

Old St. Joseph's Church

Est. 1733 | Philadelphia's Jesuit Parish

321 Willings Alley
Philadelphia, PA 19106
Phone: (215) 923-1733
www.OLDSTJOSEPH.ORG

December 24, 2017 | The Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Real Story of Christmas

In the ancient world, people did not write biographies of famous people as we do today. Writing history was not a scientific endeavor in which the goal was documentation and factual reporting. Instead, ancient historians wrote to capture the larger dimensions of their subject's character and the moral implications for the reader of the story they were telling. Today we would call this historical fiction. But for the ancients they thought their writings were communicating larger truths than simply recounting objective facts.

The distinction may seem rather academic, but it's an important point to make when we approach the Christmas story in the bible. The evangelists Matthew and Luke – the only two gospels that talk about Christmas – were part of the ancient world, not ours. And they wrote their stories about the birth of Jesus to appeal to the needs of their audience, as they understood those needs. It may be frustrating for us with our modern historical consciousness, but they were not writing an historically factual account of Jesus' birth. They were writing something that they thought was more important – and more true.

Biblical scholars tell us that the first part of the overall gospel story to be written down was the account of the passion. Then various sayings of Jesus (e.g., "The son of man has nowhere to lay his head") were committed to the written record. Then maybe stories about Jesus' ministry, or his resurrection appearances. Most probably the last part of the Jesus story to be written down was the story of his birth and accompanying circumstances. The nativity narratives in Matthew and Luke, therefore, are theologically laden and broadly reflective of the creative work of the evangelists. They knew they were creating a birth story that would communicate deep truths about Jesus so that the reader would be better prepared to absorb the full meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.



Admitting this truth – that the Christmas stories are intended to introduce us to the meaning of Jesus for us – has three major benefits. First, we can freely admit that the two versions in Matthew and Luke are really distinct stories, with different emphases and only some similarities. Secondly, we are freed from simply sentimentalizing the story the way the commercialization of Christmas so frequently does. Thirdly, we get closer to the actual intentions of the evangelists, and hence closer to what the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

Ask yourself the question that Matthew and Luke undoubtedly asked themselves as they began writing about Christmas: What do you believe about Jesus that you would want to emphasize in the story of his birth? Is it that Jesus is the divine Son of God? Or that Jesus is the Savior of the world? Or that Jesus is born fully human, like you and me? Or something about Jesus' human life, that he is destined to suffer and die for us? These are religious truths. We call them "mysteries." And simple historical events, therefore, can never fully express them as truths of faith. So how would you want to tell the story of Jesus' birth in order effectively to communicate the faith?

Continued on the next page...



Old St. Joseph's is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop.

Booklets with the Sunday readings are in the rear of the church.



If you read through the two Christmas stories, you see how successful the evangelists accomplished their purpose. That is why the Church through history has always endorsed what they wrote and believes their writings were especially inspired by the Holy Spirit.

What has long impressed me personally about the Christmas stories – reading them with the mind set I’ve described above – is that the stories all point to the passion of Jesus. People don’t usually speak that way. Maybe they fear it’s too much a “downer” for the joy of Christmas. But the stories work because they are so suggestive of God’s love for us and the way Jesus will act out this love in his life. The passion of Jesus is hinted at throughout the Christmas story.

In Luke’s version, Jesus is born while his parents are what we would call “displaced persons,” temporarily homeless and out on the street. Later, when they meet the holy man, Simeon, he will warn the parents that this child “is destined for the rise and fall of many” and his final fate will cut like a dagger into his mother’s heart. Those are tough words and they play a central role in the plot of the story as Luke tells it. Luke points to the passion in Jesus’ future, from the manger on!

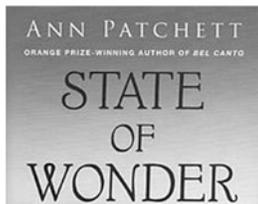
Similarly, in Matthew’s version, though the details differ from Luke’s account, immediately after Jesus’ birth the family is reduced to refugee status, fleeing their home to escape persecution much like so many people in war torn areas of today’s world. In fact, they just barely escape a village slaughter that specifically targets their own son. Even when they can eventually attempt repatriation, they are excluded from returning home and have to resettle in another part of their country. Matthew focuses on Joseph, who bears primary responsibility in the story for finding his way through this maze of ominous circumstances.

I wonder the amazement of the evangelists if they could see how we have spun the story in an entirely different way. In part, we have simply sentimentalized the story, to make it G-rated, so to speak, and mix cartoon characters into the season when we celebrate these stories. Nothing wrong with sentimentality, a psychiatrist once told me. But let’s not forget what the evangelists are trying to tell us in their story. If you want to find Jesus, you’ll have to look among the displaced homeless and the threatened refugees because those are his people. And when he grew up and became a man, he never forgot his roots and always wanted us to take care of his own.

I recall that recently a prominent political strategist criticized the Catholic bishops for supporting undocumented immigrants, charging that the bishops were just promoting their own interests, trying to fill the pews, at the expense of the country. Ironically without realizing it, he was putting a terrible damper on the real meaning of Christmas, missing the whole point of how the gospels are calling us to respond to the coming of Jesus. It’s precisely the disenfranchised who accompany Jesus. Fortunately, our bishops – and Pope Francis -- have gotten this one right. So now we know where Jesus can be found today. Merry Christmas everyone.

Walter F. Modrys, S.J.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Christmas Mass Schedule:

Sunday, December 24

Fourth Sunday in Advent

5:30 PM (Vigil), 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 AM Masses

Christmas Eve

4:00, 6:30, 9:00 PM Masses

Relaxed parking in effect 7 AM – 11 PM

Monday, December 25

Christmas Day

10:00 AM Mass

Relaxed parking in effect 9 AM – 12 PM

Solemnity of Mary, Monday, January 1

12:05 PM Mass

Relaxed parking in effect 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

The OSJ Book Group will NOT meet in January. We will reassemble on Tuesday, February 6, at 7:30 PM in the Loyola Room. **Our book is *State of Wonder* by Ann Patchett.** This novel takes a Midwesterner to the Amazon in search of a lost colleague, a journey that calls all her values into question.

The OSJ Book Group consists of avid readers, lively discussion and provides a chance to examine spiritual values in the context of fictional narratives. It meets once a month and provides parishioners with both intellectual challenge and a chance to know each other through sharing their reading experience. If you are interested, please contact shlosscarol@gmail.com or simply pick up a copy of the book and come.

YOUNG ADULT COMMUNITY

YAC Holiday Break: There will be no YAC Pre-Mass Reflection Group on Sunday, December 24, and Sunday, December 31. The group will resume in the new year at 5:30 PM in Greaton Parlor on Sunday, January 7. Additionally, there will be no YAC spirituality night on Tuesday, December 26. Our spirituality nights will resume on Tuesday, January 9. Questions? Email us at osjyac@gmail.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolve to get more involved in your parish in 2018! **Our beautiful liturgies need Altar Servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Lectors and Ushers!** Scheduling is flexible and training will be provided! Sign up through the Ministry Scheduling Program at www.oldstjoseph.org. That's the Magis!

A Musical Note from the Pastor: I am pleased formally to announce that I have asked Mark Bani to assume the position of full-time music director at OSJ. As you recall, Mark began here in September as "interim" music director. But given his obvious talent and ability to lead the music ministry, we want his contribution to our parish worship program to continue into the future. Mark has graciously accepted this invitation and so we welcome him once again to our OSJ family.

There will be no Coffee Hour after the 9:30 and 11:30 AM Masses on Sunday, December 31. Coffee Hours will resume on Sunday, January 7.



Requiescat in pace

William R. Regli, father of longtime parishioners William C. and Susan Regli, and grandfather to Dominique and Anthony Regli, passed away on December 15, 2017. His funeral Mass was celebrated on Thursday, December 21, 2017. We extend our heartfelt condolences to William C., Susan, Dominique, and Anthony, and their family and friends.

Relaxed Parking Update:

The city had not renewed our Sunday relaxed parking on Walnut St. between 3rd and 4th Sts. Relaxed parking is now only on the west side of South 4th Street between Walnut and Spruce and on the north side of the 400 block of Locust Street (yellow placard). The placard for the 4th St and Locust St parking (directly below) is available in the vestibule of the church and online. If you have any of the pink Walnut St. placards (bottom) in your car please dispose of them. **You will be ticketed if you park on Walnut St.**

Attending services at
Old St. Joseph's Church
321 Willings Alley, Philadelphia PA

LOCATIONS FOR PARKING: Both sides of 4th Street from Walnut to Spruce Streets & both sides of Locust Street from 4th to 5th Streets. The bearer of this certificate understands that this does not include flagrant parking violations such as parking across a driveway or crosswalk, on the footway, next to a fire hydrant, double-parking, etc. This notice may only be used during 1.) Weekend Sunday Masses including the Saturday evening Vigil, 2.) Weddings taking on a Saturday or Sunday 3.) Holyday or special evening masses and/or receptions but not before 6:30pm which is the end of rush hour, Mon. thru Fri., except on holidays. 4.) Funeral Viewing and/or Mass.

~~Walnut Street Parking Relaxation Notice~~
~~Attending Sunday Morning Services at~~
~~Old St. Joseph's Church~~
~~321 Willings Alley, Philadelphia PA~~

~~This notice may be used for relaxed parking on the NORTH SIDE OF WALNUT STREET BETWEEN 3RD & 4TH STREETS ONLY AND BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 7:00 AM AND 1:00PM ON SUNDAYS AND MAY NOT BE USED ON ANY OTHER DAY OR ON ANY OTHER STREET. The bearer of this certificate understands that this does not include flagrant parking violations such as parking across a driveway or crosswalk, on the footway, next to a fire hydrant, double-parking, etc.~~

Please remember our sick and homebound sisters and brothers:

Jack Lees
Mildred Barnett
Arlene Vattimo
Catherine Keddie
Rick Bravo
Bernardo Goldrosson
MaryLou Jennings
D. Minter
Joseph Burke
Richard Polosky

Allen May
Deborah Brooks
Ed Tomezsko
Louis Balestrucci
Jerry McAndrews SJ
April DeMatto
Lydia Staley
Jennifer Moore
Marie Jacobs
Patricia Yusko
Karen Lockyer

Ann Frances Tozzi
Louise CoCo
Sara Orkline
Adeline Acerno
James McBride
Jerry McBride
Joanna Pearl
Lucy Pearl
Marjorie Heald
Joan Nichol

Pray also for our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital.

Names will be removed after 4 weeks unless a request is renewed.



Parish Home Ministry

Eldership Community volunteers who are Eucharistic Ministers are available to visit homebound parishioners. These volunteers bring communion to the homebound. To request a home visit, please call the rectory office.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Offertory Collection for the week ending December 17

Percentage of Online Giving: 35%

Collection	Regular	Online	Total
Daily Mass	\$278.00	n/a	\$278.00
Sunday Mass	\$6,774.00	\$3,633.00	\$10,407.00

ONLINE GIVING

Old St. Joseph's provides Online Giving – a convenient, flexible and safe way to make a one-time or recurring donation to the fund of your choice (e.g., Sunday Offertory, FF&F, HPC).

To sign up for Online Giving go to our website: www.oldstjoseph.org and click on the **Online Giving** tab underneath the Important Links column.

WEEKLY READINGS



Readings from...

Monday: Isaiah 52; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1; John 1
 Tuesday: Acts 6; Psalm 31; Matthew 10
 Wednesday: 1 John 1; Psalm 97; John 20
 Thursday: 1 John 1 and 2; Psalm 124; Matthew 2
 Friday: 1 John 2; Psalm 96; Luke 2
 Saturday: 1 John 2; Psalm 96; Luke 2
 Sunday: Sirach 36; Psalm 128, Psalm 105; Colossians 3; Luke 2

Complete text of the daily readings can be found at www.usccb.org/bible/readings.

Want to Join the Jesuits?

In every generation, God calls people to follow Jesus as dedicated disciples. If you are a man young in spirit, have you ever thought about following that call as a Jesuit priest or brother? **The Society of Jesus is ready to help you discern if the Jesuit life is what God wants for you.** For almost 500 years Jesuits have been serving the Church in pastoral ministry, in education, as missionaries – or wherever the need is greatest. For Jesuits, that is their mission.

Want to explore this opportunity? Visit our Vocation Website at <https://jesuitvocations.org/>

(If you have a friend who may be interested, do him the favor of passing this along to him.)

Date	Mass Intention and Presider	Calendar Events
Mon 25 <i>Christmas Day</i>	10:00 AM Presider: Fr. Walter Modrys, S.J.	
Tues 26	12:05 PM <i>Old St. Joseph's Memorial Society</i> Presider: Fr. Ed O'Donnell, S.J.	12 Noon: Al-Anon (Drexel)
Wed 27	12:05 PM <i>Charles and Michelina Marino (D)</i> Presider: Fr. Ed Dougherty, S.J.	6:30 PM: Women Faith and Fellowship (Loyola)
Thurs 28	12:05 PM <i>Old St. Joseph's Memorial Society</i> Presider: Fr. Walter Modrys, S.J.	
Fri 29	12:05 PM <i>Edward & Mary Britt Family (D)</i> Presider: Fr. Ed O'Donnell, S.J.	
Sat 30	12:05 PM <i>Old St. Joseph's Memorial Society</i> Presider: Fr. Ed Dougherty, S.J. 5:30 PM Presider: Fr. Ed O'Donnell, S.J.	
Sun 31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>	7:30 AM Presider: Fr. Ed Dougherty, S.J. 9:30 AM Presider: Fr. Walter Modrys, S.J. 11:30 AM Presider: Fr. Walter Modrys, S.J. No 6:30 PM Mass	9:30 AM: CLOW (Barbelin)

INFORMATION

Rectory Office Hours

Monday through Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Sunday: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Mass Times

Monday through Saturday: 12:05 PM
Saturday Vigil Mass for Sunday: 5:30 PM
Sunday: 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 AM and 6:30 PM
Holy Days: 12:05 and 7:30 PM

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency when the need for a priest is urgent, please call the rectory.

Hearing Enhancements

Old St. Joseph's is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are in the rear of the church.

Registration

Persons who want to register as parishioners should complete a parish registration form and return it to the rectory office by mail or in person. Registration forms are available in the rectory office during normal office hours, on the bookcases in the back of the church and online at www.oldstjoseph.org.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Monday through Saturday: 11:30 AM to noon and by appointment

Sacrament of Baptism

Persons wanting to arrange for a baptism should call Fr. Dougherty at the parish office at least two months before the desired date to arrange catechesis and the baptism celebration.

Sacrament of Anointing

The Sacrament of Anointing (the sacrament of the sick) is administered during the 12:05 PM Mass on the first Saturday of each month. Homebound or hospitalized persons wanting to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony

Persons wanting to be married in the parish should call Fr. O'Donnell at the parish office at least nine months before the desired date.

Rite of Christian Initiation

Unbaptized adults who are considering baptism into the Catholic Church, baptized Catholics who have received no other sacraments and who want to be confirmed and to receive First Eucharist, and baptized non-Catholics who are considering full communion in the Catholic Church should call Fr. O'Donnell at the parish office.

To arrange Mass of Christian Burial, the funeral director should call the parish office.

OSJ Staff

Pastor: Fr. Walter Modrys, S.J.

(pastor@oldstjoseph.org)

Parochial Vicar: Fr. Edward O'Donnell, S.J.

(eodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)

Fr. Edward Dougherty S.J.

(dougherty@oldstjoseph.org)

In Residence: Br. Robert Carson, S.J.

Business Manager: Eric German

(germane@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Music: Mark Bani

(music@oldstjoseph.org)

Liturgy Coordinator: Sr. Asunta Thanh, acj

(liturgy@oldstjoseph.org)

Administrative Assistant: Eleanor Margaret

(office@oldstjoseph.org)

Faith, Food & Friends Director: Deborah

Hluchan (faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)

PREP Coordinator: Christine Szczepanowski

(prep@oldstjoseph.org)

OSJ Councils and Boards

Parish Pastoral Council: (osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Rana McNamara (co-chair), Richard Le (co-chair)

Parish Finance Council: Paul Shay (chair)

Historic Preservation Corporation Board: Fr. Walter Modrys, S.J. (President)

Parish Committees and Chairpersons

Adult Education: Rita O'Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo (adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life: Joe Casey (joetcasey@aol.com)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation: John Bitterman (osjspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)

Social Justice: Bethany Welch
(socialjustice@oldstjoseph.org)

Ministry Leaders

Altar Servers: Maria Ramirez,
(mathra71@yahoo.com)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:
Bill Stewart (wstewart@kaplaw.com)

Hospital Ministry: Luanne Balestrucci
(lbalestrucci@yahoo.com)

Homebound Ministry: Neal Hébert
(neal9536@gmail.com)

Lectors: Lou Anne Bulik, (labulik@yahoo.com)

Ushers: Nikola Sizgorich, (niksiz@icloud.com)

Children's Liturgy of the Word: Peggy Connolly
(pmcon@comcast.net)