beg us to think about how we want to announce the Christmas mystery. Is the focus almost

entirely on a baby who was born long ago? If so, there is the real danger that Christmas will come and go without affecting us and the way we live. Our Christmas preparations and celebrations are meant to lead us to the deeper mystery: Christmas is a salvation feast that reminds us this baby whose birth we celebrate was obedient even to death on a cross. The mystery of birth always enfolds the mystery of death. Our environment, music, hospitality, and all that we do are meant to affect us in such a way that we are led to announce the Christmas mystery as God's Presence to humanity and make that Presence known in the goodness of our daily living.

Second, with respect to the liturgy itself. Liturgy always makes demands on us: the Word proclaimed, the homily's challenge, the Creed's demands for deeper believing, the Intercession's follow-through, Communion's unity. All preparation for liturgy is meant to open the space for the Holy Spirit to work within the community so that liturgy, truly, transforms us into being better and more fruitful presences of Christ. The deepest and most lasting joy of Christmas spills beyond the liturgy into making the world a better place to be, a place of peace and goodwill to all. The liturgy itself is meant to be celebrated in such a way as to lead us to announce in our daily living that we believe with all our hearts that the Lord is come and dwells within each of us.

Lessons and Carols Today

One of the most beautiful and traditional services of the Advent/Christmas Season is the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols which through Music and the Spoken Word tell the story of the Birth of Our Savior. Under the direction of

our Director of Music/Organist/Artist-in-Residence, **Don Pearson and the Parish Choir** will be performing some of the most beloved anthems of the Christmas Season. The service takes place this Sunday afternoon, December 20th, at 3:00 p.m. and is followed by a reception in the parish hall. While there is no charge to attend, a free will offering will be received to help defray the cost of the reception. Please invite your family members, relatives, friends, and neighbors to join us for this memorable service. Last year, there were over 250 people present and we sense that there will be even more this year because of the quality and power of the music. What a wonderful way for us to prepare for the Christmas Feast! I hope you will join us.

Christmas At St. Ignatius of Antioch

**Christmas Eve, December 24th
4:00 P.M. Family Mass – *Children’s Christmas Pageant***

10:00 p.m. The Solemn Mass of Christmas Night – *Procession, Incense, The Parish Choir and Organ*

**Christmas Day, December 25th
9:00 a.m. The Mass At Dawn – *Procession, Incense, Cantors and Organ***

11:00 a.m. The Mass of Christmas Day – *Procession, Incense, The Parish Choir, Cantors, and Organ*

**December 26th – The Feast of the Holy Family
Saturday Vigil 4:00 p.m.**

**December 27th – The Feast of the Holy Family
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.**

**December 31st – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, New Year’s Eve
Vigil Mass 4:00 p.m.**

**January 1, 2016 – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, New Year’s Day, the World Day of Prayer for Peace
11:00 a.m. Solemn Mass of New Year’s Day – *Procession, Incense, The Parish Choir, Cantors, and Organ***

**January 2, 2016 – Solemnity of the Epiphany
Vigil Mass 4:00 p.m. – *Procession, Incense, Procession of The Three Kings, Cantor, and Organ***

**January 3, 2016 – Solemnity of the Epiphany
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. – *Procession, Incense, Procession of the Three Kings, The Parish Choir, Cantors, and Organ***

**January 9, 2016 – The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
4:00 p.m. Vigil Mass – *Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Sprinkling Rite***

**January 10, 2016 – The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. – *Procession, Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Sprinkling Rite – The Parish Choir, Cantors, and Organ; The conclusion of the Christmas Season.***

The Christmas Environment

You are invited to join in helping to make the Christmas Environment through your generous contributions to the Christmas Flower Fund. Your gifts provide the Christmas Trees, lights, garlands, wreaths, panels that grace the Icons, and Poinsettias possible. Your gifts may be made either In Honor of OR

In Loving Memory of a loved one, family members, or friends. Please be sure to include the designation on the envelope with your gift. Flower Fund Envelopes are provided in our monthly envelope packet or may be found on the credenza or will be included in the Christmas Letter mailing. I thank you for what you will do to sustain the wonderful work of our Art & Environment Committee.

Christmas At The Rectory

You are invited to join me at the Rectory on Sunday, December 27th, for an afternoon/evening of fellowship, great food, and Christmas “cheer!” The Rectory will be open from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and I ask that you bring your favorite appetizer (hot or cold) to share and I will provide the “cheer!” The house has once again been decorated by **Theresa Nelms, Rich Confetti, and Don Benson**. This is a wonderful way for us to be together and to continue celebrating God’s wondrous gift of the Word made Flesh in Jesus. I hope you will plan to join us.

Be A King Or A Star For A Day!

You are invited to sign up to be one of the Three Kings for the Solemnity of the Epiphany on Saturday, January 2nd and Sunday, January 3rd. Sign-up sheets will be posted on the bulletin board outside of the Sacristy for each liturgy, including a Star-bearer to lead their procession. We already have two individuals signed up to be kings for the Sunday morning 8:00 a.m. Eucharist. This is your chance to be “a king for a day!”

Christmas Cards For Archbishop Brunett

Please don’t forget to send a Christmas card and greetings to **Archbishop**

Alexander Brunett, Retired Apostolic Administrator of our Diocese. He is so grateful to all our parishioners who have sent him cards, notes, and Christmas greetings over the past years. His address is as follows:

Archbishop Alex J. Brunett
Archdiocese of Seattle
710 9th Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104-2017

He repeatedly tells me how grateful he is for our parish and will never forget his visit here with us.

From Archbishop Brunett

Dear Robert and Parishioners, During this Advent Season, I write once again to thank you for your prayers, cards, and letters. To all of you, know that you are remembered in all of my Masses and prayers.

I have my own apartment in this assisted living facility and keep a very busy schedule with various therapies, meetings, and many visitors. I am able, with the help of another priest, to celebrate Mass for twenty-five of the residents, staff, and guests each Sunday. I continue to be able to attend some parish and Archdiocesan celebrations and events and look forward to attending the four priestly ordinations this coming summer of 2016.

I have had and continue to have so many great gifts in my life but most important are the friends I have made over my years in ministry. Your kindness and prayers are such an important part of continued healing. Please know I am eternally grateful for all your kindnesses and I pray for you each day.

Again, thank you for remembering me in your prayers and keeping me in your thoughts, for your cards, and letters, I send you my warmest regards and blessings as we prepare for Christmas.

Sincerely yours in Christ Our Hope,
+Alex J. Brunett
Archbishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of
Seattle, Washington

Thank You

...to **Carolyn Krantz and Steve Rojek** who participated in the CCISCO Night Walk Against Violence on Friday, December 11th.

...to all those who participated in our Confirmation Class's "Winter Coat Outreach. **Steve Rojek** reports that 160 coats were contributed: 60 men's, 70 women's, and 30 children's sizes. 90 of the 130 adult coats went to the homeless shelter here in Antioch; 40 went to the Adult Shelter in Concord; and the 30 children's coats were taken to the Family Shelter in Martinez. Thank you for your support of this outreach project.

...to our wonderful, faithful volunteer parishioners who care for and clean the church each Saturday morning: **Carole Miller, Steve Rojek, Thelma Benasfre, Reno Benasfre, Rose Salamanca, and Jun Bajet**; and to those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall: **Robert Goncalves, Mary Ewing, Gino Ramos, Geri Abaya, and Harlan Young**.

...to all of our parishioners who selected an ornament from The Giving Tree and brought back the gifts indicated for the children of our adopted parochial school of St. Peter Martyr, along with students from Sutter, Mission, and Turner Elementary Schools.

Breakfast With Santa

This past Saturday, December 12th, the parish hosted the first ever "Breakfast with Santa." It was greatly successful! Our thanks to all who helped make this event so much fun and enjoyable:

Reindeer Food Preparers: **Kathleen & Mary Clarke**

Santa's Breakfast Chefs: **Peter Lozano & Steven Rojek**

Santa's Servers and Helpers: **Frances Rojek, Olivia Rojek, Steve Rojek, Melvin & Sandra Carrillo**

Santa's Photographer: **Joseph Jovel**

Santa: **Santa**

Christmas Environment Thank You

This past week, parishioners turned out to help create the beautiful environment for the Christmas/Epiphany Season. The wreaths, lights, garlands, panels of cloth at the Icons, the lighting of the Christmas Trees both in the Organ Gallery as well as surrounding the assembly were the labor of love of the following: **Rich Confetti, Don Benson, Jose Palomino, Theresa Nelms, Bobby Zabroski, Denise Moss, Bob Carvalho, Bill Barbanica, Harlan Young, Erika Fernandez, Diane Sampson, Ed Cissell, Dave Rodriguez, Dave Simpson, Patricia Britton, Tom & Stevie Catchings, Pablo & Norma Villegas, Lorraine Lohmeier, Baby Viviana and her grandmother, Samantha**. Many thanks to **Theresa Nelms** for providing the Breakfast Pastries as well as the dessert following lunch. Also, additional thanks to **Pablo Villegas** for installing the Christmas Lights and Lighted Wreaths on the exterior of the church. They add joy to all who enter our grounds or pass by on Contra Loma.

Parish Hosts Holiday Dinner at Los Medanos Village

Los Medanos Village is a 71 unit affordable housing unit in Pittsburg. Contra Costa Interfaith Housing provides case management and coordinates a highly successful after school homework program for the children.

On Wednesday, December 9, **Catherine Vidaurri & Will Avitabile, Dave Costanza, Lorraine Lohmeier, Vicki & Brian McCoy, Carole Miller and Tomas Lucia** prepared and served a delicious meal as part of the annual holiday party at the apartment complex. The menu consisted of a fresh green salad with lettuce from the parish garden, barbequed chicken, baked macaroni & cheese, fresh broccoli (also from the parish garden) and a variety of roasted vegetables. Homemade chocolate chip cookies and magic cookie bars rounded out the dinner.

This is the fourth year in a row that our parish hosted this event for some wonderful families.

On behalf of the parish, Thank You, for participating in this wonderful outreach. Your dedication and commitment is an inspiration and a blessing to all of us, especially to the residents of Los Medanos Village.