

December 2018

ST MARY'S
ACADEMY

FAITH COMMUNITY JUSTICE RESPECT

Faith Walk

ST. MARY'S ACADEMY CAMPUS MINISTRY



Orans Theotokos
Mother of God Praying

Orthodox Icon

What is Advent? By Justin Holcomb



“For many unfamiliar with the liturgical year, there may be some confusion surrounding the meaning of the Advent season. Some people may know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and think that it serves as an anticipation of Christ’s birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is part of the story, but there’s more to Advent.

The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God’s incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration; originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the “coming” they had in mind was not Christ’s first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming as the judge of the world. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ’s first coming at Christmas.

Today, the season of Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. At that time, the new Christian year begins with the twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, which lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6. (Advent begins on Sunday that falls between November 27th and December 3rd each year.)”

<https://www.christianity.com/christian-life/christmas/what-is-advent.html>

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.



**Praying for an End
to
Gun Violence**

Loretto and SMA Praying and Acting to End Gun Violence

The Loretto Community again this year invites us to pray in silence on the first Monday of the month (or second if we’re off school) for an end to gun violence. This call to prayer began in 2015 when the Loretto Committee on Peace felt prayer was most fitting as public statements, lobbying, letter writing on gun control had not brought about change. The committee’s hope is that our prayer may bring wisdom and guidance to this important issue.

You are most welcome to join us in the Oratory in the High School at 8:15 for whatever minutes work for you. Or take a few minutes of quiet wherever you are. The last Monday for the first semester is: December 3. If you have questions, please contact Sister Regina at rdrey@smanet.org.

Our Lady of Guadalupe December 12



Our Lady of Guadalupe
By Fernando Sayan Polo

"According to tradition, the Virgin Mary appeared to an indigenous man named Juan Diego on Dec. 9, 1531. The Virgin asked that a shrine in her name be built on the spot where she appeared, Tepeyac Hill, which is now in a suburb of Mexico City. Juan Diego told the bishop about the apparition and request, but he didn't believe him and demanded a sign before he would approve construction of the church.

On Dec. 12, the Virgin reappeared to Juan Diego and ordered him to collect roses in his tilmátlí, a kind of cloak. Juan took the roses to the bishop and when he opened his cloak, dozens of roses fell to the floor and revealed the image of the Virgen of Guadalupe imprinted on the inside. The tilmátlí with the image is on display in the Basilica de Guadalupe.

Her image has been used throughout Mexican history, not only as a religious icon but also as a sign of patriotism. Miguel Hidalgo used her image when he launched his revolt against the Spanish in 1810. She could be seen on the rebels' banners and their battle cry was "Long Live Our Lady of Guadalupe."

Emiliano Zapata also carried a banner of the Virgen of Guadalupe when he entered Mexico City in 1914.

Pope John Paul II canonized Juan Diego in 2002, making him the first indigenous American saint, and declared Our Lady of Guadalupe the patroness of the Americas."

For more, visit https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/12/virgen-de-guadalupe_n_4434582.html

A Prayer for Refugees Catholic Relief Services

God of our Wandering Ancestors,

Long have we known
That your heart is with the refugee:
That you were born into time
In a family of refugees
Fleeing violence in their homeland,
Who then gathered up their hungry child
And fled into alien country.
Their cry, your cry, resounds through the ages: "Will
you let me in?"

Give us hearts that break open
When our brothers and sisters turn to us
with that same cry.

Then surely all these things will follow:
Ears will no longer turn deaf to their voices.
Eyes will see a moment for grace instead of a threat.
Tongues will not be silenced but will instead
advocate.
And hands will reach out—
working for peace in their homeland,
working for justice in the lands where they seek safe
haven.

Lord, protect all refugees in their travels.
May they find a friend in me
And so make me worthy
Of the refuge I have found in you.
Amen.



Refugees: La Sagrada Familia
Kelly Latimore

The Spiritual Practice of “You”

By Frederick and Mary Ann Brussat

The Basic Practice

“Each of us is a work-in-progress. The spiritual practice of **you** challenges us to become all we are meant to be as God's beloved sons and daughters. We are, after all, co-creators of the Great Work of the universe. By attuning ourselves to what in different traditions has been called the image of God, the everlasting soul, or the higher self, we are able to fulfill our mission in life.

All the world's religions refer to the civil war that rages inside us when self-absorption meets self-regard and selfishness clashes with selflessness. The spiritual life requires that we think enough of ourselves to believe we can serve others without putting ourselves above them. It's sometimes a tricky balance to maintain. Begin with what is right in front of you. Have both pride and humility. Be assertive and yielding. You are much more and much less than you probably think you are. Relax. This, the Creator reminds us, is good.

Why This Practice May Be For You

Oftentimes, we are our own worst enemies. We commit acts of sabotage by doubting our own competence. Because of self-loathing, we close off avenues that could lead to personal growth. Due to feelings of inferiority, we put ourselves down, and because of grandiosity, others. Aiming for perfection, we are not satisfied with anything we do. None of these approaches are part of the spiritual practice of you which banishes “Woe is me” and “I am the master of the universe” mood swings. The ideal is to live with both our strengths and our weaknesses. The spiritual practice of you is the prescription to help you find and express your authentic self.

Daily Cue, Reminder, Vow, Blessing

- Looking in the mirror is my cue to practice “YOU” and cherish all parts of myself.
- When I see someone excel at something, I am reminded that I am called to fulfill my destiny.
- Whenever I start to sabotage myself with self-deprecation, I vow to lift up my spirit with the spiritual practice of YOU.
- Blessed is the Sacred Parent who rejoices when we become all we are meant to be.”

<https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/alphabet/view/38/you>



Todd Davidson

Visiting Thomas Merton's Hermitage at the Abbey of Gethsemani

By Regina Drey SL

Last April participants from the Loretto-sponsored schools (El Paso, St. Louis and SMA*) attending the Teacher Immersion at the Motherhouse had the rare opportunity to visit Thomas Merton's (known as Father Louis in the monastery) hermitage on the grounds of the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani and hear about his life and work through the eyes of Father Michael Casagram, a friend of my friend Mary Swain SL.

The opportunity came with Mary telling Father Michael our group would be attending Vespers, the evening prayer, at Gethsemani. He checked the schedule and seeing the hermitage was not being used that day (a rare piece of good fortune and blessing as the monks use the space for retreats), he offered to accompany us there. His offer was far more than that.

Father Michael's serene demeanor mixed with gentle humor, stories of Merton and his own life at Gethsemani, and his deep spirituality indeed made the time memorable. The place itself was memorable too. The hermitage is still mostly unchanged from the five years Merton stayed for short periods of time to the five years when he lived there permanently. It was from there that Merton left in December 1986 for an interfaith conference in Bangkok, Thailand, of monks of the Christian and Eastern traditions. He died there on December 10 at age 53 of an accidental electrocution.

The small cinder block structure is chilly even on an early spring afternoon. The scent of a comforting fire lingers and it doesn't take long to imagine Merton in his main room, sitting in a simple straight back chair writing at a large wooden table lit by a metal gooseneck lamp and nearby floor lamp, often seen in old photo are still in the room. A few old rocking chairs also appear in the photos and one can only imagine the conversation when political as well as spiritual leaders joined Merton to discuss race relations, war, and interfaith dialog among other issues of the day.

Mary Luke Tobin SL was among those who visited with Merton, who often came to the Motherhouse in the late 1950s and early 1960s, give lectures the young sisters on prayer and commitment. Mary Swain SL assembled the lectures, reflections and some of their letters in "Hidden in the Same Mystery: Thomas Merton and Loretto."

Visiting Merton's hermitage was an unforgettable spiritual experience. He wrote and prayed at a time when the world was suffering, and gave us words I believe speak to us today: "May we all grow in grace and peace, and not neglect the silence that is printed in the center of our being. It will not fail us. It is more than silence." (From a letter to Amiya Chakravarty and his students at Smith College, April 13, 1967, included in The Hidden Ground of Love.)

*The SMA attendees were Pamela Applegate, Bill Barrett, Michelle Hayden, Zac Hood; Regina Drey SL represented Loretto.)



Thomas Merton
1915 - 1968



Fr. Michael talking about Merton



The Hermitage



The Chapel in the Hermitage



Looking for Merton's Grave

World Migration Report 2018

UN Migration Agency

International Migrants Day is December 18, 2018

“Today, just as happens every day, many thousands of people throughout the world will be setting off on journeys in the hope of being able to forge safe and meaningful lives in a new country. Some will be carrying passports containing visas issued by the country to which they are heading, many having gone through visa application processes to secure the right to start a new phase of their lives in another country. These people will most likely be able to choose many aspects of this new phase: their new job or vocation; the city in which they intend to live; the mode of travel they will take; the timing and length of their journey; with whom they go; and how long they intend to stay. They should be considered the luckier ones, and more likely than not, they will be citizens of developed countries.

Today, just as happens every day, many others will be setting off on journeys they know will be long and dangerous – so much so that they may allow themselves the realization that they may be abused, exploited or even die en route. These people will most likely be facing considerable uncertainty about the journey ahead and, if they do make it to their destination, what awaits them in their new country. Many will not have visas in their passports and some won’t even have a passport or travel document. They may know in general terms how to get to various places along the way; on whom they can rely to help them; how much different legs of the journey might cost; and the modes of travel they will need to take. Equally, many things will remain unclear. These are not the luckier ones, and more likely than not, they will be from developing countries and fragile States, some having had their lives up-ended by civil conflict, persecution or various other forms of disaster.

While our introductory remarks are squarely rooted in the realities of the day, migration is a constant in human history and has long been related to livelihoods, culture and disastrous events, as well as exile. Central to any discussion on migration are the people who migrate – who they are, how they migrate, and why they migrate – which is often deeply connected to the circumstances in which they find themselves and the degree of choice they have in contemplating and undertaking migration. There is increasing recognition of the importance in better understanding how migrants contemplate migration options (including not migrating) and undertake migration journeys. This recognition is in part fueled by the increasing visibility of dangerous and sometimes deadly migration journeys.”

For the entire report, visit: http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf



Poetry Corner

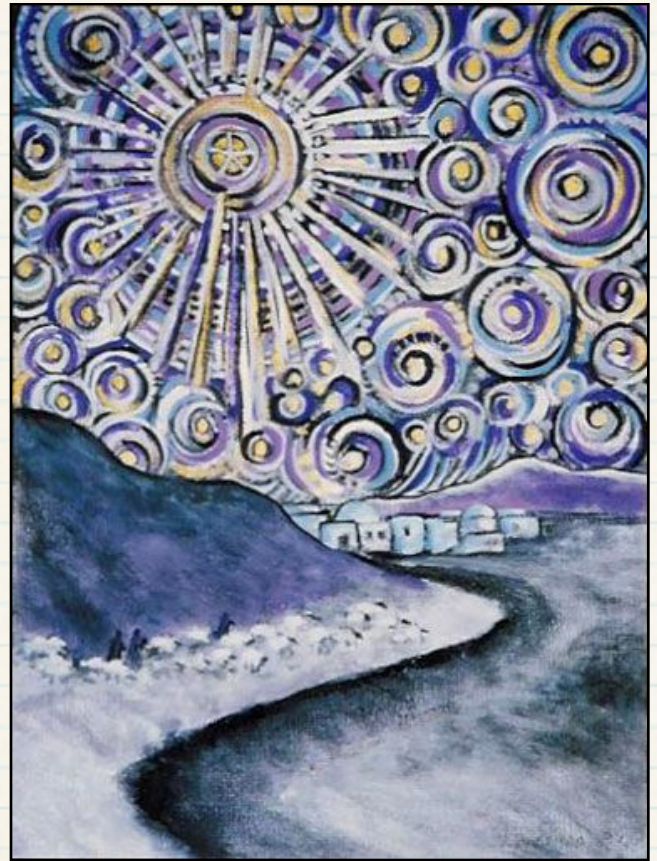
Advent

By Patrick Kavanagh

We have tested and tasted too much, lover-
Through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder.
But here in the Advent-darkened room
Where the dry black bread and the sugarless tea
Of penance will charm back the luxury
Of a child's soul, we'll return to Doom
The knowledge we stole but could not use.

And the newness that was in every stale thing
When we looked at it as children: the spirit-shocking
Wonder in a black slanting Ulster hill
Or the prophetic astonishment in the tedious talking
Of an old fool will awake for us and bring
You and me to the yard gate to watch the whins
And the bog-holes, cart-tracks, old stables where Time begins.

O after Christmas we'll have no need to go searching
For the difference that sets an old phrase burning-
We'll hear it in the whispered argument of a churning
Or in the streets where the village boys are lurching.
And we'll hear it among decent men too
Who barrow dung in gardens under trees,
Wherever life pours ordinary plenty.
Won't we be rich, my love and I, and
God we shall not ask for reason's payment,
The why of heart-breaking strangeness in dreeping hedges
Nor analyse God's breath in common statement.
We have thrown into the dust-bin the clay-minted wages
Of pleasure, knowledge and the conscious hour-
And Christ comes with a January flower.



Prayer Opportunities

-Parents and Faculty/Staff: First Wednesday of the month at 9:15 in the HS Oratory

-Prayer Intention Boxes - Near the Prayer Wall in the HS, MS Lobby and LS Lobby

-Prayer Wall in the High School: Open to All!

-Send your prayer requests via the SMA website under "Resources," "All Academy Resources," "Prayer Requests." Or email smaprayergroup@gmail.com. All prayers are handled in confidentiality, and may be submitted anonymously.

HAPPY DECEMBER!

St. Mary's Academy is a school that believes the fundamental message of God as taught and lived by Jesus, to love without bounds.

Together we continue to build and live the Loretto School values of faith, community, justice and respect!

*Paula Lee, Ph.D.
Campus Minister
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DECEMBER 2018

Interfaith and Justice Calendar

*The event begins the evening of the previous day
 **Exact date may vary between traditions and communities
 Adapted from: www.interfaithcalendar.org and www.adl.org

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						¹ World AIDS Day
² First Sunday of Advent Christian	³ Int'l. Day of Persons with Disabilities Chanukah 12/3-10 Jewish	⁴	⁵	⁶ Feast of St. Nicholas	⁷ Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (1941)	⁸ Bodhi Day Buddhist Feast of the Immaculate Conception Catholic
⁹ Second Sunday of Advent Christian	¹⁰ Human Rights Day Anniversary of the Death of Thomas Merton (1915-1968)	¹¹	¹² Our Lady of Guadalupe Christian	¹³ Feast of St. Lucy Patronness of Blindness and Eye Disorders	¹⁴ Anniversary of Sandy Hook Shooting (2012)	¹⁵
¹⁶ Third Sunday of Advent Christian	¹⁷ Birthday of Pope Francis (1936)	¹⁸ Int'l. Migrants Day	¹⁹	²⁰ Int'l. Human Solidarity Day	²¹ Winter Solstice	²²
²³ Fourth Sunday of Advent Christian	²⁴ Christmas Eve	²⁵ Christmas Day	²⁶ Kwanzaa 12/26-1/1	²⁷	²⁸ Feast of the Holy Innocents	²⁹ Wounded Knee Day
³⁰ Feast of the Holy Family Catholic	³¹					

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 Faith Community Justice World