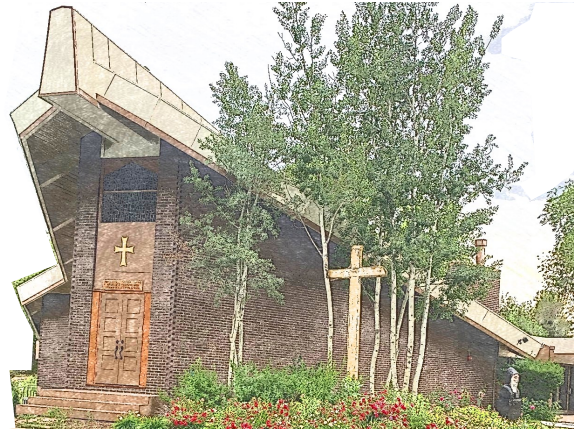


St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church

2301 Wadsworth Boulevard,
Lakewood, CO 80214

Website: www.strafkadenvver.org

Email: StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com



November 19, 2023 Announcement to Zechariah

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

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

Contact the office to register in the Parish

Spiritual Message from Father El-Badaoui Habib

The Sunday of the Annunciation to Zechariah

“Do not be afraid Zechariah for your prayers have been heard.” We are celebrating the Sunday of the annunciation to Zechariah. Our Scripture passage introduces Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, to us as man and woman full of righteousness and holiness. Both of them were living their life according to the law of God blamelessly. This elderly couple had two dreams or wishes in life. Their first wish was that they could witness the coming of the Messiah and the second that they could have a child.

Not only them but Every Jewish child of God was waiting for the appearance of the Messiah. For centuries they dreamed and spoke with longing for His coming. When the Messiah comes, all that is wrong in our world will be set right. I meant that,

God's people would be set free from oppressors. The rich would no longer tyrannize the poor. The lame would begin to leap and jump and dance. The blind would see a world of vivid color. The deaf would listen to the songs of birds and the music of harps. The deserts of Israel would be turned into fragrant gardens. Enemies would become friends. Jerusalem would be at the center of the world, and all the kings and rulers of the earth would come there to worship God the Lord of Israel.

DAILY READINGS & MASS INTENTIONS

Sunday, November 19

Announcement to Zechariah

Book of Offering Page 18

Gen 17:15-22

Rom 3:13-25

Lk 1:1-25

Monday, November 20

St. Gregory of the Decapolis

Book of Offering Page 18

Rom 4:1-12

Jn 8:31-27

Tuesday, November 21

Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple

Book of Offering Page 454 or 18

Heb 2:14-3:6 ; Lk 11:27-32 or

Rom 2:1-8; Jn 8:38-40

Wednesday, November 22

Sts. Joachim & Ann, Parents of Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary

Book of Offering Page 18

Rom 2:9-16

Jn 8:41-45

Thursday, November 23

St. Sassine, Bishop of Cyzicus
Thanksgiving Day

Book of Offering Page 18

Rom 2:17-29

Jn 8:46-50

Friday, November 24

St. Catherine of Alexandria

Book of Offering Page 18

Rom 3:1-12

Jn 8:51-55

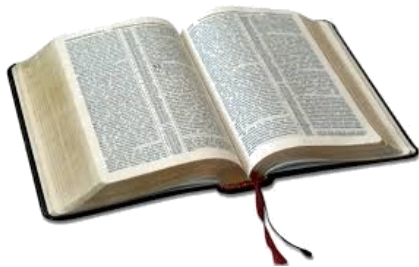
Saturday, November 25

Pope St. Clement I

Book of Offering Page 18

Rom 3:21-31

Jn 8:56-59



Today's Gospel

Dedication to Theophilus and the Birth of John the Baptist Foretold (Luke 1: 1-25)

1 Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, **2** just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, **3** I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4** so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. **6** Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. **7** But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

8 Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. **10** Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. **11** Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. **13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. **14** You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. **16** He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17** With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." **18** Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." **19** The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. **20** But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

21 Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. **22** When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. **23** When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

24 After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, **25** "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

Spiritual Message (continued)

Can you imagine a perfect world? A world without crime, pollution, death, hardship? A world without war, struggle, injustice? A world without the threat of a nuclear holocaust? A world without mad dictators? A world without floods, hurricanes, droughts, famines, earthquakes? A world of love, peace, joy, hope? No wonder a devout, pious, upright couple like Zechariah and Elizabeth so looked forward to the Messiah's appearance.

Their second great wish was for a child, a son, of their own. You see, over the life of this elderly couple there hung a great sorrow: they were childless. To be childless in Israel was a great disgrace (Lk 1:25). Despite their obvious and sincere piety, many of their neighbors undoubtedly saw their childlessness as a sign of God's punishment (Lev 20:20; 2 Sam 6:23; Jer 22:30, 36:30). And, to have children was a sign of God's blessing.

So, when Zechariah and Elizabeth had given up all hope of having a child due to their old age, the angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah and said to him, (Lk 1:13) "Do not be

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NEWS & EVENTS

This week at St. Rafka Church

Sun 19	Mon 20	Tues 21	Wed 22	Thurs 23	Fri 24	Sat 25	Sun 26
Announce- ment to Zechariah Mass 11:00am RE classes 10-10:50am	<i>No Mass</i> <i>St. Gregory of the Decapolis</i>	<i>Mass 5 p.m.</i> <i>Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple</i>	<i>Mass 5 p.m.</i> <i>Sts. Joachim & Ann, Parents of Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>	<i>Mass 5 p.m.</i> <i>St. Sassine, Bishop of Cyzi- cus</i>	<i>Mass 6:30 p.m.</i> <i>St. Catherine of Alexandria</i>	<i>Mass 11:30 a.m.</i> <i>Pope St. Clement I</i>	Announce- ment to the Virgin Mary Mass 11:00am <u>No Religious education classes</u>
The deadline to receive events and articles for the bulletin is Thursday at 12:00 PM Submit them to the Parish Office at StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com							

Reminders:

1. Religious Education classes before liturgy (10am—10:50). There are no classes next Sunday, November 26, for Thanksgiving break.

2. Youth Christmas Program practice after Divine Liturgy (in the church).

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.

*Purchase items to benefit St. Rafka.

2. **Renaissance Children's Center** is sponsoring the Giving Tree for us again this year. They will supply us with the ages and gift descriptions by Sunday, November 26. We will have until Sunday, December 10 to fulfill the wishes of these needy children and their families.

✚ Select an ornament (or two) from the tree, beginning November 26th

✚ 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, 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! More details to come.



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)

afraid, Zechariah, your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John."

"Your prayer has been heard." What prayer is that? Zechariah was in the holy place of the temple burning incense to God on the golden altar. The offering of incense was symbolic of the prayers of God's people. So, can there be any doubt what a devout priest of God, like Zechariah, would pray for at such a moment? He would pray for the coming of the Messiah and the era of salvation. "Your prayer has been heard." In other words, the Messiah is coming. But not only the prayer about the Messiah, but also "your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son." Zechariah was to be given a son.

There is, of course, a connection between the two events, between the appearance of the Messiah and the birth of a son. The angel says about Zechariah's son, "he will go on before the Lord." The angel told Zechariah that his son will be the forerunner of the Lord. In the Ancient World, a forerunner was sent before a king to announce the king's coming so that people and towns could get ready. Zechariah's son, John, was to be a forerunner of the Messiah. "He will go on before the Lord." He will tell people to get ready because the Messiah is coming. This fulfills what several of the Old Testament prophets spoke of (Lk 3:4). As is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Is 40:3)

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple (Mal 3:1)." According to God's eternal plan of salvation, the Messiah does not appear until His coming is first announced by a forerunner. Zechariah's son will be that forerunner.

John the Baptist, as forerunner, is to go on before the Lord, "in the spirit and power of Elijah." He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers ..."

Everything about John recalled the prophet Elijah: his clothing, his food, his home in the wilderness, and his message. The only difference is that John would be even greater than Elijah. As Jesus said in Luke 7:28, "I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John the Baptist but the least in the kingdom is greater than him." John is so great because "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth" (Lk 1:17). John will be permanently and continuously filled with the Spirit from the very beginning to the end of his life.

John is a forerunner. He goes on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." John's job is to make people ready for Christmas. "A people prepared for the Lord." A people ready for Christmas. What are they like? What is meant by this? The angel tells us: "To turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous ..."

To get truly ready for Christmas, we must be a people prepared for the Lord. But are we? If we are, then we have learned to live in peace and righteousness with each other. If we are, then we have turned from sin and to God.

Are you and I, a people prepared for the Lord and ready for Christmas? As I have said before, within this congregation of believers I find and experience and see love, forgiveness, and unity. Yet, there is always room for improvement, isn't there?! We do have our fights and quarrels; some believers delight in being critical and in running others down; there are some who find it difficult to forgive. Is there someone you conflict with? To get ready for Christmas you must straighten out the relationship. A people prepared for the Lord and ready for Christmas live together in love and harmony and be free from sin, turn from sin in repentance and to God in obedience and faith and be committed to the church.

Are you and I a people prepared for the Lord and ready for Christmas? What do I have to change in my personal life to be ready for Christmas, for the Lord? Amen.