I saw my nephew for the first time when he was one day old. My mother and I visited my sister in the hospital the day after she gave birth. After seeing her, we made our way to the nursery and looked through the glass window—just like in the movies. My nephew was in the second row. And if truth be told, he looked like all the other babies. But I remember wondering what he would become. What future stretched out before him, given all the possibilities of life? No doubt parents must have an even stronger sense of wonder. I was just the uncle.

Today, forty years later, I could describe that first view of my nephew in far different terms, given what I now know about him as an attorney and father of three children.

As we move closer to the annual celebration of Jesus’ birth, the thought comes to mind that the evangelists may have been moved by similar emotions when they decided to write the story of Jesus’ birth. Matthew and Luke—the only two evangelists that took up the challenge of recording the story of Jesus’ birth—were writing forty or fifty years after the death of Jesus. They knew his whole story. In offering us the story of the first Christmas, however, they didn’t want just to report that Jesus was born with the bare circumstances of his birth. In fact, those circumstances were undoubtedly unavailable to the evangelists, having been long since lost to memory. Instead, they wanted us to look forward to all that Jesus’ life would come to mean—his miracles, his teaching, his death, his resurrection. They wanted to introduce us to the mystery of Jesus by inserting details into the story that could serve as clear hints about what he would later become.

The commentators on the gospels suspect that in the early Church the stories about Jesus’ birth and infancy developed only over time. The earliest stories about Jesus concerned his passion, death and resurrection. Then stories about his public ministry were formed and came to be circulated. The infancy stories developed last. In fact, they may well have been the place where the evangelists could be most creative since the stories were not firmly set. The evangelists could fill in the details for their own purposes. They crafted the story in light of their knowledge of Jesus’ later life and death, suggesting to the reader what Jesus means to us as our Savior and how our salvation was accomplished.

It was an ingenious way to teach the mystery of Jesus, a literary device—using the birth and

—continued inside
12:05 Daily Mass Intentions and Presider

Monday 12/23
Old St. Joseph’s Memorial Society
Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ

Tuesday 12/24
12:05 PM Daily Mass
Old St. Joseph’s Memorial Society
Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ

Christmas: The Nativity of the Lord
4:00 PM  President: Fr. Modrys SJ
6:30 PM  President: Fr. O’Donnell SJ
9:00 PM  President: Fr. Modrys SJ

Wednesday 12/25
Christmas: The Nativity of the Lord
10:00 AM  President: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Thursday 12/26
Old St. Joseph’s Memorial Society
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Friday 12/27
Geraldine Marren & Family (D)
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Saturday 12/28
Edward and Mary Britt Family (D)
Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ

Saturday–Sunday

Saturday 12/28
5:30 PM  Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ

Sunday 12/29
7:30 AM  Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ
9:30 AM  Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ
11:30 AM  Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ
6:30 PM  Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ

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In your prayers, please remember our sick and homebound brothers and sisters and our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital.

Douglas Adler, George Bernato, Eleanor and Rick Bravo, Deborah Brooks, Ann Crowther, Jane Crowther, Mary Kay Crowther, Elizabeth Davies, Fr. Ed Dougherty SJ, Barbara Epting, Tessie Griffin, Carol Herman, Fr. Mike Hricko SJ, Imani Ivie, Sharon Krinsky, Bruce Maloney, Allen May, Giancarlo Mazzoleni, Fr. Jerry McAndrews SJ, D. Minter, Julius Mingroni, Bobby Morrissey, Barbara Paul, David Roberts, Ray Scannapieco, Donovan Schmidt, Dennis Scott, Sara Smith, Ann Frances Tozzi, Mary Turner, Gail Williams, Sharon Winge and Patricia Yusko.

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Announcements

January 1—Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God
On January 1, there will be one Mass, at 12:05 PM. There will be no confessions heard that day, and parish offices will be open from 11:00 AM–1:00 PM only.

Parish Cookout Dinner, January 5
The Young Adult Community will host a parish dinner in Barbelin Hall on Sunday, January 5 after 6:30 PM Mass. All are welcome; if you’d like to help at this or future dinners, contact osjycg@gmail.com.

Intelligent Talk on Immigration: A Legal Perspective
Parishioner and attorney Thomas M. Griffin will shed light on the realities faced from the border to the courtroom by people seeking a safe home in the United States or to reunite their families here. Come learn about the legal challenges of migration in this era of aggressive enforcement and political polarization on Sunday, January 12, at 1:15 PM in Barbelin Hall.
infancy narrative—that was well known in ancient literature in secular biographies of famous men, but never used to greater effect or for a more noble purpose.

Matthew and Luke each composed significantly different story lines. Spend a few moments reading each story separately and you’ll see how different each is from the other. Amazing how we have harmonized them so artificially! Shepherds and Wise Men all showing up in the stable at the same time! But it’s even more amazing how we have sentimentalized the stories to take off the rough edges. There’s snow on the ground (in Palestine?), but the stable is warm and cozy! Caroling angels on a crystal clear night! The evangelists certainly wanted to promote the joy of Christmas, but it was to be a joy founded on the paschal mystery of Christ, the triumph of the cross in a world where the innocent suffer and God intervenes by sending his Son as our Savior. So their Christmas story was to have a happy ending, if one can speak so flippantly about a story so profound. But the “happy ending” was to be in the resurrection—with the Christmas story merely the introduction.

So as you read the stories in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, notice the hint of the future passion. In Matthew, Herod pursues the infant to kill him. In Luke, Simeon in the Temple predicts that Mary’s heart will be pierced by a sword because of her son. Notice in both stories how Jesus is placed among the poor. In Luke, he is born into a homeless family. And in Matthew, the family must flee their home to escape persecution and seek refugee status in a foreign land. How contemporary! In Luke, the shepherds are the first to hear the news. And as you know, shepherds at the time were typically held in contempt for their lax observance of the law. Similarly, in Matthew, the first to come to Jesus are Gentiles guided by a star, people thought to be outside the covenant. All these “plot lines” in the story are deliberately contrived to foretell the rest of the Jesus story. Later in the gospels, Jesus describes himself with the words, “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” and “The Son of Man must suffer...” The disciples are asked, “Why does your master eat with sinners?” Almost every detail of the Christmas story, as told by Matthew and Luke, is echoed in the ministry and final days of Jesus leading up to his passion.

Anyone who works with the public is warned to be on the lookout during the Christmas holidays for people who slip into severe melancholy or depression at this time of the year. All the Christmas carols—even the entirely secular songs—tell us how we should feel so happy, cheerful, excited in this “holiday season,” but for some people unfortunately the reality of the Christmas season can be far different. For them, they feel excluded from the buoyancy and joy of the season, left out, alone. And yet the true Christmas story was originally designed precisely for the hurting people in the world and to urge the rest of us to care for them. For the Christmas story points us not just to an innocent infant whom no one can help but love. The real Christmas story inserts us into the real world that is screaming out for a savior and proclaims that God has listened to our cry and sent us a Redeemer. And if you believe that, the joy of Christmas can overcome all the forces that threaten us, no matter how vulnerable we may otherwise be.

I once heard a stirring sermon about how Christmas belongs to the poor. For the poor are the people who are most looking for a savior and hoping that God will hear their cry. It’s what Jesus meant when he blessed the poor in the first beatitude. That Christmas sermon concluded with the wish that all of us would come to know the Christmas of the poor, because only then can we know the real joy of Christmas. Our Savior has been born and given to us. Merry Christmas.

—Walter F. Modrys, SJ

Front page image: Flight into Egypt, Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1899.
INFORMATION

**Pastor**
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ *(pastor@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Parochial Vicar**
Fr. Frank Hannafey SJ *(fgillespie@oldstjoseph.org)*

**In Residence**
Br. Robert Carson SJ
Fr. Edward Dougherty SJ *(dougherty@oldstjoseph.org)*
Fr. Ed O’Donnell SJ *(eodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Pastoral Associate**
BJ Brown *(bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Business Manager**
Eric German *(germane@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Director of Music**
Mark Bani *(music@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Parish Offices**
*(office@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Religious Education (PREP) Coordinator**
Christine Szczepanowski *(prep@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Faith, Food & Friends Director**
Deborah Hluchan *(faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)*

**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 7:00 PM

**Medical Emergency**
In 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 available in the rear of the church.

**Registration**
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. They can be returned to the parish office by mail or in person.

**Sacrament of Reconciliation**
A priest is available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation Monday through Saturday from 11:30 AM–12:00 PM or by appointment.

**Sacrament of Baptism**
If you want to arrange a baptism, please contact Fr. O’Donnell *(eodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)* at least two months before the desired date.

**Eucharist for the Homebound**
To arrange to receive Communion at home, please contact the parish offices.

**The Sacrament of Anointing**
The Sacrament of Anointing (the sacrament of the sick) is offered 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**
If you want to be married at Old St. Joseph’s, please visit our website, oldstjoseph.org and read the material under the heading Weddings. Please call the parish office at 215-923-1766 at least nine months before your desired wedding date.

**Rite of Christian Initiation**
If you are an adult wishing to be baptized, or to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation, or are a baptized non-Catholic seeking full communion with Catholic Church, please call the parish office or email rcia@oldstjoseph.org.

**Mass of Christian Burial**
To schedule a funeral or memorial Mass, ask your funeral director to call the parish office.

**Parish Pastoral Council**
*(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Parish Finance Council**
Paul Shay, chair

**Historic Preservation Corporation Board**
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

**Adult Education**
Rita O’Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo *(adulted@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Eldership**
Pat Nelson *(eldership@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Parish Life**
Joe Casey *(parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Ignatian Spirituality and Formation**
Len Mancini *(osjspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Women, Faith and Fellowship**
Rana McNamara *(wff@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Young Adult Community**
*(osjyac@gmail.com)*

**Altar Servers**
Maria Ramirez *(altarserver@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**
Bill Stewart *(EM@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Hospital Ministry**
Luanne Balestrucci *(hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Homebound Ministry**
Neal Hébert *(homeEM@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Lectors**
Lou Anne Bulik *(lectors@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Ushers**
Nikola Szgorich *(ushers@oldstjoseph.org)*

**Children’s Liturgy of the Word**
Peggy Connolly *(clow@oldstjoseph.org)*