



**Disciples  
Making Disciples**



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## On Christmas Eve, we hail Mary!

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent  
24 December 2023

**2 Sam 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16**  
**Rom 16:25-27**  
**Lk 1:26-38**

On the eve of this year's Christmas, our Sunday gospel features the Annunciation – a key event that the late Pope Benedict XVI calls “the true beginning of the New Testament” in Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives.

Let us examine the angel's message and Mary's response, which point to the true meaning of Christmas.

Instead of the usual Hebrew salutation shalom (peace), the angel Gabriel greets Mary with the Greek word *chaire* (χαίρε). This translates to “Hail” or “Rejoice”, setting the stage for the joy of the gospel – that our Saviour has come into the world.

Gabriel then announces that Mary will bear a child who will be called “Son of the Most High”, that he will be given the throne of David, and that his reign will have no end. This fulfills the words of the prophet Nathan in our First Reading: “I will be a father to him and he a son to me... Your house and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established forever.” (2 Sam 7:14, 16)

Gabriel also proclaims that the Holy Spirit will come upon Mary and the power of the Most High will overshadow her. In Jewish theology, the sacred cloud is the visible sign of

God's presence – his “revelation in hiddenness”, as Pope Benedict XVI puts it. In this regard, Mary is the new Ark of the Covenant, in whom God “chooses to dwell among men in a new way”.

As for Mary, her response is threefold. First, she was “deeply disturbed” and “asked herself what this greeting could mean”. While her initial reaction (troubled) was like Zechariah's, Pope Benedict XVI points out that what follows is not fear, but reflection. Mary thus appears as a “woman of great interiority” and becomes the “image of the Church” as she considers the word of God.

Second, Mary questions how she is to be the mother of the Messiah “since I am a virgin”. Again, the difference with Zechariah's reaction is subtle but substantial. While Zechariah questions the possibility of the promise, Mary asks not whether, but how the promise is to be fulfilled.

Third, Mary responds with a straightforward yes: “Let what you have said be done to me.” In giving us free will, the only way God can redeem us is by means of a free “yes” to his will. In this regard, St Bernard of Clairvaux portrays heaven and earth waiting with bated breath in this moment.

And with Mary's “yes”, the Word entered into her and became fruitful in her. She became the Mother of God. She delivered Christ to us, and we therefore celebrate Christmas.

Let us reflect also on the last line of our gospel passage: “And the angel left her.” In her great hour of encounter with God's messenger, Mary musters the courage to say “yes”, henceforth

radically transforming her entire life. Left with a task that surpasses all human capacity, she appears to be alone, with no angels nor dominions standing around her. In our moments of waiting, in the quiet nights before the Christmas bells ring, it sometimes seems that we, too, are alone to deal with tasks that are beyond us.

But Mary was not alone. In saying “yes”, she allowed God to enter into her womb. The angel may have left her, but Christ was closer to her than ever before.

And so it is with us. In our moments of darkness when it seems that everyone has departed, let us remember that God is always with us. O come, o come, Emmanuel!



***“Let what you have said  
be done to me.”***

*- Mother Mary*

## Announcements

For announcements in the bulletin, send your requests to [mmm@sfxchurch.sg](mailto:mmm@sfxchurch.sg) by the MONDAY before the weekend, 2359hrs



SCAN QR CODE  
FOR MASS HYMNS  
[www.sfxchurch.sg/mass](http://www.sfxchurch.sg/mass)

### FAULTY CHURCH PEWS?

Spot any faulty or damaged pews in church? Scan the QR code to share with us at [tinyurl.com/SFXFacilityReport](http://tinyurl.com/SFXFacilityReport)



### NEW YEAR'S EVE: THANKSGIVING MASS

Sun 31 Dec, 11pm



Join us for a time of rosary and reflection at 10.30pm. This will be followed by the Countdown Mass during which we can give thanks to God for the past year, and what we can offer to God for the new year ahead.

### NEW YEAR'S DAY MASS: MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Mon 1 Jan, 9am

### PARISH OFFICE CLOSURE

Please note that the Parish Office will be closed on Mon 25 Dec and 1 Jan.

### CONSIDERATE PARKING THIS FESTIVE SEASON

Just a gentle reminder to park considerately, especially at Cooling Close and nearby roads where parking may be limited. Please do not park indiscriminately. Do ensure that our neighbours have access to their houses and rubbish trucks/buses may pass through the narrow lanes. Let's reflect the light of Christ's love to the residents in the neighbourhood. Thank you for your understanding.



### INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS

There will be installation of solar panels in and around the church for the next 3 months. Please be aware that heavy machinery and project personnel will be present during this period. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we work towards making our church environmentally friendly. Thank you for your support and patience during this project.

*Wishing All Our Parishioners A Blessed Christmas!*

*"Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us; and he will be called Wondrous God, Prince of peace, Father of future ages: and his reign will be without end."*  
Isaiah 9: 1, 5; Luke 1: 33

### CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY MASS SCHEDULE

#### Christmas Eve (Sun 24 Dec)

• Children's Pageant: **8.30pm** (livestreamed)  
*Calling all children to come dressed as shepherds, angels or animals and be a part of our special Christmas celebration. Let's bring the Nativity scene to life together!*

• Vigil Mass: **9pm** • Midnight Mass: **12am**



#### Christmas Day (Mon 25 Dec)

9am, 11am, 4pm

### PIETA: DECEMBER SESSION

PIETA is a support group for bereaved parents who have united in faith to seek God's comfort, wisdom and hope. The monthly session, run by bereaved parents, is for prayer, reflection and the breaking open of the WORD OF GOD. We invite any parent who has lost a child (regardless of age and no matter how recent or long ago) to journey together in faith. Please email us for directions.

**Date:** Tue 26 Dec 2023  
**Time:** 5pm - 6.45pm  
**Venue:** Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre  
(2 Highland Road, unit LG-01, Singapore 549102)

### CATHOLIC FAMILY LIFE: FAMILY CONFERENCE 2024 - BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES

It's Time To Reconnect With Our Families! Calling all Parents, Grandparents, Caregivers and Educators! Join us at our Family Conference 2024! The conference aims to unpack the challenges and opportunities of modern family life, with a focus on building resilience, understanding and unity, by integrating our Catholic faith and values in family life. Let's come together as one family to build stronger families. For more information, visit [www.familylife.sg/FamilyConference2024](http://www.familylife.sg/FamilyConference2024).

**Date:** Sat 27 Jan 2024  
**Time:** 9am - 5pm  
**Venue:** Saint Francis Xavier Seminary Building  
(618 Upper Bukit Timah Road, S678214)  
**Register:** [http://bit.ly/CFL\\_FC2024](http://bit.ly/CFL_FC2024)



### MY PERSONAL COMPASS: SHORTENED EDITION BY FR DAVID GARCIA, OP

"My Personal Compass" returns in a shortened edition this year. Come and get introduced to the basics of morality in an increasingly complex world. Build an ethical foundation to journey towards fulfilling your potential as a human person made in the image of God. To register, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/y38faeyr>. For enquiries, please email Caritas Singapore at [mpmc@caritas-singapore.org](mailto:mpmc@caritas-singapore.org).

**Dates:** 18 Jan - 21 Mar 2024 (Thursdays)  
**Time:** 7.30pm - 9.30pm  
**Venue:** CANA at Catholic Centre (55 Waterloo St, Level 3)  
**Fee:** \$100





## CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS TO THE FULLEST WITH THESE CATHOLIC TRADITIONS

Christmas, the joyous season of birth, has arrived. It's so important that the Church celebrates it not just one day, nor even 12 days, but for an entire season lasting from 16 to 22 days. It ends with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which falls on 7 Jan 2024. Here are some suggestions for celebrating this season!



### Attending Midnight Mass

Sometime in 381 a Galician lady called Egeria wrote about this custom of midnight mass after she witnessed the early Jerusalem Catholics commemorate the Christmas mystery in Bethlehem by holding a vigil at midnight. Pope Sixtus III introduced this all-night vigil custom to the Western world at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in 430.



It's significance is based on the personal value of forgiveness whereby people eagerly await the coming of the Saviour.



### Read or chant the announcement of the Nativity of Our Lord from the Roman Martyrology

You can find this text, which is most appropriately sung or chanted on Christmas Eve, at the website of the U.S. Catholic bishops ([uscbb.org](http://uscbb.org)).

"The announcement of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord from the Roman Martyrology draws upon Sacred Scripture to declare in a formal way the birth of Christ," the USCCB explains. *"It begins with creation and relates the birth of the Lord to the major events and personages of sacred and secular history."*



### Spread the Good News

The message of the Gospel and the call of the Church is clear: fully celebrating Christmas means reaching out to the poor, the oppressed and all those in need of our help. Seek out opportunities to help others throughout the whole season.

- Pray for Christians being persecuted around the world.
- Consider year-end gifts to charitable organisations that help those in need. As a family, let your kids help choose a recipient or pool your resources for a family or organisation in your community.
- Spend time bringing cheer to those who are alone or in need of companionship.



### Mark the feasts of the martyrs

Right on the heels of Christmas, the Church gives us a trio of martyrs' feasts: the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen (Dec 26); St. John the Evangelist (Dec 27) and the Holy Innocents (Dec 28).

These feasts remind us that with the birth of Christ, we are called to follow him. Often, that means losing our lives in one way or another.



### Do a family "examen" of the year

Use the format of the Ignatian Daily Examen to do an "examen" of your life in the past year. If praying the examen is too formal, go through your calendar month by month, reflecting, with a humble and thankful heart, on the various events and how you can see Christ's hand in them.

### Celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family and Bless your home and household on Epiphany



This is a good reminder of the special importance of family ties. It ties up with the blessing of the home and household on Epiphany, a time-honoured tradition for many Catholics, symbolising an open invitation and desire for the Lord's presence and blessing over the household throughout the upcoming year.



### Celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

This marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It's also the perfect time to remember your baptism and reflect on what that means to you.



# Ordination To The Sacred Order Of Presbyters: Friar Bartolo Maria, OCD



Congratulations to Friar Bartolo Maria, OCD, "son" of our Parish, who was called to the Order of the Presbyterate on 14 Dec at Church of Saints Peter and Paul by His Eminence William Cardinal Goh. May God's blessings be upon him as he begins his new ministry. Here are some highlights of the Ordination.



Photo: VITA Images



Looking for more Information?  
visit [www.sfxchurch.sg](http://www.sfxchurch.sg)

## Mass Times

### WEEKDAY MASSES

**Mon - Thu:**  
6.30pm

**Tue - Sat:**  
6.30am

**Fri:**  
8pm

### WEEKEND MASSES

**Sat:** 5.30pm

**Sun:** 7am, 9am,  
11am, 5.30pm  
(There is currently no  
Confession before Mass)

### MASS ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

9am

### CONFESSION

Contact Parish Office to  
make an appointment.

**Fri:**  
4pm - 6pm

**Sat:**  
10am - 12pm

## Opening Hours

### MAIN GATE

**Mon - Sun:**  
5am - 11pm

Closed on Public Holidays  
after 9am Mass

### BACK GATE

**Mon - Sun:**  
5am - 1am

Closed on Public Holidays  
after 9am Mass

### PARISH OFFICE

**Mon - Sat:**  
9.30am - 6.30pm

**Sun:** 8.30am - 1pm  
Closed on Public Holidays

### ADORATION ROOM

**Mon - Sun:**  
7am - 11pm

Closed on Public Holidays

### LIBRARY

**Sun:** 8am - 1pm

### COLUMBARIUM

**Mon - Fri:**  
10am - 6pm

**Sat - Sun:**  
8.30am - 6pm

Closed on Public Holidays

## ANOINTING OF THE SICK



The sacrament can be administered to any Catholic awaiting serious surgery, suffering from serious illness or weakened by old age. Anointing may be given before admission for the anticipated medical procedure. Contact the Parish Office to request for a priest. In emergencies, priests of the church nearest to the hospital can be contacted.

## INFANT BAPTISM



Spiritual preparation is held on the last Friday of every odd month. Baptism is held on the first/second Sunday of the following month. For registration, please refer to our website.

## FUNERAL



Please check with the Parish Office for priest availability and Mass timing before confirming the timing at the crematorium. For prayers at the wake, please contact the Parish Office.

## MARRIAGE



Contact the Parish Office 12 months before your intended date to book the church premises and ensure that your presiding priest is able to make that date.

## MASS OFFERING



Mass offering envelopes are available outside the Parish Office and outside JPPII Hall. Submit your envelopes at least two weeks in advance of your intended date. Please write the names clearly, and in block letters.

## VOLUNTEER & SHARE YOUR GIFTS!

If you're interested in content curation and design layout, contact [mmm@sfxchurch.sg](mailto:mmm@sfxchurch.sg)