

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope and joy** in the Catholic faith.

December 2016

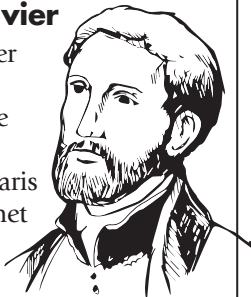
Good Shepherd Catholic Church

Rev. Leon Juchniewicz, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Francis Xavier

St. Francis Xavier was born to a Spanish noble family. He taught in Paris where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola and joined the new Society of Jesus. In 1541, he was sent as a missionary to India and Japan. He tirelessly served the poor with joy. Although he yearned to spread the Gospel in China, he died en route but wasn't bitter or disappointed. He is called the "Apostle of Japan" and "Apostle of the Indies."



Living in the present

Sometimes, we get so bogged down by worries about the future or regrets of the past, we forget to live in the present. Instead of worrying about what you can't control, entrust those worries to God knowing that he will help you through them all. Trust that his grace is enough.

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people"

(Luke 1:68).



Who was that baby in the manger?

At this time of year, we tell a charming tale of a long ago journey on a donkey, a baby born in a cave, and a visit by kings. In truth, the real event was not just charming, it was awesome. That baby was more than a child ...

He was proof that God always keeps his promises. That baby was the fulfillment of an amazing promise made to generations of faithful assuring a savior to heal the rift created by the sin of our first parents. God spoke his word

"(a)nd the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son

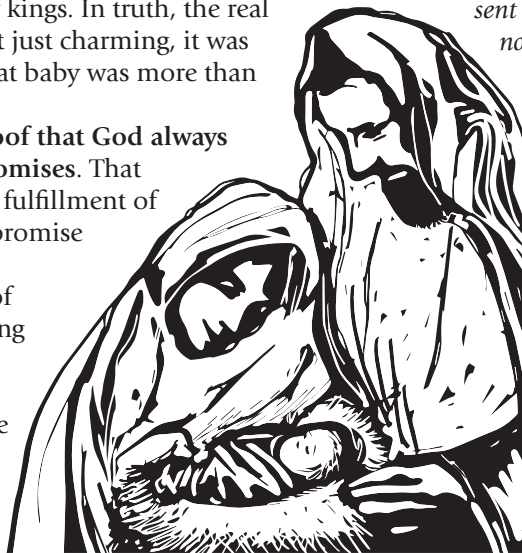
from the Father" (John 1:14). God always keeps his word. Trust him.

He was love in the flesh. *"For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world*

might be saved through him" (John 3:17). Out of love for us, Jesus willingly took on the indignity of a human body and its frailty to share our nature. Love him back.

He is God. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was*

God" (John 1:1). God came to free us from sin and open the way to everlasting life. Follow him.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics celebrate Christ's birth on December 25th?

The Gospels do not identify a specific date for Jesus' birth. December 25 was chosen for several reasons, including that the date was close to the winter solstice.

The early Church attempted to replace existing pagan celebrations with Christian ones. Under



the Emperor Aurelian, December 25 was celebrated as the "birth of the unconquered sun." As Christianity became more widely practiced, the pagan celebration was replaced by Christmas to celebrate Christ's birth — the real "unconquered" light of the world.

'Tis the season to be jolly

Family dynamics can make holiday celebrations anything but jolly. Try these tips to make this your happiest holiday season:

Repeat, "It's not about me." Taking what others say or do personally makes you easy prey for someone trying for a reaction or looking for attention. Keep your power by choosing not to get offended.

Smile and nod. Arguing your point of view in heated discussions may feel momentarily satisfying but only serves to prolong tensions. Happy holidays come from smiling, nodding, and changing the subject.



Develop a bad memory. Reliving past hurts can make holidays miserable. Decide that this will be the year to forgive and forget.

Get up. Stand up. The more we focus on irritations, the more they irritate. When feeling irked, take a break to fill your water glass, stretch your legs, or engage in a different conversation.

Have compassion. You can wish your family experience were different but trying to change others is pointless. Instead use compassion to find new ways of love during holiday gatherings.

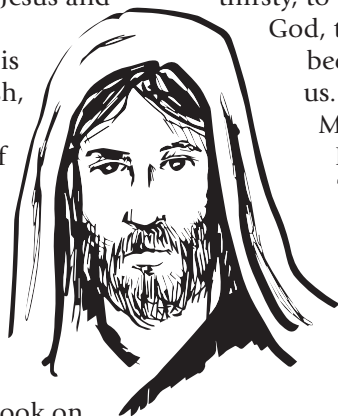
from Scripture

John 1:1-18, Who Is Jesus?

On December 25 we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Just who is Jesus and what does he mean to us?

John explained that Jesus is God's Word born into flesh, the Second Person of the Trinity. He is the source of life. Jesus enlightens us about God and his nature. To know Jesus is to know God because grace and truth come from God, through Christ to us.

At the same time Jesus took on our human nature. He lived as we live, experienced what we experience, and suffered what we suffer. He knows



what it's like to be hungry and thirsty, to be tired, to be tempted. God, the Son, understands us because he became like us.

Many who saw Jesus on Earth rejected him. They didn't recognize him as the Messiah. We each have to make a choice about Jesus. Do we choose Jesus as our Savior? Do we live our lives as if we are children of God? If our answers are "yes," then Jesus is the one to whom we turn for truth and grace.

Q & A Is the Immaculate Conception about Mary or Jesus?

The Immaculate Conception celebrates Mary's conception without Original Sin. It refers to our belief that Mary was



preserved from the stain of Original Sin at the moment of her conception in view of her role as Jesus' mother

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #491). On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX declared this truth infallibly.

Because she was not tainted by Original Sin, she could be completely filled with grace. In fact, at the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel calls her, "full of grace," (Luke 1:28). This grace enabled Mary to say "Yes" to the angel's invitation, and to continue saying "Yes" when faced with hardship and suffering, including standing at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday.

God did not preserve Mary from Original Sin simply because he favored her, but because she had been chosen from all eternity to be the mother of his Son. Her role as Jesus' mother was crucial to his mission of salvation. Her grace-filled "Yes" opened the way to Jesus' "Yes" on the Cross.

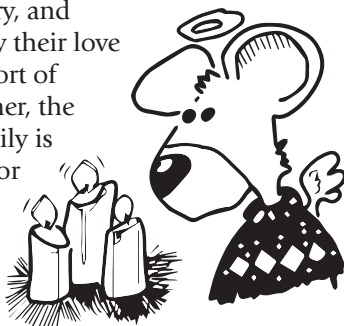
Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 5 – St. Sabas (532). St. Sabas was born in (now) Turkey, and fled to a monastery to escape an abusive home. He became a hermit and moved to the desert. He attracted many followers, and formed a community. Though unwilling, he was ordained and eventually was named the superior of all hermits in Jerusalem. He died at the age of 93.

Dec. 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531). The Blessed Mother appeared to St. Juan Diego, a Native American, and asked him to have the bishop of Mexico

build a chapel for her. She sent him with roses to the bishop as a sign. When St. Juan emptied the roses from his cloak, it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

Dec. 30 – The Holy Family (1st century). On the feast of the Holy Family, we celebrate the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. By their love and support of one another, the Holy Family is a model for all Christian families.



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