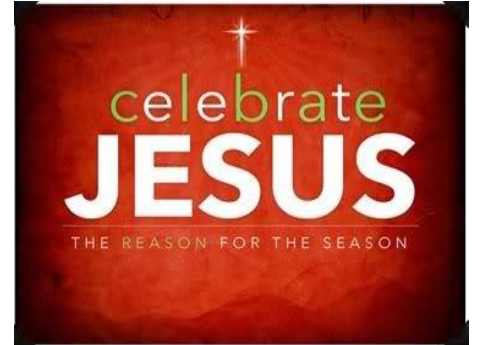


**St. Hilary
Men's Group
12.14.2013**

The Reason for the Season is the Best Gift of All - Jesus

As we near the time of Christmas, we see the decorations going up...the people madly shopping for gifts...the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season. Now is the time to stop and reflect just why we really celebrate this time. As Christians, we are the only ones who know the real meaning of Christmas and why it is a time of celebration and what that celebration means to all who will believe. If there were no Jesus, there would be no Christmas.



Pray that Jesus may be born anew in the manger of our hearts. The Lord hears our prayers and answers them. Scripture has told us this from day one. Prayer holds our focus on the fact that Jesus Christ came to dwell among us. He is worthy of our prayer. He is the One who came to us that we might be saved. Let us make Advent a time for us to come to him...and more so, to touch people's lives as a Blessing!

Let us come to know God more through Modern Comment, Holy Scripture and our Catechism.

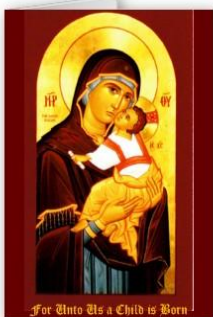
Matthew 6:19-21; 31-34

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.



But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.



1 Thessalonians 5:16-23

Brothers: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord

Catechism

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When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present the ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the John the Baptist's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

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Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family. Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest. The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal
And the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.
The angels and shepherds praise him
And the magi advance with the star,
For you are born for us,
Little Child, God eternal!



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To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God". Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us.

Christmas is the mystery of this "marvelous exchange":
Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.

Christmas Presents, Traditions & Indescribable Gifts

Christmas Gifts

Truth be told, typically the gifts we give at Christmas are given because the recipients of those gifts have some relationship to us. We buy a gift for spouse, children and family because we have a family relationship to us. Likewise for those we work with or others perhaps because they bought a gift for us last year and we feel obligated. On the other hand, we don't give gifts to the person who has been slandering our name or the angry neighbor who never has a kind word to say.

Jesus is the ultimate Gift because of the grace by which He was given. This is what makes His Gift so special. He doesn't owe us a thing. The apostle Paul says something remarkable, "But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

God gives His Gift to us, not because He feels obligated to do so, but because His love is so overwhelming.

Christmas is all about "The tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace." (Luke 1:78-79). The birth of Jesus is a majestic sunrise after a night of darkness providing the way of salvation to men and women who were previously separated from God.

Origin of Traditions

John wrote, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

When we consider the meaning of these words so easily lost in the hustle and bustle of the season, we realize the reason we celebrate Christmas is God's ultimate Gift to man, His Son Jesus Christ.

As the bells ring out the joys of Christmas, we need to remember that God the Father was the One who began the giving traditions we enjoy today. The world's best Christmas was the very first Christmas when God gifted mankind with our Savior Jesus Christ.

God became one of us...as a baby boy with a tiny smile, two ears, ten fingers and toes. Once we see him for who he really is, we are never the same.



The Unspeakable Gift

Do you remember the best Christmas gift you ever received? Was it your first toy car, race track, baseball mitt, bike or Xbox? Mine came about 50 years ago when I was 7. I remember it like it was yesterday. It was in a big box and contained a white safari hunting hat, big game toy hunting rifle with scope, canteen and compass. I first spotted that rifle earlier that summer and ached for it. I dreamt about the day I would sight a deer in the scope and pull the trigger.

A gift can be so filled with pleasant memories and emotions that we could never put words into what it means to us. A gift can be so high priced that it staggers our imagination. However, note how every man-made gift is describable by someone. And every human gift, even the best ones like my prized big-game hunting rifle, is only temporary. One day, maybe sooner than later, our gifts wear out, break or we outgrow them.

However, the gift of Jesus Christ is not merely “unspeakable” but is beyond words and lasts forever. The greatest gift ever given is the very first gift of Christmas – the person of Jesus. When God gave his one and only Son, He gave the world a priceless, indescribable present whose value will not diminish, tarnish or be lost over time.

Questions to Focus on:

#1 Do you have a special Christmas Story or Tradition you would like to share?

#2 What are your special memories of Christmas Past?

#3 How can we pass along the gift of Christmas?



A Man who never quits is Never Defeated.



Calendar

12/28/2013	Leadership Meeting	8 AM Sacred Heart Library
1/11/2014	Men's Group	7 AM Mass
1/25/2014	Leadership Meeting	8 AM Sacred Heart Library
2/8/2014	Men's Group	7 AM Mass
2/22/2013	Leadership Meeting	8 AM Sacred Heart Library
3/8/2014	Men's Group	7 AM Mass
3/15/2013	Leadership Meeting	8 AM Sacred Heart Library
3/22/2014	CMFNEO Conference	Villa Angela-St. Joseph H.S
4/12/2014	Men's Group	7 AM Mass

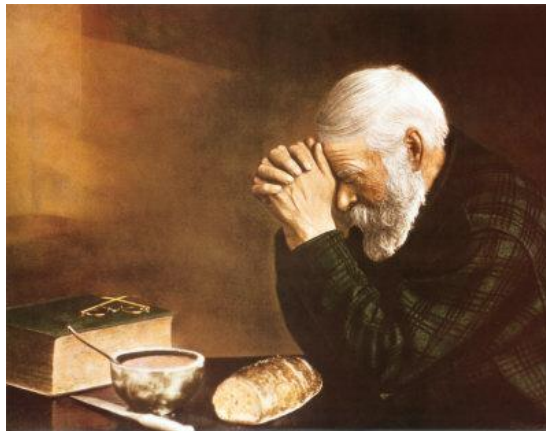
**CMFNEO Annual Conference
SATURDAY MARCH 22, 2014**

ACTION PLAN: This week I will draw closer to Jesus in my life by:

- † Seeking God in prayer and being quiet in His presence.
- † Asking for Forgiveness in prayer for the times I have been Unfaithful to God.
- † Asking Jesus for help to accept His forgiveness, so that I can forgive others.
- † Thanking him for my life and all the people and things in it.
- † Paying more attention to Blessing those in my life as God intends.
- † Asking Jesus for help in becoming a better servant.

A Prayer to Bless One's Life

Lord, I love you and need you, Come into my heart, and Bless me, my family, my home, and my friends, in the Sweet and Holy Name of Jesus Christ. Amen



Pray Latte! 1 Thessalonians 5:17

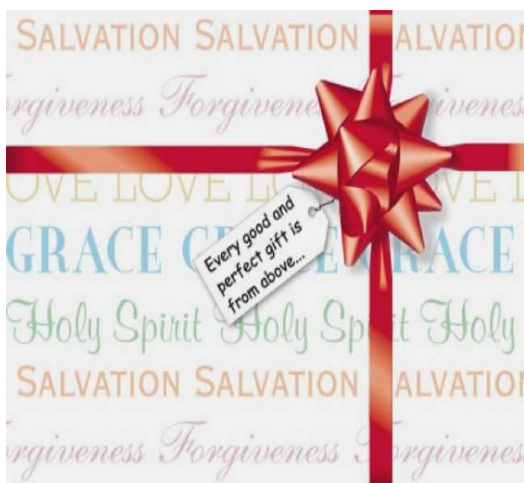


Christmas Novena

Hail and blessed be the hour and moment when the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary at midnight in Bethlehem in the piercing cold. At that hour vouchsafe, oh my God, to hear my prayers and grant my desires through the merits of our Savior Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother.

Amen

Say this 15 times each day from November 30th through Christmas Eve



Lord, God and Savior, by your love you draw me to yourself, forgive me, and fill me with every good thing, not withholding even the gift of your most beloved son.

Send forth your Holy Spirit to guide me in your path. Make me worthy of your love, and teach me how to forgive as you forgave. Amen