



All is Calm, All is Bright by Fr. Patrick Kennedy

My friends,

Last month, I attended a performance of "All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914," by Peter Rothstein. It is the story of another Christmas Eve during WWI. In battle, on the front line, hunkered down in the trenches, British soldiers keeping the night watch heard something unusual—instead of bombs bursting in air, strains of the carol, "Silent Night," began to cross "no man's land" as German soldiers sang it to mark the feast. Soon after, soldiers from both lines began to lay down their weapons and cross into no man's land. There they exchanged gifts of food and tobacco, sang together, and even helped bury each other's dead. It is a true story. It was discovered through the words of those who were there, using texts from letters, journals, official WWI documents, poetry, and gravestone inscriptions as its sources.

WWI raged on for four more years. Millions lost their lives. In the darkness of war and on the cold winter night of Christmas Eve, enemies came together. For a few hours, the noble purpose that drove them to defend their countries transported them to a different place. In this place, they were more alike than different, and with all pretenses dropped, they briefly were of one accord.

Throughout the generations, Christmas has been shrouded in darkness created by

the world order. It was like that at the first Christmas Eve, too. Nothing seemed calm and bright even back then. Darkness covered the earth, and it covered people's hearts. In those days, the people of God were under the oppressive rule of Rome. The people of Israel were fracturing. The census called by Caesar Augustus was a considerable imposition especially on the poor. Traveling 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem, mostly on foot, was an arduous trek especially for a pregnant woman. The poverty Mary and Joseph lived in created an added burden. Joseph had little money for a room in any inn. When he discovered there was no room, he had no bargaining power to slip a few extra shekels to the innkeeper like everybody else did. They had to settle for a stable.

However, on that first Christmas Eve, the Spirit of God entered into "no man's land." God illuminated the dark night not only in the City of David but in the hearts of those whose poverty, on any other night, would weigh them down. In this unoccupied space of fear and uncertainty, God became flesh and dwelt among his people. For few precious moments in this no man's land, all was calm and all was bright.

We gathered this past Christmas Eve to mark the same feast those Germans and British did 104 years ago. We recalled the same stories and sang the same carols. The realities of

human life still challenge us today. On this night, in the midst of fear and uncertainty, all is not calm, all is not bright in our world.

Yet, I wonder, could more of us dare to muster the courage to enter into no man's land, a place where everything and everyone is in neutral. As people of good will, can we refuse to believe that the way things are now is not the way they will always be? Might we promise each other in this place and with those we gather, there will be no judgment, no manipulation, no blame or scorekeeping, no discrimination in our gatherings. In this empty space between the realities of life and how we live it, will we allow ourselves to be touched by God's enduring presence and be comforted by it?

Soon our time together will end. And maybe, we won't change much as we leave each other's company. But then again, maybe we could change. History reminds us there have always been those who stopped, unimpeded by darkness, and had the courage to enter a neutral place and call a truce. They were able to see something deeper, a divine light, illuminating their path. When they saw it, they came to know all was calm and all was bright. At some level, each of them knew no matter what happened next, they were not afraid because God was with them. May this grace be ours. And in turn, may our presence be the true gift we share with those we love this season.



EVENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION

Additional Information at www.saintolaf.org/events

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who contributed to our liturgies during the Incarnation Season 2018 – music ministers, lectors, sacristans, acolytes, communion ministers, ushers, greeters, cleaners, environment team, flower donors, staff, priests, and too many behind the scenes ministers to count! Your participation made it possible to offer beautiful liturgies and concerts to celebrate the Incarnation Season. Thank you also to every member of our assemblies, whose presence and participation in song and prayer bring St. Olaf church alive with Christ's presence. Christ is born! Glory to God in the highest!

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.

PRECIOUS BELONGINGS

League of Catholic Women/Samaritan Ministry Drive, Thursday, January 3, 10:30am-Noon

Needed: Backpacks, Totes, Billfolds, Winter Hats, Caps, Scarves, Mittens, Gloves, Boots, Warm Socks. Small Facial Tissue Packs, Lip Gloss, Nail Files, Small Note Pads and Pens, Small Calculators, Umbrellas and especially Purses.

BOOK CLUB

The next meeting will be Sunday January 6, 2019 from 2:30 to 3:30; *Waiting for Christ: Meditations for Advent and Christmas*; Based on writings of Blessed John Henry Newman, edited by Christopher O. Blum (Augustine Institute)

DURUFLÉ REQUIEM - POPUP CHOIR, JANUARY 12, 7:30PM

Timothy Peter, director; William Chouinard, organist; singers from the Twin Cities' top performance choirs. Tickets \$5-20 at the door. Info at www.facebook.com/PopUpChoir

PARISH PANCAKE BREAKFAST, JANUARY 13, 2019

After the 8:00 and 10:00am Masses. Volunteers needed. Contact FRMurnane@SaintOlaf.org, 612-767-7635.

CALENDAR YEAR-END GIVING - IMPORTANT NOTICE

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.



THIS WEEK'S SCHEDULE

Additional Information at www.saintolaf.org

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2018

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, HOLY FAMILY

6:00AM MASS
8:00AM MASS
9:00AM NURSERY OPENS
10:00AM MASS
12:00PM MASS
4:00PM MASS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31

7:00AM MASS/CONFESSIONS
12:00PM MASS
12:00PM AA
5:15PM MASS FOR HOLY DAY

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION
10:00AM MASS
OFFICE CLOSED; BUILDING CLOSED AFTER MASS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2

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

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3

7:00AM MASS/CONFESSIONS
10:00AM LCW SAMARITAN DRIVE
12:00PM MASS/CONFESSIONS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5

9:00AM CENTERING PRAYER
10:00AM RCIA
12:00PM MASS/CONFESSIONS
2:00PM AFRICAN CHOIR REHEARSAL
4:00PM MASS

ANNUAL BUDGET AS OF WEEK #24

CONTRIBUTIONS	ACTUAL	BUDGET	DIFFERENCE
Week #24	52,565	26,000	26,565
YTD THROUGH #24	553,518	660,000	-106,482