



Embracing a Spirituality of Listening

ANN M. GARRIDO

The most treasured prayer of Jesus' people has long been and remains the Shema: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is God. The Lord is One." Jewish spirituality is grounded not in seeing or touching or tasting, but in hearing. No one exemplifies fidelity to this way of being in the world more than Joseph, as evidenced in today's gospel. Joseph is one who listens to what God's messenger says to him and immediately acts on it. He responds to the call to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. Then, he responds to the call to return home with his family to Israel. As many have noted, Joseph never speaks in Scripture, but he certainly listens, and he certainly acts on what he hears.

Christmas is perhaps the noisiest season of the year. At gatherings of family and friends with festive music in the background, it often feels as if we are shouting over one another to be heard. It is a season when it can be hard to have deep conversations, even with God. Indeed, it can be such a busy season that sometimes our regular prayer practices fall by the wayside. But, if we do not make space in our daily lives to listen, might we miss messages that are important, even urgent, for us to hear, as in the case of today's gospel? Messages that require immediate response? What would it look like to carve out a bit of silence in this holiday season, to be like Joseph and regroup yourself in a spirituality of listening? ●



SCAN TO LEARN
ABOUT AUTHOR
ANN M.
GARRIDO

Let the word of Christ dwell in you
richly, as in all wisdom you teach
and admonish one another, singing
psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with
gratitude in your hearts to God.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

Reflect

*Do I allow myself enough
silence, or am I tempted to fill
the silence with noise?*



ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH

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Weekend Masses: Vigil: 5:00pm, Sunday: 10:15am

Saturday 8:00pm (Neo-Catechumenal Mass).

Baptisms: by appointment 3 weeks in advance

Weddings: by appointment 6 months in advance

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Mass Schedule & Intentions

*We welcome our parishioners and visitors who have come to St. Michael's to worship this weekend.
May you be blessed by your presence here today.*

MINISTRIES ...

DECEMBER 27/28th - THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

5:00PM Lector: Karen Marsh EM: Susan Shreeve
10:15AM Lector: Cherry Ramass EM: Joyce Lee
 Collection: Karen Marsh

JANUARY 3/4th - THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

5:00PM Lector: Joshua Blee EM: Karen Marsh
10:15AM Lector: Willie Forbes EM: Joyce Lee
 Collection: Carlos DeFrias

MASS INTENTIONS ...

DECEMBER 27/28th - THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY & JOSEPH

5:00PM For those Remembered in our Christmas Flower Memorials
10:15AM For those Remembered in our Christmas Flower Memorials

JANUARY 3/4th - THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

5:00PM For the Intentions of St. Michael's Parishioners
10:15AM For World Peace

Thank you for your generosity.



Stewardship

sharing the gifts we have been given

DECEMBER 20/21th COLLECTION: \$686.00
Monthly Maintenance Collection: \$447.75
Neocatechumenal Way Donation: \$1286.00
Christmas Mass Collection: \$1157.00
Christmas Flower & Music Liturgy: \$789.00

ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS CAN BE MADE ONLINE
 to St. Michael's Church's: BNTB Account # 2000 6060 081824 100.

WHEN MAKING YOUR ONLINE TRANSACTION, BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND "COLLECTION" AS YOUR MEMO ON YOUR BANKING TRANSACTION.

Pastor's Point ...

Dear Parishioners,

I was touched by the following from MY CATHOLIC LIFE website reflection for this upcoming feast which always takes place after Christmas which says:

It is amazing that God chose to enter our fallen human condition by becoming Incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was born of her, raised by her and Saint Joseph, acquired human knowledge through their teaching, worked with His hands, experienced the fullness of human society, and did so within the context of an earthly family. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph made up a sacred family, the Holy Family. Today's feast continues our Christmas Day celebration. This feast falls within the octave of Christmas that culminates January 1 with the Solemnity of the Mother of God.

Though the earthly life shared by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph has always been a source of prayer and inspiration, the feast we celebrate today is relatively new. In 1890, Pope Leo XIII issued his encyclical Sapientiae Christianae (On Christians as Citizens) in which he emphasized the duties of Christians as citizens in a changing world. At that time, the holy father was concerned about the negative impact that the Industrial Revolution, secularism, and new political ideologies—such as communism—were having upon Christian citizens and the family in particular. He feared that the desire for economic advancement and the communistic separation of God from the political structures would result in the breakdown of the family, the fundamental building block of society. In that encyclical, the Holy Father stated:

This is a suitable moment for us to exhort especially heads of families to govern their households according to these precepts, and to be solicitous without failing for the right training of their children. The family may be regarded as the cradle of civil society, and it is in great measure within the circle of family life that the destiny of the States is fostered. Whence it is that they who would break away from Christian Discipline are working to corrupt family life, and to destroy it utterly, root and branch.

In 1892, Pope Leo XIII issued an apostolic letter, Breve Neminem Fugit, in which he highlighted the importance of the Holy Family for the world as a model for every virtue necessary for human growth.

To all fathers of families, Joseph is verily the best model of paternal vigilance and care. In the most holy Virgin Mother of God, mothers may find an excellent example of love, modesty, resignation of spirit, and the perfecting of faith. And in Jesus, who was subject to his parents, the children of the family have a divine pattern of obedience which they can admire, reverence, and imitate.

Timeless wisdom from the past that we can still apply in the present and may the example of the Holy Family animate us to be the best possible Catholic Christian, with love, peace, health, and courage be with all of you now, in the new year of 2026 and thereafter. Thank you for being a part of our parish community.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AS JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.

God bless,

Fr.

Fr. Joe, Pastor and Vicar General



WORDS OF LIFE:

"Dearest St Joseph... Help us to faithfully commit ourselves to the service and defense of human life —especially where it is vulnerable or threatened. Obtain for us the grace to do the will of God in all things." USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

A Prayer to St. Joseph, Defender of Life (www.respectlife.org/prayer-to-st-joseph)

USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities Prayer for Radical Solidarity (www.respectlife.org/prayer-for-radical-solidarity)

Bishops Corner . . .

Dear Fellow-Catholics,

The Vatican's Christmas tree and Nativity Scene were lit up and officially inaugurated in St. Peter's Square on Monday, 15th of December by Sister Raffaella Petrini, President of the Governatorate of the Vatican City State. Sister Raffaella said, "Today, in this square that embraces the world, the Nativity scene and the Christmas tree are not merely Christmas decorations, but signs of communion, calls to peace and to the care of creation, and invitations to universal fraternity, which St. Francis placed above all else and which became the hallmark of his charism." Religious and civil representatives from the dioceses that donated the elements were present and the Vatican Gendarmerie's band, as well as different choirs and bands from the dioceses, performed traditional Christmas songs and dances.

Link to the video: <https://tinyurl.com/yc7m764m>



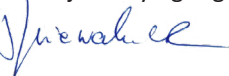
The Diocese of Nocera Inferiore-Sarno, in southern Italy, developed the Nativity Scene. It is set on a 56 feet by 39 feet rectangle platform, with a 25 feet height. It features many traditional architectural and cultural elements from the Agro Nocerino-Sarnese area, as well as nods to certain saints and religious figures important to the region. It also includes symbols that highlight the food and wine heritage of the area. The paving shows ancient Roman roads in stone slabs, and life-size shepherds and animal figures have been anchored to it.

The Christmas tree came from the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone, in northern Italy. It is a European spruce and measures 82 feet and weighs over 17,000 pounds. In addition to the main tree, 40 other smaller trees will also be brought to the Vatican

and will be used to decorate offices, public places, and buildings there.

At the end of the Christmas period, essential oils will be extracted from the branches of the tree, while the rest of the wood will be recycled by an association, in keeping with the principle of respect for creation.

Thank you for our journeying together in 2025! Have a healthy, happy and heart-warming 2026!

+ Wes 
Bishop Wes



Dear Padre,

A friend of mine took his life. He was a very staunch Catholic. His wife wanted to know if he could be buried or have a Mass in the Catholic Church.

Yes, your friend should most certainly receive a Catholic funeral and burial. "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives" (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2283).

A person who is suffering with a mental illness or disorder, certainly a prerequisite for suicide, may not have the necessary mental freedom to choose something that is understood as grave or mortal. In other words, he or she does not have the necessary requirements for full and free consent of the will.

Not that long ago, suicide was often misunderstood. Thankfully, today we understand the havoc and suffering of mental illness, and that a person can be a victim, even if it might look like he or she is not. The great suffering of those who take their own lives must not be dismissed or discarded. The family members and friends of a person who suffers suicide should also not be judged but should only receive compassion and understanding. They, too, are victims, in the fullest sense of the word and in the truest understanding of what it means to be a fragile human being. ●



AMY STOUT / CATHOLICA

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR / DearPadre.org



A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

Young people of our time, like those of every age, are a volcano of life, energy, sentiments, and ideas. It can be seen from the wonderful things they are able to do, in so many fields. However, they also need help in order for this great wealth to grow in harmony and to overcome what...can still hinder their healthy development.

ADDRESS, ROME, MAY 15, 2025

What is Happening in Our Diocese?

St. MICHAEL'S

- EMMAUS Bible Study: The Bible Study resumes on January 13th 2026.
- Neocatechumenal Way - "The Word" is on Wednesdays at 8:00pm
The celebration of the Neocatechumenal Way Eucharist - each Saturday at 7:00pm.

St. THERESA'S

- During the winter season St. Theresa's Cathedral will be locked at 4:00pm from Monday to Friday.
- Daily Mass is celebrated at 7:30am.
- Noon Day Mass in St. Theresa's Cathedral: The 12:10pm Mass is celebrated each Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday

St. ANTHONY'S

- Daily Mass is celebrated Tuesday - Friday at 8:30am

St. PATRICK'S

- Daily Mass is celebrated at 8:00am
- The Rosary is recited every, WEDNESDAY at 10:00am
- No Adoration on Thursday December 25th
- A mass in Tagalog takes place on, THE SECOND FRIDAY of the month at 7:00pm.

St. JOSEPH'S

- A Filipino mass is celebrated every, THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH at 11:00am

STELLA MARIS

- A Filipino mass is celebrated on the LAST Wednesday OF THE MONTH at 7:00pm

ST. THERESA'S GIFT SHOP Opening hours - 10:00am-2:00pm.
Tuesdays and Saturdays. Come and see what we have.

Reverse Advent Calendar Food Drive

"It is better to give than to receive" Acts 20:35

Each day of advent, add an item from the list to a box. Completed boxes should be delivered to your church hall **NEXT weekend of January 3/4th**. Alternatively, you can deliver your box to St. Patrick's Church Hall on Saturday, January 3, 2026 from 10:00am to 11:00am. Arrangements will be made for the boxes to be collected from the church halls for distribution. All food collected will be donated to The Eliza Dolittle Society food bank. Collection at each parish will be coordinated by each parish's St. Vincent de Paul representative. All questions can be directed to Elaine Kelly at 236-4613 or ekelly@ibl.bm.

Deliver your boxes to church hall during the weekend of January 3/4, 2026 when attending mass. Alternatively, you can deliver your box to St. Patrick's Church Hall on Saturday, January 3, 2026



LET'S TALK
MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health Brochures . . .

Please find included in the Bulletin rack (*in Portuguese and English*) and as individual links to the weekly email blast three flyers discussing your Mental Health and Wellness. They are brilliant, informative and very helpful flyers.

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health illness or suicidal thoughts, please call: 236-3770 weekdays from 8:00am to 5:00pm (MWI) 911 or 239-1111 (24/7 Crisis hotline)



Christmas Mass Schedule 2025

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24TH - CHRISTMAS EVE

Christmas Family Liturgy: 6:00PM Mass

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25TH - CHRISTMAS DAY

10:15AM Mass

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27TH

VIGIL 5:00PM MASS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28TH 10:15AM

THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1ST

NEW YEAR'S DAY MASS 10:15AM

ALL ARE WELCOME, PLEASE COME JOIN US!



**The Holy Family
of Jesus, Mary
and Joseph**

CELEBRATING THE Epiphany

The Epiphany is a special day that celebrates the coming of the Magi. Families are invited to bring their children to come and meet the Magi. Parents are encouraged to help their children write a letter asking Jesus for special gifts.

Date: January 9, 2026
Where: St. Michael's Church
Time: 7:00 PM

*Kindly complete the sign-up sheet

*A fellowship gathering will take place in the hall. Food and beverages are welcome.

For more information contact
Maura Almeida 704-2255/ almeidam84@gmail.com



Our Sunday Readings

For the Family

SIRACH 3:2-6, 12-14
PSALM 128:1-5
COLOSSIANS 3:12-21 or 3:12-17
MATTHEW 2:13-15, 19-23

SIRACH 3:2-6, 12-14

Reading closely

1. How does the author envision the relationship between parents and children?
2. In what ways could honoring one's parents atone for one's sins?
3. Why does God especially listen to those who honor their parents?
4. What are the rewards of honoring one's parents?
5. What challenges do children face in caring for their parents?

Living the word

6. How well have you honored your parents?
7. What challenges have you faced in honoring your parents?
8.
 - a. Are there major conflicts in your family?
 - b. Is it possible to resolve these conflicts?
 - c. What would it take to resolve them?

THE FIRST READING

A moral guide

The Book of Sirach, written in the early second century BC, was widely used by Jews and then Christians. Because the work contains many teachings about how to live in a way that pleases

God, the early church used it to teach converts how to be just, moral, and holy.

Honor thy father and mother

This passage from Sirach expands on the Fourth Commandment. As the architect of the human family, God wants parents to love their children and guide them into adulthood. The children of loving parents, therefore, should honor and obey them. Children who reject their parents' guidance bring shame upon their families. They undercut God's plan for both a healthy family and a thriving community.

Honor them all

In ancient times aged parents were cared for in the home. Now people must often move their parents into nursing homes or similar facilities. Children may find it difficult to visit or keep in contact with their parents.

This passage reminds children to fulfill their obligations as best they can, but it also becomes an exhortation to everyone. We share the responsibility of loving and supporting our elders no matter who or where they are.

MATTHEW 2:13-15, 19-23

Reading closely

1. What do you think Joseph's dream is like?
2. What do you think Joseph tells Mary when he wakes up?
3. How do you think Mary reacts?
4. How do you imagine their departure?
5. What do you think life is like for them in Egypt?
6. How might they feel about returning home?
7. What dangers does the family face?
8. What might the members of their extended family feel about all of this?
9. How might this entire experience have affected each member of the family?

Living the word

10. Who would especially identify with this story?
11. How different is this story from how you think about Christmas?
12. How readily would you welcome such a family into your home?
13. Do you act in ways that make others in your community feel unwelcome?

THE GOSPEL READING

Resembling Moses

This infancy narrative evokes the story of Moses in Exodus 1-4. Moses' mother hid him when Pharaoh tried to kill off the Israelites, just as Herod kills the young boys in and around Bethlehem (Mt 2:16-18). As an adult, Moses fled Egypt just as Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus flee Israel. They all return only after receiving divine instructions to do so.

Matthew continues to present Jesus as a Moses-like figure. Just as Moses presented God's law to the Israelites, so Jesus acts as teacher and interpreter of this law. Unlike Moses, however, Jesus, as God's Son, has authority over the law.

Herod & sons

Herod ruled all of Israel at the time of Jesus' birth. When he died, his rule was divided among three of his sons. Archelaus was given Judea, but he was so inept that he was replaced by direct Roman rule. One of those future rulers was Pontius Pilate.

Another son, Antipas, was given rule over Galilee. Somewhat confusingly, these two sons were also called *Herod*. Herod Antipas arrested and killed John the Baptist (Mt 14:1f).

Going home

Only Matthew and Luke include stories about Jesus' birth. Despite notable differences between the two stories, both agree that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. In Matthew's Gospel, however, the family isn't from Nazareth. In a way, only when Jesus goes to Judea, to the cross, does he finally go home.

Son of God

In the Old Testament God's chosen people are often collectively called *God's son*. Matthew applies this term specifically to Jesus. In verse 15 Matthew quotes the prophet Hosea, who spoke eloquently of God's care for his people after freeing them from slavery in Egypt. Unlike those rebellious people, Jesus is the singularly perfect son.

Dangerous beginning

Jesus' birth threatens Herod, who retaliates by threatening the child. The small family flees the murderous king and settles, uneasily, in Galilee only after he is dead. These disturbing events point ahead to the darkness of the crucifixion. The child who was spared will become the adult who doesn't flee but gives his life for the sake of all.

PRAYER

*from the Blessing for a Family or Household
from Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*

In good times and in bad,
in sickness and in health,
we belong to each other
as we belong to you, God ever faithful.

By morning and by night
may your name be on our lips,
a blessing to all our days:
so may kindness and patience be ever among us,
a hunger for justice,
and songs of thankfulness in all we do.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.