

## Pope Francis' General Audience: On Hope

'Hope opens new horizons, makes one capable of dreaming what is not even imaginable'  
Rome, Dec 28, 2016 zenith.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

In his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul recalls for us the great figure of Abraham, to indicate to us the way of faith and hope. Of him, the Apostle writes: "In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations" (*Romans* 4:18); "firm in hope against all hope." This concept is strong: and even when there is no hope, I hope. So is our Father Abraham. Saint Paul is referring to the faith with which Abraham believed in the word of God, who promised him a son. But it was truly a trust hoping "against hope," so unlikely was what the Lord announced to him, because he was elderly — he was almost one hundred years old — and his wife was sterile. He was unable, but God said it and he believed. There was no human hope because he was elderly and his wife was sterile: but he believed.

Trusting in this promise, Abraham starts out, accepts leaving his land and becoming a foreigner, hoping in this "impossible" son that God wished to give him despite Sarah's womb being now as dead. Abraham believed; his faith opened to a hope that seemed unreasonable; that is, the ability to go beyond human reasoning, the wisdom and prudence of the world, beyond what is normally regarded a good sense, to believe in the impossible. Hope opens new horizons, makes one capable of dreaming what is not even imaginable. Hope makes one enter the darkness of an uncertain future to walk in the light. The virtue of hope is beautiful; it gives us so much strength to walk in life.

However, it is a difficult way. And the moment of the crisis of dejection came also for Abraham. He trusted, he left his home, his land, his friends ... everything. He left and arrived in the country that God had indicated to him; time passed. At that time, to undertake such a trip was not as today with airplanes — now it is done in a few hours; then it took months, years! Time passed, but the <promised> son did not come; Sarah's womb remained closed in its sterility.

And Abraham — I do not say that he lost patience but he complained to the Lord. We learn this also from our Father Abraham: to complain to the Lord is a way of praying. Sometimes I feel when I confess that I have complained to the Lord ... and [I answer]: "but no! Do complain, He is a Father!" And this is a way of praying: complain to the Lord, this is good. Abraham complained to the Lord saying: "' Lord God, [...], I am leaving without children and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus" (Eliezer was the one who governed everything). Abraham added: "Behold, you have not given me descendants and my slave will be my heir." And behold, this word of the Lord was addressed to him: 'He shall not be your heir; but one born of you shall be your heir.' And then He led him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them'; and He added: 'So shall your descendants be.' And yet again Abraham believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (*Genesis* 15:2-6).

The scene unfolded at night; outside it was dark, but in Abraham's heart there was also the darkness of disappointment, of discouragement, of difficulty in continuing to hope in something impossible. By now, the Patriarch was very advanced in years, there seemed to be no more time for a son, and it will be a slave who will take over, inheriting everything.

Abraham is addressing the Lord, but God, although He is present there and speaks with him, seems as though He is distancing Himself, as if <Abraham> had not had faith in His word. Abraham feels alone, he is old and tired, death looms. How can he continue to trust?

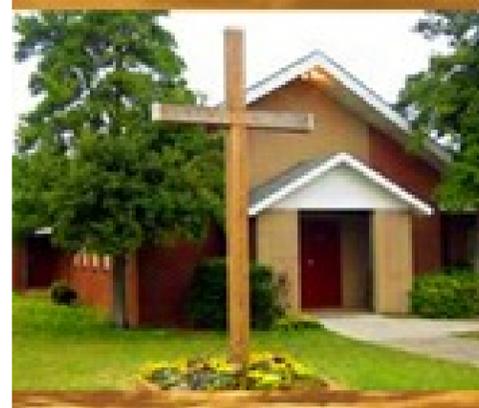
Yet, his lament is already a form of faith, it is a prayer. Despite everything, Abraham continues to believe in God and to hope that something can still happen. Otherwise, why question the Lord, why complain to him, why remind Him of His promises? Faith is not only silence, which accepts everything without replying; hope is not certainty that makes one immune to doubt and to perplexity. But so often, hope is darkness; but hope is there ... which leads one forward. Faith is also to struggle with God, to show Him our bitterness, without "pious" pretenses. "I was angry with God and I said this and this and this to Him ... But He is a Father, He has understood you: go in peace! One must have this courage! And this is hope. And hope is also not to be afraid to see reality for what it is and to accept its contradictions.

Therefore, Abraham turns to God in faith to help him continue to hope. It is curious; he does not ask for a son. He asks: "Help me to continue to hope," the prayer to have hope. And the Lord responds insisting on His unlikely promise: a slave will not be the heir but in fact a son, born of Abraham, generated by him. Nothing has changed on God's part. He continues to confirm what He already said, and he does not offer footholds to Abraham to feel reassured. His only security is to trust in the Lord's word and to continue to hope.

And that sign that God gives to Abraham is a request to continue to believe and to hope: "Look toward heaven and number the stars [...] So shall your descendants be" (*Genesis* 15:5). It is, again, a promise; it is something to wait for in the future. God leads Abraham out of the tent, in reality out of his narrow visions, and He shows him the stars. To believe, it is necessary to be able to see with the eyes of faith, they are only stars, which all can see, but for Abraham they must become the sign of God's fidelity.

This is faith; this is the way of hope that each one of us must follow. If for us also the only possibility remains to look at the stars, then it is time to trust God. There is nothing more beautiful. Hope does not disappoint. Thank you.

# St. Gerard Catholic Church



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

## SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading:

*Numbers* 6:22-27

Responsorial:

*Psalms* 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Second Reading:

*Galatians* 4:4-7

Gospel:

*Luke* 2:16-21

Today's Missal

### Lectionary Readings for the week of January 1, 2017

Monday: 1 John 2:22-28;

John 1:19-28

Tuesday: 1 John 2:29-3:6;

John 1:29-34

Wednesday: 1 John 3:7-10;

John 1:35-42

Thursday: 1 John 3:11-21;

John 1:43-51

Friday: 1 John 5:5-13;

Mark 1:7-11

Saturday: 1 John 5:14-21;

John 2:1-11

## Solemnity of Mary The Holy Mother Of God January 1, 2017

### 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.*

### Father Emmanuel Andinam: Administrator

*So they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds said to them. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told. When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception*  
**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 11:00 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, **CCD:** Sundays 10:00 AM,

**RCIA:** 9 AM Thursdays

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

**Contact Us:** Phone 803 649-3203, **E-Mail** stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net

**Facebook** @stgerardaiken, **Emergency number for Father** 803 341-5933



**Pray for our sick:**  
 Judy Riley  
 Marge Glauser  
 Leonard Saunders  
 Shirley Paige  
 William and Jackie Cobbs  
 Woody Alexander  
 Lena Mickens  
 Rosa Johnson  
 Brenda and Ike Ligans  
 Joe Fulmer

"A Church without charity does not exist" - Pope Francis  
 Each new year gives us the opportunity to renew our commitment as disciples of Jesus. We understand that all gifts are entrusted to us by God. We commit ourselves to return those gifts with increase. As stewards we offer our lives in service.



**Mass Intentions**  
 4:00 PM, 7:00 AM Masses are said for your own personal intentions 11:00 AM Mass for The Lacombe & McCoola Families; From The Lacombes

**Weekend Offering**  
 December 24-25, 2016

Collection	\$2,244.00
Needed	\$2,612.00
Under	\$368.00
Attendance	85

*Stewardship a way of life*

**The Gathering Hymn** 75 M  
**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**  
**The Offertory Hymn is** 87 M  
**What Child Is This?**  
**The Communion Hymn is** CHOIR 73 M  
**Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming**  
**Our Song of Praise is** 63 M  
**Angels We Have Heard On High**



**Pastoral Council:**  
 (Vacant, Chairman)  
 Payson Borst  
 Jacqueline Brown  
 Fredrick Cadek  
 Marge Glauser  
 Joan Hesik  
 Janet Menefee  
 Gregory Wright  
 Vacant

**Finance Council:**  
 Robert Erikson, Chairman  
 Leon Gagnon and Anna Marie Key, Auditors  
 Lisa Solenberger, Secretary  
 Art Wagner

**Lay Ministers**

	<b>Saturday 7 January</b> 4:00 PM Vigil Mass Lector: Tami Schaeffer E E Ministers: Jerry Schaeffer	<b>Sunday 8 January</b> 7:00 AM Mass Denise Gelinas Roger Gelinas	<b>Sunday 8 January</b> 11:00 AM Mass Richardean Paige Jeanette Coleman
	<b>Saturday 14 January</b> 4:00 PM Vigil Mass Lector: Joan Hesik E E Ministers: Ellen Heim	<b>Sunday 15 January</b> 7:00 AM Mass Mary Kay L'Esperance Gerard L'Esperance	<b>Sunday 15 January</b> 11:00 AM Mass Paula Thurston Wayman Johnson

Refreshment January 1 Jean Schodowski/Richardean Paige	Refreshment January 8 Jackie Brown/Rosa DiStefano	Refreshment January 15 Jackie Cobbs/Rosa Johnson
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**Finance Council Meeting Changed to January 17 at 4:00 PM**  
**Parish Council Meeting Changed to January 17 at 6:00 PM**

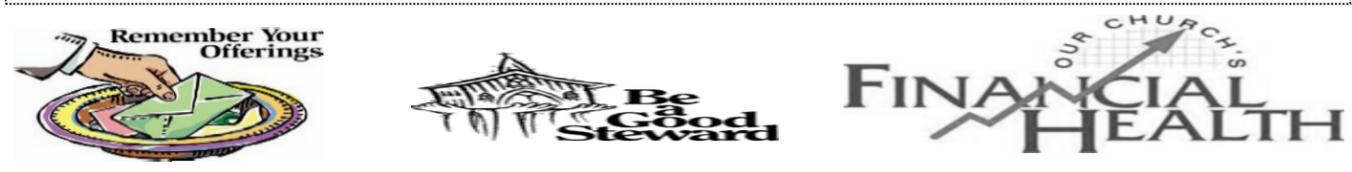
**We need a chair person for our (St. Gerard) Bishop Stewardship Appeal.**  
 Call the office for information on duties.

**The Legion of Mary is meeting at 1:30 on Fridays.**  
 Please consider joining. Call the office with questions. Please Pray the Rosary.



**Perpetual Novena in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Tuesdays at the 8:15 Mass**

**Feed the Valley, Thank you and bless your gifts of food.**



**Thank you to the Parish Family and a Happy New Year.**

I consider it our foremost responsibility to give thanks to God on this first day of the New Year 2017. We give thanks to God for his gift of life and health and all the blessings we have enjoyed in the past year.

Join me also in thanking God for his blessings on our parish family and for the grace that has enabled us to serve him in worship, prayer and in works of charity. May his grace continue to sustain us in witnessing in this parish family to the truth that we are indeed one body in Christ and individually parts of one another by our love, care and support for each other.

May I also use this opportunity to acknowledge with much gratitude to the love, care and support that you have given to our parish family by way of your time, talent and treasure. I remember especially with thanks the work of members of the Finance and Pastoral Councils, the choir, Legion of Mary and all the people that have volunteered in numerous ways to the pastoral life of this community. I also remember with thanks the generosity of those ladies and their families that sponsored and provided food for the Aiken Deanery meeting of Priests that was held here at St Gerard on December 20, 2016. I am also very grateful to the ladies that decorated the Church at Christmas and to the Choir for the beautiful music selection for the Christmas Masses, as well as the Altar Servers, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Lectors and Ushers for their services.

I wish to express special thanks to the parishioners that have already responded in a very generous way either by pledges or in additional contributions to the support of the church following my letter to all our families. May God in his kindness reward you abundantly for your generosity.

I also wish to express my deep appreciation and thanks to everyone for their kindness to me and for the Christmas gifts and good wishes I have received. I wish to express my wishes for all of you in this New Year through this ancient blessing that God gave through Moses: "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6: 24-26). I wish you all a blessed and a happy New Year.

Fr. Emmanuel Andinam.

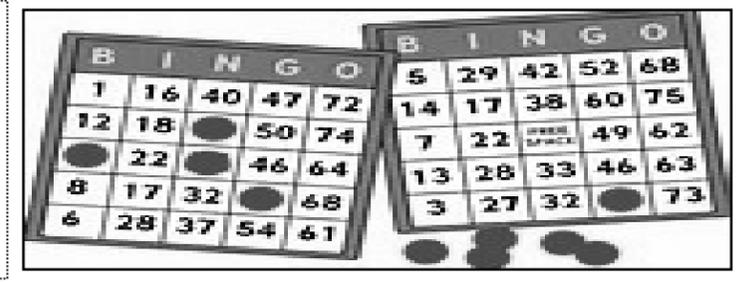
**Volunteer Corner: Thank you to Jackie Brown and Nancy Durden for decorating the sanctuary for Christmas. To Johnny Durden for delivering the flowers. Thank you to all those who donated for the flower memorials.**

Glittery holiday ads can blind us to our *Stewardship* values and distort our needs and wants. It is important that during this season of endless buying we remember that each of us also has the need to give back to God and to those that are in need.

If you attend St. Gerard on a regular basis and feel welcome, Why not consider becoming a member. We would love to have you. Feel free to talk to a member or call the office 649-3203. Registration forms are in the the church hall lobby.

**BINGO**  
 Columbus Club Hall Every Monday at  
 7:10 PM till 9:00 PM 5 Cards \$ 10.00  
 Each Additional Card \$2.00

<b>15 Regular Games</b>	<b>\$20 Payout</b>
<b>1 Coverall Jackpot</b>	<b>\$150 Payout</b>



Update: The Simkins' new address #121, 8008 Bass Lake Rd., New Hope, MN 55428  
 I am told they are doing well.