

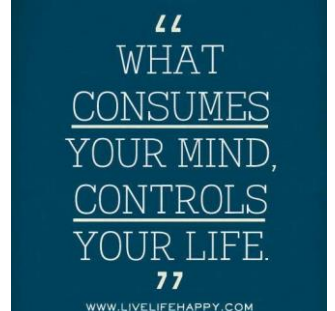
St. Joseph Catholic Church
POB 1010
Nome, AK 99762-1010
Pastor: Rev. Tom Kuffel
Email: tkuffel@cbna.org
Parish: 907-443-5527; Cell 907-434-6117
4th Sunday of Advent A 11.27.2016

Announcements

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 Christmass Schedule:
 5:30 PM Christmass Eve Mass
 11:30 PM Midnight Mass
 10:30 AM Christmass Day Mass

Kotz Church Project:
 We are looking for an appraisal of the Church from MacSwain Appraisers We received 6 responses from architect firms. Fr. Kuffel will be in Kotz Jan 14 weekend.

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"You are what you are and where you are because of what has gone into your mind. You can change what you are, You can change where you are, Change what goes into your mind. What you feed your mind determines your appetite."
 Do you feed your Mind with the Word of God and the Bread of Life?



The great secret to success is to go through life as a person who never gets used up" (Albert Schweitzer). When you make it a goal to continually learn and enlarge yourself you become the kind of person who can never be "used up." You are always recharging your batteries and finding better ways to get things done. You are, forever, the wise disciple ready to learn.



Christmas Prayer

*Child of Bethlehem-house of bread;
 Man of Jerusalem-city of peace;
 you have loved us without limit or condition;
 in our greatness and in our misery,
 in our folly and in our virtue;
 may your hand be always upon us
 and may your heart be within us,
 so that we too may become
 bread and peace for one another.*



| | | | |
|--------|------------|------------|----------|
| | St. Joseph | St Francis | St. Anne |
| Sunday | \$0.00 | \$221.00 | \$0.00 |
| Bazaar | \$888.00 | \$1586.00 | |

Stewardship: What is it?

**Giving to another invests in the other.
 Giving to another dignifies the other.
 Giving to another motivates the other
 So they expect to live a life of Excellence
 Jesus gave Himself to you; what have you done
 with his gift of Himself to yourself?**



Gift Giving: Whose on your List?
Is your parish on your Christmas list?
Is it on your will?
Is it on your daily schedule?

Church is more than a building; it is a communion with the living God

Charitable giving transforms our thinking. We change the world when we give, for we empower another person. Yet, many people are afraid to give because they think they don't have enough; they want to keep it for themselves; they are waiting for a better opportunity, or they just fear their gift will be wasted. If you give from your heart it is never a bad choice.

Today, every charitable institution seeks funds to support their mission. From pagan and secular groups to extreme radical groups, everyone has needs. Discerning which group to support is critical, yet easy. Groups that are faithful to our Catholic Social Teachings are the first criteria. Second, is this something that you are personally involved in? Third, do you want to invest your money in their mission?

Many people are afraid to give. They are afraid to dip into their savings. They don't want to change their lifestyle. They only want to give from their extra income – not their needed income.

Yet, what about the investment you make in others in which you will enrich another person and improve their lifestyle. Instead of looking at what we are giving up, we need to look at what we are giving to: A Person!

Stewardship invests in your spiritual growth. People go deeply into debt to get their education and think it is a wonderful investment. Why don't we think that we are deeply in debt to God and want to invest our lives in his will?

Giving invests in our relationship with God, not just our money, but our time and talent in which we show God, that He is our Father and we care about our relationship with Him and what He expects from us as we help one another!

Christianity goes beyond doctrines, morality, and teachings. It goes beyond how we behave. While all of those things are important, we need to recognize that Christianity essentially involves vision: to see God. We are to see his reality of truth, goodness, joy, hope, peace and love. Christmas allows us to see God: to fill us with these desires, these virtues of light amid the darkness of lies, evil, sadness, despair, anger, and hatred in our world.

Christmas is celebrated at that time of the year when darkness fills most of the day. Our Americanized commercial Christmas fills our modern day darkness with glitzy lights and glitter that all but blind us to the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Being a Christian sees beyond the glitter and glamour of decorations. Christmas for Christians sees the light of what joy does for one's life. What hope can do when confronted with despair! What truth does when people lie, cheat, and steal from us! What peace and love does when we are tempted with anger and lust. Christianity sees our lives and the lives of the persons we love as Jesus sees them. Christmas is the most amazing event. God invests Himself in our human depravity.

Our ordinariness is what appeals to God. God wants to be loved by plain men and women, men and women who are fully alive. He wants to be loved and sought in the mundane routines of our lives. To live each day filled with joy, peace, and love for we seek his truth and goodness each day of our lives.

That is why the Virgin Mary is such an extraordinary person. She appeared to be, and was in reality, simply a little Jewish girl. She was lowly and considered herself to be a maidservant. But she was innocent and capable of wonder. In her simple humanity she was, in reality, more beautiful to God than any other.

Given the routine lives so many face in living, our culture has developed an entertainment industry that tells us things are not significant unless they are spectacular. Spectacles abound in sports, entertainment and in television. But, we must ask, what profit do we get from these spectacles: What investment do they offer in our lives?

Spectacles are merely escapes: A way to flee from being what we consider to be just an ordinary human being. Consider the amount of alcohol, drugs, and pornography that fill our culture. These are escapes from the beauty of being simple and humble: From living a life filled with joy, peace, goodness, beauty, and holiness. We are continually told that living a simple, humble, holy life is boring – a wasted life!

God's Christmas gift to us is the fact that we can carry the love, joy, peace, and presence of Jesus into our daily lives: our work place, our schools, our marriages, and our relationships. We can be the light to their world.

The Birth of Jesus, the Incarnation, makes significant those things which appear to be insignificant. A simple Jewish maiden, in little town called Bethlehem, and an ordinary birth all become the glory, beauty, and wonder of God loving his people.

Weekly Schedule:

| Date | MassTime | Place | Feast Day | Lector/Minister | Intention | Activity |
|------------|----------|-------|------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Mon Dec 19 | 6:00 PM | Nome | | | Lisa Svoboda | |
| Tue Dec 20 | 6:00 PM | Nome | | | Lisa Svoboda | |
| Wed Dec 21 | 6:00 PM | Nome | | | Lisa Svoboda | |
| Thu Dec 22 | 6:00 PM | Nome | | | Ray Kuffel | |
| Fri Dec 23 | 8:00 AM | Nome | | | Lisa Svoboda | |
| Sat Dec 24 | 5:30 PM | Nome | Christmass | | Lisa Svoboda | Christmas Eve |
| Sat Dec 24 | 11:30 PM | Nome | Christmass | | Lisa Svoboda | Christmas Eve |
| Sun Dec 25 | | | Christmass | | St. Anne | |

Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled (Lk 1:45).

God's promises are like seeds. If they take root in our hearts, if we really trust them, then they will grow to fulfillment and bear the fruits of blessing for ourselves and others.

Lord Jesus, You came in your loving kindness to become one like us. You saved all earthly creatures, lost since time began. Restoring joy to the world! Redeem our souls and bodies, O Christ, and so possess us with your love. By Your first coming, You make us righteous; At your second coming, set us free, so, when you judge, the world may be filled with your love and light. Today clothe us in your light and love so to follow in your steps, O King, Into your heavenly hall

Counterfeit Contemplation

Many new theologies do not see any separation between God and the soul. In fact, modern believers, those who say there are spiritual but not religious and many contemporary meditation practices, teach that God and the soul are the same thing. This error pops up in nearly every conversation: "God is omnipresent. We cannot, not be in God's presence." This is Pantheism. God is everywhere.

The need for moral conversion

This is true, but misleading. One can be present in different ways. God is present in all that exists, yet God cannot sin and we separate ourselves from God through our sin. In fact, since Adam's sin, all, except as Catholics believe: Mary and Jesus, are born separated from full union with God. We have a definite fault: We tend to believe we are God Himself. This was the sin of Satan and the cause of Adam and Eve's fall from grace, they wanted to be God-like. That is to have knowledge of good and evil. The trick of Satan was to make them think they were not god-like but in fact they were created in his image and likeness. The trick of Satan is the same with many new methods of prayer teaching that God is present everywhere and that we are one with god and god is one with us.

Modern spiritualities tend not to believe God is a transcendence Person but just another being and we can become the god we want to be. Even the ancient philosophers knew that God is very much unlike us and we will never be anything like Him. He is uncreated; we are created. Union with God is not just the recognition that God exists; contemplation reveals God is a Person Who is intimately involved in our lives. To experiences this communion with God as Person, it is is not enough to state he exists. We need a *moral conversion*, not just an awareness or consciousness of God.

We must draw near to God because He drew near to us.

"Seeking the Hidden God" *Union with God According to St. John of the Cross* writes: "For the soul desirous of union, it is not enough to know where one ought to go to seek God; it also wants to find Him. The soul responds to the Spirit with a new question: Granted that He whom I love is within me, why do I not feel Him and do not find Him?" There is a great difference between knowing God and knowing I live in His company, and encounter his love. True prayer realizes I am enamored with Jesus and His Spirit for I know He is enamored with me. .

If God is in me, then why does He not reveal His presence to me as He did with Adam and Eve? He walked with them in the Garden? Yes, it is true, God dwells within us, but He is lost, concealed under our preoccupations, our personal plans for our own profit and gain, plans that we want to carry out without taking account of God's will and love for me and the command that I am to love my neighbor as myself.

In our desires we have very lively passions, that thrust us toward creatures and make us give them our heart. They make us place our hope in creation and human persons and things and comfort ourselves with them. So we live in this created, temporary transitory world, which occupies our hearts and minds. We forget the transcendence of God, Who sends his Son into the world to reveal the glory, majesty, and divinity of that other world which we so desperately desire to find in our prayer.

To find this transcendent world, we must not believe God is just everywhere and anywhere for He is not. God is Father and He is found in truth, beauty, goodness, justice, peace, and holiness. We will only find Him if we seek Him and His love which is displayed in our world by all that we know and see as true, beautiful, good, just, peaceful and holy.

The Lord waits for us, so to speak, in the depth of our desires to find ultimate happiness. He reveals Himself through his Son who comes to us as a baby born simply. He does not come in pomp and circumstance, but humbly and quietly. Meditation is not to become a god, or see God in everything, but to realize God came to us to teach us to be like Him. To be loving to those who are unlovable; to be compassionate with those who are filled with hurt and pain and suffering; to be forgiving to those who have sinned against us.

Prayer is not training ourselves to become gods, but reveals to us the love God the Father has for us and invites us to love Him, his Son, the babe in the manger so that we may live and be like him. That we are truthful, good, beautiful, just, peaceful and ultimately Holy.

Prayer is not a process in which we empty ourselves; prayer is a conversation in which we fill ourselves with divine love. "Hide yourself, until you find Him in the depths of your spirit. Here, with the door shut, praying in secret to your Father, then... in recesses of your heart you will hear Him and love Him and enjoy Him..."

God's will or ours?

To find God in our souls, we must close our will, our desires, to everything that is ugly, evil, and hateful. We must set aside our own plans to follow His plan. This is what it truly means to go into our room and close the door. That is what the Magi did when they bore their gifts to the new born King. They abandoned their arts of black magic for that is what they truly were – wizards who experimented in the black arts to find fulfillment. But when they encountered Jesus, they realized that God's way was The Way.

Silence and emptiness is not enough. Awareness is not enough.. Setting aside all our thoughts and feelings during prayer gains us nothing. What we need to set aside is *our will*, in so far as it is different from God's will. God wills for us is to meditate on Him through Scripture, that's what we should do. He will show us that His will for us has changed when He Himself begins to change our prayer. And this change will only take place when we have truly abandoned our will for God's.

Some commentators point out that the shepherds, the simple souls, were the first to come to Jesus in the manger and to encounter the Redeemer of the world. The Wisemen from the East, represent the social elite, who arrived much later. This is quite natural. The shepherds lived nearby. They only needed to "come over" (Lk 2:15), as we do when we go to visit our neighbors. The Wisemen, however, lived far away. They had a long and arduous journey in order to arrive in Bethlehem. And they needed guidance and direction.

Today too simple and lowly souls live very close to the Lord. They are, so to speak, his neighbors and they easily go to see Him present in our world. But most of us in the world today live far from Jesus; the Incarnate God Who came to dwell among us. We live our lives by philosophies, agendas, worldly affairs, and occupations that totally absorb us and distance us from the manger.

In all kinds of ways, God has to prod us and reach out to us again and again, so that we escape from the mediocrity of our faith and the business of activities. Through prayer, we discover the way that leads to Him. a path exists for all.

The Lord provides everyone with tailor-made signals. He calls each one of us by name, so that we too can say: "Come, let us go to Bethlehem – to the God who has come to meet us. Yes indeed, Jesus at Christmass sets out to meet us!

Left to ourselves we could not reach Him. We are too blind, we need a star. Jesus, the true Star, has come down: He meets us where we are. He has travelled the longer part of the journey. Now He invites us: Come and see how much I love you. Come and see: I am here.

Let us go there! Let us surpass ourselves! Let us journey towards God each according to his path: his calling and our longing towards Him. Come let us adore at the Manger: Christ's Mass.

Christ's Mass is the origin of Christmas. He comes to dwell among his people. He prays with his people; He heals his people. At Mass, we like the shepherds bow down and worship for we hear the angels sing; we as the Magi have seen the star, and now we come to Him Who awaits us at that Eucharist.