



Church of Saint Cecilia

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Weekly Masses:
Saturday 4:30 & Sunday 8:15 & 10:00
Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday 3:45



Holy Family

Flight into Egypt

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The Church of Saint Cecilia

Pope recently wrote Apostolic Letter on the significance of the Christmas crèche

Pope Francis recently wrote this letter on the meaning and importance of the nativity scene. He signed the Letter during his visit recently to the Italian town of Greccio. Greccio is the mountain village where Saint Francis of Assisi created the first crib scene in 1223 to commemorate the birth of Jesus. Pope Francis returned to the town on Sunday to deliver his Apostolic Letter entitled, “Admirabile signum.”

The Latin title of the Letter refers to the “enchanted image” of the Christmas crèche, one that “never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder”, writes the Pope. “The depiction of Jesus’ birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God”, he says.

“The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture”, continues Pope Francis. Contemplating the Christmas story is like setting out on a spiritual journey, “drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman.” So great is His love for us, writes the Pope, “that He became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with Him.”

The Pope hopes this Letter will encourage the family tradition of preparing the nativity scene, “but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares.” Praising the imagination and creativity that goes into these small masterpieces, Pope Francis says he hopes this custom will never be lost “and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.”

Pope Francis recalls the origin of the Christmas crèche as related in the Gospels. “Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal Himself as ‘the bread come down from heaven’.” The nativity scene “evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus’ life and brings them close to our own daily lives”, writes the Pope.

Pope Francis takes us back to the Italian town of Greccio, which Saint Francis visited in the year 1223. The caves he saw there reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. On December 25, friars and local people came together, bringing flowers and torches, writes the Pope. “When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey.” A priest celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, “showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist.”

This is how our tradition began, continues Pope Francis, “with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.” With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization, he writes. His teaching continues today “to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith.”

Pope Francis explains that the Christmas crèche moves us so deeply because it shows God’s tender love. From the time of its Franciscan origins, “the nativity scene has invited us to ‘feel’ and ‘touch’ the poverty that God’s Son took upon Himself in the Incarnation”, writes the Pope. “It asks us to meet Him and serve Him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need.”

Pope Francis reflects on the meaning behind the elements that make up the nativity scene. He begins with the background of “a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night.” We think of when we experienced the darkness of night, he says, yet even then, God does not abandon us. “His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering.”

In a recent audience the Pope described the crib as a kind of living Gospel that “brings the Gospel into the places of our lives: our homes, schools, (continued)

FAITH FORMATION

Upcoming Whole Community Wednesday (WCW) Events

12/25-1/8 - Christmas Break

1/11 - FMSC field trip - all parishioners welcome!

1/15 - Small Groups, Meditative Yoga with Lisa Reiner

1/22 - Small Groups, Pushing Back on the to School Prison Pipeline led by Bridget Sabo

Potluck at 5:30pm, meetings to follow at 6:30pm. All are welcome!

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) News

In the month of January our students will learn about the Epiphany, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Shepherds/Magi, and the Presentation in the Temple.

December/January Schedule

Dec 29th - Family weekend

Jan 5th - class

Jan 12th - class

Jan 19th - Family weekend, MLK

Jan 26th - class

FMSC Packing Session

We are planning a parish-wide Feed My Starving Children event on Saturday, January 11th from 1-2:30pm at the Coon Rapids location. Look for the sign up in the Link. Friends, family, and neighbors are all welcome to join us. We reserved 150 spots and hope to fill them all! Those who signed up can expect an email with a link to register your name shortly after the new year.

Thank You

Through the generosity of our community, 317 gifts were delivered to families at College Prep Elementary and Holy Rosary Church. With funds donated, we purchased gift cards which were used to fulfill requests for additional families at College Prep Elementary. Thank you so much for your generosity! The Giving Tree Team

The Gift of Warmth

This Christmas season we will be collecting something warm for those in need. Suggested items (socks, gloves, mittens, hats, etc.) may be placed in the basket near the crèche. Thank you.

workplaces, community centers, hospitals, and clinics, prisons and squares.” It reminds us, the Pope said, of how the Lord showed His love for us by being born as one of us.

To make a crib “is to celebrate God’s closeness, and to rediscover that He is real, concrete and alive,” and the baby Jesus with open arms tells us that God came to embrace us in our humanity. It is nice, the Pope said, to stand before the crib and share our daily lives, hopes and concerns with the Lord. Then he went on to speak of the other figures in the crib: Mary and St. Joseph who symbolize the joys, worries and harmony of the family life.

“The crib is a domestic Gospel,” and the image of the manger evokes the meals we share as families and the centrality of Jesus, the living bread come down from heaven, into our family life. Caught up in the frenetic rhythms of today’s life, the Christmas crib also reminds us to pause and contemplate what is truly important. In a world which weapons continue to be manufactured every day, and violent images penetrate our sight and our hearts, “the crib is an artisanal image of peace, that’s why it is a living Gospel.”

The Pope wrapped up his discourse inviting everyone to make a little crib in their homes “as a reminder that God came to be with us, was born a man like us, and continues to accompany us in our lives. “He doesn’t change things with magic, but if we welcome Him into our hearts everything can change,” he said.

Making a crib, Pope Francis concluded, is like opening the door to our home and saying: “Jesus, come in!” “If Jesus dwells in our lives, life is reborn and if life is reborn, it really is Christmas!

The Pope then writes about the landscape that often include ancient ruins or buildings. He explains how these ruins are “the visible sign of fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints.” This scenic setting tells us that Jesus has come “to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendor.”

Turing to the shepherds, Pope Francis writes that, “unlike so many other people busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation.” The shepherds respond to God “who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet Him with love, gratitude and awe”, he adds.

The presence of the poor and the lowly, is a reminder that “God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of His love and who ask Him to draw near to them.” From the manger, “Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.”

There are the figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, writes Pope Francis, “from the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the woman carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way.”

The Pope then focuses on the figures of Mary and Joseph. “Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows Him to every visitor. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey His word and to put it into practice. Saint Joseph stands by her side, protecting the Child and His mother.” Joseph is the guardian, the just man, who “entrusted himself always to God’s will.”

But it is when we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, that the nativity scene comes alive. “It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way He wished to reveal the greatness of His love: by smiling and opening His arms to all.” The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, “but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God’s own life.”

The memories of standing before the Christmas crèche when we were children should remind us “of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren” says Pope Francis. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged, “what matters is that it speaks to our lives.”

The Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. “Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God’s love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with Him.”

Year End Giving 2019—Please note that end of year contributions for 2019 tax records must be received in the parish office by Tuesday, December 31st. When making your year end gifts, please consider taking advantage of the option to sign up for monthly automatic withdrawal through your checking or savings account for your regular contribution to the operating budget of the church. An additional contribution can be likewise, made to the building fund. Forms are available in the back of church or on our website. Thank you.

New Year’s Day Mass will be celebrated at 10:00am on Wednesday, January 1st.

Early Bulletin Deadline

Submissions for the January 5th bulletin are due Monday, December 30th by 9:00am. Email submissions to bulletin@stceciliasp.org.