

Message From the Pastor

Pastor's Visit to Students of First Grade

Dear St. Veronica School Families,

As we progress through Advent, if we are open, we can hear voices speaking to us comfort and consolation. Sometimes these voices can also inspire and energize us.

That's what happened to me on my visit to First Grade of St. Veronica School on December 06, the Feast of St. Nicholas.

As I walked into the class, the children were all excited to see me. Wow! I rarely receive such a grand reception. Mrs. Burke, their wonderful teacher, said to me: "Father, they are so happy and excited to see you. They have been waiting for you this morning."

That day being St. Nicholas' feast day, each child had received a holy picture with the Nativity scene on it. Those pictures were really beautiful and simple. They showed the holy family, Jesus in the manger, animals close to the manger, little angels hovering over the holy family with wreaths of flowers. The children were all taken up with the beauty of the birth of Christ these pictures depicted.

I told the children to hold up the pictures as we prayed the Our Father and another simple prayer, and then I blessed those pictures.

Then we got to talking about what would happen on Christmas day. The answers were all about the birth of Jesus. When I asked them if there was anything else special that day, then they mentioned that Santa would come with gifts. One child mentioned about family that would come together on Christmas day.

Asked about what Jesus would do on Christmas day, one child said that he would bless us. I probed the meaning of "us." We explored that Jesus would bless the first grade students and the whole of St. Veronica school and parish, and their families. Then they widened the scope of Jesus' blessings to South San Francisco, Daly City, Pacifica, San Bruno. Then Jesus' blessings were going to reach America, Ireland, Mexico, Philippines, Peru. They felt that at his birth, Jesus is going to "bless the whole wide world."

About how to prepare for Christmas during this Advent season, they mentioned decorations and Christmas tree. One child said we want to pray when we get up in the morning. Another said that we must think about the poor and homeless. Still another said that we prepare for Jesus' birthday "by going to Church and praying for the people in our family" and "It's not about getting toys from Santa Claus, but about loving Jesus and others."

In the midst of Christmas talk, one of the children mentioned that Jesus died for us. They are able to make the connection between Christmas and Good Friday. They realize that Christmas has a purpose, which is to lead Jesus to make the ultimate sacrifice for the fullness of our life. Wow! It's amazing that these children get the sense that on the crib, the cross casts its shadow already.

There were such heartwarming answers that came straight from the hearts of these children. When I heard them, it was as if Jesus was speaking to me. I could feel the comfort in my heart and a sense of the presence of God. These children speak such profound truth to me and fill me with a new energy for God and people. They have the simplicity and innocence to be the signposts of God's love and grace in this Advent season.

Do you think there is something precious and priceless in these children that we can all learn from this Advent season as a wonderful way of preparing ourselves for the holy baby?

Your friend and pastor,
Father Charles Puthota

December - parish events – *PREPARE & PARTICIPATE*



Fr. Joe will have *Advent Reflections* on the four Thursdays of Advent at 10:00 a.m.

Penance Service: Monday, December 13th at 7:30 p.m. at St. Dunstan Church in Millbrae.

Simbang Gabi Masses: Beginning December 15th through 23rd at 6:30 p.m. (except on December 18th at 5:00 p.m.). These are traditional Filipino masses, but everyone is welcome to attend.

Mass for our Lady of Guadalupe: Sunday, December 12th at 5:00 p.m. to celebrate the feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of the Americas.

Parish Children's Christmas Eve Mass: This mass will take place at 5:00 p.m.

Prayer Service on December 31st at 10:15 p.m. followed by 11:00 p.m. New Year's Eve Mass

