

Third Sunday of Advent ~December 11, 2016

*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 year to all 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.

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.

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.

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
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
Directors of Religious Ed.: Maureen Poirier & Melissa Mann –
stpried@ptd.net
Maintenance Staff: Connie Spang, Francis Kennedy

Schedule of Weekend Masses

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

Reconciliation

Saturday 4:15 – 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

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 – Mary Lasko 570-439-7706
Mary Beth Sampson 570-724-2953
Church Linens & Decorations – Sue Singer 570-724-2360
Buildings & Grounds – Rick Joachim 570-439-2591
Cemetery Committee – Howard Rutledge 570-724-4529
Fundraising Dinners – Tara Gordon 570-439-0006
Paul Urner 570-723-9970
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 – Rectory 570-724-3371
Worship Committee – Rectory 570- 724-3371
Sunday Nursing Home Communion – Eileen Evert 570-439-4470
Prayer Chain – Kate Black 570-724-3047
Order of Secular Carmelite – Lori Makos 570-724-3371

Third Sunday of Advent

December 11, 2016

Date	Time	Confession Time and Mass Intention
Monday 12/12 <i>Zec 2:14-17; Lk 1:26-38</i>	11:45am-12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of Marie Franks (Connie White)
Tuesday 12/13 <i>Zep 3:1-2, 9-13; Mt 21:28-32</i>	7:30am	In Memory of Patti Radocaj (Richard & Kate Black)
Wednesday 12/14 <i>Is 45:6-8, 18, 21-25; Lk 7:18-23</i>	11:45am-12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of William Snyder (Edward & Loretta Nonnenmacher)
Thursday 12/15 <i>Is 54:1-10; Lk 7:24-30</i>	11:45am-12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of Patti Radocaj (Eric & Tina Kreisler & Family)
Friday 12/16 <i>Is 56:1-3, 6-8; Jn 5:33-36</i>	11:45am-12:00pm 12:10pm	Confessions In Memory of Patti Radocaj (Poirier Family)
Saturday 12/17 <i>Gn 49:2, 8-10; Mt 1:1-17</i>	4:15-4:45pm 5:00pm	Confessions In Memory of Parents of Frank & Ida Dziengowski (Dziengowski Family)
Sunday 12/18 <i>Is 7:10-14; Rom 1:1-7; Mt 1:18-24</i>	8:30am 11:00am	All Living and Deceased Parishioners of Saint Peter's Parish In Memory of Kathleen Mahoney (George & Susan Koury)

This week's Sanctuary Candle is offered in honor of **Joseph Boroch** (Banik, Staight, & Britton Families)

The Week Ahead

SUNDAY, December 11, 2016

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

Secular Carmelites – 1:00pm, Parish Center

MONDAY, December 12, 2016

Penance Service – 7:00pm

TUESDAY, December 13, 2016

Eucharistic Adoration – 8:00am-7:00pm

Benediction/Evening Prayer – 6:45pm

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

Broad Acres Mass – 10:30am

AA/Al-Anon – 8:00pm, Parish Center

WEDNESDAY, December 14, 2016

Green Home Mass – 2:00pm

Adult Ed Movie Series – 7:00pm, Parish Center

THURSDAY, December 15, 2016

Cards & Games – 12:00pm, Parish Center

R.C.I.A. – 6:00pm, Parish Center

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

SUNDAY, December 18, 2016

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

Lessons & Carols – 6:00pm

Ministers of the Altar Schedule

Weekend of December 18th

5:00pm

Servers: M.Mann, A.Banik, W.Feil

Lectors: T.Sampson, L.Sampson

E. Min.: B.Butler, G.Brown, K.Wilcox

8:30am

Servers: N.Ingerick, M.Ingerick, J.Lubera

Lectors: D.Bleggi, T.Reindl

E. Min.: T.Gamble, M.Bialas, M.Sampson

11:00am

Servers: K.Kramer, A.Swendrowski, K.Swendrowski

Lectors: B.Dalton, L.Nonnenmacher

E. Min.: V.Anthony, C.Lannak, M.Stirnaman

FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS

This month's food pantry items are: *Creamy Peanut Butter and Grape Jelly.*

Please place your donations in the box at the entrance of the church.

Welcome to St. Peter's Church! 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. Please complete this form and return it to the parish office or drop it in the offertory basket.

Request for Parishioner Registration Form

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____



Liturgical Reflection

Third Sunday of Advent

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:-6, 10

Today's First Reading is one of the hopeful visions. There is much joy and anticipation as we await rare desert flowers and miraculous cures. God restores all that has become barren to former beauty, and those who have been taken captive in Babylon will be freed and will enter Zion (Jerusalem) singing. What encouragement for the feeble and the frightened, to hear they will be made whole again!

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 146

Psalm 146 is a song of praise, giving thanks to God for all that he has done. The response is fashioned from Isaiah 35:4, reiterating the notion that our God will come and save us. The tense of the psalm reminds us that this is not a concept from of old, but a reality for today. Psalm 146 is the joyful prayer of one who has lived through terrible times, only to shine forth praising God's name. Faith and trust are learned amidst pain and suffering.

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10

Patience is a difficult virtue to learn and act upon. None of us wants to hear "in God's time." We want what we want now. Yet, in his wisdom, James counsels that we must wait patiently and joyously, and to never give up. Temptation and rash judgments are things which can get us into trouble when we do not think things through and spontaneously at upon our desires. We must be patient.

GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11

THE BLIND REGAIN THEIR SIGHT
THE LAME WALK
LEPERS ARE CLEANSED
THE DEAF HEAR
THE DEAD ARE RAISED
AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOOD NEWS
PROCLAIMED TO THEM

Last Sunday's reading from Matthew introduced John the Baptist's call to repent in order to prepare for the arrival of God's final rule, which he described as "the

coming wrath." He indicated awareness that he himself was not the Messiah, but his forerunner. It is ironic that as we speak of waiting, John the Baptist becomes impatient and send his disciples to inquire, "are you [Jesus] the one who is to come or should we look for another?" He seems disappointed that there is not a big, fiery finish. Jesus rebukes him and, paraphrasing Isaiah says that the prophecies have now been fulfilled. However, realizing he responded quickly, Jesus goes on to tell the crowds the great things that John has done.



December 12th – 7:00pm, St. Peter's
December 13th – 6:30pm, St. Thomas
December 19th – 7:00pm, Holy Child

GAUDETE SUNDAY



"Rejoice: the Lord is nigh." As Christmas draws near, the Church emphasizes the joy which should be in our hearts over all that the birth of our Savior means for us. The great joy of Christians is to see the day

drawing nigh when the Lord will come again in His glory to lead them into His kingdom. The oft-repeated Veni ("Come") of Advent is an echo not only of the prophets but also of the conclusion of the Apocalypse of St. John: "Come, Lord Jesus," the last words of the New Testament. The third Sunday of Advent (like the Fourth Sunday of Lent) is a day of joy in the midst of a penitential season. It is traditionally called **Gaudete Sunday**, from the Latin of the Entrance Antiphon for today: *Gaudete in Domino semper*, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice! The Lord is near" (Phil 4:4-5). The antiphon captures the mood of the entire liturgy as we move into the second part of Advent: there is a sense of joyful expectation, an awareness that the fulfillment of God's great plan for us is near. Like Lent, Advent is a penitential season, so the priest normally wears purple vestments. But on Gaudete Sunday, having passed the midpoint of Advent, the Church lightens the mood a little, and the priest may wear rose vestments. The change in color provides us with encouragement to continue our spiritual preparation—especially prayer and fasting—for Christmas. For this same reason, the third candle of the Advent wreath, first lit on Gaudete Sunday, is traditionally rose-colored. Gaudete Sunday has a counterpart in Lent: Laetare Sunday.

Parish Activities and Information

CONGRATULATIONS

At last Sunday's Mass, Rebecca Mahosky and Chad Owlett asked to be received into the Catholic faith community through the Rite of Acceptance. Please give Rebecca and Chad your prayerful support as they continue their journey towards becoming full members of the Body of Christ.

YEAR END DONATIONS

2016 financial statements will be prepared upon request. All donations must be received by December 31st to be included on your 2016 statement. If you would like a 2016 statement, please call the rectory or write "send statement" on your weekly offering envelope.

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 for chairing this event and also to Joe Mercuri for all his help making the bread pudding. A profit of \$3,328.03 was raised to support the activities of the parish.

NEW ITEMS AT THE RESOURCE CENTER

We have partnered with Stewardship: A Mission of Faith and Lighthouse Catholic Media to bring you a Resource Center filled with life-changing materials. Our 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. The shelves have been recently restocked with a new variety of books and booklets 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 24th.**

HOMLESS SHELTER NEED

St. Peter's has been assigned our first week to staff the Homeless Shelter from Sunday, January 1st – Saturday, January 7th. There are shifts available from 5:00-7:00pm or 5:00-9:00pm some evenings. If you're interested in volunteering or for more information please reach out to Tara Gordon at 570-439-0006 or David Gordon at 570-439-0005. We will be reaching out to those who have offered to prepare meals as the dates draw closer.

FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS



Please join us on Sunday, December 18th at 6:00pm 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 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.

SANCTUARY CANDLES

A candle is kept burning day and night wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in Catholic churches or chapels. It is an emblem of Christ's abiding love and a reminder to the faithful to respond with loving adoration in return. Sanctuary candles are available to remember or honor your loved ones.

ADULT EDUCATION –MOVIE SERIES

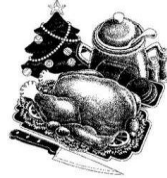
The St Peter's Adult Education programs will continue during Advent. Please join us for a video presentation from Bishop Robert Barron on the Pivotal Players in Catholic history and culture with the following schedule:

On December 14th we will observe the artist **Michelangelo** express the beauty of the faith in painting and sculpture.

On December 21st we will learn the exuberant joy of the Catholic Christian life in the writings and life of **G. K. Chesterton**.

Programs are free, open to everyone and will commence at 7:00pm each evening.

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT ST. PETER'S



Are you going to be by yourself this Christmas? Are you not feeling up to cooking a big dinner? Would your family enjoy being with others this Christmas?

Everyone is invited to share a meal and fellowship 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 Monday, December 19th 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.

ANNUAL APPEAL

Thank you to those who have already made a pledge to the Diocesan Annual Appeal. Each gift truly matters. If you have not yet made your gift, and need a pledge envelope, envelopes can be found at each entrance to the church. St. Peter's Annual Appeal Parish Goal: \$ 46,500. Current Pledged Amount: \$ 44,701. We are \$1,799 under our goal.

Stewardship

Sunday Collection for December 4th: \$9,072.25

Weekly Goal to Meet Expenses: \$5,222.00

Difference: (\$3,082.25)

Year-to-Date Budget Variance: (\$1,757.59)

Collection for Care & Education of Priests: \$1,030.19

We are grateful to all those who financially sacrifice every week to support our parish and its ministries!

Christmas Mass Schedule



Christmas Eve ~ 4:00pm & 6:00pm

Christmas Day ~ 10:00am

Diocese of Scranton News

RETROUVAILLE PROGRAM

Marriage Help: If your marriage is tearing the two of you apart, if there is little or no meaningful communication, if you are considering separation or divorce, then the Retrouvaille Program can help you. Retrouvaille is helping couples put the pieces back together and to rediscover a more loving relationship. The next local program will be Feb. 24-26, 2017 at The Ramada Inn, Clarks Summit, PA. Registration Required. All calls confidential. Cost is by donation. For more information call 1-800-470-2230 or visit helpourmarriage.org.

***** DIOCESAN CERTIFICATE IN LAY MINISTRY PROGRAM 2017

The Office for Parish Life encourages parish leaders to consider application for the Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry for January 2017! The Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry is a ministry formation program designed to equip and advance the servant leadership capacities of individuals serving their parish in areas such as Pastoral Council, Director of Religious Education and Catechist, Liturgical Coordinator, Parish Staff, Volunteer Ministry teams, and others! Through independent online study with the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF), as well as regional skills workshops and opportunities for prayer and reflection, Diocesan Certificate candidates enrich their knowledge base, while also learning practical tools for effective parish ministry in their faith communities. Starting with our New Candidate Orientation Retreat on Saturday, January 28, 2017, the Office for Parish Life anticipates welcoming new candidates into the Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry program in the New Year. Prospective candidates are encouraged to contact Kitty Scanlan, Coordinator for Lay Ministry Formation, at 570-207-2213, or by email at Kitty-Scanlan@dioceseofscranton.org for application information, materials, and application submissions.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Patroness of the Americas

Feast Day in the USA - December 12th



At dawn on December 9, 1531, on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City, Our Blessed Lady appeared to Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian (canonized on July 31, 2002, as Saint Juan Diego by Pope John Paul II). While on his way to attend mass he heard sounds of chirping birds and beautiful music, wondering where it was coming from and its meaning. Then he heard a voice calling him. There she revealed herself to him as "the Ever

Virgin Mother of the True God," and made known her desire that a Shrine be built there to bear witness to her love, her compassion, and her protection. She sent him to Bishop Juan de Zumarraga in Mexico City to request her great desire.

The Bishop dismissed the humble Indian without paying attention to his story. Two more times Our Lady appeared to Juan, requesting him to deliver the same favor. He did as she asked and finally the Bishop asked for a sign. So, Juan reported this to her and she promised to grant a sign the following morning.

On December 12, while on his way to bring a priest to his dying uncle, Our Lady appeared to him for the fourth time. She assured him of his uncle's recovery and told him to gather fresh roses which he would find growing on the frosty summit of the rocky and barren hill. This done, she arranged the castilian roses in his tilma (cloak) and hurried him to the Bishop, giving him an account of their origin. This is what is known as "The Miracle of the pink roses."

To the Bishop's amazement, when Juan opened up his tilma before him there was painted upon it a miraculous beautiful image of Our Lady exactly as she had appeared on Mount Tepeyac. The Bishop prostrated himself in veneration and soon after began the building of the Shrine on the top of Mount Tepeyac. The Basilica in Mexico City is the most important Shrine to Our Blessed mother, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe in all the American continents.

Juan Diego's cloak, marvelously preserved, can still be seen behind the main altar in the new Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which is near the original Basilica site she requested. Millions from all over Mexico and the world make their way to venerate Our Blessed Mother and to implore her intercession. She stated to Juan, "Am I not here as your Mother?"

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

That's The Way It Is!



This past week we celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Feast is a Holy Day of Obligation in the United States. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is about the conception of Mary, not Jesus. God has revealed, and the Church thus teaches that Mary was conceived in sinlessness.

This sinlessness is a radical sinlessness. It isn't just that Mary could have sinned but choose not to sin. It isn't just that Mary committed no personal sin. The doctrine means that Mary was not stained by Original Sin. There was never a time in the life of Mary when she was not justified—that is—in right relationship with God. Mary was filled with the life of God from the moment she came into existence. Because of this, Mary could not sin. Sin for Mary was impossible. Just as sin was impossible for Jesus, so also sin was impossible for Mary. Yet we maintain that Mary was totally and completely free. Mary was freer than any human being save Jesus.

How can we maintain Mary's radical freedom yet the impossibility for her to sin? Freedom in the Christian sense is not the ability to choose to sin. Freedom in the Christian sense is not getting to choose whatever we want. Freedom in the Christian sense is freedom to love. When we say that Mary was totally and completely free, we mean that Mary was free to know, love and service God as she was created to do. Sin is what places us in slavery. Sin makes us slaves to ourselves, our passions, our wants, our desires. Sin causes us to consider our own wants, desires, passions, etc, at the expense of what God wants. Sin hampers generosity and love. When we are set free, we are set free from slavery to self and are enabled to truly love as God created us to love. Real love and real freedom, then, entail the impossibility of sin. Love and sin are mutually exclusive.

This is difficult for some to believe. Many Protestants, especially the fundamentalists see all of the above as a lie from the deepest of the pits of Hell. Part of the problem with Catholicism, is that the doctrines can only be understood within the context of all the other doctrines. Protestant fundamentalists tend to isolate the doctrines from all the other doctrines of Faith. When doctrines are placed under the microscope in such a manner they make no sense. It is like trying to understand a liver without understanding all the other organs within the body. It is like trying to study piece of artwork that is not designed to be studied up close, but can only truly be understood when the person steps back and sees how everything fits together.

When we place our teachings about Mary within the context of all the other revealed truths, we find that Mary magnifies God for she reveals to us the truths of redemption. Mary is redemption. There is no Christian who is as perfectly redeemed as Mary. There is no Christian who experiences the fullness of the promises of

redemption, save Mary. What is redemption? Redemption is sinlessness. Redemption is resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Redemption is spiritual motherhood: The Church bears the presence of God and brings Him to birth in every generation.

When Mary says that her soul rejoices in God her savior, indeed, no soul can more fully rejoice in God as their savior for no person is as perfectly redeemed. God saves us from sin—but He does so after the fact. God saves us after we have already fallen into sin. We are saved and we rejoice in our salvation. However, God saved Mary before the fact—that is He prevented her from ever falling into Sin. This is a more perfect form of redemption. This makes perfect sense: God choose Mary to be His mother from eternity past. Because of this, God had to grant her certain graces that no other Christian is given. God had to create and prepare Mary from eternity past to be the spotless virgin who would bear His Son. Mary is unique in the order of redemption. When we honor Mary, when we meditate on Mary we meditate on our eternal destiny.

Mary lived the fullest life of heaven on earth. In so doing she revealed what eternal life really is. When we meditate on the mysteries of Mary, we see humanity as God created it to be; we see what God wants for us. We see what gifts God will give to those who are Faithful. The Immaculate Conception, then, and all the other truths about Mary aren't just important because they concern Mary. They are important because they concern the identity and destiny of the Church- the Body of Christ.

That's the way it is!

The Reverend David W. Bechtel

Pro Life News

PRIESTS FOR LIFE

As we enter the second half of Advent, the liturgy focuses more specifically on the Incarnation and birth of Jesus at the first Christmas. We think about Mary's initial fear and uncertainty in the face of her unexpected pregnancy. Then, in every Church in the world, believers spiritually rush to her side to eagerly await with her the birth of the Savior. The best way for a parish to celebrate Christmas is to rush physically to the side of those in the community who, like Mary, are uncertain and afraid about their pregnancy. We are to accompany them through their pregnancy with support and encouragement, and help them experience the fact that every birth reflects the joy of the birth of Christ. *Nationwide pregnancy centers, providing alternatives to abortion, can be reached through the "Option Line," 1-800-712-HELP, or at www.pregnancycenters.org.*

WORD OF LIFE

"A child is loved because he is one's child: not because he is beautiful or because he is like this or like that... Not because he thinks as I do, or embodies my dreams. A child is a child: a life generated by us but intended for him, for his good, for the good of the family, of society, of mankind as a whole."- *Pope Francis, General Audience, February 2015*

News From the Vatican



DON'T WHITEWASH YOUR SINS – LET GOD HEAL YOU

As Christmas approaches, don't downplay your sins, Pope Francis said. Instead, name them honestly in the Sacrament of

Confession, open your heart, and ask the Lord to heal you from within. If we merely say: “yes, yes, I have some sins; I go, I confess...and then I go on as before, we don't allow ourselves to be recreated by the Lord. It's as if we've applied “two coats of paint” on our heart, believing that is good enough. “No!” he said. What we should do instead is name our sins carefully, saying: “I've done this, and this, and this, and I am ashamed at heart. And I open my heart,” asking the Lord to “recreate me!”

Doing this is what will give us the courage to go towards Christmas with “true faith,” Francis said. It often happens that we want “to hide the gravity of our sins,” he said, but when we attempt to “diminish,” instead of acknowledge our sins, they become “very ugly,” like “the venom of a serpent” that seeks to destroy others. Referring to the day's reading from the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus first forgives the sins of the paralytic man before physically healing him, Francis focused on the great importance of seeking out Christ's spiritual healing in our own lives.

What Jesus did in the Gospel, he said, “was not only change things from ugly to beautiful, from wicked to good: Jesus made a transformation.”

It's not a solution of “cosmetics” or “make-up,” Pope Francis noted. “He changed everything from the inside!” The message of the Gospel is that before healing the paralytic man, Jesus first forgave his sins, “recreating him” and making him “totally new.” Just as the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah is also about renewal, the Pope encouraged everyone to seek out renewal by going to the “root” of our sins. We must “get to the bottom of our sins and then give them to the Lord, so that He will cancel them and help us go forward with faith,” he said. “We are all sinners,” but if we go to the root of our sins and invite God there, he will come and make us a “new man” or a “new woman.”

Just as Mary Magdalene did not have a physical ailment, but “a wound within,” we are all sinners in need of healing, the Pope said. Mary Magdalene recognized that Jesus could heal not only physical sickness, but spiritual as well. “This is what the Lord is asking of us today,” he said. “Courage! Give me your sins and I will make you a new man, a new woman.” May the Lord give us faith to believe this.”

POPE FRANCIS INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER

Universal: End to Child-Soldiers – That the scandal of child-soldiers may be eliminated the world over.

Evangelization: Europe – That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel which gives joy and hope to life.

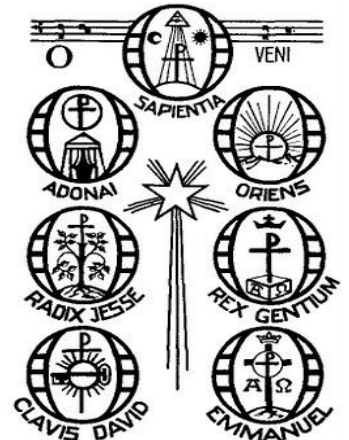


Beginning the Church's liturgical year, Advent (from, "ad-venire" in Latin or "to come to") is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of Christmas. Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of the Lord. In this season, we recall two central elements 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 Matthew will be the primary Gospel proclaimed (Lectionary Cycle A).



The "O Antiphons" Of Advent

The Roman Church has been singing the "O" Antiphons since at least the eighth century. They are the antiphons that accompany the Magnificat canticle of Evening Prayer from December 17-23. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not



only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative "Come!" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

December 17 - O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18 - O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai: come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19 - O Root of Jesse's stem, sign of God's love for all his people: come to save us without delay!

December 20 - O Key of David, opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom: come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21 - O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 22 - O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

December 23 - O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!

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A Gift in Your Will

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, Valerie Tobin, Michael Farrington, Debbie Adleman, Darlene Brennan, Shirley Mekos Broughton, Cynthia Gordon, 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, 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, Adrienne Gilbert, Rita Grinnan, Bob Murphy, Richard Wheeler, Carolyn Antoniow, Sylvia Smith, Robbie Butler, Susan Cleveland, Lynn Bower, 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, Floyd Williammee, 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, Darleen Kohler, Callie Cavanaugh, Victoria Salerno, Wanda Trynovich, Tim Cunningham, Tony Pranses, Bob Snyder, Don Brooks, Kathy Macensky, Paul Beuter, Avery Trescott, Jerry Eckert, Michael Liebner, Cole Salerno, Mark Kilmer, Richard Kramer, Margaret Barnett, Bob Brostrom, Richard Nowak, Nolan Frederick, Tess Dooley, Patty Perry, and Frank Dziengowski, Jr.



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

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.