

St. John the Evangelist Church

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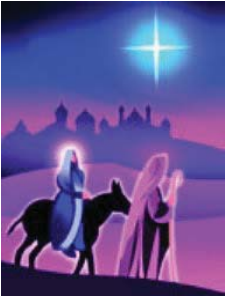
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Mr. Kevin Dashney	Director of Music
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prepare the way...

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Peace to all of you!

This Sunday we are celebrating the Fourth Sunday of Advent. We are at the doors of Christmas. The liturgy encourages us to be ready and expecting for the coming of the Lord. As the Virgin Mary was given the announcement that she was to be the Mother of the Lord, we are called to welcome Emmanuel, God with us, in our hearts, so that He can fill us with peace and fullness of life. If we are open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the Lord will accomplish marvelous deeds in our lives. The Lord himself is coming to visit us and to dwell within us this Christmas. It is true that it is going to be a difficult and different one. We are going to miss being with our extended family and friends; nonetheless, the reason for Christmas is there: Christ among us. It is a time that is going to help us to focus in what is essential: to be aware that Christ is coming to share our weaknesses and struggles and to give us divine life. In past years, we've been busy shopping for gifts and cooking. All that is good but at times we go overboard, and we risk living Christmas superficially. However, this year gives us the opportunity to go to the essential, to make room for Christ in our hearts and to encounter the immense love of Christ for us that He makes himself small and little for us. Let us take profit of this immense gift that the Lord grants us and let us receive all the graces that He wants to give us at this specific time. We will have masses on Christmas Eve at 5 pm, 8 pm and 11 pm and on Christmas Day at 9 am, 11 am and 2 pm. I really encourage you to come and to reserve your tickets with Eventbrite. We are going to broadcast the masses on our <https://www.facebook.com/stjohnwhitby/> page. Rejoice, the Lord is coming to give us fullness of life!

Pope Francis Homily, Christmas

"Those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined" (Is 9:1). The prophecy we heard in the first reading was fulfilled in the Gospel: as shepherds kept watch over their flocks by night, "the glory of the Lord shone around them" (Lk 2:9). In the midst of our earthly night, a light appeared from heaven. What is the meaning of this light that shone in the darkness? Saint Paul tells us: "The grace of God has appeared". The grace of God, "bringing salvation to all" (Tit 2:11), has shone on our world this night.

But what is this grace? It is divine love, the love that changes lives, renews history, liberates from evil, fills hearts with peace and joy. Tonight the love of God has been revealed to us: it is Jesus. In Jesus, the Most High made himself tiny, so that we might love him. But we can still ask ourselves: why does Saint Paul describe the coming of God into our world as "grace"? To tell us that it is utterly free. Whereas on earth everything seems to be about giving in order to get, God comes down freely. His love is non-negotiable: we did nothing to deserve it and we will never be able to repay it.

The grace of God has appeared. Tonight we realize that, when we failed to measure up, God became small for our sake; while we were going about our own business, he came into our midst. Christmas reminds us that God continues to love us all, even the worst of us. To me, to you, to

each of us, he says today: "I love you and I will always love you, for you are precious in my eyes".

God does not love you because you think and act the right way. He loves you, plain and simple. His love is unconditional; it does not depend on you. You may have mistaken ideas, you may have made a complete mess of things, but the Lord continues to love you. How often do we think that God is good if we are good and punishes us if we are bad. Yet that is not how he is. For all our sins, he continues to love us. His love does not change. It is not fickle; it is faithful. It is patient. This is the gift we find at Christmas. We discover to our amazement that the Lord is absolute gratuity, absolute tender love. His glory does not overwhelm us; his presence does not terrify us. He is born in utter poverty in order to win our hearts by the wealth of his love.

The grace of God has appeared. Grace is a synonym of beauty. Tonight, in the beauty of God's love, we also discover our own beauty, for we are *beloved of God*. For better or worse, in sickness and in health, whether happy or sad, in his eyes we are beautiful, not for what we do but for what we are. Deep within us, there is an indelible and intangible beauty, an irrepressible beauty, which is the core of our being. Today God reminds us of this. He lovingly takes upon himself our humanity and makes it his own, "espousing" it forever.

The "great joy" proclaimed tonight to the shepherds is indeed "for all the people". We too, with all our weaknesses and failures, are among those shepherds, who were certainly not saints. And just as God called the shepherds, so too he calls us, for he loves us. In the dark night of life, he says to us as he did to them, "Be not afraid!" (Lk 2:10). Take courage, do not lose confidence, do not lose hope, do not think that to love is a waste of time! Tonight love has conquered fear, new hope has arrived, God's kindly light has overcome the darkness of human arrogance. Mankind, God loves you; for your sake he became man. You are no longer alone!

Dear brothers and sisters, what are we to do with this grace? Only one thing: *accept the gift*. Before we go out to seek God, let us allow ourselves to be sought by him. He always seeks us first. Let us not begin with our own abilities but with his grace, for he, Jesus, is the Saviour. Let us contemplate the Child and let ourselves be caught up in his tender love.

So great a gift deserves immense gratitude. To accept this grace means being ready to *give thanks in return*. Often we live our lives with such little gratitude. Today is the right day to draw near to the tabernacle, the crèche, the manger, and to say thank you. Let us receive the gift that is Jesus, in order then to *become gift* like Jesus. To become gift is to give meaning to life. And it is the best way to change the world: we change, the Church changes, history changes, once we stop trying to change others but try to change ourselves and to make of our life a gift.

(December 24, 2019).

Fr. Francisco Fernandez, Your servant and your Pastor

CHRISTMAS FLOWER FUND



Special envelopes are available at the back of the Church for donations to offset the cost of decorating at Christmas. We appreciate your support and assistance at this time of year!

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE
EVENTBRITE TICKETS ARE REQUIRED

GO TO:

<https://stjohntheevangelistwh.archtoronto.org/>

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2020

5PM, 8PM, 11PM

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2020

9AM, 11AM, 2PM SPANISH

CHANGE OF OFFICE HOURS

During the month of December, while Durham is in the "red zone", the office hours will be Monday & Friday 9am to 5pm. Wednesday 9am to 8pm. Tuesday is by appointment only. Thursday closed.

Closed noon to 1pm for lunch.

Please make appointments as much as possible or call ahead. Thank you for your consideration.

Gift Giving to our Migrant Workers

Envelopes are available on the back counter, to make cash, cheque or gift card donations to the Migrants Workers in our parish area for their Christmas in lieu of the annual Christmas dinner this year. Your cash or cheques will be used to purchase gift cards for them. Thank you!



Office Hours Christmas to New Year

The parish office will close at noon on Thursday, December 24th through to Monday, December 28th. It will be open December 29th & 30th. The office will also close at noon on Thursday December 31st and reopen at 9am on Monday, January 4, 2021.

Mass Schedule for Octave of Christmas

Sat Dec 26	9am Feast of St. Stephen
Sat Dec 26	5pm Vigil of The Holy Family
Sun Dec 27	9am, 11am 2pm Solemnity of the Holy Family
Mon Dec 28	9am Holy Innocents, Martyrs
Tues Dec 29	8:20am Fifth Octave Day
Wed Dec 30	7:00pm Sixth Octave Day
Thur Dec 31	5pm Vigil of Mary, Mother of God
Fri Jan 1	9am, 11am, 2pm Solemnity Mary, Mother of God



Masses For The Week

Sat. Dec 19 – 5:00pm

+Judy Tayeb
req. by Her Family

Mon Dec 21 – 8:20am

+

Tues Dec 22 – 8:20am

+

Wed. Dec 23 – 7:00pm

+Ted Kapuscinski

req. by Doreen & Family
+Shirley Barrett
Req. by Her Family

+Deceased Members of the Spicer Family
req. by The Morris Family

Thur. Dec 24 – 5pm, 8pm, 11pm NO INTENTIONS

Fri. Dec 25 – 9am, 11am NO INTENTIONS

Sat. Dec 26 – 9:00am

+Bryan McEachen
req. by His Family

Sat. Dec 26 – 5:00pm

+Werner Kuenzle
req. by Jenny & Heidi Kuenzle

Tabernacle Candle Dec 20 – 27, 2020 for The Donaldson Family



Suggested Daily Readings

Leader: The Lord is our faith and our life.

All: May the Lord's peace be with us all.

Leader: And may his love shine in our hearts.

All: Our hope is in the coming of the Lord.

Light the candle(s). During the week, relight whenever the family gathers together.

Scripture Reading

Leader: Let us pray that our faith may be strengthened for the coming of the Lord.

All: Amen

4th Week – All four candles are lit.

Suggested Scripture Readings:

Sunday	Isaiah 11: 1-10
Monday	Zephaniah 3: 14-17
Tuesday	Matthew 1: 18-25
Wednesday	Luke 2: 8-20
Thursday	Matthew 4: 14-16

Replace purple and pink candles with White Candles as we enter Christmas Season:

Friday Luke 2: 7-20 (Nativity of our Lord)

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*

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