

POPE FRANCIS' GENERAL AUDIENCE: On Christian Hope

"When we find ourselves before a child, perhaps we might have many problems and many difficulties, but a smile comes to us from within, because we find ourselves before hope: a child is a hope! And so we must be able to see in life the way of hope, which leads us to find God, God who became a Child for us — and it will make us smile"

Rome, Dec. 7, 2016, zenith.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Today we begin a new series of catecheses, on the theme of *Christian hope*. It is very important, because hope does not disappoint. Optimism disappoints, but not hope! We are in such need of it, in these times that seem dark, in which sometimes we feel lost in face of the evil and violence that surround us, in face of the pain of so many of our brothers. We need hope! We feel lost and also somewhat discouraged, because we feel impotent and it seems that this darkness will never end.

However, we must not let hope abandon us, because God walks with us with His love. "I hope because God is by my side: all of us can say this. Each one of us can say: "I hope, I have hope, because God walks with me." He walks and leads me by the hand. God does not leave us alone. The Lord Jesus has overcome evil and opened to us the way of life.

And then, particularly in this Season of Advent, which is the time of expectation, in which we prepare ourselves to receive once again the consoling mystery of the Incarnation and the light of Christmas, it is important to reflect on hope. Let us allow ourselves to be taught by the Lord what it means to hope. Therefore, we listen to the words of Sacred Scripture, beginning with *the prophet Isaiah*, the great prophet of Advent, the great messenger of hope.

In the second part of his Book, Isaiah addresses the people with a *proclamation of consolation*: "Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service has ended, that her guilt is expiated, That she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill made low; The rugged land shall be a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

God the Father consoles by arousing consolers, to whom He asks to hearten the people, His children, proclaiming that the warfare is ended, sorrow is ended, and sin is pardoned. This is what heals the afflicted and fearful heart. Therefore, the prophet asks to *prepare the way of the Lord*, opening oneself to His gifts of salvation.

For the people, consolation begins with the possibility to walk on the way of God, a new way, straightened and passable, a way to prepare *in the desert*, so that one can go across it and return to the homeland. Because the people the prophet was addressing was living the tragedy of the exile in Babylon, and now, instead, it hears it said that it will be able to return to its land, through a way made easy and wide, without valleys and mountains that make the way exhausting, a way leveled in the desert. Therefore, to prepare that way means to prepare *a way of salvation and of liberation* from every obstacle and hindrance.

The exile was a dramatic moment in the history of Israel, when the people had lost everything. The people had lost their homeland, freedom, dignity and even their trust in God. They felt abandoned and without hope. Instead, see the prophet's appeal, which reopens their heart to faith. *The desert* is a place in which it is difficult to live, but precisely there is where they will be able to walk to *return, not only to their homeland but also to God, and to hope and to smile again*. When we are in darkness, in difficulties, we cannot smile and it is, in fact, hope that teaches us to smile to find that way that leads to God. One of the first things that happen to persons who are tired of God is that they are persons without a smile. Perhaps they are able to have a great laugh, they do so one after another, a beat, a laugh ... but a smile is lacking! Hope alone gives a smile: it is the smile of the hope of finding God.

Life is often a desert, it is difficult to walk in it, but if we entrust ourselves to God it can become beautiful and wide as a highway. Suffice it never to lose hope, suffice it to continue to believe, always, despite all. When we find ourselves before a child, perhaps we might have many problems and many difficulties, but a smile comes to us from within, because we find ourselves before hope: a child is a hope! And so we must be able to see in life the way of hope, which leads us to find God, God who became a Child for us — and it will make us smile, it will give us all!

In fact, these words of Isaiah are later used by John the Baptist in his preaching, which invites to conversion. He said thus: "The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord" (*Matthew* 3:3). It is a voice that cries where it seems that no one is able to hear — but who can hear in the desert? — that cries in the loss due to the crisis of faith. We cannot deny that today's world is in a crisis of faith. One says "I believe in God, I am Christian" — "I am of that religion ..." But your life is very far from being Christian; it is very far from God! Religion, faith has fallen in an expression: "Do I believe?" — "Yes!" However, here it is about turning to God, converting the heart to God and of going on this way to find Him. He awaits us. This is John the Baptist's preaching: to prepare. To prepare the encounter with this Child who will give us back a smile. When the Baptist proclaims the coming of Jesus, for the Israelites it was as if they were still in exile, because they were under Roman domination, making them strangers in their own homeland, governed by powerful occupants who decided their life. However, the true history is not that made up of the powerful but rather that *made by God together with His little ones*. The true history — that which will remain in eternity — is that which God writes *with His little ones*: God with Mary, God with Jesus, God with Joseph, *God with the little ones*. Those little and simple ones that we find around Jesus about to be born: Zechariah and Elizabeth, elderly marked by sterility; Mary, young virgin girl betrothed bride of Joseph, the shepherds held in contempt, accounted as nothing. It is the little ones, made great by their faith, *the little ones who are able to continue to hope*. And hope is the virtue of *little ones*. The great, the satisfied do not know hope they do not know what it is.

It is the little ones with God, with Jesus that transform the desert of exile, of desperate loneliness, of suffering into a level way on which to walk to go to encounter the glory of the Lord. And we come, therefore, to allowing ourselves to be taught hope. Let us wait confidently for the coming of the Lord and no matter what the desert is of our lives — each one knows in what desert he walks — it will become a flowering garden. Hope does not disappoint!

St. Gerard Catholic Church



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

SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading:

Isaiah 35:1-6a,10(7A)

Responsorial:

Psalms 146:6-7,8-9,9-10

Second Reading:

James 5:7-10

Gospel:

Matthew 11:2-11

Today's Missal

Lectionary Readings for the
week of December 11, 2016

Monday: Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab
(690A); Luke 1:39-47

Tuesday: Zephaniah 3:1-2,9-13;
Matthew 21:28-32

Wednesday: Isaiah 45:6b-8,18,21b-25;
Luke 7:18b-23

Thursday: Isaiah 54:1-10;
Luke 7:24-30

Friday: Isaiah 56:1-3a,6-8;
John 5:33-36

Saturday: Genesis 49:2,8-10;
Matthew 1:1-17

The Third Sunday of Advent December 11, 2016

Mission Statement

Called to be a People for Others

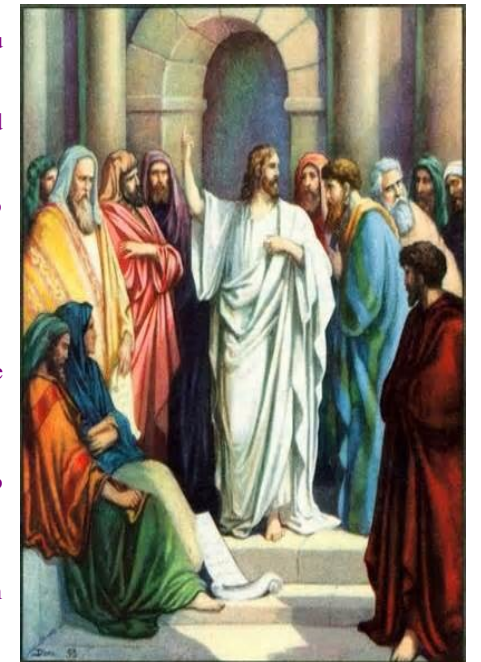
Vision Statement

*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

Now John had heard in prison what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?" Jesus answered, "Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor; and blessed is anyone who does not find me a cause of falling." As the men were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John, "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Look, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you. 'In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

Matthew 11: 2-11



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
Nancy Durden
Marge Glauser
Joan Hesik
Janet Menefee
Gregory Wright

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 John Lauer From A. Lauer



**Weekend Offering
December 3-4, 2016**

Collection \$3,397.00
Needed \$2,612.00
Over \$785.00
Attendance 148

The Gathering Hymn 20 M
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
The Offertory Hymn is 46 M
The Whole World Is Waiting For Love
The Communion Hymn is CHOIR 27 M
See How the Virgin Waits for Him
Our Song of Praise is 34 M
Alleluia, Hurry the Lord Is Near



Lay Ministers

	Saturday December 17 4:00 PM Vigil Mass Lector: Joan Hesik E E Ministers: Ellen Heim/Joe Dennis	Sunday December 18 7:00 AM Mass Denise Gelinas Roger Gelinas	Sunday December 18 11:00 AM Mass Sheila Wagner Mary Rose
	Saturday December 24 4:00 PM Vigil Mass Lector: Lisa Solenberger E E Ministers: Wayman Johnson	Sunday December 25 9:00 AM Mass Diane Begic	

Refreshments December 11 Jackie Cobbs/Rosa DiStefano	Refreshments December 18 Sheila Wagner/Patricia Hayes	Refreshments December 25 N/A
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Christmas flowers in memory of loved ones.

Memorials are \$10 each. Please make donations not later than December 18 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 need Servers for December 25th at 9 AM, and Ushers)
Call the Office or sign up in the lobby.**

Second Collection this week For: Retirement for religious

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

Choir Practice will be held on December 13. Time 6:00 PM till 7:15 PM.

**Volunteer Corner:
Joan Hesik For her help with the parish data base
and Francisca Palacios for the copy paper.**

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.