

SAINT JOHN NEUMANN PARISH

708 Milford Rd (Rte 101A), Merrimack, NH 03054 — SJNNH.ORG



4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 19, 2021

Fr. Robert Glasgow
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MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday (Anticipatory) 5:30 PM
Sunday 8:00 AM
Sunday 10:00 AM
Sunday (Labor Day thru Memorial Day) ... 6:00 PM
Daily (Mon, Wed-Fri) 12:15 PM

CONFESSION

Saturday 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
And before/after daily Mass, or by appointment.

BAPTISM

Parents must attend a Parent Baptism Class before the baptism of their child. The class is offered the first Sunday of each month following the 10:00 AM Mass.

MARRIAGE

Please contact the office at least six months prior to the wedding date. The diocese requires Marriage Prep.

VISITS TO THE HOMEBOUND AND SICK, ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Please call the office to request home or hospital visitation.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

RCIA is the process of formation offered to those who seek to become Catholic. For information, please call the office.

LET US GO TO BETHLEHEM

And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
since from you shall come a ruler,
who is to shepherd my people Israel. —Mt 2:6

The excerpt below is from Pope Benedict XVI's homily of 24 Dec 2012 (Midnight Mass).



MARY AND JOSEPH ON THEIR WAY TO BETHLEHEM [detail]
by Hugo van der Goes (d. 1482)

DEAR Brothers and Sisters!

I am repeatedly struck by the Gospel writer's almost casual remark that there was no room for them [Mary and Joseph] at the inn. Inevitably the question arises, what would happen if Mary and Joseph were to knock at my door. Would there be room for them? And then it occurs to us that St John takes up this seemingly chance comment about the lack of room at the inn, which drove the Holy Family into the stable; he explores it more deeply and arrives at the heart of the matter when he writes: "he came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (Jn 1:11). The great moral question of our attitude towards the homeless, towards refugees and migrants, takes on a deeper dimension: do we really have room for God when he seeks to enter under our roof? Do we have time and space for him? Do we not actually turn away God himself? We begin to do so when we have no time for God. The faster we can move, the more efficient our time-saving appliances become, the less time we have. And God? The question of God never seems urgent. Our time is already completely full. But matters go deeper still. Does God actually have a place in our thinking?

Our process of thinking is structured in such a way that he simply ought not to exist. Even if he seems to knock at the door of our thinking, he has to be explained



away. If thinking is to be taken seriously, it must be structured in such a way that the "God hypothesis" becomes superfluous. There is no room for him. Not even in our feelings and desires is there any room for him. We want ourselves. We want what we can seize hold of, we want happiness that is within our reach, we want our plans and purposes to succeed. We are so "full" of ourselves that there is no room left for God. And that means there is no room for others either, for children, for the poor, for the stranger. By reflecting on that one simple saying about the lack of room at the inn, we have come to see how much we need to listen to St Paul's exhortation: "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom 12:2). Paul speaks of renewal, the opening up of our intellect (nous), of the whole way we view the world and ourselves. The conversion that we need must truly reach into the depths of our relationship with reality. Let us ask the Lord that we may become vigilant for his presence, that we may hear how softly yet insistently he knocks at the door of our being and willing. Let us ask that we may make room for him within ourselves, that we may recognize him also in those through whom he speaks to us: children, the suffering, the abandoned, those who are excluded and the poor of this world.

There is another verse from the Christmas story on which I should like to reflect with you—the angels' hymn of praise, which they sing out following the announcement of the new-born Savior: "*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests*" (Lk 2:14). God is glorious. God is pure light, the radiance of truth and love. He is good. He is true goodness, goodness par excellence. The angels surrounding him begin by simply proclaiming the joy of seeing God's glory. Their song radiates the joy that fills them. In their words, it is as if we were hearing the sounds of heaven. There is no question of attempting to understand the meaning of it all, but simply the overflowing happiness of seeing the pure splendor of God's truth and love. We want to let this joy reach out and touch us: truth exists, pure goodness exists, pure light exists. God is good, and he is the supreme power above all powers. All this should simply make us joyful tonight, together with the angels and the shepherds.

Linked to God's glory on high is peace on earth among men. Where God is not glorified, where he is forgotten or even denied, there is no peace either. Nowadays, though, widespread currents of thought assert the exact opposite: they say that religions, especially monotheism, are the cause of the violence and the wars in the world. If there is to be peace, humanity must first be liberated from them. While there is no denying a certain misuse of religion in history, yet it is not true that denial of God would lead to peace. If God's light is extinguished, man's divine dignity is also extinguished. Then the human creature would cease to be God's image, to which we must pay honor in every person, in the weak, in the stranger, in the poor. Then we would no longer all be brothers and sisters, children of the one Father, who belong to one another on account of that one Father. The kind of arrogant violence that then arises, the way man then despises and tramples upon man: we saw this in all its cruelty in the last century. Only if God's light shines over

man and within him, only if every single person is desired, known and loved by God is his dignity inviolable, however wretched his situation may be. On this Holy Night, God himself became man; as Isaiah prophesied, the child born here is "Emmanuel", God with us (Is 7:14). And down the centuries, while there has been misuse of religion, it is also true that forces of reconciliation and goodness have constantly sprung up from faith in the God who became man. Into the darkness of sin and violence, this faith has shone a bright ray of peace and goodness, which continues to shine.

So Christ is our peace, and he proclaimed peace to those far away and to those near at hand (cf. Eph 2:14, 17). How could we now do other than pray to him: Yes, Lord, proclaim peace today to us too, whether we are far away or near at hand. Grant also to us today that swords may be turned into ploughshares (Is 2:4), that instead of weapons for warfare, practical aid may be given to the suffering. Enlighten those who think they have to practice violence in your name, so that they may see the senselessness of violence and learn to recognize your true face. Help us to become people "with whom you are pleased"—people according to your image and thus people of peace.

Once the angels departed, the shepherds said to one another: "*LET US GO, THEN, TO BETHLEHEM to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us*" (Lk 2:15). The shepherds went with haste to Bethlehem, the Evangelist tells us (cf. 2:16). A holy curiosity impelled them to see this child in a manger, who the angel had said was the Savior, Christ the Lord. The great joy of which the angel spoke had touched their hearts and given them wings.

LET US GO OVER TO BETHLEHEM: as we say these words to one another, along with the shepherds, we should not only think of the great "crossing over" to the living God, but also of the actual town of Bethlehem and all those places where the Lord lived, ministered and suffered.

The shepherds made haste. Holy curiosity and holy joy impelled them. In our case, it is probably not very often that we make haste for the things of God. God does not feature among the things that require haste. The things of God can wait, we think and we say. And yet he is the most important thing, ultimately the one truly important thing. Why should we not also be moved by curiosity to see more closely and to know what God has said to us? At this hour, let us ask him to touch our hearts with the holy curiosity and the holy joy of the shepherds, and thus LET US GO OVER JOYFULLY TO BETHLEHEM, to the Lord who today once more comes to meet us. Amen.

LAST WEEK

3rd Sunday of Advent: \$6,913.80

Thank you for your generosity!

WEEKLY CALENDAR

19 Dec, SUNDAY — 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

- 8:00 AM | Mass
- 10:00 AM | Mass
- 4:30 PM | **Confession (until 5:30 PM)**
- 6:00 PM | Mass
- 7:00 PM | Adoration

20 Dec, MONDAY

- 12:15 PM | Daily Mass

21 Nov, TUESDAY

- 7:00 PM | Scout Meeting

22 Dec, WEDNESDAY

- 9:30 AM | Knitting Group (meets every other Wednesday)
- 10:00 AM | Faith Sharing
- 12:15 PM | Daily Mass

23 Dec, THURSDAY

- 12:15 PM | Daily Mass

24 Dec, FRIDAY — CHRISTMAS EVE

- 10:00 AM | *No Food Pantry
- 12:15 PM | *No Daily Mass
- 4:00 PM | **CHRISTMAS Eve Children's Mass**
- 7:00 PM | **CHRISTMAS Eve Mass**
- 10:00 PM | **CHRISTMAS "Midnight" Mass**

25 Dec, SATURDAY — CHRISTMAS DAY

- 10:00 AM | **CHRISTMAS Day Mass**
- 4:00 PM | *No Confession
- 5:30 PM | *No 5:30 Mass

CHRISTMAS MASSES

24 Dec (Fri), Christmas Eve

- Vigil Mass (Children's) 4:00 PM
- Vigil Mass 7:00 PM
- "Midnight" 10:00 PM

25 Dec (Sat), Christmas Day

10:00 AM



FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

(1st Sunday after Christmas)

- Sat, 25 Dec (Sat) ... *No 5:30 Anticipatory Mass
- Sun, 26 Dec (Sun) 8:00, 10:00 AM, and 6:00 PM Masses

ADVENT WREATH BLESSING

PURPLE CANDLES are lit the First and Second Sundays of Advent. The ROSE CANDLE is lit the Third Advent [Gaudete Sunday]. The last PURPLE CANDLE is lit the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The following prayer is repeated each day:

- V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.
- R/. Who made heaven and earth.
- V. O God, by whose Word all things are sanctified, pour forth your blessing upon this wreath and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from you abundant graces. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
- R/. Amen.
- V. O Lord, stir up your might, we beg you and come, that by your protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins and saved by your deliverance. Through Christ our Lord.
- R/. Amen.

MASS INTENTIONS

- Dec 18 (Sat), 5:30 PM Jack Geisheimer (req. by family); Susan Flagg (req. by Ellie Boucher)
- Dec 19 (Sun), 8:00 AM SJN Parishioners
- Dec 19, 10:00 AM Holy Souls
- Dec 19, 6:00 PM Msgr. Robert Larkin (req. by Maresco family); Jack McLarkey (req. by Maresco family)
- Dec 24 (Fri), 4:00 PM Eugene Mooney & Al Porcaro (req. by family)
- Dec 24, 7:00 PM Ann McCann (req. by family)
- Dec 24, 10:00 PM Durkey-Lowney Families
- Dec 25 (Sat), 10:00 AM John & Lorraine Berube (req. by Mark & Joanne Kenna)

The Code of Canon Law confirms the practice of offering Mass(es) for particular intentions is ancient: "The Christian faithful who give an offering to apply the Mass for their intention contribute to the good of the Church and by that offering share its concern to support its ministers and works" (945 §2).

CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

THANKS to everyone for supporting our St John Neuman tradition of making Christmas a little brighter for area families-in-need by donating a GIFT CARD. They were distributed on December 17th along with Food Baskets to families served by our SJN FOOD PANTRY. To quote St Peter Chrysologus, "The poor stretch forth their hands, but God receives what is offered." God bless!

PARISH NEWS

The parish uses Flocknotes to keep members updated. To receive emails and/or text messages, see below. Unsubscribe any time. Choose to get updates from just the groups you're interested in.

Visit > <https://SJNMERRIMACK.flocknote.com>

Text > "SJNMERRIMACK" to 84576 (message and data rates may apply)

MEMORIAL CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Those who receive offering envelopes will notice a special envelope labeled "Christmas Decoration Offering". A DONATION can be made in the name of a loved one(s). If so, please print their name(s) on the envelope. Those not receiving offering envelopes are welcome to DONATE towards our Christmas altar decorations as well, just use a plain envelope (and if in memory of a loved one, print their name or names on the envelope).

CHOIR REHEARSALS

The SEASONAL CHOIR continues to meet Tuesday evenings, 7-9 PM.

The CHILDREN'S CHOIR will meet Sunday mornings starting November 28, 9:00-9:45 AM.

CANTATA rehearsals will meet on Sundays starting November 28, time TBD (it will be either 11:30 AM or 4:00 PM).

HOLY HOUR

FRIDAY, following the 12:15 PM daily Mass and SUNDAY, following the 6:00 PM Mass.

Other than Holy Communion, no act of worship pleases God so much as VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. In the words of Pope St Paul VI (d. 1987), "Visits to the Blessed Sacrament are a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord" (Pope St Paul VI, d. 1987).

— TAX NOTICE —

If you would like a statement of your 2021 contributions to the parish, please fill out the CONTRIBUTIONS REQUEST CARD (located alongside the bulletins in the foyer) and place it in the collection basket. You can also request a statement by emailing us your:

- Name

- Address
- Phone #
- Envelope #

Statements will go out in February. Your financial support, especially during the past few months, has been very much appreciated!

— AMAZON SMILE —

Please consider supporting our St John Neumann FOOD PANTRY whenever you purchase items through AMAZON.COM. This past quarter (Apr-Jun) we received \$102.45 from the AmazonSmile Foundation. To participate, go to:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/02-0370038>

and add "Saint John Neumann Parish" as your charity of choice. 0.5% of every purchase is donated by Amazon.com to the SJN FOOD PANTRY.

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FINANCE COMMITTEE
Bob Fregault (Chairman)

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