

Heart Beats



Newsletter Of The International Community Of Sacred Heart Cathedral

November - December 2015

**“May the words of our mouths (and those we write) and the meditations of our hearts,
be pleasing in Thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer” - Psalm 19:14**

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Parishioner,

Whilst walking through the streets of Yokohama, Tokyo or even nearby Motomachi these days, we see gorgeous illuminations and carols being played reminding us that Christmas is round the corner once again. However, as Catholics, we focus our attention primarily on the season of preparation i.e. Advent.

The season of Advent leads us to a deeper understanding of the meaning of Christ's birth in our midst, and that is depicted in the manner in which we celebrate Christmas. During Advent, we must take our relationship with the Lord even deeper which will show itself in our relationships with one another.

Advent comprises the four Sundays before Christmas day, symbolized by the four violet & rose candles around the Christmas wreath that are lit on each particular Sunday. Each Sunday corresponds to the long years that the Israelites endured waiting for the promised Messiah.

Those who waited in humility and trust were led to the lowly manger and witnessed the magnificent mercy of God in a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes that wintry night. The likes of Herod and the people who refused to acknowledge the power of God in humility and love missed this marvelous event. Those people never expected God to come in place so poor and so abandoned.

So as we enter Advent, let us reflect on the gospel of the manger in all its simplicity and poverty. Let us go back to the experiences of the people who were led to and gathered around the Nativity. Ponder on the experience of the woman who gave birth to the child in the midst of all the fear and anxieties from those who persecuted and ridiculed her. Imagine Joseph who lost honor, maybe family, friends and livelihood for standing beside the woman at the behest of the angel. Look back into the lives of those shepherds who keep vigil all night watching their sheep and then simply believed and worshipped the new born King gifting Him their only treasure - their sheep.

By observing Advent in the proper manner, may our hearts be transformed by reaching out to the suffering and needy. Let this Advent be an occasion to reflect on our lifestyles and our practice of the Christian faith. While we regularly watch in the news all the thousands of people affected by disasters and human cruelty, should we not spend less on shopping for what is unnecessary and instead give more to what is charitable?

Should we not turn away from all our grumblings and instead have a heart that is always grateful? Should we not set aside hatred and indifference and instead focus more on ways in which we can reach out to one another in mercy and compassion?

Continued

Bishop of the Diocese	: Most Rev. Raphael Umemura, DD
Parish Rector	: Fr Keisuke Suzuki
Parish Assistant	: Fr Roed Desamparado, CM
Mass Schedule (Japanese)	: Daily Mass at 07:00 on weekdays
	: Sunday Mass at 07:30 & 11:30
	: Sunday Mass at 18:00 on Saturdays
Mass Schedule (English)	: Sunday Mass at 09:30
Mass Schedule (Spanish)	: Sunday Mass at 14:00 on the second Sunday of every month (except August)

Here at Sacred Heart Cathedral, there are many who struggle with loneliness, discrimination, meaninglessness and financial insecurity. And somehow, it is a human experience – each person has his or her own problems. That is why we strive hard to bring our community together to essentially bring Christ’s presence into our midst by continually helping, encouraging and sustaining one another.

Lastly, there is always that invitation to get involved to give light and life to the vibrancy of our community as God’s family. And on behalf of our parish priest, Fr Suzuki, I am grateful to all those who contributed and will contribute on many occasions to enable our church community walk the narrow road towards Him.

Let peace reign in us!

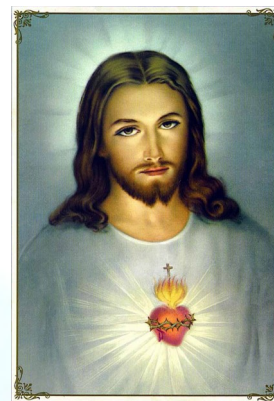
Fr Roed Desamparado

Jesus
is the
Reason
for the
Season



Prayer of Consecration To The Sacred Heart Of Jesus

- Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque



I give myself and consecrate to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, my person and my life, my actions, pains and sufferings, so that I may be unwilling to make use of any part of my being other than to honour, love and glorify the Sacred Heart. This is my unchanging purpose, namely, to be all His, and to do all things for the love of Him, at the same time renouncing with all my heart whatever is displeasing to Him.

I therefore take You, O Sacred Heart, to be the only object of my love, the guardian of my life, my assurance of salvation, the remedy of my weakness and inconstancy, the atonement for all the faults of my life and my sure refuge at the hour of death.

Be then, O Heart of goodness, my justification before God the Father, and turn away from me the strokes of his righteous anger. O Heart of love, I put all my confidence in You, for I fear everything from my own wickedness and frailty, but I hope for all things from Your goodness and bounty.

Remove from me all that can displease You or resist Your holy will; let your pure love imprint Your image so deeply upon my heart, that I shall never be able to forget You or be separated from You.

May I obtain from all Your loving kindness the grace of having my name written in Your Heart, for in You I desire to place all my happiness and glory, living and dying in bondage to You.

Sweet Heart of Jesus, make my heart like unto Thine! Amen.

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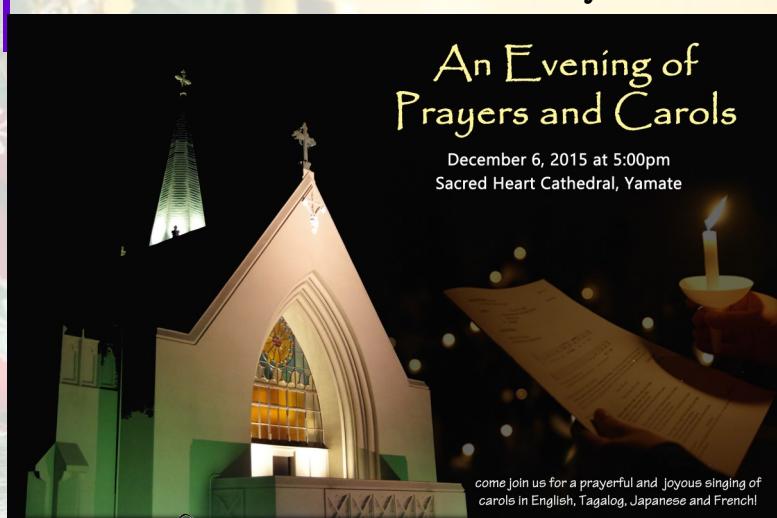
Evening of Carols

Inviting one and all to our annual parish Advent cum Christmas tradition – an Evening of Carols interspersed with prayer followed by a potluck dinner. We will begin in the church sanctuary itself with carols being sung in French, Japanese, Tagalog besides English following which we will move to the basement for dinner. Each family is requested to bring a dish and drinks to share with about four to five people.

Date : December 06

Time : 5:00 pm onwards

Venue : Sacred Heart Cathedral sanctuary & basement



Mass For the Schedule Season

December 24:

8:00 pm - Japanese Christmas Eve Mass at Futaba School Auditorium

9:30 pm - English Carols at Sacred Heart Cathedral

10:00 pm - English Christmas Eve Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral

December 25:

7:30 am - Japanese Mass

9:30 am - English Mass

11:30 am - Japanese Mass with Bishop Umemura

January 1, 2016:

9:30 am - English Mass

11:30 am - Japanese Mass with Bishop Umemura

- * There will be Confession **thirty minutes before each mass during the Sundays in Advent**
- * English Confession is also available during the First Friday Holy Hour - on **December 4 from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm**

Please help us clean our Church!

Date : Saturday, December 05

Time : 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Lunch will be served.



A Festival of NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

The Festival of "Nine Lessons and Carols" is a traditional format for a Christian worship service in Advent. Each of the lessons narrate the series of events in the history of God's plan of salvation - from the fall of man to God's covenant with Abraham, Isaiah's prophecies about the coming Messiah through the seed of Jesse (David) until the time He actually arrives, culminating at the nativity scene - through nine readings from the Word of God interspersed with choral singing comprising hymns and carols.

This format was based on an order drawn up by Edward White Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, for Christmas Eve 1880 in Truro, Cornwall. It has since been adapted and used by other churches all over the world. This lovely tradition has been kept alive in the Bluff area of Yokohama since the mid 1950s. And in the 1970s, Fr John Berg combined the choirs of Christ Church and Sacred Heart Cathedral to form a joint choir to sing at this Advent service. Though he left in 2005, this joint effort continues in the spirit of friendship between the two churches whilst celebrating the good news together.

This year it will take place on Sunday, December 13 at 6:00 p.m. at Yokohama Christ Church in front of the foreign cemetery. Choirs of Christ Church and Sacred Heart will sing 13 hymns and carols together, many with the congregation, and four to five of the lessons shall be read by Sacred Heart parishioners and by Fr. Roed.

You all are invited to this beautiful festival for the Christmas season.



Welcome Potluck Party



After a long and hot summer, the international community gathered in the church basement on September 5th to welcome returning and new members to Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Everyone brought a dish to share potluck style. We had food from France, the Philippines, India, Mexico, Spain, the U.S. and more. It was all yummy and so nice to share and feast together.

At the dinner, people had the opportunity to put faces to the names of the leaders of various ministries and find out how to get involved in the parish activities. Don't forget all ministries are open to new participants at any time, so you can still get involved and participate when you can.

We also enjoyed wonderful entertainment with lilting song and dance from the Filipino community including a Hawaiian dance, and a rousing chorus of songs from our French community.

Finally, every one's knowledge of Sacred Heart Cathedral was tested in our first ever official Sacred Heart Quiz Bowl! The winning team got to share a giant bag of candy and a 24 pack of American micro-brewed beer.

If you didn't make it to the welcome dinner, be sure to make it for our second potluck of the year on December 6th - which is our annual Christmas party with carol-singing, Santa and more.

All in all, it was an evening of fun, games, entertainment, prizes, and most importantly COMMUNITY. A big thank you to everyone who helped to make this event a success, arigatou gozaimashita!

Katherine Kelly

Church Charity Bazaar 2015 Financial Report

Income:	October 24-25	Gross Sales	Expenses	Total Net	50%
	Hot dogs	Y 217,800	Y 87,000	Y 130,800	(Y65,400)
	Bake goods	Y 138,120		Y 138,120	(Y69,060)
	Filipino Foods	<u>Y 379,900</u>	<u>Y 180,900</u>	<u>Y 199,000</u>	<u>(Y99,500)</u>
	Total	<u>Y 735,820</u>	<u>Y 267,900</u>	<u>Y 467,920</u>	<u>(Y233,960)</u>
Total Net Income:				Y 467,920	
Less:	Donation				
	50% Yamate Church		Y233,960		
	50% International Community		<u>Y233,960</u>		
	Council Welfare Fund				
			Y467,920		0



Church Charity Bazaar

At 10:30 pm on Sunday, October 25, I can safely say the 2015 Annual Sacred Heart Bazaar is now behind us, mostly!

The parish international community via the International Community Council (ICC) put up two booths this year. Once again, we had our regular homemade baked goods for sale. Many individuals donated cakes, cookies, pies, tarts and more to sell. Tempting sweet treats were had by all bazaar goers both days.

Besides that, this year we had an additional booth – one selling hot dogs and beer to replace the regular burgers. We had three different kinds of hot dogs: a traditional All-American Hot Dog, a Chicago-style Hot Dog, and a Cincinnati Chili Coney Island Hot Dog. In total, we sold 400 hot dogs and all were gone by 1:45 pm on Sunday. Again, we could not have succeeded without the help of many.



The booths made a net income of 467,920 yen with half going to the Church and the other half going to the ICC Welfare Fund.

It takes many hours to bring about a successful bazaar, from planning and coordinating, to shopping, to baking and cooking weeks beforehand. And then the final week where the booths are staged the Sunday before, the tents are stood up on Thursday afternoon, on late Friday afternoon and early Saturday morning, items are moved out of storage in various locations to the booths, then on Saturday morning, it is time to hurry up and actually set up the sale tables and the BBQs, and then secure the items on Saturday night (no naughty crows stealing our buns!), and of course, selling items all day both days, taking down the booths and tables and returning them to storage on Sunday night, and finally returning the rented items still even later on Sunday night.

As I write this, more hours lay ahead with the clean-up and washing of dishes, pots, and utensils here at home and at an even later date when we take time to straighten up the ICC closet in the church basement. Nevertheless, all has been or will be accomplished in due time.

Why do we do it? Why do we work so hard? Well, I think I do it to follow St Ignatius Loyola's motto: "For the greater glory of God: *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.*"

Perhaps, you are also inspired by St Ignatius's motto? Maybe his motto will push you to step up and lead one of the ICC booths for next year's bazaar. The work is not hard, especially when we remember to offer up every task "for the greater glory of God"- for then, in the end the result is peace and satisfaction in all that we do.

Thank you again everyone!

Katherine Kelly



Parish News & Events



The Rosaries held at each home during the past couple of months

Block Rosary

On November 27, we will celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, manifested to Saint Catherine Laboure of France in the year 1830. The Medal of the Immaculate Conception (popularly known as the Miraculous Medal) was designed by the Blessed Virgin herself! No wonder, then that it wins such extraordinary graces for those who wear it and pray for Mary's intercession.



Inspired by Fr Roed, we started our block rosary here at Sacred Heart Cathedral on July 27, 2013. We carry the icon of the Miraculous Virgin Mary from house to house, we pray the rosary together with the host family, we offer our petitions, pray the Perpetual Novena to our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Then, we read the gospel for the day and share what the Holy Spirit inspires us to share. We learn a lot from each person's sharing enriching our spiritual lives.

If you would like to have the block rosary group pray together in your house, please call Nelly Kato at 080- 3480-5045 or Menchie Suzuki at 080-3547-5769 and we can arrange a schedule at your convenience.

Nelly Kato

Sacred Tradition

EXTRAORDINARY
JUBILEE OF MERCY
DEC. 8, 2015 - NOV. 20, 2016



"IT WILL BE A HOLY YEAR OF MERCY."
POPE FRANCIS

The Jubilee Year of The Church

This December 13th, 2015 prior to the 11:30 am mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, our good bishop Reverend Raphael Umemura, DD will symbolically open the Main Door of the Cathedral marking the beginning of our observance of the "Jubilee Year of Mercy" here in the Yokohama Diocese. This is in keeping with the "Jubilee Year of Mercy" which will commence with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8th) and will end on the feast of Christ the King next year (November 2016).

This observance of the Jubilee year is rooted in Hebrew tradition and recorded in the book of Leviticus 25. It occurs every 50 years and was meant to restore equality among all children of Israel, freedom for slaves and prisoners and debts cancelled.

In Catholic tradition however, the Jubilee year occurs every 25 years. It was started by Pope Boniface VIII in the year 1300. During that time, Pope Boniface conceived the Jubilee year to be celebrated once every century. However, from 1475 onwards, the Jubilee year was celebrated every 25 years. The reason was to allow each generation a chance to experience at least one Jubilee year.

Unlike the original practice of the Jubilee year in Biblical tradition, the celebration of the Jubilee year takes a more spiritual significance today. We now look at this yearlong celebration as an opportunity to deepen our faith and to follow Christ with a renewed commitment.

In this Jubilee year, Pope Francis has asked that we focus on our God of Mercy. Therefore, "Mercy" is the main theme of this Jubilee Year based on the Paul's letter to the Ephesians 2:4, "God rich in Mercy".

On a side note, Pope Francis indeed sounded the clarion call to save our fallen world through the mercy of God and the virtue of mercy in each of us. In his Lenten message this year, Pope Francis said: "How greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present, especially our parishes and our communities, may become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!"

Fr Roed Desamparado



Egypt and Exodus - 2

The tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, brought about the Passover. If you are not familiar with the text, I recommend that you reread Exodus 12; it is more like the rubrics one has to follow during a sacred ceremony, yet utterly essential for our own understanding of what is the sacrificial Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ who poured out his blood for our Salvation. Israel was to obey God's instructions and "keep this service" (observe this rite as a lasting ordinance).

This word "service" is the same word used in chapter 1 for slavery. This service to God differs from "service" to Pharaoh. Israel was to serve God not by the unceasing, backbreaking work ordered by Pharaoh, but by carrying the remembrance of God's redemption with them, representing it each year, teaching it to their children. "When your children ask you, "What does this rite of yours mean?" you shall reply, "This is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt; when he struck down the Egyptians, he spared our houses".

One wishes that most Catholic parents take the time to explain lovingly to their children the sacred rites that are performed at their home or at their local church. Each generation was to be formed, instructed by the Passover. It became part of their identity. They are a chosen people, redeemed by God from darkness and slavery to worship him. Today, we show our "service" to God through the liturgy, which literally is "the work of the people." We eat bread and drink wine (in reality, the body and blood of Christ) as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice similar to the way that at Passover, Israel eats lamb as a memorial of the Passover sacrifice.

The faith of Israel was put to the test when in the desert "Pharaoh and his chariots and charioteers" pursued them. They cried out: "Far better for us to be the slaves of the Egyptians than to die in the desert." Moses answered the people, "Fear not! Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the Lord will win for you today. These Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again. The Lord himself will fight for you. You have only to keep still." (Ex 14:12-14). "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord swept the sea with a strong east wind throughout the night and so turned it into dry land. When the water was thus divided, the Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry land, with the water like a wall to their right and to their left." (21-23)

Later after their ordeal, Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord in Exodus chapter 15: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea. My strength and my courage is the Lord and he has been my savior. He is my God, I praise him; the God of my father, I extol him. The Lord is a warrior, Lord is his name! Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into the sea; the elite of his officers were submerged in the Red Sea. The flood waters covered them; they sank into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, has shattered the enemy. (1-6) Who is like unto you among the gods, O Lord? Who is like unto you, magnificent in holiness? (11) In your mercy you led the people you redeemed; in your strength you guided them to your holy dwelling." (13)

The Exodus is a grand example of the way the Church reads the Old and New Testaments in light of each other to gain greater insight into God's plan of salvation. Egypt is analogous to the state of sin and separation from God that enslaves all descendants of Adam and Eve. Pharaoh appears as a "seed of the Serpent" in the garden of Goshen, biting at the heels of God's children and epitomizing the lures of the devil to serve someone or something other than God. In the Passover, we can see the necessity of a redeemer and something of the cost of redemption, as well as the Lamb that will substitute the first born. The Red sea dramatizes the drowning of the old master - sin, in the waves, and the birth to a new life as a child of God on the other side.

Who is like unto you among the gods, O Lord? Who is like unto you, magnificent in holiness? In your mercy you led the people you redeemed; in your strength you guided them to your holy dwelling." (Exodus 15:11,13)

Taken from the notes found in **The Great Adventure Bible Study Program** put out by the Ascension Press under Jeff Cavins as the general Editor

Br Michel Beaudoin



Angels & Saints



How blessed are we in the Catholic Church that there seems to be a special saint for just about every illness and health concern we can think of!

The saints are great aids to us in our time of need and help guide us to greater love for Christ through our crosses and trials, especially when it comes to our health. Invoking the intercession of saints is powerful. Here is a list of both popular and not-so-well-known saints to invoke for common ailments and petitions:

- ✠ Addictions – St. Maximilian Kolbe
- ✠ Arthritis – St. Alphonsus Ligouri
- ✠ Babies, Infants, Children's Health – St. Philomena
- ✠ Back Pain – St. Gemma Galgani
- ✠ Breast Cancer – St. Agatha
- ✠ Broken Bones – St. Stanislaus Kostka
- ✠ Burns – St. John the Apostle
- ✠ Cancer – St. Peregrine
- ✠ Chronic Illness and Suffering – St. Lidwina of Schiedam
- ✠ Cramps, Abdominal Pain – St. Erasmus of Formiae (St. Elmo)
- ✠ Diabetes – St. Josemaria Escriva
- ✠ Epilepsy and Seizures – St. Vitus
- ✠ Eye Disorders – St. Lucy
- ✠ Head Injuries – Blessed John Licci
- ✠ Headaches – St. Teresa of Avila
- ✠ Heart Disease, Heart Attack – St. John of God
- ✠ Impossible Causes – St. Jude Thaddeus
- ✠ Infections – St. Agrippina of Mineo
- ✠ Infertility, Miscarriage, Childbirth – St. Gerard
- ✠ Kidney Disease – St. Benedict
- ✠ Lung and Respiratory Problems – St. Bernardine of Siena
- ✠ Obesity, Stomach Ailments – St. Charles Borromeo
- ✠ Pain, Suffering, Healing – St. Pio of Pietrelcina
- ✠ Skin Disease – St. Anthony of the Desert
- ✠ Stress, Anxiety, Mental Health – St. Dymphna
- ✠ Strokes, High Blood Pressure – St. Andrew Avellino
- ✠ Surgery – St. Luke the Evangelist
- ✠ Throat Ailments – St. Blaise
- ✠ Toothache, Dental Problems – St. Apollonia
- ✠ Wounds – St. Rita
- ✠ Lost Articles - St. Anthony of Padua
- ✠ Suitable Employment - St. Joseph
- ✠ Happy & Peaceful Death - St. Joseph
- ✠ Safe Travel - St. Christopher & St. Raphael



BIBLE PEOPLE PAIRS

Try this Bible Word game. It is a Jumble of two Bible figures (e.g. JOMASERPHY = JOSEPH-MARY)

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. DAEAVEM | 2. ODGALVIAITDH | 3. BROUTAHZ | 4. ESJACAOUB |
| 5. PISLAUASL | 6. DESLAIMSLOANH | 7. BACAIELN | 8. SABRAHARAAMH |
| 9. MOAASREONS | 10. LAPARIQLAULISCI | 11. MAAHAMRTRY | 12. SANAPAPNHIIRAAS |
| 13. SISIHAMAAECL | 14. CARLEHEALH | 15. CJOASLHEUBA | |

ANS: 1) Adam-Eve 2) David-Goliath 3) Boaz-Ruth 4) Esau-Jacob 5) Paul-Silas 6) Samson-Delilah 7) Cain-Abel 8) Sarah-Abraham 9) Moses-Aaron 10) Aquila-Priscilla 11) Martha-Mary 12) Ananias-Sapphira 13) Isaac-Ishmael 14) Rachel-Leah 15) Joshua-Caleb





The Spirituality of November

As we fast track towards year end, our beloved 'Mother Church' in her great wisdom, leads our inner and liturgical prayer to contemplate on the reality of the transience of life. The Church Magisterium speaks so clearly through the Catechism, calling our final destination, "the four last things" - *Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven*. Whether we want or not, like or not, we are going to be present at the Last Judgment and receive God's justice at the end of our lives.

During the middle ages, the monks usually greeted one another with these Latin words: *Memento mori*, meaning "remember your mortality" or "remember, that you will die". To reflect on the end of our lives and the afterlife may fill us with fear. It is perfectly natural to experience unsettled feelings and concern regarding the brevity of our existence and the uncertainty of life after death. From the perspective of eternity, our earthly life is very short. But as Christians, we know by experience that *close to God, there is no fear*. In Christ dwells our hope.

These days, we hear a lot of talk about how merciful, compassionate and non-judgmental God is. How nice and safe it makes us feel, doesn't it? But can this safe talk lead us to real salvation? We tend to forget what is clearly stated in the Bible and taught in the Catechism: God's mercy ends in judgment: personal and cosmic judgment. God is merciful but is Justice and Truth.

In the book of Sirach, we find an encouraging and challenging thought that sustains our trust and fidelity to the Lord. "*In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin.*" Sirach 7:36. The Church is not harassing us, when calling us to examine our consciences daily and to confess regularly to prepare for our final calling. We really don't know at what moment and in what circumstance we will be called by God to give an account for our lives. Once we die, that is it.

Our "Catholic God" is not a "God of surprises" as we consider eternal life. He inspired the Bible, He chose prophets and sent messengers all along human history. In His ultimate love, He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, and by divine command, the Apostles, and built the Church to teach and accompany us on the path to eternal life. With great love, God has been sustaining the Catholic Church through trials and suffering in history.

Perhaps for the spiritual times we are living in, an ancient catholic tradition could be revisited. During the rite of coronation of Popes, the new Holy Father, was carried into St Peter's Basilica in the *sedia gestatoria*. The solemn procession would stop three times and one of the servers kneeling and holding up on a rod a piece of burning flax, would say: "*Sancte Pater, sic transit gloria mundi!* ... Holy Father, in this way the glory of the world passes!"

As faithful Catholics, teach your children that life, while a precious, unique gift from God doesn't really belong to us. Instruct them to follow the teachings of the Church and to make an examination of conscience before going to bed and take them to confession.

And more important: "If you are in an irregular situation, for the love of God see your parish priest NOW. If you have some habitual sin that is keeping you from the grace of God, GO TO CONFESSION." - <http://wdtprs.com/blog/2015/02/memento-mori-4/>. The time of mercy and repentance is now".

"Tempus Fugit, Memento Mori," "Time Flies, Remember Death." St Joseph, Patron Saint For A Happy Death, ora pro nobis. O Mary, Mother of grace and Mother of mercy, do thou protect us from our enemy, and receive us at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fr Luiz Antonio de Aguiar



"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations." (Psalm 100)





Mountain Madness

Did you know there are mountains in Tokyo?

Just a few...but mountains all the same!

It's not exactly the image that comes to mind, but Tokyo really has it all - the skyscrapers, the stores, the temples, the parks, the (artificial) beach and... the mountains!

The month of November is when these mountains really come into their own, as they slowly turn beautiful shades of red and yellow, before shedding their leaves and welcoming winter. As revered as the famous cherry blossom season, you really cannot let the months of October or November pass without going to pay homage to the beauty of the season.

For those of us living in Tokyo and Yokohama, this is when it is time to pack our day packs and go find these mountains. The most popular of which is Mt Takao, in the city of Hachioji in western Tokyo. Unfortunately, with popularity come crowds and this is probably one of the busiest places in Tokyo during the weekends in November. If you are happy to deal with the throngs of people though, then a trip to Mt Takao for the autumn leaves really is worth the effort.

Mt Takao, or Takao-san in Japanese, is a small mountain - just 599 metres to be exact. Considering Mt Fuji is 3,776m, then Takao-san really is not very high, making it the perfect choice for a family day out. It is actually also recognized by the Michelin Green Guide travel guidebook for its beauty and accessibility to natural surroundings, and, along with Fuji-san, both have been awarded three stars for several years running.

Not surprisingly, Takao-san is considered a sacred mountain, with visitors worshipping at the Yakuoin Temple, near the summit, for more than 1,000 years. The summit can be reached via a network of trails, all basically taking no more than 90 minutes. For the less energetic, there is also a cable car or chair lift that takes you just over half way up, dropping you near the entrance to the temple, so you don't have to walk far to reach the summit. To be honest though, during Spring and Autumn, the lines for the cable car and chairlift can be horrendous, so I would recommend that you brave the walk.

Of the different routes available, my personal favourite is the Inariyama Trail, to the left of the cable car as you approach the mountain. This unpaved route is more of a hiking trail, winding its way along the ridge line and taking you all the way from the base of the mountain to the summit in less than 90 minutes. You will be guaranteed stunning shades of red and yellow as you pass through this trail. This route does not pass through the temple though, rather it takes you straight to the summit, but you can choose to descend a different route, passing the temple on your way down. Likewise with trail #6, which will pass a waterfall and take you past a marsh area as you wind your way to the top.

For most day trippers however, trail #1 is the preferred route to the top, since it is a paved trail all the way to the summit; passing the cable car and chair lift stations, before going through the temple en route to the summit. It is rather steep though and is the more crowded option on weekends during Autumn. This route will also take you past the monkey park and the famous Takao-san beer garden; two very popular attractions at any time of the year.

On a clear day, beautiful views of Mt Fuji will be waiting for you at the summit - regardless of which route you take to get there. There are lots of picnic tables and stalls selling food and drinks, but you will see that the average visitor will come equipped with a packed lunch. Rather than waste your time lining up for food, I recommend that you also go prepared with your packed lunch and a flask with hot drinks, then sit down and enjoy the view. Yes, it will be crowded...but just soak it up. In a way, it's part and parcel of the experience - it is Tokyo after all!

If you are feeling energetic once you reach the summit of Mt Takao, there are also several other options for traversing the local mountains. Takao-san is just one summit in the Meiji-no-Mori Takao Quasi National Park - a further 45 mins hike from the summit of Mt Takao will take you to the summit of Mt Shiroyama (670m), continuing on further to Mt Kagenobu (727m) and even further to Mt Jimba (857m). This is quite a distance however, with the advertised course time being 5 hours from the summit of Mt Takao - maybe not the best option for a day trip in winter, unless you are planning a very early start.

Continued



Out And About



At any of the summits, you can also exit the trails by descending to bus stops about 1-1.5 hours from the respective summits. Please plan well though and ensure that you research in advance. It's all too easy to get caught up in the beauty of the autumn colours and lose track of time....!!

The summit of Mt Takao is more than enough for a family day trip and when you descend the mountain, make sure you also take the time to enjoy a bowl of hot noodles at any of the small restaurants close to the station. For a really memorable day, another option would be to visit the beautiful Uaki-Toriyama restaurant, a short bus ride from the station (the restaurant provides a shuttle bus). This restaurant is set in traditional Japanese gardens with meals served by kimono-clad staff in small tea houses overlooking the gardens. It is famous for grilled chicken dishes and fresh, seasonal ingredients and is definitely worth a visit - please make sure that you reserve in advance though!

To reach Takao-san from Yokohama:

Yokohama - Hachioji (Yokohama Line - 1hr); Hachioji - Takao (Chuo Line - 7mins); Takao - Takaosanguchi (Keio Takao Line - 2 mins)

Including transfer times, the train journey will take up to 90 mins, costing just over 1,000 yen one way.

The foot of the mountain is just a short walk from the station, with cable car / chair lift stations right by the base. A round trip on either costs 930 yen, taking less than 10 minutes to whisk you up 400 metres. Happy leaf viewing!

Caroline Kennedy

"Heart Beats" invites its readers to share their local adventure spots and holiday picks here. If you would like your article to be published in the next issue, please email the Editor.

Your Recipe Space

Flaming Cheese

(The perfect addition to your holiday menu to wow your guests)

Ingredients :

- ★ 1 lb kasseri cheese (sliced 1/2 inch thick, brick or wheel)
- ★ 2 tablespoons olive oil (more if needed)
- ★ 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- ★ 1/2 cup brandy or 1/2 cup Ouzo
- ★ 2 fresh lemons, cut into wedges
- ★ 4 pita bread, warmed and cut into triangles for serving

Method :

Slice the cheese into 1/2" thick triangles or 1/2" squares (depending on the style you buy). Place brandy into a zip-lock bag and add cheese portions, seal and let marinate for 2 hours). Heat oil in a cast iron skillet over medium / high heat. Remove cheese portions from marinade, reserving marinade for later use. Dredge cheese through the flour, shaking off excess. Fry the cheese slices for approximately two minutes, flip with spatula and fry an additional 1-2 minutes. Remove from heat when nicely seared on each side and gooey.

Now here is where you need to exercise caution - carefully carry the cast iron skillet to the dinner table. Pour one ounce of the brandy marinade over the top of the fried cheese, and immediately set it ablaze with a lighter. Immediately squeeze a lemon slice over the top to dowse the flames.

Serve with warmed pita slices and additional lemon wedges. Enjoy!

Katherine Kelly

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Memories Of My San Diego Christmas

I have always loved Christmas in San Diego. Since my father worked in the Navy for 23 years, we went to the Navy Exchange (a huge department store on base) every weekend. As a young boy, I remember the Christmas season beginning in my mind as soon as we entered the Navy Exchange in San Diego. Many times, I could notice the upcoming season by the holiday goods that were on display throughout the year. As was often the case, for many Navy families, the “Christmas season,” in addition to “Christmas shopping” often started in October as many Christmas items (such as Christmas wrappers, Christmas lights, and Christmas ornaments) were often already on the shelves even before Halloween!

In my family, my mother and sister were in charge of wrapping and labeling all the presents to our friends and family. Then, after all the presents were wrapped, around 7 pm, my father and I would load up the car on Christmas Eve, and then deliver presents to as many as ten or fifteen houses that night. As a young boy, I really enjoyed seeing the “happy and surprised faces” of my relatives and friends as we made a “surprise visit” to their houses on December 24th. Honestly speaking, as a boy, I often felt like a “modern day Santa Claus” with my dad. This always warmed my heart as I could also see my dad’s big smile as he handed each gift to each person.



On Christmas day, every year, my mother prepared a fabulous lunch for all of us. The menu comprised a wide variety of food consisting of Guamanian dishes such as Red Rice (Spanish style), Guamanian marinated beef, Kelaguin (boiled chicken bits sautéed in lemon and many Guamanian spices), Filipino food such as lumpia and punsit, a honey baked ham, barbequed spare ribs (marinated in a special Guamanian family recipe that my mother made the night before) which were cooked with “tender loving care” outside in our open grill in the backyard every Christmas by my father. In addition, for dessert, we also had apple pie, lemon cream pie, pumpkin pie, chocolate brownies or Christmas cupcakes that my sister and mother would also bake on Christmas morning, and an array of other delicious Filipino desserts. This was always the “Espineli family Christmas lunch” that we all looked forward to every year.

Although the years have passed and I’m now living in Japan, memories of my San Diego Christmases are still very dear in my heart. Christmas in San Diego is very warm and many San Diegians are often still wearing shorts and enjoying the beautiful beaches in December. During the Christmas season, I remember the weather in San Diego as being beautiful. In addition, I always enjoyed seeing many people smiling (and sometimes singing Christmas carols) in the shopping malls as they were filled with the “spirit of Christmas.”

However, now that I am older and wiser, I believe that it was not the “spirit of Christmas of gift-giving” that made Christmas special in San Diego. Rather, I believe, it was the “power and love of Jesus” that always seemed to “touch everyone” in a special way during my San Diego Christmas every year.

May your Christmas too be filled with the love of Jesus, and may the joy of celebrating the “birth of Jesus” fill your hearts always. Merry Christmas everyone!

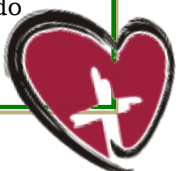
Gilbert Chaco Espineli

Mumbai Memoirs Of Christmas

When growing up in my beloved suburb of Bandra (situated in the bustling sardine-packed city of Mumbai), Christmas came really early! That’s because Christmas programs and rehearsals (whether church or school based) started as early as November! And Carol Singing and the Christmas Midnight Mass choir were the highlights of the Christmas season – even more significant to us than the Christmas Ball on Christmas Day!! So let me share with you what my Christmas is all about.

As part of the parish youth group, we used to organize the Carol Singing going into the four zones of the parish on four consecutive days. Back home, parishes are divided into zones for convenience sake. As a teenager, I remember the huge van hired with loudspeakers blaring out carols, Santa and all of us singers singing along with the CDs. The van would wind its way through the streets and make a long halt at the buildings and colonies that housed our parishioners where we would be greeted and treated to soup or cocoa and biscuits. Most importantly however, it was a witness to all the non-Christians in the neighbourhood of ‘peace and good will to all men’ that the birth of Christ brings. We also carried a collection box with us and the proceeds were given to the orphanages the parish supported. It was one of the most fun things to do and missing Carol Singing for my friends and myself was a crime.

Continued





Regrettably, carol singing on that scale has been discontinued due to traffic and consumer regulations although it still takes place at bazaars and events nowadays.

The Caroling and its organizing weeks prior would be done by 9 pm or so, after which we would make it on time (but quite often not on time - much to the chagrin of our choir director) to the Christmas choir rehearsal beginning at 8 pm and reach home by midnight (standard rehearsal time in Mumbai!). All this singing really put us in the Christmas spirit! Our voices would be hoarse by Christmas Day but who cared!!!

The Christmas Midnight Masses in our churches in Mumbai are always held outdoors in the church grounds to accommodate the several thousands of faithful who gather for the service. Since winter in Mumbai can hardly be described as 'winter' with a temperature averaging around 20° C, an outdoor mass is comfortable. The choirs therefore are also huge, replete with orchestra et al. I remember singing in the same choir as a child and till today, when I go home for the Christmas holidays each year, it is in the same choir that my friends and I continue to sing in - but along with their children too - bringing in and training the next generation in the manner in which we were trained.

The high mass is grand with everyone dressed in their best and it is after mass where parishioners mingle, meet and greet others over coffee and cake. Rarely did we go home directly but stopped for a bite at a bistro or café still open for business. By the time we got home, it was past 3 am but it was then time to open the presents under the Christmas tree.

Typically, we got up late on Christmas Day, but it was always just a family lunch with a roast dish and other assorted dishes such as 'vindaloo' (a Portuguese influenced pork dish), 'foogias' (a kind of hand bread), 'biryani' etc. Curries are certainly part of the menu but in India, each curry has a distinct name and character. It was a lazy day spent wishing relatives on the phone who came by distributing sweets (distributing goodies / sweets used to be quite a tradition back home, although it is a fast dying one). Despite the long lunch, we had to take it easy that day since we would be dancing all night at the Christmas Ball.

The Christmas Dance is held in various hotels, club houses and even some church grounds on December 25th from 9 pm onwards until the wee hours of the morning. Our group of friends would mostly go to the local clubhouse where we would meet all the familiar faces. To this day, we still go for the Dance but not to dance as much as to meet friends settled abroad who all gravitate towards Mumbai during the holiday season.

As a family, we put up Christmas decorations as soon as the Christmas break began. It is mandatory for every Catholic home in Mumbai to hang up the Star Of David outside our windows and many households labour over the making of a crib and then enrol in the parish Crib Competition where they are judged in their creativity in the making of one.

Mom began baking and making Christmas sweets by the beginning of December so she would have enough time to complete the entire array of sweets expected by relatives and friends. Whilst we are Indian, the sweets made by our East Indian Catholic community (the term 'East Indian' coming from the British East India company where our ancestors were employed) are quite different from the typical Indian sweets that you might be familiar with. Our sweets have a strong Portuguese influence (Mumbai being a Portuguese colony long before it was turned over to the British!) so marzipan, milk cream, guava cheese, coconut tarts, pudding, plum cake, etc were all made from scratch at home - which involved slaving over a hot mass bubbling away in a casserole and stirring it for hours until the magically exact moment when it was to be removed from the heat to be cooled and then moulded into appropriate Christmassy forms.

Christmas is also a time for reunions and on my paternal family side, an annual Christmas party during the Christmas week is a must where there is less of chatting and more of singing; and on my maternal family side, it is customary to get together over the New Year holidays. My aunts, uncles and cousins all converge at my aunt's beach cottage where we bring in the New Year with a Thanksgiving Prayer Service and Mass on the beach (with my priest uncles as the in-house celebrants) followed by a beach barbeque. As the families grow, we make sure that we still come together to enjoy extended family time which includes praying together.

Although we've been living in Japan for the past six years, we faithfully make it to Mumbai every Christmas season to spend time with family and carry on these traditions we've grown up with. While some of them are mere memories, many of them are still alive and over the years, have only evolved to become richer. How thankful to God I am for that!

Karen Gomez

