

The gospel readings of the coming year come from Matthew. Today's reading, concerning 'how Jesus Christ came to be born', expresses the faith in the Incarnation of the community for which Matthew wrote. This community of Jewish Christians were anxious to persuade those with whom they had shared the traditions of Israel to believe in Christ as the 'fulfilment' of 'the Law and the prophets' (Mt 5.17).

Whereas, the more familiar story of Christ's birth, in Luke's gospel, is centred on Mary, the mother of the Saviour, Matthew's account – so remarkable in its accord is essential with Luke's account – is told from the point of view of Joseph, the one who was destined to be the foster father of the Saviour. It is through Joseph that the Davidic lineage of the child to be born – so important in the hopes of Israel – is proclaimed. Finding his betrothed to be with child, Joseph 'being a just man' considered divorcing her quietly. Some scholars see profound significance in Matthew's reference to 'justice' (i.e. fidelity to the traditions of Israel): the implication that before the divine mystery that confronted him – probably through his being informed by Mary – Joseph's first reaction was a sense of unworthiness. His reluctance was only overcome by a divine call that led him to take up the immense responsibility that was to be his.



All this was to fulfil the words of the Lord through the prophet

As in Luke's account, Mary's virginal conception is clearly affirmed. Her son is not only to be 'a descendant of David', as our reading from Romans declares, but also the Son of God, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit – something that our reading from Romans declares will be made manifest to the whole world 'through his resurrection from the dead'. Matthew also cites the words of Isaiah, 'a virgin will conceive'. The prophet's prediction, in fact, was that Ahaz the king was to be given a sign from God in the coming birth of a son. (There are about a dozen of these 'all this was to fulfil' citations in Matthew's gospel. They are not technical interpretations of the texts cited, but expressions – in the spirit of the rabbinical traditions – of the conviction that Christian faith's reading of the Old Testament recognises the 'fulfilment' of old Israel's hopes.)

The Davidic Messiah announced to Joseph in his dream is far more than a liberator from Roman occupation. His name – which means 'God saves' – points to his role as the Saviour: 'Saving the people from their sins', he will fulfil the true destiny of Israel, as the people chosen to bring the whole world to share in God's final blessings.

Telling of his coming as 'Emmanuel' – a name that means 'God is with us' – Matthew invites the Jewish people to recognise that the great theme of divine presence, running through the Scriptures, 'I will be your God; and you will be my people', has found a realisation beyond all their imagining. In fact, Matthew's gospel will close with the same theme from the mouth of Jesus himself: 'I am with you always; yes, to the end of time'.

John Thornhill sm
www.theemmausseries.com

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife... When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." Are you willing to respond as Joseph did?

If you think God is calling you to ministerial service, contact Fr. Chris Lemieux, Vocations Director, Archdiocese of Toronto. 416-968-0997 vocations@vocations.ca www.vocationstoronto.ca

Readings ~ Isaiah 7:10-14 ~ Romans 1:1-7 ~ Matthew 1:18-24

PARISH

Mass Intentions This Week – December 19 – December 25

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

	Intention(s):	Offered by:
Monday, 9am	✠ Kathleen Richards	Conrath family
Tuesday, 9am	✠ John Fitzgerald	Kevin & Marie Reilly
Wednesday, 9am	✠ Jamie Hanneberry	Aunt Shirley
Thursday, 9am	✠ Nicholas Ferik	Enedina Ferik
Friday, 9am	✠ Jean Kramar	sister & nephew
Saturday, 9am	✠ Elsa Bratti	Mary Lynne Bratti

Christmas & New Year's Schedule

Christmas Eve – Saturday, December 24 ☞ **Nativity of the Lord Vigil***
 Masses at 5pm, 7:30pm, 11pm
 Carols & music begins approximately 40 minutes prior to vigil Masses
 Please note: there will be no confession on this day.

Christmas Day – Sunday, December 25 ☞ **Nativity of the Lord***
 Regular Sunday schedule (8, 9:30, 11am, 12:30pm)
 At the 9:30am Christmas Day Mass, we will use a modified Liturgy of the Word for Children, allowing families the opportunity to experience what our young parishioners share at every 9:30am Mass on Sundays when they gather in the parish hall. Note that the children will remain seated with their families during this Mass.

New Year's Eve Vigil – Saturday, December 31
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, World Day of Peace
 Mass at 5:15pm

New Year's Day – Sunday, January 1
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, World Day of Peace
 Regular Sunday schedule (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.

BIRTHDAY WISHES FOR THE INFANT JESUS! We encourage families to take time during the hustle and bustle of the holidays and come together to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas... *the birth of our Lord Jesus*. Children are invited to make birthday cards for the infant Jesus. Tell Jesus what you are doing to show thanks for his great love in his birthday card! On Christmas Day, December 25, the whole family can visit the manger **before mass** to wish Jesus a happy birthday and offer their birthday cards.

2016-2017 SUNDAY MISSAL – There is a very limited supply available at the back of the church. Please place your \$3.00 payment in an envelope marked "Missal" into the offertory basket or drop it off at the church office.

Reminders for Sacramental Preparation
CONFIRMATION SESSION 2B meets on Sunday, January 22, 2017, 4-5:30pm or Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 7-8:30pm, Parish Hall.

FIRST COMMUNION CATECHISM SESSION FOR PARENTS ONLY meets on Thursday, January 26, 2017, 7-8:30pm, Parish Hall.

COMMUNITY

SHARELIFE ~ You Can Work Wonders!

You don't have to look far to see the wonders being worked by ShareLife. You can find them in your neighbourhood, in the homes on your street, in the pews of your parish. In 42 municipalities, in 225 parishes, and in more than 20 languages, those in need receive professional, faith-informed and compassionate care as a result of ShareLife funding. They feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, protect the meek and care for the sick. Those in need received professional, faith-informed and compassionate care as a result of your generosity. Thank you for your support!

Children's Liturgy of the Word – Children will not be dismissed at the 9:30am Mass on Christmas Day, December 25. Instead, we will have a modified Liturgy of the Word for Children. Note: Children will remain seated with their families during this Mass.

Rosary – prayed daily at 8:30am prior to the 9am Mass. The **Rosary Group** meets every Friday at 2pm in the Parish Hall and prays fifteen decades followed by the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. All are welcome to join in prayer.

Victoria Scholars Concert – TONIGHT, December 18, 7:30pm at Our Lady of Sorrows Church Ring the Yuletide with the Victoria Scholars as they present a concert of carols from Christmas past and present by composers from Canada and around the world. Join the Scholars for a festive and spirited celebration of season music. Tickets available at the door: Regular \$30, Senior 65+ / Student \$25. Doors open at 7pm. Visit www.victoriascholars.ca

Lectio Devina – The Reluctant Prophet of Repentance (Jonah 3:1-4:11) Sunday, January 8, 2017, St. Michael's Cathedral. We begin with vespers (evening prayer) at 7:00pm followed by Lectio Divina from 7:30pm-8:15pm. All are welcome. www.archtoronto.org

Keeping the Faithful Connected – The goal of the National Catholic Broadcasting Council (NCBC) is to insure that Catholics are able to experience the Mass each day when they are unable to attend their local parish. The primary way we enable this across Canada is through our Broadcast Partners at Salt + Light Television, VisionTV and yesTV. [The Daily TV Mass is now available Monday-Saturday **anytime** from **anyplace**.] Visit www.dailytvmass.com to find out more about how to stay connected with our faith. Call NCBC at 1-888-383-6277 for more information.

Pre-Theology of the Body - removing blocks, obstacles and -isms so we can hear the Gospel of the body! December 26-29, 2016, 9:30am-4:00pm, Pauline Books & Media, 3022 Dufferin St., Toronto. Pre-registration required. Call 416 781 9131.

Becoming Experts in Humanity – Saturday, January 7, 2017, 9:30am-2:30pm (includes mass in the seminary chapel) St. Augustine's Scarborough Campus. An exploration of factors that influence human behavior led by Dr. Josephine Lombardi. For further details and registration go to www.staugustines.on.ca.

Mass of Comfort and Light – Monday, January 11, 2017 at St. Padre Pio Church Call 416 921 1163 for more information or email info@cfstoronto.com.

He is the Light of the World! Enrich your faith this Advent and Christmas with special programming throughout the season on EWTN. Attend Mass in Vatican City with Pope Francis, enjoy concerts from Europe and travel to the sacred sites of the Holy Land. Find EWTN in your area by visiting www.ewtn.com/channelfinder.