



E-NEWS – Sermon December 25, 2015

Christmas Angel Surprise

To Members of Saint Mary Magdalene – until Christmas I will send this weekly news, adapted from my Sunday sermon, [remember it is a spoken sermon, not a literary composition]. It is my part to promote our need for additional funds to complete our church construction endeavors. Thank you for whatever you can do to help us.

Take a look at the end of my sermon where there is a glass design which attempts to portray simply our current challenge and efforts.

News for December 25th

Our Diocese is reviewing our most current presentation. That will take some time because of all the Christmas traffic and busy schedules of reviewers. There is also somewhat more time needed in our case because our request may be the largest single request for a loan of any parish.

Christmas Angel Surprise

Some Christmas presents we ask for, and we know what they are when we receive them. Other Christmas presents may be wrapped in very colorful paper and will be a big surprise when the presents are opened. Since early November I have noted we would have a St Mary Magdalene Christmas Angel surprise. Here they are!



However, if you were peeking into the packing crates in the lobby the last few weeks, you have already seen these two angels. However, I saved another surprise, just for Christmas, which I have kept a secret until now.

Last week at Mass I noted that in the 15 listening sessions we had for a new church, the only issue that people of the parish mentioned at all 15 sessions was: will we have a columbarium for the ashes of loved ones. The answer is: yes, we will.

Marble Mountain

Last summer I visited friends in Da Nang, Vietnam. I went to a place called Marble Mountain to see if I could find angels for our columbarium area. There were not very many there already completed, and I did not care for what they had to offer.

The people at the marble sculpture place told me: '*We can make whatever you want.*' I searched the Internet for some angels and found some figures I liked, but I did not like the faces. I told them I needed to think it over.

Angels in the Bible

In the Bible angels [read the whole Jesus' birth story in Luke and Matthew, not just the portion we hear today] - angels frequently reveal important matters to people like Mary and St. Joseph. I can tell you while thinking over what the angel faces should be, I also received an inspiration from some angels.

I emailed back to Apex and asked a parishioner to take a photo of the faces of our Christmas Crib angels. The faces of the angels over here at Jesus' birth are also the faces over there on the angels who will watch over our deceased. I am grateful to the person at Marble Mountain who told me '*We can make whatever you want.*'

Today I want to pose for our consideration this thought: what we are doing with our lives between our birth and our leaving this world. Our Gospel story of Jesus has Angels at both His birth and at His tomb.



Out of Eden Walk

I repeat another story I told in November about a man named Paul Salopek who is walking around the world, not every day, but 6 months each year for 7-8 years. It is not an aimless walk, but a walk that imitates the first people very long ago who walked out of Africa, into Europe, then Asia, across the Bearing Sea, and into North and South America.

Paul Salopek was recently in the country of Georgia where he joined an excavation team looking into a settlement of people who stopped there 2 million years ago. That area is still very beautiful and productive.

He asked what specifically the archaeologists were looking for, and they responded: '*we are looking for what those people were doing here.*' So, you and I ask ourselves the same question '*what are we doing here*' between the event of our birth and the event of our leaving the earth?

Times of War – Times of Peace

There are some veterans in our congregation and many veterans in our country who remember their military service in Da Nang when it was a place and time of war. It is not anymore; Marble Mountain and its adjacent China Beach are places of beauty and peace and prosperity now.

But there are still many places of conflict in our world. Would that someday someone preaching from this pulpit would not have to mention our prayers for people who wander like Joseph and Mary for a place of comfort and serenity. In my life it seems like there has always been an opportunity at Christmas to offer prayers for people like the Holy Family.

Into Our Woods

On a softer and brighter note I actually hope there are not too many more messages to go from this pulpit. We hope to have a new pulpit in our new church soon up there where the woods are now.

You are welcome to walk into the woods where our Knights of Columbus have made a clearing where there is a cross with some ribbons on it. That is the place where the altar in the new church will be. We seek and welcome the help of all who come to StMM for worship.



Grinch & Star Wars

I have another example of a different kind of war. We are being entertained this Christmas with stories of Star Wars, Star WARS. Wars between galaxies. I played Grinch to our 7th grade students who took a field trip to see that film. I asked them to watch for themes and messages and meanings that they could identify in the Christmas story.

They did well; here are some responses: *waiting for something, there was hatred and love, there were people who supported those who struggle, people searched like the wise men, there was family who went to the dark side, at Christmas we need people to help those who are grumpy, temptation to the dark side is always around,*

red represents sadness and blue represents joy - joy always wins, there is the birth of a new force, there are people with vision, God will welcome us back, there will be a new generation, people are on a journey of hope, there is betrayal and friendship, people are frightened but determined, there are creepy people and saving people, there is resistance to completing our search.

And I add one theme of my own: the Star Wars story is not over.

Our Own Angels

Like our own story is not over between the Angels of Bethlehem and the Angels present when we finish our days.

The stories I have presented today for pondering revolve around these words:

- We can make whatever you want
- What were those people doing here
- Our story is not over

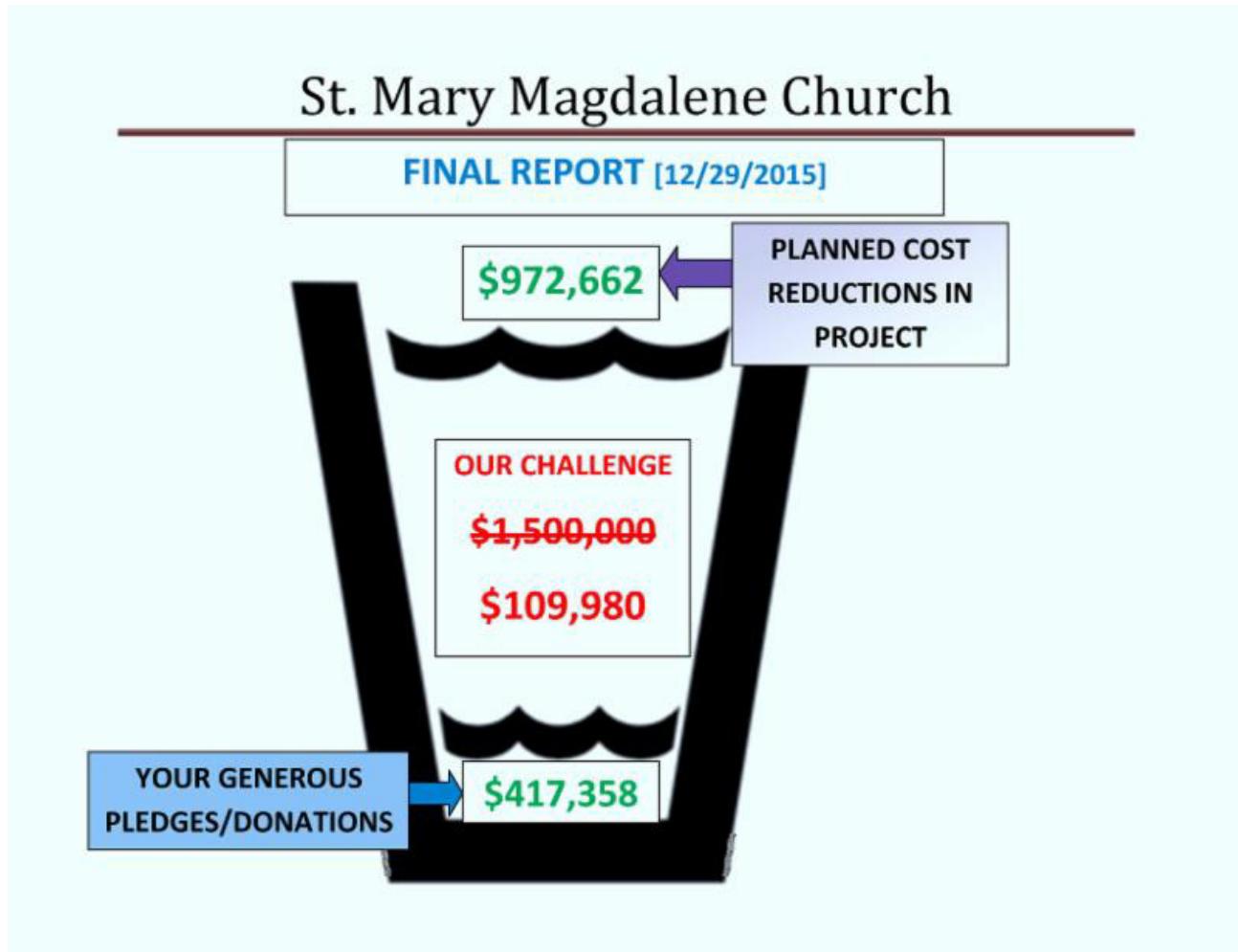
We can find those sentiments in the Gospels also:

- In Advent - When John the Baptist was born all the town people asked: '*what will this child be?*' [We can make whatever you want]
- At Christmas - The shepherds said: '*Let us go to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place.*' [What were those people doing here]
- At Easter - When Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' empty tomb the Angels told her: '*Why do you seek the living among the dead; he is not here.*' [Our story is not over]

*I had joy over the last 6 months in searching the Angel stories
And finding these Angels for Christmas 2015.
I pray for you the help of Angels in your own search for Christmas joy.*

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Fundraiser Glass



Bottom Line

We ask each family in our parish to pledge \$5,000 over 3-4 years. If we had a 100% response we would be underway quickly. For those who have already made a pledge/gift, please consider an additional \$2,000 pledge/gift, more if you can, to help us with these new costs. You are the ones who have brought us this far, and you are the ones who will bring us to the finish line. Many thanks.