

Our Advent season draws to a close with a liturgy filled with promise and expectation. Luke's gospel text describes the first meeting of John the Baptist with the Lord he is to herald so selflessly – in a tableau rich in implications, as we shall see. The first reading from the prophet Micah sums up the immense hopes about to be realized with the coming of the New David. The messiah will be born in Bethlehem, the city of David; he will be a mighty leader, gathering God's scattered people and exercising a rule giving expression to God's 'power and majesty'; he will, in fact, be peace personified (cf. Eph 2:14).

The reading from the letter to the Hebrews describes how the Saviour's coming inaugurates a new and final order of things in the plan of God. The old covenant, with its animal sacrifices and burnt offerings, was only a foreshadowing. Many times the prophets, in the name of God, had rebuked the people for relying upon these external observances while their hearts were far from God and God's ways. Jesus himself was to run up against this same attitude. The letter to the Hebrews, we know, was written for people who looked back nostalgically to the rituals of old Israel, inviting them to leave these shadows behind and rejoice in the reality they pointed to. Today's passage takes us to the heart of the matter – the eternal designs of God shaping the mission of the eternal Son made man. True worship, as the psalm quoted reminds us (Ps 40), is giving one's life over to God in fidelity and obedience. The Saviour's becoming one of us, and giving himself – 'once and for all' – into the hands of his Father, through his Paschal Mystery, has realized this pattern in a manner beyond all human expectations. By this self-offering, he has become the true worship of the whole of creation. More than that, he has united us to himself in his act of worship – God's 'will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body'.

But all of this is in the future, as Luke describes the dawn of salvation. Presenting the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, he invites us to recognize how much is involved in the drama that is beginning. It realizes the designs of the eternal Father, whose 'promise made to Mary is fulfilled'; the Old Testament and its time of waiting is coming to an end, as its final and greatest spokesman recognizes the coming of the Son of God; it is through Mary – 'most blessed of all women' – that this dawn of salvation takes place; and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Mary has conceived, and Elizabeth with her child are able to enter into the joy that faith in this coming, or advent, brings to the world.

John Thornhill sm
www.theemmausseries.com

Are you called to follow in the footsteps of Mary as a priest or religious to carry the Good News of God's great Love?

If God is calling you to be a priest, religious or deacon, call Fr. Chris Lemieux 416-968-0997 vocations@vocations.ca www.vocationstoronto.ca



Blessed is the fruit of your womb

Readings ~ Micah 5:2-5a ~ Hebrews 10:5-10 ~ Luke 1:39-45

PARISH

Mass Intentions This Week – December 21 to 27

Please join us as we pray for the following announced intentions...

	Intention(s):	Offered by:
Monday, 9am	✠ Jamie Henneberry	Aunt Shirley
Tuesday, 9am	✠ members of the Koperwas family	The family
Wednesday, 9am	✠ Mike Lundy	Betty Horsey
Thursday, 9am	✠ Elsa Bratti	Mary Lynne Bratti
Friday	Nativity of the Lord <i>a very blessed Christmas to all!</i>	
Saturday, 9am	✠ Jeremy Theret	Geraldine Sneyd
5:15pm	✠ Helena Martin	Audrey Gilchrist
Sunday, 8am	✠ <i>For the needs of our parish and faithful parishioners</i> ✠	
9:30am	✠ Americo Amorim	The family
11am	✠ members of the Tipping family	Margaret Tipping
12:30pm	✠ Janina & Edward Kulaga	The family

Advent Vespers@OLS – Sunday, December 20, 4:30pm

You are invited to invest some of your time to "prepare the way of the Lord" by attending this beautiful service. As part of the ancient monastic tradition of Holy Hours, the early evening observance of Vespers consists of carefully selected scriptural readings, psalms, choral motets, chants & hymns. Including a solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, you will experience 50 minutes of peace, tranquility & prayer. For more information, contact the parish office.

75th Anniversary Parish Photo Directory

If you would like to be included in the directory, call the parish office to book your sitting or to indicate that you are interested in being contacted if more sittings are offered at a later date.

Victoria Scholars Concert@OLS – "Christmas Echoes" – Sunday, Dec. 20, 7:30pm

Join the Victoria Scholars for a festive and spirited celebration as they present a concert of carols from Christmas past & present by composers from Canada & around the world. Tickets at the door.

Christmas & New Year's Schedule

Christmas Eve – Thursday, December 24 ☞ 9am – regular weekday Mass
Nativity of the Lord* ☞ Vigil Masses at 5pm, 7:30pm, 11pm
Carols & music begins approximately 40 minutes prior to vigil Masses

Christmas Day – Friday, December 25 – Nativity of the Lord*
Regular Sunday schedule (8, 9:30, 11am, 12:30pm)

Saturday/Sunday, December 26/27 – Feast of the Holy Family
Regular weekend schedule (Saturday vigil at 5:15pm, Sunday at 8, 9:30, 11am, 12:30pm)

New Year's Eve – Thursday, December 31 ☞ 9am – regular weekday Mass
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, World Day of Peace ☞ 5:15pm vigil Mass

New Year's Day – Friday, Jan. 1 – Mary, Mother of God*, World Day of Peace
Regular Sunday schedule (8, 9:30, 11am, 12:30pm)

Saturday/Sunday, January 2/3 – Epiphany of the Lord
Regular weekend schedule (Saturday vigil at 5:15pm, Sunday at 8, 9:30, 11am, 12:30pm)

* Indicates a holy day of obligation. As Catholics, we are required to attend Mass on these special feast days.

"One of the most beautiful moments in history was that when pregnancy met pregnancy when child bearers became the first heralds of the King of Kings." – Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Ph.D., D.D.

COMMUNITY

Service of Nine Lessons & Carols with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

Enjoy music by Howells, Lauridsen, Poulenc and Willan. Takes place on Tuesday, December 22 at 7pm at the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, Paroisse du Sacré-Coeur, 381 Sherbourne St. For more information, visit www.thomasmorechurch.ca

"Theology of the Body is the Answer" – Jan. 9, 16, 23, 30, Feb. 6, 13, 10am-4pm

Of special interest to teens, young adults, parents and catechists! Why is St. John Paul II's life-changing teaching "The Theology of the Body" the answer to today's hottest issues? Theology of the Body is the New Evangelization and the new catechesis! Know your stuff. Today's culture is all about the body, beauty, sex, love and relationships. So are God and the Church. Takes place at Pauline Books & Media, 3022 Dufferin St. Cost: \$40 (pre-registration required). Visit www.tinyurl.com/TOB2016 or call 416-781-9131, ext. 226 for more information

Lectio Divina with Cardinal Thomas Collins – January 10, 7pm

Lectio Divina ("divine, or sacred, reading") is the name given to a spiritual tradition among Christians over the last two thousand years. This form of prayer involves three distinct stages: a) reading a short scripture passage b) reflecting on the passage and c) a short period of silence. We begin with Vespers at 7pm, followed by Lectio Divina from 7:30–8:15pm. All are welcome to join in this special evening of prayer. During the extensive renovations at St. Michael's Cathedral, Lectio Divina will be traveling to parishes around the archdiocese. Visit www.archtoronto.org/lectio for a full listing of locations.

Infertility? Recurrent Miscarriage? We Can Help!

Are you suffering and don't know where to turn for elective treatments that are morally acceptable? We can help. FertilityCare Toronto, a ShareLife member agency, utilizes the Creighton Model FertilityCare System and Natural Procreative Technology to assist women (teens through perimenopause) and couples wishing to effectively manage their fertility in a natural way. Visit www.fertilitycare.ca



An Intro to The Book of Revelation: God's Message of Hope in a Difficult Time

The symbolic language of the Apocalypse makes it one of the most difficult books of the Bible to understand. And yet, beyond so many images of "end of the world," there emerges a very coherent portrait of Jesus Christ, who stands in the midst of His faithful, offering a message of hope, comfort and consolation in a difficult time. The workshop, led by Msgr. Robert Nusca (Pastor of Holy Rosary Parish and Assoc. Professor of New Testament Studies at St. Augustine's Seminary), will offer an introduction to this "Last Book of the Bible," and help us to discover its message of hope for us today. Takes place on January 16 at St. Augustine's Seminary, 2661 Kingston Rd., Scarborough. Cost is \$40 and includes lunch. Register at www.staugustines.on.ca or call 416-261-7207, ext. 235 or email ioft@sastoronto.org

200th Anniversary of Missionary Oblates of Mary – January 18, Mass@7pm

St. Maximilian Kolbe Church, 4260 Cawthra Rd. Solemn Mass with Cardinal Thomas Collins.

Bioethics from a Roman Catholic Perspective – Tuesdays in February

Dr. Moira McQueen, from the University of Toronto, appointed by Pope Francis in October 2015 to audit the Synod on the Family in Rome, will be presenting a series of four lectures entitled "Bioethics: where science and medicine meet moral and ethical dilemmas". The series covers ethics, reproductive issues, stem cell therapies, end-of-life issues, euthanasia and physician-assisted dying. Takes place at All Saints' Catholic Church, 1415 Royal York Rd. from 7–9pm every Tuesday in February, 2016. Reserve your seats for this important series by sending an email to franca.gallucci28@gmail.com