



# St. John BEFORE THE LATIN GATE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## JOIN US FOR OUR ADVENT MISSION

*A PATH TO VIRTUE: MOVING FROM MERE KNOWLEDGE TO ABILITY*

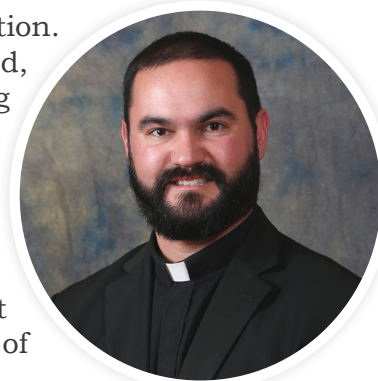
For most of us, this is a season of busy preparation. There are presents to be bought and wrapped, Christmas cards to be addressed and mailed, baking to be done — the list goes on! Yet, far more important than these material preparations is the spiritual preparation to which we are each invited by Mother Church during the Advent season.

Vocations Director for the Diocese of Tulsa and former pastor, Fr. Michael Pratt, says this is what makes a parish mission so fitting during this time of year. It provides us each with a tangible way to unplug from the world's pervasive materialism in order to truly prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's birth.

"Advent is a season of preparation for the Church," Fr. Pratt says. "We are preparing to celebrate the birth of our Lord. So to take time to step away from that world and focus on our faith lives is very appropriate."

Having been away from St. John Before the Latin Gate for more than two years, Fr. Pratt is eager to return as the presenter for this year's Advent Mission. It will take place Dec. 9-11 and will center on the theme *A Path to Virtue: Moving from Mere Knowledge to Ability*.

"I'm excited for us to be able to take three nights away from the busyness of life in order to focus together on a specific theme and really go after it —



*Having been away from his St. John Before the Latin Gate family for some time, Fr. Michael Pratt is eager to return as this year's Advent Mission presenter.*



## STEWARDSHIP

### *Living in Love*

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). As Christ’s disciples, we are called to live lives of love. When asked which commandment is the most important, Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” He immediately followed this command with, “Love your neighbor as yourself. No commandment is greater than these” (Mk 12:29-31).

The life of a Christian is, essentially, all about love! This doesn’t mean that Christ preached an abstract Gospel, or that we need to love simply because “it feels good.” The reality is quite the opposite. Indeed, Christ’s Gospel of love is one of dramatic action, and living in that love calls each of us to action.

What is this love, then, of which Christ speaks? How are we to live it out today?

Christ, the God who, as John tells us, “is love” Himself, came to Earth out of pure love for us. So that we might have everlasting life, Christ took the punishment for our sins. He, the Lord of all creation, was mocked, scourged and ultimately murdered on the cross to atone for the sins that we, His creatures, have committed. Now, that’s love! And it is the love that we are called to imitate throughout our lives.

Notice the selfless nature of Jesus’ act. He gained nothing in return for what He did, and He calls us to love in the same manner. How do we do that here and now? Do we die on our own personal crosses? The answer, in a way, is “yes.” We don’t necessarily die on the wood of the literal cross as Christ did,

but we must die to self for the sake of others. That is the love of Christ, and that is the love He calls us to every day. If we want to truly love God, we must love others. God Himself showed us the reality of this need when he commanded that we love our neighbor just as we love Him. And then Christ explained, “Whatever you do to the least of those, you do to me.” If we are called to love God, then we are called to love our neighbor, for Christ resides in each one of us. It must be a love like Christ has shown us – one of selflessness. We should want for nothing more than the good of our neighbor.

There are many ways that we can show our love to others, particularly through prayer and service. Here at our parish, there are many ministries that offer us the opportunity to serve our neighbors. If we offer a little time, we can help out in the parish office doing seemingly menial yet important tasks, such as stuffing inserts into the bulletins so that fellow parishioners are aware of news and events within the parish. Those of us with an aptitude for teaching may be called to serve others through RCIA or our Religious Education program. There is also always a need for more lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist to aid the priest in bringing Christ to other parishioners at Mass.

These are but a few of the countless opportunities we have to serve our parish and local community. However we are called to do so, one thing is for certain: the love of Christ calls us to action. How will we show our love for God this year? Remember, “Whatever you do for the least of those, you do for me.”

### *A Letter From Our Pastor*

## A STEWARD’S RESPONSE TO THE ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS GIFT

Dear Parishioners,

Christmas is America’s favorite holiday. Consider for a moment the amount of effort we put into the holiday — decorating our homes with ornate light displays, buying boxes upon boxes of presents, addressing Christmas cards and attending seasonal get-togethers. When taken all together, it staggers the imagination. Whatever might happen to be next on the list of “favorite holidays” — Valentine’s Day, Halloween or Thanksgiving — it can’t hold a candle to our investment in Christmas.

Don’t get me wrong — I love Christmas, too. But I’m afraid that many of us somehow miss the main reason for our Christmas celebrations.

I’ve sometimes heard people say things like, “Getting everything ready for Christmas becomes so hectic, I don’t want to do it every year. But, you know, Christmas is really for the children.” And occasionally, I’ve heard or read in a letter to the editor that Christmas is about the hope that a newborn baby brings

to the world. Even in the early winter, when the days are short, we can celebrate babyhood, a new human life.

Both those sentiments are wrong because they’re too limited. Of course, it’s true that many of our Christmas customs are for the children — we might not get to hang our stockings to be filled by Santa Claus otherwise. And it’s true that the birth of a baby, any baby, brings joy and hope to all those around. Yes, many of our Christmas celebrations are centered on the children, and the birth of a child offers a promise for the future.

At Christmas, we celebrate not just any baby, but a particular baby. We celebrate His birth not because it’s cute to see a baby in a manger filled with hay and surrounded by farm animals — instead, we celebrate this birth because of Who this baby is and what He did as an adult, for *all* of us.

A human baby is certainly a wonderful creation, made in the image of God. But Jesus is more than that, not less, for He is God

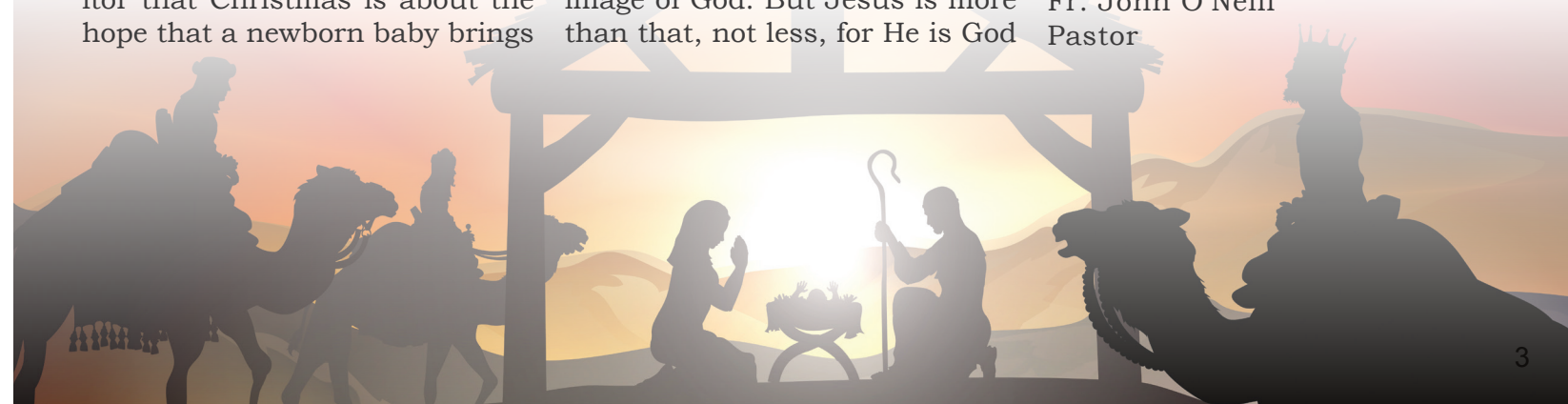
the Son who took on human nature in order to redeem us from the results of the sin into which we had fallen. He didn’t stay a baby. He grew up and taught and preached and healed. Finally, He was put to death “for our sake,” as the Creed affirms, and rose from the dead. That’s why we celebrate His birth more than 2,000 years later. That’s why normal routines are suspended for a few joyful days each year.

In response to the gift the Father gave us with the birth of His Son, we joyfully exchange gifts with each other, share with the poor, and offer our gifts of time, talent and treasure to the Church. God gives to us — and as stewards, we must do our best to faithfully use those gifts.

A joyful and blessed Christmas to all of you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. John O’Neill  
Pastor





## ROLAND AND MARGE HARRISON REFLECT ON A LIFETIME OF FAITH AND SERVICE:

### “Our Duty to God”

When Roland Harrison arrived in Bartlesville for a job interview over 50 years ago, the first thing he did was to find a Catholic parish and school that his family could call home. For Roland and his wife, Marge, this was their top priority — finding a strong faith community in which to raise their children. And at St. John Before the Latin Gate, they found just that — and much, much more.

Roland and Marge made the move here from their native Austin, Texas, in 1958. At the time, Marge was expecting their fourth child. The couple would go on to have seven children total, with their family life centering on our parish.

“Roland and I were cradle Catholics, and we have just been trying to follow God and the Church ever since day one,” Marge says. “All our children went through the parish school, so our life has been around St. John. We’re probably historians at St. John because we’ve been here so long!”

Over the years, the Harrisons have been involved in numerous parish ministries and activities. Roland participated in the Knights of Columbus and the Men’s Club and was a leader in the Cub Scouts for many years. Marge stayed busy volunteering at the school and with the Women’s Association. She taught religious education, sang with the choir, and was instrumental in putting together and running the parish library. She was also a part of the

Rosary group that began in parishioners’ homes and now meets at the church on Thursdays.

With their dedicated involvement in church life, St. John soon became a second home for the Harrison family.

“We had lots of friends in the parish and they had big families, too,” Marge says. “It was just one big family, with lots of children and all of us trying to do what God wanted us to do. And of course, we have the Eucharist, and that is what we center everything on.”

Both Roland and Marge were raised by parents who modeled an active faith life. Although they attended the same church and parish school in Austin, their four-year age difference meant that they didn’t know each other as children. However, Marge remembers seeing Roland serve as an altar boy, and recalls him being so small that everyone wondered how he would ever be able to hold the large liturgical books for the priest!

In 1945, the two would finally meet at a square dancing venue as teenagers.

“I watched her one night out dancing and swinging around by herself, and I thought, ‘I’m going to marry that girl someday,’” Roland says. “But in July, they dropped the bomb the week after I turned 18, and I was in a uniform by December. The Army sent me to do office work because I could type. That was 75 miles from home, but we got

Saturday night and Sunday off, so I was able to get a bus home and dance with her on the weekends.”

Following his year in the Army, Roland began saving up for marriage while attending college and then graduate school. In 1951, he and Marge were wed. At the time, they could never have predicted how greatly their marriage would be blessed. Today, they have been married for almost 70 years and have 7 children, 21 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren!

From the very beginning of life together, the Harrisons deeply valued the gift of life. To this day, they count their large family as their greatest blessing. In 1973, the couple was heartbroken by the decision of Roe v. Wade. Searching for a way to help mothers facing unexpected pregnancies, Marge learned about an organization called Birthright. She and a friend from the St. John Women’s Association worked to open a branch of this non-profit in Bartlesville. Thanks to them, by 1976, our local Birthright was bringing much-needed love and resources to countless expectant mothers.

Marge went on to spend more than 40 years volunteering with this pro-life organization so close to her heart.

“We were dyed-in-the-wool that this is God’s world and we have to do what He wants,” she says of herself and her husband. “We knew that every

child that God sent us was a treasure, and we figured if God sent them, He would take care of them because they were His children. Roland and I were blessed with good parents and tried to pass that on. We’re a big and close family. We wanted all of our children to have the faith and God in their lives — that was the most important thing.”

Since they first joined our faith family here at St. John, the Harrisons have now spent a full lifetime in service to our parish. Although the couple is slowing down — as Marge points out, they now serve mainly through their constant prayers for everyone in the parish — their faith remains as strong as ever.

“My whole life, God has blessed me,” Roland says. “We’re just happy we’re here, and we’ll continue as long as we can. God puts us in certain places, and we just try to do the best we can. I still wonder what God wants me to do, and we’re finding out all the time — even me, at age 92.”

St. John is greatly blessed to call the Harrisons “family,” and all of us at the parish are grateful for their incredible model of faith in action.

“We never called it ‘time, talent and treasure’ — we just called it our duty to God,” Marge says. “It’s called time, talent and treasure today, but it’s the same thing. We’re still on our game, and we’re still going!”



*Roland and Marge Harrison have been parishioners for over 50 years.*



*Over the years, Roland and Marge Harrison have been involved in numerous parish ministries and activities.*

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*— Roland Harrison*



## MASS REVERENCE & ETIQUETTE

For many of us, when we are invited to a wedding, one of our first considerations is “what am I going to wear?” We wouldn’t think of showing up at a formal event in our workout clothes. How many of us search for just the right outfit to wear to our annual office party or on a date? Compare that to how much thought we put into what we wear to Mass on Sunday.

How we dress for an occasion indicates the importance that we place upon that particular celebration. At Mass, we encounter God through the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Dressing appropriately for Mass is one way that we show respect both for God and for our faith family. And this respect is important at all Masses – no matter what time of day or night.

Think about what you are teaching your children when you all wear your “Sunday clothes” to Mass. You are reminding them that Mass is a special celebration. After all, we are going to Jesus’ house.

Some people may quickly point out that Mass shouldn’t be a fashion show – a place to show off your finery – and they are right! We also know that some parishioners come to Mass on their way home from work, and they certainly should not feel embarrassed about arriving at Mass in their work clothes. And no one should ever stay away from Mass because of simplicity of clothing.

But one rule should apply in all instances – our attire at Mass should always be modest. Our clothing should never distract others from what we are gathered together to celebrate – the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

The celebration of Mass is always a holy occasion and thus should be treated in the most holy manner – in body, mind and spirit.



## CELEBRATING THE PATRONESS OF THE AMERICAS:

### *Our Lady of Guadalupe*

Nearly 500 years ago in Mexico, the Blessed Mother appeared to a Mexican peasant farmer named Juan Diego, speaking his native tongue, and asking him to implore the bishop to build a church on Tepeyac Hill, the site of a former Aztec temple, that she might intercede for the suffering of her children in Mexico.

In order to convince the bishop, the Blessed Mother sent the humble man with a sign, a cloak, or “tilma” filled with beautiful roses which, in the dead of winter, could only be explained by a miracle. When Juan Diego arrived to give the message and the roses to the bishop, the flowers fell from his tilma, revealing a miraculous image of the Virgin Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In 1946, Pope Pius XII, decreed Our Lady of Guadalupe to be “Patroness of all the Americas” and her feast day is celebrated annually on Dec. 12, all over the world, and in a special way here at St. John Before the Latin Gate.

This year, we will celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 8, the Sunday before the feast. The festivities will begin with a procession from Bartlesville High School to St. John’s. The procession will begin at 12 p.m., with people gathering at 11:30 a.m. The procession will be accompanied by a traditional Mexican

band, *matachines* (traditional Mexican dancers) and 70 horses. After the procession, Mass will be celebrated at 2:00 p.m. with the bishop, as well as our parish priests. Following the Mass, there will be a reception with food, fellowship and a mariachi band. All are welcome to participate in these special events, joining those who gather from surrounding areas, and as far away as Tulsa.

“The celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe is very significant to our community because the image itself is a powerful symbol of devotion,” says Associate Pastor Fr. Carlos Loaiza. “Our Lady of Guadalupe reminds us of our identity, not only as Mexicans or Latinos, but as believers.”

These celebrations serve as a reminder of the beauty of our faith, and during the season of Advent, invite us to grow closer to our Blessed Mother who draws us to her Son, Jesus.

“These celebrations help people to grow in their faith, because this is the faith of their parents and grandparents,” Fr. Carlos says. “When people are growing up in the United States, sometimes they don’t have time to attend Mass because they have different activities — but with this celebration, Our Lady of Guadalupe gathers all families together.



“These celebrations remind them that God is there for us and that our Mother takes us to Jesus Christ,” he adds.

Cultural celebrations such as Our Lady of Guadalupe are an opportunity for people of all different cultures to come together, celebrating the beauty and diversity of our faith. These moments are a chance to learn more about one another, as well as encounter the rich history and tradition of Catholicism, as practiced around the world. All parishioners are encouraged to come and join in the festivities surrounding the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“We are from different Latino countries, but we gather all together in one faith, in one Hispanic faith and tradition, and it doesn’t matter where people come from or what color they are — on that day, everybody gets together,” says Everardo Ramirez, our Hispanic Ministry Coordinator. “It’s a beautiful celebration that Our Lady of Guadalupe has the power to gather all people together.”

For more information of the celebrations surrounding the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, contact Hispanic Ministry Coordinator, Everardo Ramirez, at 918-336-4353.



# St. John BEFORE THE LATIN GATE



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## Advent Mission *continued from front cover*

to focus on those virtues which enable us to live a life of Christ,” Fr. Pratt says. “This is a very fitting theme, I think, as we prepare for Christmas.”

Each evening’s talk will begin promptly at 7 p.m. in the church, taking a practical approach on the nature of sin, how to combat it, and finally the secret weapons which enable us to live out virtuous behaviors. Lasting approximately 30-45 minutes, Fr. Pratt hopes to provide parishioners with practical tools on how to embrace virtuous living, thus enabling them to more fully embrace the Christian lifestyle.

“I’m eager for this chance to reconnect with parishioners and to see some familiar faces — to have conversations with them about faith and virtue,” he says. “But most importantly, I’m hoping that it will help their Advent season. That it will help them

prepare to truly celebrate the birth of our Lord a few weeks later.”

All parishioners are encouraged to take advantage of this Advent Mission and to step away from their hectic lives for just a bit in order to focus their hearts and minds on the true source of love and happiness. This is a wonderful opportunity to carve out some time for our Lord during this holiday season, so that we may truly be ready to welcome Him on Christmas morning.

“Your faith is worth it,” Fr. Pratt says. “It’s worth scheduling — worth giving God this extra time. And when we say ‘yes’ to giving God extra time, He will always take advantage of it and bless our lives. I know everyone has obligations and it can be hard, especially this time of year. But it’s absolutely worth it.”

Please refer to the parish bulletin for more information about St. John Before the Latin Gate’s Advent Mission, or contact the parish office at 918-336-4353.

## LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Saturday:** 5 p.m. | **Sunday:** 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. (*en Español*)

**Tuesday:** 7 a.m. (*chapel*) | **Wednesday:** 5:15 p.m. (*church*) | **Thursday:** 7 a.m. (*chapel*)

**Friday:** 8:15 a.m. (*church during school year/non-school days in chapel*)

**Reconciliation:** Saturday: 4-4:45 p.m. | Sunday: 12:30-1:15 p.m.