

Countdown to Christmas: Six days left: Last day of exams, Christmas Eve Mass at John Carroll, family fun, dogs react to holiday hurries, today's O Antiphon, and more classic Christmas hymns



Seniors Travis and Lindsey strike a fun pose with Pope Francis by the John Carroll Campus Ministry Office after their exams.

Introduction:

In the last Advent days leading up to Christmas, I will share some reflections, prayers, and music for you to enjoy during this very hectic holiday season.

Excitement in the air:

The level of excitement is building here at John Carroll as our students are finishing their last two exams this morning: Christmas Break begins at 11:30 a.m. Our students have been through a lot in recent weeks with the sad loss of one of our beloved juniors. Time off for rest and renewal with family and friends is definitely in order!!

I spent some quiet time this morning during the first exam period getting everything

ready for our annual Christmas Eve Mass here in the gym. Candles, ciboria, hosts to be consecrated, vestments... I even remembered all the necessities for incensing!! (Can you tell that I have sometimes forgotten to unpack those items in the past?)

Christmas Eve Mass at John Carroll:

My John Carroll Campus Ministry Office started hosting the 4:30 Christmas Eve Mass about fourteen years ago as the overflow for the 4 p.m. Masses at nearby St. Margaret and St. Ignatius Churches. (My colleague Father Steve Sutton, who also serves as Associate Pastor at St. Ignatius, Hickory, celebrates this Mass each year.)

The first year we set up our Auditorium which seats almost 700 people. It was completely full with standing room only by 3:45. We had to turn people away at the door!! We made a decision to start at 4 p.m. since everyone was there and in their seats. Why wait until 4:30?

It was clear as more and more people showed up at the front doors to be turned away that day— since we were at full capacity—that we needed to move our liturgy to the gym for the next year. This has worked out so well and we now have plenty of parking and seating for over 1200.

Each year we have a full house. Going to Mass in a gym is definitely not the same as being in a church with all the liturgical adornments of the season. But it is the people there that matter: What has transpired is that most families now come to my school as their Christmas Eve Mass location-of-choice, not as an overflow from a neighboring parish.

We are always delighted to see so many multi-generational John Carroll families here, including lots of our graduates. It has become a bit of a reunion Mass, if you will, for our school community. It is a particular special blessing for me each year to celebrate this first Mass of the Nativity with so many people who have touched my life and my heart over the years.

What are your Christmas Eve plans?



Pope Francis got into the holiday spirit when I wasn't looking.... How festive is this?

Family fun in the days to come:

Everyone in my family is looking forward to all the festivities during this week leading up to Christmas. We are having our annual family dinner this Sunday with all our children, their spouses and significant others, and my parents. We will relax and enjoy each other's company with what promises to be a great dinner.

Our almost-seven year old grandson Tyler is so excited for Christmas and Santa. Watching the holidays through the eyes of children is what warms our hearts the most.

We are particularly blessed this year as we anticipate the birth of Meighan and Jeff's baby girl, due on January 15. Baby McKenna is a loved and cherished member of our family already. I know there are a few gifts under the tree with her name on them too!!

Daisy gets crazy:

How is your dog holding up with all the holiday preparations? I have heard some crazy stories over the years about dogs tearing into the wrapped presents and diving into the holiday cookies and candies when no one is looking.

When Daisy, our seven-year old pug, was a puppy she loved to crawl under the Christmas tree and nap on the tree skirt. It was so adorable. She outgrew the space under the tree and she doesn't bother the gifts. But what Daisy definitely does not like is the commotion outside caused by the frequent stops on our cul-de-sac by the mailman, and the UPS and Fed-Ex trucks. It makes her crazy!!

Daisy likes the quiet, usually snoring nearby while my husband works from his home office. But when those trucks make their way down our court, watch out: Daisy is up

and staring out the window, barking and letting us know that someone is disturbing her tranquility. What happened to the peace and quiet?



Today's "O Antiphon"

***"O Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!"***

—Today's Antiphon for December 19



Music for your Enjoyment:

***"Angels We Have Heard on High" (w/ 32 fingers and 8 thumbs) Performed by
the Piano Guys: Paul Anderson, Jon Schmidt, Al van der Beek & Steven
Sharp Nelson, with numerous appearances by their Elf-on-the-Shelf Simone.***

With almost 6 million hits on Youtube, this classic hymn is delightfully arranged and set in a beautifully decorated set complete with gift-wrapped grand piano and train garden with mini-cams.

———

"What Child is This?" by violinist, composer, and dancer Lindsey Stirling.

Highlighting another classic performance with almost 5 million hits on Youtube, this talented young woman plays and dances to this favorite hymn outdoors in the snow.

Prayer for December 19:

*Oh, Jesus who descended from Jesse,
you are a sign of God's love.
I feel hopeful and expectant,
filled with a rebirth of joy and love.*

*I depend you so much.
You are a rock for my belief
and a sign of God's love.*

*Fill me with your praise!
I want to sing your glory,
filled with joy
for the message of hope you send.*

*I don't always understand
when you are acting on my behalf.
Thank you for the message of hope you send me.
Give me true faith and love
as I celebrate the mystery
of how you came to be with us.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

Amen.

