# CATHOLIC

Christmas & Feast of the Holy Family

December 25-26, 2021

CHURCH

Vision Statement: "To offer every person in our community a life-changing encounter with Jesus."

## **POPE FRANCIS** DIVINE LOVE HAS APPEARED



What is the meaning of this light that shone in the darkness? Saint Paul tells us: The grace of God, "bringing salvation to all" (Tit 2:11), has shone on our world this night.

But what is this grace? It is divine love, the love that changes lives, renews history, liberates from evil, fills hearts with peace and joy. Tonight the love of God has been revealed to us: it is Jesus. In Jesus, the Most High made himself tiny,

so that we might love him. But we can still ask ourselves: why does Saint Paul describe the coming of God into our world as "grace"? To tell us that it is utterly free. Whereas on earth everything seems to be about giving in order to get, God comes down freely. His love is non-negotiable: we did nothing to deserve it and we will never be able to repay it.

The grace of God has appeared. Tonight we realize that, when we failed to measure up, God became small for our sake; while we were going about our own business, he came into our midst. Christmas reminds us that God continues to love us all, even the worst of us. To me, to you, to each of us, he says today: "I love you and I will always love you, for you are precious in my eyes".

God does not love you because you think and act the right way. He loves you, plain and simple. His love is unconditional; it does not depend on you. You may have mistaken ideas, you may have made a complete mess of things, but the Lord continues to love you. How often do we think that God is good if we are good and punishes us if we are bad. Yet that is not how he is. For all our sins, he continues to love us. His love does not change. It is not fickle; it is faithful. It is patient. This is the gift we find at Christmas. We discover to our amazement that the Lord is absolute gratuity, absolute tender love. His glory does not overwhelm us; his presence does not terrify us. He is born in utter poverty in order to win our hearts by the wealth of his love.

The grace of God has appeared. Grace is a synonym of beauty. Tonight, in the beauty of God's love, we also discover our own beauty, for we are beloved of God. For better or worse, in sickness and in health, whether happy or sad, in his eyes we are beautiful, not for what we do but for what we are. Deep within us, there is an indelible and intangible beauty, an irrepressible beauty, which is the core of our being. Today God reminds us of this. He lovingly takes upon himself our humanity and makes it his own, "espousing" it forever. The "great joy" proclaimed tonight to the shepherds is indeed "for all the people". We too, with all our weaknesses and failures, are among those shepherds, who were certainly not saints. And just as God called the shepherds, so too he calls us, for he loves us. In the dark night of life, he says to us as he did to them, "Be not afraid!" (Lk 2:10). Take courage, do not lose confidence, do not lose hope, do not think that to love is a waste of time! Tonight love has conquered fear, new hope has arrived, God's kindly light has overcome the darkness of human arrogance. Mankind, God loves you; for your sake he became man. You are no longer alone!

What are we to do with this grace? Only one thing: accept the gift. Before we go out to seek God, let us allow ourselves to be sought by him. He always seeks us first. Let us not begin with our own abilities but with his grace, for he, Jesus, is the Savior. Let us contemplate the Child and let ourselves be caught up in his tender love. Then we have no further excuse for not letting ourselves be loved by him. Whatever goes wrong in our lives, whatever doesn't work in the Church, whatever problems there are in the world, will no longer serve as an excuse. It will become secondary, for faced with Jesus' extravagant love, a love of utter meekness and closeness, we have no excuse. At Christmas, the question is this: "Do I allow myself to be loved

by God? Do I abandon myself to his love that comes to save me?"

So great a gift deserves immense gratitude. To accept this grace means being ready to give thanks in return. Often we live our lives with such little gratitude. Today is the right day to draw near to the tabernacle, the crèche, the manger, and to say thank you. Let us receive the gift that is Jesus, in order then to become gift like Jesus. To become gift is to give meaning to life. And it is the best way to change the "The grace of God has appeared"

But what is this grace? It is divine love, the love that changes lives, renews history, liberates from evil, fills hearts with peace and joy.

world: we change, the Church changes, history changes, once we stop trying to change others but try to change ourselves and to make of our life a gift.

Jesus shows this to us tonight. He did not change history by pressuring anyone or by a flood of words, but by the gift of his life. He did not wait until we were good before he loved us, but gave himself freely to us. May we not wait for our neighbors to be good before we do good to them, for the Church to be perfect before we love her, for others to respect us before we serve them. Let us begin with ourselves. This is what it means freely to accept the gift of grace. And holiness is nothing other than preserving this freedom.

If you think your heart is poor in love, this night is for you. The grace of God has appeared, to shine forth in your life. Accept it and the light of Christmas will shine forth in you. —Francis

# FROM FATHER ERIC MERRY CHRISTMAS!



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On behalf of Father Peter, Deacon Mark and the staff of Epiphany Parish and School... Merry Christmas! And a Happy New Year!

Christmas and its Octave (the 8 days of celebration) should be a festive time, but we all continue to feel the weight of the pandemic. Here we are with our second Christmas over-

shadowed a bit. These are things that we will all remember for the rest of our lives, but we all want the pandemic to become soon and very soon a distant memory. In the meantime, let's push forward and celebrate the best we can.

As in every other year, the parish and school staff and I hope that Christmas 2021 finds your fami-

ly united in health, peace, and filled with the abundant grace of Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel ("God is with us")! It is a hope and a prayer rooted in reality: despite appearances and the circumstances of our risky lives as mortal beings, God does have us in the palm of his hands. Blessed be God!

Celebrating the Nativity of the Lord offers us all the opportunity to contemplate the things that truly matter, beginning with God, family, and friends. We ourselves, led by

our parents and other adults in our lives, must make it a season of faith, hope, charity and good will to all, and especially with those who continue to face setbacks or sadness because of the pandemic.

It is my prayer that each of you will have a safe, fun and merry



Christmas. We look forward to the day when we will shake off some of the impediments to easy-going rapport, get back together, and move forward with renewed energy and sense of purpose as a parish and school.

May God bless America, our state, and our town!

–Father Eric

From the Mass of Christmas Night:

Grant, O Lord, we pray, that we may draw new vigor from celebrating the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son, by whose heavenly mystery we receive both food and drink. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen

# **CELEBRATING OUR FAITH**

SACRAMENTS SCHEDULE

## **Mass Schedule**

Incense is used at 9:30am Sunday Mass. Ministers have Glutenfree Hosts. 7:30 am Sunday Mass is Broadcast on Facebook at Epiphanyparish.com, with drive up Communion till 8:30am (Canopy). \*Masks Required at 2 Masses.

### Sunday, Dec. 26, THE HOLY FAMILY

| 7:30am*  | David and Jane Hume  |
|----------|----------------------|
| 9:30am   | Susan Lamb           |
| 11:30am* | People of the Parish |

Monday, Dec. 27, St. John, Apostle and Evangelist 7:00am Sally Leahy

Lector: Kara Esker EME: Deb Willenborg

Tuesday, Dec. 28, The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

7:00am Diane Bussan 8:15am Ewa Martin Lector: Kris Angles EME: Dorothy Meier

#### Wednesday, Dec. 29, 5th Day within the Octave

7:00am Barbara Walljasper 8:15am Joan Kober-Forman and Mike Forman Lector: Chris Niebur EMEs: Lynda Arnold, Ed & Newze Nnakwe

### Thursday, Dec. 30, 6th Day within the Octave

7:00am Barbara Walljasper 8:15am Ewa and Kevin Martin, Stephen Kudelko Lector: Jennifer Kamradt EME: Darly Menke

#### Friday, Dec. 31, 7th Day within the Octave

7:00am Barbara Walljasper Lector: Mathew and Katrina Kinate EME: Aggie Hatch

### Saturday. January 1. MARY MOTHER OF GOD

| ,,     |                                 |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| 7:30am | All Souls' Day Memorial Society |
| 4:00pm | David Supan                     |

Lector: Steve G. EME: Barb Burdett, Mary C. & Keith Walljasper

### Sunday, January 2, EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

| 7:30am*  | Teresa Voirol        |
|----------|----------------------|
| 9:30am   | Joanne Warren        |
| 11:30am* | People of the Parish |

### **Confession Times**

7:30am **M-F** 

7am,3pm SAT 7am,9am,11am SUN



Epiphanyparish.com

# **PARISH UPDATES**

### **Epiphany Youth Ministry**

**Alumni Night!** Past and current members of High School Youth Group are invited to join us in the parish hall on Wednesday December 29th from 7-9pm for a Skittles Tournament and discussions on living your faith after high school!

**High School Youth Group** meets Sunday January 2nd from 6:30-8pm in our new youth space (the old convent). Start your new year by growing in your faith with an awesome and fun community of teens!

**Catholic Heart Work Camp** is a weeklong summer mission trip for teens - you'll work tirelessly, think deeply, celebrate Mass, and build relationships. You'll dance, laugh till your side hurts, pray, change on the inside, and be part of transforming lives and communities for Christ! 8th graders and up are invited to join us in Memphis TN from June 12th-18th for Catholic Heart Work Camp. Contact Kara (kara.esker@epiphanyparish.com) for more info!

**Junior High Youth Group** is open to all 6-8th graders and meets once a month. Our next Junior High Youth Group is Friday, January 21st from 7-8:30pm. Come to the parish hall to hang out, have fun, and grow in faith together!

### **School Custodian Needed!**

Epiphany Catholic School is looking for a part time custodian to work during the school day. Responsibilities include cleaning, facility set-up, compliance checks, and maintenance of school buildings. Experience to include knowledge of maintenance/cleaning equipment as well as familiarity with basic landscaping and minor building repair practices, additional duties as directed. Applicants must complete all diocesan requirements. If interested in applying, please contact jennifer.kamradt@ epiphanyschools.org.

### **The Giving Tree**

Because of the pandemic, we will be collecting monetary donations for PATH Crisis Center, Safe Harbor, Mid Central Community Action (Neville House), Birthright and Catholic Charities. You can contribute in two ways. 1) Go to Epiphanyparish.com and click on E-Giving. The Giving Tree is included in a drop down menu. OR, 2) Write a check to Epiphany Church and place "Giving Tree" in the memo line. The deadline for

# Cover: *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1675, The National Gallery, London.

This painting illustrates the belief that Christ was both human and divine: the embodiment of the 'Two Trinities'. At the center of the composition the Christ Child forms



part of the Heavenly Trinity with the dove of the Holy Ghost and God the Father above, and part of the Earthly Trinity with his human parents, Mary and Joseph. The scene is not based on a particular biblical event, though a story in the Gospel of Luke echoes its theme. Aged 12, Christ disappeared after a trip to Jerusalem; he was eventually found in the Temple debating with religious scholars. When confronted by his anxious parents Christ spoke simply of his divine mission. Mary gazes lovingly at her son. Joseph looks towards us, inviting us to adore Christ, who stands on a sharp-edged rock.

This is possibly intended to symbolize an altar or may refer to biblical descriptions of Christ as the 'cornerstone' upon which God's household would be built.

# **PARISH CONTACTS**

Parish Office (309)452-2585 Epiphanyparish.com School Office (309)452-3268 Epiphanyschools.org

Fr. Eric Powell (Pastor) pastor@epiphanyparish.com 309-660-7860

Fr. Peter O. Okola, AJ (Vicar)

Fr.Peter@epiphanyparish.com

Deacon Mark Cleary (Baptisms) mcleary08@comcas t.net 309-531-1062

703-626-8819 Kara Esker (Youth, CCD, Pastoral Team)) pastoralassistant@epiphanyparish.com

Stephanie Demboski Adult Faith Formation & Evangelization Coordinator stephanie.demboski@epiphanyparish.com

Domine King, Joyce Tellman (Office Staff) office@epiphanyparish.com; Angie O'Connor business.manager@epiphanyparish.com

Mike Essington (IT) it.director@epiphanyparish.com

Spiritual Directors:

Sylvia Hernandez sylviahernandez50@gmail.com Deacon Mark Cleary mcleary08@comcast.net

### Parish Outreach

If you find yourself in serious economic need, Epiphany Parish and St. Vincent de Paul want to help. Email Orlando Lopez our Outreach coordinator: outreach@epiphanyparish.com.

## SHARING THE MISSION THANK YOU!

### **Gifts from Our Parish Family**

| December 12, 2021     | \$12,417   |
|-----------------------|------------|
| E-giving              | \$11,651   |
| Special               | \$1,276    |
| Parish Endowment      | \$535      |
| School                |            |
| Endowment             | \$130      |
| Capital Improvement   | \$611      |
| Weekly Budget         | \$24,500   |
| YTD Budget (24 weeks) | \$588,000  |
| YTD Income            | \$559,247  |
| YTD Balance           | (\$28,753) |

Giving Tree contributions is December 6th. Please consider assisting those less fortunate.

### Women's Bible Study

Start the New Year off right.... Join us for a new *Walking with Purpose* Bible Study: "Order Your Priorities: Building a Life Well Lived". Ordering Your Priorities: Building a Life Well Lived is an immensely practical Bible study that will help you put the most important things first. We'll begin by paying attention to the One who made us, because He can best tell us what we need for our lives to run well. Tuesdays, Jan 11-Feb 22, 2022, From 8:30-10:00am or 6:30-8:00pm. See registration details on the Events page at epiphanyparish.com

### Starting a Small Group

Have you ever wanted to start a Small Group that studied something of interest to you? But you didn't know where to begin? Come to our Leader Formation Class Jan-February and learn all you need to know to kick off a small group! Begins Sunday Jan. 9 from 7:30-9:00 pm in the Rectory Room, ends before Lent.

### Chris Stefanick is Coming April 6!

Who? Chris Stefanick is an internationally acclaimed author, speaker, and television host who has devoted his life to inspiring people to live a bold, contagious faith. He has been called "one of the most engaging defenders of the Christian faith on the scene today." Chris's live seminars reach more than 85,000 people per year. His reality TV show, videos, and radio

spots reach millions of people, and his educational initiatives are turning the tide in the Church. He authored the Chosen Confirmation program which has already formed more than 500,000 teens. Above all, Chris is proud to be the husband to his wife Natalie and father to their six children. Tickets on sale soon!

### **Carmelite Spirituality Group**

Do you desire a community of likeminded people who will support each other in prayer as you live out the Carmelite Charism in the world? Then perhaps God may be calling you to become a Third Order Lay Carmelite. If you are 18 years or older, and a Catholic in good standing, you are invited to attend the Carmelite Spirituality Group. These meetings are the beginning stages, as we discern and move toward formation as a Third Order Lay Carmelite Community. The next "Carmelite Spirituality Group" will be held on Saturday, January 8th, at 10AM-12PM in the parish hall of Historic St. Patrick's Catholic Church, located at 1209 Locust St. in Bloomington, Illinois. Please contact / RSVP - Lorrie Schmidt T.O.C. (Third Order Carmelite) at: LittlewayofCarmel@gmail.com

## SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

### Funeral Committee Volunteers Needed

We want to resume funeral luncheons after January 1st, but we

### **2021 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT**

Please tear out, fill out and return this document if you would like to receive a statement of your contributions to Epiphany Parish. Return it to the parish office, or place it in the collection basket on your way into church. Email Option: fill in all lines, but print your email address clearly below.

EMAIL:

Name:

Envelope Number:

Home Address:

Tuition Statements can be obtained by logging in to your FACTS account and printing a 2021 summary. Contact Angle in the Business Office with questions.

> need YOU! Serving on the Funeral Committee is a concrete way to provide comfort to grieving families when a loved one is lost. There are a variety of ways you can help: donate desserts, set up the parish hall, help during lunch, or clean up. Committee members are not committed to help with every funeral lunch. To join the Funeral Committee, contact Suzanne Ferrara at sferra@ilstu.edu or join the Funeral Committee on Flocknote.

#### Join us at Midwest Food Bank

Epiphany Parish is sponsoring another volunteer service project at Midwest Food Bank on Thursday, January 13 from 6-8 PM. The Food Bank is located at 2031 Warehouse Road in Normal. We are looking for 25 volunteers from our parish to help sort and/or pack bulk food items, most of these volunteer roles do not involve heavy lifting. Volunteers must be age 10 or older. We ask that there be at least one adult to help supervise every three children. This is a fun opportunity to help feed the hungry, learn more about Midwest Food Bank, and meet your fellow parishioners. To sign up for this project, please go to: https://x.gldn.io/JqBpNU1xOjb or visit the website. If you have any questions you may contact Joe Morrow at 309-824-2193, or email Orlando Lopez at outreach@epiphanyparish.com.

#### **Faith in Action News**

Faith in Action is Charleston Bound this spring from April 3-9th! For all the details of this **bus trip**, visit https://bnfia.org/charleston-sc-bus-trip or call Jan at 309.827.7780. Book by Jan. 27, 2022! In addition, are you ready to brighten an older adult's day? With Faith in Action, **volunteer drivers**, shoppers and friendly visitors choose when and how often they volunteer. To register for Volunteer Orientation, email Stacey@bnfia.org or call (309) 827-7780. Upcoming dates: Jan. 4, 2022 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM, Feb. 1, 2022 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

#### Saint Nicholas Bags

Are you looking for some way to serve the community while also having a young family? Sign up for a St. Nick's bag and provide the less fortunate with necessities like shampoo and toilet paper. Pick up and drop off one time a month at Epiphany! Contact stephanie.demboski@epiphanyparish.com for more info or to sign up!





For ad info. call 1-800-950-9952 • www.4lpi.com

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