

Second Sunday of Advent ~ December 6, 2015

*Lord God, your Church joyfully awaits the coming
of its Savior, who enlightens our hearts and
dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin.*

Mission Statement

We, the parishioners of St. Peter's Church, are called to holiness by God as present day disciples of Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are united in service to God to share our faith with one another and our community. May our participation in the Holy Sacraments, our ministries and our devotion to Mary bring glory to God and His Kingdom.

Baptisms

Parents anticipating the birth of their first child are asked to attend baptismal instructions classes before the birth of their child, if possible. Please contact the Rectory to register. Note: Baptisms cannot be scheduled until all the necessary paperwork is completed.

Confirmation

Confirmation is administered every three years to all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in our Parish CCD program. Children wishing to receive Confirmation must be enrolled and participating in the CCD program for two years before they are eligible to receive the sacrament.

Marriages

In order to complete the necessary paperwork, couples are asked to contact the Rectory at least one full year in advance of the proposed marriage date.

Anointing of the Sick

Please contact the Rectory whenever a member of your family has become sick or hospitalized. Please note, because of the new government regulations regarding privacy, hospitals cannot release information without a patient's consent.

Reconciliation

The sacrament is celebrated each **Saturday from 4:00 – 4:45pm and Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 11:45am – 12:00noon** in the church and also by appointment.

Monthly Visitations

Any parishioner who is homebound and wishes to receive the Eucharist on a monthly basis is asked to contact the Rectory to schedule a visit.

Rite of Christian Initiation in Adults (RCIA)

The RCIA prepares interested adults for reception into the Catholic Church. The program is adapted to the each person's needs and prepares them for full initiation into the faith. Please contact the rectory to register for the classes.

St. Peter's Church

47 Central Avenue, Wellsboro, Pennsylvania 16901

Rectory Phone: 570-724-3371 ~ Fax: 570-724-6322

Religious Education Phone: 570-724-9789

Website: www.stpeterswellsboro.org ~ Email: stpch@ptd.net

Rectory Office Hours

Monday through Friday 9:00–2:00pm

Parish Staff

Pastor: Rev. David Bechtel – Dbechtel00@yahoo.com

Secretary: Connie Spang – stpch@ptd.net

Business Manager: Patti Mitchell – stpadm@ptd.net

Director of Religious Ed.: Maureen Poirier – stpreled@ptd.net

Maintenance Staff: Connie Spang, Francis Kennedy

Schedule of Weekend Masses

Saturday Vigil: 5:00pm ~ Sunday: 8:30am & 11:00am

Reconciliation

Saturday 4:00 – 4:45pm

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 11:45am–12:00noon

Emergency Contact

In the event of an emergency, please call the rectory at 570-724-3371. If no answer, please call 570-329-5762. This is a pager. You will be instructed to enter your phone number and Fr. Bechtel will return your call.

Religious Education and Formation

Religious Education classes are held for Pre-K – 12th grade. Classes begin in September and conclude in May. Pre-K (ages 3-5) is held during the 8:30am Mass. K-12th begins at 9:30am and concludes at 10:40am. Confirmation Prep Class meets one Sunday a month from 5:00–6:30pm as scheduled.

Pregnancy Support

Catholic Social Services (800) 982-4310

Crisis Pregnancy Help line (888) 4-OPTIONS

Endless Mountains Pregnancy Care Center (570) 673-4476

Parish Contact Listing

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – Patti Mitchell 570-724-3371

Guardians of the Redeemer – Rectory 570-724-3371

Women's Bible Study – Sue Singer 570-724-2360

St. John Neumann's Prayer Group – Christina Simonis 570-724-2085

Contemplative Spirituality Group – Kate Black 570-724-3047

Cards & Games – Patty Kramer 570-948-9023

Knights of Columbus – George Gamble 570-724-5216

Social Concerns – Karen Plumley 570-439-0175

Parish Rummage Sale – Rectory 570-724-3371

Funeral Luncheon Group – Rectory 570-724-3371

Church Linens & Decorations – Sue Singer 570-724-2360

Buildings & Grounds – Rick Joachim 570-439-2591

Cemetery Committee – Howard Rutledge 570-724-4529

Fundraising Dinners – Kathy Wilcox 570-724-3371

Music Ministry – Christina Simonis 570-724-2085,

Marilyn deGuzman 570-376-5427, Marian Miller 570-724-5245

Samaritan House – Daria Guelig 570-724-3030

Youth Group – Maureen Poirier 570-724-9789

Eucharistic Adoration – Mary Cleveland 570-724-5286

Finance Council – Priscilla Walrath 570-724-2056

Parish Council – Jon Banik 570-724-5968

Worship Committee – Rectory 570-724-3371

Sunday Communion at Nursing Homes – Eileen Evert 570-439-4470

Prayer Chain – Kate Black 570-724-3047

Order of Secular Carmelite – Lori Makos 570-724-3371

Welcome to our Visitors

If you are visiting Tioga County this weekend, welcome and thank you for celebrating the Eucharist with us! If you are searching for a Spiritual home, we welcome you to join us in worship and invite you to become part of our church family by contacting the Rectory.

Second Sunday of Advent

December 6, 2015

Date	Time	Confession Time and Mass Intention
Monday 12/7 <i>Is 35:1-10; Lk 5:17-26</i>	11:45am – 12:00pm 12:10pm 5:00pm	Confessions In Memory of Mahlon Kennedy (Teresa Kennedy) In Memory of John & Marion Cumiskey (Family)
Tuesday 12/8 <i>Gn 3:9-15; Eph 1:3-6,11-12; Lk 1:26-38</i>	12:10pm 7:00pm	In Memory of Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Gorgano (Ed & Loretta Nonnenmacher) In Memory of Steven Blaschak (Ed Gamble, George Gamble)
Wednesday 12/9 <i>Is 40:25-31; Mt 11:28-30</i>	11:45am – 12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of Joseph Donovan, Sr. (Grab Family)
Thursday 12/10 <i>Is 41:13-20; Mt 11:1-15</i>	11:45am – 12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of Mary Baker (Phyllis Sticklin)
Friday 12/11 <i>Is 48:17-19; Mt 11:16-19</i>	11:45am – 12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of Jesse Allen (Don & Lucy Whitney)
Saturday 12/12 <i>Zec 2:14-17; Lk 1:39-47</i>	4:00-4:45pm 5:00pm	Confessions In Memory of Lewis & Lenora Bowers (Daughter, Joan)
Sunday 12/13 <i>Zep 3:14-18; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18</i>	8:30am 11:00am	All Living and Deceased Members of St. Peter's Church In Honor of Paul Krystoff (M/M John Davis, M/M Patrick Davis, Antoinette Davis)



This Week's Sanctuary Candle

The sanctuary candle is a reminder to us of the presence of Christ reserved in the Tabernacle.
This week's candle is offered in honor of **Family and Friends** (Tom & Linda Sampson)

Stewardship

Your Gift of Time, Talent & Treasure

Thanks for your continued support and generosity!

Sunday Collection for Nov. 29th: **\$10,447.25**

Weekly Goal to Meet Expenses: \$5,990.00

Difference: \$4,457.25

Year-to-Date Budget Variance: (\$984.36)

Attendance for weekend of November 29th

5:00pm – 172; 8:30am – 192; 11:00am – 160

Total number attending Mass – 524

Number of registered families – 473

Number of registered parishioners – 1000

Reflect on your gifts...and your giving!

Envelope usage statistics for the weekend of November 29th

Amount Given	Number of Contributors	Percentage of Contributors	Total Amount
\$0.00	335	71.73%	\$ 0.00
\$0.01 – \$1.00	1	0.21%	\$ 1.00
\$1.01 – \$5.00	21	4.50%	\$ 95.00
\$5.01 – \$10.00	21	4.50%	\$ 206.00
\$10.01 – \$15.00	9	1.93%	\$ 117.00
\$15.01 – \$20.00	24	5.14%	\$ 475.00
\$20.01 – \$25.00	17	3.64%	\$ 419.00
\$25.01 – \$50.00	24	5.14%	\$ 942.00
\$50.01 – \$75.00	4	0.86%	\$ 270.00
\$75.01 – \$100.00	5	1.07%	\$ 500.00
\$100.01 – \$500.00	6	1.28%	\$ 6,501.00
Totals	467		\$ 9,526.00

Loose Collection: \$ 921.25

The Week Ahead

TUESDAY, December 8, 2015

Rectory Closed

Women's Bible Study – 9:00am, Parish Center

Broad Acres Mass – 10:30am

Guardians of the Redeemer – 7:00pm, Parish Center

AA/Al-Anon – 8:00pm, Parish Center

WEDNESDAY, December 9, 2015

Green Home Mass – 2:00pm

ChristLife Series Kickoff – 6:30pm, Parish Center

THURSDAY, December 10, 2015

Contemplative Spirituality Group – 8:30am, Parish Center

Cards & Games – 12:00noon, Parish Center

R.C.I.A. – 6:00pm, Parish Center

St. John Neumann Prayer Group – 7:00pm, Parish Center

SUNDAY, December 13, 2015

Religious Ed. – Pre-School, 8:30am; K-12th, 9:30am

Secular Carmelites – 1:00pm, Parish Center

Penance Service – 3:00pm

Thank you!! Thanks to a generous donation from one of our parishioners, our Year-to-Date Budget Variance has been drastically reduced. We are very fortunate at St. Peter's that when there is a need, someone always responds. If we all consider donating just a little more each week, the remaining negative balance will be quickly eradicated. Please be as generous as you are able.

Advent Penance Services



December 13th – 3:00pm, St. Peter's

December 20th – 3:00pm, Holy Child

December 21st – 7:00pm, St. Thomas



Liturgical Reflection

Second Sunday of Advent

FIRST READING: Baruch 5:1-9

These words are addressed to exiles who still remember the pain of being “led away on foot by their enemies.” Israel’s exile in Babylon left the people hopeless, questioning their identity. How could God so utterly abandon them? The prophet’s promise is of complete reversal. God will remember his people and return them to their home from which they were snatched. God will clear the way for their return, leveling the lofty mountains and filling in the “age-old depths.” These words of hope don’t speak only to people displaced geographically, but to each of us who has experienced our own exile of estrangement and spiritual malaise. God is at work turning sorrow to joy!

SECOND READING: Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Ever the teacher, in this letter of joy written from prison, Paul reminds us that the work of conversion lasts a lifetime. God begins “a good work” in us at Baptism initiating a life process of growth that doesn’t end till we stand before the Lord. Paul encourages the Philippians to continue doing what they’ve been doing, only more and prays that their love may grow and mature.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:1-6



God’s salvation approaches and nothing will stand in its way. Mountains will be leveled and valleys filled in so nothing can

impede the progress of God’s Kingdom. Luke situates John within a very specific historic and geographical context with a clear nod to the Roman authorities and the religious elite who will prove to be the Kingdom’s first opponents. But somehow we sense that the voice in the desert knows full well that those who walk the halls of power will be no match for the one whose advent he proclaims.

ABOUT THIS SUNDAY

We light a second purple candle on the second Sunday of Advent to represent the hope of Christ coming to the world. The word “hope” has two meanings in the Bible. The first contains the sense of eager anticipation or waiting. The second depicts a sense of confident expectation based on certainty. Biblical hope is secured by God’s faithfulness to His promises. For the Old Testament leaders, their hope was in the Messiah’s arrival. For us, it is the hope of the Messiah’s return. God’s plan for humanity unfolded in the town of Bethlehem, the birthplace of the Messiah, joyously fulfilling a long-awaited promise. Today we confidently wait for the Messiah’s triumphant return.



Ministers of the Altar Schedule

Immaculate Conception – December 8th

5:00pm (Vigil – Dec. 7th)

Servers: J.Gordon, L.Gordon, A.Banik

Lectors: D.Gordon, P.Walrath

E. Min.: D.Sherman, E.Evert, K.Wilcox

12:10pm

Servers: K.Pacific, E.Poirier

Lectors: P.Kramer, R.Kramer

E. Min.: C.Lannak, M.Cunningham, L.Whitney

7:00pm

Servers: F.Kennedy, X.Tellgren, A.Dunkel

Lectors: N.Kennedy, K.Tellgren

E. Min.: B.Brown, V.Anthony, L.Makos

Weekend of December 13th

5:00pm

Servers: J.Grab, G.Macensky, B.Rudy

Lectors: B.Dalton, C.Evert

E. Min.: G.Poirier, G.Brown, C.Delong

8:30am

Servers: A.Bleggi, M.Mann, Z.Florio

Lectors: M.Ostapowicz, D.Bleggi

E. Min.: T.Gamble, A.Singer, N.Ostapowicz

11:00am

Servers: K.Kramer, A.Burge, L.Burge

Lectors: C.Waclawik, L.Nonnenmacher

E. Min.: M.Stirnman, D.Stager, L.Stager

Parish Activities and Information

RECTORY CLOSED

The Rectory will be closed on Tuesday, December 8th for Immaculate Conception, a Holy Day of Obligation. In the event of an emergency, please refer to the emergency contact information on the front of the bulletin and Fr. Bechtel return your call as soon as possible.

YEAR END DONATIONS

2015 financial statements will be prepared upon request. All donations must be received by December 31st to be included on your 2015 statement. If you would like a 2015 statement, please call the rectory or write “send statement” on your weekly offering envelope.

SECOND COLLECTION NEXT WEEKEND

A second collection will be taken up at all Masses next weekend in support of the Retirement Fund for Religious. Your gift to this collection provides vital support for the retirement needs of senior sisters, brothers and religious order priests. It also helps ensure that younger members can continue the good works of their elders. Please be as generous as you are able.

BREAD PUDDING FUNDRAISER UPDATE

Thank you to all who helped to make the Dickens bread pudding fundraiser a success! A special thank you to Sue Sticklin and Kirsten Tellgren for chairing this event. A financial report will be included in next week’s bulletin.

FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS



Please join us on Sunday, December 20th at 5:00pm for The Festival of Lessons and Carols. This festival is a service of Scripture and song that dates to the late 19th century. In this service, we listen to nine Scripture lessons which recount the Fall, the promise of a Messiah, the Incarnation, and the Great Commission to preach the Good News. Each lesson is followed by a carol or other song that reflects on the lesson's message and a brief prayer.

ADVENT MATERIAL

There is a wide selection of Advent preparation material on the handout table on the side of the church to enrich our Advent season. Please feel free to pick up a couple of items for you and your family.



NEW RESOURCE CENTER

It is with great excitement that we introduce to you an opportunity to grow in your faith. We have partnered with Stewardship: A Mission of Faith and Lighthouse Catholic Media to bring you a new Resource Center filled with life-changing materials. These materials have assisted many churches, schools, businesses and other locations in planting the seeds of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ in the souls entrusted to their care. Our new Resource Center is located on the side of the church and is filled with material that is free of charge. Gift donations are accepted to help cover the cost to replenish items in our display. We invite local Christian Stewards from the community to step forward to help underwrite the cost of the Display itself and its materials. This is a great opportunity for any member of the Church to show their support through a donation that will support our display. A large variety of books, booklets and CD's are available on various topics.



2016 CALENDARS ARE HERE

The 2016 Catholic family calendars have arrived and can be found at each entrance to the church and on the handout table. Special thanks to Tussey-Mosher Funeral Home for their full sponsorship of these beautiful calendars.

ALTAR SERVER TRAINING

Training for new altar servers will take place on Wednesday, December 10th from 3:15-4:15pm in the Church. This training is open to anyone in 5th grade or older.



CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

Reminder: Deliver the gifts for the nursing home residents in person, by December 24th. Please place the gifts for the children, in a gift bag UNWRAPPED, back under the tree, by **Sunday, December 6th**. The donations of bedding can be put in a plastic bag and should be placed under the tree by December 6th.

SOCIAL CONCERNS FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION

The Social Concerns Committee is accepting specific donations for the local food pantry on a monthly rotation. **December's food items are Creamy Peanut Butter and grape jelly (15oz).** Please place your donations in the box at the entrance of the church anytime throughout the month.

ADULT EDUCATION

Parish members interested in learning about our upcoming adult education opportunity, the New Evangelization series "Discovering Christ", are encouraged to register to attend a complimentary dinner and information session on Wednesday, December 9th, 6:30pm in the Parish Center. Attendees should be willing to commit to a 7-week process of spiritual enrichment beginning January 20th. The pilot series itself (limited to the first 24 registrants) begins on January 20th and will run for 7-sessions plus a mini-retreat. "Discovering Christ" will repeat in the fall of 2016 with expanded registration available. Contact the Rectory to register for the December 9th information session. More info on this series is available by visiting Christlife.org.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER MEMORIAL



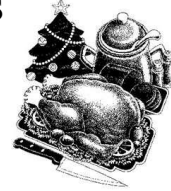
Each Christmas, the flowers in the church during the season, memorialize deceased loved ones. If you would like to contribute to this year's Christmas flowers in memory of a loved one, please use the envelope found in your monthly packet and place in the collection basket.

CHRISTMAS MASS INTENTIONS

Special Christmas Mass Intention envelopes can be found in your monthly packets to remember both living and deceased family members and friends. The envelopes will be placed on the altar during all of the Christmas Masses to remember your intentions. Please place your Christmas Mass intentions envelopes in the collection basket.

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT ST. PETER'S

You are invited to share a meal and spend time with others on Christmas Day. Dinner will be served at 12:00pm in the Parish Center. Meat and beverage will be provided. Kindly bring a dish to share. If you do not cook, bring an item that can be served cold. Reservations are requested by Sunday, December 20th by calling Betsy and Dan Gordon at 570-439-5790 or email danbg77@gmail.com. Reservations should include name, # attending, and the dish you are bringing.



Happy Birthday and God's blessings to Paul Krystoff who is celebrating his 98th birthday!



That's The Way It Is!

By Fr. Dave Bechtel



November 29 began a new liturgical year with celebration of the First Sunday of Advent. Each year the Church gives us the season of Advent to help us prepare for the coming of Christ. We are given four weeks signified by the lighted candles on the Advent Wreath to prepare.

Christmas for secular culture has already begun, even if Christmas has not yet begun for the Church. In secular society Christmas began on Halloween and will end on New Year's Day. In the Church, Christmas begins on---well---Christmas! Christmas runs until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord approximately 2 weeks later.

On most people's minds right now, even Catholics, is not "What happens if I die today? Am I ready to meet God? What happens if Christ comes again today? Am I ready to go out and greet him" but "There is only 24 shopping days left until Christmas. I have to make sure I get the best deals I can and take advantage of this time."

Some people criticize shopping centers and malls for opening on Thanksgiving. Well, here is the reality: The business of business is business. Put another way, the reason why businesses exist is to turn a profit. Should we blame Wall Street for taking the holidays away from us and turning them into opportunities for profit or should we blame ourselves?

I submit that we should blame ourselves. The market forces are what control Wall Street and we are the market forces. Wall Street would not be capitalizing on the holiday if we didn't allow them to do it. If we weren't shopping on Thanksgiving, stores would not be open. If we didn't care about whether or not there were Christmas presents under a tree for our family, stores would not be taking advantage of the holiday. Everyone always demonizes Wall Street and the rich, but no one seems to realize that we create Wall Street and we create the rich, just as we create Hollywood celebrities.

If we return to what Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years are all about, we realize that presents and Black Friday deals have absolutely nothing to do with them, nor does Frosty the Snowman, rein deer, magic elf's and the like. For that matter snow and sleigh rides have nothing to do with Christmas. Consider: the people south of the equator are at the height of summer when they celebrate Christmas, and their sunsets are around 9:00—just like it is for us in the summer.

It is not the amount of money you spend on your loved ones that matter at Christmas, but how much TIME you spend with your loved ones that matters. It is not Black Friday deals and last minute shopping that matters, it is the birth of Christ that matters, and most importantly our preparation for it.

How do we prepare for the birth of Christ? Three main ways: 1) going to Confession and getting right with God. 2) Making sure we make Mass on the weekends a priority. 3) Being generous givers. It is cliché, but nevertheless true: Christmas is about giving—not presents, but what really matters: love. Christmas is also about our thanksgiving to God for what he has done for us.

That's the way it is!

Father Dave Bechtel

Diocese of Scranton News

MEN'S CONFERENCE – SAVE THE DATE

The 2nd Annual Men's Conference will be held on Saturday, April 23, 2016 at King's College, Wilkes-Barre, PA. The speakers will be Dr. Schott Hahn and Msgr. Charles Pope.

JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY



This Holy Year will commence on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and will conclude on Sunday, November 20, 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe and living face of the Father's mercy.

Bishop Bambera To Open Holy Door of Mercy at Cathedral - To inaugurate our observance of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy declared by Pope Francis, Bishop Bambera will open the Holy Door of Mercy at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on Sunday, December 13th, at the 10:00am Mass. All are welcome to participate in this celebration.

How can we show others the mercy of God? We say that God is compassionate, but we ignore the poor. We say that God loves us and has mercy on us, but we hold grudges against our friends. Our actions need to authentically reflect God's mercy.

Corporal Work of Mercy

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

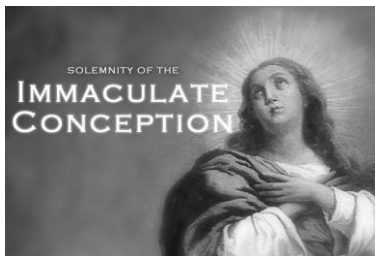
Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity. We should support the efforts of those working towards greater accessibility of this essential resource.

We take it for granted that we have access to clean water.

- Donate. . . to help build wells for water for those in need
- Organize a group of children involved on a sports team (e.g. soccer) or a summer camp. Invite them to collect bottled water to distribute at a shelter for families. If parents can be involved, ask them to accompany their children in delivering the water to the families.
- Do the same for youth and young adult groups.
- Make an effort not to waste water. Remembering to turn off the water faucet when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes can help, especially in regions suffering from drought.

Visit www.usccb.org for ways you can participate in the Jubilee of Mercy.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception December 8, 2015



The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception celebrates the saving work of God in preserving the Blessed Virgin Mary from the stain of original sin.

Because of His foreknowledge that Mary would consent to bear Christ, God kept Mary free from original sin from the moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne.

Unlike certain other Holy Days of Obligation, where the requirement to attend Mass is abrogated when the date of the feast falls on a Saturday or a Monday, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is so important that the obligation is not waived.

The Mass schedule at St. Peter's is as follows:

5:00pm Monday, December 7th (Vigil Mass)

12:10pm & 7:00pm Tuesday, December 8th

News From the Vatican



POPE FRANCIS EXPLAINS THE MOTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE JUBILEE OF MERCY

Vatican City, 2 December 2015 (VIS) The Holy Father explains the motives and expectations of the Jubilee of Mercy.

“The theme of mercy has been strongly accentuated in the life of the Church...I felt that it was as if it was the Lord's wish to show His mercy to humanity. It was not something that came to my mind, but rather the relatively recent renewal of a tradition that has however always existed. ... It is obvious that today's world is in need of mercy and compassion, or rather of the capacity for empathy. We are accustomed to bad news, cruel news, and the worst atrocities that offend the name and the life of God. The world needs to discover that God is the Father, that there is mercy, that cruelty is not the way, that condemnation is not the way, because it is the Church herself who at times takes a hard line, and falls into the temptation to follow a hard line and to underline moral rules only; many people are excluded. I believe that this is the time for mercy. We are all sinners; all of us carry inner burdens. I felt that Jesus wanted to open the door to His heart; that the Father wants to show us his innate mercy, and for this reason he sends us the Spirit. ... It is the year of reconciliation. On the one hand we see the weapons trade ... the murder of innocent people in the cruelest ways possible, the exploitation of people, of children. There is currently a

form of sacrilege against humanity, because man is sacred, he is the image of the living God. And the Father says, 'stop and come to me'”

“I am a sinner ... I am sure of this. I am a sinner whom the Lord looked upon with mercy. I am, a forgiven man. ... I still make mistakes and commit sins, and I confess every fifteen or twenty days. And if I confess it is because I need to feel that God's mercy is still upon me.” Francis recalled that he felt this sensation in a particular way on 21 September 1953, when he felt the need to enter a church and confess to a priest he did not know, and from then his life was changed; he decided to become a priest and his confessor, who was suffering from leukemia, accompanied him for a year. “He died the following year,” said the Pope. “After the funeral I cried bitterly, I felt totally lost, as if with the fear that God had abandoned me.” This was the moment in which I came across God's mercy.”

BE MEN AND WOMEN OF PEACE

“Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters. We must therefore consider ourselves and conduct ourselves as such. We are well aware that the recent events and acts of violence which have shaken the country were not grounded in properly religious motives. Those who claim to believe in God must also be men and women of peace. Christians, Muslims and members of the traditional religions have lived together in peace for many years. They ought, therefore, to remain united in working for an end to every act which, from whatever side, disfigures the Face of God and whose ultimate aim is to defend particular interests by any and all means, to the detriment of the common good. Together, we must say no to hatred, to revenge and to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself. God is peace.”

Pope Francis

POPE FRANCIS' DECEMBER PRAYER INTENTIONS

Universal: That all may experience the mercy of God, who never tires of forgiving.

Evangelization: That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope.

Pro Life News

WORD OF LIFE

Heavenly Father, thank you for the precious gift of life. Help us to cherish and protect this gift, even in the midst of fear, pain, and suffering. Give us love for all people, especially the most vulnerable, and help us bear witness to the truth that every life is worth living. Grant us the humility to accept help when we are in need, and teach us to be merciful to all. Through our words and actions, may others encounter the outstretched hands of your mercy. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. — *USCCB 2015-16 Respect Life Program.*

Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty.

Visit www.usccb.org/pray. Join the Movement

ADVENT SEASON

NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 24

Beginning the Church's liturgical year, Advent (from, "ad-venire" in Latin or "to come to") is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of Christmas. Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of the Lord. In this season, we recall two central elements of our faith: the final coming of the Lord in glory and the incarnation of the Lord in the birth of Jesus. The key themes of the Advent season are watchful waiting, preparation, and justice. In this new liturgical year, the Gospel of Luke will be the primary Gospel proclaimed (Lectionary Cycle C).



Advent Traditions for Families

Advent Wreath: The Advent wreath, which has German origins, is probably the most recognized Advent custom. It is a wreath made of evergreens that is bound to a circle of wire. It symbolizes the many years from Adam to Christ in which the world awaited its Redeemer; it also represents the years that we have awaited His second and final coming. The wreath holds four equally spaced candles, the three purple ones lit on the penitential Sundays and a pink one for Gaudete, the joyful third Sunday in Advent.

The Empty Manger: Each child may have his own individual manger, or there may be one manger for the whole family. The idea is that when acts of service, sacrifice, or kindness are done in honor of Baby Jesus as a birthday present, the child receives a piece of straw to put into the manger. Then, on Christmas morning, Baby Jesus is placed in the manger. Encourage your children to make Jesus bed as comfortable as possible through their good deeds. In the process, explain Christ's incomparable self-gift at Christmas and Easter that enables us to be part of God's family.

The Jesse Tree: The Jesse tree tells about Christ's ancestry through symbols and relates Scripture to salvation history, progressing from creation to the birth of Christ. The tree can be made on a poster board with the symbols glued on, or on an actual tree.

St. Nicholas Day: The feast of St. Nicholas is on Dec. 6th. It is a highlight of the Advent season. Each child puts out a shoe the night before St. Nicholas Day in the hope that the kind bishop with his miter, staff, and bag of gifts will pay a visit. Many families give gifts on both Dec. 6 and Christmas.

The Christ Candle: Any large white candle can be used for the Christ candle. The idea is to decorate it with symbols for Christ. Use old Christmas cards, sequins, holly, etc. The candle can be lit on Christmas Eve to show that the Light of the World has arrived. Then continue to light the Christ candle throughout the year at Sunday dinner to remind your family of our waiting for Christ, as well as celebrating His birth and Resurrection.

The Mary Candle: Some families have the custom of decorating the Christ candle with a blue veil on December 8th, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On this great feast, others place a candle with a blue ribbon before a statue or picture of the Blessed Virgin, whose yes to God enabled our Lords coming at Christmas. The candle is lit during meal times to serve as a delightful reminder of Mary's eager expectation of the Light of the World. It can also serve as a reminder to each family member to keep their own light of grace burning as a preparation for Christ's coming.

St. Lucy Cakes: The feast of St. Lucy, virgin and martyr, is on December 13th. This marks the opening of the Christmas season in Sweden. Her life story can be found in most saints books, as can the recipe for the traditional cakes. The symbolism is rich and her life story worthwhile reading.

The Nativity Scene: This is the event in which the entire family shares setting up the Christmas manger. Mary and Joseph should be far off traveling and their approach to Bethlehem can be adjusted daily. Older children can make life-size Nativity models, carve them, cut them out from cardboard, or set up pre-made figurines. The creative ideas are without limit. Make sure to place the Nativity scene where many can admire the children's efforts to give God glory.

Christmas Baking: There are many recipe books available to find great traditional Christmas baking ideas. The baking usually starts around December 20th. As Christmas approaches, the house will smell of baking and fresh wreaths. The glory of Christmas is at hand! Move the manger to a focal point, add lights to the Nativity to be lighted on Christmas Eve, and anticipate together.

Blessing of the Tree: More and more frequently families are blessing their Christmas trees. It is good to remind children that the tree relates to many aspects of our faith. For example, we are reminded that our first parents were not allowed to eat from one tree, and that Christ paid the great price for our redemption by hanging on a tree (cf. Acts 5:29-32).

Advent increases our hope, a hope which does not disappoint.

The Lord never lets us down. Pope Francis @pontifex

Advent Prayer

God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy, so that we may share his wisdom and become one with him when he comes in glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

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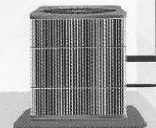
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Eternal Rest Grant Unto Them, O Lord and
Let the Perpetual Light Shine Upon Them.

Deborah Browning, Scott Waclawik

Lord, this we know, no matter how difficult life may be at this time, we know you will not stop loving us and will always hold us in the palm of your hand. We are reaching to you, Lord, to hold us, comfort us, and heal us. Lord, this we know, you are faithful in your love for us today and forever. You are with us, and we are with you. Amen.