



## ***Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ December 20, 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 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.stpeterswellsboro.org) ~ Email: [stpch@ptd.net](mailto:stpch@ptd.net)

### **Rectory Office Hours**

Monday through Friday 9:00–2:00pm

### **Parish Staff**

Pastor: Rev. David Bechtel – [Dbechtel00@yahoo.com](mailto:Dbechtel00@yahoo.com)

Secretary: Connie Spang – [stpch@ptd.net](mailto:stpch@ptd.net)

Business Manager: Patti Mitchell – [stpadm@ptd.net](mailto:stpadm@ptd.net)

Director of Religious Ed.: Maureen Poirier – [stpreled@ptd.net](mailto: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 – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Classes begin in September and conclude in May. Pre-K (ages 3-5) is held during the 8:30am Mass. K-12<sup>th</sup> 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.

# Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 20, 2015

Date	Time	Confession Time and Mass Intention
<b>Monday 12/21</b> <i>Sg 2:8-14; Lk 1:39-45</i>	11:45am – 12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of Vernon Mast III (Vernon & Mary Mast)
<b>Tuesday 12/22</b> <i>1Sm 1:24-28; Lk 1:46-56</i>	7:30am	In Memory of Ann Perrine (Tascione Family)
<b>Wednesday 12/23</b> <i>Mal 3:1-4,24-24; Lk 1:57-66</i>	7:30am	In Memory of John & Janet Harvan (Vernon & Mast)
<b>Thursday 12/24</b> <i>2Sm 7:1-5,8-12,14,16; Lk 1:67-79</i>	4:00pm 7:00pm	Our Christmas Intentions Our Christmas Intentions
<b>Friday 12/25</b> <i>Is 52:7-10; Heb1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18</i>	10:00am	Our Christmas Intentions
<b>Saturday 12/26</b> <i>Act 6:8-10,7:54-59; Mt 10:17-22</i>	4:00-4:45pm 5:00pm	Confessions In Memory of Frank & Mary Dziengowski & Henry & Luella Caso (Family)
<b>Sunday 12/27</b> <i>Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 3:12-21; Lk 2:41-52</i>	8:30am 11:00am	In Memory of Dave Getgen (Wife, Joan) All Living and Deceased Members of St. Peter's Church



## 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 memory of **Beth Patt** (Frank Patt & Family)

## Stewardship

Your Gift of Time, Talent & Treasure

Thanks for your continued support and generosity!

Sunday Collection for Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>: **\$5,295**

Weekly Goal to Meet Expenses: \$5,990.00

Difference: (\$695.00)

Year-to-Date Budget Variance: \$1,361.64

Retirement Fund for Religious: \$881.00

### Attendance for weekend of December 13<sup>th</sup>

5:00pm – 156; 8:30am – 205; 11:00am – 151

Total number attending Mass – 512

Number of registered families – 473

Number of registered parishioners – 1000

## Reflect on your gifts...and your giving!

Envelope usage statistics for the weekend of December 13<sup>th</sup>

Amount Given	Number of Contributors	Percentage of Contributors	Total Amount
\$0.00	323	69.02%	\$ 0.00
\$0.01 – \$1.00	1	0.21%	\$ 1.00
\$1.01 – \$5.00	13	2.78%	\$ 54.00
\$5.01 – \$10.00	31	6.62%	\$ 301.00
\$10.01 – \$15.00	8	1.71%	\$ 109.00
\$15.01 – \$20.00	24	5.13%	\$ 475.00
\$20.01 – \$25.00	20	4.27%	\$ 494.00
\$25.01 – \$50.00	30	6.41%	\$ 1,199.00
\$50.01 – \$75.00	3	0.64%	\$ 195.00
\$75.01 – \$100.00	7	1.50%	\$ 660.00
\$100.01 – \$500.00	8	1.71%	\$ 1,335.00
Totals	468		\$ 4,823.00

Loose Collection: \$ 472

## Advent Penance Services



December 20<sup>th</sup> – 3:00pm, Holy Child

December 21<sup>st</sup> – 7:00pm, St. Thomas

## Christmas Mass Schedule



Christmas Eve ~ 4:00pm & 7:00pm

Christmas Day ~ 10:00am

## The Week Ahead

### SUNDAY, December 20, 2015

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

Lessons & Carols – 5:00pm

### TUESDAY, December 22, 2015

Adoration – 7:30am-7:00pm

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

AA/Al-Anon – 8:00pm, Parish Center

### WEDNESDAY, December 23, 2015

Rectory Closed

### THURSDAY, December 24, 2015

Rectory Closed

### FRIDAY, December 25, 2015

Rectory Closed

### SUNDAY, December 27, 2015

No Religious Education Classes



## Liturgical Reflection

### Fourth Sunday of Advent

#### FIRST READING: Micah 5:1-4

Bethlehem was a small village overshadowed by the larger and more significant Jerusalem. Yet it is from her that God will bring Israel's greatest blessing, the ideal king who will be Israel's eternal ruler. AS the birthplace of King David, Bethlehem always had a claim to fame, but politically and economically it was insignificant. God promises through the prophet that insignificance will turn to glory because the one who will spring from her womb will bring peace to the ends of the earth.

#### SECOND READING: Hebrews 10:5-10

Borrowing from Psalm 40, the author of Hebrews reminds us that God values obedience far more than sacrifices. In the Gospel, Jesus often equates love with keeping the commandments. Rituals are important, but only if they reflect the true sacrifice of our lives in obedience to God's will. Christ's exemplary obedience was manifest when he willingly offered his body "once for all."

#### GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-45

Mary rushes to the side of Elizabeth, who, like her, is the recipient of divine favor. But Elizabeth immediately recognizes in Mary one more blessed than she, and she also understands that what makes Mary special is her ability to trust that God's words to her would be fulfilled. Both women will suffer greatly for the privilege they've been granted – as will their sons – but for now the linked destinies of John and Jesus can't detract from the sheer joy of reaching out to touch a cousin who is also the recipient of God's surprising grace. On this the last Sunday before Christmas, our Gospel reading prepares us to witness Christ's birth by showing us how Jesus was recognized as Israel's long-awaited Messiah even before his birth and recalls Mary's actions after the announcement of Jesus' birth by the angel Gabriel. Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, her cousin, who is also with child. Elizabeth greets Mary with full recognition of the roles that they and their unborn children will play in God's plan for salvation. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and sings Mary's praise because she bears the Lord. We sing these words of praise to Mary in the Hail Mary. Even John the Baptist, the unborn child in Elizabeth's womb, is said to recognize the presence of the Lord and leaps for joy.

#### ABOUT THIS SUNDAY

It is appropriate on this last Sunday of Advent, that we consider the role of Mary in God's plan of salvation. Elizabeth describes Mary as the first disciple, as the one who believed that God's word to her would be fulfilled. Mary's faith enabled her to recognize the work of God in her people's history and in her own life. Her openness to God allowed God to work through her so that salvation might come to everyone. Because of this, Mary is a model and symbol of the Church. May we be like Mary, open and cooperative in God's plan for salvation.

## Ministers of the Altar Schedule

### Weekend of December 24<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup>

#### 4:00pm

Servers: E. Poirier, E. Poirier, W.Poirier, J.Poirier  
Lectors: G.Poirier, M. Ostapowicz  
E. Min.: E.Evert, D.Sherman, N.Ostapowicz, L.Makos

#### 7:00pm

Servers: M.Mann, A.Banik, F.Kennedy, A.Bleggi  
Lectors: D.Bleggi, N.Kennedy  
E. Min.: G.Brown, A.Singer, M.Bialas

#### 10:00am

Servers: A.Burge, L.Burge, Z.Florio  
Lectors: R.Kramer, P.Kramer  
E. Min.: L.Tascione, M.Cunningham, C.Lannak

### Weekend of December 26<sup>th</sup> / 27<sup>th</sup>

#### 5:00pm

Servers: J.Grab, G.Macensky, A.Banik  
Lectors: C.Evert, P.Walrath  
E. Min.: G.Poirier, G.Brown, K.Wilcox

#### 8:30am

Servers: A.Osborn, A.Osborn, X.Tellgren  
Lectors: K.Tellgren, N.Bickham  
E. Min.: M.Osborn, T.Gamble, L.Whitney

#### 11:00am

Servers: A.Dunkel, A.Swendrowski, K.Swendrowski  
Lectors: B.Dalton, C.Waclawik  
E. Min.: C.Delong, V.Anthony, M.Stirnaman

## Parish Activities and Information

### FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS



Please join us today Sun., Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 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 20<sup>th</sup> by calling Betsy and Dan Gordon at 570-439-5790 or email [danbg77@gmail.com](mailto:danbg77@gmail.com). Reservations should include name, # attending, and the dish you are bringing.



### 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.

## YEAR END DONATIONS

2015 financial statements will be prepared upon request. All donations must be received by December 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

## 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.

## CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

The Social Concerns Committee extends a special thanks to those who generously supported this year's Giving Tree project! Your gifts will make Christmas a little merrier for local children and nursing home residents and will help Seeds of Hope respond to community needs during the coming year. **Reminder: Deliver the gifts for the nursing home residents in person, by December 24<sup>th</sup>.**

## SOCIAL CONCERNS FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION

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

## 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.

## RECTORY CLOSED

The Rectory will be closed on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. In the event of an emergency, please call the emergency numbers found on the front of the bulletin. Fr. Bechtel will return your call as soon as possible.

## Diocese of Scranton News

### MEN'S CONFERENCE – SAVE THE DATE

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Men's Conference will be held on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at King's College, Wilkes-Barre. 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.*

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis opened the holy doors of St. Peter's in Rome and proclaimed a Jubilee Year of Mercy. Mercy is love one does not deserve or earn. It is justice one has no right to expect. Mercy is what God is about. To participate in the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis invites us to open our hearts and live the works of mercy. Plan ways you, your family, colleagues, parish or school groups can feed the hungry, provide access to safe drinking water, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and imprisoned, bury the dead. Pope Francis said that wherever Christians are should be "an oasis of mercy." Who are the refugees, the suffering, the fearful and depressed to whom we can reach out? What kind of oasis can you be?

***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 VISIT THE SICK

Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. In spite of their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them.

- Give blood
- Spend time volunteering at a nursing home – Get creative and make use of your talents (e.g. sing, read, paint, call Bingo, etc.)!
- Take time on a Saturday to stop and visit with an elderly neighbor.
- Offer to assist caregivers of chronically sick family members on a one-time or periodic basis. Give caregivers time off from their caregiving responsibilities so they can rest, complete personal chores, or enjoy a relaxing break.
- Next time you make a meal that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and give it to a family in your parish who has a sick loved one.

Visit [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) for ways you can participate in the Jubilee of Mercy.

# That's The Way It Is!



**By Fr. Dave Bechtel**

Theresa Caputo is a "Catholic" Medium. She claims to be able to channel messages from deceased people to their living loved ones. From what I have read she seems to have helped a lot of people. It also seems the information she gets is accurate and

would be impossible to know unless she really is channeling the spirit of a loved one, or some kind of spirit.

The Bible is replete with examples of prophets and mystics who have had encounters with the world beyond. The history of the Church is replete with saints who have likewise encountered the world beyond, saw and talked to people who were in heaven. The Church is NOT opposed to AUTHENTIC mystics, visionaries and prophets.

However, there is an eternity of difference between someone like Theresa Caputo and an authentic prophet, visionary or seer. First: authentic visionaries and prophets do not relate messages from the dead. Mediums claim to have this gift and they charge people for their services. Authentic visionaries do not charge fees for their prophetic gifts and abilities. They use their God given gifts to glorify God and help His people, not for profit self glorification, and entertainment. Theresa profits from her work and entertains people. She does not glorify God by her work.

Second: the Church does not deny that in special circumstances God may allow the soul of a deceased loved one to appear for whatever reason. However, in that case, the initiative for the apparition began with God, not the person and not a medium. In the case of Theresa, people seek her out to specifically channel messages from their deceased loved ones, and she charges a fee for her services.

Third: authentic visionaries and authentic apparitions always give thanks to God for their salvation, and praise Jesus Christ as Lord. Of everything I have listed so far, this is the most important. The messages Theresa receives, however, say nothing about salvation and nothing about God. This causes me disquiet. The saints (those souls in heaven) praise God day and night without ceasing—if they appear their goal is to bring people to Jesus.

The people Theresa claims to be channeling are silent about God, salvation and Jesus Christ. This makes me wonder as to the nature of the spirits Theresa is really channeling. She might be channeling spirits alright, what she does not know is that the spirits she is channeling are demonic. This is how she is able to know things should would not know. Satan and his legions do not praise God and do not want to lead people to Jesus Christ.

Fourth: We can know the authenticity of the work of Theresa simply by looking at the fruits of her work. From what I can tell the fruits are non-existent. When God is truly at work, one finds lasting peace. When God is truly

at work one comes to know God more fully and their lives are even more deeply transformed from the encounter. They become more loving, generous, less wordily, and more centered on Christ. When we look at those Theresa claims to help, what are the fruits? Are they finding lasting peace? If so, why do they continue to seek her out? Are they being lead into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ? Are their lives being transformed? Do they have a greater appreciation for the gift of the Eucharist? It seems to me the people that seek out Theresa are not finding lasting peace, they are finding short term happiness but in the long run are coming away empty. That is why they continue to seek her out. The question here is not whether Theresa is really channeling spirits. She may be. The question is whether the work she is doing is the result of the working of God's Spirit. On the whole I would say she is not doing the work of God, even if she thinks she is. The Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church have nothing good to say about consulting psychics, mediums, divination, necromancy, etc.

For one reason or another, life sometimes deals people a very bad hand. People are hurting, grieving the loss of their loved ones, perhaps a child. They think people like Theresa can help them. The truth is she can't. Christianity is a religion of the cross. There is no way to short circuit the cross. We have to carry our crosses, our tragedies in life and only God can help us carry our cross.

The sin is not in grieving and searching out answers. The sin is not in looking for peace or wanting the consolation that our loved ones are in heaven where no harm shall touch them. The sin is in abandoning God and seeking out people like Theresa for the answers. God is the only one with the answers, and sometimes we have to be content with the fact that God will give us the answers when God is good and ready to do so, not before. Our Faith must be in God and God alone. We must approach God and God alone to help us carry our crosses. This may not lead to short term happiness, but it will lead to salvation and long term peace and joy.

That's the way it is!

Father Dave Bechtel

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## Pro Life News

### WORD OF LIFE

The Incarnation - "By his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being" (Vatican II, GS 22). This saving event reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who "so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person. The Church, faithfully contemplating the mystery of the Redemption, acknowledges this value with ever new wonder. She feels called to proclaim to the people of all times this "Gospel", the source of invincible hope and true joy for every period of history. The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person, and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel" ~ Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*

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# News From the Vatican



## THE CHURCH, MOTHER OF VOCATIONS

Dear Brothers and Sisters, It is my great hope that, during the course of this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, all the baptized may experience the joy of belonging to the Church and rediscover that the Christian vocation, just like every

particular vocation, is born from within the People of God, and is a gift of divine mercy. The Church is the house of mercy, and it is the 'soil' where vocations take root, mature and bear fruit.

For this reason, on the occasion of the 53<sup>rd</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I invite all of you to reflect upon the apostolic community, and to give thanks for the role of the community in each person's vocational journey. In the Bull of Indiction for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, I recalled the words of the venerable Bede, describing the call of Saint Matthew: 'Miserando atque eligendo'. The Lord's merciful action forgives our sins and opens us to the new life which takes shape in the call to discipleship and mission. Each vocation in the Church has its origin in the compassionate gaze of Jesus. Conversion and vocation are two sides of the same coin, and continually remain interconnected throughout the whole of the missionary disciple's life.

Blessed Paul VI, in his exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, described various steps in the process of evangelization. One of these steps is belonging to the Christian community, that community from which we first received the witness of faith and the clear proclamation of the Lord's mercy. This incorporation into the Christian community brings with it all the richness of ecclesial life, particularly the sacraments. Indeed, the Church is not only a place in which we believe, but it is also an object of our faith; it is for this reason that we profess in the Creed: 'I believe in the Church'.

I urge all the faithful to assume their responsibility for the care and discernment of vocations. When the Apostles sought someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot, St. Peter brought together one hundred and twenty of the brethren; and in order to choose seven deacons, a group of disciples was gathered. St. Paul gave Titus specific criteria for the selection of presbyters. Still today, the Christian community is always present in the discernment of vocations, in their formation and in their perseverance.

Vocations are born within the Church. From the moment a vocation begins to become evident, it is necessary to have an adequate 'sense' of the Church. No one is called exclusively for a particular region, or for a group or for an ecclesial movement, but rather for the Church and for the world. In responding to God's call, young people see their own ecclesial horizon expand; they are able to consider various charisms and to undertake a more objective discernment. In this way, the community becomes the home and the family where vocations are born. Candidates gratefully contemplate this mediation of the community as an essential element for their future. They learn to know and to love their brothers and sisters who pursue paths different from their own; and these

bonds strengthen in everyone the communion which they share.

Vocations grow within the Church. In the course of formation, candidates for various vocations need to grow in their knowledge of the ecclesial community, overcoming the limited perspectives that we all have at the beginning. To that end, it is helpful to undertake some apostolic experience together with other members of the community, for example: in the company of a good catechist, to communicate the Christian message; together with a religious community, to experience the evangelization of the peripheries sharing in the life of the cloister, to discover the treasure of contemplation; in contact with missionaries, to know more closely the mission *ad gentes*; and in the company of diocesan priests, to deepen one's experience of pastoral life in the parish and in the diocese. For those who are already in formation, the ecclesial community always remains the fundamental formational environment, towards which one should feel a sense of gratitude.

Vocations are sustained by the Church. After definitive commitment, our vocational journey within the Church does not come to an end, but it continues in our willingness to serve, our perseverance and our ongoing formation. The one who has consecrated his life to the Lord is willing to serve the Church wherever it has need.

Among those involved in pastoral activity, priests are especially important. In their ministry, they fulfill the words of Jesus, Who said: 'I am the gate of the sheepfold ... I am the good shepherd'. The pastoral care of vocations is a fundamental part of their ministry. Priests accompany those who are discerning a vocation, as well as those who have already dedicated their lives to the service of God and of the community.

All the faithful are called to appreciate the ecclesial dynamism of vocations, so that communities of faith can become, after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, like a mother's womb which welcomes the gift of the Holy Spirit. The motherhood of the Church finds expression in constant prayer for vocations and in the work of educating and accompanying all those who perceive God's call. This motherhood is also expressed through a careful selection of candidates for the ordained ministry and for the consecrated life. Finally, the Church is the mother of vocations in her continual support of those who have dedicated their lives to the service of others.

We ask the Lord to grant to all those who are on a vocational journey a deep sense of belonging to the Church; and that the Holy Spirit may strengthen among Pastors, and all of the faithful, a deeper sense of communion, discernment and spiritual fatherhood and motherhood."

\*\*\*\*\*

## 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.

\*\*\*\*\*

Pope Francis @Pontifex

*Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>* - One goal for each day: to convey the tenderness of Christ to those who are most in need.

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# 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).



## BLESSING OF NATIVITY SCENE

In its present form the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi, who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time. When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.



All make the sign of the cross as the leader says: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**Response:** Who made heaven and earth.

One of those present or the leader reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example, Luke 2:1 (lines 1-8) or Isaiah 7:10 (lines 10-15, the birth of Emmanuel).

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Savior was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love.

Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

**Response:** Amen.

From "Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers"

# CHRISTMAS SEASON

December 25 - January 10

*Christmas is a privileged opportunity to meditate on the meaning and value of our existence. The approach of this Solemnity helps us on the one hand to reflect on the drama of history in which people, injured by sin, are perennially in search of happiness and of a fulfilling sense of life and death; and on the other, it urges us to meditate on the merciful kindness of God who came to man to communicate to him directly the Truth that saves, and to enable him to partake in his friendship and his life. Therefore let us prepare ourselves for Christmas with humility and simplicity, making ourselves ready to receive as a gift the light, joy and peace that shine from this mystery.*  
Pope Benedict

Christmas is one of the most important days of the Church year, second only to Easter itself. It is the feast of the incarnation, the feast of God becoming flesh (the Latin "in carne" means "enfleshment"). It is a uniquely Christian teaching, the Divine choosing to become one of us. Because of this belief, God is not only Transcendent, but also wholly Immanent, Emmanuel (God-with-us). While remaining Transcendent (meaning we must rise above our present condition to reach Him), He is at the same time Immanent (meaning He is with us as we rise toward Him). Every Eucharist is like Christmas where the bread and wine are transformed into His flesh, His Body and Blood, and, in a sense, He is born anew on the altar.

The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. During this season, we celebrate the birth of Christ into our world and into our hearts, and reflect on the gift of salvation that is born with him...including the fact that he was born to die for us.

The Christmas tree and the Nativity scene are popular symbols of the season and a tradition in many Christian homes. It is also traditional to exchange Christmas gifts with family and friends as a way to honor God the Father's gift of his only son to the world. Having received the gift of Christ, we naturally want to pass that gift along to our loved ones.

## *A Prayer for Christmas*

*O God, our loving Father, help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angles, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.*

*May Christmas morning make us happy to be your children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen*

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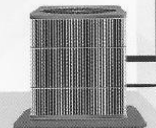
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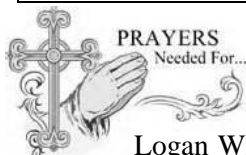
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We hope you'll consider including a gift to St. Peter's Church in your will or living trust. Called a charitable bequest, just a few sentences in your will or trust are all that is needed. Share this sample bequest language for St. Peter's Church with your estate planning attorney:

"I, [name], of [city, state, zip], give, devise and bequeath to St. Peter's Church, Wellsboro [written amount or percentage of the estate or description of property] for its unrestricted use and purpose."



PRAYERS  
Needed For...

## Parish Prayer List

Nettie Mays, Nan Bowser, Rebecca Kreider, Bill Jacobson, Trish Knowlton, Sheldon Moon, Helene Carpenter, Angela Shirley, Joe Heminhaus, Jr., Jasmine Williams, Judy Nagel, Sue Evert, Allisa Abrams, Logan Williams, Valerie Tobin, Michael Farrington, Debbie Adleman, Darlene Brennan, Shirley Mekos Broughton, Cynthia Gordon, Tim Christman, Michelle Lawrence, Ann Porter, Tucker Gromosiak, Meghan Henneman, Joyce Bowe, Donna Brennan, Peggy Zona, Natasha Rymarczuk, Bob Erway, Mary Mekos, Mary Cramner, Bob Black, Maci Lynn Perry, Martha Desch, Pam Robbins, Leon Herb, Deb Finestone, Nick Cavagnaro, Patricia Jaworowicz, Sunny Fernandez, Maxwell Foox, Antoinette Davis, Kay Evans, Anna Marie Mimplitsch, Sean Rice, Jonathan Hardman, Sylvia Darrow, Lola Moore, Edwin Rosa, Carol Johns, Joan Kilmer, Stephen Hurd, Stephanie Hemighauf, Suzie Alexander, Larry Sasani, Kathy Barnes, Wendy Doan-Newcomb, Michele Bush, Ashley Johns, Syler Sullivan, Carter Goodwin, Adrienne Gilbert, Rita Grinnan, Bob Murphy, Richard Wheeler, Carolyn Antoniow, Sylvia Smith, Jean Thurman, Robbie Butler, Susan Cleveland, Lynn Bower, Brian Abbott, Dominic Bianco, Tom Mohr, Carol Weatherby, Carol Shine, Teresa Pavlock, Jerry Pierce, Joann Black, Gabriel, Melissa & Daniel Espinoza, Lori Lopaz, Patricia Quattrone, Larry Jackson, Katie Seip, Lisa Jones, Grace Bickham, Edward Collins, Floyd Williammee, Barbara Gaugler, Renee Kennedy, Gay Furlong, Elsa DiBernardo, Fran Rose, Christine Palmer, June Sherman, Kathy Smith, Beverly Heck, Tim Bogaczyk, Beth Valdez, Virginia Shaefer, Charles Barrett, Joe Engel, Tony Dooley, David Naugle, Connie Kenderdine, Darleen Kohler, Mary Lou Bonk, Jon Banik, Kaydence Burger, and Callie Cavanaugh.



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

Marjorie Gooch

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.