

ST. IGNATIUS CATHOLIC CHURCH

December 2022 - January 2023
BI-MONTHLY ENGLISH BULLETIN



GREETINGS FROM US!



Fr. Saturnino Ochoa, SJ, Pastor

Dear Jesus,
Happy Birthday!

We all know that you never fail to keep your promise to come to us year after year. Thank you, dear Jesus. Thank you for sharing our fears and our little joys, our sorrows, and our moments of happiness.

They say that your name means "God comes to save us!" Particularly this year, we do need you to come bringing salvation. You yourself are our salvation. As you know, there is a vicious war going on. The number of people who have to leave their countries and homes is increasing. The three-year-long pandemic is unabated. Well, dear Jesus, our house is messy and not very clean. We apologize, but please do come again this year. We need you and we welcome you.

And when you come to us, do not forget to bring us two New Year's presents. One is PEACE on earth and peace in our hearts. The other one is HEALTH, to be able to come back to our church freely again and without restrictions. And to be able again to SING and PRAY TOGETHER, in a loud voice.

Thank you, dear Jesus. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

P.S. Best wishes to Mary and Joseph!



Fr. Bony James, SJ, John de Britto English Director

Happy Nativity of the Lord!

Christmas is a time of great joy. When Jesus looks at the stable where he was born, he can see various people lined up there. Wise men and shepherds forget their differences and become one, standing side by side and praising Jesus. I pray that all the parishioners of St Ignatius will be able to do the same.

This year, in addition to the stable that the church puts up every year, the Vietnamese community has also built a stable. The stables built by each community have their own national characteristics and colors, but each aims at the same purpose of praising Jesus and conveying his joy.

Christmas is the celebration that unites us all and brings great blessings and joy to our parish community. With all our various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, let us continue to strive for unity in diversity.



Sr. Flor Florece, F.I, Coordinator

How many Christmases have you already had? Christmas after Christmas.... Have they drawn you closer and closer to its real meaning, or has the secular world been enticing you farther and farther away? We Christians living in Japan have a special role every time

we celebrate Christmas – to proclaim and witness with our lives the joy, the mystery, the awe of the **INCARNATION** -that "the **WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US**"!

This Special Edition is a collaboration of many priests, religious, and lay people of all ages, languages, races, and culture. On every page, it attempts to convey what Christmas is all about, from a Christian perspective. It presents the different angles of Christmas, starting from Advent, an often forgotten period, bypassed quickly by a secular world. Christmas Season does not end in December but in January, with the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. In some cultures, it is extended to the Feast of the "Sto. Niño" (The Child Jesus).

"**God so loved the world that he gave us his most precious One**"! This year, we chose John 3:16 to center us on Jesus, rather than on the peripherals. How do these words speak to you, i.e. in what you are going through right now? Or in your search for true happiness and not just a "MERRY Christmas"? Does the need of a Savior make all the more sense in what is happening in our world today? "CHRISTMAS" can COME anytime, every time Christ is in-fleshed in your heart! It does not have to be only on December 25.

On behalf of the John de Britto English Center volunteers and staff, I wish you a "Grace-filled Christmas and a New Year full of HOPE!"





What is the meaning of “Christmas” and when was the word first used?

During the Middle Ages people used to fast right up until 24 December. They then would have twelve full days of Christmas festivities, reaching a crescendo on 6th January (Twelfth Night), when presents were exchanged. These celebrations commemorated Christ’s birth and the name Christmas (Christ’s Mass) is first recorded in England in 1038.

What role did St. Francis of Assisi play in reviving Christmas activities?

Christmas festivities were revived by St. Francis of Assisi when, in the winter of 1223, he started his Nativity Plays in Italy. The people in the plays sang songs or “canticles” that told the story during the plays. Sometimes, the choruses of these new carols were in Latin; but normally they were all in a language that the people watching the play could understand and join in. These new carols gradually spread to other European countries.

In what century did people first put up special decorations at Christmas?

The first evidence of this happening was in the 15th century. It was recorded that in London it was the custom at Christmas for every house and all the parish churches to be “decked with holm, ivy, bays, and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green.” The heart-shaped leaves of ivy were said to symbolize the coming to earth of Jesus, while holly was seen as protection against pagans and witches, its thorns and red berries held to represent the Crown of Thorns worn by Jesus at the crucifixion and the blood he shed. The first commercially produced decorations appeared in Germany in the 1860’s and gradually spread to other European countries.

Why is the exchange of gifts one of the core aspects of the modern Christmas celebration?

On Christmas Day, people exchange gifts based on the Christian tradition associated with the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh which were given to the baby Jesus by the Magi (Wise Men).

Historians have pointed out that Christmas presents date back to early Christian rulers who believed that their subjects should give gifts to their superiors and insisted on tributes and tithes during the Christmas period. Christmas gift-giving to superiors became less common, and around the time of the Protestant Reformation, bestowing presents on children became increasingly widespread in Europe.

In what century was the first written use of “Xmas”?

The 16th century. The “X” in Xmas comes from the Greek letter Chi which looks like an “X”. The letter “X” has long been used as an abbreviation for Christ since the Greek word for Christ begins with what looks like an “X”. Christ was often written with the letters Chi (X) Rho (ρ) which looks like Xp. The Chi-Rho symbol representing Christ looks like this:



What country is the Poinsettia, with its red and green foliage, native to?

Mexico. It derives its English name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first US minister to Mexico. He introduced the plant to the US in 1825.

Who created the first electric light Christmas display?

Thomas Edison. In 1880 he put up the first Christmas display made from electric lights to advertise his light bulbs. A few years later an inventor named Edward Johnson, a colleague of Thomas Edison, created the first string of Christmas lights.

In what country did “Silent Night” originate?

Austria. Its original German title was Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht. The lyrics were written by Joseph Mohr in 1816 and the music was composed by Franz Xaver Gruber 1818.

As a heartwarming Christmas miracle, it was sung during the impromptu WWI Christmas truce. Because it was a carol popular in both English speaking and German speaking countries, both sides sang it in their respective languages.

What Southeast Asian country boasts the longest holiday season starting with decorations and carols as early as September and celebrations that last sometimes until late January?

The Philippines. While the official holidays last from December 16th to January 9th, people in the Philippines start celebrating with decorations and carols much earlier. Sometimes into early September, and with the celebrations of Santo Niño in the third or fourth Sundays of January, the celebrations can sometimes continue until the end of January.

By the end of this page, hopefully, you have known a lot more about Christmas than you did!

Excerpts from <https://conversationstartersworld.com/trivia-questions/christmas-trivia/> (free domain),
<https://spartacus-educational.com/ChristmasAnswers.htm> (free domain)

From Advent to Christmas: The Liminality of Joy

By Fr. Antonius Firmansyah, SJ

Liminality. This word that is seldom used simply means “crossing the threshold,” but it has a powerful role in explaining the meaning of our spiritual growth. Every day we cross many thresholds and move further to a deeper level of growth. Every time we celebrate our birthday, we cross the threshold of our present age and move into another year of becoming a more mature person. Every time we graduate from one level of education onto another level, we cross a threshold of the learning process and becoming wiser persons able to apply our knowledge to new contexts. Every time we take part in someone’s wedding, we witness the crossing of a threshold: from being single to being a person committed to sharing life with another. There are other examples expressing our liminal experiences, but these suffice to illustrate the three dimensions of liminality: appreciating the past, acknowledging the present, and integrating them into the future.

Even when we enter the twilight age of our life, we continue to answer the invitation to find new meaning in our past and present experiences in order to build up hope for the future. The deeper we enter into these liminal experiences, the more mature we become spiritually, and at the same time we become more aware of the joy of being Christian.

The Advent Season provides us with an invitation to cross the threshold of joy. Signaling the beginning of another liturgical year, Advent invites us to cross the threshold from natural joy to authentic Christian joy. Pope St. Paul VI wrote, “Christian joy presupposes a person capable of natural joy.” (Pope Paul VI, “Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino*”, May 9, 1975) What he means by natural joy is the joy of being human in this created world. The joy of being born into this world, the joy of living together with nature, the joy of celebrating birthdays, the joy of finding companions in life, the joy of parents giving birth to their children—these are all our natural joy as humans. Christian joy is not separate from this natural joy. It is the deepening of our natural joy as human beings.



Our joy as Christians is the joy of finding God’s grace supporting us in our life on this earth. If in our natural joy we can be joyful in our growth progress as human beings, through Christian joy we can be joyful even during times of tribulation. Our natural joy gives us the starting point for Christian joy. We can learn how to choose to be hopeful, because we know we can experience the basic meaning of becoming better humans through our growth progress. We can repeatedly choose to hope for more profound meaning even when we cannot see the positive outcome of our progress. This is a sign of Christian joy.

Christian joy, thus, is never an instant experience, but results from our perseverance in building hope through every trial and tribulation. If we are faithful in waiting, in building hope through these processes, we will eventually realize that no matter what the external outcome may be, the most important thing in our growth is to find that God is always with us during that process of becoming. This is the process of transitioning from natural joy to Christian joy that we need to experience during this Advent season. In the end, we will find that our life testimony is not about how we celebrate the big events in life. People are more eager to see our lives as a testimony of faithfulness to God throughout the minuscule moments of daily life. We will be able to generate hope not only for ourselves but also for other people by becoming aware that the source of that hope is God who is born within each of us.

Emmanuel. This word, meaning God-with-us, illustrates the result of Christian joy that we want to experience by building up our hope through the season of Advent—the awareness that God is always with us through the birth of Christ in this world. When we dare to move from the historical remembrance of Jesus’ birth and integrate it into the future expectation of his birth in the realities of our own life, we will be granted an awareness that God is willing to dwell with us in this world. Is this not the true joy worthy of our longing during the Advent season?

ST. IGNATIUS NEWS AND EVENTS



Church Mini-Bazaar

Church bazaars, especially at this time of the year, are what people look forward to. But because of the shadow of the CORONA virus these past two years, the St Ignatius Church bazaar has been greatly reduced to a MINI-event on two consecutive Sundays. We share with you here the poster prepared by the Committee in charge. This year, it was held Nov. 27 and Dec. 4 with the collaboration of many church groups. Proceeds will be sent to the **Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)**, which is taking care of refugees from Ukraine. Your donation surely will make somebody happier this Christmas season and beyond!



One Body in Christ

Do you know that the Parish Council has come up with two projects to reach out this Christmas season to the elderly and those who probably could not come to Mass, or have lost contact with St. Ignatius for some years already? Yes, they have sent a postal LETTER, updating them on the various activities of the church and assuring them that we are praying for them. Starting Christmas Eve, you can get the Christmas greeting cards of the priests who serve us. Plus, there are **free Christmas cards**, too, on which you can write a personal message to give to friends and acquaintances. After all, **WE ARE ONE BODY** in Christ and so let us share the joy of the season!

News from John de Britto English Center

Celebration of the Sacraments

Matrimony

In the English-speaking community, it is rare that weddings are held in St. Ignatius Church. While many take the Pre-Cana Course, they rarely marry in Japan because they want to celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime event with their loved ones in their home countries. Last year, there was only one, a Filipina-Japanese couple. This year, Nov. 11, a Filipino pair had their Eucharistic Celebration and Nuptial Mass celebrated by Fr. Saturnino Ochoa, SJ. Assisted by the Wedding Team of St. Ignatius, there were add-ons to the rites because of cultural traditions. The same is true of Vietnamese weddings, which occur almost every Saturday! Have you ever witnessed one?



Conversion and Baptism



On November 20, the Solemnity of Christ the King, Fr. Robert Chiesa, SJ, officiated at a beautiful celebration in St. Mary's Chapel. A Brazilian mother from a Protestant denomination, had her Conversion Ceremony after accompaniment of almost a year by Sr. Flor Florece, F.I. She also asked for the Baptism of her 11-month child in the Catholic faith. Likewise, two young brothers of Japanese-Swedish parentage were baptized together with two little girls of Japanese-Filipino



ST. IGNATIUS NEWS AND EVENTS



descent, and one Filipino infant. What a joy to think that at the end of liturgical year, God has gifted us with new members in our parish!

Reconciliation

Every year, as Advent starts, Tagalog/English Confessions are offered by the Center. This year they were held Nov. 27, with Fr. Irinel Dobos, a Franciscan Conventual volunteer priest in the English Center.

This year's novelty is that Confession as an opportunity is likewise provided for children, teenagers, and parents of the English School. We have to take care of the "lambs" too, emphasizing the importance of parents' witnessing to this Sacrament. It too can strengthen family life!

The Sunday School will schedule their Confessions within the Advent Season. Of course, other families interested may likewise avail themselves of this opportunity.



English School Advent Celebration

Christmas is still several weeks from now. And yet, the children are already singing "We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!" They are already looking forward to their gifts, to eating Christmas cake, KFC, and to Santa Claus and the Christmas tree!

The Sunday School catechists decided to have an ADVENT Celebration December 4, Second Sunday of Advent. They wanted the children to be aware that there is an important Season before Christmas, a preparation of the heart! Using origami, they taught the children how to make "the stable" where baby Jesus will be placed on Christmas day; for "hay", they cut strips of paper on which they write every time they do a "good deed" during the Advent Season. It will be offered during the Christmas Party of the English Center. Part of their formation is to know the difference between these two seasons!



Christmas Party with a Twist

How can Christmas pass without a PARTY? For many in the English Center, it is unthinkable! There has got to be singing, dancing, games, and most of all, eating! But experts say, "We are entering the 8th wave", referring to the CORONA situation. So how can we creatively celebrate?

On Dec. 18, the English Center will have a party in St. Joseph Hall from 1:30-3:30 pm. We will still have the above events, but will take into consideration the "Protocols".

The theme adopted was "GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE US HIS MOST PRECIOUS ONE"! Part 1 is a video showing how Christmas is celebrated in various countries. There will be singing of Christmas carols, games, dancing on the stage. Part 2 will be the presentation by the English School children and their offering of "good deeds". Part 3 will be the St. Ignatius International Youth Ministry (SIYM) presentation of "Contemplating the Reality of the World" as we celebrate Christmas 2022. The challenge is, how do we show SOLIDARITY with our brothers and sisters who have "less"?

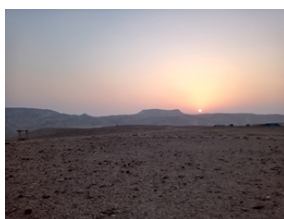


SPECIAL FEATURE

The Dream of God

By Isabelle Bonasse, NdV

Sunday, October 30, 2022



I can only hear the strong wind blowing. Some distance away is the oasis where everybody is still sleeping. I can see in the pale light of dawn a flock of sheep grazing. But what can they be grazing on, as I am merely surrounded by stones and dust? It is 5 o'clock in the morning and I am gazing at the sunrise in the heart of the Negev desert.

I suddenly thought of God's dream of pitching his tent among us (Jn 1, 14). That was where it all started, in this desert, where he had called Abraham, in order to form him and prepare a people for his coming.

Tuesday, November 1, 2022

I am in front of an open door, my heart overwhelmed with emotion. It is here, in Nazareth, in young Mary's house, that God's dream came true. "Can anything good come from that place?" It is here that his Son Jesus lived the first day of his existence among us, the day he was the tiniest, in Mary's womb, the day eternity entered time forever. Had Abraham foreseen such a wonder when his eyes were searching the stars in the desert nights, pondering over God's mysterious promise to him?

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."



Wednesday, November 2, 2022



The following morning, we arrive in Bethlehem. The atmosphere is very different: Bethlehem is a big, lively city in Palestine territory, just beside Jerusalem. We can see the Wall of Shame, a grim remembrance of the tensions existing between Israel and Palestine. The concrete wall is 70 kilometers long, built in 2002 by the Israeli state to stop the Palestinian terrorist attacks. But at what price! A whole people is imprisoned, cheated, humiliated, forced into poverty.

I am reminded of all the wars in the world, in Myanmar, Ukraine, Nigeria and so many more places. Will armed conflicts never end? What has become of God's dream?

Then, our eyes fall on some graffiti on the wall, picturing an icon of the Blessed Virgin. With teary eyes, I contemplate the woman who destroys walls to build bridges, the one who embraces all the children of God in her love, the mother of us all, poor sinners still wandering far from God. And I see signs of hope. Hope in the humble people who have chosen the way of peace and reconciliation.

We met some of those wonderful persons.

For example, the Melkite sisters of the Emmanuel, who have seen their convent property cut by the wall, and who welcome pilgrims, sowing forgiveness and joy around them.

Or Brother Oliver, an icon of Jesus' love for all religions and political parties. He lives in Emmaus and has become the unavoidable witness to encounter at the end of a pilgrimage in the Holy Land. He welcomes everybody equally, and his radiant faith works miracles of reconciliation. Even the Israelite government regularly sends him their young army recruits to listen to his words of peace!

And so many other men and women of God...



God's victories will always be hidden from men's eyes, like the birth of Jesus in a poor stable of Bethlehem. And as I am gazing at the star of David which marks the place where Mary gave birth to her son, I suddenly understand that, more than 2,000 years ago, Jesus was born here in order to be born one day in my heart. I understand that God's dream will become true if I allow it to be fulfilled in me. He wants to pitch his tent among men. He wants, this year again, to pitch his tent in me.

**A BLESSED ADVENT SEASON!
AND SOON, MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!**

Isabelle Bonasse is a member of the Notre Dame de Vie Institute. She is French and has been volunteering in John de Britto English Center for the past two years. The above article is a reflection of her experience of visiting the Holy Land recently.

WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Christmas Mass Schedule (Main Church)

DECEMBER 24 (SATURDAY)

12 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM / 7 PM	Japanese Mass
7:30 PM	Vietnamese (at Sophia University)
9 PM	English Mass

DECEMBER 25 (SUNDAY)

7:00 AM / 8:30 AM / 10:00 AM / 6:00 PM	Japanese Mass
12 PM / 4:30 PM	English Mass
1:30 PM	Spanish Mass
3:00 PM	Vietnamese Mass

* Online registration is needed. Maximum seating capacity: 250 seats.

Access the following QR Codes:

Christmas Eve and Day Online Registration

New Year's Day Online Registration

Christmas and New Year's Day Masses Livestreaming



CHURCH WEBSITE & FACEBOOK PAGE



Caroling

As for the past years, on Christmas Eve, the youth, led by the SIIYM, will have caroling on the Church lawn in between Masses. Come and join, sing your heart out, to ease the nostalgia of being away from home this Christmas!



January Events

- January 1**
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass follows the regular Sun. schedule
- January 8**
Solemnity of The Epiphany of the Lord; Church New Year's Celebration
- January 22**
Mass in honor of Sto. Niño (The Child Jesus)
- January 29**
SIIYM Anniversary
- And still more... February 5, John de Britto Center Anniversary!

End of the Year Retreat

Now, you would not want to miss this! Read the details.



The Need of Happiness is the Need of God

AN ENGLISH YEAR-END RETREAT with Fr. Irinel Dobos, OFM Conv.

DECEMBER 31, SATURDAY

ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH (YOTSUYA, TOKYO)
10AM - 5PM (DOORS OPEN AT 9:45AM)

ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR ATTENDING STARTS ON DECEMBER 18 (MAX. 80 PARTICIPANTS ONLY). PLEASE VISIT [HTTP://WWW.STIGNATIUS.JP/EN/](http://www.stignatius.jp/en/)

The Need of Happiness is the Need of God

AN ENGLISH YEAR-END RETREAT with Fr. Irinel Dobos, OFM Conv.

PROGRAM

10:00-10:15	Spiritual preparation in silence
10:15-11:05	Happiness in the Bible and in the Lives of Saints (A Presentation by Fr. Irinel Dobos, OFM Conv.)
11:05-11:30	Break or Personal Prayer Time
11:30-12:30	Small Group Session and Confession
12:30-13:30	Lunch (not provided)
13:30-14:30	Adoration Before the Blessed Sacrament and Confession
14:30-14:45	Break or silent reflection time
14:45-15:45	Q&A with Fr. Irinel and Synthesis of the Retreat
15:45-16:00	Break or silent reflection time
16:00-17:00	Holy Eucharist

Fr. Irinel Dobos, born to a Catholic family in the then communist country of Romania, is a member of The Order of Friars Minor Conventual. He was ordained priest on 24 June 2014 and served in several Franciscan communities in Italy, France, and Chile as chaplain, confessor, parochial vicar, religious teacher, and spiritual director.

In May 2015, after a deeply moving experience with hidden Japanese Christians, he asked his superiors to be sent to Japan as a missionary. After 7 years of waiting, his request was finally granted and he arrived in Tokyo on 4 September 2022.

Pope's Prayer Intentions

December: For Non-Profit Organizations

We pray that volunteer non-profit organizations committed to human development find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation.

January: For Educators

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

Mass Intentions

December 24 & 25

We pray for the suffering children around the world. In the birth of Jesus, may we rejoice together and live in peace and love of neighbor.

January 1

We pray for all gathered in the church to pray, and wherever you are. May each one receive grace and strength from the Word of the God, share and walk together with hope.

SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM THE FAMILY OF ST. IGNATIUS



主のご降誕、おめでとうございます！



Staff of St. Ignatius Church

Pastor: Fr. Saturnino Ochoa , S.J.

Associate and Support Priests:

Fr. Kiyoshi Shibata S.J.

Fr. Bony James S.J.

Fr. Manuel Silgo S.J.

Fr. Generoso Florez S.J.

Fr. Javier Garralda S.J.

Fr. Nguyen Thanh Nha S.J.

Sister: Sr. Ivette Sanchez, M.C.

John de Britto English Center:

Fr. Bony James, S.J.

Director

Sr. Flor Florece, FI.

Coordinator

For all those who made this Bi-monthly Bulletin possible, we express our deepest gratitude. THANK YOU VERY MUCH and GOD BLESS!