

St. John the Evangelist Church

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Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD



Message from the Pastor

Peace to all of you!

I would like to wish to all of you and your families a happy new year. Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. The First Reading, from the Book of Numbers, gives us the account of the blessing of Aaron to the people of Israel. Through this blessing, they are meant to receive God's life and grace. Through God's countenance and mercy, they share in God's peace. At the beginning of the year, God blesses us, transmitting to us His own divine life so that we may find peace and joy throughout the upcoming year. Let us

entrust to the Lord so that He may guide us in ways of life, peace, and fruitfulness. The Second Reading, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians, offers us the teaching that when Jesus, the Son of God, was born, He shares in our human nature, making us children of God. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and became man, able to share in our sufferings and struggles so that He can save us from sin. Moreover, He has given us the gift of sharing in His divine nature so that we can act like God. Our redemption is not only freedom from sin but reception of new life. The Gospel, from St. Luke, gives us the account of the visit of the shepherds to Christ in Bethlehem. After the shepherds received the announcement that Christ, the Savior, was born in a manger, they come out full of joy wishing to testify that this Good News of Salvation happened. When they arrived to the stable, they found and recognized the Savior wrapped in swaddling clothes. This is the sign of the Saving Messiah who will give His life to save us from sin to open the way to new life. They were filled with such a joy that they came back glorifying God. The encounter with the child Jesus brings about a powerful transformation of life. Let us wonder in amazement like the shepherds and the Virgin Mary in front of this marvel of God's mercy in our lives.

In this past year of 2022 that has just concluded, we have experienced many things, a lot of challenges and many blessings. It is important to realize that God has been helping us in our difficulties and that He has been offering us so many graces. This should fill us with gratitude, hope and trust for the new year that is just starting. God will certainly accompany us and guide us throughout the year. Let us trust in His providential guidance and mercy!

Fr. Francisco Fernandez, Your servant and your Pastor

Pope Francis' Homily on Christmas (January 1, 2021)

In the readings of today's Mass, three verbs find their fulfilment in the Mother of God: to bless, to be born and to find.

To bless. In the Book of Numbers, the Lord tells his sacred ministers to bless his people: "Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, 'The Lord bless you'" (6:23-24). This is no pious exhortation; it is a specific request. And it is important that, today too, priests constantly bless the People of God and that the faithful themselves be bearers of blessing; that they bless. The Lord knows how much we need to be blessed. The first thing he did after creating the world was to say that everything was good (*bene-dicere*) and to say of us that that we were very good. Now, however, with the Son of God we receive not only words of blessing, but the blessing itself: Jesus is himself the blessing of the Father. In him, Saint Paul tells us, the Father blesses us "with every blessing" (Eph 1:3). Every time we open our hearts to Jesus, God's blessing enters our lives.

Today we celebrate the Son of God, who is "blessed" by nature, who comes to us through his Mother, "blessed" by grace. In this way, Mary brings us God's blessing. Wherever she is, Jesus comes to us. Therefore, we should welcome her like Saint Elizabeth who, immediately recognizing the blessing, cried out: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Lk 1:42). We repeat those words every time we recite the Hail Mary. In welcoming Mary, we receive a blessing, but we also learn to bless. Our Lady teaches us that blessings are received in order to be given. She, who was blessed, became a blessing for all those whom she met: for Elizabeth, for the newlyweds at Cana, for the Apostles in the Upper Room... We too are called to bless, to "speak well" in God's name. Our world is gravely polluted by the way we "speak" and think "badly" of others, of society, of ourselves. Speaking badly corrupts and decays, whereas blessing restores life and gives the strength needed to begin anew each day. Let us ask the Mother of God for the grace to be joyful bearers of God's blessing to others, as she is to us.

The second verb is to be born. Saint Paul points out that the Son of God was "born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). In these few words, he tells us something amazing: that the Lord was born like us. He did not appear on the scene as an adult, but as a child. He came into the world not on his own, but from a woman, after nine months in the womb of his Mother, from whom he allowed his humanity to be shaped. The heart of the Lord began to beat within Mary; the God of life drew oxygen from her. Ever since then, Mary has united us to God because in her God bound himself to our flesh, and he has never left it. Saint Francis loved to say that Mary "made the Lord of Majesty our brother" (Saint Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, 9, 3). She is not only the bridge joining us to God; she is more. She is the road that God travelled in order to reach us, and the road that we must travel in order to reach him. Through Mary, we encounter God the way he wants us to: in tender love, in intimacy, in the flesh. For Jesus is not an abstract idea; he is real and incarnate; he was "born of a woman", and quietly grew. Women know about this kind of quiet growth. We men tend to be abstract and want things right away. Women are concrete and know how to weave life's threads with quiet patience. How many women, how many mothers, thus give birth and rebirth to life, offering the world a future!

We are in this world not to die, but to give life. The holy Mother of God teaches us that the first step in giving life to those around us is to cherish it within ourselves. Today's Gospel tells us that Mary "kept all these things in her heart" (cf. Lk 2:19). And goodness comes from the heart. How important it is to keep our hearts pure, to cultivate our interior life and to persevere in our prayer! How important it is to educate our hearts to care, to cherish the persons and things around us. Everything starts from this: from cherishing others, the world and creation. What good is it to know many persons and things if we fail to cherish them? This year, while we hope for new beginnings and new cures, let us not neglect care. Together with a vaccine for our bodies, we need a vaccine for our hearts. That vaccine is care. This will be a good year if we take care of others, as Our Lady does with us.

The third verb is to find. The Gospel tells us that the shepherds "found Mary and Joseph and the child" (v. 16). They did not find miraculous and spectacular signs, but a simple family. Yet there they truly found God, who is grandeur in littleness, strength in tenderness. But how were the shepherds able to find this inconspicuous sign? They were called by an angel. We too would not have found God if we had not been called by grace. We could never have imagined such a God, born of a woman, who revolutionizes history with tender love. Yet by grace we did find him. And we discovered that his forgiveness brings new birth, his consolation enkindles hope, his presence bestows irrepressible joy. We found him but we must not lose sight of him. Indeed, the Lord is never found once and for all: each day he has to be found anew. The Gospel thus describes the shepherds as constantly on the lookout, constantly on the move: "they went with haste, they found, they made known, they returned, glorifying and praising God" (vv. 16-17.20). They were not passive, because to receive grace we have to be active.

What about ourselves? What are we called to find at the beginning of this year? It would be good to find time for someone. Time is a treasure that all of us possess, yet we guard it jealously, since we want to use it only for ourselves. Let us ask for the grace to find time for God and for our neighbour – for those who are alone or suffering, for those who need someone to listen and show concern for them. If we can find time to give, we will be amazed and filled with joy, like the shepherds. May Our Lady, who brought God into the world of time, help us to be generous with our time. Holy Mother of God, to you we consecrate this New Year. You, who know how to cherish things in your heart, care for us, bless our time, and teach us to find time for God and for others. With joy and confidence, we acclaim you: Holy Mother of God! Amen.

JANUARY 1, 2023

SACRAMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM

2022-2023

**FIRST EUCHARIST
(Grade 2)**

PARENTS' MEETING in the Church (parents only)
Tuesday, January 24, 2023, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

****NEW DATES FOR RITE OF ENROLMENT****

at the Church (children & families)
Saturday, January 28 at 5:00 pm OR
Sunday, January 29 at 9:00 am OR 11:00am

**CONFIRMATION
(Grade 7)**

Sessions 1 – 5

February 4, 11, 25 and March 4 in the Parish Centre
(date for Session 5 to be determined)
9:00 am – 10:30 am or 11:00 am – 12:30 pm (as scheduled)

Durham Outlook for the Needy
St Vincent's Kitchen Monthly Casseroles
A note from a volunteer at St. Vincent's Kitchen
As I was serving clients Shepherd's Pie at the kitchen in Oshawa recently, I noticed a parishioner's name from St. John's on the label. A client was enjoying the meal and remarked "This is the best meal I have had here, for all the time I have been coming."

That comment made such an impression on me and I wanted to thank those who generously give of their time and talent to make casseroles for the clients who come to the kitchen. Sometimes we don't know the impact our lives have on our community and it's important that we get to hear from them!
Thank you!

GRAND IN YOUR HAND - WINNER

Thank you to everyone who purchased a ticket. The ballots were spun in a spinner cage at the rectory on Wednesday, December 7th, and Father Francisco pulled ticket # 22 as the winner. Thank you for your continued support of St. John's CWL.



Octave of Christmas

Monday, January 2 - Mass is at 9am, the office is closed.

Regular mass schedule resumes on Tuesday January 3rd. The parish office is open 9am to 8pm.



Friday January 6 – First Friday Adoration for 1 hour following mass

ATTENTION ENGAGED COUPLES!
MARRIAGE PREPARATION CLASSES
Our next Marriage Preparation Course at St. John the Evangelist will be held on 6 Monday evenings from April 10 to May 15, 2023 at 7pm in the Parish Centre. Call 668-3676. Fee is \$250 per couple.



Masses For The Week

Sat Dec 31 – 5:00pm

NO INTENTIONS

Mon Jan 2 – 9am

+Molly & Family

req. by Maire & Patrick Fitzpatrick

Tues Jan 3 – 8:20am

+William & Hanna Waugh

req. by The Deehan Family

Wed Jan 4 – 7:00pm

+

req. by

Thurs Jan 5 – 8:20am

+

req. by

Fri Jan 6 – 8:20am

+

req. by

Sat Jan 7 – 5:00pm

+Robert Griffith

req. by Marianna Griffith

Knights of Columbus, St John the Evangelist Council, meetings are the 1st Wednesday of each month from Sept to June. Next Meeting is Wednesday January 4 at 8PM at the Knights Hall at 133 Brock St North with masking and social distancing still recommended but not mandatory. For further information assisting the St John's community and becoming a Knight through our online virtual application and exemplification process taking less than an hour, contact Membership Director Bryan Childerhouse bryan.childerhouse@rogers.com or call 416-508-9877

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