

# Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul And the Shrine of Saint Katharine Drexel

18th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, Archbishop of Philadelphia*



**December 5, 2021**

## **Parish Mission Statement**

With Jesus Christ as our Head and Foundation, the Cathedral Parish of Saints Peter and Paul forms a vibrant Roman Catholic community in Center City and serves all those who come to the Cathedral Basilica, the Mother Church of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Our parish community professes our Catholic Faith, ministers to others and welcomes all, as rooted in the Word of God and the celebration of the Sacraments of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

*Adopted by the Parish Council, August 10, 2021*

**Reverend Gerald Dennis Gill**

**Rector**

**Reverend Monsignor Arthur E. Rodgers**

**Rector Emeritus**

**Reverend Matthew K. Biedrzycki**

**Parochial Vicar**

**Reverend Monsignor Louis A. D'Addezio**

**Priests in Residence**

**Deacon Jesús M. Burgos**

**Permanent Deacon**

**Sister Eleanor McCann, R.S.M.**

**Pastoral Associate**

**Sister Mary Luchia, P.V.M.I**

**Parish Evangelization**

**Sister Mary Raphael Paradis, R.S.M.**

**Outreach Coordinator**

**Charlene Angelini**

**Director of Cathedral Parish Music**

**Mark Loria**

**Principal Organist**

**The Cathedral Shop is open**

**Wed. 10:30 AM - 2:00 PM / Sat. 11:00 AM - 5:15 PM**

**Sun. 10:30 AM - 6:30 PM / 215-665-9032**

## **MASS SCHEDULE**

**Sunday:** 5:15 PM Anticipated Mass on Saturday  
8:00 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:00 AM in Basilica  
12:30 PM Spanish in Cathedral Chapel  
Sta. Misa en español, en la Capilla  
6:30 PM in Basilica

**Weekdays:** 7:15 AM, 12:05 PM in Cathedral Chapel

**Saturdays:** 12:05 PM in Cathedral Chapel

**Holy Days:** See website

## **SACRAMENT OF PENANCE SCHEDULE**

**Sunday:** 9:00 AM and 5:30 PM in Basilica  
12:00 PM (español) en la Capilla

**Weekdays:** 11:30 AM in Basilica

**Saturday:** 4:15 PM in Basilica

**Please contact the Parish Office to arrange for the:**

**SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM AND MARRIAGE,  
SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK,  
AND HOLY COMMUNION OF THE SICK  
AND HOMEBOUND**

Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter & Paul   
@CathedralPhila 

**Parish Office Hours: Monday to Friday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

**1723 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 • 215-561-1313**

**[www.cathedralphila.org](http://www.cathedralphila.org) • [info@cathedralphila.org](mailto:info@cathedralphila.org)**

**Shrine of Saint Katharine Drexel <https://www.saintkatharinedrexelshrine.com/>**

# Second Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 5, 2021

*"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:  
all flesh shall see the salvation of God." LK 3:4,6*

*R. Alleluia, alleluia*



## December 4 Saturday, Advent Weekday St. John Damascene

12:05 James Hennelly  
5:15 Jim Hennelly

## December 5 Second Sunday of Advent

8:00 For the People of the Parish  
9:30 Lawrence J. Rocco  
11:00 Angelo Pagnotti  
12:30 Gregorio Gonzalez  
6:30 Irene Lux

## December 6 Monday, Advent Weekday St. Nicholas

7:15 John McCann  
12:05 Robert Stewart

## December 7 Tuesday St. Ambrose

7:15 Essie Mae Rubin  
12:05 Marguerite P. Grant  
5:15 Intentions of the Priest Celebrant

## December 8 Wednesday The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

7:15 Intentions of the Priest Celebrant  
12:05 Intentions of the Priest Celebrant  
5:15 Intentions of the Priest Celebrant  
7:00 Intentions of the Priest Celebrant

## December 9 Thursday, Advent Weekday St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin

7:15 Alessandro Iavarone  
12:05 Sebastian Skistimas

## December 10 Friday, Advent Weekday

7:15 Frank Byrne  
12:05 Martin Breslin

## December 11 Saturday, Advent Weekday St. Damasus I

12:05 Clair Gillespie  
5:15 Eileen Maher

## December 12 Third Sunday of Advent

8:00 For the People of the Parish  
9:30 Charles & Mary McGinnis  
11:00 Helen Timlin  
12:30 Eduviges Rodríguez  
6:30 Kenneth C. Sweeney

Dear Parishioners,

*Today is the Second Sunday of Advent!* This Sunday we are introduced to Saint John the Baptist, the precursor of the Lord and our companion to prepare for the Birth of the Savior. The Baptist boldly preaches that our preparation must be thorough and focused on the promise of salvation that comes with Jesus. In other words, our preparation during Advent must be real and practical, with plans for a good Advent Confession and decisions that focus more on the presence of Christ in our lives. The salvation that comes with the Birth of Jesus is so immediate and intimate that John cries out "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3: 6). The *Nothing Compares to Being There* initiative of the Archdiocese, with its emphasis on the irreplaceable need to be *in person* for the celebration of Mass, invites us to see *in person* the salvation of God in the flesh with the celebration of the Sunday Mystery of the Eucharist.

*This Wednesday, December 8, 2021 is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Holy Day of Obligation.* This Advent Holy Day commemorates the conception of Mary in the womb of her mother without any stain of original sin. This gift to Mary prepares her to be the worthy Mother of the Christ Child. Mary, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, is the Patroness of the United States of America. The Holy Day Mass schedule is:

**Tuesday, December 7**

**5:15 PM Anticipated Mass in the Cathedral Chapel**

**Wednesday, December 8**

**7:15 AM in the Cathedral Chapel**

**12:05 PM in the Cathedral Basilica**

**5:15 PM in the Cathedral Chapel**

**7:00 PM in the Cathedral Chapel (Mass for the Consecration to Saint Joseph)**  
**11:30 AM Confessions in the Cathedral Basilica**

*On Saturday, December 11, 2021, we anticipate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of the Americas.* Archbishop Nelson Perez will celebrate Mass on Saturday evening, December 11, 2021 at 9:00 PM in the Cathedral Basilica.

*I am so very grateful to all those who participated in our Annual Eucharistic Devotion, our Parish Forty Hours, this past week. It was a beautiful witness to our love for the Holy Eucharist. Thank you to our Cathedral Young Adults for their well done and well received Pot Luck following the 11:00 AM Solemn Mass last Sunday. The response to the annual *Parish Fall Collection* is promising. I thank those who have already contributed and remind those who have not to please consider doing so.*

*Next Sunday, the second collection will be directed to the liturgical preparations for the celebration of Christmas.* You can mail your Sunday offerings to the Cathedral Parish Office or make use of the many ways to give electronically. Please see <http://cathedralphila.org/donate/>. Thank you so very much for your goodness and generosity to the Cathedral Parish.

God bless you,  
Father Dennis Gill, Rector





## What's Happening at the Parish Outside the Liturgical Schedule

- Dec. 4** Blanket Drive  
**Dec. 5** Christmas Concert, Cathedral, 3PM  
**Dec. 8** Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary—*Holy Day of Obligation*  
 Keys and Sword Kick-off event. See P.5  
**Dec. 9** Catechetical Session, NR, 7PM  
 Perpetual Novena to Saint Katharine Drexel,  
*following the 7:15 AM and 12:05 PM Masses.*  
**Dec. 10** Divine Mercy Chaplet, Zoom, 3PM  
**Dec. 11** Advent Reflection Day, Drexel Hall  
**Dec. 12** Advent Giving Tree-Drop-off last day

## ADVENT GIVING TREE



Please participate in the  
**Advent Giving Tree!**

During the first weeks of Advent take a gift tag or tags. The gifts or gift cards may be dropped off in the **Sacristy** before or after Mass, or anytime during Cathedral visiting hours, wrapped and with the identifying tag on

each gift by the **Third Sunday of Advent, December 12.** Gifts and/or gift cards may also be dropped off in person or mailed to the Rectory office at 1723 Race St. Philadelphia, PA 19103. This will allow for the distribution of these gifts for Christmas.

You can also donate on-line and just need to identify the gift for Advent Giving Tree on the subject line.

Thank you in advance for your generosity to the many men, women and children who will benefit from your kindness this Christmas.

Please **do not leave** the presents under the tree.



### Prayer for your second week of Advent

Dear Jesus, you entered our world on Christmas as the Prince of Peace. This Advent, as we strive to become the best version of ourselves, fill us with a deep and abiding peace. Help us share that peace with those who need it most. Amen.

Adapted from DynamicCatholic.org



## PRAYER PARTICIPATION GENEROSITY

Let us prepare our hearts during this time of Advent to welcome the Messiah. His mother, Mary, the woman of the YES, made the plan of God her own without reservation. Let us ask Mary to become a clear light for our steps and the highest model for our inspiration.

The spirit of giving is most evident during the Advent season. Please consider a gift to the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul through your will or a planned gift.

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Pray for us.*

*And let us remember to always pray for each other!*

Your generosity on 11/21 was:

Regular	\$5,724
Special	1,151 (for winter maintenance needs of Cathedral)
Total	\$6,875

Your generosity on 11/28 was:

Regular	\$5,045.50
Special	1,282.50 (for promotion of Shrine of SKD and the Memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connelly)
Total	6,328.00

**We hope that your generosity will exceed \$10,000 this week.** Thank you!

Please consider a gift to support the good works of our Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul.

- You are invited to become a member of our parish family and take part in our ministries, programs, events, and worship. Please speak with Father Gill, Father Biedrzycki, Deacon Burgos or Sr. Eleanor McCann after any Sunday Mass and one of them can help you register
- Planned Gifts** – call and leave a message for Rose at 215-561-1313, so she may discuss with you long-term ways that may be best for you such as annuities, life insurance, stock, estate planning and memorial gifts
- Text to give** anytime, especially for your Sunday Mass offering – text “Cathedral” to 215-709-9955
- Venmo us @cathedralbasilica**
- Donate on-line** at <http://cathedralphila.org/donate/> or scan this QR code:



### LIVE STREAMED SUNDAY MASS AT 11:00 AM

Click **Here**, or go to: <https://vimeo.com/event/17522>

***Please remember these parishioners and friends of the Cathedral Parish in your prayers/ Ora por los enfermos:***

*Paige Bednarsky, Loyalty, Lucila C. Castor, Mark Louie Castor, Judy Miller, Marie Rizzi, Daniel Damon, Nancy, Jacqueline and her intentions, Anthony Pelle, Jr., Baby Ava Hope, David Blue, Jeannette Argir, Judy Day, Wally Dalton, Baby Benjamin Summers, Eileen Maher, Carmine Meadows, April De Matto, and those in nursing homes or hospitals and all the sick.*

***To add or remove parishioners, friends or family members to the prayer list, please send an email to: [sr.mrparadis@archphila.org](mailto:sr.mrparadis@archphila.org), or call Sister Mary Raphael, Parish Outreach Coordinator, at the Cathedral Parish Office, 215-561-1313 Monday through Thursday. Por favor envíe un email o llame a la oficina parroquial para añadir o remover los nombres de la lista de personas que estén enfermas.***

***Declaración de la Misión de la  
Parroquia Catedral de los Santos  
Pedro y Pablo***

Con Jesucristo como nuestra Cabeza y Fundamento, la Parroquia Catedral de los Santos Pedro y Pablo forma una vibrante comunidad Católica Romana en el centro de la ciudad y sirve a todos aquellos que vienen a la Catedral Basílica, la Iglesia Madre de la Arquidiócesis de Filadelfia. Nuestra comunidad parroquial profesa nuestra fe católica, ministra a los demás y da la bienvenida a todos, enraizada en la Palabra de Dios y la celebración de los sacramentos de Jesucristo, nuestro Señor y Salvador.

*Adoptado por el Consejo Pastoral  
Parroquial, agosto 10, 2021*

**BOLETIN INFORMATIVO**

Oficina para Católicos Hispanos

**CLICK HERE**

<https://oficinahispanacatolica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/>

**EVENTOS DE INTERES**

Para ver los eventos que se llevarán a cabo en la Catedral Basílica de los Santos Pedro y Pablo visite:

<https://cathedralphila.org/category/events/>

**Misa Televisada en Español**

En UNIVISIÓN 65 - Todos los domingos a las  
**6:30 AM**

**[La Santa Misa Grabada en línea](#)**

**SACRAMENTO DE LA RECONCILIACIÓN**

Los domingos a las 12:00 PM en la Capilla

**«Ven y Verás» Juan 1:39**

**10 y 11 de diciembre del 2021**

Un fin de semana para hombres hispanos en edad de secundaria, o mayores, para experimentar la vida en el Seminario San Carlos Borromeo y para aprender cómo discernir una vocación.

El fin de semana comenzará a las 7:00 p.m. el viernes y terminará el sábado a las 6:00 p.m.

Registración previa es requerida.

Para registrarse llame a la Oficina para Católicos Hispanos al 215-667-2820 antes del 3 de diciembre.

**BÚSQÜEDA**

Visite FORMED.org o vaya a

**<https://watch.formed.org/la-busqueda>**

**REFLEXIÓN DEL PÁRROCO**

Estimados feligreses,

*¡Hoy es el segundo domingo de Adviento!* En este domingo se nos presenta a San Juan Bautista, el precursor del Señor y nuestro compañero para prepararnos para el Nacimiento del Salvador. El Bautista predica con valentía que nuestra preparación debe ser completa y enfocada en la promesa de salvación que viene con Jesús. En otras palabras, nuestra preparación durante el Adviento debe ser real y práctica, con planes para una buena confesión de Adviento y decisiones que se centren más en la presencia de Cristo en nuestras vidas. La salvación que viene con el nacimiento de Jesús es tan inmediata e íntima que Juan clama “todos los hombres verán la salvación de Dios” (Lucas 3: 6). La iniciativa *Nada se Compara con Estar Ahí* de la arquidiócesis, con su énfasis en la necesidad insustituible de estar *en persona* para la celebración de la Misa, nos invita a ver *en persona* la salvación de Dios en el hombre con la celebración del Misterio dominical de la Eucaristía.

*Este miércoles 8 de diciembre del 2021 es la Solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Santísima Virgen María, Día de Precepto.* Este día de Adviento conmemora la concepción de María en el vientre de su madre sin ninguna mancha de pecado original. Este don a María la prepara para ser la digna Madre del Niño Jesús. María, bajo el título de la Inmaculada Concepción, es la Patrona de los Estados Unidos de América. El horario de la Misa de este día de precepto es:

**Martes 7 de diciembre**

**5:15 PM Misa anticipada en la capilla de la catedral**

**Miércoles 8 de diciembre**

**7:15 AM en la Capilla Catedral**

**12:05 PM en la Catedral Basílica**

**5:15 PM en la Capilla de la Catedral**

**7:00 PM en la Capilla de la Catedral (Misa de Consagración a San José)**

**11:30 AM Confesiones en la Catedral Basílica**

*El sábado 11 de diciembre del 2021, anticipamos la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Patrona de las Américas.* El Arzobispo Nelson Pérez celebrará la misa el sábado 11 de diciembre del 2021 a las 9:00 PM en la Catedral Basílica.

*Estoy muy agradecido con todos aquellos que participaron en nuestra Devoción Eucarística Anual, nuestras Cuarenta Horas Parroquiales, la semana pasada. Fue un hermoso testimonio de nuestro amor por la Sagrada Eucaristía. Agradecemos a los Jóvenes Adultos de la Catedral por su buena labor en el compartir «Pot Luck por sus siglas en inglés» después de la misa solemne de las 11:00 AM el domingo pasado. La respuesta a la Colecta Anual de Otoño de la parroquia es prometedora. Agradezco a los que ya han contribuido y les recuerdo a los que no lo han hecho que por favor consideren hacerlo.*

*El próximo domingo, la segunda colecta estará dirigida a los preparativos litúrgicos para la celebración de la Navidad. Puede enviar sus ofrendas dominicales a la oficina parroquial de la Catedral o hacer uso de las muchas formas de donar electrónicamente. Consulte <http://cathedralphila.org/donate/>. Muchas gracias por su bondad y generosidad con la Parroquia Catedral.*

Dios te bendiga,  
Padre Dennis Gill, Rector

**NADA SE  
COMPARA  
con estar ahí**





## A HOLIDAY KICKOFF PARTY

THE KEYS AND SWORD IS AN EFFORT OF THE MOTHER CHURCH OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA, THE CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL. WHAT BEGAN AS AN ANNUAL EVENT HAS TRANSFORMED INTO A YEAR-ROUND INITIATIVE ON BEHALF OF THE CATHEDRAL. THIS HOLIDAY KICKOFF PARTY WILL UNITE THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA BUSINESS COMMUNITY AS WE EXPAND THIS INITIATIVE TO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TO BUILD CONNECTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR THE MOTHER CHURCH.

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

With a word from:  
Patricia (Trish) D. Wellenbach  
President & CEO, Please Touch Museum  
Chair, Thomas Jefferson University Board of Trustees

\* Prior to the start of our event, we invite everyone to join us for Mass celebrating the Holy Day of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary at 5:15pm at the Cathedral Chapel. Parking is available. If you are unable to attend the Mass, we will look forward to seeing you at our Holiday Kickoff Party.

TO REGISTER, VISIT [KSPHILA.ORG/HOLIDAY](http://KSPHILA.ORG/HOLIDAY)  
Registration: \$10/person

**This *Keys and Sword Kickoff Event* is designed to raise awareness about the needs of our Cathedral Basilica in the business community and to announce the annual event on June 24, 2022.**

Everyone is welcome!

*More information can be found at <https://ksphila.org/holiday>*



***TODAY! Sunday, December 5, 2021-3:00 PM***

## Cathedral Christmas Concert

*The Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul proudly presents the Christmas Concert, I LOOK FROM AFAR.*

*Everything You Always Wanted to Know About  
The Mass But Were Afraid To Ask!*

**(Presented on Zoom) @ 7-8:30PM**

## December 7, 2021 - The Introductory Rites

**Rev. Daniel Mackle**, Director of Liturgy and Professor of Pastoral Theology, St. Charles at Borromeo Seminary

**Register at the link below:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/join?from=addon=register/tZwsdOyprDIiGda3qI-g1mXXTCfM50tnPegy>

## Advent Visiting Day

This Advent, as you prepare for the coming of the Lord, please consider giving some time on **Sunday, December 12, the Third Sunday of Advent**, to visit one of our home bound parishioners at one of the congregate living facilities within our parish borders. Let our home bound brothers and sisters know what an important part of our parish they are! Please call Sarah Contrucci at 724-664-3947 with any questions or to sign up to help.

## CATECHETICAL SESSION FOR ADULTS

**-Adult faith formation-**

## The Sacrament of Holy Orders

Thursday, December 9 2021, 7:00 PM

## Meeting in the Neumann Room

The weekly catechetical session is primarily for the adults among us who are preparing to receive the Easter Sacraments. However, **anyone** interested in the topic for better understanding and faith formation is most welcome to attend. Anyone, especially our parishioners, seeking more information on the reception of the Sacraments or assisting as a sponsor, please call the Parish Office at 215-561-1313 or email Father Dennis Gill at [fr.dgill@archphila.org](mailto:fr.dgill@archphila.org)



## Advent Day of Reflection

Sponsored by the Office of Consecrated Life

**Monsignor John M. Savinski**

## Saint Joseph in Advent

**Saturday, December 11, 2021**

## Drexel Hall at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter & Paul

**All are invited/lunch provided**

**RSVP:** [sr.gbraccio@archphila.org](mailto:sr.gbraccio@archphila.org)  
215-587-37955

For more details go to:

<https://cathedralphila.org/advent-day-of-reflection/>

## Spiritual Direction

Offered by: Sister Eleanor McCann, RSM, Parish Pastoral Associate

## Part 2 of 4:

## What do I bring to a spiritual direction session?

When I arrive at my appointment, I usually come with a journal that may have questions for clarity. I may be struggling with a personal relationship and wondering how to lovingly deal with that person. I must realize that I am not coming to a counseling session, but to a focused time, to notice how my faith may help me. The same may be true when sharing a concern about a family member whose faith life seems non-existent. Thirdly, my own faith seems to have taken a turn for the worse, where God seems to be completely absent: these are important but a minimal sampling of concerns, which we bring to God with the help of our companion or director. One may offer an optional stipend to the director, but it is never expected.



**HOSPICE SUNDAY**  
*NEXT SUNDAY*

Please remember to bring your food donations **for St. John's Hospice**. Please bring all items to Mass and leave them in the Sacristy. Your recent donations were very much appreciated.

Thank you for your continued generosity,

Together

## CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

**CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF  
SAINTS PETER AND PAUL  
AND SHRINE OF SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

### CHRISTMAS CONCERT

**Sunday, December 5, 2021 at 3:00 PM in the Basilica**

For more information, please see, [https://  
cathedralphilaconcerts.org/](https://cathedralphilaconcerts.org/)

### CONFESSIONS FOR CHRISTMAS 2021

Sundays of Advent

9:00 AM, 12 Noon (in Spanish in the Chapel),  
and 5:30 PM in the Basilica

Monday through Friday, at 11:30 AM in the Basilica

Saturdays of Advent 4:15 PM in the Basilica

### Resources for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

can be found on the website of the ODW,  
[http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/sacred-liturgy/  
archdiocesan-guidelines/](http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/sacred-liturgy/archdiocesan-guidelines/)

### MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS 2021

**Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord,  
December 25**

**A Holy Day of Obligation**

**Friday, Christmas Eve, December 24, 2021**

**5:00 PM Solemn Vigil Mass**

**and 7:30 PM Vigil Mass in the Basilica**

**Saturday, Christmas Day, December 25, 2021**

**12:00 AM Midnight**

**Solemn Mass in the Basilica**

**8:00 AM, 10:00 AM – Solemn Mass, and**

**12:00 PM Noon - Solemn Mass in the Basilica.**

There is no evening Mass.

### MASSES FOR SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

**Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
December 26, 2021**

*Follows the regular Sunday Mass schedule*

**Sunday, December 26, 2021**

**8:00 AM Mass, 9:30 AM Mass,**

**11:00 AM Solemn Mass, 12:30 PM Mass**

**(in Spanish in the Cathedral Chapel)**

**and 6:30 PM Mass in the Basilica**

*Confessions on Sunday, December 26, 2021*

*9:00 AM, 12 Noon (in Spanish in the Chapel)*

*and 5:30 PM in the Basilica*



### YEAR OF SAINT JOSEPH

Visit <http://archphila.org/joseph/>  
*often for new events and resources for the  
celebration of this holy year!*

**The year of St. Joseph ends on December 8<sup>th</sup>**

**The Consecration will close on December 8<sup>th</sup>  
with a final in-person meeting and Mass celebration.**

## EVANGELIZATION

*“In illo tempore...”*

*Advent Series (Pt. 2)*

*“At that time...”* These words invite us to enter into a very specific place and time; whatever place and time that might be. On the Second Sunday of Advent this year we hear that at that time...

*“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.”*

Last week, we took some time to consider the role of vigilance in our Advent observance and the importance of a good confession to our proper preparation. Something else indispensable to our preparation is prayer. Regular, deeply meditative prayer is important for allowing the word of God we hear at Mass and even receive into our hearts in the Eucharist to “take on flesh” in our own place and time.

St. Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises encourages his disciples to reflect upon the reality of the Lord’s Incarnation by using their imagination to fill in the details that are oft-overlooked in the Gospel of accounts of Jesus’ life for the sake of brevity.

Luke, for his part was likely a physician and possessed a particularly analytical mind. He recounts to those reading his Gospel account:

*“...I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.”*

The persons we hear noted as being present “at that time...” when the word of God came to John the Baptist in the desert are historically verifiable.

One praying over any given scene as St. Ignatius proposes may consider the people and places where the action happens. He may also consider who is there and what they are doing or saying and try to garner some fruit from that. One could try this with the Nativity of the Lord too. Many events and actions are left to the imagination of the reader. Joseph take his wife who is with child down to Bethlehem for the Census. There is a whole journey through the Judean wilderness about which scripture is silent. What happened? How do real people deal with the real problem of survival in the wilderness? What graces/gifts did they need? How did they respond to the word of God?

This way of meditating on God’s word has a power to purify one’s mind and heart of the many other images that can crowd out God’s word and will at any given moment in favor of lesser things. Take time this week to try this method of prayer with some of the Gospel stories and welcome Jesus into your own place and time in a new way. **Come Lord Jesus, Come!**

Fr. Matthew Biedrzycki