

'When we acknowledge our sins and ask for forgiveness, there is a celebration in Heaven. Jesus celebrates: this is His mercy: let us not be discouraged.'

Below is a ZENIT translation of Pope Francis' address during this morning's weekly General Audience in St. Peter's Square:

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#### **THE HOLY FATHER'S CATECHESIS**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Last Sunday, the Holy Door was opened in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Cathedral of Rome, and a *Door of Mercy* was opened in the Cathedral of every diocese of the world, as well as in shrines and churches indicated by bishops. The Jubilee is in the whole world, not only in Rome. I wanted this sign of the Holy Door to be present in every particular Church, so that the Jubilee of Mercy could become a shared experience by every person. Thus the Holy Year got underway in the whole Church and is celebrated in every diocese as at Rome. Moreover, the first Holy Door was opened in fact in the heart of Africa. And Rome, see, is the visible sign of the universal communion. May this ecclesial communion become ever more intense, so that the Church is a living sign of the Father's love and mercy in the world.

The date of December 8 was also intended to stress this need, linking -- 50 years later -- the beginning of the Jubilee with the conclusion of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. In fact, the Council contemplated and presented the Church in the light of the mystery of communion. Spread throughout the world and articulated in so many particular Churches, it is, however, always and only the one Church of Jesus Christ, the one He desired and for which He offered Himself. The "one" Church that lives of the communion itself of God.

This mystery of communion, which renders the Church sign of the Father's love, grows and matures in our heart, when the Love, which we recognize in the Cross of Christ and in which we immerse ourselves, makes us love as we ourselves are loved by Him. It is a love without end, which has the face of forgiveness and mercy.

However, mercy and forgiveness must not remain beautiful words, but be realized in daily life. *To love and to forgive are the concrete and visible signs that faith has transformed our hearts* and they enable us to express in ourselves the very life of God -- to love and forgive as God loves and forgives. This is a program of life that knows no interruptions or exceptions, but which pushes us to always go beyond without ever tiring, with the certainty of being supported by God's paternal presence.

This great sign of Christian life is then transformed into many other signs that are characteristics of the Jubilee. I am thinking of all those who will cross one of the Holy Doors, which in this Year are true Doors of Mercy. The Door indicates Jesus Himself who said: "I am the door; if any one enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9). *To cross the Holy Door is the sign of our trust in the Lord Jesus*, who did not come to judge, but to save (cf. John 12:47). Be careful that you do not come across someone who is a bit fast or too crafty who tells you that you must pay: no! Salvation cannot be paid for; salvation is not purchased. Jesus is the Door, and Jesus is free! He Himself spoke about those that make one go in as they shouldn't, and He says simply that they are thieves and bandits. Again, be careful: salvation is free. To cross the Holy Door is the sign of a true conversion of our heart. When we cross that Door it is good to remember that we must also have the door of our heart wide open. I stand before the Holy Door and I ask: "Lord, help me to open wide the door of my heart!" The Holy Year will not be very effective if the door of our heart does not let Christ pass, who pushes us to go to others, to bring Him and his love. Therefore, as the Holy Door remains open, because it is the sign of the welcome that God Himself gives us, so our door also, that of our heart, must remain wide open not to exclude anyone, not even he or she who annoys me: no one.

*Confession* is also an important sign of the Jubilee. To approach the sacrament with which we are reconciled with God is equivalent to having a direct experience of His mercy. It is to meet the Father who forgives: God forgives everything. God understands us also in our limitations, He also understands us in our contradictions. Not only this, with His love He says to us that precisely when we acknowledge our sins He is still closer and spurs us to look ahead. He says more: that when we acknowledge our sins and ask for forgiveness, there is a celebration in Heaven. Jesus celebrates: this is His mercy: let us not be discouraged. Forward, forward with this!

How many times I've heard it said to me: "Father, I am unable to forgive my neighbor, my work companion, the lady next door, my mother-in-law, my sister-in-law." We have all felt this "I am unable to forgive." But how can we ask God to forgive us, if we are unable to forgive? And to forgive is something great, yet it's not easy to forgive, because our heart is poor and it cannot do so on its own. However, if we open ourselves to receive God's mercy for us, we in turn become capable of forgiving. I've heard it said so many times: "I couldn't stand that person: I hated her. But one day I approached the Lord and asked him to forgive my sins, and I also forgave that person." These are everyday things. And we have this possibility close to us.

Therefore, courage! Let us live the Jubilee by beginning with these signs that imply a great force of love. The Lord will accompany us to lead us to experience other important signs for our life. Courage and forward!

# St. Gerard Catholic Church



640 Edrie St. NE  
Aiken, SC 29801  
803 649-3203

## The Fourth Sunday of Advent December 20, 2015

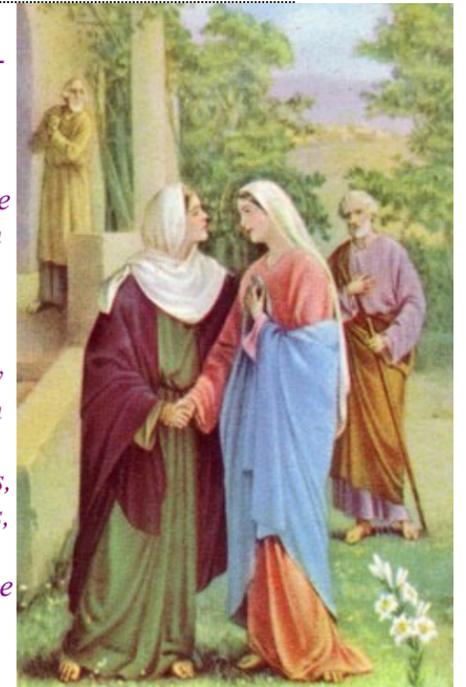
**Mission Statement**  
*Called to be a People for Others*

#### **Vision Statement**

*Anchored by faith hope and love in Jesus Christ,  
we strive to be active disciples, serving each  
other and all God's people by welcoming and  
embracing the enriching diversity of our community of faith.*

**Fr. Emmanuel Andinam: Administrator**

*Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'*  
Luke 1:39-45



#### SUNDAY READINGS

**First Reading:**

*Micah 5:1-4*

**Responsorial:**

*Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19*

**Second Reading:**

*Hebrews 10:5-10*

**Gospel:**

*Luke 1:39-45*

#### Lectionary Readings for the week of December 20, 2015

Monday: *Sons of Songs 2:8-14;  
Luke 1:39-45*

Tuesday: *1 Samuel 1:24-28;  
Luke 1:46-56*

Wednesday: *Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24;  
Luke 1:46-56*

Thursday: *2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16;  
Luke 1:67-79*

Christmas Day: *Numbers 6:22-27;  
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21*

**Mass Times:** Weekdays Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8:15 AM, First Friday Benediction after Mass  
Weekend Saturday 4:00 PM, Sunday 7:00 AM and 11:15 AM

**Confessions:** after weekday Masses and by Appointment

**Office Hours:** 9:00 AM till 3:00 PM Tuesday - Thursday

**Bible Study:** Fridays 10:00 AM (Insight to the scriptures)

**Baptisms, Confirmations and Marriages:** By Appointment, Contact the office.

**Contact Us:** Phone 803 649-3203, E-Mail [stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net](mailto:stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net)

**Facebook** @stgerardaiken,

**Emergency number for Father 803 637-2027**





**Pray for our sick:**

Gary Gilbert  
Marge Glouser  
Leonard Saunders  
Shirley Paige  
William and Jackie Cobbs  
Woody Alexander  
Lena Mickens  
Rosa Johnson  
Brenda Ligon  
Joe Fulmer  
Patricia Bailey  
Shirley Acosta

During Advent we receive constant reminders that Jesus and his ministry are gifts of God. We did not and do not earn them. They flow to us from the grace of God. During this season of giving, let us remember the most important gift we have received – being children of God. As God’s children, it’s important that we express our love for others as well.

**Mass Intentions**

4:00 PM, 7:00 AM and 11:15 AM  
Masses will be said for your own personal intentions.

The Gathering Hymn 34 M  
Alleluia, Hurry the Lord Is Near  
The Offertory Hymn is 239 H  
Creator of the Stars of Night  
The Communion Hymn is CHOIR 848 BB  
Gospel Canticle Magnificat  
Our Song of Praise is 48 M  
The Whole World Is Waiting for Love



**Pastoral Council:**

Wayman Johnson,  
Chairman  
Payson Borst  
Jacqueline Brown  
Fredrick Cadek  
Nancy Durden  
Marge Glauser  
Janet Menefee  
Gregory Wright  
Joan Hesik

**Finance Council:**

Robert Erikson,  
Chairman  
Leon Gagnon and  
Anna Marie Key,  
Auditors.  
Lisa Solenberger  
Art Wagner

**Sunday Offering December 13, 2015**

Collection \$1,682.00  
Needed \$2,612.00  
Under \$930.00  
Holy Day \$359.00  
Attendance 126  
Stewardship a way of life

**Lay Ministers**

	<b>Thursday December 24</b> 4:00 PM Christmas Vigil Lector: Joan Hesik E E Ministers: Roger Gelinaz	<b>Friday December 25</b> 11:15 AM Christmas Mass Patricia Hayes Mary Rose	
	<b>Saturday December 26</b> 4:00 PM Vigil Mass Lector: No Mass E E Minister: No Mass	<b>Sunday December 27</b> 7:00 AM Mass Denise Gelinaz Roger Gelinaz	<b>Sunday December 27</b> 11:15 AM Mass Richardean Paige Marge Glauser
	<b>Refreshments December 27</b> Shirley Paige/Anna Marie Key	<b>Counters December 27</b> Open	

We collected \$1,300 over and above the regular collection last week for renovation and year end contributions. Thank you.

Sr. Catherine Mare Lowe, the administrator at Our lady of the Valley Catholic Center, thanks St. Gerard Catholic Church for the assistance received this past year. We have helped supply food for individuals and families in crises. Sr. Catherine wishes The St. Gerard family Merry Christmas and a Blessed Holiday Season.

The Christmas Mass schedule will be (Christmas Vigil at 4:00 PM Christmas Eve) and (Christmas Mass at 11:15 AM Christmas Day) **No 4:00 PM Mass on Saturday December 26th.**

**COLLECTION FOR ITEMS NEEDED FOR THE RECTORY**

As you know, our Rectory is in the process of being renovated. This work has been on-going for the last six month. The goal is to be done early next year. Upon the completion, there will be many items needed to furnish the rectory, such as furniture, kitchen items, linens, towels, etc. Donations for these items are needed. If you would like to make a donation, please place it in an envelope and put it in the collection basket. Please indicate on the envelope "Donation for Rectory Items". If you want to designate what your donation should be used for, please note that on the envelope as well. No donation to small. Thank you for your support of our parish community.

**CONSIDER A TAX DEDUCTIBLE YEAR END DONATION TO ST GERARD**

As Christmas approaches, we ask that you remember St Gerard in your holiday plans. While shopping for gifts and gatherings with loved ones, please consider setting aside part of your budget to support St Gerard with a tax-deductible charitable donation. If you read the Sunday offering section of the bulletin you will notice that our collections are often below what the parish needs. Now is the season we give thanks to God for all He has done for us this past year and throughout our lives. It is also a good time to begin considering how we might give back some of our wealth or assets to Him through His Church with a special year-end gift. Your generous, tax-deductible donation to St Gerard enables us to continue to be a vibrant and active parish and be a community that supports itself. Any amount you can share will be greatly appreciated!

Anyone that wants to buy Poinsettias for the Altar this Christmas, you may donate \$10 and designate "for poinsettias" and your intention will be in the Christmas bulletin. Please get donations in As Soon As Possible. Any changes to the Christmas Day Bulletin will be done by Tuesday 12/22 . Only two days left. Thank you.

**Volunteer Corner**

There will be a catered supper for all volunteers and ministries. Date: 1/15/16 @ 6:00 PM and invitations will be sent out.

We have had to take several people off the ministries schedule for several weeks between Jan. 9 and Apr. 9. This leaves us with 6 weeks with no one for the 4 PM mass as Eucharistic Ministers. I hate to have to over use folks. So any one willing to fill in that is a Eucharistic Minister not on the schedule or any one that doesn't mind being over booked let me know ASAP. Thank, You Mike

Father will be out of town the week of January 11th. No week day masses for that week.

I will be off December 24th and 30th-31st and January 1st. So if you have info for bulletin or business to conduct please get with me as soon as possible. Mike

Christmas Choir practice will be on Tuesday from 6:00 PM to 7:15 PM December 22nd.

Show your thanks for all your blessings by giving back. Sign up this holiday season to become an ACTS volunteer. ACTS is in desperate need of volunteers to serve in our Resale Store and Client Room assisting clients with their clothing vouchers. Shifts are available Monday thru Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Commit to as few or as many hours and/or days as fit your schedule. It's not only rewarding but fun, as well! Just e-mail us at volunteer@actsofaiken.org, or call 803.649.3800 for more information.

Our Lady of The Valley still needs food donations. All food collected here at St. Gerard is donated to OLV. Please continue to be generous. If you know of someone that needs The Blessed Sacrament brought to their home or hospital please call the office.

No Bible study on Friday 12/25 Christmas Day or 1/1/16 New Years Day

The next parish council meeting is 19 January at 6:30 PM.

The Salvation Army needs help at the shelter on Park Ave. They are losing older people that have been helping with serving lunch. We already have at least one parishioner helping. Please if you have the time to help call Rose at 641-4149 or call Mary Welsh at 648-2140. Feed God's children.

Someone has changed the set up on the organ. We can't get it to play like it should. If anyone knows about this please give us a hand in figuring it out. Thanks

You should check out this web site [www.DynamicCatholic.com](http://www.DynamicCatholic.com)

John M. Kelly ( Catholic Author)

The program is Best Advent Ever Rediscover Mercy

**In Harms' Way:** Please remember in your prayers our Nation and loved ones of our parishioners currently serving in harms' way: James Ligon, Robert McHugh, Jacob Hershey, and James Rossini.

Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

**Hospital Visits:** If you or a loved one is in Aiken Regional Hospital (ARMC) please let St Gerards know. Remember - ARMC does not inform us of Catholic patients, even if you register as a Catholic; it is up to the patient or family to do so. You can: ask the ARMC Chaplain to call the Catholic church, ask your nurse to inform the Catholic church ( name & room number), call-St.Gerard at 649-3203 and leave a message or email St Gerard at stgerardscatholi@Atlanticbbn.net.

Begin 2016 with Praise, Worship and Eucharistic Adoration  
Featuring

Audrey Assad



Free of Charge Live Praise and Worship Concert  
St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church  
4921 Columbia Road  
Grovetown, Georgia

7:00 PM, Friday January 8th  
Following Daily Mass at 6:00 PM

2016 St. Gerard calendars in the entrance hall.