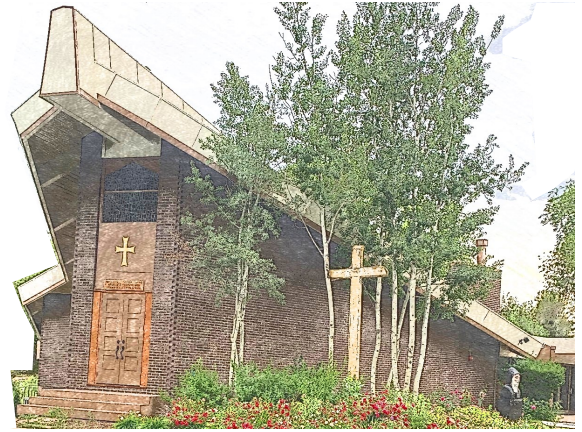


# **St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church**

2301 Wadsworth Boulevard,  
Lakewood, CO 80214

Website: [www.strafkadenver.org](http://www.strafkadenver.org)

Email: [StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com](mailto:StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com)



## **December 3, 2023 Visitation of the Virgin to Elizabeth**

### **Schedule of Masses & Services**

**Sunday Mass** 11:00 AM

**Tuesday-Thursday Mass** 5:00 PM

**Friday Mass** 6:30 PM

**Saturday Mass** 11:30 AM

**Holy Days on Weekdays** 6:30 PM

**Confession:** Tuesday-Thursday 4:00 – 4:45 PM

**Please call the office to alert us of any  
Pastoral Care needs**  
(Hospital, Homebound, Etc.)

### **Office Hours**

9:30 am-3:30 pm, Wednesday & Friday  
720-833-0354

[StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com](mailto:StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com)

*Rev. El-Badaoui Habib, Parochial Administrator*

*Linda Craven, Office & Business Manager*

*Philip Kyburz, Grand Knight,  
St. Rafka Council of the Knights of Columbus*

*Linda Craven, Religious Education*  
[lhalpincraven@gmail.com](mailto:lhalpincraven@gmail.com)

Contact the office to register in the Parish

## **Spiritual Message from Father El-Badaoui Habib**

### **Sunday of the Visitation**

Today we celebrate the Sunday of the visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. Knowing that Elizabeth is in her sixth month of pregnancy, Mary, believing in the angel's good news to her, rose and went in haste to the hill country. She went to a town in Judah, and she carried in her womb a very special gift that won't be only for Zechariah and Elizabeth but for the whole world. As she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth, a great peace and heavenly Joy dwelt on everyone.

Mary rushes off from Nazareth in Galilee to the hill country of Judah with her Christmas present for Elizabeth. Her Christmas present is, of course, Christ Himself. And how wonderfully wrapped her present is. I don't know about the rest of you here present today, but most of the time, everyone knows which presents under the tree have been wrapped by his dad. The wrapping is usually unique. Long ago, at many times, God has given His Christmas present to His people of old wrapped in various ways. Uniquely wrapped in a burning bush, in a pillar of cloud and fire, wrapped in manna

## DAILY READINGS & MASS INTENTIONS

**Sunday, December 3**

***Visitation of the Virgin to Elizabeth***

*Book of Offering Page 38*

2 Sam 6:9-18

Eph 1:1-14

Lk 1:39-45

**Monday, December 4**

***St. Barbara***

*Book of Offering Page 473 or 38*

1 Cor 7:36-40; Mt 25:1-13 or

Eph 1:15-23; Lk 1:46-56

**Tuesday, December 5**

***St. Saba the Hermit***

*Book of Offering Page 38*

Eph 2:1-10

Lk 10:38-42

**Wednesday, December 6**

***St. Nicholas (Zakhia)***

*Book of Offering Page 38*

Heb 13:7-17; Mt 25:14-30 or

Eph 2:11-16; Lk 19:1-10

**Thursday, December 7**

***St. Ambrose, Doctor of the Church***

*Book of Offering Page 38*

Eph 2:17-22

Jn 4:39-42

**Friday, December 8**

***\*Holy Day of Obligation\****

***Feast of the Immaculate Conception***

*Book of Offering Page 454*

Heb 7:11-17

Lk 11:27-32

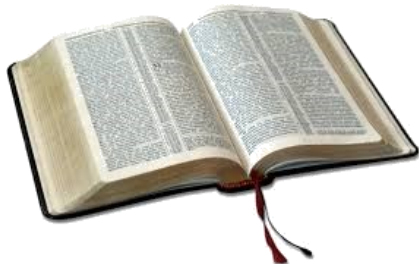
**Saturday, December 9**

***St. Francis of Paola***

*Book of Offering Page 38*

Eph 4:1-7

Lk 5:27-32



## Today's Gospel

### Mary Visits Elizabeth (Luke 1: 39-45)

<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, <sup>40</sup> and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

### Spiritual Message (continued)

lying on the ground, wrapped in a rock gushing with water, wrapped in a still, small voice. But now, in these last days, He has given us His Christmas present wrapped in a virgin mother, bread and wine, water and His Word preached. But never has it been as uniquely and wonderfully wrapped as it is in the Virgin Mary.

But why the great rush? Luke says that she arose and went WITH HASTE to her relative, Elizabeth. For Mary, Christmas was still 9 months away. What's the rush? Mary arose and went with haste to see Elizabeth because she believed what the angel Gabriel had told her. "And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren." (Luke 1:36). Gabriel gave Mary a sign to assure her that the incomprehensible news he had just given to her

# NEWS & EVENTS

## *This week at St. Rafka Church*

Sun 3	Mon 4	Tues 5	Wed 6	Thurs 7	Fri 8	Sat 9	Sun 10
<b>Visitation of the Virgin to Elizabeth</b> <b>Mass 11:00am</b> Mass in CO Springs 5 pm Religious education classes resume	<i>No Mass</i> <i>St. Barbara</i>	<i>Mass 5 p.m.</i> <i>St. Saba the Hermit</i>	<i>Mass 5 p.m.</i> <i>St. Nicholas (Zakhia)</i>	<i>Mass 5 p.m.</i> <i>St. Ambrose, Doctor of the Church</i>	<i>Mass 6:30 p.m.</i> <b>*Holy Day of Obligation*</b> <i>Feast of the Immaculate Conception</i>	<i>Mass 11:30 a.m.</i> <i>St. Francis of Paola</i>	<b>Birth of John the Baptist</b>  <b>Mass 11:00am</b>  Religious education classes 10 am
The deadline to receive events and articles for the bulletin is Thursday at 12:00 PM Submit them to the Parish Office at <a href="mailto:StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com">StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com</a>							

### Reminders:

1. Religious Education classes resume before liturgy (10am—10:50).
2. Youth Christmas Program practice after Divine Liturgy (in the church). **Only 2 practices left.**
3. Mass in Colorado Springs this Sunday, December 3, at 5 pm. at St Joseph's Catholic Church, 1830 S Corona St, Colorado Springs CO 80905. Parking lot is on the Wahsatch St. side.

### Upcoming Events:

1. Ladies Society Bake Sale (Contact Gisel Cherabie for details, 303-960-8646).  
 Annual Craft/Bake Sale December 3rd, 10th, and 17th.  
 How you can help:  
 \*Prepare crafts or baked goods wrapped and priced to sell. (use the Signup Genius link in the email sent with this bulletin).  
 \*Purchase items to benefit St. Rafka.
2. **Renaissance Children's Center** is sponsoring the Giving Tree for us again this year. There are still ornaments on the tree, so please take them this weekend.  
 † Select an ornament (or two) from the tree.  
 † Purchase your gifts (suggested \$30 per child)  
 † Bring **unwrapped** gifts with the tag attached back by **December 10th.**  
 Your gift will benefit a SPECIFIC child in need, served by Renaissance Children's Center which is a program of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.
3. St. Rafka Christmas Party Sunday December 17, 2023. This will include Youth Christmas Program immediately following liturgy and lunch with Santa! To RSVP, please contact Carla Beaini at (720)291-9786. The Evite link is in the email.



## St. Rafka Parish Mission Statement

Faith, hope, and love, reinforcing our family values, promoted through heritage and prayer for the glory of God, the edification of the Holy Church and the salvation of the world.

### Spiritual Message (continued)

about her own pregnancy was true. And Mary believed the Word she heard and did what the Word invited her to do.

James says, “Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith by my works.” (James 2:18) James, by the way, is the cousin of Jesus, which makes him the nephew of Mary. So, I wonder where James learned all that stuff about the connection between faith and works. Faith and works go together. Faith without works is dead. How do we know that Mary believed the word of the Lord delivered to her by Gabriel? She went WITH HASTE to see if Elizabeth assist her cousin in the last months of her pregnancy. If she did not believe in the word delivered by the angel, she would gladly stay at home doing nothing. She went to the hill country of Judea— a 3-days journey.

Luke writes, “She entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.” Faith believes the Word and does what it says and goes where it leads, in haste, without delay. The Word of the Lord to Mary was that the holy Son of God was present in her womb. That Word is confirmed by the pregnancy of Elizabeth. In faith, Mary goes in haste without delay, and her faith is confirmed.

Likewise, the Word of the Lord says to you that the holy, Son of God is present in this bread and in this wine, present for the forgiveness of all your sins, for the giving of real life and as a foretaste of the feast to come. And to that incomprehensible promise is added the following invitation. Take and eat; take and drink. So, in faith, we come to this house, (some from a distance even further than the hill country of Judah). We come in haste without delay expecting to find what we are told to seek. Whoever seeks, finds. God has wrapped His great Christmas gift to you in bread and wine.

This is only half of the scene as St. Luke records it. To get the complete picture, we need to see Elizabeth’s reaction to Mary’s visitation. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. We already know who this baby in Elizabeth’s womb is. He is John, the one who will go before the Lord to prepare His way, to give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. The same angel Gabriel who informed Mary about her baby also informed Zechariah about Elizabeth’s baby. He said, “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:15). John begins his ministry in the womb of his mother. And his first congregation consists of his mom and his aunt Mary. And to them, John proclaims the presence of Immanuel – God with us.

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.”

This is the same leaping for joy that adult John would do as he saw the adult Jesus approaching him in the water of the Jordan River where he was preparing the way of the Lord through the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” This is the same leaping for joy that we will do when this same Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, died, and was buried for our sins, comes again in the clouds in all His glory.

Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. And blessed are you when you believe the same. **Amen.**