

Our Lady of Victories Church

(serving Harrington Park, River Vale and the Pascack/Northern Valley)

150 Harriot Avenue, Harrington Park, New Jersey

www.olvhp.org

Rev. Bryan F.J. Adamecik SFO, KHS Pastor

Rev. Duverney Bermudez

Rev. Anthony Mastroeni

Rev. Christopher M. Ciccarino KHS

Rev. John O'Connor

Rev. Brian Muzás

Latin Mass Assistants

Weekend Assistants

Br. Angelus CFR

Parish Seminarian

Sr. Elizabeth Holler, SC

Sr. Mary Corrigan, SC

In Residence-Convent

Mr. Thomas Lagatol Mr. Albert McLaughlin

Deacons

Susan Evarella

Religious Education

Deacon Al McLaughlin

Parish Catechetical Leader

Selena Piazza

Lesla Rossmann

Ministers of Music

Elizabeth Ulisse

Martin Coyne II

Parish Trustees

Jerryl Pulis & Meagan Mullany

Curtiss & Katie Stella

Jr. High School Ministry

High School Ministry

Maria Hellrigel

Parish Secretary

Jorden Pedersen Esq.

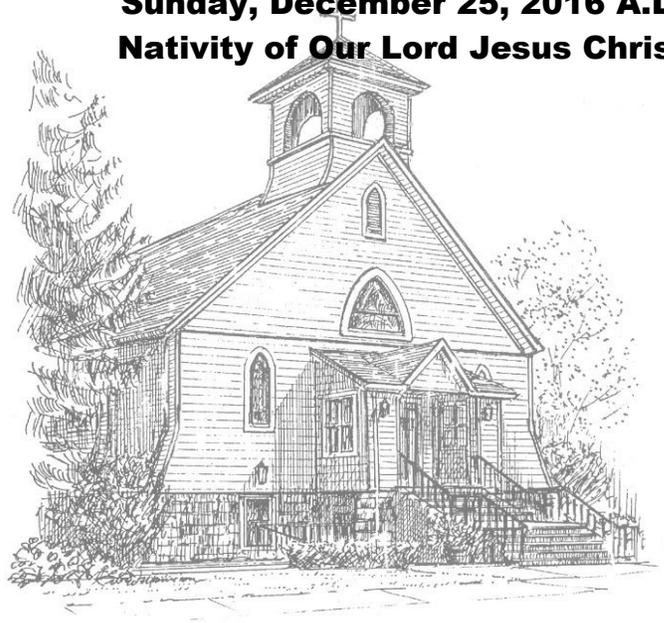
President Parish Council

Jon Fischer CFA

Chairman Finance Committee

Sunday, December 25, 2016 A.D.

Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ



January 1

Solemnity of Mary MASSES

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Saturday- December 31

4:00pm Mass in Church

5:00pm Mass in Church

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Sunday- January 1, 2015

7:30am Mass in Church

8:15am Latin Mass in Church

9:30am Mass in Church

10:45am Mass in Church

12:00Noon Mass in Church

1:00pm Spanish Mass

6:00pm Mass in Church

No 7:00pm Mass

Church and Gym are handicap accessible.

WELCOME

To the Parish Family of

OUR LADY OF VICTORIES

(THE LITTLE CHURCH WITH THE BIG HEART)

COME WORSHIP WITH US

Mass Schedule

Saturday: 4:00pm, 5:00pm

Sunday: 7:30am, 8:15am (Latin)

9:30am, 10:45am, 12:00pm,

1:00pm (Spanish)

6:00pm & 7:00pm

Weekdays: M-Sat 8:00a.m. & 12:00noon



Find us on
Facebook

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201-768-3962

Religious Education
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OLV Convent
201-768-1705

PRAY FOR OUR SICK

Please **PRAY** in the name of **JESUS**, the Healer, that the **SICK** of **OLV PARISH** may be restored to health and all those who **ASSIST** and **CARE** for the sick will be given the **STRENGTH** to continue **GOD'S GOOD WILL**: Br. Pius, William Biasi, John Bolger, Joey Bulger, Ellen Dunn, Catherine Fallon, Kamal Faris, Kathy Freeburn, Thomas Haring, Peter Kellar, Arnold Kemner, Joseph LoVecchio, Anne Matthaai, Teresa Meierdierks, Kathleen Musante, Canice Prince, Dan Ragusa, Mary Rinner, Suzanne Rothschild, Wendy Ruggiero, Cookie and George Rush, Kathryn Turrell, Therese Vaglio, and Jim Walsh.

SPIRITUAL EXCERPT

"Be not afraid to tell Jesus that you love Him; even though it be without feeling, this is the way to oblige Him to help you, and carry you like a little child too feeble to walk."

St. Therese of Lisieux, Counsels and Reminiscences.

HOLY HOUR AT OLV

Every Tuesday from 12:30-3:15PM. **Every Thursday** at 7:00PM OLV has a Holy Hour with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Prayers and Quiet Time. **Every Friday** OLV has Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 12Noon to 4PM. Stop by and make a visit to our Eucharistic Lord.

Knights of Columbus

All men over 18 are invited to join the OLV Knights of Columbus, the world's largest men's fraternal organization. For more info' or to join, please call Greg Evanela 201-784-5752.

HIGHER POWER

A Sunday school teacher said to her children, "We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Biblical times. But, there is a Higher Power. Can anybody tell me what it is?" One child blurted out, "Aces!"

DID YOU KNOW?

How can a candy treat be a birth announcement? Many years ago a candy maker had an idea. He wanted to show, through the candy he made, that Jesus Christ was born among us, lived and died to save us all. So, through the use of color and shape, he created a piece of candy that told the story of Jesus from Christmas to Easter. He created the candy cane. The white stripes on the candy cane stand for the fact that Jesus was sinless and pure. The small red stripes stand for the scourging Jesus endured before He died. The large red stripes stand for Jesus' blood, shed on the cross. The candy cane is shaped like a shepherd's staff, reminding us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Turn it upside down, and it is a letter "J", the first letter of Jesus' name. We can learn a lot from the candy cane – both to look at it and see Jesus, and, like the candy maker, to share the story of Jesus in whatever we do.

DEFEND YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Over the course of the last generation, Christianity and in particular our Catholic Faith has been under attack. Anti-Catholicism is the last acceptable prejudice. What can we do about it? Besides prayer, all Catholics should join The Catholic League at www.catholicleague.org or 450 Seventh Avenue, NY, NY 10123 and receive the journal, The Catalyst, which has articles detailing where Catholicism is under attack and by whom. As Christmas approaches, we will see secularism creep in and try to wrestle and strip the season of its Christian elements.

WORKERS NEEDED

The Harvest is great but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord to send more laborers into the harvest. Become a Priest or Religious Brother or Sister or Permanent Deacon. For info' see Fr. Bryan or call the Vocations Office 973-497-4365.

My Dear Friends in Christ:

As this most special season of Christmas approaches and we look back on this past year, it is most appropriate to pause and consider the many gifts and blessings God has bestowed upon us and our loved ones throughout the year.

The birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ is celebrated at Christmas and establishes Christmas as a Season of Gift Giving. Tradition holds that the three Wise Men brought gifts to the new born Savior. A generous gift to the Christmas Collection or a Special Christmas and Year End Gift not only supports our educational and parish ministries, but also positively affects your taxes and other financial considerations for 2016.

For many years, hospitals and universities have encouraged gifts at Christmas and year end. It is important that our parishioners be aware of these types of gifts that can be made to the parish. The experts tell us that gifts of stock and other securities make excellent tax-oriented gifts, particularly if they have appreciated in value.

In the spirit of Christmas and gift-giving, please consider your parish and its mission to proclaim the Gospel message and provide ministries 365 days a year. Thank you and God bless you. **Fr. Bryan**

PEWS TO BE MEMORIALIZED

The parish has a few pew benches that were never memorialized. The cost of a 1/2 pew to be memorialized is \$1750 a pew - call Maria or Deacon Al at the rectory if you would like to donate in the name of your family or a loved one.

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The Greatest Human Confrontation

by Pope Saint John Paul II

Speaking to the Bishops of the United States, one month before he was elected Pope. Sept., 1978.

(Wall Street Journal, September 11, 1978)

We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced. I do not think the wide circle of the American Society, or the wide circle of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-church, between the Gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the anti-Christ. This confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God's Plan, and it must be a trial which the Church must take up, and face courageously... We must prepare ourselves to suffer great trials before long, such as will demand of us a disposition to give up even life, and a total dedication to Christ and for Christ with your and my prayers. It is possible to mitigate the coming tribulation, but it is no longer possible to avert it, because only thus can the Church be effectually renewed. How many times has the renewal of the Church sprung from the shedding of blood? This time, too, it will not be otherwise. We must be strong and prepared and trust in Christ and in His Holy Mother; and be very, very assiduous in praying the Holy Rosary.

"O God, who has made this most holy night to shine forth with the brightness of True Light, grant we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mystery of His light on Earth, may attain the enjoyment of His happiness in Heaven." Collect: Midnight Mass

THE LOVE OF GOD

No matter how long it has been, the Love of God knows no time. We celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation on **First Friday** at 7PM, **Saturday** at 11AM until Noon, and from 3 – 3:25PM. **Monday thru Friday** at 7:25AM – 7:50AM.

Upcoming OLV Parish Events

Dec 27 -Tue – Marian Novena Prayer 2:00-3:00PM
Dec 28—Wed—Bible Study Group—10:00AM
Dec 28 - Wed—OLV Needlers 6:30PM
Dec 30-Fri— Adoration from 12:30PM-3:00PM
Jan 28—Sat—K of C Beefsteak Dinner
Jan 28/29—Sat/Sun—Rosary Society Baby Item Collection
Feb 4—Sat—10AM—First Confession
Apr 2— Sun—Rosary Society Breakfast w/guest speaker
May 21—Sun- 2:00PM -Confirmation

PRAY for THOSE in the MILITARY

Lieutenant Julia H. Cheringal, US Navy;
Lieutenant Ben Clemente, US Army;
Ensign Jon Clemente, US Navy;
1st Lieutenant Ryan Colomeo, U.S. Marine Corps;
Major Michael Franson, US Army;
Sergeant First Class Charles Greene, US Army;
Lieutenant Tara Harris, US Air Force;
Lieutenant Joseph Jaeger, US Navy;
Lieutenant Andrew Jaeger, US Navy;
Chief Master Sergeant Shawn Llewellyn, US Air Force;
Captain Shawn Linn, US Army;
2nd Lieutenant Gigi McElroy, US Army;
Colonel John McLaughlin, US Army;
Lieutenant John G. Miele, US Army.

BEEFSTEAK DINNER - 1/28/17

This is a major fundraiser for the Knights of Columbus to fund our seminarians - men studying for the priesthood and other charitable works. Please support this event. It is a fun evening, and last year it was a great success. If you would like to be a placemat advertiser send your business card and a check payable to the OLV K of C c/o The OLV K of C, PO Box 145, Harrington Park NJ 07640 or call Greg Evanella 201-784-5752.

Office of Concern Food Pantry at St. Cecilia

We are always in need and if you wish to contribute specific holiday foods such as cranberry sauce and other fixings, that is fine, but there are also **three areas of year-round foods that are especially valuable: canned fruits and vegetables, pasta (spaghetti, rigatoni, etc) and breakfast cereals.**

CLOTHING BINS

Through the turbulence of your many demands, would you be willing to take a few minutes to gather your unwanted clothing and shoes to help the poor? Please drop them in the donation bins located on the Church grounds. Your donations help Catholic Charities and Mt. Carmel Guild.

Worldwide Marriage Day

The search is underway for Longest Married Couple in the U.S. Do you think you know who they are? Maybe it's your parents... grandparents... That nice couple who live down the street... Nominating a couple is easy! Just send their names, wedding date and where they live and your contact information to: wwmelmc2017@gmail.com. Nominations accepted until January 8, 2017. Winners will be announced February 2017 to celebrate World Marriage Day. Nominate a couple you know today!

Natural Gas Generator Available

OLV has a never been used 35K natural gas generator in the event one loses electric power. If you are interested call the rectory or speak to Fr Bryan or Deacon Al.

SENIOR MOMENT

While on a road trip, an elderly couple stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. After finishing their meal, they left the restaurant, and resumed their trip. When leaving, the elderly woman unknowingly left her glasses on the table, and she didn't miss them until they had been driving about forty minutes. By then, to add to the aggravation, they had to travel quite a distance before they could find a place to turn around, in order to return to the restaurant to retrieve her glasses. All the way back, the elderly husband was the classic grouchy old man. He fussed and complained, and scolded his wife relentlessly during the entire return drive. The more he chided her, the more agitated he became. He just couldn't let up one minute. To her relief, they finally arrived at the restaurant. As the woman got out of the car and hurried to retrieve her glasses, the old coot yelled after her, "While you're in there, get my hat and the credit card."

Eight Gifts That Do Not Cost a Cent

- 1) The Gift of *Listening*...But you must REALLY listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. Just listening.
- 2) The Gift of *Affection*...Be generous with the appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back, and handholds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.
- 3) The Gift of *Laughter*...Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories. Your friends will say, "I love to laugh with you."
- 4) The Gift of a *Written Note*...It can be a simple "Thanks for the help" note, or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime, and may even change a life.
- 5) The Gift of a *Compliment*... A simple and sincere, "You look great in red," or "You did a super job," or "That was a wonderful meal," make someone's day.
- 6) The Gift of a *Favor*...Go out of your way to do something kind for someone.
- 7) The Gift of *Solitude*...There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.
- 8) The Gift of *Cheerful Disposition* ... The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone. It is not that hard to say: *Hello* or *Thank You*. Friends are a very rare jewel indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share a word of praise, and they always want to open their hearts to us.

Catholic Daughters of the Americas

CDA is a national organization dedicated to prayer, good works, and the helping of others less fortunate. You will make new and dear friends and have fun while enriching your life and others. Regular meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month in the lower church at 7:00PM. For info, contact ReneeTringali@gmail.com/201-913-2580

THANK YOU!

To our youth who decorated the church: Matt Brady, Maryrose Evanella, Thomas Evanella, Zachary Smith, Caroline Sommers and Brian Sumereau.

Be on Heaven's most wanted list.

The Nativity of the Lord

Thank you!

St. Vincent de Paul, Social Concerns thanks the parish for its generous response to the Giving Tree Collection. Because of your help our ministry is able to provide gifts for many area families who are in need.

CATHOLIC CARE FOR THOSE TERMINALLY ILL WITH CANCER
Rosary Hill Home, owned and operated by the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, NY, since 1901, is committed to providing loving, one-on-one palliative care to those suffering from terminal cancer. Free to all who meet Admission requirements. The Sisters depend solely upon the "providence of God and the hourly mercy of the charitable public;" no payment is accepted from patients, their families, private insurance or from the government. More information at www.rosaryhillhome.org or 914-769-0114.

Question??

Is the occult the same as superstition? Superstition and the occult are not one and the same. While the Church rightly condemns superstition, it is not in the same league as the occult, which the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes clear. The former is a deviation of religious feeling that emphasizes external objects and actions over interior dispositions, such as fearing bad luck if a black cat crosses your path. The various manifestations of the occult are much more serious, since they have their origin in Satan's kingdom, regardless of how innocent they might appear to the unformed.

CHRISTMAS BANNED!!!

Can you imagine not being permitted to freely say "Merry Christmas?" Can you imagine having to conceal your beliefs by describing them in seemingly unrelated words, like singing an apparently happy, almost nonsensical song when it is really about your beliefs? For Catholics those conditions did occur in England as well as other places between 1558 and 1829.

The Christmas carol The Twelve Days of Christmas, in fact, is a result of Catholics needing to conceal their beliefs in this way, according to The Handbook of Catholic Sacramentals by Ann Ball (Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind.). Written in England as a catechism for young Catholics, The Twelve Days of Christmas contains hidden meanings intended to help children remember lessons of faith. Instead of referring to an earthly suitor, the "true love" mentioned in the song really refers to God. The "me" who receives the presents is symbolic of every baptized person.

The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge, a bird that feigns injury to decoy predators away from its helpless nestlings.

The meaning of the other symbols are:

- Two turtle doves - The Old and New Testaments
- Three French hens - Faith, Hope, and Charity
- Four calling birds - The four Gospels
- Five golden rings - The first five books of the Old Testament
- Six geese a-laying - The six days of creation
- Seven swans a-swimming - Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Eight maids a-milking - The eight Beatitudes
- Nine ladies dancing - Nine fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Ten lords a-leaping - The Ten Commandments
- Eleven pipers piping - The eleven faithful disciples
- Twelve drummers drumming - The twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed.

SICK OR "HOMEBOUND"

If you are sick or "homebound" (or know someone who is), and would like to have Communion, please contact the Rectory at 201-768-1706.

Mass Intentions

Monday, December 26—St. Stephen—first martyr

8:00 Intentions of Anna Heaney R/b John Heaney
12:00 Brandon Kilgore R/b Richard and Maureen Ferrara

Tuesday, December 27— St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

8:00 Rev. Paschal Tsiquaye R/b the Evanelia Family
12:00 Maria Tarabocchia R/b Nick Tarabocchia

Wednesday, December 28—The Holy Innocents—Martyrs

8:00 Deceased of Burrmano and Hellrigel Families
12:00 James McGrath Jr. R/b Dennis and Kathleen Falotico

Thursday, December 29—St. Thomas Becket, bishop, martyr

8:00 Bartolomeo Merola R/b Richard and Maureen Ferrara
12:00 Wendy Walker R/b Bob and Rosemarie Murphy

Friday, December 30 – The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

8:00 Alfred Fedorowicz R/b Richard and Maureen Ferrara
12:00 Frances Schmitt R/b Lee and Linda Ferrara

Saturday, December 31—St. Sylvester I, Pope

8:00 Kevin O'Halloran
12:00 George W. Smith R/b William and Dianne Smith
4:00 William J. Sweeney R/b George and Gail Fabiano
5:00 Frank and Elsie May Reeves R/b the Anzalone Family

Sunday, January 1—Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

7:30 Ann Benish R/b the Poggi Family
8:15 Dorothea McDonough
9:30 Rita Farrell R/b Joan Kincaid
10:45 Pasquale DeSarno R/b the Colarullo Family
12:00 David Zocco R/b Mike Zocco
1:00 People of the Parish
6:00 Anna Lucia Arias R/b Maria Arias

No 7:00PM Mass today.

Sanctuary Memorials

The Sanctuary Votive Lamp, the Blessed Virgin Mary Votive Lamp and the St. Joseph Votive Lamp burn this week for the intentions of Anna Heaney, r/b John Heaney.

The Hosts and Wine used at the celebration of the Mass this week have been donated for the intentions of Anna Heaney, r/b John Heaney.

The Infant of Prague Votive Lamp burns for the souls in Purgatory.

The Pope John Paul II Votive Lamp burns for the unemployed.

SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US

It is through the generosity of our advertisers that we are able to place this bulletin into your hands, each week, without cost to the Parish. Why not get into the habit of looking through the ads and giving your neighbors/merchants a chance to serve your needs. Tell them you read about them in the OLV Parish Bulletin.

ARE YOU NEW TO THE AREA?

If you are, why not join our ever-growing Parish family. Stop by the Rectory any weekday and meet Maria and register to become a member of the OLV Family. Census forms are also located in the Church vestibule.

FORMER CATHOLICS

Know of any former Catholics or Catholics who no longer come to Mass, have them check out this website- CatholicsComeHome.org

Happiness is like your shadow. Run after it and you will never catch it, but keep your face to the sun, and it will follow you. The happiest people are those who discover that what they should be doing and what they are doing are the same things.

GOSSIP

By Father Mark Nolte

One of the things that tears at the fabric of a parish is gossip. People talking and pulling things down, complaining, bickering, you name it. Gossip is like tearing open a feather pillow in a 25 mph wind ... you can never retrieve all the feathers. The negative talk does not help. Many people in this (every) parish give so much to make the place hum with positive activity but a couple of complaining words wipe out whatever good was done. And it takes the wind out of the sails. When I hear of such talk I get discouraged and my energy level is sapped. And there is no way to respond to the gossip because, like pillow feathers, they just get scooted along and kept in the air by others. Gossip is another way of saying: rash judgment, detraction and calumny. Rash judgment is assuming as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor. Detraction, without an objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them. Calumny are remarks, contrary to the truth, that harm the reputation of others and give occasion for false judgments concerning them. If we all held to the high principle of making sure our words never ventured into these there sins against the 8th commandment we would all do a lot less talking. The cure to gossip – which may be mailed, spoken, written, emailed, sign-languaged, texted, broadcast, etc. – is charity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: "Charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Cor 13:4-7)

MARRIAGE

After 40 years of marriage, a husband and wife came for counseling. When asked what the problem was, the wife went into a passionate, painful tirade listing every problem they had ever had in the years they had been married. On and on and on: neglect, lack of intimacy, emptiness, loneliness, feeling unloved and unlovable, an entire laundry list of unmet needs she had endured. Finally, after allowing this for a sufficient length of time, the therapist got up, walked around the desk and after asking the wife to stand, embraced and kissed her passionately as her husband watched with a raised eyebrow. The woman shut up and quietly sat down as though in a daze. The therapist turned to the husband and said, "This is what your wife needs at least 3 times a week. Can you do this?" "Well, I can drop her off here on Mondays and Wednesdays, but on Fridays, I fish."

SAVE USED EYEGLASSES

The OLV Knights of Columbus collects used and old eyeglasses for the less fortunate. Any old or "retired" glasses may be left in the basket in the back of Church.

THE LOVE OF GOD

No matter how long it has been, the Love of God knows no time. We celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation on **First Friday** at 7PM, **Saturday** at 11:00 AM until Noon, and from 3– 3:25PM. **Monday thru Friday** at 7:25AM – 7:50AM.

PARENTS & TIME

If your son or daughter were to be asked, "What was most important in your mother's or father's life", how would your children answer this question? What does your child perceive as most important in their parent's lives? Would the response of the most important be jobs or career, the pursuit of money and material wealth, or themselves over the correct answer of family? Parents, think about it, because your actions speak louder than words.

THE NATIVITY SCENE

One of the most beautiful and popular teaching tools of the Christian Faith is the Nativity Scene, or "Crèche," an Old French word for manger. The "Book of Blessing" says that St. Francis of Assisi began the custom of displaying figures to depict the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas Eve, 1223. However, there are wall paintings depicting the Nativity of the Lord, based on the Gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke, dating from as far back as the fourth century! Some of the ancient Nativity scenes even include the prophecies of Isaiah and Habakkuk, which foretold the Messiah would be born in the midst of animals in a manger. "Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping watch over their flock." **LUKE 2:8**. The good news of the birth of the Good Shepherd was given to the poor, uneducated shepherds. This is in keeping with St. Luke's Gospel theme that the lowly are singled out as recipients of God's favors and blessings. One thousand years earlier, while out in the fields shepherding the flock, David was called to be the King of Israel. From then on, God continually promised an even greater shepherd, One who would lead the people and be a Son to Him. "And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." **LUKE 2:12** The manger, or animals feeding trough, gives us much "food for thought" – pun intended! How appropriate that Jesus, the Bread of Life, was placed in a feeding trough! Animals know where to go to be fed by INSTINCT, but we know where to go to be fed by FAITH! By faith, we are much smarter than animals. Or are we? That's what St. Francis asked by placing two special animals in the crèche. "An ox knows its owner, and an ass, its master's manger, but Israel does not know me, my people have not understood." **ISAIAH 1:3** These "dumbest" of animals are placed in the crèche to "chide" us into realizing what THEY were smart enough to know: that the Holy Child was the One through Whom all things were made! Jesus, God's Son in human flesh, is their Owner and Master! Another explanation for their presence is that the ox, an animal often sacrificed, was a sign of the supreme sacrifice Jesus would offer on His cross; the ass was a sign that the donkey would carry Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, so He could become our Sacrifice. The people of Bethlehem (means house of BREAD) represent us! Like our ancestors, we cry out in need to the Lord, waiting for His reply. As they went about their daily routine, some found room for the Lord in their hearts– but others did not. Those who took the time to stop, to look and to reflect found the Lord; those who were so preoccupied with work, earthly concerns or whatever, probably missed Him! Will we find room for Him in our hearts and our lives today?

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

Poinsettias are native to southern Mexico, Central America, Africa, and even in the wild in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. They are named after Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first US ambassador to Mexico. As a statesman and a botanist, he introduced the American elm to Mexico – and brought the beautiful Mexican shrub with large red flowers he found growing on the roadside to the USA in the 1820's. Although South Carolina was their first "home", they were first sold in Pennsylvania; currently the leading producer of poinsettias is the State of California. Ancient Mayan Indians believed poinsettias were powerful creatures from another world. A legend with many variations tells how they became a Christmas flower. In each version a poor child - who could not afford a gift to offer to Christ on Christmas Eve - picked weeds from the roadside; the child had been told that any humble gift, given in love, would be acceptable to God. Once inside the church the weeds bloomed into red and green flowers, which many proclaimed a Christmas miracle! From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the "Flores de Noche Buena" or "Flowers of the Holy Night" - for they always bloom during Christmas.