

## Be Strong and Fear Not

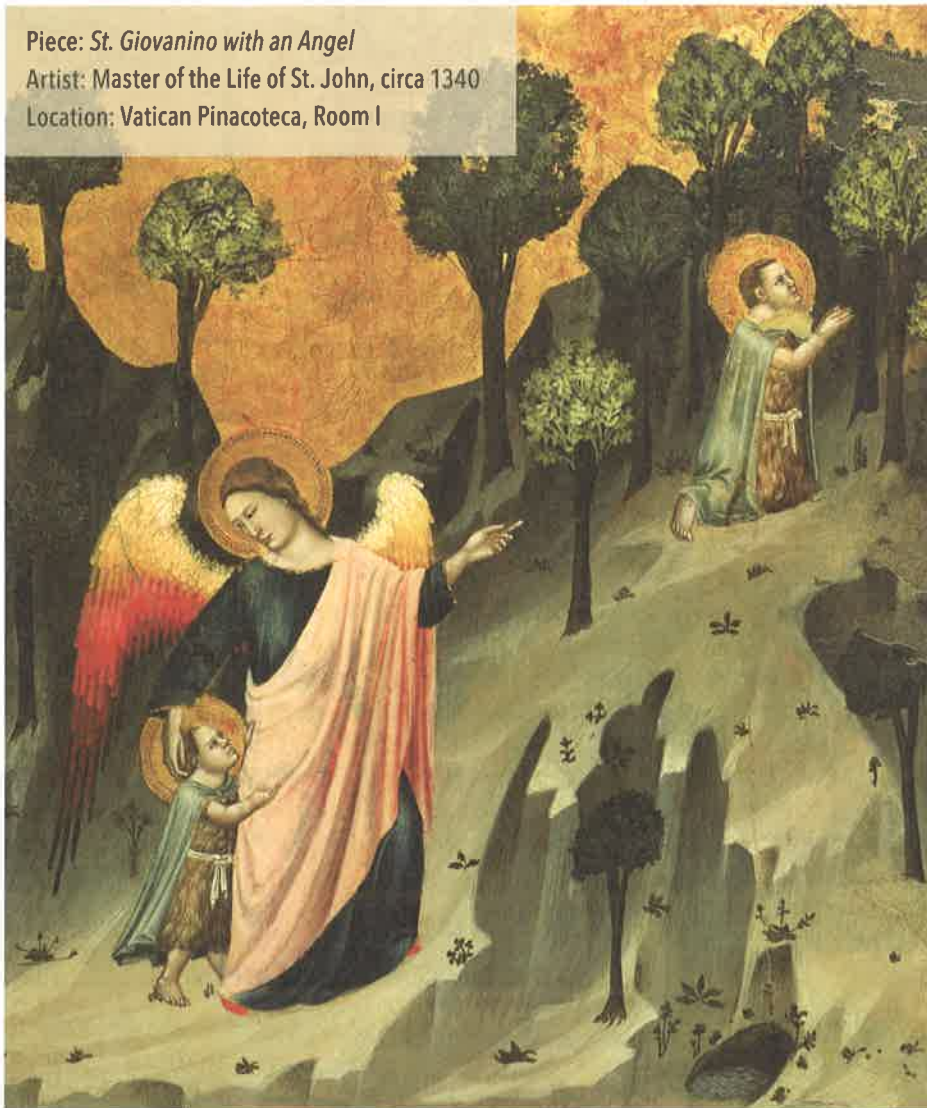
John came to announce a savior, but in his difficult imprisonment, he and his disciples began to wonder if the one he announced was truly the one. It is easy to doubt when difficulty comes our way and life doesn't treat us as we think we deserve.

In this painting, a young John the Baptist is accompanied by an angel who points up the hill. John is shown kneeling in prayer, referencing the months he spent in the desert preparing himself as well as preaching conversion. Even with this long and fruitful preparation, John's heart is tempted to doubt. Yes, even saints struggle.

John sends his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the Messiah. It does us much good to bring our concerns and doubts to Jesus directly! Jesus responds as he often does. Rather than just answer, "I am he"—which could easily be considered an empty claim—he invites them to look at the evidence. He fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 35:5: "The eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf be opened," the poor shall find a new reason to hope.

Jesus' mission is to change lives and to save us from the blindness of egoism, the deafness of a hardened heart, and the closed mind that cannot accept the other. He is the savior of those who let themselves be saved.

Piece: *St. Giovanino with an Angel*  
Artist: Master of the Life of St. John, circa 1340  
Location: Vatican Pinacoteca, Room I



Saint James' exhortation could have been meant for John the Baptist or anyone who finds it hard to persevere in trusting and following Jesus: "You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand" (5:8).

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

### *For Reflection*

*What doubts about God arise in my heart?*

*How do I deal with these moments of uncertainty?*

*"Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"  
(Matthew 11:3).*

# IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH

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 Rev. Leo S. Stajkowski.....In Residence  
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 Parish Preschool .....610 404-8645  
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## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - DECEMBER 11, 2016

*The Sanctuary Lamp Burns In Memory of Josephine Peter & John Bogus*

### ★ ★ MASS INTENTIONS ★ ★

SAT	5:15 PM	LIVING & DECEASED PARISHIONERS	THU	7:00 PM	PAULINE DETTORE
SUN	7:30 AM	MARY DOLAN	FRI	7:30 AM	SEVERINE PROCK & ELIZABETH RUSSONIELLO
	9:00 AM	CHARLES WAGNER	SAT	5:15 PM	LIVING & DECEASED PARISHIONERS
	11:00 AM	ANTONIO BARLETTA	SUN	7:30 AM	DEC'D MEMBERS OF THE EVANS FAMILY
MON		<b>No MASS</b>		9:00 AM	ANGELO, MICHAEL & DORIS BASCELLI
TUE	7:00 PM	LAVERNE T. WEBER		11:00 AM	DEC'D MEMBERS OF THE OTT FAMILY
WED	7:30 AM	EVELYN HAIGHT			

### NEXT WEEK AT A GLANCE

**SCRIP:** Lukes **5:15pm** McNamara **7:30am** Collura **9:00am** McCauley **11:00am** DeFalco

<u>DAY</u>	<u>MASS</u>	<u>LECTOR</u>	<u>COMMENTATOR</u>	<u>ALTAR SERVERS</u>
SAT	5:15pm	Sherry McCollum	Ann Marie Arbo	Elly Smithson, Jordan and Lauren Yerger
SUN	7:30am	Dan Sweeney	Pam Amos	Mason and Morgan Cambria, Samantha Reitnour
	9:00am	Barbara Giordano	Tim Stewart	Ande and Ethan Kraycik, Aiden Reber
	11:00am	Becky Shemanski	Rhonda Ouimet	Michael DiScala, Carson Endy, Will Gray

### ***Second collection next week is the Monthly Collection***

Dear Parishioners,  
 As we begin the Holy season of Advent in preparation for Christmas, I invite you to set time aside to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confessions are heard every Saturday from 4:00 to 5:00pm.  
 Our Advent Parish Penance Service will be held on Monday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm. On that occasion, visiting priests will be available to hear confessions and impart God's pardon and peace. As always, be assured of my continued prayers for you and your family.  
 Monsignor John McCann

Remember in your prayers the sick of our parish: Marco Fiato, Bryan Fiato, John & Margaret Kakas, Maryanne Prentice, Tracy Seasholtz, Delores Woy, Alice Arantowicz, Yolanda Marino, Ann Schlott, Kathy Patrick, Joseph & Susan McCorristin, Mary & Phil Morici, Margaret Maccarone, Father Joseph Campion, Dan Casciano, Paisley Stout, Jake Maccarone, William Janda, Madge Butto, Roseann Malcom, Doris Slater, Joan Cronin, Rita Conrad, Rose Osorio, Tony Williams, Dolores McCullough, Steve Mammarella, Gloria Richards, Jennifer Pinti, Jane Falcone, Fannie Hunter, Andrew Martin, Mary Okuniewski, Paul Bringenberg, Joseph Kolenda, Kenneth Barth, Dominic Strock, Bob Hocker, Mike DiScala, Keith Kienle, Tom Kirchner, Norma Nanni, Ralph Gullo, Nancy Iezzi, Sonny Motta, Joseph Shevenock, Jr., Mildred Mattassa and Ronald Kryman

Pray for the recently deceased: Jim Cote, Suzanne P. Metzker  
 HOSPITAL VISITATIONS: Monsignor McCann, Deacon Hiryak, Deacon Bardi and Deacon Giordano visit our parishioners who are hospitalized, in nursing homes or homebound regularly. If you or a member of your family is hospitalized, please call the parish office at 610-582-2411.

## **THIS WEEK AT ICC:**

<b>Sun</b>	<b>12/11</b>	<b>Women's Society Cookie Sale</b>
<b>Mon</b>	<b>12/12</b>	<b>7:30pm RCIA</b>
<b>Tues</b>	<b>12/13</b>	<b>7pm Greif Sharing Group</b> <b>7:30pm Bell Choir</b>
<b>Thurs</b>	<b>12/15</b>	<b>7:30pm Adult Choir</b>
<b>Sat</b>	<b>12/17</b>	<b>4-5pm Confession</b>

## **WHAT'S HAPPENING**

Please note there will be No Mass on Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **ICA HSO 12 Days of Christmas Raffle**

**December 12 - \$200 Amazon Gift Card**

**December 13 - \$225 Target Gift Card**

**December 14 - \$275 Visa & \$75 Texas Roadhouse Gift Cards**

**December 15-\$300 Amazon&\$75 Texas Roadhouse Gift Cards**

**December 16 - \$400 Visa & \$75 Texas Roadhouse Gift cards**

**Tickets \$5 each or \$20 for five.**

**Tickets are available at Social Sunday and in the school office. Winners are announced at [www.icahso.org](http://www.icahso.org).**

*Women's Society Annual Christmas Cookie Sale is before and after all Masses December 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>. If you enjoy baking cookies, we would love to include your favorites in our beautiful arrangements. We also accept cookies marked, packed and sold by the dozen. Please consider baking an extra batch or two to share with us. Cookies for assortments must be dropped in the social hall 9-11am on December 10<sup>th</sup>. We also accept donations before and after all Masses.*

Bereavement Grief Support Group will meet December 13<sup>th</sup>, 7-8pm in the Parish Office Building, lower level. Please enter from the back across from the playground. Our group offers an opportunity to work through the grieving process with the help and support of others who have experienced this difficult journey. Info call Pat at 610-775-1892 or Toni at 610-404-1389.

*During the holy season of Advent, there will be a book drive donation box in the narthex. New and gently used children's books ranging from pre-school/early reader books through middle school reading levels will be accepted. The books will be donated to Commonwealth Catholic Charities and distributed to families with children who have been displaced from their homelands because of war, violence and terrorism. For more information or any questions, please contact Erin at [efhannon33@gmail.com](mailto:efhannon33@gmail.com).*

**OPLAKTY**, Blessed Christmas Wafers, are available in the narthex. This centuries old custom finds its origins in the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly Slovakia, Poland and Lithuania. The breaking and sharing of the Christmas wafer at the holy supper on Christmas Eve was a sign of friendship, love and forgiveness among family and friends. At the holy supper an extra place setting was placed on the table symbolizing that Jesus Christ was the unseen Guest in the home. As you prepare to celebrate Christmas this year, be mindful of the many customs and traditions which remind us of the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior.

### **Simbang Gabi Christmas Novena Masses:**

Holy Rosary Church, 3<sup>rd</sup> & Franklin Sts., Reading - December 7-15 at 7pm – Bring your favorite dish to share for our party on the last night. **ALL ARE WELCOME!**

## **CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE 2016**

### **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

#### **PENANCE SERVICE**

Monday, December 19 - 7:00pm

### **CHRISTMAS MASSES**

#### **CHRISTMAS EVE**

Saturday, December 24 - 4:00pm, 7:00pm, Midnight

#### **CHRISTMAS DAY**

Sunday, December 25 - 9:00am, 11:00am

### **NEW YEAR'S MASSES**

#### **NEW YEARS EVE**

Saturday, December 31 - 5:15pm

#### **NEW YEAR'S DAY – SOLEMNITY OF MARY**

Sunday, January 1 - 7:30, 9:00am, 11:00am

**2017 IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CALENDARS** are now available in the narthex. We are most grateful to the Dengler Funeral Home for providing these beautiful religious art calendars to our parishioners.

### ***Immaculate Conception Academy is enrolling for the 2016-17 school year!***

If you have a student in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we welcome you to visit and see what an Immaculate Conception Academy education can do for your child!

#### **ICA offers a full day Kindergarten Program.**

Kindergarten students must have been 5 by 10/15/16 and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students aged 6 by 10/15/16.

**Bishop's Transfer Grants** are available for any public, private or charter school student who transfers into Immaculate Conception Academy grades 1-7. **These grants are \$1,500 over two years!** (\$1,000 for the first year and \$500 for the second).

**Aftercare is available.**

**Please contact Adele Reilly, Advancement Director at 610-404-8645 or [adele.reilly@icaknights.org](mailto:adele.reilly@icaknights.org) for more information or to schedule a tour!**

**Emmanuel: An Eternal Gift for Us Today** – Immaculate Conception will host a special Christmas concert on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 7pm. Join us as we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany with favorite carols and inspired readings for the whole family. This free concert will be performed by talented local musicians, including Sandy Bach on the organ and piano, the Bella Musica String Quartet, Pat DeWald on the flute, and Jaylynn Ritter on the trumpet. Refreshments will be served afterwards in the social hall. Come and enjoy some homemade wassail, egg nog, and other tasty treats. A free will offering will be taken up to benefit the Soup Kitchen at the Kennedy House in Reading.

*Does a member of your family have Same-Sex Attraction? Are you having difficulty dealing with the issue? ENCOURAGE is a ministry in the Catholic Church giving faithful witness to Catholic teaching with compassion. Group meetings are held monthly in the Allentown Diocese. For more information call 610-334-9147 or [www.couragerc.org](http://www.couragerc.org).*

## Calendar

### Monday

December 12

*Our Lady of Guadalupe*

Zec 2:14-17 or

Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab

Lk 1:26-38

or Lk 1:39-47

### Tuesday

December 13

*St. Lucy,*

*Virgin and Martyr*

Zep 3:1-2, 9-13

Mt 21:28-32

### Wednesday

December 14

*St. John of the Cross,*

*Priest and*

*Doctor of the Church*

Is 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25

Lk 7:18b-23

### Thursday

December 15

*Advent Weekday*

Is 54:1-10

Lk 7:24-30

### Friday

December 16

*Advent Weekday*

Is 56:1-3a, 6-8

Jn 5:33-36

### Saturday

December 17

*Advent Weekday*

Gn 49:2, 8-10

Mt 1:1-17

### Sunday

December 18

*Fourth Sunday  
of Advent*

Is 7:10-14

Rom 1:1-7

Mt 1:18-24

# Dear Padre,

**When I was younger, my faith was very important; but lately I don't feel that closeness to God. Is this a crisis of faith?**

**H**ow has your life changed since childhood? Do you feel, react, and appreciate things today as you did then? Spirituality is an ordinary part of human experience, and I hope you discover that the God of your youth, although remembered fondly, is not the God of your adult experience.

Many adults discover that their understanding, decisions, and behaviors have expanded and matured. In the interplay of the demands of society and culture, we are forced to grow and develop. What worked for us as a child of five is not usually what we would choose today.

In the spiritual journey, we are not so much forced but invited to grow and mature. Some people miss the invitation and get stuck in a rut.

They may cling to childlike images of God and still expect such images to serve them well. The consequences of this are not easily recognized until moments of crisis or dramatic change, when the result is often reflected by the question, "Where is God?"

So it's not so much a crisis of faith but a realization of the desire to pursue (again) the spiritual journey. Begin to relate to God as an adult. Use your skills and knowledge to build a new relationship with God, the Church, and the community of believers.

You will discover a living faith, an experience of God, that is important and meaningful for you now.

From *Dear Padre: Questions People Ask*, Liguori, 2003  
sundaybulletin@liguori.org



HARRY BEUGELINK / SHUTTERSTOCK



## *A Word From Pope Francis*

*"God loves us and that is why he is with us....Thanks to his help, we can always begin again....We are able to open our eyes again, to overcome sadness and mourning to strike up a new song."*

—Angelus, December 15, 2013