Today at the 11:00 AM Solemn Mass, 21 people will participate in the Rite of Welcome and Entrance into the Catechumenate, marking the end of the inquiry phase of the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). During Advent, the next phase of this journey begins for these adults—preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. Philip Lauer, author of this reflection, participated in this Rite four years ago.

Aft er spending at least 25 years of my life as a self-identifying atheist, I find that conversion to a life of faith takes more than going to Mass every Sunday. While Sunday Mass is, of course, necessary to my faith and is, in fact, the high point of my week, there still remain six days of distraction in between. For me, without constant and diligent effort, I easily slip into doubt, unbelief, and even, at my most intellectually slack, a sort of passive nihilism. The will and stamina to sustain this effort I can only attribute to grace, as they are not particularly at hand in other areas of my life.

I was raised in a large, loving and devoutly Christian family, very active in the local Assembly of God church. The entire atmosphere of my youth was so saturated in Pentecostal faith that I was unaware of even the possibility of a different worldview until my early teens. For whatever reason, whether typical teen rebellion or genuine disillusionment, by my late teens I had rejected not only Pentecostalism but all religious belief, and revolted against it angrily.

After high school, art school exposed me to all variety of contemporary secular thought and I drank it in. Soon it was the 90s when the so-called New Atheists were on the rise. I read all of their books as fast as I could get them. I was sold on the idea that the world would be better off without religion, sold on the belief that science would soon be sufficient to explain everything.

I also read books of scripture scholarship written by non-believers as well as books by believers, all in order to prepare myself to debate, often ruthlessly, any believer willing to cross swords. Once in a while, though, an undeniable beauty would glimmer from these readings, momentarily piercing my certainty. I saw only later that Christ was always quietly but tenaciously holding my attention.

As Dostoevsky’s Tikhon from The Devils remarks, “The absolute atheist stands on the next-to-last rung before most perfect faith (whether he steps over it or not), while the indifferent man has no faith at all, nothing but dismal fear, and that, too, only occasionally, if he is a sensitive man.” Thankfully, indifference to religion was never possible for me. There was no shattering event or obvious turning point, though there were a number of shining influences—individuals, ideas, texts—along the way. The materialist philosophy that I had been touting for my entire adult life gradually began to feel inadequate and superficial.

Then there were, here and there, fleeting moments of wonder, of a sudden staggering awareness of the immeasurable, inexplicable gratuitousness of being. I have now been stepping to that next rung for more than a decade. Four years ago, I was baptized here at St Ignatius Loyola, followed two years later by my wife, and just months after that by our two daughters.

My faith practice has to remain as near to unceasing as I can manage, by continuing to engage with such individuals, ideas and texts as those that guided me here, by frequent prayer, by opening myself to others, and by seeking opportunities to ‘produce good fruit’—at least to try. I am especially grateful for being allowed to join the RCIA team, though clearly now my motivation is not without self-interest. With Saint Paul, I will pray for this group of men and women, “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5–6).

— Philip Lauer
Parishioner & RCIA Team Member
THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4th
Second Sunday of Advent

1st Annual Christmas Tree Lighting. Immediately following the 11:00 AM Mass. Wallace Hall. Details below.

Sacred Music in a Sacred Space presents A Chanticleer Christmas. 4:00 PM. Church. Details on page 5.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8th
Feast of the Immaculate Conception
8:30 AM, 12:10 PM, 5:30 PM & 7:30 PM

Vigil Mass
Wednesday, December 7th at 5:30 PM
All Masses will be celebrated in the Church. The Feast is a holy day of obligation.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10th
IGNITE! Teen Ministry.
6:30 PM. Parish Lounge. Details on page 3.

FAMILY MINISTRY

1st Annual Christmas Tree Lighting
TODAY
Immediately following the 11:00 AM Mass. Wallace Hall.
All are welcome.

GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Saint Ignatius Loyola Grammar School extends a cordial invitation to join us at our

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FAIR
Today from 10:00 AM–3:00 PM, McKinnon Hall

CALL TO MINISTRY

We need to expand the number of our parishioners serving as

Eucharistic Ministers  Hospitality Ministers  Lectors

Response forms and brief descriptions of each ministry are available in the Narthex (Church lobby) and in the Parish House.
Instruction for new ministers will be offered in January.
For more information, contact Fr. Feely at feelyt@saintignatiusloyola.org

ADVENT CONFESSION SCHEDULE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19th
RECONCILIATION MONDAY

All parishes in the Archdiocese of New York will offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Monday, December 19th.
Confessions will be heard beginning at 4:00 PM.
Many priests will be available for Confession.

ADDITIONAL CONFESSION TIMES
Thursday, December 22nd & Friday, December 23rd
6:00 PM–8:00 PM in the Parish House

HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Saturday, December 24th
Christmas Eve

• 4:00 PM Family Mass I • 6:00 PM Family Mass II
• 8:00 PM Mass of Christmas • Midnight Mass

Sunday, December 25th
Christmas Day

• 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM*
* There is a particular need for volunteers at the 11:00 AM Mass

If you are available, please email Rob Manning at robbiefmanning@gmail.com to let him know at which Mass you can assist.

THE ANNUAL APPEAL

As you plan your Christmas gift-giving, please remember to include your contribution to the Annual Appeal on your to-do list.

In order to fund the current level of service and programming, we rely on the Annual Appeal, which is now underway.

If you have not yet made a donation, you can do so by visiting the Annual Appeal page on the St. Ignatius website by scanning the QR code at left.

To electronically access the Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2016 and a letter from Father Yesalonia about the Annual Appeal, visit our website at stignatiusloyola.org
Copies are also available at the Parish House.

Thank you for your continued generosity!
**IGNATIAN YOUNG ADULTS**

**Sunday Social Winter Schedule**

The Sunday Socials are held in Wallace Hall at 8:30 PM, following the 7:30 PM Mass. They are hosted by the Ignatian Young Adults. All young adults (ages 21–39) are welcome.

**Sunday Social Dates**

Dec. 11  March 5

**IGNITE! TEEN MINISTRY**

**Saturday, December 10th**

6:30 PM – 8:30 PM  
Parish Lounge  

All high school students are welcome!

Ignite is a Catholic community of high school students rooted in the Ignatian way of prayer, service, and community. We meet twice a month on Saturdays from 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM.

**To register,**

scan the QR code at left  
or visit  
https://goo.gl/forms/fUpawgmEXNRGJjc53

**RANGER ROSARY MINISTRY**

**Monday, December 12th**

7:00 PM in the Meeting Room

The Ranger Rosary ministry, which started at St. Ignatius in August 2009, meets twice a month to make rosaries for Catholics who are serving in the armed services. These rosaries are constructed from materials with no metal parts that might reflect light or make a rattling noise. 

New members are always welcome!

**BOOMERS & BEYOND**

**Calling all Boomers & Beyonders and Ignatian Young Adults**

for our annual Christmas Caroling event.

You don't have to be a super soprano or terrific tenor … just someone who wants to join with us in sharing some Christmas joy through song… and perhaps stop at a local spot for a snack and drink afterwards.

**Date & Time:** Sunday, December 11th at 1:30 PM  
**Place:** Lott Assisted Living Residence – 5th Avenue (between 107th and 108th Streets)

**ANNUAL PARISH CHRISTMAS COOKIE EXCHANGE**

*Hosted by the Ignatian Young Adults at the IYA Sunday Social*

December 11th at 8:30 PM in Wallace Hall, following the 7:30 PM Mass

All parishioners are welcome.

*Bring your homemade cookies to swap with others!*

**To participate:**

**BAKE** your favorite Christmas cookies.  
(If you’re not a baker but would still like to participate in the exchange, treats from a bakery are fine, too!)

We recommend bringing 2 dozen cookies (24), but any amount is fine as long as you bring that many home!

**BRING** your treats to Wallace Hall on Sunday, December 11th, before or after the 7:30 PM Mass. Please bring your treats in a container you can reuse for carrying your new cookies home.

**EXCHANGE** your cookies.

All are welcome to stay for our Christmas Social, also in Wallace Hall!

If you are interested in donating baked goods for the Christmas Social or have any questions about the event, please email ignatianyoungadults@gmail.com

**SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL**

**FRIDAY – SUNDAY**

**DECEMBER 16th – DECEMBER 18th**

**SVdP Women’s Shelter**  
**Wallace Hall**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is in need of volunteers for the Women’s Shelter, which is located in Wallace Hall, every other weekend through April.

If you would like to volunteer in the Shelter, please leave a message for Teresa Abruzzo at the Parish House or email svdp.shelter980@gmail.com

**Pope Francis’ December Prayer Intentions**

**Universal: End to Child Soldiers**

That the scandal of child soldiers may be eliminated the world over.

**Evangelization: Europe**

That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel which gives joy and hope to life.
Sunday, December 18th
Immediately following the 11:00 AM Family Mass
We hope that your family will join us in this celebration of our Lord’s birth. There is a role for everyone!

To participate
1. Scan the QR Code at left to be directed to the online registration form or visit http://stignatiusloyola.org/index.php/outreach/family_ministry/2016_wallace_hall_christmas_pageant_registration

OR
2. Download the form found on our website stignatiusloyola.org and return the completed form to the Parish House or email it to Mary Jo Ward at mjward@med.cornell.edu by 11:59 PM on Friday, December 9th.

Two rehearsals are required:
Sunday, December 11th & Sunday, December 18th
We would also be grateful for help from parents in organizing rehearsals, costumes, and props.

Please contact Mary Jo Ward at mjward@med.cornell.edu with any questions or to volunteer.

Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas
Bishop Robert Morneau of Green Bay, WI offers Advent and Christmas meditations and prayers, reflecting on Scripture readings from the daily Mass.

Advent/Christmas Prayer Booklet
Based on the writings of the late Bishop Kenneth Untener, this booklet features daily scripture reflections for the Advent/Christmas season.

Both booklets are available at the Parish House

Advent Brochure
Copies of our Advent Brochure are available in the Narthex, at the Parish House, and online at stignatiusloyola.org

Announced Masses and Readings for the Week

Monday, December 5th
(Second Monday of Advent)
Isaiah 35:1–10    Psalm 85    Luke 5:17–26
8:30 MEM    Caroline Choix
12:10 MEM    Bettina Caiola
5:30 ANN    Dolorita Wallace Moore

Tuesday, December 6th
(Second Tuesday of Advent)
Isaiah 40:1–11    Psalm 96    Matthew 18:12–14
8:30 MEM    Kelly Gillebaard
12:10 MEM    Gilda Scandiffo
5:30 MEM    Margaret Phelan

Wednesday, December 7th
(St. Ambrose)
Isaiah 40:25–31    Psalm 103    Matthew 11:28–30
8:30 MEM    Jerry Johnson
12:10 MEM    Virginia Persson Morales

Thursday, December 8th
(The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary)
Genesis 3:9–15, 20    Psalm 98
Ephesians 1:3–6, 11–12    Luke 1:26–38

Friday, December 9th
(Second Friday of Advent)
Isaiah 48:17–19    Psalm 1    Matthew 11:16–19
8:30 MEM    Nettie Crisci
12:10 MEM    Deborah Ann Horan
5:30 MEM    Catherine Scanlon

Saturday, December 10th
(Second Saturday of Advent)
Sirach 48:1–4, 9–11    Psalm 80    Matthew 17:9a, 10–13
8:30 MEM    The Meehan Family

Sunday, December 11th
(Third Sunday of Advent)
Isaiah 35:1–6a, 10    Psalm 146
James 5:7–10    Matthew 11:2–11

Available at the Parish House
The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola:
A Walking Tour
Updated in commemoration of our Sesquicentennial Celebration, the redesigned Walking Tour provides a detailed overview of the rich architectural history of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola.
Cost: $8

Next Weekend: Special Collection
The annual collection for the retired women and men religious of the New York Archdiocese will be taken next weekend. Thank you in advance for your generosity.
Christmas Angel Project

Concludes Next Weekend!

to benefit
The Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Harlem and St. Mary’s Church on Grand Street

All Christmas Angel Project cards have been selected.
Thank you for remembering those in need!

Gifts must be returned to the Parish House no later than Sunday, December 11th.

Annual Toy Drive

Continues This Weekend!
to benefit the children from the Church of St. Mary of the Assumption + Our Lady of Mt. Carmel – St. Benedicta

Through Monday, December 12th

Please bring new, unwrapped toys or games for boys and girls between the ages of 6–12 to the Parish House.

See the flyer in the Narthex and on our website for a list of suggested toys.

December at Sacred Music in a Sacred Space

A Chanticleer Christmas
TODAY at 4:00 PM

Now for its fourth year at St. Ignatius Loyola, A Chanticleer Christmas accompanies your holiday season with joy and tranquility in music old, new, and familiar.

Seasonal anthems and carols by Americans from Billings to Ives to Steven Sametz will make for a classically rich and resplendent Chanticleer Christmas.

Called “the world's reigning male chorus” by The New Yorker magazine, Chanticleer is known around the world as “an orchestra of voices” for the seamless blend of its twelve male voices ranging from soprano to bass and its original interpretations of vocal literature, from Renaissance to jazz and popular genres, as well as contemporary composition.

Heaven and Nature Sing: Annual Christmas Concerts

Sunday, December 11th at 3:00 PM & Sunday, December 18th at 3:00 PM

The New York Times calls these concerts “part of the essence of Christmas in New York,” and our sellout audiences year after year agree!

The Vivaldi Gloria is the centerpiece of this year’s concerts, accompanied by well-known seasonal favorites and festive carols for everyone to join in singing.

Featuring the Choir & Orchestra of St. Ignatius Loyola, the Parish Community Choir, and the Children's Choirs.

Tickets for all concerts are available online at www.smssconcerts.org or by calling 212-288-2520.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11th

11 AM SOLEMN MASS

Biery, Peeters & Statham
Three settings of Veni, Emmanuel

Palestrina
Fuit homo missus a deo

Lassus
Confortamini et jam nolite

MUSIC

Tickets for all concerts are available online at www.smssconcerts.org or by calling 212-288-2520.

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

ADVENT FOOD DRIVE
Continues This Weekend!
Benefiting the Community Food Pantry at the Church of St. Gregory the Great

Week 2 (Dec. 4th – 10th):
canned fruits & vegetables

Week 3 (Dec. 11th – 17th):
rice, beans, and cereals

Week 4 (Dec. 18th – 19th):
tuna fish, soups, and canned meals, such as Chef Boyardee, stews, or hash

Through Monday, December 19th, SVdP will be accepting donations of food for the Community Food Pantry at the Church of St. Gregory the Great.

Please bring donations to the Parish House through Monday, December 19th.
Mass for the Feast of St. Lucy, Patron Saint of the Blind. Tuesday, December 13, 6:30 PM. St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Lady Chapel, East 50th Street and 5th Avenue. Presented by the Xavier Society for the Blind. Readings for the Mass will be available in large print and braille. All are welcome. For further information, call 212-473-7800.

U.S. National Rosary Pilgrimage to Lourdes, France. Thursday, June 22, 2017—Saturday, July 1, 2017. Includes all meals, a guided tour of Lourdes, a guided visit to Gavarnie, and scheduled liturgical services. The group will be accompanied by medical staff, clergy, and volunteers to assist with the needs of the pilgrims. Prices start at $2,745 (for a JFK/New York departure). Reservation deadline is Wednesday, March 15, 2017. For additional details and rate information, visit lourdes-pilgrimage.com, call 877-276-7279, or email lourdespilgrimageoffice@comcast.net

ArchCare Care Navigation Center: Resources for Seniors. Need help caring for yourself or someone else but not sure where to turn? ArchCare, the healthcare system of the Archdiocese of New York has a Care Navigation Center staffed by health and social service professionals dedicated to helping people better understand and access the services for which they are eligible. Call 855-951-2273 between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM seven days a week.

Sunday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Every Sunday, 3:15 PM–5:30 PM. Saint Joseph’s Church, 404 East 87th Street. An opportunity for quiet prayer and silent adoration. All are welcome.

**PRAYER SUGGESTION**

**Sacred Space**

Spend 10 minutes in prayer, as you sit at your computer, with the help of on-screen guidance and scripture chosen specially every day. Visit www.sacredspace.ie

**For your convenience**

To reach the Giving page on the parish website, scan the QR Code at left.

**Music Information:** (212) 288-2520  Email: music@stignatiusloyola.org