



Saint Joseph Catholic Church

P. O. Box 365 117 South Main St.

Loreauville, Louisiana 70552

(337) 229-4254

FAX (337) 229-4255

Rev. Barry F. Crochet, Pastor

Rev. Godwin Nzeh CMF, Associate Pastor

Deacon Roland Jeanlouis, Pastoral Associate

pastor@stjosephparishonline.org

stjosephparishonline.org

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil Mass — 4:00 p.m.; Sunday — 7:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
9:00 a.m. at Our Lady of Victory

Monday and Friday — 6:45 a.m. at Our Lady of Victory

Tuesday and Thursday — 5:30 p.m. at Saint Joseph

Wednesday — 6:45 a.m. at Saint Joseph

First Saturday — 8:00 a.m. at Our Lady of Victory

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

Every Saturday from 3:00 p.m. to 3:40 p.m. and one-half hour before all weekday Masses, or by appointment during office hours.

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday — 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

If possible please conduct parish business by phone or email.

RECEPTIONIST/BOOKKEEPER/CEMETERIAN

Mrs. Gail Borel — gail.borel@stjosephparishonline.org

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Mrs. Sherry Hebert — sherry.hebert@stjosephparishonline.org

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

The Adoration Chapel is open. The Main Church is also accessible from this entrance for your convenience.

FUNERALS

Please contact the Church Office to make Funeral Service arrangements prior to your appointment with the Funeral Home.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Please contact the Church Office to make arrangements for your child's Baptism.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Please contact the Church Office six months prior to the desired date of marriage. No dates for marriage are reserved until after the first marriage interview with clergy.

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Please contact the Church Office to set up an appointment.



Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord, Your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ Your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection.

Please pray for our Priests, Seminarians and Deacons

Eternal Father, we lift up to You these special men. Sanctify them. Heal and guide them. Mold them into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. May their lives be pleasing to You. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

Date	Name
December 22	Rev. Garrett McIntyre/Miguel Pagan Dcn. Clifford Hebert
December 23	Rev. Glenn Meaux/Anthony Phillips Dcn. Joseph Hebert
December 24	Rev. Aaron Melancon/Eric Quebedeaux Dcn. Marcel Hebert
December 25	Rev. Bill John Melancon/Giovanni Ranzino Dcn. Randy Hyde
December 26	Rev. Andre Metrejean/Braden Scalisi Dcn. Bryan Istre
December 27	Rev. Mark Miley/Eli Weil Dcn. Roland Jeanlouis
December 28	Rev. Thomas Montelaro/Cole Zaunbrecher Dcn. Dwayne Joubert

MINISTERS FOR NEXT SUNDAY

	Readers	Eucharistic Ministers	Altar Servers
December 24 4:00 p.m.	Earl Price	Linda Landry	Volunteers
6:00 p.m.	Betty Guidry	Margaret Bonin	Volunteers
December 25 7:00 a.m.	Sandy Sonnier	Maxine Latiolais	Volunteers
December 28 4:00 p.m.	Brad Clifton	Julie Clifton	Volunteers
December 29 7:00 a.m.	Russell Steiner	Carolyn Roseberry	Volunteers
10:30 a.m.	Mike Lawson	Raymond Bergeron	Volunteers

Please pray for our parish family members who are sick:

Stuart Sandoz, Brett Hebert, Eric Clements, Trevor Louviere, Austin Willett, Willey Poirrier, Butch White, Patricia Freyou, Lecia Broussard, Ashley Hebert, Stephen Dugas, Jade Delcambre, Pat Villermin, Brennan Wingfield, Betty Suire, Joe Judice, Mike Habetz, Nona Bourque, Leroy Begnaud, Betty Champagne, Leroy and Gloria Courville, Wayne LeBlanc, Melvin Broussard, June

Granger, Max Borres, Vivian LeBlanc, Beckie LeBaron, Patricia Sorrell, David Dupuy, Ava Rose and Olivia James Dworaczyk, Ray Broussard, Shyla Romero, Bart Doucet, Ellenor Hebert, Jory L. Bernard, Annette Dugas, Kayla Barras Veronie, Jamie Ransonet, Randy Dugas, Rudy Delcambre, Ted Habetz, Clarence Theriot, Junelle Jefferies, Fred Thibodeaux, Lucy Bernard, Leif Melancon,

Charlie Berard, Brad and James Clifton, Holly LeBlanc, Judy Theriot, Carl LeBlanc, Sophie Bonin Reese, Nelda Breaux, Bernard Hebert, Jillian Faye Boudreaux, Marty LeBlanc, Bill Gonsoulin, Mark Ruly, Robert, Sr. and Julie LeBlanc, John Delcambre, Michael Theriot, Hayes Enlund, Steve Thibeaux, Davi Clifton, Jimmy Wilson, Bobbie Boutte, Genie and Karen Dugas.

December 15, 2024

Regular Sunday Offering Envelopes	\$ 4,457.00
Regular Sunday Offering Loose	\$ 2,359.00
Regular Collection Total	\$ 6,816.00
Weekly Budget	\$ 7,385.00
Difference	-\$ 569.00
Present Loan Balance	\$ 86,418.61
Donation Against Loan Balance	\$ 1,263.00
Insurance Balance 2024-2025	\$ 48,011.83
Insurance Collection	\$ 170.00
Immaculate Conception	\$ 1,042.00

The Sanctuary Lamp is burning for

Richard, Judice and Dupont Families, Vicki Dugas

Blessed Virgin Mary Altar Candle is burning for

Claude and Nola Dugas, Albert, Lydia and Bob Thibodeaux,
Earl and Mary Lou Barras

Saint Joseph Altar Candle is burning for

Paul and Audrey Crochet, Jordan Prince

Other Candles are burning for: Martha Escagne Rodriguez, Vance Breaux, Sr, Deyna Champagne, Harold Champagne, Trey Romero, Chad Romero, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, and Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priest, Religious, Domingue Family, Steve and Donna Berard Special Intention, Mr. and Mrs. Collins Louviere, Kerney Louviere, Brook Burch, Will and Lily Roberts, Gene Louviere.

The Vocation Chalice is in the Adoration Chapel

Please pray for vocations. If you would like to have the vocation chalice in your home please call the rectory office at 229-4254

Mass Intentions

Saturday 4:00 p.m. and 10:30 a.m. StJo — Robin Neville, Judy Douet and Glen Martin, Ronald Broussard, Louis and Mae Mae Broussard, Dupoy, Lasseigne, Mullican Ancestors and Descendants, Sidney Breaux Family, Pauline and Craig, Adam “Coo” and Jeanette Crochet, David Guidry, Joseph Donald “Don” Crochet, Earline Crochet, Robert Judice, Sr., Judice and Lavolette Families, Dr. James Russell Romero, Elton “Red” Boutte, Brandon Boutte, Dr. John Rellus Hebert, Perry J. Judice, Lorraine Breaux Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Antoine “Boy” LeBlanc Family, Johnny and Rose Albert, Huey Olivier Family Ancestors and Descendants, Michael and Christine Arceneaux, Ancestors and Descendants, Ronald Albert, Ossie Romero, Jr., Daisy and Perfece Armentor, Billy Degeyter, Chester “Butch” Gonsoulin and Parents, Mutchie Ransonet, Sady and Daisy Ransonet, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Nola Champagne, Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Landry and Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Trey Romero, Chad Romero, Deyna Champagne, Harold Champagne, Audrey Crochet, Paul Crochet Family, Jordan Prince and Special Intention, Vance Breaux Sr., Duffy Domingue, Cabrol and Domingue Family, Sam and Glo Delcambre, Martha Escagne Rodriguez, Albert Rodriguez, Melvin Dugas, Roy Sr. and Gladys Berard, Lloyd and Anne Broussard, Simon and Felicie Granger, Forbus and Myrtle Mestayer, Kay Dooley and William and Dolores Dooley, Kim Decuir, Carl Wayne Judice, Leed and Mabel Gondron, Sandi and Glenn Angelle, Joseph and Helen Bastien, Betty Romero, Romero and Babin Families, Lynn and Theresa Delcambre, Ancestors and Descendants, Patricia Gachassin, Shanie Edler Decuir, Tim Edler, Richard Family, Arceneaux and Mestayer Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Kelly Louviere, Abel Louviere Family, Theodore Thibodeaux Family, Lynn Dugas, Sr., Lovell Romero, Henry and Renella and Josh Pelafigue, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Jay Gonsoulin Family, Paul Sonnier Family and Clyde Warfel Family, Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families,

Catholic Daughters Angel Tree



The Catholic Daughters are providing Angel Cards to raise money for our Court. The cards can be dedicated in Memory of a loved one or in honor of someone for whom you want extra prayers. The cards will be hung on a Christmas tree in the church vestibule beginning the First Week of Advent. The cards will be a reminder for everyone to pray for these people.

We are accepting any donations. Contact any CDA member or check with the Parish Office to obtain the cards.

Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry, Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Joe and Rita Habetz, Mary Kay Habetz, Tom Voorhies, Tommy Breaux, Jennings Fournet, Maude Granger and Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Ransonet, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Granger, Shelton Joseph Freyou, Ella Desormeaux Freyou, Rickie Oubre, Loto Louviere, Jr, Gam and Velma Gondron Family, Doris Roslie Lejeune Family, John Lacour Family, Special Intention, Larry Crochet, Matthew Thibeaux, Edmond Lancon Family, Louis Thibeaux Family, Keri Bonin Boutte, Bonin and Boutte Family, Clyde Dressel, Judy Judice, Beaugard Judice, Gondron and Deville Family Ancestors and Descendants, Holy Souls in Purgatory, Horace and Sylvia Thibodeaux, Wade & Lou Dupre, Gus Dupre, David Guidry, Cherie LeCompte, Barbara Sonnier, Steve Michel, Aline Smith, Dannette Taylor, Derrick Taylor, Nellie Hebert Arceneaux, Sara Escamilla, Trenace Songe, Myra Starr, Brian Robichaux, Jane Watkins, Claire Landry, Lee Villarrubia, Milton Martinez, Bishop Warren Boudreaux, Bishop Joseph Latino, Msgr. John Newfield, Msgr. Francis Amedee, Msgr. Andrew Frey, Rev. Albert Richardson, Msgr. Richard Soseman, Fr. Varin Slacke OFM, Rev. Kurian Kanat, Rev. Greg Downs, Deacon Mel Marts, Ruben Rogers, Elizabeth Capps Rogers, Wayne Rogers, Clotilde Rogers, Alfred Crochet, Claude Hebert, Cecile Hebert, Deacon Jay Bergeron, Archbishop Harry Flynn, Sue Crochet, Francis Crochet.

Sunday 7:00 a.m. StJo — *Pro Populo* Saint Joseph & Our Lady of Victory

Monday 6:45 a.m. OLV — Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Huey Olivier Family Ancestors and Descendants, Michael and Christine Arceneaux, Ancestors and Descendants.

Christmas Eve

Tuesday 4:00 p.m. StJo/OLV and 6:00 p.m. StJo

Christmas Day

Wednesday 7:00 a.m. StJo and 9:00 a.m. OLV

[see page 7 for Mass Intentions]

Thursday 5:30 p.m. StJo — Suzette Judice, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Huey Olivier Family Ancestors and Descendants, Michael and Christine Arceneaux, Ancestors and Descendants.

Friday 6:45 a.m. OLV — Judice and Walet Families, Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Huey Olivier Family Ancestors and Descendants, Michael and Christine Arceneaux, Ancestors and Descendants.

Calendar of Events

Tuesday, December 24, 2024

Christmas Eve

[Holy Day of Obligation]

NO Confessions

Christmas Vigil Mass — 4:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church **and**

Our Lady of Victory Church

NO Confessions

Christmas Mass During the Night

6:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

Wednesday, December 25, 2024

Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord

[Holy Day of Obligation]

Christmas Mass at Dawn — 7:00 a.m.

Saint Joseph Church

Christmas Day Mass — 9:00 a.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church

Sunday, December 29, 2024

Feast of the Holy Family



CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

The Nativity

1. Four thousand years had passed since God promised to our first parents that a Redeemer should come to free the world from the curse that had fallen upon it when Adam was disobedient to the Divine Command. Prophets and kings had desired to see the day when that Promise should be fulfilled, but had not seen it. The whole world had long expected the day of Redemption. God always is slow in His best Gifts. Hence, let us learn to be patient. “He will surely come. He will not tarry.”

2. All the world was at peace at the moment when Christ was born. The angry passions of men were hushed as if in compliment to the Prince of Peace. He never comes where strife and confusion prevail. If we desire that He should come into our hearts today, we must resolve to keep control of our evil passions, and the self-will that dares to do battle against the Will of God.

3. But when the Gift came at last, It was a Gift worthy of the Divine Generosity. It was a Gift of infinite value, given to all and each of the sons of men. It was a Gift in which God gave Himself to be wholly ours. The little Infant in the cradle before Whom we kneel today is the Omnipotent God, loving us with an immeasurable Love; our King, our Lord, our Redeemer, our best Friend, the Divine Lover of our souls. Oh, would that we loved Him more!

Heaven

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. (I Corinthians 2:9)

1. These words convey the best idea that the Apostle who had been carried up into the third Heaven could give of the happiness of the redeemed. All the loveliest things we have ever seen are as nothing in comparison to the sight of Heaven; all the sweetest sounds are discord compared with the music of Heaven; all the joys that have made the longest hours only too short do not deserve the name of joy compared with the joys of Heaven. One moment of Heaven is worth them all!

2. Whatever God does He does on a scale worthy of Himself. The happiness of Heaven will be immeasurable from the fact of its being in union with the God of infinite Love and Beauty. It will be a joy like the joy of Our Lord Himself, since He will say to each of the redeemed: “Enter into the joy of your Lord.” Are we doing what we can to insure that those words are being addressed to us?

3. In Heaven all will be perfectly happy. Even those who have the lowest places will have all that their hearts desire. There will be no unsatisfied wish in Heaven, no craving after what we do not possess. Every one will have an overflowing cup of pleasure. Oh, what fools we are not to do more to insure the joy of Heaven!

Let us pray that we may often think of Heaven and its joys.

Christmas Flower Memorials



(In Honor) Howard J. Percle, Sr.

Richard, Judice and Dupont Families
Ancestors and Descendants

Prioux, Trahan, LeBlanc
and Bonin Families

Landry and Champagne Families

Gilman and Velma Gondron Family
Louto and Anite Gondron Family

The Catanzaro Family
The Napoli Family

Mr. and Mrs. P. C. Walet, Rita, Lillian
and Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Spiess,
David, Mary Ann and Allen Rosen,
Mr. and Mrs. Merlin Walet, Butsy,
Dr. Harold and Kathleen Heitkamp

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Walet, Herman,
Pliny, "Caro", Carolyn Walet

Herman, Teresa, Rita, Lillian, Pliny, Delia,
Whitney, Goldie and Mollie Viator

Lillian, Tommy, Hillard and Pat Temple

Albert, Lydia and Bob Thibodeaux
Howard, Lawrence and Carolyn Walet

Eric Suire, Charlie Latiolais,
Roland and Pee Wee Broussard

Choo Choo Guidry,
Glen and Sandy Angelle, Aunt Lone

Mr. and Mrs. Orford Breaux
Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Deville
Mr. and Mrs. Linwood Delcambre
Mr. and Mrs. Leander Gondran, Sr.

Evan and Owen Allen
Burt and Stella Amedee
Earl and Mary Lou Barras
Cal and Margie Berard
Willie and Louise Bonin
Chuck Michael Borres
Melvin and Rae Borres
Kelly and Bonnie Boudreaux
Sidney and Margaret Breaux
Clarence and Nola Champagne
Jeanne and Billy Clifton
Ernest Sr. and Ena Cook
Adam and Jeanette Crochet

Paul and Audrey Crochet
Gloria and Sam Delcambre
Sam and Glo Delcambre
Claude and Nola Dugas
Lavinia and Eddie Edler
Alton and Deanna Gondron
Ronald and Mildred Gonsoulin
Wilfred and Betha Hulin
Robert and Edelia Johnson
Been and Mag Judice
Roland and Hilda Judice
Octave "Tot" Judice and Gerdie Judice
Walter and Doris M. Judice

Gert and Sydney Kern
June and O'Neil Landry
Lloyd and Maudrey Landry
Bernard and Valerie Lissard, Sr.
Clark and Mary Ann Provost
Sis and Maurice Provost
Jennie and Julius Ransonet
Hubert and Lily Richard
Chad and Trey Romero
Noelie and Warren Solar
Paul and Buddy Stephens
Bruce and Beverly Temple

Jerry Arceneaux
Kathleen Arceneaux
Nick Bienvenu
Beryl Bonin
Harriet Boudreaux
Allen David Borres
Augusta "Mom" Borres
Brandon Boutte
Elton "Red" Boutte
Craig Breaux
Ed Broussard
John E. Broussard
Violette C. Broussard
Deyna Champagne
Eric Champagne
Harold Champagne
Norma Champeaux
Glenn Clifton

Jimmy Clifton
Audrey Crochet
Paul Crochet
Shanie Edler Decuir
Russel "Heavy" Derise
Delores Dooley
William Dooley
Kamryn Elizabeth Dorsey
Vicki Dugas
Bonnie Edler
Tim Edler
Ozita Egby
Marion Forstall
Virginia Frioux
Patricia Gachassin
Gerald B-Boy Gondron
Leander Gondran, Jr.
Wallace Goudeau

Pauline B. Guidry
Russell Hebert
Patrice Hebert
Lisa Hussey
Carl Wayne Judice
Darrell P. Judice
Perry M. Judice
Wayne "Butch" Judice
Audrey Kern
Jon Luke Lancon
Mae Provost Lassalle
Sidney "Snip" Lassalle, Sr.
Troy LeBlanc
Loto Louviere, Jr.
Mary Ann C. Louviere
Mary Kathryn V. McGee
Allyson Mestayer
Joe Moore

Claire Bonin Myers
Chris Allen Percle
Karen Renee Percle
Nancy Percle
Eddie Pierre
Lucille Pierre
Magnolia Pratt
Jordan Prince
Jordan Prince
Clark Provost
David Provost
C. L. Romero
Hosie Thigpen
Curtis Toffier
David Viator
James Voorhies, Sr.
Herman Walet
Teresa Walet

Christmas Mass Intentions

Ancestors and Descendants

Souls in Purgatory
 Pope, Priests, and Religious
 Deceased Catholic Daughter Members
 James and Brad Clifton Recovery
 Special Intention

Berard and Bonin
 Douet and Morvant Families
 Living and Deceased

Dupoy, Lasseigne, and Mullican Families
 Ancestors and Descendants
 Clarence and Nola Champagne Families
 Ancestors and Descendants
 Arceneaux and Mestayer Families

Michael and Christine Arceneaux
 Ancestors and Descendants

Huey Olivier Family
 Ancestors and Descendants

Lynn and Theresa Delcambre
 Ancestors and Descendants

Mark and Penny Landry
 Ancestors and Descendants



Richard, Judice, and Dupont Families
 Breaux and Viator Families
 Broussard and Boudreaux Families
 Romero and Babin Families
 Linwood Delcambre Families

Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Bourque Family
 Mr. and Mrs. Frank Charpentier Family

Stanley and Elsie Crochet Family
 Gam and Velma Gondron Family
 Louto and Anite Gondron Family
 Kernis and Aimee Peltier Family
 Orford Breaux Family
 Mozard Gondron Family

Lee Gonsoulin Family
 Edmond Lancon Family
 Nick LeBlanc Jr. Family
 Nick LeBlanc Sr. Family
 Oneal Mestayer Family
 Edgar Peltier Family
 Louis Thibeaux Family
 Broussard Family
 Cole Family
 Edler Family

Rhule, Mabel, and
 Wayne Gondron

Donna and Steve Berard
 Paul and Audrey Crochet
 Glo and Sam Delcambre
 Wade and Lou Dupre
 Evelyn and Jimmy Fitch
 Connor and Kathy Sorensen
 Roy and Michael Thibodeaux
 Pliny and Carolyn "Caro" Walet

Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Breaux
 Mr. and Mrs. Orford Breaux
 Mr. and Mrs. Linwood Delcambre
 Mr. and Mrs. T. L. Legnon Jr.
 Mr. and Mrs. Russell Ruiz Sr

Msgr. Francis Amedee
 Deacon Jay Bergeron
 Chris Bienvenu
 Harriette Boudreaux
 Bishop Warren Boudreaux
 Cobey Braquet
 Jack Braquet
 Darold Breaux
 Lucille Breaux
 Neil Breaux
 Neil Breaux
 Lane Champagne
 Boo Castille
 Warren Chastant
 Jimmy Clifton
 Alfred Crochet
 Francis Crochet
 Francis Crochet
 Sue Crochet
 Don Davis
 Shanie Edler Decuir

Billy Degeyter
 Carrol Delcambre
 Howard Delcambre
 Linda Derouen
 Rev. Greg Downs
 Vicki Dugas
 Gus Dupre
 Tim Edler
 Sara Escamilla
 Joel Fitch
 Archbishop Harry Flynn
 Msgr. Andrew Frey
 Patricia Gachassin
 Patricia Gachassin
 David Guidry
 Glenda Guidry
 Cecile Hebert
 Claude Hebert
 Debbie Hebert
 Suzette Judice
 Suzette Judice

Rev. Kurian Kanat
 Jon-Luke Lancon
 Claire Landry
 Bishop Joseph Latino
 Cherie LeCompte
 Phyllis Crochet LeBlanc
 Yvonne LeBlanc
 Milton Martinez
 Deacon Mel Marts
 Steve Michel
 Msgr. John Newfield
 Jordan Prince
 Rev. Albert Richardson
 Brian Robichaux
 Martha Escagne Rodriguez
 Clotilde Rogers
 Elizabeth Capps Rogers
 Ruben Rogers
 Wayne Rogers
 C.L. Romero
 Betty Romero

Dr. James Russell Romero
 Earline Ruiz
 Rusty R. Ruiz
 Fr. Varin Slacke OFM
 Trenace Songe
 Msgr. Richard Soseman
 Aline Smith
 Myra Starr
 Gloria Stoltz
 Dannette Taylor
 Derrick Taylor
 Matthew Thibeaux
 Curtis Toffier
 Lee Villarrubia
 Elaine Villermin
 Anna Mae Vincent
 Howard Walet
 Jane Watkins
 Waylon Autry Williams
 Michael and Terry

Christmas, the Infinite, and the Finite

by George Weigel

December 21, 2011

The title of Father Edward Oakes' ... book, **Infinity Dwindled to Infancy**, nicely captures the imaginative challenge posed at Christmas: the Mystery of the infinite God become finite man. In truth, however, the challenge to our imaginations has less to do with the *how* of ... this marvelous exchange than with the *why*.

Posit an all-powerful and infinite God, and most of us wouldn't have too much trouble with the idea that such a God *could* do anything, including coming into the finite world He created. The real question is *why* such a God would want to do such a thing: to submit His Divinity to the limits of our humanity, to dwindle into infancy and then to go farther to die as a tortured criminal at the hands of His own creatures. Here is the "scandal" of Christianity. For the answer faith gives to the question of *why* is Salvific Love: a Love so great that it required, not an argument, but a demonstration.

Eastern Christian theology helps us understand the full dimensions of the *why* of the Incarnation through its concept of *theosis*, or divinization: God becomes man so that we might become like God so that we can live comfortably with God forever. Here, then, is the *marvelous exchange*. God "exchanges" His Divinity for our humanity, thus enabling us to "exchange" our weakness for His Divine Glory — the Glory of which the angels sing to the shepherds of Bethlehem. The years Saint Paul spent in the desert, pondering just how the Paschal Mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection, which had been revealed to him on the road to Damascus, fulfilled God's election of Israel, led the Apostle to the



Gentiles to be the first to formulate this *exchange*: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich" [II Corinthians 8:9].

The Fathers of the Church took up the theme and developed the idea that, in the "exchange," men and women were empowered to become godlike. Thus Saint Gregory Nazianzen: "Let us seek to be like Christ, because Christ also became like us: to become gods through Him since He Himself, through us, became a man. He took the worst upon Himself to make us a Gift of the best." If the language of "becoming gods" strikes our ears as odd, that may be because we have not quite plumbed the radical depths of the Divine Love: for in the Incarnation, "God so loved the world" [John 3:16] that He doubled-down on the Divine Humility, dwindling Himself into infancy so that we could share, really and truly, in the Divine Life.

The indictment of Christianity that began in the 18th Century and metastasized in the 19th was that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus kept humanity infantile, such that only by throwing the God of the Bible over the side could humanity ever achieve maturity and liberation. This was, of course, a complete inversion of the Truth: the Christian faith, proclaimed by the Second Letter of Peter, is that God, by the Incarnation, has made us "partakers of the Divine Nature" [II Peter 1:4]. And in doing so, the Divine Humility, manifest as Love, brings us into the fullness of human maturation and the fullness of true freedom. Thus Pope Saint Leo the Great, in the Christmas homily the Church reads in the Office of Readings for Christmas Day, could admonish his Roman congregation in 440: "Realize, O Christian, your dignity. Once made a partaker in the Divine Nature, do not return to your former baseness by a life unworthy of that dignity."

Christmas faith inspires righteous living, not by fear, but by Love: the Love that expresses Itself in history in the humility of the Incarnation and the Holy Birth; the Love that speaks of the Glory of God, "wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" [Luke 2:12]

George Weigel is Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

He Who Speaks to You by Hippolytus

God, subsisting alone, and having nothing contemporaneous with Himself, determined to create the world. And conceiving the world in mind, and willing and uttering the word, He made it; and straightway it appeared, formed as it had pleased Him.

For us, then, it is sufficient simply to know that there was nothing contemporaneous with God. Beside Him there was nothing; but He, while existing alone, yet existed in plurality. For He was neither without reason, nor wisdom, nor power, nor counsel. And all things were in Him, and He was the All.

When He willed, and as He willed, He manifested His word in the times determined by Him, and by Him He made all things. When He wills, He does; and when He thinks, He executes; and when He speaks, He manifests; when He fashions, He contrives in wisdom. For all things that are made He forms by reason and wisdom — creating them in reason, and arranging them in wisdom.

He made them, then, as He pleased, for He was God. And as the Author, and fellow-Counsellor, and Framer of the things that are in formation, He begot the Word; and as He bears this Word in Himself, and that, too, as (yet) invisible to the world which is created, He makes Him visible; (and) uttering the voice first, and begetting Him as Light of Light, He set Him forth to the world as its Lord, (and) His own mind; and whereas He was visible formerly to Himself alone, and invisible to the world which is made, He makes Him visible in order that the world might see Him in His manifestation, and be capable of being saved.

And thus there appeared another beside Himself. But when I say another, I do not mean that there are two Gods, but that it is only as light of light, or as water from a fountain, or as a ray from the sun. For there is but one power, which is from the All; and the Father is the All, from Whom comes this Power, the Word. And this is the mind which came forth into the world, and was manifested as the Son of God . . .

And Who is He that is made manifest but the Word of the Father? — Whom the Father sent, and in Whom He showed to men the Power proceeding from Him. Thus, then, was the Word made manifest, even as the blessed John says. For he sums up the things that were said by the prophets, and shows that this is the Word, by Whom all things were made.

For he speaks to this effect: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.* And beneath He says: *The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not; He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. If, then, said he, the world was made by Him, according to the word of the prophet, By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, then this is the Word that was also made manifest.*

We accordingly see the Word incarnate, and we know the Father by Him, and we believe in the Son, (and) we worship the Holy Spirit . . .

Now Jeremiah says: *Who has stood in the counsel of the Lord, and has perceived His Word?* But the Word of God alone is visible, while the word of man is audible. When he speaks of seeing the Word, I must believe that this visible (Word) has been sent. And there was none other (sent) but the Word. And that He was sent Peter testifies, when he says to the centurion Cornelius: *God sent His Word unto the children of Israel by the preaching of Jesus Christ.* This is the God Who is Lord of all. If, then, the Word is sent by Jesus Christ, the Will of the Father is Jesus Christ.

These things then, brethren, are declared by the Scriptures. And the blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges this Word as God, when he says? *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost. For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the Holy Spirit. The Father decrees, the Word executes, and the Son is manifested, through Whom the Father is believed on.

The economy of harmony is led back to one God; for God is One. It is the Father Who commands, and the Son Who obeys, and the Holy Spirit Who gives understanding: the Father Who is above all, and the Son Who is through all, and the Holy Spirit Who is in all.

And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit. For the Jews glorified (or gloried in) the Father, but gave Him not thanks, for they did not recognize the Son. The disciples recognized the Son, but not in the Holy Ghost; wherefore they also denied Him.

The Father's Word, therefore, knowing the economy (disposition) and the Will of the Father, to wit, that the Father seeks to be worshipped in none other way than this, gave this charge to the disciples after He rose from the dead: *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* And by this He showed, that whosoever omitted any one of these, failed in glorifying God perfectly. For it is through this Trinity that the Father is glorified. For the Father willed, the Son did, the Spirit manifested. The whole Scriptures, then, proclaim this truth . . .

Rest satisfied with the word spoken by Christ, viz., That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, just as, speaking by the prophet of the generation of the Word, He shows the fact that He is begotten, but reserves the question of the manner and means, to reveal it only in the time determined by Himself. For He speaks thus: *From the womb, before the morning star, I have begotten You.*

This (is He who) breathes upon the disciples, and gives them the Spirit, and comes in among them when the doors are shut, and is taken up by a cloud into the heavens while the disciples gaze at Him, and is set down on the right hand of the Father, and comes again as the Judge of the living and the dead. This is the God Who for our sakes became man, to Whom also the Father has put all things in subjection. To Him be the Glory and the Power, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church both now and ever, and even for evermore. Amen.

Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170 A.D. — c. 235 A.D.) was a Bishop of Rome and one of the most important Second-Third Centuries Christian theologians.





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