

December 1, 2013: First Sunday of Advent



“Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” — Mt 24:43-44

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LITURGY

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday, December 1 (Is 2:1-5/Rom 13:11-14/Mt 24:37-44)

8:00 am- James Grahmann

10:30 am- Elsie Steffek

Monday, December 2 (Is 4:2-6/Mt 8:5-11)

7:00 am- Frank & Agnes Polansky

10:00 am- Living & deceased members of Hermes & Neskora Families (H'ville Rehab)

Tuesday, December 3, St. Francis Xavier, Priest (Is 11:1-10/Lk 10:21-24)

7:00 am- Elroy & Judith Koerth

Wednesday, December 4, St. John Damascene, Priest & Doctor of the Church (Is 25:6-10a/Mt 15:29-37)

7:00 am- Willard, Irene & Francis Hagendorf

8:05 am- Joe P. Zappe

Thursday, December 5 (Is 26:1-6/Mt 7:21, 24-27)

7:00 am- Robert & Vickie Klimitchek

10:00 am- Mary Michna (Stevens)

Friday, December 6, St. Nicholas, Bishop (Is 29:17-24/Mt 9:27-31)

7:00 am- Marjorie Migl Fields

8:05 am- Ernest Schulte

Saturday, Dec. 7, St. Ambrose, Bishop & Doctor of the Church (Is 30:19-21, 23-26/Mt 9:35--10:1, 5a, 6-8)

5:30 pm- For our Parish Family

Sunday, Dec. 8 (Is 11:1-10/Rom 15:4-9/Mt 3:1-12)

8:00 am- James Kouba

10:30 am- Jim & Josephine Gutierrez, Frank Gutierrez

Church Bulletin Sponsor: John & Sherry Henke in memory of John, Lucy & Stephen Henke.

Radio Broadcast Sponsor: Marvin & Annette Grahmann Family in memory of Russell Grahmann.

Vigil Light: In memory of Dale Jetelina by Tracy Swoboda, Dalton & Aston Jetelina.

Our Gift to God: Envelopes-\$6,081.45; Campaign for Human Dev.-\$648; Manna-\$2,142; Cemetery-\$773; Loose-\$1,058; Children-\$50.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of *Timothy Brosch*, son of Ben & Mary Lee Brosch; *Robert Butschek*, brother of John Butschek; and, *Daniel Silgero*. May they rest in the peace of Christ.

Please pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1

-Christmas Pageant, 6:30 p.m., Courthouse Square.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

-Rosary & Evening Praise, 5:30 p.m., Church.

-Choir practice, 6:15-8:30 p.m., Church

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

-Quilting Circle, 9:00 a.m., K.C. Hall of Fame Room.

-K.C. General Meeting, 7:30 p.m., K.C. Hall.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4

-CCD: K-12th Grade, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

-Divine Mercy Study/Prayers, 7:30 p.m., Cry Room.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

-First Friday Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament begins 6:00 p.m. Intention this month: *Keep Christ in Christmas and for all the sick, especially those who are seriously ill.*

-Holy Hour for priestly vocations, 7:00 p.m., Church.

-RCIA Class, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Family Center.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6

-First Friday Adoration ends with benediction, 6:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

-Serra Club Mass for Vocations, 8:30 a.m., Holy Rosary Church, Hostyn. Rosary at 8:00 a.m.

Among our sick: Donna Avant, Lorene Christ, Matt Pohler, Wilbert Kalinec, Mary Bonorden, Josephine Muniz, Vivian Janak, Bobbie Lee Drozd, Donna Steffek, Glenn Rabel, Lisa Grissom, Richard Grahmann, Colin Grahmann, Emil Hermes, Georgia Schaefer, Pat Hanslik, Leroy Loth, Debby Kolos, Barbara Kubena, Kathy Davis, Yvonne Muska, Russell Janak, Marilyn Palmquist, Doug Blumberg, Terry Mitchon Bludau, Elrose Ehler, Melissa Pilat, Gregory Dornak, Andrew Pesek, Wilton Hrnecir, Frances Kallus, nursing home residents, & the homebound.

Anniversaries:

Ronald & Marie Ridgeway 40 years Dec. 1

November Baptisms: Colt James, son of Rodney & Christi Pustka; Uriel, son of Juan & Elizabeth Monjaraz.

Perpetual Adoration: An adorer is needed at 4:00 a.m. on Fridays. If you are able to spend this hour with Our Lord in prayer and adoration, please call Charlene Bradbury at 798-3224.

Attention All Ministers: Please call the Rectory by Tuesday, December 3 to let us know which Christmas Mass you will be attending; otherwise, ministers will be scheduled according to the person next in line. This is for all ministries.

Christian Mothers Christmas Party, Sunday, Dec. 8, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Family Center. Members are to bring sandwiches, chips or desserts. Bring a gift for your child. Santa will be present!

From the Desk of Msgr. John

Thank you to all who participated in the Christ the King Holy Hour in church last Sunday. Although we couldn't have the outdoor procession because of the weather, we had a beautiful indoor procession and holy hour.

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Advent. This season is a time of preparation for the celebration of the birthday of Jesus Christ – Christmas! It is not to prepare for "Happy Holidays," but for a "Merry Christmas."

It seems that our society gets farther and farther away from the real meaning of Christmas. Christmas is not about us, but about Jesus Who came to be our Savior. He is why we have Christmas.

As we begin this Advent season, let us reflect on the following short story called "*Mary's Dream*."

I had a dream, Joseph. I don't understand it, not really, but I think it was about a birthday celebration for our Son. I think that was what it was all about. The people had been preparing for it for about six weeks. They had decorated the house and bought new clothes. They'd gone shopping many times and bought elaborate gifts. It was peculiar, though, because the presents weren't for our Son. They wrapped them in beautiful paper and tied them with lovely bows and stacked them under a tree. Yes, a tree, Joseph, right in their house. They'd decorated the tree, also. The branches were full of glowing balls and sparkling ornaments. There was a figure on the top of the tree. It looked like an angel might look. Oh, it was beautiful. Everyone was laughing and happy. They were all excited about the gifts. They gave the gifts to each other, Joseph, not to our Son. I don't think they even knew Him. They never mentioned His name. Doesn't it seem odd for people to go to all that trouble to celebrate someone's birthday if they don't know Him. I had the strangest feeling that if our Son had gone to this celebration, He would have been intruding. Everything was so beautiful, Joseph, and everyone so gay, but it made me want to cry. How sad for Jesus – not to be wanted at His own birthday party. I'm glad it was only a dream. How terrible, Joseph, if it had been real. Author unknown.

CCD News ~~

Dec. 4: 7th Grade meets at L.A.J. Youth Center for St. Nick Ministry.

Dec. 11: Mass Day – 4th Grade participates.

Sacred Heart Catholic School News ~~

Dec. 4: Classes dismissed at 2:00 p.m.

Dec. 5: Pre-K Christmas Program, 6:30 p.m., Gym.

Dec. 6: Classes dismissed at 1:00 p.m.

K.J.T. Society #5 Christmas Party, Friday, Dec. 6,
6:30-8:30 p.m., Chovanetz Professional Building
(Kathleen Chovanetz Insurance), 205 E. 1st St.

Sacred Heart Youth ~~ Our next youth event will be held at Hallettsville Rehab on December 8th from 2-3:30 pm. We will play games with the residents. Pope Francis has put particular emphasis on the care and love of the elderly. Let us stretch our hearts and give a little of our time. We will meet at the nursing home just before 2 pm. All youth must bring a signed permission note to take part in the event. God bless!

KJZT Society #2 Christmas Party, Sunday, Dec. 8,
12:00 noon, Family Center. Members **MUST** RSVP
before Dec. 1. Call 798-5033, 798-3886, or 798-9967.

Catholic Daughters sponsoring tour of painted churches, Thursday, Dec. 5. Meet in Sacred Heart Church parking lot at 8:30 am. Carpool to Schulenburg leaves 8:45 am. Cost \$10 per person plus lunch. All are welcome. Call Kay Steinocher 798-4817 or Joyce Machicek 798-5874.

Calendar Membership: **Nov. 21:** Alice & Leroy Janak-\$100; **Nov. 22:** Jayne Easterling, Columbus-\$100; **Nov. 25:** M/M Milton Haas, Jr.-\$50; **Nov. 26:** Jason & Amanda Kurtz-\$50; **Nov. 27:** Philip Sheridan, San Antonio-\$50.

St. Philip Church, El Campo sponsoring "Healing & Freedom in the Spirit," Dec. 6 & 7, Holy Mass, healing prayer, & seminar. For info., call Gwen 979-637-0277.

Now available at the Rectory, Advent Wreaths, candles, nativities, ornaments, etc. for your Christmas shopping.

First Sunday of Advent – "Stay awake! Be prepared." The advice is clear enough. And chances are, most of us are inclined to follow this fervent instruction from the Lord. We'd like to be vigilant. We'd like to be ready.



When the ultimate Advent comes—when Jesus returns—we don't want to be the one left standing alone in the field. But on its own, the desire to be alert isn't necessarily enough to keep us from drifting off into a spiritual siesta.

Consider the apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus gave them a similar instruction to the one He gives today: "Keep watch" (Mt 26:38). And what happened? They fell asleep. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (26:41). How about us? Can we really stay awake? Indeed, the season of Advent presents a challenge: Jesus asks us to be ready to greet Him at any hour. Though our spirit may be willing, can our "flesh" pull it off? Especially in this month of holiday hustle and bustle, how can we stay constantly focused on welcoming Christ?



Saint Paul gives us a hint in today's epistle: "Put on the armor of light...Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:12, 14). Just as light prevents physical sleep, so too the light of Christ prevents spiritual slumber. When we invite Jesus' Spirit into our hearts, it's like keeping a vigil light flickering in the window of our souls. We may go about our business, but that expectant flame never burns out. So when Jesus comes again—even like a thief in the night—He will find us ready and waiting.
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A fruitful Advent makes for a wonderful Christmas

It is said that a good beginning leads to a good outcome. Then a true Advent observance is a great step toward a wonderful Christmas. And a good Advent can also bring you spiritual renewal along the way.

Waiting can often produce greater joy when the wait is finally over. Why not consider adopting one or two of these ideas to increase your Christmas joy through a fruitful Advent wait?

Pray the Wait.

- **Commit random acts of prayer.** Pray while you wait in line. Pray in the car. Pray when you're put on hold. Pray on your way to work. Keep your prayer simple and heartfelt.
- **Wait in his presence.** Make a visit to the tabernacle in your church to the Body of Christ. Spending time in reverent prayer before the Eucharist will bring healing and peace.
- **Ask God's advice for how much to spend on Christmas gifts.** It is hard to fully prepare for the Savior when you are racking up debt. Celebrate joyfully, simply, and responsibly.
- **Make a joyful noise.** St. Augustine is credited with saying that singing is praying twice. Hum along with the carols in the elevator. Sing hymns joyfully at Mass. Listen to Handel's Messiah or other sacred music of the season. Use song to boost your prayer - even if it's just singing in the shower.
- **Before you speak or act, pray that you will bear God's image in all that you say or do.** In this way, we won't be strangers, but rather will be ready and waiting to welcome him.
- **"Hail Mary" your way through Advent.** Consider the Blessed Mother's example of faith. Learn to see through her eyes, listen with her ears, and trust with her heart.



Anticipate with hope.

- **This is a good time to make peace with one another, and be forgiving.** Jesus said, "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 25:23-25).
- **Open your heart.** December is the loneliest month of the year. Make a list of people you know who live alone, are new to your area, or who have lost a loved one this year. Include them in your family events, invite them to Mass, or pay them a visit.
- **Champion a service project.** Many parishes gather gifts for disadvantaged families or folks forgotten in nursing homes. Find out what your local community is doing or begin your own service traditions.
- **Become a soldier in the war for peace.** Avoid quarreling or gossip, and work for a spirit of unity.
- **Convert your heart.** Do a thorough examination of your conscience so that you can recognize patterns of sin that need to be changed. If you need help spotting them, ask your priest for advice when you go to Confession. (Hint: if you think you don't have any sins, read Exodus 20 and Matthew 5.)
- **Mark the season.** You may not be able to wait until Christmas Eve to decorate your home, but why not decorate slowly throughout Advent to measure progress through the season?
- **Advertise your faith in Jesus' birth.** Put on a joyful appearance, no matter what is going on in your day. Remind yourself of the coming miracle and what it means for each of us.

However you choose to observe Advent, remember the gifts of the first Christmas -- justice, peace, and freedom. They are God's Christmas gifts to us all.

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope and joy** in the Catholic faith.

December 2013

Sacred Heart, St. Mary, St. John and Ascension Churches

Fr. John C. Peters, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Juan Diego

On December 9th we honor St. Juan Diego. A humble Native American convert to Christianity, Juan Diego was visited by the Blessed Virgin at Tepeyac Hill in Mexico in 1531. She sent him to ask the bishop to build a chapel for her, and had Juan bring roses as a sign. When the roses spilled from his tilma (cape) before the bishop, it retained the image of the Blessed Mother which can be seen today. Millions converted as a result.



Christmas unity

Christmas is a wonderful time to forgive anyone who hurt or disappointed us. After all, Jesus came to repair our broken relationship with God. He will give us the strength and power to forgive others if we ask.

Hope always

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope"
(Romans 15:13).



What is under your tree this Christmas?

Christmas celebrates the most amazing truth: God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, loves each of us individually and particularly. Of all God's creatures, we alone were made for God himself. His love is free - the best gift for Christmas.

Accept the gift. To do that, open your heart to receive all the love he wants to give you. Empty yourself of resentment, bitterness, anger, envy - anything that doesn't belong - to make room. Start with the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent. Repeat often throughout the year.

Unwrap the gift. The Bible is the great

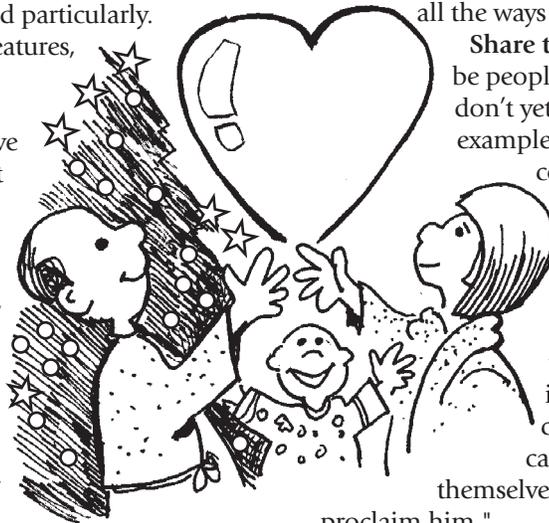
story of God's love and a personal love letter written by God to each of us.

Reading Scripture is key to revealing all the ways God loves us.

Share the gift. There may be people in your life who don't yet know God. Your example and influence could be the only way they will know what God's love can be like. Blessed Pope John Paul II said, "Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must

proclaim him."

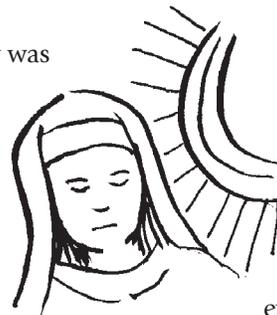
Give a gift yourself. Take time to love God more each day. St. Augustine said, "To fall in love with God is the greatest romance, to seek him the greatest adventure, to find him, the greatest human achievement." Merry Christmas.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do we celebrate the Immaculate Conception?

In December, we commemorate that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without Original Sin. (Normally a Holy Day of Obligation, this year the solemnity is on December 9th and Mass attendance is not obligatory.)

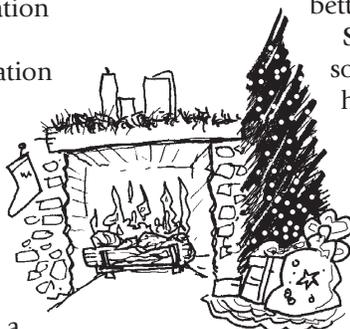


In 1854, Pope Pius IX pronounced that by a special act of divine grace, the Blessed Mother was conceived, through the union of her natural father and mother, without the stain of Original Sin, which has afflicted all other humans except for her divine Son.

Have a real Merry Christmas!

Do you wish for an idyllic Christmas celebration complete with a warm fire, joyful music, and tinsel-covered tree? For many of us, the celebration comes at the end of weeks spent shopping, wrapping, and spending, and is wrought with family tensions, obligations, and exhaustion. Try these steps to keep your sanity and your Savior in your Christmas celebrating:

Be realistic. It isn't the goal of the season to make everyone happy. If you don't overspend and over extend before Christmas, you'll be in a



better frame of mind when it arrives.

Soothe the beast. Beautiful music can set a soothing tone for your celebration. Pick your favorite holy hymns to put yourself in the Christmas mood.

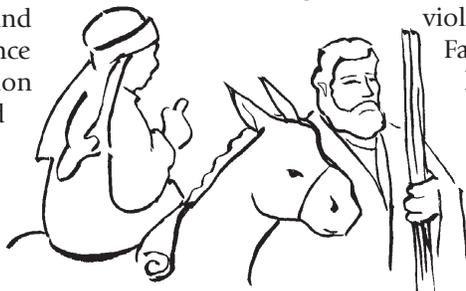
Reach out. Want to make your own problems seem small? Take on someone else's. Do at least one good Christmas deed for someone needy.

Seek the eternal. Jesus gives us peace, purpose, and perspective. Spend time with Jesus each day of Advent and Christmas to remind yourself of what is most important about Christmas.

from Scripture

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23, God chooses each of us in a special way.

Mary and Joseph were forced to travel in the last stages of her pregnancy from Nazareth to Bethlehem. On foot or donkey, it was a dirty and exhausting journey. Once there, they had no option for decent housing and had to stay in a stable with animals. Young Mary gave birth in crude conditions with no friend or family to help.



they arrived and they had to make their own way in an unfamiliar land.

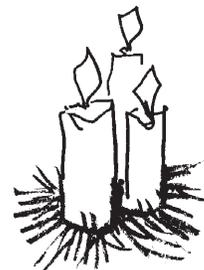
Refugees all over the world flee violence like the Holy Family. Catholics have a special charge to protect them and those who are vulnerable: children, elderly, and poor. Like Mary's

After a short time, they fled to Egypt with their newborn to escape threats from the government, and stayed there for several years. There were no friendly faces to greet the family once

and Joseph's, God has a special place for each of us in his plan of salvation. Prayerfully ask God what he wants you to do for him and his kingdom.

Q & A Do I have to attend Mass on Christmas?

In our culture, Christmas has become a warm and wonderful time to gather with friends and family, a time to exchange gifts of love, and a time to enjoy family traditions. But first and foremost, Christmas celebrates the Incarnation - the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it.



There is nothing the world can offer us that compares to the fact that God "so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God came and lived among us and rose from the dead to save us. He is still with us and offers us eternal life. That's what Christmas celebrates. So, yes, we do have to go to Mass to worship, adore, and offer thanks to the one who makes our salvation possible. He was born on Christmas.

Remember, Christmas is a Holy Day of Obligation when all Catholics are obliged to attend Mass.

Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 14 – St. John of the Cross (1591). As a Carmelite, St. John led a reform in the Order to encourage more prayer and simplicity. Briefly jailed over a misunderstanding, some of his best spiritual writing came from this experience.

Dec. 21 – St. Peter Canisius (1597). Born in Holland, he was ordained into the Society of Jesus and vigorously safeguarded the Catholic faith through writings and teaching. His work, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is still used today.

Dec. 26 – St. Stephen (first century).

A deacon of the early Church, St. Stephen preached that God can be found everywhere, not just in one place like the temple. He angered the Jewish authorities and became the first martyr of the Catholic Church.

Dec. 29 – The Holy Family (1st century). On the feast of the Holy Family, we celebrate the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. By their love and support of one another the Holy Family is a model for all Christian families.



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