

# St. John the Evangelist Church

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## Pastoral Team

Rev. Francisco Fernandez Siles Pastor

Rev. Edwin Logroño - In Residence

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Ms. Cassandra Sullivan

Lay Pastoral Asst.

Secretary

Youth Ministry

## Support Staff

Mr. Francisco Perez Caretaker

Mrs. Sue McGee

Mrs. Gail Stewart

Bookkeeper

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## Feast of the Holy Family

Message from the Pastor

Peace to all of you!

I would like to wish to all of you and your families a very blessed and 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 priestly blessing of Aaron to the people of Israel. Through this blessing, they receive God's life and mercy. By contemplating God's countenance, they experience His tenderness and mercy, they share in God's peace. At the beginning of the civil year, God graciously blesses us, sharing with us His own divine life so that we may find strength and support throughout the upcoming year. Let us entrust ourselves to God's providence so that He may guide us in ways of life, peace, and fullness of life. The Second Reading, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians, offers us the beautiful insight that, by being born human like us, Jesus has made us children of God. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and became man so that He could free us from our sins. Moreover, He has given us also the gift of being sharers in His divine nature so that we can act and love like God. Our redemption is not only freedom from sin but transformation into new life. The Gospel, from St. Luke, gives us the account of the visit of the shepherds to Christ at the manger. After the shepherds received the announcement that Christ, the Savior, was born in a stable. They hastened full of joy ready to meet the Savior. When they arrived and saw the baby Jesus, they realized that He indeed is the Savior. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, the sign of the Saving Messiah who will die to save us from sin to give us new life. They were filled with such a joy that they went back glorifying God. The encounter with the child Jesus provokes an overflowing of divine life into our hearts. Let us wonder in amazement like the shepherds and the Virgin Mary in front of this marvel of God's mercy for us.

In this past year of 2023 that we just have concluded, we have experienced many blessings and challenges as well. There is war and conflict over the world and people are struggling financially. All of this has caused a lot of stress and burnout. Yet, it is important to realize that God has been guiding us and supporting us in our difficulties and that He has been giving us so many graces. This should fill us with hope and trust for the new year that is to come. 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 Mary, Mother of God (January 1, 2022)

The shepherds found "Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger" (Lk 2:16). For the shepherds, the manger was a joyful sign: it was the confirmation of the message they had heard from the angel (cf. v. 12), the place where they found the Saviour. It is also the proof of God's closeness to them, for he was born in a manger, an object they know well, as a sign of his closeness and familiarity. The manger is also a joyful sign for us. Jesus touches our hearts by being born in littleness and poverty; he fills us with love, not fear. The manger foretells the One who makes himself food for us. His poverty is good news for everyone, especially the marginalized, the rejected and those who do not count in the eyes of the world. For that is how God comes: not on a fast track, and lacking even a cradle! That is what is beautiful about seeing him there, laid in a manger.

Yet such was not the case with Mary, the Holy Mother of God. She had to endure "the scandal of the manger". She too, long before the shepherds, had received the message of an angel, who spoke to her solemnly about the throne of David: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David" (Lk 1:31-32). And now, Mary has to lay him in a trough for animals. How can she hold together the throne of a king and the lowly manger? How can she reconcile the glory of the Most High and the bitter poverty of a stable? Let us think of the distress of the Mother of God. What can be more painful for a mother than to see her child suffering poverty? It is troubling indeed. We would not blame Mary, were she to complain of those unexpected troubles. Yet she does not lose heart. She does not complain, but keeps silent. Rather than complain, she chooses a different part: For her part, the Gospel tells us, Mary "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (cf. Lk 2:19).

That is not what the shepherds and the people do. The shepherds tell everyone about what they had seen: the angel that appeared in the heart of the night, and his words concerning the Child. And the people, upon hearing these things, are amazed (cf. v. 18). Words and amazement. Mary, instead, is pensive; she keeps all these things, pondering them in her heart. We ourselves can have the same two different responses. The story told by the shepherds, and their own amazement, remind us of the beginnings of faith, when everything seems easy and straightforward. We rejoice in the newness of God who enters into our lives and fills us with wonder. Mary's pensiveness, on the other hand, is the expression of a mature, adult faith, not a faith of beginners. Not a newborn faith, it is rather a faith that now gives birth. For spiritual fruitfulness is born of trials and testing. From the quiet of Nazareth and from the triumphant promises received by the Angel – the beginnings – Mary now finds herself in the dark stable of Bethlehem. Yet that is where she gives God to the world. Others, before the scandal of the manger, might feel deeply troubled. She does not: she keeps those things, pondering them in her heart.

Let us learn from the Mother of God how to have that same attitude: to keep and to ponder. Because we may well have to endure certain "scandals of the manger". We hope that everything will be all right and then, like a bolt from the blue, an unexpected problem arises. Our expectations clash painfully with reality. That can also happen in the life of faith, when the joy of the Gospel is put to the test in troubling situations. Today the Mother of God teaches us to draw profit from this clash. She shows us that it is necessary: it is the narrow path to achieve the goal, the cross, without which there can be no resurrection. Like the pangs of childbirth, it begets a more mature faith.

### ***HAPPY NEW YEAR! A prayer for 2024***

Lord, as we embark on this new year, we lift up to you our loved ones, our communities, and the world. May your peace reign in our hearts and in the hearts of all people. Bring healing where there is brokenness and reconciliation where there is division. Let's end this year with a thankful heart and start the new year with peace and faith. Let us release the bitterness and frustrations of the past year. Let us move into the next year knowing God loves us and wants the best for us. Let's pray that the new year will be focused on healing ourselves through repentance and renewing our minds. We were not meant to do life alone! We can bring the light of hope into our own hearts, home, and world.



Masses For The Week

Sat Dec 30– 5:00pm

+Bonnie Kay Latour  
*req. by Margaret Lance*

Mon Jan 1 – 9am & 11am

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Tues Jan 2 – 9am

+Michael McCarthy  
*req. by Mary Frances Enright*

Wed Jan 3 – 7:00pm

+Daniel McCarroll  
*req. by Mary Louise LaBarre & Ken Reilly & Family*  
+Shirley Barrett  
*req. by Her Family*

Thur Jan 4 – 8:20am

+  
*req. by*

Fri Jan 5 – 8:20am

+  
*req. by*

*Tabernacle candle for Natasha,  
req. by Mary*

ATTENTION ENGAGED COUPLES!  
MARRIAGE PREPARATION CLASSES

Our next Marriage Preparation Course at St. John the Evangelist will begin on Monday nights, April 8 to May 13, 2024 from 7pm to 9pm. Call 668-3676 to register. Cost is \$300 per couple.

FIRST EUCHARIST PARENT INFORMATION MEETING  
TUESDAY JANUARY 23RD 2024

7:00pm-8:00pm

In the Church. Parent only meeting.  
First Eucharist workbooks and Rite of Enrolment card  
will be distributed.

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Classes begin Saturday February 3rd 2024  
Parish Centre  
More information coming January 2024.

Knights of Columbus, St John the Evangelist Council,  
meetings are the 1st Wednesday of each month from Sept  
to June. Next Meeting is Wednesday Jan 3rd, 2024 at 8PM  
at the Knights Hall at 133 Brock St North. For further  
information call or email Bryan Childerhouse  
[bryan.childerhouse@rogers.com](mailto:bryan.childerhouse@rogers.com) or call 416-508-9877

CWL GENERAL MEETING

Ladies of the parish, mark your calendars for Thursday,  
January 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. in the main room of the parish  
centre for our January general meeting. On the agenda is  
giving away our money to our charities and the opportunity  
to renew your CWL membership. Not a member, you are  
welcome to join us. If you have any questions, or require  
transportation, please contact Lynne Childerhouse at 905-  
431-6582 or [lchilderhouse@hotmail.com](mailto:lchilderhouse@hotmail.com).

Update Regarding the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund

On December 12, 2023 the Archdiocese of Toronto  
announced the first phase of funding as part of our \$6  
million commitment to the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund  
(IRF). Through the tremendous generosity of parishioners  
throughout the archdiocese, including our own parish, more  
than \$2.7 million has been directed through the IRF to  
organizations and projects committed to promoting healing  
and reconciliation for communities and families.

Recipients include the Embrace Life Council located in  
Iqaluit, Nunavut, that will receive \$250,000 over five years.  
The funds will be used for grief care packages to assist those  
mourning the loss of a loved one by suicide.

Thank you for your continued prayers and ongoing support  
as we journey together on the path of healing and  
reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples of This Land. To  
learn more, visit  
[www.archtoronto.org/healingandreconciliation](http://www.archtoronto.org/healingandreconciliation)

SUNDAY DECEMBER 31, 2023  
VIGIL OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD  
5PM WITH ADORATION UNTIL 7PM

MONDAY JANUARY 1, 2024  
SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD  
9AM, 11AM, 2PM SPANISH

*OFFICE OPENS TUESDAY JAN 2, 2024*

ShareLife Update GOAL \$148,700  
Collection to date as of December 19, 2023  
**\$134,478.90**

Envelopes for Christmas flower offering are still  
available at the back counter. Thank you for your  
generosity.

**The office will open on Tuesday January 2nd at 9am. No  
evening hours on Tuesday and Wednesday of that  
week.**



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