

My dear Little Flower,

Over these past months, our parish's NCCL (*National Community of Catechetical Leaders, an Archdiocese wide effort focused on enriching the family experience in our parish.*) Family Ministry and the Siena Ministry (*a ministry focused on marketing and evangelization - integrating communication, outreach and mission-driven initiative*) have been reflecting and rediscovering a simple truth: the Gospel is a story, God's story, and each of us is part of it. We carry this story in our hearts, in our homes, and in the way we choose kindness, hope, sacrifice, love and faith. And just as it was handed on to us by those who loved us, we are called to pass it on with joy.

With that spirit, I am delighted to introduce to you a new parish project:

**THE LITTLE FLOWER STORY WAGON** - A Catholic Parish Fable.

This is a lovingly crafted, imaginative story series for children, families, and the young at heart. It follows the Wise Pepper Farmer Giuseppe and his joyful little companions; Pip the Rabbit, Luma the Firefly, and Pastor the Black Dog as they travel through magical fields, dreamy meadows, and changing seasons carrying powerful stories of saints, kindness, and God's love.

But, always, behind the whimsical lies something more profound: Why do we tell stories? Because stories form and change us. Because children remember what made them smile. Because faith grows when it is shared with joy. Because Jesus told stories!

The Little Flower Story Wagon is one more way for our parish to:

- Pass on our Catholic tradition through a creative, gentle, and accessible form
- Give witness to the Gospel in language families can enjoy together
- Invite children to see themselves in God's big story
- Help parents talk about faith at home, around the table, at bedtime, or in the car
- Celebrate our identity as the Church of the Little Flower, where stories of small acts of love become great offerings to God

Our hope is that these stories will spark conversations, inspire prayer, and warm the hearts of children who may be hearing about the saints, virtues, and the love of Jesus for the first time.

In an age when our young people are surrounded by noise, The Little Flower Story Wagon offers a gentle counter-voice, a place where quiet wonder, beauty, and faith meet. A Gift to Our Community.

As these stories unfold throughout different seasons, we pray that they become a small tradition in your homes: something your children look forward to do with mom and dad (before going to bed), something that becomes part of their memory of church, something that quietly plants seeds of faith that will blossom in God's good time.

This ministry is part of our parish's ongoing effort to nurture evangelization, hospitality, and spiritual growth. Our Siena Ministry for Marketing and Evangelization is helping us bring this vision to life, and we are excited to journey with all of you as it takes flight!

My dear parish family, thank you for being a community that welcomes creativity, joy, and the simple stories that draw us closer to God. May the Little Flower herself, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, guide this humble effort with her childlike trust and her fearless love.

Your parish priest,  
Fr. JC Merino

***The Little Flower Story Wagon: An Advent Adventure***  
**Week 1 of Advent — The Treasure of Hope**



The first flakes of winter had begun to softly fall over the wide green meadow where **the Wise Pepper Farmer Giuseppe** lived. His humble cottage glowed with the soft blue light of Advent, and the Little Flower Story Wagon was decorated with fresh evergreen garlands and a single purple lantern on each side.

Inside the warm barn, **Pip the Rabbit**, **Luma the Firefly**, and **Pastor the Black Dog** were buzzing (or wagging) with excitement.

“Tonight begins our Advent journey!” Pip announced, hopping in a joyful circle. “Giuseppe said we’re traveling to share the story of *waiting for Jesus!*”

Pastor sat proudly near the wagon, tail thumping against the hay. He gave a happy *boof*, as if to say he was *very* ready to go. He nudged a small wooden crate with his nose—curious, hopeful, and just a little impatient.

Luma hovered above them, glowing a soft violet light. “I heard Giuseppe say we’re carrying a very special gift in the wagon tonight.”

Just then, **Wise Pepper Farmer Giuseppe** entered, brushing snow from his worn hat and shoulders. His white beard glistened with flakes, and his eyes shone warmly, like a candle in a window.

“My dear friends,” he said in his gentle Italian accent, “the children of Little Flower Parish are preparing their hearts for the coming of Jesus. And so, the Story Wagon will bring them Advent treasures—one for each of the four weeks.”

He lifted a small wooden chest carved with twinkling stars.

“Inside is the First Treasure of Advent:”

He opened it slowly.

**“Hope.”**

Pip’s long ears perked straight up.

“What’s hope made of?” he asked.

Giuseppe chuckled softly.

“Sometimes hope is as small as a seed hidden under winter snow...  
and sometimes hope is bright as a star guiding travelers in the night.”

With that, they set off. Snowflakes danced like tiny angels around them as the Story Wagon rolled through the quiet evening paths, the purple lanterns shining like little Advent candles.

When they arrived at the parish courtyard, the children were gathered around the crèche, which still held only an empty manger.

Giuseppe stepped aside.

"Tonight," he whispered, "you will share the treasure."

Pip hopped forward bravely.

"This week is about **Hope**," he said proudly. "Like a seed sleeping under the soil in winter. You can't see what God is doing—but He's working just the same."

Luma floated higher, shining brighter.

"And hope is like a tiny light that doesn't give up," she added. "Even the smallest spark can guide your heart."

The children looked at the lanterns, glowing softly in the cold darkness.

Then Pastor padded quietly to the manger. He curled beside it and laid his warm head next to the straw. His calm presence said everything:

Hope means making space for Jesus—  
even before His arrival.

Giuseppe opened the star-carved chest and revealed a small wooden star, made for the parish. Each child touched it reverently and whispered a quiet Advent prayer into the winter night.

As the Story Wagon prepared to leave, the children called out: "Will you come back next week?"

Giuseppe winked, his breath forming a soft cloud in the frosty air.

"Oh yes, little ones. Next week we will bring the Treasure of *Peace*."

The wagon jingled off into the snowy night, the lanterns flickering like the first candle on an Advent wreath, leaving behind footprints, gentle glows, and hearts full of hope.

The End.

