

St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church

2301 Wadsworth Boulevard,
Lakewood, CO 80214
Website: www.strafkadenver.org
Email: StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com



November 26, 2023 Announcement to the Virgin Mary

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

Second Sunday of Christmas - the Annunciation to Mary

Today, we are celebrating the Sunday of the annunciation to Mary. This passage of the Gospel is a story to tell us that the birth of Christ cannot be told unless you also include his mother, Mary. This story tells us that there is no child who can be born without a mother. Mary played that very important role in the life of her son Jesus. She became his mother which means the mother of Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, and the "Mother of God," since she said yes to the angel's message. She was especially chosen for that wonderful Mission that you and I are chosen to proclaim. Today I want to concentrate upon three points:

- 1. The Angel's announcement.**
- 2. Mary's response.**
- 3. Mary's faith.**

The text says that God sent the angel Gabriel to a very specific place called: Nazareth, a town in Galilee. Gabriel was sent from God, from heaven which is a most glorious place. It is a place of absolute purity, beauty, and peace. Nothing here on earth or in the entire universe can compare to its splendor. It is from that exalted place that he comes.

God sends him to a small insignificant and despised town in Galilee: called Nazareth. It did not have a high standard in Israel. People used to ask, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" God sent his angel Gabriel from the most exalted place to a very lowly place on earth. And he does not come to some highly exalted person either. No, the Lord God sends him to a young girl who

DAILY READINGS & MASS INTENTIONS

Sunday, November 26

Announcement to the Virgin Mary

Book of Offering Page 27

2 Sam 7:8-17

Gal 3:15-22

Lk 1:26-38

Monday, November 27

St. James Intercissus, M

Book of Offering Page 473 or 27

2 Tm 2:8-16; Mt 10:28-33 or

Gal 3:1-6; Lk 11:27-32

Tuesday, November 28

St. Stephen the Younger, M

Book of Offering Page 27

Gal 3:7-14

Mt 11:25-30

Wednesday, November 29

Sts. Saturninus and Sisinius, M

Book of Offering Page 27

Gal 3:23-29

Mt 13:54-58

Thursday, November 30

St. Andrew, Ap, St. Bishop (Pishoy), C

Book of Offering Page 463 or 27

1 Cor 1:26-31; Mt 4:18-23 or

Gal 4:1-7; Mt 12:46-50

Friday, December 1

Nahum the Prophet, C

Book of Offering Page 27

Gal 4:8-12

Jn 6:40-44

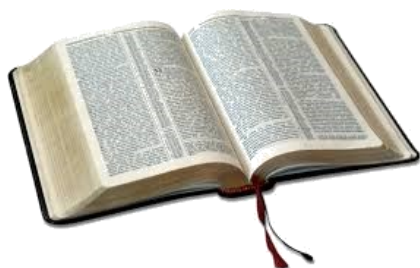
Saturday, December 2

Habakkuk the Prophet

Book of Offering Page 27

Gal 4:13-20

Lk 10:21-24



Today's Gospel

The Birth of Jesus Foretold (Luke 1:26-38)

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" ³⁵ And the angel said to her,

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

³⁶ And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Spiritual Message (continued)

has no claim to fame. She is just an ordinary teenager. He says, "Greetings," "Rejoice", "Be glad." Why she should rejoice for he says, "**Rejoice, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.**" The Lord looks kindly upon her in her lowly state. In front of this greeting, Mary wonders what kind of greeting this might be. Gabriel was patient with her and, after telling her not to be afraid, he restates what he just told her. He tells her again that she has found favor with God.

He wants her to rejoice, to be happy, for he is going to tell her something highly important. He is going to tell her something that the world has been waiting for thousands of years to hear. And so have the angels.

God sends Gabriel to earth with the most wonderful message that could ever be proclaimed. He sends him to that young woman to tell her that out of her the Messiah would be born. What a most joyful message! And he wants Mary to share in that joy as well. But Mary in the beginning is troubled, she was confused, for she knows that the greeting the angel gave her is not an ordinary greeting, there is a cost she has to pay.

NEWS & EVENTS

This week at St. Rafka Church

Sun 26	Mon 27	Tues 28	Wed 29	Thurs 30	Fri 1	Sat 2	Sun 3
<p>Announcement to the Virgin Mary</p> <p>Mass 11:00am</p> <p><u>No Religious education classes</u></p>	<p><i>No Mass</i></p> <p><i>St. James Intercissus, M</i></p>	<p><i>Mass 5 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>St. Stephen the Younger, M</i></p>	<p><i>Mass 5 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>Sts. Saturninus and Sisinius, M</i></p>	<p><i>Mass 5 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>St. Andrew, Ap, St. Bishop (Pishoy), C</i></p>	<p><i>Mass 6:30 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>Nahum the Prophet, C</i></p>	<p><i>Mass 11:30 a.m.</i></p> <p><i>Habakkuk the Prophet</i></p>	<p>Visitation of the Virgin to Elizabeth</p> <p>Mass 11:00am</p> <p>Mass in CO Springs 5 pm</p> <p>Religious education classes re-sume</p>
<p>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</p>							

Reminders:

1. Religious Education classes resume before liturgy (10am—10:50).
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. (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. The ages and gift descriptions are on the tree now, and we 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 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! 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)

Mary couldn't answer straight away, she needed time to think about that. She has to sort things out. She thinks about things. She ponders things in her heart before she makes up her mind. Gabriel said to her, "*You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and his kingdom will never end.*"

2. But now, listen to the response of Mary. She says, "*How will this be, since I'm a virgin?*" She would ask about what it would mean for Israel and for the whole world. She is trying to sort things out in her mind. She is engaged. The only way that you could undo such an engagement would be by a letter of divorce. She wonders how this is possible since she has never had any sexual relations with a man.

The angel explained to her that the birth of that royal son would take place in a most miraculous way. It is going to come about through the power of God. And so, she says, "*I am the Lord's servant.*"

We are put here on this earth for service - service to God and service to others. It is for that reason also that the Lord Jesus came to earth. Listen to what he says in Mark 10:45, "*I have come to serve, and not to be served, and to give my life as a ransom for many.*" We think that if we are in charge of our own lives' things would be better for us. We don't want others to interfere with our own plans, including God. The first question we ask is not how can we serve God and how can we serve our neighbors, but "What's in it for me?"

3. Mary did not do that. Mary believed in the word of God's angel and said: "Let it be done to me according to your words." She submitted her will to the will of God who spoke to her through his angel Gabriel. Mary knows that this is not just anybody telling her these things. She knows that through Gabriel, God is speaking to her. She believes as a certainty that something is going to happen, and then you also must adjust your life accordingly. You have to change your focus. It is your faith that determines your actions. It is your faith that determines the things that you say and do.

That is the way it is for every believer. That is also the way it is for you and for me. When you believe in God, then he takes charge of your life. Then you allow him to rule you through his Word and Spirit. And then through your whole life you seek the will of God. You do your utmost to serve him, and him alone. For you know that he also has a wonderful plan for each and every one of us. He has chosen you to bring glory to his name forever and ever, in this life and the life beyond.

Mary confessed that she is the Lord's servant. She is his slave. She says to the Lord, "*Lord, you can have my life and do with it what you want.*" How will they treat her son? But one thing she does know is that she must submit herself to God's will. Do not think that she can do that on her own strength. It says in the text that the angel tells her that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her. We should not just think here of the Holy Spirit's involvement in the pregnancy of Mary. He will be with her all her life. She puts her trust in the Lord, even though there are all kinds of uncertainties before her, and all kinds of obstacles that she knows she will have to overcome.

The Lord God asks the same from you and from me. This morning the Lord God once again came to you with his Word. He reminded us that we have been created to serve, to serve God and our neighbor. Do you believe that message? Then also show that in your life. Show that today and during the festive season, and into the new year. God wants to realize his plan through you. But you also have to let him. And if you do, God will bless you. He will give you peace and overshadow you all your life. Amen.

St. James Intercissus, Martyr—November 27

A soldier and courtier to King Yezdigerd I of Persia in the early fifth century, James was a Christian who, during Yezdigerd's persecution of Christians, renounced his faith for fear of death.

His family, who had not apostatized, contacted James upon the death of the king, and thus the end of the persecution, and chastised him for having renounced his Heavenly King before the worldly king of Persia.

Upon hearing the rebukes of his family for the denial of his faith, James was thrown into a deep crisis of conscience, and he went through a true, deep conversion, uniting and conforming himself to the living God. Wanting to make amends, he professed his faith before the new king, Bahram and was condemned to death.

He is referred to as 'Intercisus' because the name literally means 'hacked to pieces,' and this name was given to him documenting the manner of his death. He was hung from a beam and slowly cut into 28 pieces, beginning with his fingers and then his toes, hands, and so forth until his beheading, the final cut.

Even though the crowd, made up of many Christians, urged him to renounce his faith and worship the sun because they could not bear to see him suffer such excruciating torture, he never renounced his faith. Instead, he made every piece cut from his body an offering to the Living God and won the crown of martyrdom.

James Intercisus is the patron saint of lost vocations and torture victims.