

DECEMBER 2023

# *San Damiano Chapel*

NEWSLETTER

From the Heart of Viterbo  
December 2023

Fr. Conrad, OFM

## A Franciscan Advent

December is mostly Advent. The Christmas celebration really begins with Midnight Mass and lasts – past Epiphany – to the feast of Christ's Baptism. This year will be different since the 4th Sunday of Advent is actually Christmas eve..in the morning. That means there is only 1 day in the 4th week of Advent. Since Epiphany is January 7, the Baptism is celebrated on Monday, January 8 – after which, Christmas ends and Winter Ordinary Time begins until Mardi Gras, February 13. Confusing? All it means is that everything is early this year with even Easter at the end of March. So why not make the best of Advent using a Franciscan lens? Here's how:

Franciscans are perpetual Advent people since Saint Francis loved St John the Baptist who “prepared the way of the Lord”. St Francis loved singing “I am the herald of the Great King. Now, I am usually a strict “Advent-ist” which means I avoid doing Christmas things until Christmas Eve so as not to miss out on the richness of the season because a Franciscan Advent is:

\*future-oriented and raising our consciousness for a better world making ready for the Great King who makes all things new;

## Chapel Schedule and Mass Opportunities:

### Sunday Mass:

11:00 am and 6:00 pm  
(San Damiano Chapel)  
Sacrament of Reconciliation  
available by request.

### Monday:

Daily Mass at 11am  
(St. Rose Convent)

### Tuesday:

Daily Mass at 11  
(St. Rose Convent)

### Wednesday

Daily Mass at 11am  
(St. Rose Convent)  
Adoration at 5pm (San Damiano)  
Mass at 6pm (San Damiano)

### Thursday:

Daily Mass at 11am  
(St. Rose Convent)

### Friday:

Daily Mass at 11am  
(St. Rose Convent)



**VITERBO**  
UNIVERSITY



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**STBC - Sister Thea Bowman  
Center**



\*renovational by correcting our attitudes by filling up valleys of alienation, bringing down mountains of pride and self-absorption, smoothing out roads of violence for the healing and arrival of the Great King;

\*evangelical and announcing the gospel of reconciliation and peace

\*Marian in that with Mary, bearing the Word Made Flesh within us, we hasten to those who are empty to make present to them the Great King who makes us leap with joy.

It really means Advent never ends; we are always a people of hope and expectation – the coming Holy Year of 2025 will emphasize that we are perpetual “Pilgrims in Hope”.

With all the celebrations of Greccio and the Creches, I hope we take advantage of the Advent journey.

Brother Conrad

REMINDER: The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available at the Cathedral on December 18 from 9 a.m. through 6 p.m. I am also available before the evening Mass on Sunday or at your request.

*Solemnity of the  
Immaculate  
Conception of the  
Blessed Virgin  
Mary*



*Friday, December 8  
Mass at Noon*



## Advent Baking with Father Conrad

Many old European Advent traditions involve foods that are made weeks in advance and aged. This is especially helpful for us busy people who never seem have enough time to bake everything before Christmas. So instead of the single recipe, I thought I'd include some things I have done and some which sound interesting and may try. Food does have a connection with the message of the day we are celebrating:

First Sunday of Advent: "Stir up Sunday" from the Mass opening prayer: "Stir up your might and come, and save us." We usually make fruitcake on this day and when all the ingredients are in the bowl, everyone gets to stir while praying the above.

St. Nicholas Day (Dec. 6). The traditional "Speculaas" cookies from Holland are light spice cookies with lemon or orange rind added to the dough. I've done these and used a Santa cutter to simulate the St Nicholas figure.



Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8). Moravian spice cookies are only one idea - but these are associated with the day because of the passage from Sirach 24: 20-21 in reference to Mary .."I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatic balm..."

Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec 12). All types of Mexican foods are traditional but the "Polverones de canelé" are the most popular. They are little round sugar cookies with almonds and rolled in cinnamon and powdered sugar.

St Lucy Day (Dec 13) We have been serving the "St. Lucy Cats" each year, but they also make a cake in the shape of a crown with candles to simulate the custom of young girls wearing crowns on her day. I did find the St Lucy Gingersnaps or "Luciapepperkakor" which recipe is available on the internet.



The Posadas (Mexican Christmas Novena) Dec 16-24. Magnificent choices if you like tamales, chicken mole, menudo, etc., but the dessert most served are churros sprinkled with that great cinnamon sugar.

St. John Kanty (Dec 23). Very familiar to Polish Americans, there are many parishes named in honor of this Polish Saint. Besides other cookies, the most famous and the one I do - if any of the above- are kolaczki, pronounced "kolatchki".

These are the small square or round dough cookies with either apricot, cherry, poppyseed or almond filling.

My Mom had an awesome recipe..

which I have to admit..I've mastered.

Okay...I'll bring some on Christmas Eve.





*Join us in celebrating  
The Nativity of the Lord*



*Midnight Mass  
Prelude at 11:30, Mass at Midnight*

*Christmas Day Mass  
11:00 am*



# Melodious Wisdom with Sister Malinda Gerke, FSPA

## You Will Find An Infant

December is a crowded month. There is shopping. There are cards to send. There is weather to contend with. There are classes and tests. And yes there is preparation for Christmas.

Let's look at the Christmas part of it.

The most important task we are given to do is the mandate from the Angels. We are to join the shepherds and hear, "You will find an infant, wrapped in saddling clothes, and lying in a manger." Did the angels forget to say that the baby will have a halo around his head, that he will look like he is at least a year old and is raising his hands as if in blessing? That is the image of Jesus that we find in most crib scenes.

What did the angels really say, and why didn't the angels lead the shepherds to the manger?

The angels didn't even go to Bethlehem. They just told the shepherds to go there.

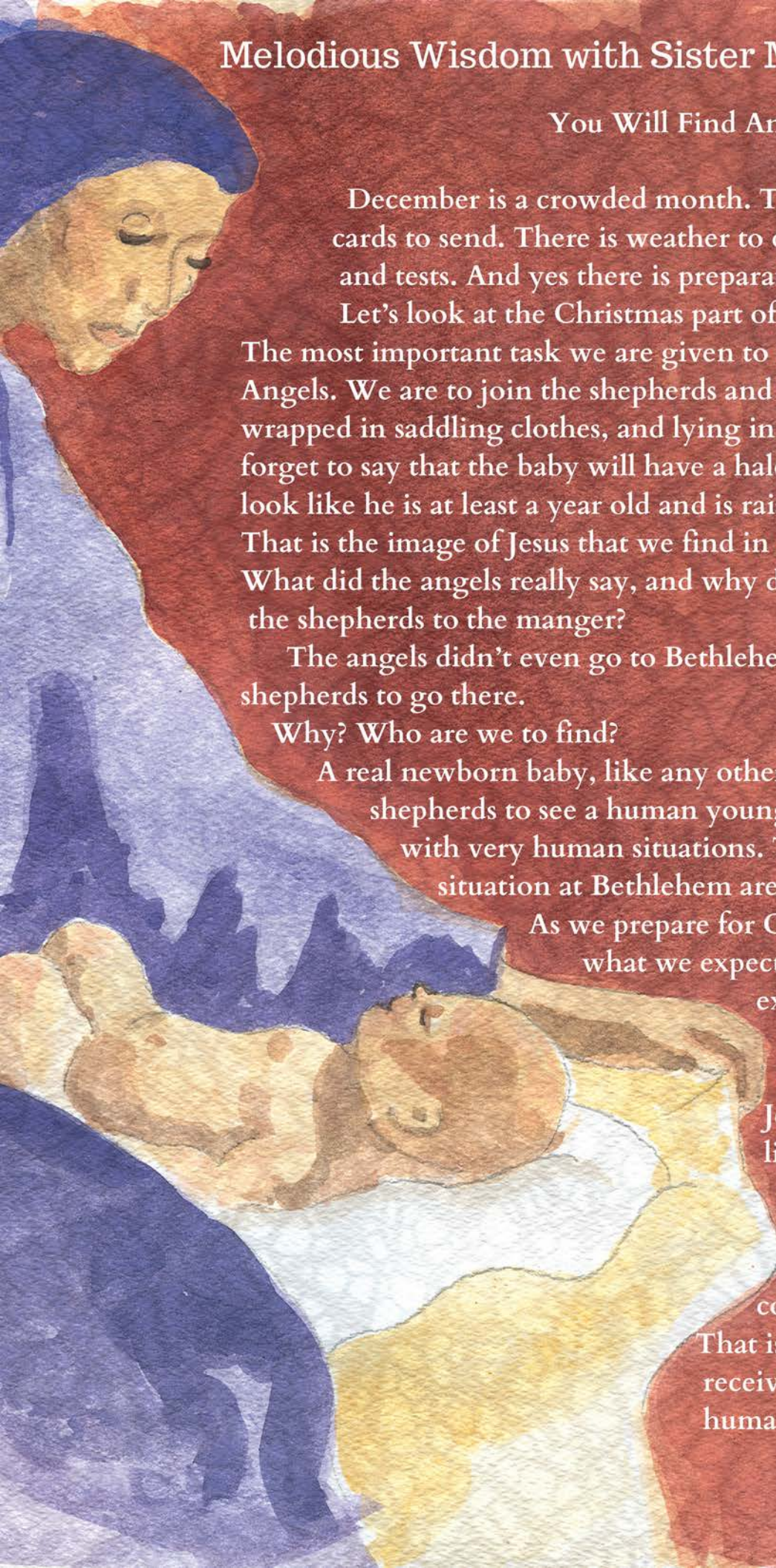
Why? Who are we to find?

A real newborn baby, like any other baby. We are to go with the shepherds to see a human young mother and father coping with very human situations. The glorifications of the situation at Bethlehem are just that - glorifications.

As we prepare for Christmas, let's think about what we expect to see in the manger? Do we expect that we are to see GOD?

Or are we going to give ourselves the gift of seeing Jesus as he really is, one of us, like us in all things? If we give ourselves that gift, we will put ourselves in the faith mindset to hear the message that Jesus comes to offer us.

That is a gift the angels did not receive. Jesus comes to be with us, human beings, not angels.







# Advent Bowls

## SOUNDS OF GRECCIO

DECEMBER 16, 2023

Saturday, 6-7 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. to view display of Nativity scenes



TOM  
ROBERTS



MALINDA  
GERKE, FSPA

All are welcome to join us for a special evening of Taize-style prayer, Tibetan singing bowls and harp music at San Damiano Chapel on the campus of Viterbo University.



CELEBRATING  
*Christmas*  
AT GRECCIO

1223-2023



Freewill offerings and donations to our baby item drive are appreciated!

REGISTRATION AND MORE INFORMATION:

**[www.FSCenter.org](http://www.FSCenter.org) • 608-791-5295**

Find more events at  
**[www.fspa.org/centenary](http://www.fspa.org/centenary)**



## **Honoring Baby Jesus with a Gift for Today's Babies!**

**As we celebrate the 800th anniversary of the crèche and contemplate the humble beginnings of Baby Jesus, let's extend our hands to the infants of today.**

**Join our baby item drive, running Dec. 4 / now through Dec. 21. Your contributions will echo the love and care shown to the holy infant by benefiting Centro Latino, Family & Children's Center, Hope Restores and The Parenting Place. Let's come together, mirroring the spirit of that blessed night, and make a difference in the lives of our community's youngest members.**

**Drop-off locations are open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.**

**•Franciscan Spirituality Center, 920 Market Street, La Crosse, WI**

**•San Damiano Chapel, 900 Viterbo Drive, La Crosse, WI**

**•Viterbo University Fine Arts Center Atrium, 929 Jackson Street, La Crosse, WI**

**To contribute a monetary gift to help purchase items on the wish list,  
text baby to 608-650-6464.**

**Most-Needed Items (in order of greatest need):**

**Diapers (all sizes, especially 5-6)**

**Pull-ups**

**Baby wipes**

**Baby bottles**

**Formula**

**Pacifiers**

**Baby wash**

**Baby lotion**

**Baby bibs**

**Baby blankets**

**Laundry detergent**

**Onesies (in all sizes)**

**Sleep sacks and zip-up sleepers**

**Diaper bags**

**Wearable infant carriers**

**Board books**





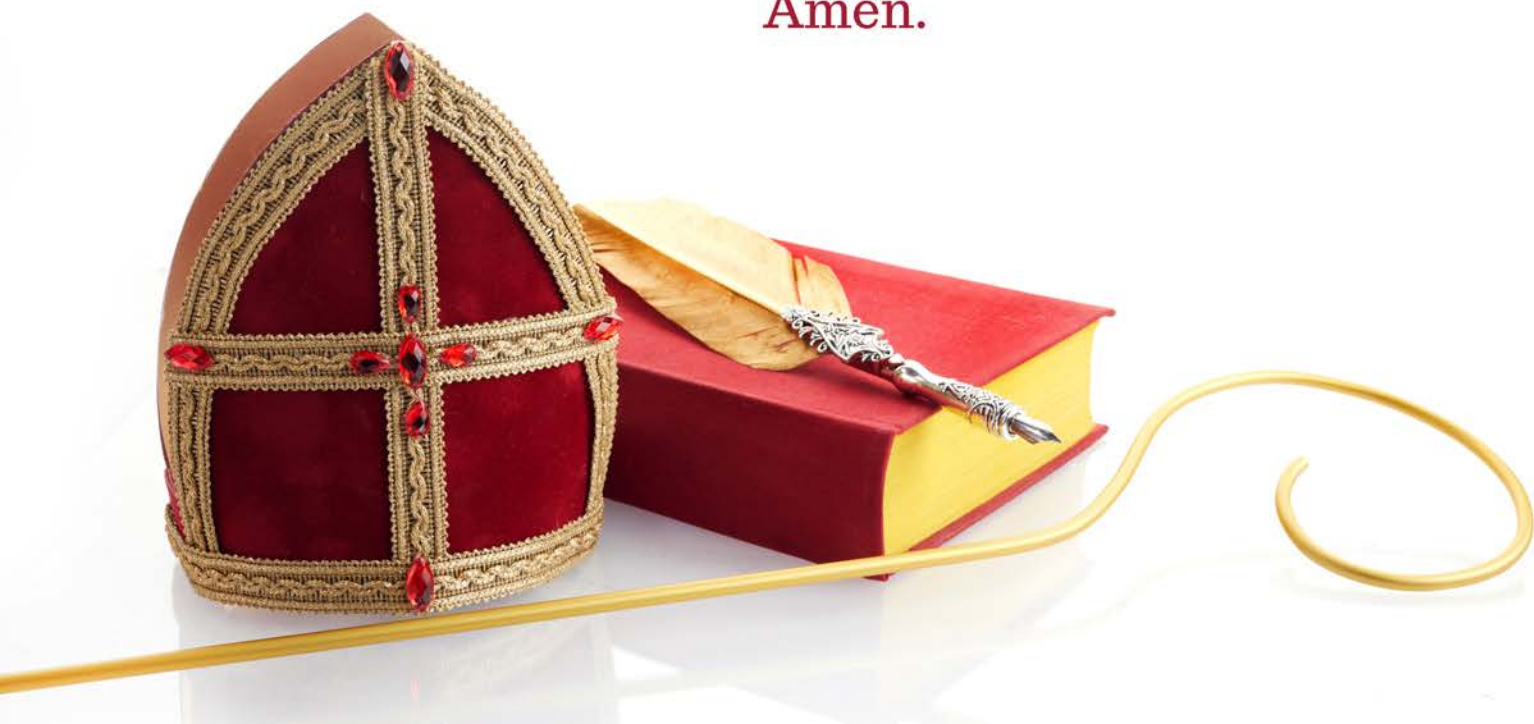
## A Prayer to Saint Nicholas of Myra

O good St. Nicholas,  
you who are the joy of the children,  
put in my heart the spirit of childhood,  
which the gospel speaks,  
and teach me to seed happiness around me.  
You, whose feast prepares us for Christmas,  
open my faith to the mystery of God made man.

You good bishop and shepherd,  
help me to find my place in the Church  
and inspire the Church to be faithful to the Gospel.

O good Saint Nicholas, patron of children,  
sailors and the helpless,  
watch over those who pray to Jesus, your Lord and theirs,  
as well as over those who humble themselves before you.  
Bring us all in reverence to the Holy Child of Bethlehem,  
when true joy and peace are found.

Amen.





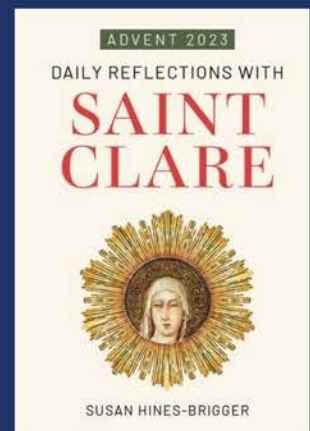
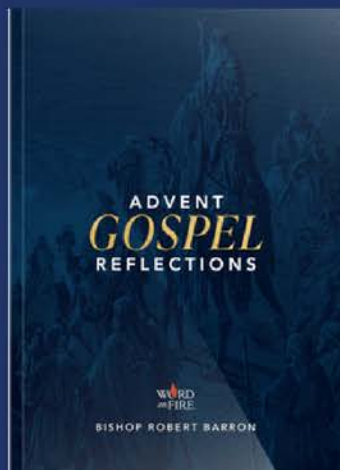
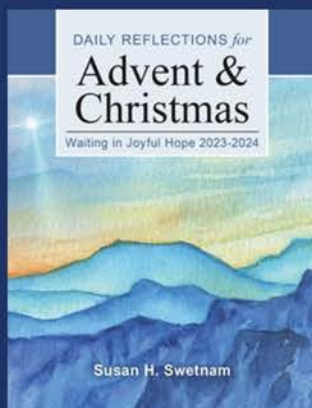


# Christmas Children's Choir

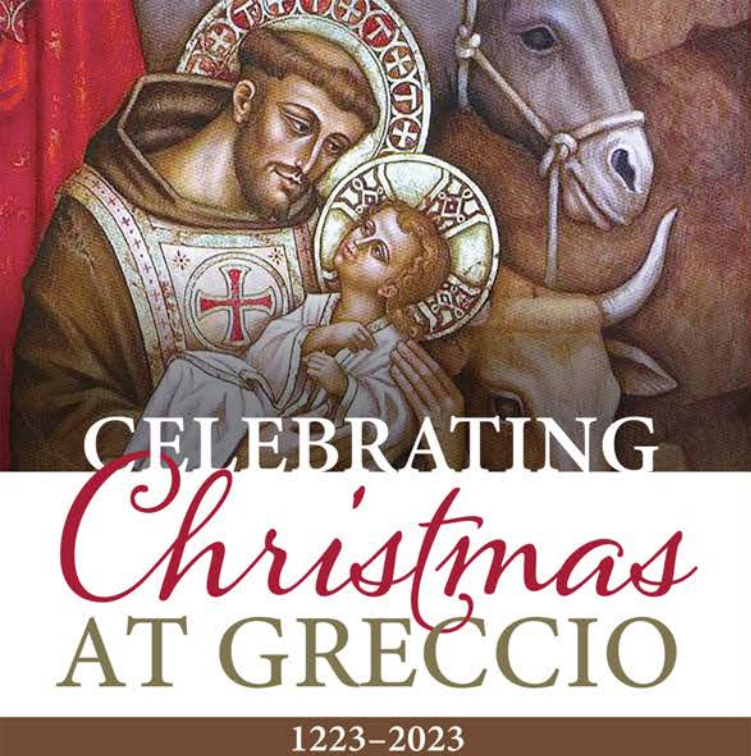
**Contact Polly to be a part of our children's  
choir at Christmas Day Mass.  
We will rehearse on December 17 after the  
11:00 am mass, and before mass on  
Christmas Day.**

## *Advent Resources*

FREE TO TAKE FROM SAN DAMIANO CHAPEL







## The Greccio Experience

Walk through the displayed Nativity Scenes shared from families and community members in the chapel. All are invited to walk through and enjoy the scenes through January 8. The chapel is open during business hours and on Sundays from 10-6.



## Paint the Nativity: A Community Mural

From Dec. 4-15, the Franciscan Spirituality Center invites everyone to be part of an extraordinary project. Designed by artist Paul Oman, "For Unto Us a Child is Born" is a paint-by-number mural that aims to capture the divine essence of that first Christmas.

Open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., with additional hours on Mondays and Thursdays from 5-7 p.m., the center warmly welcomes individuals of all ages and skill levels. The mural will be displayed in the chapel at the Sounds of Greccio Advent Service and through the rest of the season.



## Franciscan Night at Rotary Lights

December 10  
5:00-10:00 pm

- Enjoy Viterbo University's 9th Street Singers at 5:30.
- Take home a keepsake, a token of gratitude and remembrance of the first Nativity scene.



# All you Holy Saints, Pray for Us!

## Franiscan Saints for the Month of December

December 2

Bl. Mary Angela Astorch  
Capuchin Poor Clare  
(September 1, 1592-December 2,  
1665)

Bl. Raphael Chylinski

Priest, Order of Friars Minor  
Conventual  
(January 8, 1680/90-December 2,  
1742)

December 4

Bl. François Galves  
Priest, Order of Friars Minor,  
martyr (d. 1623)  
Bl. Pietro Tecelano  
Third Order Secular  
(c. 1190-December 1289)

December 5

Bl. Peter of Sienna  
Third Order Secular (d. December  
4, 1289)

December 7

St. Mary Joseph Rosello  
Third Order Secular before  
founding another institute  
(1811-December 7, 1811)

December 8

Feast of the Immaculate  
Conception,  
Patroness of the Seraphic  
Order, Holy Day of Obligation,  
Plenary Indulgence for tertiaries  
and cord bearers

December 9

Bl. Clara Isabella Fornari  
Poor Clare Nun  
(June 25, 1697-December 9, 1744)

December 11

Bl. Francis (Arthur) Bell  
Priest, Order of Friars Minor,  
martyr of England  
(January 13, 1590-December 11,  
1643)

December 12

Finding the Body of Our Holy  
Father St. Francis  
Bl. Bartolo da San Gimignano  
Priest, Third Order Secular  
(1228-December 1300)

Bl. Pius Ludwik Bartosik

Priest, Friars Minor Conventual,  
martyr  
August 21, 1909-December 12,

December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe  
1941

December 14

Bl. Jean Discalceat  
Priest, Franciscan  
(c. 1278-December 1349)

December 15

Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the  
Franciscan Order

Bl. Mary Frances Schervier

Founder Religious Sisters of the  
Third Order Regular of St. Francis  
(January 8, 1819-December 14,  
1876)

December 23

Bl. Nicolas Factor-Estaña  
Priest, Order of Friars Minor  
(June 29, 1520-December 23,  
1583)

December 24

Bl. Bentivolio of Bonio  
Priest, Order of Friars Minor (d.  
1231)

December 25

Nativity of Our Lord Jesus  
Christ

December 28

Bl. Matthia Nazzarei  
Poor Clare Nun  
(March 1, 1253-December 28,  
1319)

December 29

Bl. Gerard Cagnoli  
Lay Brother, Order of Friars Minor  
(c. 1267-c. 1342)

## December

1 Friday of week 34 in Ordinary Time

2 Saturday of week 34 in Ordinary Time  
or Saturday memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

3 1st Sunday of Advent

4 Monday of the 1st week of Advent  
or Saint John Damascene, Priest, Doctor

5 Tuesday of the 1st week of Advent

6 Wednesday of the 1st week of Advent  
or Saint Nicholas, Bishop

7 Saint Ambrose, Bishop, Doctor

8 The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary Solemnity

9 Saturday of the 1st week of Advent  
or Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin

10 2nd Sunday of Advent

11 Monday of the 2nd week of Advent  
or Saint Damasus I, Pope

12 Tuesday of the 2nd week of Advent  
or Our Lady of Guadalupe

12 Saint Lucy, Virgin, Martyr

14 Saint John of the Cross, Priest, Doctor

15 Friday of the 2nd week of Advent

16 Saturday of the 2nd week of Advent

17 3rd Sunday of Advent

(commemoration of Saint Peter Canisius, Priest,  
Doctor)

(commemoration of Saint John of Kęty, Priest)

24 4th Sunday of Advent

25 Christmas Day Solemnity

26 Saint Stephen, the first Martyr Feast

27 Saint John, Apostle, Evangelist Feast

28 The Holy Innocents, Martyrs Feast

29 Saint Thomas Becket, Bishop, Martyr Feast

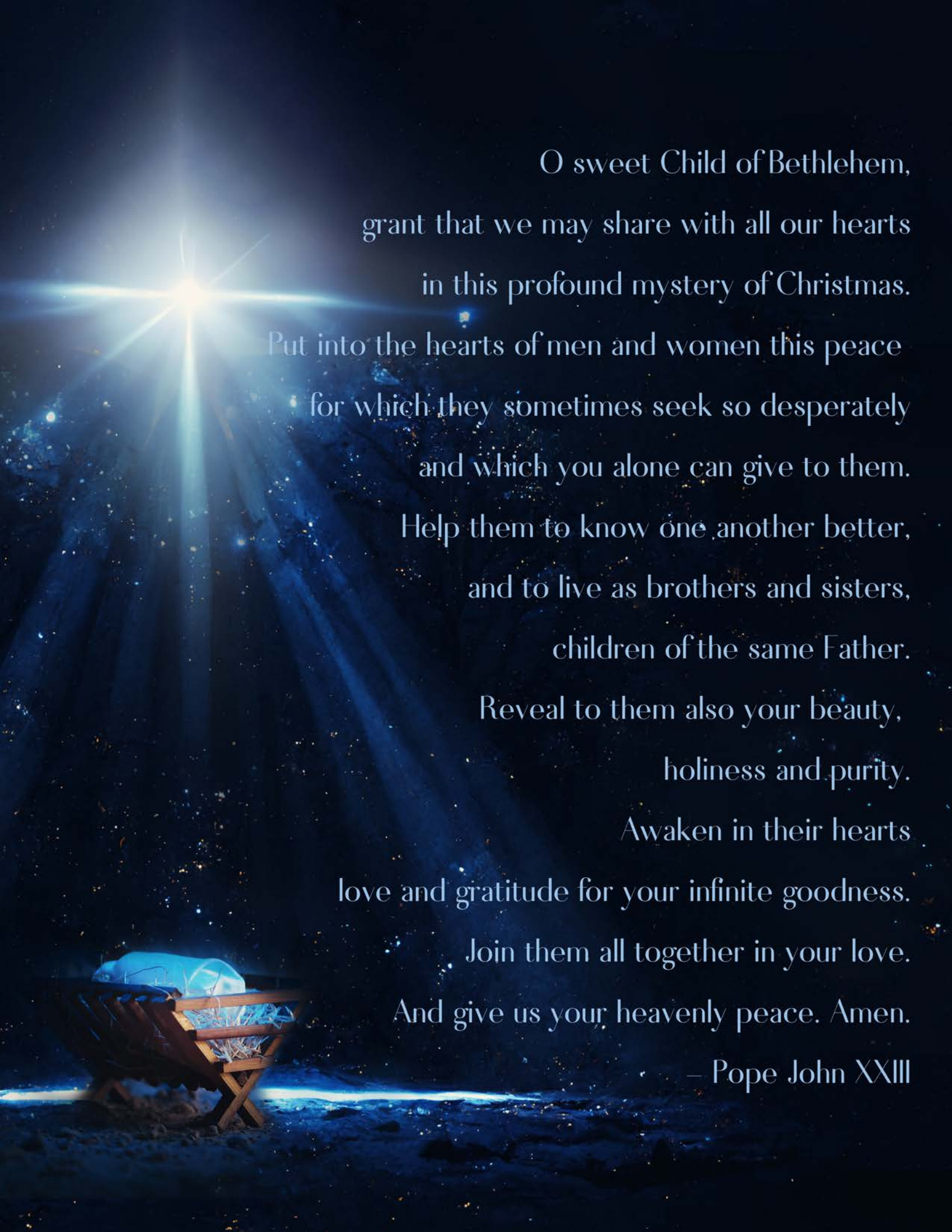
30 6th day within the octave of Christmas

31 The Holy Family

December 30

Bl. Margaret Colonna  
Poor Clare Nun  
(c. 1255-December 30, 1280)



A dark, starry night sky with a bright, multi-pointed star in the upper left. Beams of light radiate from the star, illuminating a wooden manger in the lower left. The manger contains a white cloth and some straw. The overall scene is serene and celestial.

O sweet Child of Bethlehem,  
grant that we may share with all our hearts  
in this profound mystery of Christmas.

Put into the hearts of men and women this peace  
for which they sometimes seek so desperately  
and which you alone can give to them.  
Help them to know one another better,  
and to live as brothers and sisters,  
children of the same Father.

Reveal to them also your beauty,  
holiness and purity.

Awaken in their hearts  
love and gratitude for your infinite goodness.

Join them all together in your love.  
And give us your heavenly peace. Amen.

— Pope John XXIII