

From the Deacon's Desk

**Scripture Today: God meets us where we are.**

On the Second Sunday of Advent we noted that “John [the Baptist] was just being John”. He discerned God’s will for him and did it. Now we hear of “Mary just being Mary,” a young teenager in a tiny hamlet on a craggy hilltop in the northern region of Galilee. Mary heard a message from God so amazing she wondered how it could happen. But she realized it was God’s will for her and she consented. There were many details and consequences she could not know, but she said “Yes!” to be the human mother of God incarnate. That was “Mary just being Mary.” That is all God asked of her and that is all God asks of us – to be all that God created us to be.

For us, just as for John the Baptist and Mary, we begin by identifying, accepting, and developing all the unique talents, abilities, and gifts God has given to each of us, and then using them to the best of our ability **for ourselves and for others**. Is that not the greatest gift we can give to Jesus when we celebrate his birthday on Christmas? Is our present for Jesus ready?

**Art & Environment:**

Thank you to Valerie Helinski, Diane Courter, and the Catrell Family for getting things ready for our Christmas Season. We still need to set a few things up after the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent Mass, so if you’re free after the 9:30 a.m. Mass, please lend a hand.

**Favorite Marian Prayers:**

Since we hear about the Annunciation on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, I thought this would be a good time to share with you some of my favorite prayers to Mary, our Blessed Mother. I often pray the rosary while driving, and in fact, I have not turned my radio on in my car for many years now. Instead of music, when I drive I pray. Sometimes when I don’t even feel like thinking, I’ll put on a CD of the rosary being said and I’ll let the words wash over me like a wave of blessing.

In all our prayers to Mary we honor and worship her Son, who is more than happy to listen to His mother’s pleas on our behalf. As someone once told me: “What son doesn’t love someone who loves his mother?”

Pope Francis has introduced the world to a favorite prayer of his called **The Prayer to Our Lady Undoer of Knots**. The prayer is as follows:

**“Virgin Mary, Mother of fair love, Mother who never refuses to come to the aid of a child in need, Mother whose hands never cease to serve your beloved children because they are moved by the divine love and immense mercy that exists in your heart, cast your compassionate eyes upon me and see the snarl of knots that exist in my life. You know very well how desperate I am, my pain, and how I**

**am bound by these knots. Mary, Mother to whom God entrusted the undoing of the knots in the lives of His children, I entrust into your hands the ribbon of my life. No one, not even the Evil One himself, can take it away from your precious care. In your hands, there is no knot that cannot be undone. Powerful Mother, by your grace and intercessory power with your Son and my liberator, Jesus, take into your hands today this knot. (Mention your petition here.)**

**I beg you to undo it for the glory of God, once for all. You are my hope. O my Lady, you are the only consolation God gives me, the fortification of my feeble strength, the enrichment of my destitution, and, with Christ, the freedom from my chains. Hear my plea. Keep me, guide me, protect me, O safe refuge.”**

Another favorite pray of mine is the **The Memorare**, which invites us to ask the Blessed Mother for her assistance and her grace, especially when we feel most troubled in our daily lives. The prayer is as follows:

**“REMEMBER, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.”**

As Catholics, all our beliefs about Mary, including our prayers to her, are meant to point us to Jesus and bring us into deeper union with him. When our Lord was on the cross and he said to St. John “Behold Thy Mother” (John 19:27), Jesus’ mother became *ours* as well. Don’t be afraid to ask our Blessed Mother for her assistance or to show her your love!

### **Security Procedures:**

In an effort to be proactive with the possibility of church shootings like the one that happened in Texas, I’d like to tentatively enact some procedure changes to our Mass gatherings.

**Five minutes after Mass starts, the side doors should be locked. This will made it easier to keep an eye on who enters the church by making folks who come late enter through the back middle doors only.**

I know this is extreme and goes against what we as a church are trying to accomplish with evangelization and outreach, but we also need to keep our parishioners safe, especially the children.

I’m open to further suggestions **EXCEPT** letting people carry guns into church. I’m also receptive to listening to our law enforcement parishioners for thoughts and input as well.

May the Lord watch over us, but I also believe God helps those who are proactive and help themselves. With all of us having Free Will, even God is limited in stopping a person with a gun who is psychologically ill or who has evil in their heart.