

Despite the fact that many of the themes of Christian faith are fading, Luke's gospel account of the Saviour's birth resonates in the awareness of most Australians – the Child in the manger, the shepherds and the angels' song of "Peace on earth". We believers are challenged to own what the story has to tell a struggling world - beyond commercial trivialisation and the sentimental attractiveness of a new born babe.

The second readings of the liturgies of Christmas Day point beyond these superficialities, inviting us to share in the wonder and joy brought by the Saviour's birth: the dawn of salvation for the whole world! "God's grace (saving power) has been revealed" bringing "salvation for the whole human race"; "in these last days God has spoken through his Son".

For a renewed Christian faith, all things are moving towards the consummation of God's designs for creation. With the coming of this dawn, God's plan has reached its great climax. Blessed with faith in Christ, we rejoice as we hear Isaiah giving expression to the messianic expectations of old Israel, because we recognise their amazing fulfilment in the story of Jesus, the son of David, the "Prince of Peace", bringing to the human family the "good news" – "Your God is King!"

Luke's gospel narrative is so well remembered because it is a masterpiece. Christ's birth is set on the world stage, within the "Pax Romana" of a mighty empire; and the nation's messianic expectations are fulfilled in Bethlehem, "the town of David". But contrasts soon emerge with these grand settings that fill this dawn of our salvation with gospel overtones, anticipating what is to take place as the Saviour's mission unfolds. The earthly pomp of the empire and the chequered history of the Davidic dynasty are far removed from this humble birth, amidst the overflow of a crowded inn – with a manger for a crib and a crowd of smelly shepherds as privileged witnesses. Rome's proud boast, that its legions have brought peace to the world, pales into insignificance for those who recognise what this birth means for the whole of creation - as the angel hosts sing "Glory to God" and "peace to all those who enjoy God's favour". The chatter of the shepherds is a foil to the response of Mary, the first of all Christian believers, looking into the future and "treasuring all these things and pondering them in her heart".

We have another very different masterpiece, in the opening passage of John's gospel. This telling of the same story is the fruit of a long meditation upon the dawning of the world's salvation: "In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God ... The Word was the true light that enlightens all men and he was coming into the world ... The Word was made flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of God".



God's saving power has been revealed – salvation for the whole human race

John Thornhill sm
www.theemmausseries.com

We celebrate the birth of our Lord into our world; however, many have not received Him into their hearts. If Christ lives in your heart and you would like to help others discover the Lord, He may be calling.

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 52:7-10 ~ Hebrews 1:1-6 ~ John 1:1-18

PARISH

Mass Intentions This Week – December 25 – January 1

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

	Intention(s):	Offered by:
Monday, 9am	✠ Maria Estorba	family
Tuesday, 9am	✠ Elizabeth Ciscagnett	Marie Clarke
Wednesday, 9am	✠ 57 th Wedding Anniversary	Sadie
Thursday, 9am	✠ Donald Barrett	family
Friday, 9am	... of Joe Conrath	Tom Sansone
Saturday, 9am	✠ Joseph & Catherine Giuliano	family
5:15pm	✠ Pasko Pavkovic	family
Sunday, 8am	✠ For the needs of our parish and faithful parishioners ✠	
9:30am	✠ Catherine Werderitch	S. Allen
11am	... of Daniella Servedio	sister & nephew
12:30pm	✠ Andrew Hurley	Dodig Family

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2016

Dear Parishioners,

*For unto us a child is born....
O come let us adore Him!*

On that first Christmas the angels praised God and the shepherds came and adored the newborn King. In our busy lives, we need to pause and treasure the gift of Christmas in our hearts. That gift is simply, Jesus!

We warmly welcome all who have come today to celebrate this glorious feast. We welcome the stranger, the traveller and guests! We welcome our students home from university or college for a good winter's rest! We welcome parishioners who moved away but join us today as old friends! We welcome all who have not been active of late in their Catholic faith, and hope they will find new hope and inspiration this Christmas to come back again and again! We welcome our faithful parishioners, loyal and true; may the Lord bless you for all you do.

As we gather with family and friends, thankful for our many blessings, let us also remember in prayer those who are alone, who are suffering and who do not live in peace. Let us welcome this wonderful and grace-filled opportunity to put aside past differences and old habits and begin anew that prayerful relationship with the Lord and His Church community. We are, after all, one People of God – redeemed by the Light. May we walk by the Light, and live by the Light – together in love.

On behalf of all the staff and myself, may our Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, bless you, your families and loved ones at this blessed time of hope and grace. May the peace, joy, and love of the Holy Family be present in your lives each day of the New Year.

New Year's Schedule

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.

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 FOR PARENTS meets on Sunday, January 22, 2017, 2-3pm or Thursday January 26, 2017, 7-8:30pm, Parish Hall.

SHARELIFE - As we navigate through the Christmas season, our lives are overtaken by the many demands before us – shopping, Christmas parties, family gatherings and the like. It is also a time that we at ShareLife pause to reflect on the past year, and give thanks for the generosity of our parishioners toward the work of our agencies. Overall, \$13.7 million was raised for ShareLife during the past year, which includes contributions received from schools, employee campaigns, and our corporate campaign. We are indeed grateful for the support and generosity that is shown toward helping the poor that turn to our agencies for assistance.

The Sharelife office has released a Report to Donors sharing the results of the 2016 campaign and demonstrating how your support has made a difference. Copies of the report are available at the back of the church or can be downloaded from www.sharelife.org.

Children's Liturgy of the Word – Children will not be dismissed at the 9:30am Mass on New Year's Day, January 1, 2017. Children are to remain seated with their families during this Mass.

Rosary – prayed daily at 8:30am prior to the 9am Mass. Note: The **Rosary Group** will NOT meet after Christmas and will resume on Friday, January 6 at 2pm in the Parish Hall.

"Final Friday" Fellowship – last Friday of each month, after 9am Mass. Everyone is invited to the parish hall for refreshments. Take advantage of this special opportunity to get to know your fellow parishioners. All are welcome...bring a friend!

Stretch and Flex – Tuesdays, 6:15pm-7:30pm, 2nd floor of the Running Room. \$10 per session. Bring a bottle of water, a yoga-type mat and wear comfy clothing.

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.

Lay Spiritual Formation – Saturday January 7, 2017, St. Augustine's Scarborough Campus. An examination of factors that influence human nature and freedom led by Dr. Josephine Lombardi. For further details and registration go to www.staugustines.on.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

Christmas Concert: God is Born – Sunday, January 8, 2017, 5:00pm, Our Lady of Sorrows Church: European Christmas music including English and Polish Carols for voices, bells and instruments. Tickets: \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door, children under 12 free. Call 6477746581 or Email: novisingerstoronto@gmail.com