

Jesuit Retreat Center

December 2024

Special Edition Newsletter

A Community in Communion: Advent 2024

"Advent means arrival or coming. It is the Season to celebrate that God has come among us: God is in communion with us, and we are united through His Son, Jesus. This Advent, let us celebrate this union, this communion, with God through reflections and images from the Jesuit Retreat Center."

Fr John Auther, S.J.



Imaginative prayer is given to us by St. Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises. Jesuit Fathers - Chi Ngo, John Auther, Kevin Leidich, Jim Voiss, along with Sr. Ingrid Clemmensen, O.P., Pat Clough, Pooja Jain & Dyane Hendricks have prepared the path that expands Advent and makes it contemporary with our own lives and events. Everything you need for prayerful reflection is provided in this special edition of the Newsletter though you may wish to have your New Testament handy. The Gospel of Luke will be our companion as we enter into the Infancy Narrative. Advent 2024 - a time for "a dreary world to rejoice", a time to encounter God's love in communion with one another.



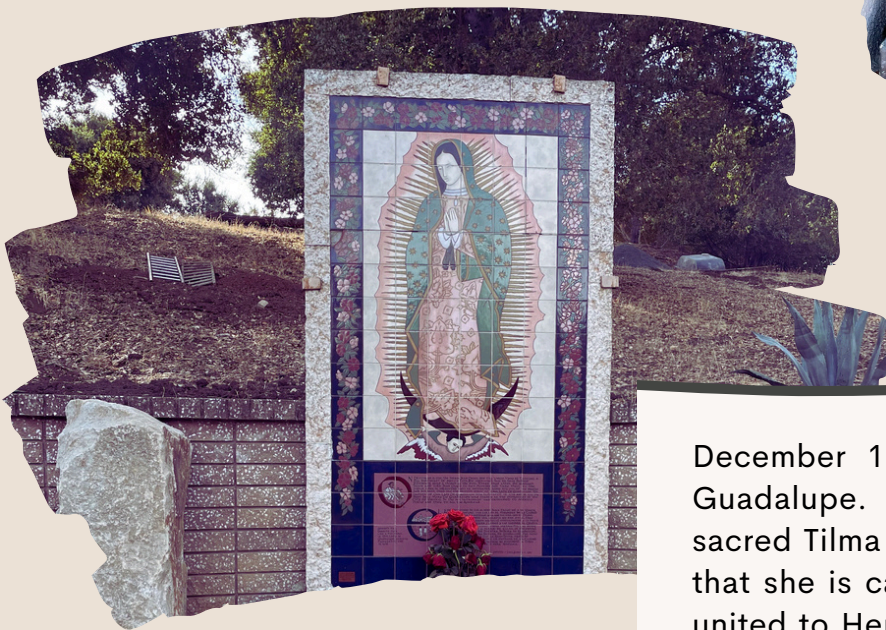
MARY

How might we experience Mary as her companions? What might her own words teach us if we imagine we are walking by her side, living in her village, walking with her to Synagogue, reading the prophets? Did you know Mary is often shown in early paintings with a book in her hands? She was educated. Her faith was lived. Follow the movements of your own heart with the images that beckon you into Mary's presence and lead you deeper into your own heart. Pray with her.



The Annunciation: "Hail, favored one!" (Luke 1:26-38)

Imagine Mary, surprised by the Angel Gabriel: "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." Imagine her youth, purity of heart, her complete trust: Mary asks the Angel, "how is it happening in my life?" The Angel replies: "Do not be afraid, Mary, the Lord is with you." And Mary says, Yes. "Be it done unto me according to your word." Read Luke slowly, allowing the words to penetrate.....linger on the words that stir your heart. Return to them during the first week. God desires to make possible the redemption of the whole human race, and "The word is made flesh and dwells among us."



December 12th is the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is a pregnant Mary depicted on the sacred Tilma in the Centennial Garden, reminding us that she is carrying Jesus in her womb. She is more united to Her Son than we can ever know with "love beyond telling." We find a wonderful image of how we too should carry Jesus into the world and let Him give Himself through us to the people He loves. *Jesus, this Advent, may we take inspiration from your Mother in offering You who dwells in us, to a world crying out for knowledge of You.*

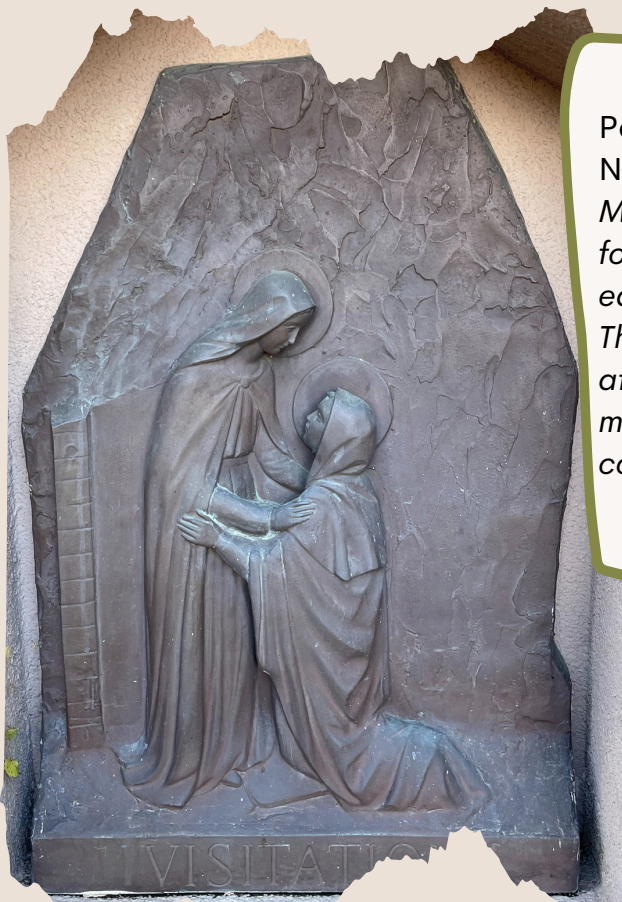


The Visitation (Luke 1:39-80)

Mary has learned from the Angel Gabriel that her cousin, Elizabeth, is also pregnant. She hastens to be with her, walking several arduous days up into the hill country of Judea. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and filled with the Holy Spirit, she cried out in a loud voice: Most blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." What is Mary's response? "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior." Read The Magnificat (Luke 2: 46-55). *What words become your own prayer of thanksgiving and joy?*



Ponder the words of contemporary Dutch priest, Henry Nouwen: *"I find the meeting of these two women very moving. Mary's visit made Elizabeth aware of what she was waiting for. The child in her womb leaped for joy. They affirmed for each other that something was happening worth waiting for. They create a community of support, celebration, and affirmation. The visit of Elizabeth and Mary is one of the Bible's most beautiful expressions of what it means to form community."*



The Nativity (Luke 2:1-7)

Mary and Joseph set out for the City of David called Bethlehem to enroll in the census. Imagine the journey. Travel with them. Notice the details and specifics of the journey. Ignatius imaged a servant girl was accompanying them, one who would help Mary in her time of need. "While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her first-born son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room in the inn." A scene like no other, they are now a family enfolded in a manger. Are you there? Listen to - [Mary.](#)
[Did You Know?](#)



Joseph, faithful, ever watchful, a provider, accepting, kind. What other qualities of character do you notice? He too is chosen. Reassured by the Angel Gabriel, he takes Mary into his home. Together they await the unknown mysteries ahead of them. Spend time with Joseph. Imagine his questions and the depth of his own faith. What must he do to keep Mary and Jesus safe and provide for them? What is his gift to Jesus?

*The Rosary Path presents three sets of events from the life of Jesus and Mary. The slow and gentle prayer walk allows us to contemplate how they experienced joys, sorrows and glories and brings us into communion with these sacred mysteries. With each step and each whispered prayer, we realize how very near they are to us. *Jesus, may we, this Advent, be drawn ever more completely into the wonderful journey of Your life until we see that Your life has become the pattern of our lives.*



For some of us as we walk the trails of the Retreat Center, we have experienced that Jesus walks at our side. He joins us as He joined humanity at his Birth. It is a great consolation to know that He so willingly, so lovingly, unites with us and matches His steps to our steps. *This Advent, Jesus, help us to sense how closely You walk with us through our days. Let us walk with You.*

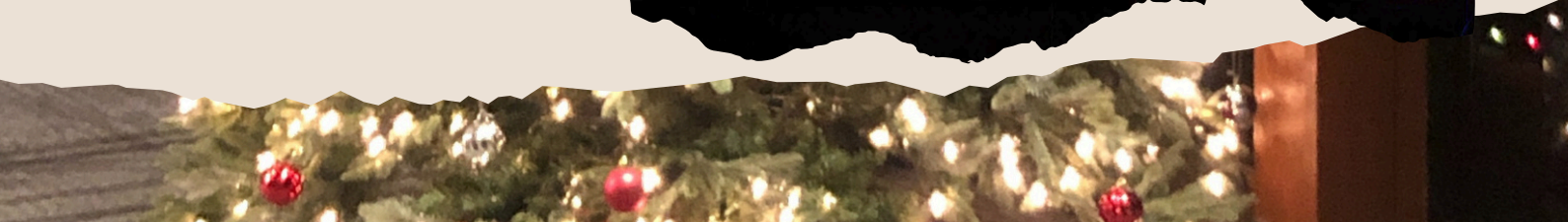
Many of us have walked the labyrinth at the Center. Our experience may vary between one person and another, from one time of walking it to another. But almost always we become more conscious of the ways our lives take many unexpected turns, of the ways that God is always ahead of us and somewhat unpredictable in what is sent our way. Jesus holds our lives precious in His hands and guides us. We are given the chance of abandoning ourselves into this union with Jesus who leads in the many twists and turns of our lives. *Jesus, this Advent, may we find peace in a trust that unites us to you as we walk through the lights and shadows of our lives.*





There is nothing like the sound of water to remind us of how the Lord pours grace upon grace into our lives. It is as though the Lord wants to unite us to Him with bonds of the deepest gratitude as we look over our lives here at the Center and encounter blessing after blessing. The fountain flows and fills the air with a reminder that God is everywhere sharing one blessing after another with us. How can we do anything but respond by saying, "yes!" to God's invitation to be in profound communion with this goodness pouring forth from the Divine Life. *Jesus, may we be ever more conscious of the many blessings that you pour into our lives and in gratitude, be joined joyfully to You in this Advent Season.*

The Chapel is such a sacred space where our Holy Communion is always present inviting us to pray in worship, petition, thanksgiving and contemplation. The Lord left us this Sacrament to allow us to experience a closeness we can hardly imagine. This gift penetrates our defenses and reaches the deepest recesses of our hearts and draws it into union with Jesus. *Jesus, this Advent, may our communion with you in this Sacrament be ever richer, more fulfilling and complete.*



God has placed us in such a beautiful world. Sometimes it takes a short visit to the Retreat Center to remind us of how beautiful the world is. Into this beautiful world, Jesus came. As He delighted in the natural world, drawing so many lessons from it, so we often experience a deep union with the beauty of Nature as we spend time at the Retreat Center. We share this love of Nature with Jesus and it actually draws us closer to Him. Nature unites us in a Communion with the Lord. *Jesus, may the beauty of this world bind us closer to You as we experience You opening our eyes to the glories of Creation.*



Often, we look out over the Santa Clara Valley, from which many of us have come to make retreats. We know we will be returning to the life we left in that busy world, but from this distance we feel united to the hustle and bustle of the life of countless people, and we pray that the peace we know here might penetrate the world out there. Our prayer unites us to that world and those people and to Jesus who looks with such compassion on a world that is too busy to think of Him. May this Advent be a time for us to think often and lovingly of Jesus who came to live with us. *Lord Jesus, lift our eyes to You often this Advent and help us to feel the peace You bring.*





We hope your heart has been opened. Do everything you can to keep it open. Light candles. Sing. Rejoice! And return often to savor the love we hold dear for the place and the people who renew us. We are Advent people. We are a community in communion.



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