

Breath of Life

THE PASTORAL CARE NEWSLETTER
OF MATULAITIS HOME

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To say that 2020 has been strange and challenging would be an understatement. As the year draws to a close and we enter the Advent season, we reflect on our faith and our relationship with God throughout these trying times. Have we grown in faith? Has our trust in God been strengthened or shaken?

“For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for harm, to give you a future with hope... When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, and I will change your lot” (Jeremiah 29:11-14). God has shown His faithfulness to this promise in the birth of Jesus, Whose coming we remember and Whose return we anticipate this Advent. But how do we also see this promise fulfilled for us now, amid the loss and pain of this pandemic? We may find ourselves asking God, “If Your plans for us are for our welfare and not for harm, how is it that we are facing such hard times? Why are so many experiencing such disappointment, loneliness, and grief?”

Fr. Austin Fleming reflected beautifully on this in his Nov. 18th blog post: “I think I’m beginning to understand... You do plan for my welfare, you do reach out to me – not to *replace* my human condition, but to meet me *in* my humanity... What I want you to take away, you come to *heal*, what I pray

you’ll remake, you come to *mend*, when I grieve, you come to console me *in* my loss, when I’m alone, *yours* is the presence that fills my void, when I’m sad, *you* are the source of joy I seek, when I’m confused, you offer *wisdom*, not answers.”

Just as His first coming was so different from what was expected, Jesus comes to us now in ways different than we might anticipate. The Jews of His time expected a mighty conqueror; Jesus came in weakness and poverty, joining us in the frailty of our humanity, establishing a kingdom not of this world.



He continues to come and bring hope in our darkest times, often not taking them away, but walking through them with us, lighting the way. As Fr. Fleming concludes, “Your plan is to meet me *in* my story, *in* the hard times...and *in* my pain, there to find me, heal me, love and save me, all to make my story one with yours.” This Advent, may we once again invite Jesus into our lives and make ready our hearts for His coming. How have you experienced God in your life this year? What are your hopes for the year ahead?

Source: “A Concord Pastor Comments,” <http://concordpastor.blogspot.com/>.



Daily – Holy Mass, 10:30am Chapel

Weekly – Hallway Hymn Sing-A-Longs with Christmas Carols

11.29.20 First Sunday of Advent

12.3.20 Bible Study, D-Lounge 2pm

12.4.20 First Friday
Adoration & Benediction
Chapel 3:30pm

12.8.20 Solemnity of the
Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Holy Mass 10:30am
Adoration & Benediction
Chapel 3:30pm

12.13.20 13th of the Month Rosary Club
Chapel 1:30pm

12.17.20 Communal Preparation
for Reconciliation Service
Chapel 2pm

12.24.20 Christmas Eve

12.25.20 Christmas Day
Holy Mass 10:30am
Adoration & Benediction
Chapel 3pm

12.27.20 Solemnity of the
Holy Family

1.1.21 Solemnity of Mary,
Mother of God

1.3.21 Solemnity of the
Epiphany of the Lord



Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Immaculate Conception is the conception of Jesus’ mother Mary free from original sin. The Catholic Church teaches that God acted upon Mary in the moment of her conception, preserving her innocence and purity, keeping her “immaculate” so that she would be “full of grace” and become the mother of our Savior.

The Immaculate Conception is often confused with the virgin birth of Jesus, the latter saying that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born by Mary without a human father. While many Christians believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, it is principally Roman Catholics, along with some other Christian denominations, who believe in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.



The religious Sisters who founded Matulaitis Home are the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Their congregation was founded in Lithuania by Blessed George Matulaitis in 1918. They look to Mary, the Immaculate Conception, as their patron and example of faithful discipleship, guiding them to live well their vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, as they seek to unite their prayer life with apostolic activity and help others in every possible way on their journey to God. May we, too, follow Mary’s example and say “yes” to God, responding to God’s call throughout our lives saying with Mary, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

The Nativity Scene

We are accustomed to seeing nativity displays during the Advent and Christmas season, but we may never have paused to wonder about their history. How did this come to be a common fixture of religious holiday décor?

Saint Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first nativity scene in 1223 at Greccio, Italy, in an attempt to place the emphasis of Christmas upon the worship of Christ, the greatest gift, rather than upon secular materialism and gift-giving. Apparently, the concern for keeping Christ at the center of Christmas isn't a new problem!

The nativity scene created by St. Francis is described by St. Bonaventure in his *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi* written around 1260. St. Francis' nativity scene was a living one with humans and animals cast in the Biblical roles and staged in a cave. Pope Honorius III gave his blessing to the exhibit and such reenactments became popular. Within one hundred years, every church in Italy was expected to have a nativity scene at Christmastime. Eventually, statues replaced the human and animal participants, and these scenes grew into elaborate affairs with richly robed figurines placed in intricate landscape settings.

Today, many people have a nativity scene, also called a crèche, displayed in their home along with other traditional holiday décor like Christmas trees, holiday lights, and candles in the windows. Some are simple, some more elaborate, and some are family heirlooms passed down through generations. Along with the figurines, traditions about the setup and placement of the crèche may also be passed down from generation to generation. Many families wait until Christmas Eve to place Baby Jesus in the manger. Some families set up the stable in one area of a room, and then place Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the three wise men in other separate areas. As Christmas draws near, they move the figures closer to the manger, placing the Holy Family in the crèche on Christmas Eve. They continue to bring the Magi closer little by little until they arrive on the Epiphany, celebrated on the 6th of January. Other traditions include the children of the family placing wisps of straw in and around the crib each day

until Christmas in order to prepare the bed – and their hearts – for the Holy birth. Thus, when the Christ Child arrives on Christmas Day, a soft bed of straw awaits Him.

Take a moment as Christmas draws near to enjoy the beautiful nativity scene in our Chapel. Maybe you have your own crèche at home; do you have any special traditions for how you display yours? Do you have other treasured holiday traditions? Some may have to be adjusted this year; how will you make this Christmas special?



Sources: "Nativity Scene," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity_scene.
"Traditions for Placing Jesus and the Magi in Nativity," <https://catholicprayer.com/blog/placing-christ-child-magi-nativity-scene/>.



We pray that you enjoy a blessed and happy Christmas, with quiet moments to hear God speaking peace and joy to your heart. May God's blessings be ever with you. Praying for an end to the pandemic and that the New Year be filled with happiness and hope. We thank God for you always!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

From all of us on the Spiritual Care Team:
Olivia, Father Sadauskas, Sister Bernadette, and Rojeanne



Check out our website:
www.matulaitisnh.org



Matulaitis Home
10 Thurber Road
Putnam, CT 06260
Phone.....860-928-7976
Fax.....860-963-1920