

Today, our Advent liturgy takes on a new focus. In the past Sundays, the theme of the Saviour's 'coming' has made us aware of the unfolding of God's plan for creation. Luke's gospel of the Annunciation – emphasising the fact that the coming of the Saviour depended upon Mary's consent – reminds us of the mystery that is basic to our existence as persons, that we must all play our part in the realisation of God's final plan. Our life 'in Christ' is at once gift and task. All that we do, leading to eternal life, begins with the unmerited gifts of God's 'grace', but these gifts bring with them the tasks whereby we realise our true personhood, as followers of Christ.

Our first reading from 2 Samuel is chosen because it contains the prophecy that the sovereignty of the House of David will last forever. This prophecy, the angel tells Mary, will be fulfilled in the Son she is to conceive, who will be given 'the throne of his ancestor, David', and will exercise a 'reign that will never end'. This fascinating Old Testament text, however, reflects the ambiguities of the mystery of divine/human collaboration through which God's designs are realised. Though David became, in retrospect, a symbolic figure in the messianic expectations of old Israel, there was much in his life that does not bear close scrutiny. And many of the kings who were his descendants were oppressors of the people, for whom the Jerusalem temple was a symbol of their centralised political power. The prophecy of Nathan, in the tradition that has developed over the intervening centuries, subtly hints at these ambiguities. God will fulfil the messianic expectations that have come to be associated with David's name, but the prophecy distances itself from the selfish politics of the House of David - David will not build God's 'house'; he is reminded that he was only a shepherd boy when God made him great; when God builds up his house, and gives it a reign that will never end, the whole world will know that it is all God's doing.



Let what you have said be done to me

What a contrast between this history, marked by human inadequacies, and the consent of Mary, opening the way to the glorious fulfilment of old Israel's hopes. The gospel account of Mary's encounter with God's messenger, we should note, is not a visual description – as suggested by familiar paintings. Taking the form of a dialogue, it spells out the decision in which Mary – putting aside her puzzlement and the uncertainties associated with the future into which she was being invited – gave her wholehearted consent. This consent, it is clear, is possible through God's 'grace' and favour: 'Rejoice so highly favoured', is the greeting brought by God's messenger. The narrative makes it clear that this beginning owes nothing to human standing or achievement. By human standards, Mary is an insignificant slip of a girl – fourteen or fifteen was the usual age of betrothal. She comes from Nazareth, an obscure village of about 150 souls, not even mentioned in the Old Testament. But the passing of time will bring to light how great were God's gifts, and how total was Mary's heroic response – making her the mother of the Saviour, the model of discipleship – indeed the Mother of the whole family of discipleship.

The reading from St Paul, the concluding passage of Romans, calls us back to awareness of the place of Mary's response - and our personal responses - in a total plan shaped by God's gifts, and our carrying out of the tasks these gifts have brought – a 'mystery kept secret for endless ages ... the way the eternal God wants things to be', revealed in Jesus Christ, and to be made known to the whole human family.

John Thornhill sm
www.theemmausseries.com

From the angel Gabriel, Mary heard God's plan for her life and she said "Yes!"...and so the Saviour came into the world. Pray to know God's Will for your life, so as to help bring Jesus to our world.

If you think God is calling you to do this as a priest, religious or deacon, contact Fr. Chris Lemieux, Vocations Director, Archdiocese of Toronto
416-968-0997 vocations@archtoronto.org www.vocationstoronto.ca

PARISH

Readings ~ 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 ~ Romans 16:25-27 ~ Luke 1:26-38

Mass Intentions This Week — December 25 - January 31, 2018

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

	Intention(s):	Offered by:
Monday, 9am	☞ Celebrated for the needs of all members of our parish family ☞	
Tuesday, 9am	✠ Steven Fritz	Jeannette & Rene families
Wednesday, 9am	✠ Elizabeth Cascagnett	Marie Clarke
Thursday, 9am	✠ members of Mahoney family	
Friday, 9am	✠ Charles Moreland	Reilly family
Saturday, 9am	✠ members of Grogan family	
5:15pm	✠ Donald Barrett	family
Sunday, 8am	☞ Celebrated for the needs of all members of our parish family ☞	
9:30am	✠ Jacqueline Gorski	OLS Sr. Choir
11am	☞ Celebrated for the needs of all members of our parish family ☞	

Christmas & New Year's Schedule

Christmas Eve† / Christmas Day ♦ Nativity of the Lord*

Sunday, December 24 — 5, 7, 11pm / Monday, December 25 — 8, 9:30 & 11am & 12:30pm

†Carols & music begins approximately 40 minutes prior to Christmas Eve Vigil Masses.

Additional seating is available in the Parish Hall with video & audio simulcast of the Liturgy. The hall can be accessed from the church exterior (glassed in stairwell), at the west side of the church. Eucharistic Ministers will provide communion.

Feast of the Holy Family

Saturday, December 30 — 5:15pm Vigil Mass

Sunday, December 31 — 8, 9:30 & 11am. No Mass at 12:30pm today.

New Year's Eve / New Year's Day ♦ Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*

Sunday, December 31 — 5pm / Monday, January 1 — 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 in His birthday card what you are doing to show thanks for his great love. 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.

2018 Sunday Missals — There is a limited supply available on the book rack at the back of the church. Please place your \$3 payment in an envelope marked "Sunday Missal" into the offertory basket or drop it off at the church office. Parishioners are encouraged to prepare for Mass by reviewing the readings before coming to Mass and listening to the proclaimed Word of God during Mass. If you wish to bring your personal copy of the Sunday Missal to Mass, please put your name on the inside cover.

Phase II Renovation -The entire Cliveden south stairwell as well as the north exterior basement stairwell are closed during construction. **Basement hall and washrooms can be accessed through the glassed-in stairwell on the west side of the church, and through the north Cliveden basement stairwell.**

While access is limited, please contact the parish office if you wish to receive Communion at home.



Dear Parishioners,

During the holy season of Christmas. I would like to share with you, the message sent to the parish by Bishop Boissonneau:

During the Christmas season, it is a helpful reflection to recall that the holiest of families was turned away and indeed struggled with all kinds of challenges as they welcomed the gift of Jesus Christ. Joseph and Mary met with closed doors, and so placed Jesus in a manger, "because there was no place for them in the inn". Jesus was born rejected by some and regarded by many others with indifference.

Gratefully, our parishes are communities where rejection and indifference are met with the message of faith and love. This is true especially in the cases of struggling families, the elderly, the poor, the newly arrived and the ill.

Through the grace of the one born in a stable and lying in a manger, let us strive to make room for those who have not found a room at the inn.

May the Lord who came to be with us, also bless us and our families with gifts to share with those around us.

Fr. Nino

Reminders for Sacramental Preparation

RECONCILIATION SESSION 2 (Children Only) - Choose **ONE** of the following sessions to attend Sunday, January 21 (2:30pm-3:15) **OR** Monday, 22 (6:30-7:15). We meet in the parish hall.

Gifts of Securities Can Help Everyone!— You can support the Church using securities (stocks, mutual funds, bonds). You will not have to pay any capital gains on your securities gift and you will get a tax receipt for the full amount. Also you can divide up your gifts as you wish (e.g. Parish offertory or building fund, ShareLife, The Shepherds' Trust, St. Augustine's Seminary, special collections, etc.). For more information please contact the parish office at 416 231 6016 or the Development Office of the Archdiocese of Toronto at 416 934 3411. Visit www.archtoronto.org/development.

Liturgy of the Word for Children— This program for young parishioners (4-10 years of age) takes place on Sundays at the 9:30am Mass. Please note that access to the hall is through the west glassed-in stairwell. Children will not be dismissed at the 9:30am Mass on Christmas Day, December 25, 2017. Children are to remain seated with their families during this Mass.



Hearing Assist Headsets - Parishioners who have trouble hearing at Mass are welcome to request a Hearing Assistance device from the ushers when they enter the church. They are available on a "first come —first served" basis. These headsets pick up the feed directly from our sound system and can be used with or without hearing aids.

Coffee Friday — **Last Friday of each month**, after the 9am Mass. Everyone is invited to the parish hall for refreshments. This is an opportunity to get to know the members of your parish community. All are welcome. . . .bring a friend!

Rosary — prayed daily prior to the 9am Mass. **Note: The Rosary Group will NOT meet after Christmas and will resume on Friday, January 5 at 2pm in the parish hall.**