

POPE FRANCIS' GENERAL AUDIENCE: On Christmas Joy

Rome, Dec. 14, 2016, zenit.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning! We are approaching Christmas, and the prophet Isaiah helps us once again to open ourselves to hope, receiving the Good News of the coming of salvation. Chapter 52 of Isaiah begins with the invitation addressed to Jerusalem to awake, to shake herself from the dust and loose the bonds, and to put on her beautiful garments, because the Lord has come to liberate His people (vv. 1-3). And he adds: "My people shall know my name, that it is I who speak; here am I" (v. 6).

To this "here am I" said by God, which summarizing His whole will of salvation and of closeness to us, the song of joy of Jerusalem responds, in keeping with the prophet's invitation. It is a very important historical moment. It is the end of the exile of Babylon; it is the possibility for Israel to find God again and, in faith, to find itself again. The Lord makes Himself close, and the "little remnant," namely the little people that remained after the exile and that in exile endured in faith, that went through the crisis and continued to believe and to hope even in the midst of darkness, that "little remnant" will be able to see the wonders of God. At this point the prophet inserts a song of exultance:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news, Announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, saying to Zion, "Your God is King!" ...Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem. For the LORD has comforted his people, has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth can see the salvation of our God. (*Isaiah 52:7.9-10*).

These words of Isaiah, on which we wish to pause a little, make reference to the miracle of peace, and they do so in a very particular way, fixing the eyes not on the messenger but on his feet, which run swiftly: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger ..."

It is like the Bride of the Canticle of Canticles, who runs to her Beloved: "Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills" (*Canticle 2:8*). Thus runs also the messenger of peace, bringing the happy announcement of liberation, of salvation, and proclaiming that God reigns.

God has not abandoned His people and did not let Himself be defeated by evil, because He is faithful, and his grace is greater than sin. We must learn this, because we are obstinate and do not learn it. But I will ask a question: what is greater, God or sin? God! And who wins at the end, God or sin? God. He is able to overcome the greatest sin, the most shameful, the most terrible, the worst of sins. With what weapon does God overcome sin? With love! This means that "God reigns"; these are the words of faith in a Lord whose power bends over humanity, abases Himself, to offer mercy and liberate man from what disfigures in him the beautiful image of God, because when we are in sin, God's image is disfigured. And the fulfillment of so much love will be in fact the Kingdom established by Jesus, that Kingdom of forgiveness and peace that we celebrate at Christmas and that is realized definitively at Easter. And the most beautiful joy of Christmas is this interior joy of peace: the Lord has cancelled my sins, the Lord has forgiven me, the Lord has had mercy on me, He came to save me. This is the joy of Christmas!

These are, brothers and sisters, the reasons for our hope. When everything seems ended, when, in face of so many negative realities, faith becomes difficult and the temptation comes to say that nothing has meaning anymore, see instead the Good News brought by those swift feet: God is coming to realize something new, to establish a kingdom of peace. God has "bared His arm" and is coming to bring freedom and consolation. Evil will not triumph forever; there is an end to pain. Despair is defeated because God is among us.

And we are also asked to awake somewhat, like Jerusalem, in keeping with the invitation addressed to her by the prophet. We are called to become men and women of hope, collaborating with the coming of this Kingdom made of light and destined to all, men and women of hope. How awful it is when we meet a Christian that has lost hope! "But I don't hope for anything, everything has ended for me": so says a Christian who is unable to look at horizons of hope and, before his eyes there is only a wall. But God destroys these walls with forgiveness! And we must pray for this, that God may give us hope every day, and that He may give it to all; that hope that is born when we see God in the crib in Bethlehem. The message of the Good News that has been entrusted to us is urgent. We must also run like the messenger on the mountains, because the world cannot wait; humanity has hunger and thirst for justice, for truth and for peace.

St. Gerard Catholic Church



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

SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading:

Isaiah 7:10-14(10A)

Responsorial:

Psalms 24:1-2,3-4,5-6

Second Reading:

Romans 1:1-7

Gospel:

Matthew 1:18-24

Today's Missal

Lectionary Readings for the week of December 18, 2016

Monday: Judges 13:2-7,24-25a;
Luke 1:5-25

Tuesday: Isaiah 7:10-14;
Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday: Song of Songs 2:8-14;
Luke 1:39-45

Thursday: 1 Samuel 1:24-28;
Luke 1:46-56

Friday: Malachi 3:1-4,23-24;
Luke 1:57-66

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

The Fourth Sunday of Advent December 18, 2016

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

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home;
Matthew 1:18-24



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
Ligons
Joe Fulmer
Chuck Simkin

“And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value...” (Ph.1:9-10A)

Stewardship a way of life



Pastoral Council:

Wayman Johnson,
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

Mass Intentions

4:00 PM, 7:00 AM Masses are said for
your own personal intentions 11:00 AM for the soul of
Shirley Acosta From Frank

Weekend Offering

December 10-11, 2016

Collection \$3,182.00
Needed \$2,612.00
Over \$570.00
Attendance 161

The Gathering Hymn 20 M
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
The Offertory Hymn is 73 M
Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming
The Communion Hymn is CHOIR 34 M
Alleluia, Hurry the Lord Is Near
Our Song of Praise is 46 M
The Whole World Is Waiting for Love



Lay Ministers

Saturday December 24

7:00 PM Vigil Mass

Lector: Lisa Solenberger
E E Ministers: Wayman Johnson

Sunday December 25

9:00 AM Christmas Mass

Diane Begic
Still Open



Saturday December 31

4:00 PM Vigil Mass

Lector: Diane Begic
E E Ministers: Pam Ziomek/Joe Dennis

Sunday January 1

7:00 AM Mass

Denise Gelinis
Roger Gelinis

Sunday January 1

11:00 AM Mass

Patricia Hayes
Marge Glauser/Joe Dennis

Refreshments December 18

Sheila Wagner/Patricia Hayes

Refreshments December 25

N/A

Refreshment January 1

Jean Schodowski/Richardean Paige

Christmas flowers in memory of loved ones.

Memorials are \$10 each. Please make donations not later than this weekend so we can purchase the flowers and put the memorials in the bulletin. Contact the office, Jackie Brown or put donation in the collection baskets with the info on the loved one. Thank you and have a blessed Advent



Advent And Christmas Mass Schedules:

Weekend Masses will remain the same with the exception of Christmas Masses. Christmas Eve Mass is at 7:00 PM and Christmas Day Mass is at 9:00 AM.

(We still need Servers and an Usher for December 25th at 9 AM CHRISTMAS MASS)

No bible study on December 23rd or 30th We will resume on January 6, 2017

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

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

Finance Council Meeting January 10 at 4:00 PM

Parish Council Meeting January 10 at 6:00 PM

Volunteer Corner:

The new ministries schedule is posted under the current schedule. Please let me know about conflicts before I post the official schedule in two weeks. Thanks

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.



Social interaction before Mass in the Church

There is no doubt that the lack of a gathering place is a burden on many of us, especially when we gather for Mass. Many rightly see the time before Mass as a good opportunity for social contact. It would be much appreciated if our social interaction in the church before Mass is done with due consideration for those that may be saying prayers or are having a moment of reflection. It would be helpful if all social interactions could be stopped and a quiet moment is observed five minutes before the start of Mass. Thank you very much.

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

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.

2016 Bishop's Annual Appeal Update

As of October 31, 2016, our parish has raised \$ 8,620.00 towards our goal of \$ 7,904.00. That is 105.64% with 120 parish families 40 % participating. The Bishop's Annual Appeal funds critical ministries in our diocese doing very important work. It is vital that every parish participate to support the mission of the diocese. Through charitable works, outreach, and education, we are making a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in need. If you have not yet made a gift, please help us reach our parish's financial and participation goals. 50% of all funds raised in excess of our parish goal will be returned to St. Gerard in January so that we may continue the work of our parish. Visit www.sccatholic.org/giving or mail a check payable to the Bishop's Annual Appeal to: The Diocese of Charleston, Office of Stewardship and Mission Advancement, 901 Orange Grove Road, Charleston, SC 29407.

ACTS is partnering with the Augusta/Aiken Warrior Project (AWP) to provide available assistance to local Warriors of all service branches, regardless of era of service or wounded status. Please ask any veterans (especially post-9/11 veterans) to contact ACTS at ph#803.642.5919 They served us now let's help ACTS serve them.

Show your thanks for all your blessings by giving back. 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 usatvolunteer@actsofaiken.org, or call 803.649.3800 for more information.

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 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@atlanticbnn.net.