



Pray with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love



Celebrate this Second Sunday of Advent *Find Peace & Confidence to Share Christ with Others*

In this season of anticipation, let us open our hearts and minds to be the best version of ourselves, asking God to forgive us for our failures, and fill us with a deep and abiding peace. Help us to share that peace with everyone we encounter and who need it most.

Today's Gospel shares how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. We are all called to prepare for Jesus' coming - into our homes, our lives, and our hearts.

Bishop Mark Brennan's Advent Pastoral Letter calls each one of us to be confident in heeding Christ's command to make Him known to others, inviting them to put their faith in Him. As we begin and end each day this week be alert and concerned about others' salvation as well as our own, making time to share the good news to people through our words, actions, and how we live our daily lives.



ALL OF US ARE CALLED TO EVANGELIZE
(section two of Bishop Mark's letter)

Hoping to stir the embers of an evangelizing faith in the Church, Pope St. Paul VI wrote an encyclical letter in 1975 called "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (Announcing the

Gospel) in which he underlined the supreme importance of evangelization: "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious resurrection" [# 14].

Even so, you might say: "Don't we have priests and deacons and nuns to do that? Isn't it enough for me to live right so I can go to heaven?" Our clergy and religious often bring others to Christ but they aren't meant to work alone. Yes, you should observe God's commandments because that gives witness to the sincerity of your faith, but the Lord also calls you to join in the Church's great evangelizing mission. *The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few, he said, so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest* [Matthew 9:37]. You are one of those laborers for the Gospel. Your Baptism made you a missionary disciple. The grace of that sacrament, renewed by the Eucharist, intensified by Confirmation, restored by Penance, strengthens you to love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself. It prepares you to help bring in the harvest of souls for whom Christ thirsts.

Your prayer and worship honor God but the ways to love your neighbor are many and varied. Yet there is no greater form of love than to introduce another human being to his or her Savior. That love can make the difference between a

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person achieving the final destiny of eternal life in heaven or missing out on it. While the Lord will surely make allowances for those who, through no fault of their own, have not known him, it is far better to know your Savior and to enter into a personal and life-giving relationship with him. But someone needs to get the journey started. That someone is you!

Remember: Jesus himself tells us to evangelize. Re-read the quotation from St. Matthew's Gospel early in this letter. The Lord is not content with us caring only for our own salvation; he wants us to be concerned about others' salvation, too. Second, we have truly good news to share with other people. We know who the Savior of the world is. There have been other great religious figures in history, such as Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed, but none of them claimed to be the world's savior from sin and death. Only Jesus credibly claimed that role.

Third, as I indicated above, Jesus teaches us to love our neighbor. Out of love, we should be willing to reach out to those who have never known Christ or known him only superficially, as well as to those Catholics who, for various reasons, have stopped practicing their faith. Love means truly caring about the welfare of others; caring for their eternal welfare is the highest form of spiritual love.

Finally, we should want to invite others to join us in the Church. *It is not good for the man to be alone* [Genesis 2:18]. That is a truth applied in Genesis to marriage, but it is applicable to religion as well. The Lord gathers his disciples into his Church so that they can support one another in living their faith and have greater strength and insight to speak of him to others. The Lord uses our social nature to build up the Body of Christ, the visible Church, on earth, so that we can fulfill our mission to announce his Gospel and infuse his goodness in the world.

Mary – Conceived Without Sin God's Perfect Plan

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is December 8th, but since that day is the Second Sunday of Advent, the solemnity moves to Monday, December 9th. On this day we honor Mary for she was conceived without sin.

All others are born with original sin – the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. However, by the grace of God, Mary was conceived with original innocence and holiness. Both Adam and Eve used their free will to disobey God, thus giving into sin – a mark that would be upon all generations.

While the New Testament could serve as the supreme brag book about Jesus, the beloved grandson, of Mary's parents Saints Joseph and Anne; unfortunately for us, we don't have a wealth of facts on His maternal grandparents. It is safe to say their love and trust in God must have been wonderfully strong and pure.

Saints Joachim and Anne are mentioned in writings that complement the bible – the Proto-Evangelium of James the Less. It includes the account of the life of Mary, beginning with Joachim and Anne longing for a child. Joachim went into the desert or wilderness to fast and pray for forty days and forty nights. During that time Anne relentlessly prayed at home.



One day when she was weeping, an angel appeared, promising she would conceive. Joachim and Anne did not doubt God, and they vowed to consecrate their child to the Lord. When Mary was three the holy couple presented her to the priests at the temple (as we just celebrated last month). The priest at her reception said, "The Lord God has magnified your name for all generations; through you the Lord will reveal deliverance to the children of Israel in the last days."

Researching the Hebrew meaning of the name Joachim you will discover it means God prepares, raised by Yahweh, and God has granted a son. In Hebrew,

Anne means God has given grace.

We should have no doubt Joachim and Anne were overjoyed being the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We can only imagine the conversations and traditions Saint Anne and Joachim shared with her to make sweet Mary's heart so blessed, free of sin, and ultimately being chosen to be the Mother of the Christ child.

Immaculate Virgin Mary, you were pleasing in the sight of God from the first moment of your conception in the womb of your mother, Saint Anne. You were chosen to be the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I believe the

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teaching of Holy Mother the Church, that in the first instant of your conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ. Savior of the human race and your beloved Son. you were preserved from all stain of original sin. I thank God for this wonderful privilege and grace He bestowed upon you as I honor your Immaculate Conception. Look graciously upon me as I implore this special favor: (Mention your request).

Virgin Immaculate, Mother of God and my Mother, from your throne in heaven turn your eyes of pity upon me. Filled

with confidence in your goodness and power, I beg you to help me in this journey of life, which is so full of dangers for my soul. I entrust myself entirely to you, that I may never be the slave of the devil through sin but may always live a humble and pure life. I consecrate myself to you forever, for my only desire is to love your Divine Son, Jesus. Mary, since none of your devout servants has ever perished, may I, too, be saved. Amen.

Editor's note: The painting accompanying this article is by Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbaran, circa. 1638-1640. The Virgin Mary appears on a pedestal of cherubs' heads above a crescent moon, and surrounded in golden light. Below are her parents, Saints Joachim and Anne.

Why is the Solemnity's Gospel about the Annunciation?

Hail, full of grace;
the Lord is with you (Luke 1:28).
Blessed art thou
among women (Luke 1:41-48),
and blessed is the fruit
of your womb, (Luke 1:42b)
Jesus (Luke 1:31).
Holy Mary,
Mother of God (Luke 1:43),
pray for us sinners (James 5:16),
now and at the hour
of our death (James 5:16-20).
Amen.



As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our readings include the story of the Annunciation, because it highlights Mary's role as the chosen vessel for God's plan along with her purity and readiness to become the Mother of Jesus. This emphasizes Church doctrine of her Immaculate Conception.

In the Gospel we hear Angel Gabriel announcing her (Luke 1:28-42) as "full of grace; the Lord is with you... Of all women you are the most blessed...."

Mary, unlike Eve, obeyed God with her response to Gabriel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."

Many outside the Church mistakenly believe Catholics worship the Blessed Mother. It is true we do honor her loving awe – deservedly so. However, we don't worship Mary.

We pray for her intercession through the Hail Mary, the Rosary, novenas, and litanies among others. The Church considers her the greatest teacher and perfect example of true and loving discipleship.

Everything we believe about Mary is in the bible, just as the Hail Mary prayer is contained in the bible.

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

First Reading: GENESIS 3:9-15, 20

Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, forever separating the human race from grace and instead obtaining original sin.

Responsorial: Psalm 98

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.

Second Reading: EPHESIANS 1:3-6, 11-12

God blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens....

Gospel: LUKE 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus... the Son of the Most High...." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT](#)

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, may we follow the example of our Blessed Mother and not hesitate to bring Christ to our brothers and sisters in our world, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all nations, that leaders sincerely work towards unity among all races, creeds, cultures, and traditions, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That those who are considering a vocation to the priesthood or religious life may look to Mary as a model of assent to God's call, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For young mothers and mothers-to-be who face difficult circumstances in bearing and caring for their children, that they may find hope and courage through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That we the faithful make it a priority to come to the aid of mothers in need with unselfish assistance in every which way we can offer, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

The Feast of the Holy House

“Here the word became Flesh”

We share the story of the Mystery of the Holy House, as we honor Our Lady of on Dec. 10th. It's not a Marian apparition but celebrating the mystery of the Holy House of Mary.

Tradition says Mary's home from the first century was transported from Nazareth to Italy in the latter part of the 13th century. There are two theories of how it took place, but first understand these details. The house consisted of three stone walls that were built up against a grotto, which was typical for the time was carved into the mountainside (the sketch attached depicts how it may have looked). The grotto in the homes of the period were used for storage. It was the three walls that were transported. How they got to their present location in Loreto, Italy is a mystery that historians still argue. The grotto remains intact in Nazareth, and it is protected within the walls of the Basilica of the Annunciation.



The three walls of Mary's home are within the Basilica della Santa Casa (Basilica of the Holy House), in Loreto.

The first theory of how the walls of Mary's home were moved from Nazareth is supernatural. The ancient legend has it that on the night of May 9-10, 1291, the house was moved from Nazareth to Croatia. It remained there three years before the angels moved it again to Italy first by the sea, second in the woods, and third to its spot on a hilltop that was once covered in a field of laurel trees owned by a woman named Loreta. The location is now known as the city of Loreto. The final move was the night between Dec. 9-10, 1294.

The modern interpretation by Vatican archivist involved documents found dated to coincide with the move. They indicate the walls were moved by crusaders during the Christian Crusades of the time, when Judeo-Christians were fleeing from Palestine. It is believed a wealthy family named Angelos or Angeli financed the move of the house to a papal state in Italy.

Whichever you are inclined to believe saints, blessed, and popes have said divine intervention must have happened in order for the three walls of the home to be safely transported and in the dark of night, disappearing from its original foundation.

Archeologists have actually confirmed that the carved stones in the Holy House are indeed from Nazareth and the time of Christ. Further the cut of the stone is that of Palestine nature. Markings in the house match markings inside the grotto in Nazareth.

Inside the house is a Latin inscription, “Here the word became Flesh,” for it is believed that the incarnation took place within those walls. Imagine young Mary gazing upon Angel Gabriel as she gave her “yes” to God.

This Marian sanctuary has been a place of prayer and reflection for millions of pilgrims, including many saints and popes throughout the last 700 years. All of them wanting to see the walls of the home Mary was born and lived; and where Jesus and Joseph also called home.

The basilica built around the Holy House is a tremendous masterpiece of Italian Renaissance, a drastic contrast to the simplicity of the dark and aged walls that form the house.

Another element of the house is the ancient altar of the apostles, where the disciples are believed to have gathered with Mary immediately after the Resurrection.

In 2019, Pope Francis made a decree noting that the Shrine of the Holy House of Loreto, “recalls the mystery of the Incarnation, leading all those who visit it to consider ‘the fullness of time’, when God sent his Son, born of a woman, as well as to meditate both on the words of the Angel announcing the Good News and on the words of the Virgin in response to the divine call.”

The Holy Father hopes the celebration of the optional feast of Our Lady of Loreto “will help all people, especially families, youth and religious to imitate the virtues of that perfect disciple of the Gospel, the Virgin Mother, who, in conceiving the Head of the Church also accepted us as her own.”

Building the Church

Honor Our Lady of Guadalupe – December 12

As the America's celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe's Feast Day on December 12, reflect on how you are building the Church.

Yes, you.

In 1531, God chose humble peasant St. Juan Diego for our Blessed Mother Mary to appear to on a remote hilly region of Mexico. Diego converted to Christianity thanks to the Franciscan missionaries in the predominately pagan country. He loved his faith and was a true servant. The Blessed Mother knew that. She appeared as an Aztec princess with dark skin and native clothing, visibly expectant with Jesus. Speaking in his language, Mary directed Juan to make sure a church was built in her honor on the Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City. He went to the priests and bishop to share the amazing story and request.

When the bishop of Mexico didn't believe that Mary appeared and made this demand to a mere peasant, Juan returned to the site of the apparition pleading to Mary. She again appeared and had him gather roses in his cloak to give to the bishop. The roses were impossible to have grown in that region and in that season without a miracle.

Saint Juan did as Mary instructed and when he went to the bishop and opened his cloak, the roses fell to the ground and to their amazement on the cloak was the beautiful image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

A chapel was built on the Tepeyac hillside. Today the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe is on that site. The foundations of the original temple and an expansion of it - dedicated to the Virgin Mary after the Our Lady of Guadalupe apparitions - are preserved under it.

It is estimated that nine million people in the Americas were converted to Christianity in the 10 years after the apparition. Conversions are still attributed to it today.

According to Sister Martha Gomez, Delegate for Consecrated Life, families go to church as early as 4 am, children dress up as St. Juan Diego and indigenous people of the time, flowers - mainly roses - are presented before the church's painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe - very parish in the country has one. Sister Martha is

native of Mexico. Those who make the pilgrimage to celebrate at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe go in thanksgiving of answered prayers, in humble and reverent hearts with prayer requests, and others go with open minds to learn about the apparition and miracles that continued to follow. Many of these visitors make their way slowly into the basilica on their knees.

So, again, on this important feast day ask yourself, "What am I doing to help build the Church and love of Christ in our world?"

If you want to know where to start, make sure you check out Bishop Mark Brennan's Pastoral Letter for Advent - Bringing People to Christ at: DWC.ORG/BRINGING-PEOPLE-TO-CHRIST/

May we be like Saint Juan Diego - a humble servant of God, confident in faith, and mindful

Celebrate
Our Lady of Guadalupe



In Mexico families go to church as early as 4am. Children dress up like St. Juan Diego and indigenous people for Mass - excited to present Mary with flowers and for the priest to bless them on the special day and the coming year.

Pictured are Leo and Anna Maria, the nephew and niece of Sr. Martha Gomez, our delegate for consecrated life.

THE SAINT OF LIGHT!

CELEBRATE ST. LUCY ON DEC. 13.



Lucy (Lucia) was born in Sicily in the year 283 to a noble family. The Roman Empire punished all known Christians with prison, torture, and death.

Saint Lucy was hiding her Christian life from non-believers. She served others as she knew Christ served the people. She would place a wreath with candles on her head to provide light during the dark night, when she would sneak food and necessities to Christians in hiding.

When she was promised in her teens to marriage to a non-Christian man, she adamantly refused, bringing anger to the potential groom and his family. Further it brought attention to Lucy, who said she was promised to God. Because she was Christian, she was tortured. One story recorded notes that her persecutors gouged her eyes out and tried to burn her. When the fire kept extinguishing, the torturers killed her by thrusting a sword in her neck.

People all around the world celebrate St. Lucy's Feast Day on Dec. 13th as a national holiday praying novena's, singing festive songs, and little girls dressing up like the sweet innocent saint.

Saint Lucy is an example of purity and chastity. She is the patron saint of the blind and those with eye/sight problems. Learn from her bravery, devotion, and compassion.

The art of St. Lucy is by Krysten Brown of

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FOCUS ON CHRIST TO STRENGTHEN MIND, BODY, & SOUL

He was a priest in the 16th century and one of the Doctors of the Church for his teachings of humility; having faith over fear; never losing hope; avoiding self-pity; trusting in God!

Saint John of the Cross on your feast day December 14, pray for us to have your mindset to find the purpose in all things and strength through our faith!

His name reflects his character – accepting his crosses with faith as his strength. He led a life with much hardship, agony, and persecution. He accepted these trials and focused on God, which gave him hope and peace. His most referenced works are *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *Spiritual Canticle*, and *Dark Night of the Soul*.

His drawing of the crucifix (The inset sketch included with this article) was created after the saint had a vision of Christ on the cross. It illustrates our Lord's body collapsed with His head forward, resting at His chest. This is a reminder for us to never forget Christ was human and among us. He knows pain, agony, depression, doubt, and feelings of abandonment.

Quotes of St. John of the Cross' wisdom:

Avoid self-pity: “Whenever anything disagreeable or displeasing happens to you, remember Christ crucified and be silent.”

Faith over fear: “If a man wishes to be sure of the road he treads on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark.”

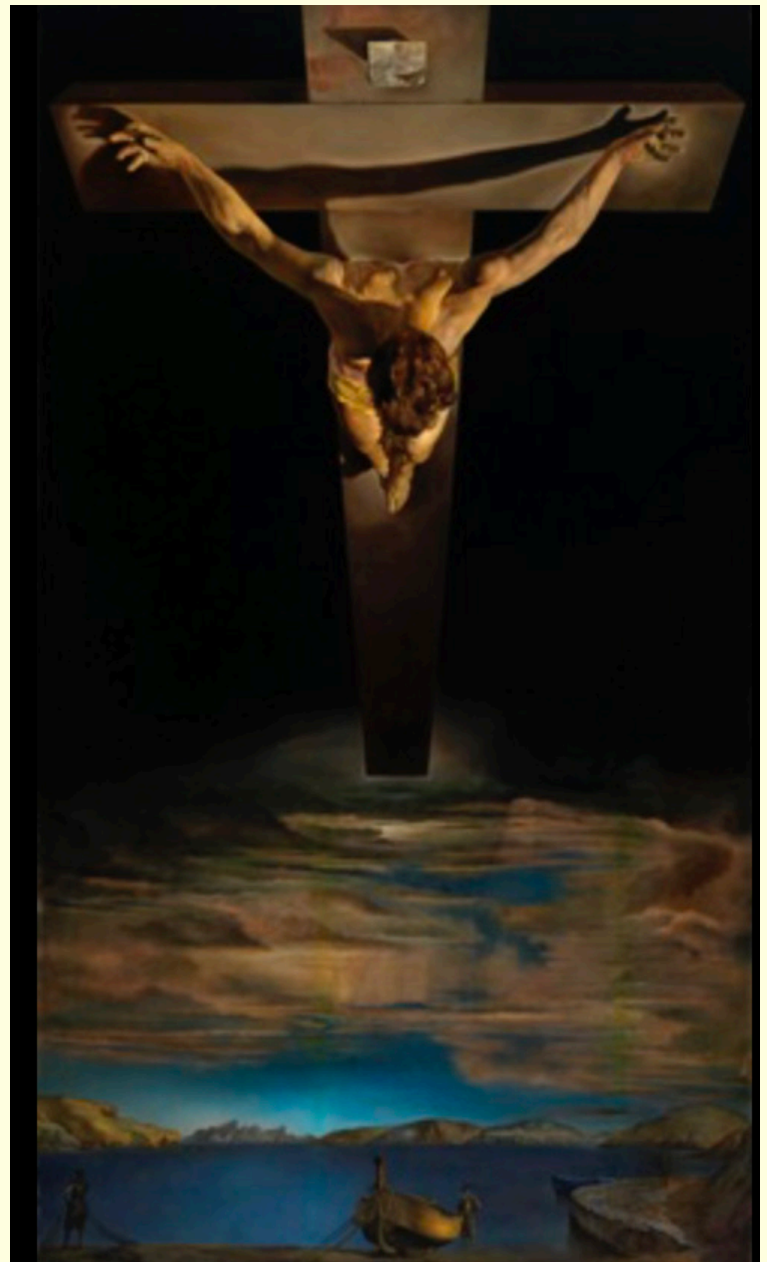
Never lose hope: “The endurance of darkness is the preparation for great light.”

Joy awaits the heart that prays: “He who avoids prayer is avoiding everything that is good.”

Trust in God: “In tribulation immediately draw near to God with confidence, and you will receive strength, enlightenment, and instruction.”

Focus on Christ's peace: “Strive to preserve your heart in peace; let no event of this world disturb it.”

Editor's note: the larger image with this article titled *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* is by Spanish Artist Salvador Dali in 1951. Dali based this painting on the friar's original sketch. Dali said the piece is based on a triangle and circle theory - the triangle representing the Trinity and the circle - unity.



20/20 VISION SERIES

A YEAR WITH THE SAINTS

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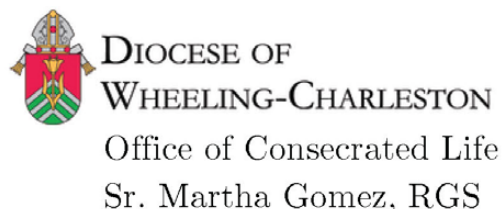
Note: Each session will begin at 7 pm and will be presented via Zoom.

January 29	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton – Sr. Mary Clark, SC
February 26	St. Brigid of Kildare – Sr. Karen Kirby, CSJ
March 18	St. Joseph – Sr. Kathleen Durkin, CSJ
April 29	St. Mary Euphrasia – Sr. Martha Gomez, R.G.S.
May 20	Blessed Virgin Mary – TBD
June 24	Marcellin Champagnat – Brother John Byrd, FMS
July 29	St. Ignatius of Loyola – Lou Volpe
August 26	St. Dominic – Sr. Ellen Dunn, OP
September 30	St. Lorenzo Ruiz – Fr. Carlos Melocoton
October 28	Jesuit Martyrs – TBD
November 18	Servant of God Dorothy Day – Kate Marshall
December 16	St. Stephan – Deacon John Yaquinta

(Series originated by Ms. Shirley Carter, B.A., M.A.A.T.)

Cost for complete series: \$120.00 Or \$15.00 per session.

RSVP – Anna Marie Troiani: atroiani@csjoseph.org



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First Reading: BARUCH 5:1-9

Turn away from misery, and find joy in God forever.

Responsorial: Psalm 126

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Second Reading: PHILIPPIANS 1:4-6, 8-11

St. Paul shares his prayer for God's people: "That your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge... to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...."

Gospel: LUKE 3:1-6

John, son of Zechariah, proclaimed the call for a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, "as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah. 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths... the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

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PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, the Church founded by the Lord Jesus, that we straighten our paths and be confident in His command to make Him known to others, inviting them to put their faith in Him, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That nations of the world work together for justice in the eyes of God, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all who struggle during Advent because emotional or economic hardship, that they may know God's constant presence and love to bring them out of the dark valley of anxiety, let us pray to the Lord. . .

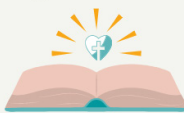
That we focus on Christ's call for us to be concerned about others' salvation as well as our own, making time to share the good news to people through our words, actions, and how we live our daily lives, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

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LITURGY OF THE HOURS

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MASS ONLINE

Saturday 6pm Masses will continue to be livestreamed from the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and will be available on our website each Sunday at DWC.ORG.