

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

My dear St. Ignatius Family,

We are in the last week of Advent, and Christmas is around the corner. Today's Gospel scene is that of the Annunciation to our Blessed Mother. Through the years we have heard, and read, many reflections on this passage. But I would like you to reflect on some questions in the context of the present situation we are facing.

Whose message was it? It was a message from God. When we hear anything, be it a good news or bad news we have to check the credibility of the source. Who delivered the message? The Angel Gabriel delivered the message. We know that whenever someone does something good for us, we think, he/she is an angel. Let us become angels to others by delivering happy news to them, and console others in their sadness. We should not cause tension or become a reason for drifts. To whom was the message delivered? It was to a virgin. Mary remained sinless throughout her life, in the world of her time. To have the desire to be pure, one needs to be in awe of the holiness of God. For this one needs a constant connection with God. We, too, should always try to be pure. In this stressful time, instead of depending on harmful addictions for relief, we need to find comfort in God. Where was the message given? At her home. Some people are discouraged because church activities are not as they were, due to the pandemic. There are still so many ways we can be good stewards of Christ even from our homes. We have to use our talents of time, wealth and health, for the greater glory of God. What type of message was delivered? It was of course good news for all of humanity, for it offered us salvation. But for Mary, an unmarried woman, pregnancy out of wedlock would mean adultery and would lead to death by stoning. But we can see how she trusted God. Today we hear news reports of the number of deaths due to covid, the number of people infected, warnings for all of us, and precautions for us to take. Many are confused, depressed, lonely and frightened in this situation. But let us not panic. Know and believe that God is still in control, and He knows what He is doing.



This Sunday the fourth purple candle is lit. It symbolises **Peace**. It is also called the **Angel's Candle**. It reminds us of the message of the angels to the shepherds: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests." (Lk.2:14). More than ever we need His peace now. His peace means not the absence of problems, but to be calm in our hearts, amidst turmoil, and see His presence in our lives. In order to enjoy complete peace, we must be free of any malice in our hearts. We have to forgive others from the heart. Though we may get irritated with the behaviour of others and react, or even overreact, we should never hold any grudges in our hearts. Sometimes

this is extremely difficult, and almost near to impossible. But forgive, for our loving God has forgiven our innumerable mistakes. So as we light the candle of peace, we pray:

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Jesus the light of the world, give us Your peace. The world as a whole, is going through a very tough time. Help us to keep our focus on You, even in the midst of our troubles. Let us be peace bearers to all, and forgive all. Help us Lord to persevere till the last moment of our lives. Amen

The fifth white candle in the center is called the "Christ Candle". It means Jesus is the light of the world. It is white in colour to represent the purity of Christ, the spotless Lamb. It is lit on the Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

As we continue our preparation for Christmas, I would like you to make a good confession, and prepare the room for Him in Your hearts. In addition to the regular confession on Saturday (3:30 PM to 4:30 PM), there will be a confession on Monday, December 21st, from 5 PM to 8 PM. Confession will be in the old school building.

I encourage you to create a nativity scene at your home. Please do not put everything in it on 24th. But let us make a spiritual journey to Bethlehem, along with Mary and Joseph, by placing statues in and around the manger, day by day.

Monday 21 st . Display the manger. Make our hearts and homes ready to receive Jesus.	Tuesday 22 nd . Place shepherds outside. Wait for Jesus with the humility and simplicity of these poor shepherds.	Wednesday 23 rd . Place Mary and Joseph. Let us completely rely on God's providence and obey His Holy will .
Thursday 24 th Place the Infant Jesus . Receive Jesus in our hearts . Do everything to make Him happy and never do anything to make Him sad.		

Before I conclude, I encourage you to read the short story "A Christmas Inspiration" by Canadian writer, Lucy Maud Montgomery. In this touching story, we can see how five young women staying in a boarding house make their grumpy landlady Miss. Allen happy. When they all received gifts, instead of remaining happy in their world, they noticed that Miss. Allen didn't receive a single gift. Though Miss. Allen never smiled, one young woman, got an inspiration to give her a gift. All the others agreed. They gave a big surprise to Miss. Allen and made her so happy that she cried out of joy. It is in giving that we receive true joy. The smile on the face of the receiver is the real gift. Let us see Jesus in others, especially in the less fortunate when we celebrate Christmas. Above all, let nothing steal your attention from Christ. God bless you all.

On behalf of all the priests, deacons, nuns and staff also,

I WISH YOU ALL A BLESSED CHRISTMAS FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY HEART.

In Jesus and Mary,

Fr. Shibi Pappan.

"Pray as though everything depended on God; Act as though everything depended on you."