

CHRISTMAS IS FOR CHILDREN

Brightly wrapped gifts and gingerbread houses aren't the only reasons that our favorite December holiday seems to be *made just for the youngsters* (and young at heart!). From the very beginning, Christmas was meant for those most given to a *sense of wonder*.

That's why Holy Mary was the first to be invited to the celebration — nine months in advance! She was awe struck when the angel Gabriel told her she would bear a Son, and what manner of a Son He would be.

Yet in her littleness, neither the fact of her vowed virginity nor the disparity between her lowly estate and this high calling, was an obstacle to her *trusting* 'Let it be.' Our Blessed Mother did not for a moment question or doubt the adorable will of God. But in wonder and worshipful amazement she sought a more intimate knowledge of the mystery: "How will this be, for I know not man?" (Lk 1:34) Even in this childlike *persistence* do we not hear echoes of a child's *delight*, "Wow, you can really do that?!"

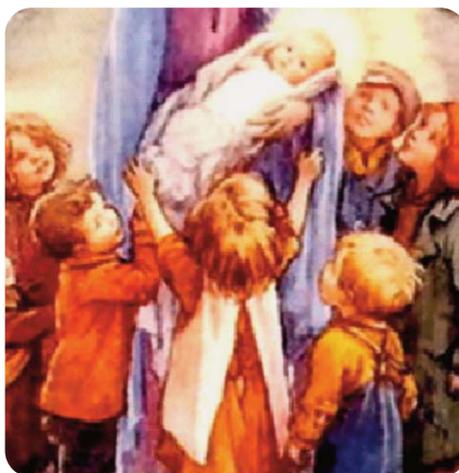
And of course, a childlike mother makes perfect sense, for didn't our Lord tell us Himself that, "*unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt 18:3) How could we hope for heaven without Christmas? We couldn't!

In her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, our Lady showed child-like *spontaneity* as she hastened to marvel at God's work. She went in charity to help her



aging relative, yes, but also to witness for herself what she had been told. With what joy and wonder must she have thought, 'Elizabeth is with child and so am I!'

On that first Christmas night the shepherds like Mary, spontaneously heeded the message of the angel and proclaimed, "*Let us go...and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us*" (Lk 2:15). Then they sought and saw the baby Jesus and when everything was just as the angel had said, they "returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen." What a Gift!



During this Christmastime filled with gift wrapping and gingerbread making, will the Good News of Jesus break into our daily routines as it did for our Blessed Mother and the shepherds? Will we be ready? How will we receive it? Perhaps by remembering the children and pondering the childlike we can find our way.

Children have a spontaneous, trusting, even persistent capacity for receiving. We often smile at the 'gifts' that awe them triggering spontaneous delight and joy. Perhaps it is their uncluttered hearts and minds that sense with wonder the effect of God's most hidden Gift, the uncreated Son of God made incarnate and united forever - irrevocably! - to His creation.

Perhaps children sense the 'radiance' of His Presence in a leaf, a butterfly or even a toad and so they are filled with wonder at even the simplest things.

And perhaps, as children of the Kingdom, with Christ the one *true* Gift, waiting for us to find Him everywhere and in everything, every day can be Christmas - filled with wonder and joy.

But Jesus called the children to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

(Lk 18:16)

THE JOURNEY HOME PART 3 – IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE

Sr. Mary Joseph Kanja, O.P. ~ 1950 - 2017

--After Sr. Mary Joseph’s Profession of Vows she quickly discovered all the ways the Lord had prepared her for life in the Monastery.



Working in her family’s field gave her the skills needed to cultivate the Monastery garden. Her love for monkeys inspired her to create a protective barrier of two rows of corn all around the entire vegetable plot. Filling their arms with corn also lessened the monkey’s raids on the kitchen fruit bowl when the sister neglected to latch the door.

Sister’s experience of working with young girls in the boarding school was remembered with gratitude when she was appointed Novice Mistress. These same practical virtues coupled with her tailoring and business experience, gained from operating an inhome tailoring shop, stood her in good stead when she was elected as the first native Kenyan Prioress of Corpus Christi Monastery, Nairobi.



As Prioress, when a new Monastery was being built, Sr. Mary Joseph used her tape measure to check the worker’s work against the architect’s drawings. One day she asked an electrician to his chagrin, “Do you intend putting that outlet inside the cabinet that will be built in that spot?”

Sister took the same common sense approach to the various challenges met by all Prioresses. Then her life took an unexpected turn. A scheduled visit to the dentist led to the extraction of four wisdom teeth accompanied by grave complications. Damage to her trigeminal nerve left sister in unbearable pain. Unable to find relief in Kenya Sr. Mary Joseph asked for help. Our Prioress, Sr. Mary of Mercy, OP, welcomed her to Farmington Hills while benefactors and generous doctors arranged for the needed surgeries.

Although the procedures and therapies did not return Sister to full health she continued to share the fruits of her many gifts with the nuns of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament. Every sister in the house owns at least one garment sewn for her by Sr. Mary Joseph. Many of our friends have purchased from our Book and Gift Shop crocheted baby things, dressed dolls or purses with a baby doll hiding inside. For many years the sisters, benefactors and employees benefited from her green thumb cultivated vegetables from her garden.



Sr. Mary Joseph had a tender devotion to God the Father. She loved to study and ponder His Divine Providence. In that Providence, Sister never fully recovered her health. Unable to return to her beloved Kenya she embraced her adopted homeland and in 2016 Sister proudly became a citizen of the United States of America.

In recent years Sister’s health deteriorated. Last year a MRI discovered an old back fracture. She remembered the probable cause. At age seven, Sister was walking on a narrow path between two very tall hedges when she met a bull coming the other way. The bull wanted her out of his way, so he put down his head, charged and catching her between his horns

tossed her over a hedge into a bramble.

When she came to her senses she was in great pain but she got up, found her milk pail amidst the thorns and continued on her errand to get milk. The local farmer tended her wounds, filled her pail with milk and sent her home.



SINGING A TWELVE DAY CATECHISM?

Some believe *The Twelve Days of Christmas* is just a fun, non-sense song. (Can you sing it?)

Some believe it was a secret Catholic Catechism taught to children during the time of persecution in England. Others believe the catechism was added to the song by a clever English pastor in the 18th century whose goal was to combat secularism and keep his faithful flock celebrating their faith in Christ by filling the twelve days between Christmas and the Epiphany, January 6th, with reasons for gratitude and joy.

Whatever its origin, can you identify the hidden Christian truth in the refrain and in each day's gift?

REFRAIN: On the # day of Christmas my *true love* gave to me ____ (name of a daily Gift)
Who is our True Lover and Gift Giver? John 3:16

First Day -

Partridge in a Pear Tree

Who is the Partridge? What is the Tree? Hint: A Partridge by using the "broken wing trick," will offer itself as decoy to save its young from a stalking predator.

--Second Day -

Two Turtle Doves

What are these two Doves that are revelations of God's Plan?

Hint: In the beginning God created – Genesis. 1:1 & 2:4b. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God John 1:1



Third Day - Cor. 1:13

Three French Hens

What are these three highly valued Hens? Hint: Saint Paul tells us, "Three things will last" but the greatest one is eternal.

Fourth Day -

Four Calling Birds -

Who are these four 'Birds' that sing the song of "Good News?"

Fifth Day -

Golden Rings - *What is the group name of the first five love letters from our "Beloved?"*

Sixth Day - Genesis 1:1 or 2:4

Six Geese A-laying - *What are these Geese, if in these six our True Love worked wonders and then He rested?*

Seventh Day - I Corinthians 12:8-11; Romans 12, Ephesians 4; I Peter 4:10-11

Seven Swans a Swimming - *What seven treasures were given to us by the Spirit of our Love?*

Eighth Day - Matthew 5

Eight Maids a Milking - *'Happy' are these eight maids, who are they?*

Ninth - Galatians 5:22 & 23

Nine Ladies Dancing - *What are these nine that form a cornucopia of spiritual nourishment?*

Tenth - Psalm 119: 174 & 1 Corinicles 15: 29

Ten Lords A-leaping - *What ten-in-one Gift is the delight to our hearts and set King David's feet a-dancing?*

Eleventh - Acts 1: 13 & 2:14

Eleven Pipers Piping - *Who are the eleven if Jesus taught twelve to pipe?*

Twelfth Day -

Twelve Drummers Drumming - *Where can we find the twelve truths the Pipers piped? Can you name them?*

Hint: In the Holy Mass it can replace the Nicene Creed.

What might happen to our Faith if on each day of this Christmas Season we pondered its gift?

Will you take this Twelve Day Challenge?

OUR LADY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MONASTERY - VIETNAM

A MISSION APPEAL

Would you have a dollar or two to spare? Our Sisters in Vietnam are in need of some help to be able to finally build a permanent Monastery. They have the land but not the money! The US Dollar goes a long way in Vietnam. These nuns can reach their goal if many chip in just a little bit. In their name, we thank you ahead of time.

Please make your donation payable to the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament and the funds will be forwarded to our Vietnamese Sisters.



The Dominican Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit
572/C Ngu Phuc, Ho Nai 3, Trang Bom, Dong Nai – Viet Nam
Tel : 0(84) 251 398 4822 – Email : danviendaminh@yahoo.com

Dear Friends and Benefactors of our Sisters in Farmington Hills,

First of all, I would like to give you the warm greetings from our Dominican Community in Xuan Loc Diocese, Viet Nam.

I, the undersigned, am Sr. Theresa Bui Thị Tam, OP, Prioress of the Monastery of our Lady of the Holy Spirit in Vietnam. Our Monastery was founded in 2002, sponsored by our Sisters of Farmington Hills where we received our formation as Dominican Nuns.

Thanks be to God, since returning to Vietnam we have received good vocations. Currently we have 10 Professed Sisters, 6 novices and 2 postulants. We long to welcome all of the young and fervent candidates who apply, yet we have had to refuse some, due to our small living quarters. At the present all of our cells are occupied. A lovely piece of land was donated to us, on which we hope to build a real, permanent monastery. We have obtained written permission to begin building in the year 2019 but we do not have the funds to do so.

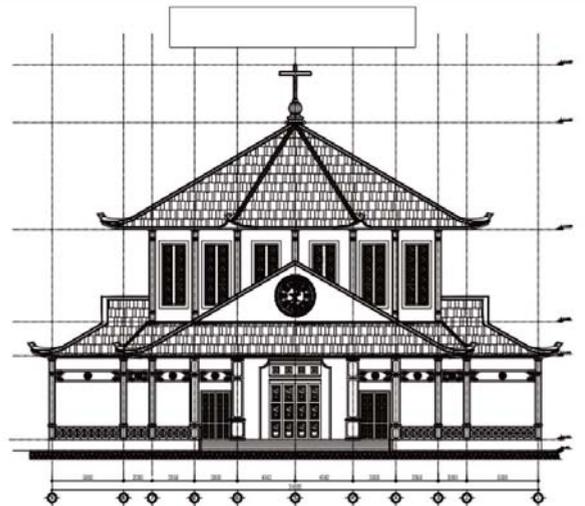
Without God's help, we can do nothing with this big project, but we trust in our Lord's providence, that He will build the monastery for us through the help of His children, and hope that you will be among them. We hope you will consider making a contribution, however small, to help us build the first Dominican monastery in Vietnam. We would be forever grateful.

May our Lord bestow countless graces upon you and your loved ones.

Sincerely in Jesus Christ,



Sr. Theresa Bui Thi Tam, OP
Prioress



TOP: Current front gate and Community Room with three of the foundresses Sr. Maria Rose, Sr. Mary of the Trinity Khang, Sr. Theresa Tam and our Sr. Mary Thomas, visiting as Prioress.

CENTER: New Property - The lake and the land.

BOTTOM: Current one-room Chapel and an architect's drawing of the future Chapel.

ANSWERS TO THE TWELVE DAY CATECHISM

A Partridge in a Pear Tree - Jesus Christ, Our Savior and His Cross

Two Turtle Doves - The Old and New Testaments

Three French Hens - The Theological Virtues or those that touch God: Faith, Hope, and Love 1 Corinthians 13:13

Four Calling Birds - The Four Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Five Gold Rings - The Torah or First Five Books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Six Geese a-laying - The 6 Days of Creation Genesis. 1:1 & 2:4b

Seven Swans a-swimming - The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord Isaiah 11: 2-3
I Corinthians 12:8-11; Romans 12, Ephesians 4; I Peter 4:10-11

Eight Maids a milking - The 8 Beatitudes – “Blessed or happy are ... “ Cf. Matthew 5:3-10

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 2. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. 3. Blessed are they who mourn: for they shall be comforted. 4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill. 5. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. 6. Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God. 7. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. 8. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Nine Ladies Dancing - The 9 Fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control Galatians 5:22-23

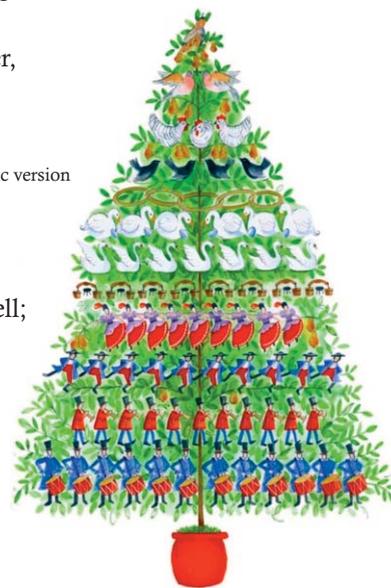
Ten Lords a-leaping - The Ten Commandments. Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5

1. I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have any strange gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor thy father and mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

Eleven Pipers Piping - The 11 Faithful Apostles after the loss of Judas Iscariot: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James

The Twelve Drummers Drumming - The twelve Points of the Apostles Creed, Catholic version

1. *I believe in God*, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,
2. and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
3. who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell;
5. on the third day he rose from the dead;
6. he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
7. from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
10. the forgiveness of sins,
11. the resurrection of the body,
12. and life everlasting. Amen



WILL YOU PRAY WITH US?

FOR PRIESTS - A WEEKLY HOLY HOUR



***In Our Monastery Chapel
Thursdays - 1:10 PM to 2:10 PM***

You are invited to join a small but steadfast group who have 'watched with Jesus for one hour' weekly for nearly 40 years in intercession for priests and priestly vocations.

Look at how the Lord is blessing our Seminary!

FOR NUNS - A TURNING OF YOUR HEART

Each day for 15 minutes a Nun lifts her heart in focused adoration and intercession for the women the Lord is calling into our work of Love.

Daily, for a few moments, could you pray with and for her?

LOVE IS MY VOCATION

... TO WIN THE WORLD FOR CHRIST — my goal.

... MY LIFE OF PRAYER — Love's way to achievement.

Will you join my efforts as a

CLOISTERED DOMINICAN NUN?

Write, Phone or Visit
MOTHER MARY OF JESUS, O.P.
MONASTERY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
9704 Oakland Detroit 48211 TO 8-5444

CHRISTMAS NOVENA - DECEMBER 16 -24

From December 16 through December 24 we will be praying our Christmas Novena for and with our friends and benefactors.

During these nine days our daily public schedule will be:

Holy Mass and the Novena Prayer at 7:15 AM.

Evening Prayer (Vespers) at 4:30 PM.

On Sunday, December 17, Evening Prayer at 4:10 PM

with the Rosary, Novena Prayer

and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

On Christmas Eve Vespers will begin at 4:15 PM. There will be no Rosary or Benediction.

We will close immediately following Vespers and reopen at 11:30 PM for Midnight Mass.



Intentions: _____

Please check here if no
acknowledgment needed

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

You Are Cordially Invited

To attend our celebrations of:

Christmas Midnight Mass

Our doors will open at 11:30 PM

Christmas Morning Mass - 9:30 AM

Our doors will open at 9:00 AM

Holy Mass on New Year's Day - 9:30 AM

Our doors will open at 9:00 AM

So that all the sisters can be together for dinner on Christmas and New Year's Day, our doors will close at 12:00 Noon.

If you are unable to be with us for Holy Mass during this Novena, please join us in spirit by reciting the Christmas novena prayer at home.

A Blessed Advent and Christmas to each of you.

Christmas Novena Prayer

Wipe away, Infant Jesus, the tears of children! Embrace the sick and the elderly! Move men to lay down their arms and to draw close in a universal embrace of peace! Invite the peoples, O merciful Jesus, to tear down the walls created by poverty and unemployment, by ignorance and indifference, by discrimination and intolerance. It is you, O Divine Child of Bethlehem, who save us, freeing us from sin. It is you who are the true and only Savior, whom humanity often searches for with uncertainty. God of peace, gift of peace for all humanity, come to live in the heart of every individual and of every family. Be our peace and our joy!

Amen.

Pope Saint John Paul II
(Urbi et Orbi 12/25/1994)

WEB ADDRESS: www.opnuns-fh.org

Donate on-line via PayPal or "Givng"

Prayer Line: 248-626-8253



***Joyous & Holy Christmas
to you and all whom you love.***

Please "come and see" our Giftshop.
Open daily from 8:15 AM until 4:15 PM - Closed Sundays.

Remember to pay the Lord a visit and
offer a gift of prayer for all those on your shopping list!

You may donate on-line via PayPal at www.opnuns-fh.org and please consider remembering us in your will.

SR MARY JOSEPH KANJA, OP - PART 3 *con't from page 2*

Sixty years later a surgeon attempted to correct the back fracture caused by that bull. The surgery was extensive resulting in severe pain which put a strain Sister's heart.

On the Feast of All the Saints of the Dominican Order, November 7, 2017 *Sr. Mary Joseph of God the Father*, dressed in her best habit, sat for a moment before going to Chapel for Morning Prayer and her Loving Father gently came and took her into His Eternal Home. As Sister Mary Joseph would say, "He had the plan all along."



RENOVATION PROJECT: NEWS AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT

Finally, our life is slowly getting back to normal with the decorating of our *Gift Shop for Christmas* displaying beautiful new merchandise,.

Please, ***Come and See.*** And, of course, ***shop!***
Be sure to stop in the Chapel to visit Jesus and request Supernatural Gifts for all on your shopping list, too.



An *Open House* of the new guest quarters and the *Infirmiry*, pictured above, will be held in the *Spring 2019*.
Look for details in the next issue of *Echoes*.