

HOLY ROSARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

DECEMBER 25, 2021

A festive Christmas poster featuring a nativity scene. At the top, a bright, multi-pointed star shines against a dark blue, starry night sky. Below the star, the words "Merry Christmas!" are written in a large, elegant, golden cursive font. Underneath this, the phrase "AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The central focus is a manger made of wooden planks, filled with straw and a white cloth. A baby Jesus is lying in the manger, wrapped in white swaddling clothes. The manger is set on a wooden stand. The background is a dark blue sky with many small, colorful stars and a soft, glowing light emanating from behind the manger.

*Merry
Christmas!*

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH

JOHN 1:14

A light will shine on us this day: the Lord is born for us.



My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Infant Jesus has come to us, and this day we rejoice. With his light, he comes to banish the darkness, the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams.

A few months ago, when Fr. Dunstan Epaalat was with us on his occasional visit from Kenya. Having never been here in the Fall, he enjoyed seeing the various decorations up for Halloween. Even after the holiday, he would point them out. I was surprised to find something unexpected—the orange had given way to multi-colored Christmas lights. Almost two months before the holiday, people had already started celebrating.

We need the light amidst the darkness. Not only is this a dark time of year, but we face the burdens of life and of our world. We never seem to be able to escape them, and sometimes the darkness piles on and weighs heavy upon us. We long for that light which banishes the darkness, and in the birth of Jesus Christ—dawn has come. So yes, we put up our lights—on our homes, our trees and in our windows, as we await the coming of the Light of the Son of God which shines more brightly than all the rest.

Every year, I am astonished to see Christmas trees at the curb on December 26th. While there is a practical side, this is one of those feasts whose celebrations should stretch beyond the one day. Christmas shouldn't be the end of our celebrations, but the beginning of them, for the great guest has just arrived, and we should keep Jesus close. We need the Light of Christ, and all of these little traditions, celebrations and decorations, help remind us that Jesus has come, and the joy that he brings to us.

**God of love, Father of all,
the darkness that covered the earth
has given way to the bright dawn
of your Word made flesh.
Make us a people of this light.
Make us faithful to your Word,
that we may bring your life
to the waiting world.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

The question becomes—how do we help Christmas endure?

The Christmas Tree and Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square stay up until February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, the traditional end of Christmas. Consider leaving up some of your decorations until then, especially your Nativity scene.

The decorations, though, are just a reminder. How do we carry that Light with us, keeping Jesus close? God is bigger than any darkness in our lives. And while the darkness may always be there until His complete victory in the Second Coming, Jesus can help us keep it at bay and from overwhelming us if we don't give up on him, on that Light he has come to bring. There is much that can shake us, and our faith in this world. It seems so dark at times.

But Christ comes to enlighten our lives—if we let him. And through us, through our faith, Jesus Christ enlightens the world as well. How will you, this Christmas, make Jesus present in our world?

May you have a blessed Christmas, as you experience the nearness of God and the light and joy he has come to bring.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Matthew Oakland

May we help Jesus light the world this Christmastide.

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

"He so loved us that for our sake He was made man in time, through Whom all times were made; was in the world less in years than His servants, though older than the world itself in His eternity; was made man, Who made man; was created of a mother, whom He created; was carried by hands which He formed; nursed at the breasts which He had filled; cried in the manger in wordless infancy, He the Word without Whom all human eloquence is mute (St. Augustine, Sermon 188)." The miracle of what happens at Christmas is truly an awesome mystery. Revealed in the silent ordinariness of life is God's intimate love for humanity and all that he made. The Word, existing for all time, comes and dwells among us. God kisses us. We can seek and soar with playful delight as a joy never known before fills our heart.



Joy is best expressed through dance. There is just something truly wonderful about the self-abandon a beautiful melodic dance reveals. If we are able to let go and really be free, it celebrates life in a way few other experiences really can. With the birth of Jesus Christ, God takes the Divine Dance to a deeper and more tangible level. We can now not only see what we believe but believe what we see! This most perfect dance is a call to beauty, innocence, truth, purpose, hope, faith, and love. Today we know, beyond doubt, that we are a necessary part of God's beautifully choreographed masterpiece of life and not just a random happening without real intent or purpose. We are loved, treasured, and blessed.

Accepting the truth of God's birth in time we also accept an invitation to dance with God. We can let go of what tethers us to anxious concerns and superficial securities. Throw caution to the wind and go with God. We have been blessed with talents, gifts, and life eternal. Follow the rhythm of the dance with joy and listen to what the Word who became flesh tells us about what the next steps can be. Today, heaven remains the same, but earth has been profoundly changed.

Our hearts are aglow with the joy of Christmas! Our senses are alive with the season, from the rich smells of evergreen and gingerbread to the feel of crisp air on our skin and the warmth of a loved one's embrace. At some point in the holiday hustle and bustle, take a few moments of quiet. In the silence, reflect on the other senses of the season. Imagine the cool damp of an animal stable, the earthy smell of hay and feed, and the crisp night air blowing in softly. Imagine kneeling beside an exhausted, joyful mother and a relieved, protective father. Imagine an infant wrapped in cloth scraps held out to your open arms. Imagine holding the infant Jesus. As his eyes meet yours, welcome into your heart the greatest gift of Christmas.



The angel said to them,
"Do not be afraid; for
behold, I proclaim to you
good news of great joy that
will be for all the people."
-Luke 2:10

Christmas hymns have been around as long as Christmas has been celebrated. In fact, the earliest known Christmas hymn was written by St. Hilary of Poitiers in the year 336 AD, just 23 years after Constantine legalized Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. It was called **“Jesus, Light of All Nations.”**

Until the Middle Ages, Christmas songs were almost exclusively hymns for religious services. St. Francis of Assisi helped to speed along the development of carols with his creation of the manger scene, which spurred religious piety among the laity. Originally, these carols were based on hymns sung by monks, and some have survived to this day.

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

sounds like Gregorian chant, and essentially, it is. It is a paraphrase of the “O” antiphons, each one starting with the exclamation “O,” that are chanted as part of the Liturgy of the Hours as Christmas approaches. The lyrics of the carol go back to the twelfth century or earlier, and the melody at least as far back as the fifteenth century. Interestingly, though the song is sung in many languages all over the world and the same ancient melody is used everywhere, the tune was first put to the lyrics when it was translated into English. So it is specifically the English version that has spread throughout the world.

“Silent Night” was penned in 1818 by a young Austrian priest who asked the church organist to write a melody to be played on the guitar. Why would an organist, who barely knew how to play guitar, use that instrument for Christmas

Mass? It would seem the church organ was out of commission. Whether it was damaged by flooding or hungry church mice is unknown, but the result is a simple, touching song that has become one of the most frequently recorded Christmas carols.

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” is another ancient carol. Probably originally composed by Cistercian monks in the Middle Ages, we can thank an exiled English Catholic for our beloved English version. It was illegal to practice the Catholic Faith in England from 1588 to 1829. John Wade, having escaped to France, had a successful career as a musical copyist known for his beautiful calligraphy. In 1751, he penned “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” the first known version of the carol in English. Did he actually write it? We don't know for sure, but he gets the credit, anyway.



Of course, this was not the earliest English Christmas carol. The earliest English carols that we know of were written by

John Audelay, an Augustinian monk affectionately known as Blind John. On his deathbed in 1426, he put his things in order, pulling together a collection of his writings that included his own Christmas carols.

I find that learning about the surprising history of some of our beloved Christmas carols deepens their meaning and shows us how God can use anything for his greater glory, as long as we're willing to give. And that's an important message in this season of giving.

Adapted from “The Stories Behind Our Most Beloved Christmas Carols” by Jeannette Williams.

How can we keep the Christmas spirit alive at Holy Rosary?

Every Catholic parish exists to support your faith throughout your life. At Holy Rosary, we gather to receive the Sacraments, to grow in our understanding and faith, to share our lives and to serve the needs of others. Please contact us if we can be of service to you.

Parish Office at 206-937-1488 ext. 200

To learn more about the Catholic Faith

School Enrollment:

Anna Horton, Principal ahorton@holyroaryws.org

Children:

Sr. Stella Abellon: srstella@holyroaryseattle.org

Youth & Adults:

Fr. Oakland froakland@holyroaryseattle.org

To make an appointment with Fr. Oakland

Melissa Tuthill mtuthill@holyroaryseattle.org

To Prepare for Sacraments

Baptism of Children:

Deyette Swegle dsweagle@holyroaryseattle.org

First Confession & Communion:

Sr. Stella Abellon
srstella@holyroaryseattle.org

Confirmation:

payouth@holyroaryseattle.org

Marriage:

Sarah Goins marriage@holyroaryseattle.org