



# Holy Family Parish

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2019



## FIRST READING : Isaiah 7:10-14

The Lord spoke to Ahaz and said, 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above.' 'No,' Ahaz answered 'I will not put the Lord to the test.' Then Isaiah said: 'Listen now, House of David: are you not satisfied with trying the patience of men without trying the patience of my God, too? The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign. It is this: the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel, a name which means "God-is-with-us."'

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM : Psalm 23:1-6

℟. *Let the Lord enter, He is the King of glory.*

*The Lord's is the earth and its fullness, the world and all its peoples, It is He who set it on the seas; on the waters He made it firm. ℟.*

*Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord? Who shall stand in His holy place? The man with clean hands and pure heart, who desires not worthless things. ℟.*

*He shall receive blessings from the Lord and reward from the God who saves him, Such are the men who seek Him, seek the face of the God of Jacob. ℟.*

## SECOND READING : Romans 1:1-7

From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus who has been called to be an apostle, and specially chosen to preach the Good News that God promised long ago through his prophets in the scriptures. This news is about the Son of God who, according to the human nature he took was a descendant of David: it is about Jesus Christ our Lord who, in the order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness that was in him, was proclaimed Son of God in all his power through his resurrection from the dead. Through him we received grace and our apostolic mission to preach the obedience of faith to all pagan nations in honour of his name. You are one of these nations, and by his call belong to Jesus Christ. To you all, then, who are God's beloved in Rome, called to be saints, may God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send grace and peace.

## GOSPEL : Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph; being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.' When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

## FINAL NEWSLETTER FOR 2019

Thank you to all our helpers who have kept Holy Family ticking along this year. May all parishioners have a very safe and Holy Christmas and a very Joyful New Year.

## CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM FR JEREMY

Dear Friends in Christ, may our personal encounter with the child Jesus this Christmas, lead us to share His joy with those around us. At this time, let us also not forget those suffering around the world in war torn regions, and here at home, those suffering from neglect, loneliness, sorrow, and poverty; let us beg the child Jesus to change hearts - especially our hearts - so that we can bring His peace to all. Let us keep an eye out for ways in which we can extend a helping hand to those around us in need. Merry Christmas to all ! Fr Jeremy

*« The best way to look at Christmas, is to stand on one's head. Contemplating the crib, everything looks upside down: the angels looking down on the God who made them, God looking up at His own creation. There in the manger, where He is homeless, we all find our home ... Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home. » ~ GK Chesterton*

## CHRISTMAS TIMETABLE

### CHRISTMAS EVE

Tuesday 24th December

9:00am Mass (No 7:00pm Mass)

### **Midnight Mass**

**12:00am**

Carols from 11:00pm

### CHRISTMAS DAY

Wednesday 25th December

**8:00am - (Latin - Sung Mass)**

**10:00am - (English - Sung Mass)**

### BOXING DAY

Thursday 26th December

9:00am

*Please note: From Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> December till Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January there will be changes in Mass times please check the noticeboard and in the foyer.*



*« If we want to find the God who appeared as a child, then we must dismount from the high horse of our "enlightened" reason. We must set aside our false certainties, our intellectual pride, which prevents us from recognizing God's closeness. » ~ Pope Benedict XVI, 2011*

# CHRIST WAS REALLY BORN ON DECEMBER 25: HERE'S A DEFENCE OF THE TRADITIONAL DATE FOR CHRISTMAS

by Dr Taylor Marshall

The Catholic Church, from at least the second century, has claimed that Christ was born on December 25. However, today, it is commonly alleged that our Lord Jesus Christ was not born on December 25. For the sake of simplicity, let us set out the usual objections to the date of December 25 and counter each of them.

**OBJECTION 1:** December 25 was chosen in order to replace the pagan Roman festival of 'Saturnalia'. Saturnalia was a popular winter festival and so the Catholic Church prudently substituted Christmas in its place.

**REPLY TO OBJECTION 1:** Saturnalia commemorated the winter solstice. Yet the winter solstice falls on December 22. It is true that Saturnalia celebrations began as early as December 17 and extended till December 23. Still, the dates don't match up.

**OBJECTION 2:** December 25 was chosen to replace the pagan Roman holiday *Natalis Solis Invicti* which means "Birthday of the Unconquered Sun."

**REPLY TO OBJECTION 2:** Let us examine first the cult of the 'Unconquered Sun'. The Roman Emperor Aurelian introduced the cult of the *Sol Invictus* or *Unconquered Sun* to Rome in A.D. 274. Aurelian found political traction with this cult, because his own name *Aurelian* derives from the Latin word *aurora* denoting "sunrise." Coins reveal that Emperor Aurelian called himself the *Pontifex Solis* or *Pontiff of the Sun*. Thus, Aurelian simply accommodated a generic solar cult and identified his name with it at the end of the third century.

Most importantly, there is no historical record for a celebration *Natalis Sol Invictus* on December 25 prior to A.D. 354. Within an illuminated manuscript for the year A.D. 354, there is an entry for December 25 reading "N INVICTI CM XXX." Here N means "nativity." INVICTI means "of the Unconquered." CM signifies "circenses missus" or "games ordered." The Roman numeral XXX equals thirty.

Thus, the inscription means that thirty games were order for the nativity of the Unconquered for December 25th. Note that the word "sun" is not present. Moreover, the very same codex also lists "natus Christus in Betleem Iudeae" for the day of December 25. The phrase is translated as "birth of Christ in Bethlehem of Judea."

The date of December 25th only officially became the "Birthday of the Unconquered Sun" under the Emperor Julian the Apostate (born 331; reigned 361-363). Julian the Apostate had been a Christian but who had apostatized and returned to Roman paganism. History reveals that it was the hateful former Christian Emperor that erected a pagan holiday on December 25. Think about that for a moment. What was he trying to replace?

These historical facts reveal that the *Unconquered Sun* was not likely a popular deity in the Roman Empire. The Roman people did not need to be weaned off of a so-called ancient holiday. Moreover, the tradition of a December 25th celebration does not find a place on the Roman calendar until after the *Christianization of Rome*. The "Birthday of the Unconquered Sun" holiday was scarcely traditional and hardly popular. Saturnalia (mentioned above) was much more popular, traditional, and fun. It seems, rather, that Julian the Apostate had attempted to introduce a pagan holiday in order to replace the Christian one!

**OBJECTION 3:** Christ could not have been born in December since Saint Luke describes shepherds herding in the neighbouring fields of Bethlehem.

Shepherds do not herd during the winter. Thus, Christ was not born in winter.

**REPLY TO OBJECTION 3:** Recall that Palestine is not England, Russia, or Alaska. Bethlehem is situated at the latitude of 31.7°.

My city of Dallas, Texas has the latitude of 32.8°, and it's still rather comfortable outside in December.

As the great Cornelius-a-Lapide remarks during his lifetime, one could still see shepherds and sheep in the fields of Italy during late December, and Italy is at higher latitude than Bethlehem.

Now we move on to establishing the birthday of Christ from Sacred Scripture in two steps. The first step is to use Scripture to determine the birthday of Saint John the Baptist. The next step is using Saint John the Baptist's birthday as the key for finding Christ's birthday. We can discover that Christ was born in late December by observing first the time of year in which Saint Luke describes Saint Zacharias in the temple.

This provides us with the approximate conception date of Saint John the Baptist. From there we can follow the chronology that Saint Luke gives, and that lands us at the end of December.

Saint Luke reports that Zacharias served in the "course of Abias" (Lk 1:5) which Scripture records as the eighth course among the twenty-four priestly courses (Neh 12:17). Each shift of priests served one week in the temple for two times each year. The course of Abias served during the eighth week and the thirty-second week in the annual cycle. However, when did the cycle of courses begin?

Josef Heinrich Friedlieb has convincingly established that the first priestly course of Jojarib was on duty during the destruction of Jerusalem on the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av.

Thus the priestly course of Jojarib was on duty during the second week of Av. Consequently, the priestly course of Abias (the course of Saint Zacharias) was undoubtedly serving during the second week of the Jewish month of Tishri—the very week of the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of Tishri. In our calendar, the Day of Atonement would land anywhere from September 22 to October 8.

Zacharias and Elizabeth conceived John the Baptist immediately after Zacharias served his course. This entails that Saint John the Baptist would have been conceived somewhere around the end of September, placing John's birth at the end of June, confirming the Catholic Church's celebration of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist on June 24.

The second-century *Protoevangelium of Saint James* also confirms a late September conception of the Baptist since the work depicts Saint Zacharias as High Priest and as entering the Holy of Holies—not merely the holy place with the altar of incense. This is a factual mistake because Zacharias was not the high priest, but one of the chief priests.

Still, the *Protoevangelium* regards Zacharias as a high priest and this associates him with the Day of Atonement, which lands on the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tishri (roughly the end of our September). Immediately after this entry into the temple and message of the Archangel Gabriel, Zacharias and Elizabeth conceive John the Baptist. Allowing for forty weeks of gestation, this places the birth of John the Baptist at the end of June—once again confirming the Catholic date for the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist on June 24.

The rest of the dating is rather simple. We read that just after the Virgin Mary conceived Christ, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was six months pregnant with John the Baptist. This means that John the Baptist was six months older than our Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 1:24-27, 36). If you add six months to June 24 you get December 24-25 as the birthday of Christ.

Then, if you subtract nine months from December 25 you get that the Annunciation was March 25, which is when it is celebrated in our liturgical calendar. All the dates match up perfectly. So then, if John the Baptist was conceived shortly after the Jewish Day of the Atonement, then the traditional Catholic dates are essentially correct. The birth of Christ would be about or on December 25.

Sacred Tradition also confirms December 25 as the birthday of the Son of God. The source of this ancient tradition is the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. Ask any mother about the birth of her children. She will not only give you the date of the birth, but she will be able to rattle off the time, the location, the weather, the weight of the baby, the length of the baby, and a number of other details. I'm the father of six blessed children, and while I sometimes forget these details—*mea maxima culpa*—my wife never does. You see, mothers never forget the details surrounding the births of their babies.

Now ask yourself: Would the Blessed Virgin Mary ever forget the birth of her Son Jesus Christ who was conceived without human seed, proclaimed by angels, born in a miraculous way, and visited by Magi? She knew from the moment of His incarnation in her stainless womb that He was the Son of God and Messiah. Would she ever forget that day?

Next, ask yourself: Would the Apostles be interested in hearing Mary tell the story? Of course they would. Do you think the holy Apostle who wrote, "And the Word was made flesh," (John) was not interested in the minute details of His birth? Even when I walk around with our seven-month-old son, people always ask "How old is he?" or "When was he born?" Don't you think people asked this question of Mary?

So the exact birth date (December 25) and the time (midnight) would have been known in the first century, and by many early Christians. Moreover, the Apostles would have asked about it and would have, no doubt, commemorated the blessed event that both Saint Matthew and Saint Luke chronicle for us.

St Luke records the Infancy Narratives in his Gospel. He would have spoken directly to Mary regarding those details. He would have visited her. In summary, it is completely reasonable to state that the early Christians both knew and commemorated the birth of Christ. Their source would have been His Immaculate Mother.

Further testimony reveals that the Church Fathers claimed December 25 as the Birthday of Christ *prior* to the conversion of Constantine and the Roman Empire. The earliest record of this is that Pope Saint Telesphorus (reigned A.D. 126-137) instituted the tradition of Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Although the *Liber Pontificalis* (an early book of liturgical prayers) does not give us the date of Christmas, it assumes that the Pope was already celebrating Christmas and that a Mass at midnight was added.

During this time, we also read the following words of Theophilus (A.D. 115-181), Catholic bishop of Caesarea in Palestine: "We ought to celebrate the birthday of Our Lord on what day soever the 25th of December shall happen."

Shortly thereafter in the second century, Saint Hippolytus (A.D. 170-240) wrote in passing that the birth of Christ occurred on December 25:

*"The First Advent of our Lord in the flesh occurred when He was born in Bethlehem, was December 25th, a Wednesday, while Augustus was in his forty-second year, which is five thousand and five hundred years from Adam. He suffered in the thirty-third year, March 25th, Friday, the eighteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, while Rufus and Roubellion were Consuls."*

Also note in the quote above the special significance of March 25, which marks the death of Christ (March 25 was assumed to corresponded to the Hebrew month Nisan 14 – the traditional

date of crucifixion).

Christ, as the perfect man, was believed to have been conceived and died on the same day—March 25. In his *Chronicon*, Saint Hippolytus states that the earth was created on March 25, 5500 B.C. Thus, March 25 was identified by the Church Fathers as the Creation date of the universe, as the date of the Annunciation and Incarnation of Christ, and also as the date of the Death of Christ our Saviour.

In the Syrian Church, March 25 or the Feast of the Annunciation was seen as one of the most important feasts of the entire year. It denoted the day that God took up his abode in the womb of the Virgin.

In fact, if the Annunciation and Good Friday came into conflict on the calendar, the Annunciation trumped it, so important was the day in Syrian tradition. It goes without saying that the Syrian Church preserved some of the most ancient Christian traditions and had a sweet and profound devotion for Mary and the Incarnation of Christ.

Now then, March 25 was enshrined in the early Christian tradition, and from this date it is easy to discern the date of Christ's birth. March 25 (Christ conceived by the Holy Ghost) plus nine months brings us to December 25 (the birth of Christ at Bethlehem).

Saint Augustine confirms this tradition of March 25 as the Messianic conception and December 25 as His birth:

*"For Christ is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also he suffered; so the womb of the Virgin, in which he was conceived, where no one of mortals was begotten, corresponds to the new grave in which he was buried, wherein was never man laid, neither before him nor since. But he was born, according to tradition, upon December the 25th."*

In about A.D. 400, Saint Augustine also noted how the schismatic Donatists celebrated December 25 as the birth of Christ, but that the schismatics refused to celebrate Epiphany on January 6, since they regarded Epiphany as a new feast without a basis in Apostolic Tradition.

The Donatist schism originated in A.D. 311 which may indicate that the Latin Church was celebrating a December 25 Christmas (but not a January 6 Epiphany) before A.D. 311.

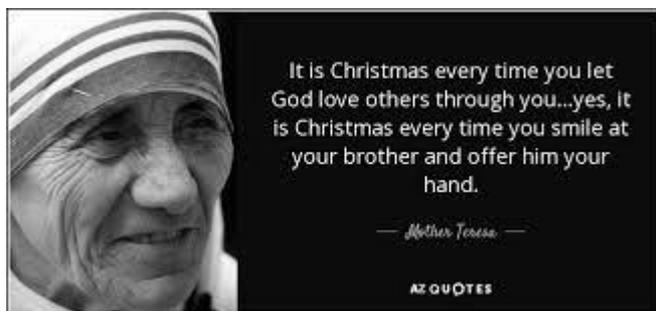
Whichever is the case, the liturgical celebration of Christ's birth was commemorated in Rome on December 25 long before Christianity became legalized and long before our earliest record of a pagan feast for the birthday of the Unconquered Sun.

For these reasons, it is reasonable and right to hold that Christ was born on December 25 in 1 B.C. and that he died and rose again in March of A.D. 33.

Taylor's new book *The Eternal City* also makes an argument in defence of the traditional BC/AD dating as being 100% accurate.

This article is located at:

<https://taylormarshall.com/2012/12/yes-christ-was-really-born-on-december.html>



**PROCESSIONAL HYMN:**

O Come, O come, Emmanuel  
 Redeem thy captive Israel,  
 That doth in exile homeless mourn  
 Until her Saviour Christ be born.

*Rejoice, rejoice!*

*Emmanuel is born to save thee Israel.*

O come thou day star seen on high  
 with healing for our hearts draw nigh:  
 Do thou the mists of night dispel and  
 death's forboding darkness quell.

*Rejoice, rejoice!*

*Emmanuel is born to save thee Israel.*

O come of Gentile hearts, the King.  
 A world that needs thee ransoming  
 And save thy Servants who confess  
 with humbled hearts their faithlessness.

*Rejoice, rejoice!*

*Emmanuel is born to save thee Israel.*

**OFFERTORY HYMN:**

*Alma Redemptoris Mater  
 quae pervia caeli porta manes  
 et stella maris, succure cadenti,  
 surgere qui curat populo:  
 tu quae genuisti, natura mirante,  
 tuum sanctum genitorem:  
 Virgo prius ac posterious,  
 Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud ave,  
 peccatorum miserere. Amen*

**COMMUNION HYMN:**

Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
 Born to set thy people free;  
 From our fears and sins release us,  
 Let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
 hope of all the earth thou art:  
 Dear desire of ev'ry nation,  
 joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,  
 Born a child, and yet a king,  
 Born to reign in us forever,  
 Now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit  
 Rule in all our hearts alone;  
 By thine all sufficient merit  
 Raise us to thy glorious throne.

**RECESSIONAL HYMN:**

O come, divine Messiah;  
 The world in silence waits the day  
 When hope shall sing its triumph  
 And sadness flee away.

*Dear Saviour, haste!*

*Come, come to earth.*

*dispel the night and show your face,  
 and bid us hail the dawn of grace.*

*O come, divine Messiah; the world in  
 silence waits the day when hope shall  
 sing its triumph and sadness flee away.*

O Christ, whom nations sign for,  
 Whom priest and prophet long foretold,  
 Come break the captive's fetters,  
 Redeem the long lost fold.

*Dear Saviour, haste!*

*Come, come to earth.*

*dispel the night and show your face,  
 and bid us hail the dawn of grace.*

*O come, divine Messiah; the world in  
 silence waits the day when hope shall  
 sing its triumph and sadness flee away.*

You come in peace and meekness  
 And lowly will your cradle be;  
 All clothed in human weakness  
 Shall we your Godhead see.

**FAMILY PRAYERS FOR ADVENT  
(Advent Wreath)****What to do?**

1. Begin with the Sign of the Cross
2. Light Candle
3. Say Antiphon of the Day
4. Say the Advent Prayer of that week
5. say Gospel of the Week
6. Finish with Grace before Meals.

**4th Week Prayer:** Stir up your might,  
 we pray You O Lord, and come; rescue  
 us through Your great strength so that  
 salvation, which has been hindered by  
 our sins, may be hastened by the grace  
 of Your gentle mercy. Who lives and  
 reigns forever and ever. Amen.

**4th Week Gospel: Luke 1:39-45**

"Blessed are you who believed that  
 what was spoken to you by the Lord  
 would be fulfilled."

**Fourth Candle and Week 4 of Advent**

**Monday:** "O Wisdom, you come forth  
 from the mouth of the Most High. You  
 fill the universe and hold all things  
 together in a strong yet gentle manner.  
 O come to teach us the way of truth."

**Tuesday:** "O Adonai and leader of  
 Israel, you appeared to Moses in a  
 burning bush and you gave him the  
 Law on Sinai. O come and save us with  
 your mighty power."

**Wednesday:** "O stock of Jesse, you  
 stand as a signal for the nations; kings  
 fall silent before you whom the peoples  
 acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do  
 not delay."

**Thursday:** "O key of David and sceptre  
 of Israel, what you open no one else  
 can close again; what you close no one  
 can open. O come to lead the captive  
 from prison; free those who sit in  
 darkness and in the shadow of death."

**Friday:** O Rising Sun, you are the  
 splendour of eternal light and the sun  
 of justice. O come and enlighten those  
 who sit in darkness and in the shadow  
 of death."

**Saturday:** "O King whom all the  
 peoples desire, you are the cornerstone  
 which makes all one. O come and save  
 man whom you made from clay."

**Sunday:** "O Emmanuel, you are our  
 king and judge, the One whom the  
 peoples await and their Saviour. O  
 come and save us. Lord, our God."

**NEXT SUNDAY:**

**29 December 2019**

**Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
(Yr A)**

*Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 3:12-21;  
 Mt 2:13-15, 19-23;*

**LITURGY ROSTER****Midnight Mass:**

**Readers:** S. Shaw, C. Tagiilima  
**Prayers of the Faithful:** A. Leifi  
**Offertory:** Tagiilima Family  
**Special Ministers:** F. Ulugia

**Christmas Day:**

**Readers:** M. D'Souza, R. Cardoza  
**Prayers of the Faithful:** R. Lopez  
**Offertory:** Drabble Family  
**Special Ministers:** S. Molloy

**Holy Family:**

**Readers:** R. Lopez, F. Xavier  
**Prayers of the Faithful:** Leslie Ahio  
**Offertory:** Jaifee Family  
**Special Ministers:** P. Vernon

**CHURCH CLEANING ROSTER**

on break till 15<sup>th</sup> February 2020  
 Please keep the Church tidy.

**SUNDAY CUP OF TEA ROSTER**

Murrell/Kaufman Families  
 then on break till 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2020

**ANNIVERSARIES THIS WEEK**

**22 Dec:** *Ante Katavich*

**23 Dec:** *Michelle Bryan, Michael Atkinson,  
 Margaret Finn.*

**24 Dec:** *Freeth Herbert, Margaret Bartocci*

**25 Dec:** *Gloria Petica*

**31Dec:** *Teresa Gilmer*

**PARISH FINANCES**

<b>Parish</b>	\$1,115.80
<b>Priests</b>	\$557.90
<b>Total Cash</b>	\$1,673.70

**REMINDER:**

Parish activities  
 that take a break during January,  
 Please make a note on your calendar  
 the starting dates for 2020

**Hall Cleaners - starts 1 February 2020**

**Sunday Cup of Tea - starts 2 February 2020**

**Catechism Classes - starts 2 February 2020**

**Rosary for Life - starts 2 February 2020**

**Parish Newsletter - starts 2 February 2020**

**Hall Bookings - starts 2 February 2020**

**Monthly Adoration - starts 7 February 2020**

**Church Cleaners - start 15 February 2020**

**Thursday Night Formation - starts February**

The Parish Office will be **CLOSED** from  
 the 24th December till 21st January.