“Queen of Peace is a parish of many cultures, living one Catholic faith, united to glorify God, and striving to provide a spiritual home for the members of our diverse community.”

Rev. Msgr. Michael J. Hardiman, - Pastor
Rev. James L. Tighe Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Michael Ugbor Parochial Vicar
Deacon Gregory Bizzoco Jr.
Deacon Jose M. Fernandez

Emergency Sick Calls Anytime

RECTORY
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718 380-5031   Fax 718 969-2025
Web Site In development
E-mail
queenofpeacerectory@outlook.com
Mrs. Arleni Guerrero,
Administrative Assistant
Plant Manager: Miguel Guaman
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
Deacon Gregory J. Bizzoco Jr.,
718- 380-3966

Catholic Cemeteries 718 894-4888

National suicide prevention hotline 24/7
1-800-273-8255
Samaritans NYC 24/7
212-673-3000

In addition to our Parish Office, the rectory is also home to the Priests of the parish. Please respect their home by calling in advance to make an appointment with a priest or deacon

Our Lady, Queen of Peace, Pray for us

4th Sunday of Advent

SUNDAY MASS SCHEDULE
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:00 PM
Sunday: 8:30AM & 11:00AM

WEEKDAY MASS SCHEDULE
8:30 AM Monday- Saturday
Mass in Spanish every Friday

RECTORY OFFICE HOURS
Monday to Friday:
9:00 AM TO 12:00 PM
1:00PM TO 4:00PM
Office closed Saturday & Sunday

LEGION OF MARY
Tuesday 10:30AM
Parish Center

EVENING HOURS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

BAPTISMS In English at 2pm on the 3rd Saturday of the month. Baptisms in Spanish on the 3rd Sunday of each month at 2:00pm. Please call the Rectory to register.

PENANCE Confessions are heard each Saturday 4:00- 4:45. Confessions anytime by appointment.

MARRIAGES Arrangements should be made at least (9) months in advance. Please call the Rectory for an appointment with a Priest/Deacon

CARE OF THE SICK Communion is regularly brought to the sick by our Eucharistic Ministers, Deacons and Priests. Please let us know when a parishioner is unable to come to church due to serious illness or age. Anointing of the sick is celebrated on the first Saturday of each month during the 8:30 Mass.

Novenas & Rosary follow the 8:30 Mass
Mon. Miraculous Medal
Tues. St. Anthony
Wed. St. Jude
Thurs. St. Ann
Fri. Sacred Heart
Sat. Queen of Peace

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP NOVENA:
Wednesdays at Noon

Eucharistic Adoration Wednesday 9AM-Noon First Friday 9AM - Noon concludes with Midday Prayer & Novena

December 22nd, 2019
The secular world has not a clue as to what Christmas is all about. Christmas music starts right after Thanksgiving and ends on Christmas. As Catholics, Christmas is the end of the Season of Advent but it begins the Octave and then the Season of Christmas which ends with the Feast of the Baptist of the Lord, January 12, 2020.

The Christmas feast is about the greatest present our human race and our Universe has ever received, Jesus! The Babe in Bethlehem grows up to be the Man from Nazareth, who goes up to Jerusalem to die, to rise, and to give us all a share in His Divine Life. Every year, as Advent comes to a close, I think a wonderful book by Caryll Houselander (died 1954 at age 53) Wood of the Cradle, Wood of the Cross. Kerry S. Walter wrote (in an introduction to the same book under an earlier title The Passion of the Infant Christ):

“But there is another consequence of becoming more and more like the Christ-child who indwells us. Because Calvary is already present in Bethlehem, the suffering that Jesus endured on the Cross is inscribed within the Christ-child. If we live the Christ-life, gladly bending our wills to the Christ within, we will also suffer. In fact, the more we’re grounded in Christ, the greater our suffering will be, because our hearts become increasingly responsive to the poverty, sorrow, homelessness, alienation, and sin that besmirch God’s creation. Those who are Christocentric, in whom Christ waxes strong, expand and are wide open to the grief of the world. They are wide as the Arms of the Crucified are wide, and their hearts, unable to contain the world’s suffering in themselves, break open, as Christ’s did, and let the torrent of His pity sweep through them.”

Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Readings for the week of December 22, 2019
Sunday: Is 7:10-14, 2-3, 5-6
Tuesday: 2 Sm 7:1-5 Lk 1:67-79
Midnight: Is 9:1-6 Lk 2:11/Ti 2:11-14/Lk 2:1-14
Dawn: Is 62:11-12 Lk 2:15-20
Day: Is 52:7-10 or Jn 1:1-5, 9-14
Thursday: Acts 6:8-10 Mt 10:17-22
Friday: 1 Jn 1:1-Jn 20:1a, 2-8
Saturday 1 Jn 1:5 Mt 2:13-18
Next Sunday: Sir 3:2-6, Mt 2:13-15, 19-23
Yet the suffering isn't merely a response to a sometimes tragic and unjust world, valuable as feeling Christ-pity for others is. Suffering is also redemptive. We know by faith that Jesus' suffering at Calvary renews the world by taking on its sin and defeating the death that sin inflicts. If we embrace the Christ-child inscaped in us—the child who in turn inscapes the crucified and risen Christ—then our suffering necessarily participates in Christ's redemptive sacrifice. This isn't a position unique to Houselander. Thirty years after her death, Saint John Paul II explored the mystery of shared redemptive suffering in his *Salvifici doloris (On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering)*. Suffering, he said, is always an evil. But it is not meaningless because of its participation in Christ's redemptive suffering. This is a conclusion with which Houselander would have heartily agreed. For someone as sensitive to the suffering of others as she was, it offered a way of thinking about human pain that infused meaning into it and made coping with it possible.

Although she does not use the word in Passion, Houselander's message is what she called "christing" (pronounced with a long "i") in other places. Christing is the new way of being or "transubstantiation" that happens to us when we discern the Christ-child inscaped in us—the child within the wombs of others. Christing is the new way of being or "transubstantiation" that happens to us when we discern the Christ-child inscaped in us—the child who in turn inscapes the crucified and risen Christ—then our suffering necessarily participates in Christ's redemptive sacrifice. This isn't a position unique to Houselander. Thirty years after her death, Saint John Paul II explored the mystery of shared redemptive suffering in his *Salvifici doloris (On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering)*. Suffering, he said, is always an evil. But it is not meaningless because of its participation in Christ's redemptive suffering. This is a conclusion with which Houselander would have heartily agreed. For someone as sensitive to the suffering of others as she was, it offered a way of thinking about human pain that infused meaning into it and made coping with it possible.

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**Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me; Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me; Christ to right of me, Christ to left of me; Christ in my sitting, Christ in my rising; Christ in the heart of all who think of me, Christ on the tongue of all who speak to me, Christ in the eye of all who see me, Christ in the ear of all who hear me.**

At the end of the day, Houselander's message in The Passion of the Infant Christ is that the entire universe bears the imprint of its Maker, and that humans are unique in that we’re capable of recognizing that divine pattern or inscape not only in the world and in others, but also in ourselves.

When we do, the Christ-child within the wombs of our souls stirs. As Houselander wrote in a letter shortly after World War II erupted, "nothing now is more needed than a continual Christ-bearing into this world: carrying Christ, birthing Christ, and comporting oneself with the innocence and love of the Christ-child."

Today is the Fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas is Wednesday. The approach of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Blessed Lord each year brings my imagination into high gear since the story of Christ's birth as told by the Evangelists Matthew and Luke is simply perfect for the Ignatian prayer technique called **Composition of Place**: the use of the imagination to put yourself in the biblical scene. What was the Blessed Mother thinking as she and Joseph set out on their journey to Bethlehem? What was on Joseph’s mind as he set out on a journey fraught with difficulty?

Place yourself somewhere in the stable (or do you prefer a cave) and use all of your five senses to invigorate your prayer. What do you smell—straw, animal breath, animals, what else? What do you taste—perhaps some of those same things effect your taste buds as well. Can you feel the straw and the wood or the stone floor? Can you hear the angels in song, the animals breathing, the child crying? What do you see there in front of you—think newborn baby as you know newborns, not as the Christ Child is so often depicted in art. Let the scene become real for you as shepherds and Magi appear with their gifts. What is it that you say to Joseph and to Mary. Do you ask to hold the Child Jesus, does He cuddle in your arms, do His fingers wrap themselves around your own? What do you whisper to Him?

In my own name and in the name of the parish priests and staff I pray you Christmas blessings!

Our Lady Undoer of Knots, pray for us!

God bless!

MJH

Every Sunday following the 11am Mass we expose the Blessed Sacrament on our altar and it remains exposed for Eucharistic Adoration until 3pm when we pray a Novena to St. Peregrine, patron saint of persons with cancer, followed by Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Next weekend at the 5pm Mass and at our Sunday Masses we will bless chalk for the Feast of the Epiphany and invite you to bless your homes with the chalk; more on that next week.
Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God’s tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.

Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to “feel” and “touch” the poverty that God’s Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need.

I would like now to reflect on the various elements of the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the background of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. We represent this not only out of fidelity to the Gospel accounts, but also for its symbolic value. We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at all? What am I to do with my life? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering.

The landscapes that are part of the nativity scene also deserve some mention. Frequently they include the ruins of ancient houses or buildings, which in some instances replace the cave of Bethlehem and become a home for the Holy Family. These ruins appear to be inspired by the thirteenth-century Golden Legend of the Dominican Jacobus de Varagine, which relates a pagan belief that the Temple of Peace in Rome would collapse when a Virgin gave birth. More than anything, the ruins are the visible sign of fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints. This scenic setting tells us that Jesus is newness in the midst of an aging world, that he has come to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendour.

With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation rejoices in the coming of the Messiah. The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord.

“Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us”. So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words. Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene.

It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart. They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus; no one can evict them or send them away from a crib so makeshift that the poor seem entirely at home. Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God’s presence in our midst.

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, “gentle and humble in heart”, was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod’s palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.

Children – but adults too! – often love to add to the nativity scene other figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, each in its own way, these fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God’s creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us.
Gradually, we come to the cave, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”, show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God’s will. By her “fiat”, Mary became the mother of God’s Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice.

At Mary’s side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod’s threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt. And once the danger had passed, he brought the family back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God’s will, and put it into practice. When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all.

The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God’s presence in their lives.

“Life was made manifest”. In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ.

God’s ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God’s own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

As the feast of Epiphany approaches, we place the statues of the Three Kings in the Christmas crèche. Observing the star, those wise men from the East set out for Bethlehem, in order to find Jesus and to offer him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honours Jesus’ kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity that was to experience death and burial.

As we contemplate this aspect of the nativity scene, we are called to reflect on the responsibility of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of knowing Jesus and his love.

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Standing before the Christmas crèche, we are reminded of the time when we were children, eagerly waiting to set it up. These memories make us all the more conscious of the precious gift received from those who passed on the faith to us. At the same time, they remind us of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged: it can always be the same or it can change from year to year. What matters is that it speaks to our lives. Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God’s love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. Like Saint Francis, may we open our hearts to this simple grace, so that from our wondrement a humble prayer may arise: a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who wished to share with us his all, and thus never to leave us alone.

FRANCISCUS

Given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity, on 1 December in the year 2019, the seventh of my Pontificate.
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