



Comfort, Comfort Ye My People by Fr. Patrick Kennedy

My friends,

This past weekend, the Minnesota Chorale held its annual singalong of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* at St. Olaf. People from all over the city came, they were given the music, and they joined in with the Chorale on the chorus parts of the score. Handel's *Messiah* is an Advent favorite and draws crowds every time it is performed. It follows the story of the life of Jesus prior to his birth and goes through to his Resurrection. The music is stirring and engaging. It touches the hearts of those who listen to it even after all these years.

After the Overture, the piece begins with the first verse from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 40, "Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people, says your God." Isaiah proclaims it is the God of Israel who brings comfort to his people, and the people who believe in him have a mission to bring God's comfort in their care and compassion to those in need.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent tells the story of Mary proceeding in haste to comfort her cousin Elizabeth who was with child. Elizabeth had been barren all her life. Through the grace of God, she and Zechariah were now going to have a child because, as she learned, "Nothing is impossible with God." The story tells us Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months and then returned to her own home.

When I read the story year after year, I wonder what they talked about all that time. I imagine

they marveled about all that was taking place for both of them. The question "why" must have been asked numerous times. And like so many of us who ask the same question about things we don't understand, they found coming up with answers was futile. For behind every inquiry about "why," people have to throw their hands up and admit they simply will never figure it out.



I also wonder after they gave up trying, did they simply start living their daily lives as they normally did. I suspect they did. What must have helped them was the intimacy they shared together. Their presence to each other was a balm. It was comforting. It brought with it a sense of ease. And in the midst of it, they deepened their faith because whatever was going on was surely the work of God and out of their mortal hands to control and even understand.

Bringing comfort to one another is borne out of a deep understanding of our Sacred History. God has always tried to convince his

people of his care and compassion for them. Is this not why he sent his Son into the world? The stories of Jesus' care and compassion throughout his life were the hallmark of ministry. His charity to those in need and his willingness to be with them in that need was the foundation of his service. It is the mandate he gave his disciples as he entrusted them with his work here on earth.

All of us need comfort throughout our lives. Many times we give the impression we don't. Because of our stubbornness not to accept people's comfort, we suffer needlessly. Having people care about us in our need, accepting people's presence when we are down and out, allowing people to enter our lives when we are most vulnerable is a grace not an intrusion. It is not a weakness. Like Mary with Elizabeth, people bringing comfort to us creates an intimacy which helps us be less afraid and more secure. No matter what we are going through, we are not alone. When we bring comfort and when we receive it, we discover love being the motivating force behind it.

In Advent, we sing, "O Come, O Come Emanuel." Our hope is he actually does come and comfort us in our need. If we pause long enough, we see his presence in those who reach out to us when we need comfort and care. We can be at peace because we are no longer alone, and through them, we finally understand God is with us.



EVENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION

Additional Information at www.saintolaf.org/events

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

See right-hand column calendar

FREE PARKING AT CHRISTMAS

Minneapolis Club Ramp – across from us on 8th Street, no voucher or card needed; **OR** Surface Lot at 10th Street and 2nd Avenue – Need to display “St. Olaf” card on dashboard; **OR** TCF Tower Ramp – enter from 2nd Avenue or 9th Street – you will need a voucher to exit the ramp. Cards and vouchers are available from Ushers or at the Forliti Foyer Hospitality Desk any time before Christmas.

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION

Masses Monday, Dec. 31 at 5:15pm and Tuesday, Jan 1 at 10:00am.

RETIREMENT FUND FOR RELIGIOUS

Envelopes for the annual collection that helps religious communities (Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests) address a retirement shortfall are in the pamphlet racks. Make checks payable to St. Olaf (write RFR on memo line) and place in the collection.

WITH LOVE FOR ST. OLAF

Please pray, participate, and be generous as we celebrate the goodness, mercy, and love of Jesus. Make an annual gift, fulfilling it over time in 2019. Or, complete your gift right now. Your gift helps St. Olaf provide Mass, the Sacraments, and meaningful ministries that serve all who come to worship and find refuge, and you clearly provide heat, lights, salaries, and all things related to running the parish. Pick up envelopes in pamphlet stands or contact FRMurnane@SaintOlaf.org, 612-767-7635. THANK YOU!

CALENDAR YEAR-END GIVING - IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please Please make sure your gifts are POSTMARKED or entered ONLINE before 12:00 midnight, December 31, 2018. Any gift made beyond that cannot be counted as a 2018 gift – even a check dated in December. This is a tax law, not a preference of St. Olaf. We are deeply grateful for all that you do, and we want to be sure your gift is counted in 2018. Fran Rusciano Murnane: FRMurnane@SaintOlaf.org or 612-767-7635.

BOOK CLUB

The next meeting will be Sunday January 6 from 2:30 to 3:30; *Waiting for Christ: Meditations for Advent and Christmas.*

PARISH PANCAKE BREAKFAST, JANUARY 13, 2019

Watch for details. Volunteers needed. Contact FRMurnane@SaintOlaf.org, 612-767-7635.

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

Over the past few months, three former employees have died: Gene Smith, Donald Schwankl, and Mary Martin. Please pray for consolation for their families and friends, and that they may rest in peace.



THIS WEEK'S SCHEDULE

Additional Information at www.saintolaf.org

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2018

9:00AM CENTERING PRAYER
12:00PM MASS/CONFESSIONS
4:00PM MASS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

HOSPITALITY IN FLEMING HALL
6:00AM MASS
8:00AM MASS
9:00AM NURSERY OPENS
10:00AM MASS
12:00PM MASS
4:00PM MASS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24, CHRISTMAS EVE

OFFICE CLOSED
4:00PM (3:30PM PRELUDE) SEASONAL ENSEMBLE
6:00PM (5:50PM PRELUDE) CANTOR
10:00PM (9:30PM PRELUDE) ST OLAF PARISH CHOIR

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25, CHRISTMAS

OFFICE CLOSED
6:00AM NO MUSIC
8:00AM (7:50AM PRELUDE) CANTOR
10:00AM (9:40AM PRELUDE) ST OLAF PARISH CHOIR
12:00PM (11:40AM PRELUDE) SCHOLA
4:00PM (3:50PM PRELUDE) CANTOR

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26

7:00AM MASS/CONFESSIONS
7:00AM AA
12:00PM MASS
12:00PM AA
7:30PM ALANON

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27

7:00AM MASS/CONFESSIONS
12:00PM MASS/CONFESSIONS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28

OFFICE CLOSED ON FRIDAYS
7:00AM MASS/CONFESSIONS
12:00PM MASS
12:30PM ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29

9:00AM CENTERING PRAYER
12:00PM MASS/CONFESSIONS
2:00PM AFRICAN CHOIR REHEARSAL
4:00PM MASS

ANNUAL BUDGET AS OF WEEK #23

CONTRIBUTIONS	ACTUAL	BUDGET	DIFFERENCE
Week #23	39,884	26,000	13,884
YTD THROUGH #23	500,953	634,000	-133,047