



Merry Christmas!

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH



Monday—Thursday
9:00am—3:00pm



520.469.7835



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Oro Valley, Arizona 85742



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Pastor, Rev. John Arnold
Assistant Pastor, Rev. Rudy Ofori

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MASS SCHEDULE

DAILY MASS

Monday—Saturday | 8:00am

WEEKEND MASS

Saturday Vigil | 4:00pm
Sunday | 7:00am, 8:30am*, 10:00am,
11:30am **Masks are required*

CONFESSION

Saturday after 4pm Mass
Sunday after 8:30am Mass

ADORATION

Tuesday 6:30pm,
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Devotion
Thursday after 8:00am Daily Mass

OUR MISSION

We are a Roman Catholic Parish nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist. As a community, we advance spiritual growth through lifelong learning.

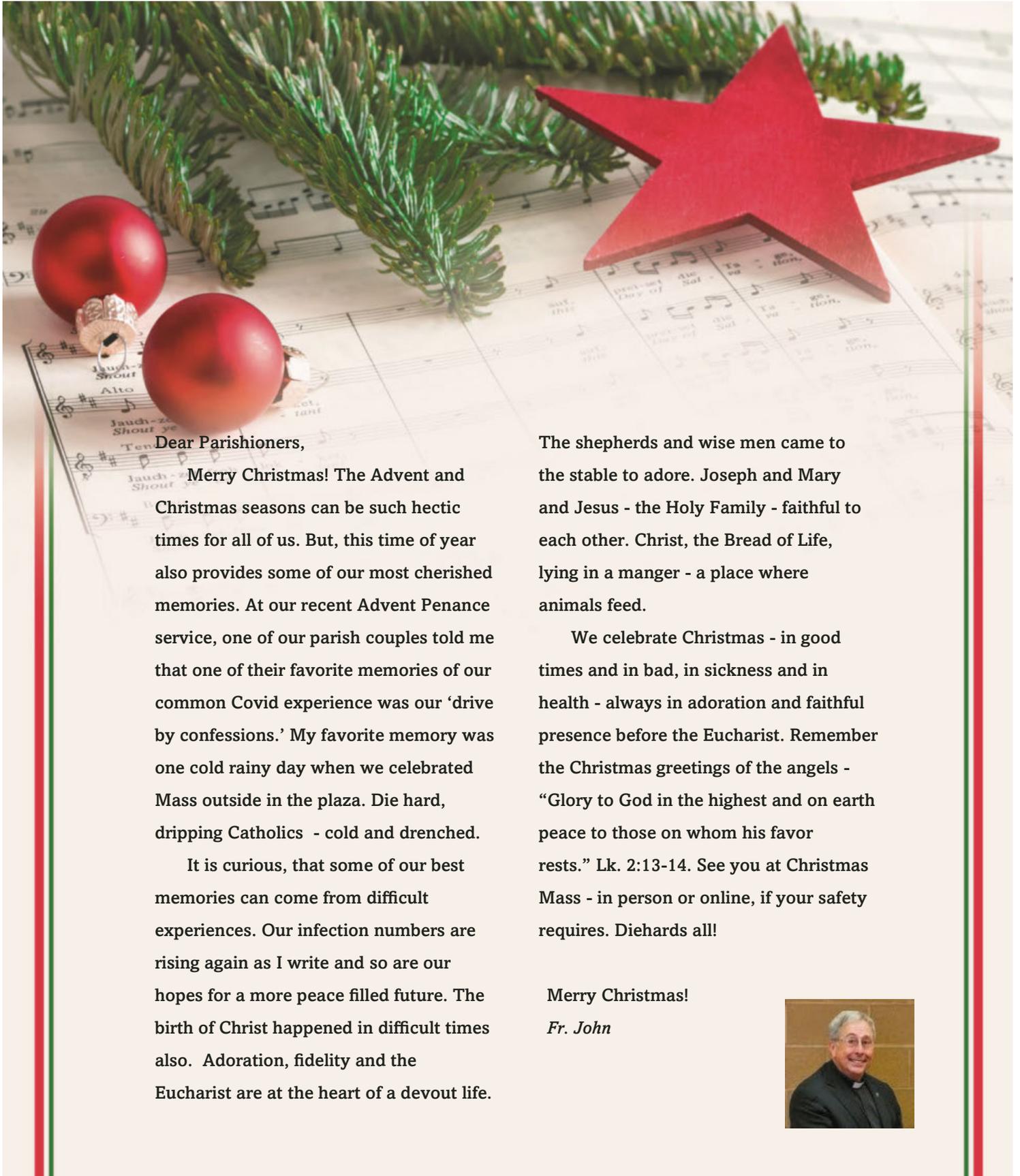
Connecting people with God, through authentic relationships to serve the community.



THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD & THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY



A Special Christmas Message



Dear Parishioners,

Merry Christmas! The Advent and Christmas seasons can be such hectic times for all of us. But, this time of year also provides some of our most cherished memories. At our recent Advent Penance service, one of our parish couples told me that one of their favorite memories of our common Covid experience was our 'drive by confessions.' My favorite memory was one cold rainy day when we celebrated Mass outside in the plaza. Die hard, dripping Catholics - cold and drenched.

It is curious, that some of our best memories can come from difficult experiences. Our infection numbers are rising again as I write and so are our hopes for a more peace filled future. The birth of Christ happened in difficult times also. Adoration, fidelity and the Eucharist are at the heart of a devout life.

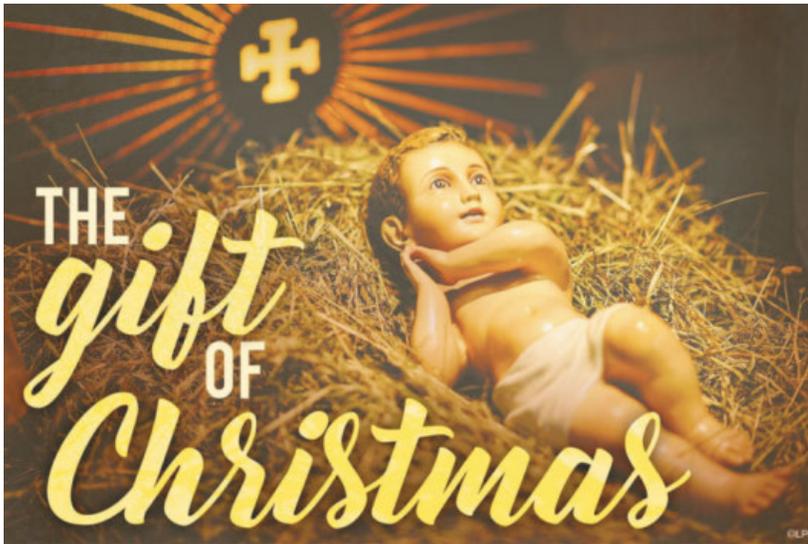
The shepherds and wise men came to the stable to adore. Joseph and Mary and Jesus - the Holy Family - faithful to each other. Christ, the Bread of Life, lying in a manger - a place where animals feed.

We celebrate Christmas - in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health - always in adoration and faithful presence before the Eucharist. Remember the Christmas greetings of the angels - "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Lk. 2:13-14. See you at Christmas Mass - in person or online, if your safety requires. Diehards all!

Merry Christmas!

Fr. John





Dear Parishioners,

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to our faithful community. Your prayers during these challenging times have lifted the spirits of many, mine included. May we continue to find God in our every day life and share our blessings with those less fortunate.

May you and your family continue to receive God's love and grace this year and the next. Thank you for all your love, support and gifts.

God Bless You and Merry Christmas,

Fr. Rudy

**Christmas Homily
OLD STORY, NEW HOPE!**

By Rev. Rudolf Ofori

The birth of every child is a gift of life. God's original blessing is the gift of life: in a baby we can see the blessing of God. A child who did not request life receives the gift of beginning, grows to crave for life, fight for life, struggle to preserve life. To be born is to be gifted by a God who is Life itself, and that is why reverence for human life is reverence for the God of life.

The birth of every child is a small protest against the tired view that there is nothing new under the sun, that we are condemned to a future which only repeats the stupidities of the past. And the birth of Jesus is God's protest against letting things be, abandoning people to their own devices, leaving people to fall back on the poverty of their own resources. Jesus is the help of God among us; he is the one Word on God's telegram of hope.

No one knows what any child will turn out to be. But by the time the Gospel is written, long after Jesus' mission has been completed, the Christian community can celebrate the true identity of Jesus. That is why Luke can begin his Gospel with the celebration of the birth of the Messiah. Luke knows who this child has turned out to be, so there is no obscurity about the birth story. He dates back in time what the Christian community has come to recognize in the power of the Spirit: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the gift of God's own life.

It is difficult to imagine the celebration of Christmas without the help of Luke's Gospel. It is the artist Luke who puts us in touch with the young virgin with child, Joseph her husband, the surprised shepherds, the jubilant angels announcing the good news. We are drawn into a drama that is larger than our own; we are invited to share the mood of joy and hope; we are asked to take our own place in the dark of the manger and behold the gift of God, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Luke's invitation, which has been extended to all believers down the centuries, reaches us again tonight: to come and worship, to see for ourselves the fragility of God, the littleness of the mighty one, the sheer tenderness of a love that is offered to all peoples.

With the birth of this a new adventure in faith begins. A new approach to God is opened for us, a new way of relating to each other is asked of us. Because this child becomes for all of us the Way, the Truth and Life.

That is why we make the journey back to Bethlehem each year: to rediscover our own roots in the gift of Jesus. For us, it is a journey home. As G.K. Chesterton wrote: "To an open house in the evening, home shall men come to an old place than Eden, and a taller town than Rome. To the end of the way of the wandering star, to the things that cannot be and that are, to the place where God was homeless, and all men are at home."



THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.

- Jn 1:14

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

MASS INTENTIONS

Friday 12/24

Carol Zamoida, Edward Kraft †, Art Villaescusa †, Serrano Family, Dan Conforti, Giampaolo Fuggiti †, The Mazza Family, Troy Iturralde

Saturday 12/25

Gonzalo Fernandez †, Joe Rodriguez †, Melecio Ferreira †, Allen Family, Martinson Family, Paula Scott, Phillip and Michael Montano †, Jennie Mao †, The Scheuermann Family, Henry Charles, Henry Conrad, and Charles Constantin, Henry Linus Scheuermann †, Crystal McCutcheon †, Mary Ann Nightengale †, Al Rebsamen †, The Stapleton Family, Jennifer Vassallo †, Cesar Zapata †, Irma Torres †

Sunday 12/26

Elsie Rossey †, Bonaguro & DeSimone Families †, The Hernandez Family, The Rincon Family, George and Mary Weihler †

Monday 12/27

Fabian Galindo †,

Tuesday 12/28

Dan Conforti

Wednesday 12/29

Mrs. Zayda Llenza Arsuaga †

Thursday 12/30

Antonio Torres †, Kyle Taylor & Mary Grace DeSilva Wedding

Friday 12/31

All St. Mark Parishioners

Saturday 1/1

Edward Kraft †, The DeLuna Family

Sunday 1/2

The deArrieta & Gallagher Families †, Alicja and Alojzy Skocz †

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THE HOLY FAMILY

He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man. - Lk 2:51-52

Feast of the Holy Family—December 26th THE WORD GROWS IN COMMUNITY

By Rev. Rudolf Ofori

Of course, when children grow up, they have a way of branching out on their own. They want to be more than inheritors of a tradition; they want to make their own mark. They want to exercise not only the dog but their own initiative. Sometimes parents can feel utterly bewildered and hurt by the direction their children take in life: they cannot fathom why Richard, who has more than distinguished himself in physics at university, now wants to spend his time on the high sea catching fish. But all parents have to learn that children are not born to be miniature reflections of themselves. Children are other people.

Later in his life when Jesus begins to formulate his own values and preach his own vision, he comes into open conflict with his own religious tradition. So, the formula goes: "you have heard it said to you.... But I say to you. 'Many Pharisees are deeply shocked to see Jesus breaking the law and encouraging his disciples to do the same. Why doesn't Jesus simply remain within the confines of his own religious tradition?"

Jesus' neighbors refuse to believe that Jesus is anything more than the son of a local carpenter. Even Jesus' relatives come to believe that he is out of his mind when he brings home the kind of people that others are happy to leave on the junk heap. The relatives are frankly embarrassed and want to take charge of him. But Jesus takes his charge from somewhere else.

The adult Jesus has to face a conflict between two loyalties: loyalty to his Jewish family versus loyalty to his Father. Jesus is

pulled in two directions - the way his family want him to go, and the way his Father wants him to go.

That conflict is foreshadowed in today's Gospel when the young Jesus of twelve years old is seen to opt for his Father's business, rather than go the way of his family. When that option is explained to Mary and Joseph, Luke tells us that they do not understand what he is talking about. But that conflict will emerge only later in the ministry: here it is foreshadowed, and Luke softens the scene when he says that Jesus lives under the authority of Mary and Joseph and grows in wisdom and stature.

At the center of Jesus' family life and at the center of his ministry is one irreplaceable person: God his Father. That relationship is for Jesus the most important of his life: ultimately, it is what gives him his direction and support and will sustain him in his passion and death. When Jesus comes to describe his own family in the Gospel it is not a relationship of blood but a relationship of fidelity to the word of God: "Mary mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice" (Luke 8:21)

We are all asked, like Jesus, to center our lives on the word of God. Whether we live alone or in a family, whether we have busloads of relatives or none, we can all be a member of Jesus' new family. There is only one qualification: to hear the word of God and do it. Because Jesus extended his family, today's feast really belongs to all of us. So, take a good look around at the family!

EVERYDAY STEWARDSHIP - RECOGNIZE GOD IN YOUR ORDINARY MOMENTS STEWARDSHIP TIES

There is a lot of imagery around Christmas that has to do with adoption — or, more specifically, with a child being loved by another as if they belonged to that person and loved in such a profound way that in time, they do come to belong to that person.

We see this with Joseph and the infant Jesus. Joseph is not Jesus' biological father. But through a series of actions, and through his faithfulness in small, everyday matters, Joseph becomes the foster father of Jesus.

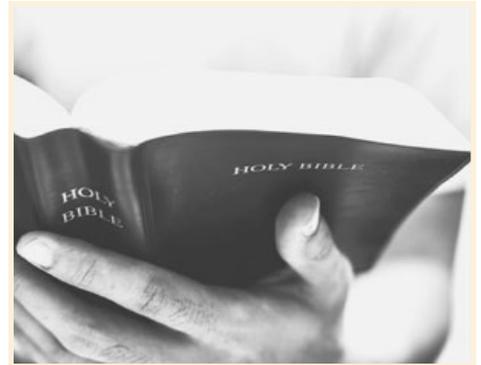
Perhaps we are parents who have adopted children, or we ourselves were adopted. We have also seen how, through a series of actions of love and sacrifice, someone can become the parent of a person who is not their "blood." A lot of times these families celebrate the day of the adoption. I've heard it called a "gotcha day," and it's marked joyously, like a birthday.

Most of us are not descended from the Israelites, God's Chosen People. But through a series of extraordinary actions of love and sacrifice, God has made Himself our parent, too. And through our own actions, and through faithfulness in small and everyday matters, we are His children.

But in this family, instead of blood ties, we have stewardship ties. It's not about who we look like, it's about how we treat one another. How we take care of one another.

So this Christmas, let's think about how we will celebrate our adoption. As much as it is Jesus' birthday, it's also our "gotcha day" — the day we received the gift of eternal family.

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS



REFLECTION & RESPOND

First Reading

The prophet Isaiah offered a song of praise in seeing the Lord's return and the salvation of his people. How will you celebrate today the birth of the Messiah?

Second Reading

The opening prologue of the Letter to the Hebrews is similar in poetic structure and theology to the prologue of the Gospel of John (today's Gospel reading). Both texts place heavy emphasis on the divinity of Jesus. In the birth of Jesus where do you see his divinity present?

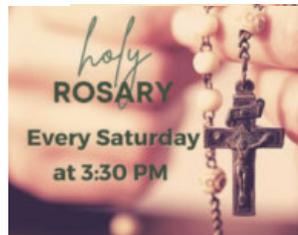
Gospel

The opening prologue to the Gospel of John offers a beautiful portrait of Jesus: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." How does the celebration of Christmas help you sense God's presence in the world?

©LPI

HEAVENLY FATHER, WE PRAY FOR

Mary Ann Sena, Karen Gonzales, David Schultz, Jack Daily, Ivette Camino †, Wayne Elias, Ruth Kieffer, Maggie Wirth, Maria Ruiz, Don Green, Dottie Chemler, Troy Iturralde and Family



THIS WEEK'S

OBSERVANCES AND READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Readings for the week of December 26, 2021

Sunday: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14/Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 [cf. 1]/Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17/Lk 2:41-52 or 1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28/Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10 [cf. 5a]/Jn 3:1-2, 21-24/Lk 2:41-52
 Monday: 1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12 [12]/Jn 20:1a, 2-8
 Tuesday: 1 Jn 1:5—2:2/Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7b-8 [7]/Mt 2:13-18
 Wednesday: 1 Jn 2:3-11/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6 [11a]/Lk 2:22-35
 Thursday: 1 Jn 2:12-17/Ps 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10 [11a]/Lk 2:36-40
 Friday: 1 Jn 2:18-21/Ps 96:1-2, 11-12, 13 [11a]/Jn 1:1-18
 Saturday: Nm 6:22-27/Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8 [2a]/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21
 Next Sunday: Is 60:1-6/Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 [cf. 11]/Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12

Observances for the week of December 26, 2021

Sunday: The Holy Family
 Monday: St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
 Tuesday: The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
 Wednesday: St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr
 Thursday:
 Friday: St. Sylvester I, Pope; New Year's Eve
 Saturday: New Year's Day; Mary, The Holy Mother of God; World Day of Peace
 Next Sunday: The Epiphany of the Lord; Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

STEWARDSHIP

	Regular	Building Fund
11/28/2021	\$20,098.50	\$1,921.00
12/5/2021	\$27,120.15	\$3,466.48
12/12/2021	\$23,467.61	\$2,868.00
Thanksgiving	Dominican \$1,128.00	Immaculate Conception \$4,000.00
Seminary	\$1,655.00	





The Parish Office will have remote working hours and some closures over the holiday. If you would like assistance in-person, the parish office will be available from 9am-3pm on Monday, December 27th. Here is the full schedule:

Monday, December 27th

Office Open 9am-3pm

Tuesday, December 28th

Remote Office Hours 9am-3pm

Wednesday, December 29th

Remote Office Hours 9am-3pm

Thursday and Friday,

December 30th and 31st

Parish Office Closed



World Day of Peace

NEW YEARS EVE
12/31 @ 6:00pm Vigil Mass

NEW YEARS DAY
1/1 @ 8:00 am Mass

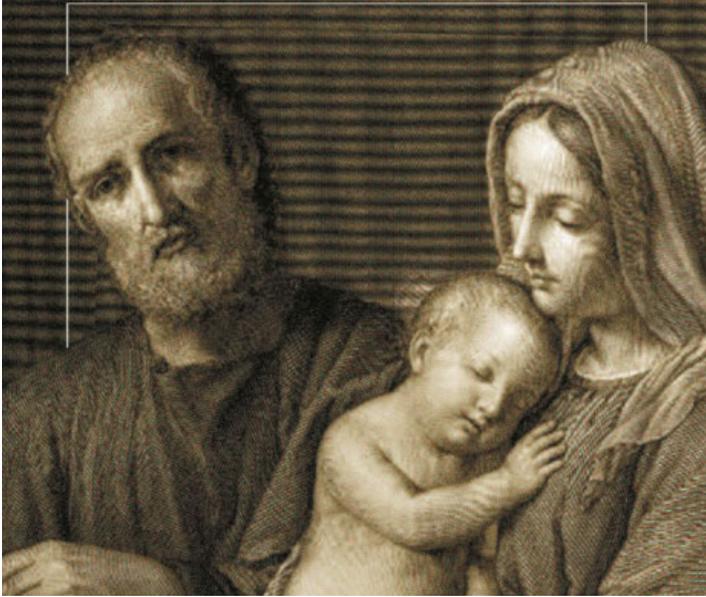


CALENDAR OF EVENTS



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
Daily Mass 8:00AM, Church	Daily Mass 8:00AM, Church	Daily Mass 8:00AM, Church	Daily Mass 8:00AM, Church	Daily Mass 8:00AM, Church	MASS 8:00AM, CHURCH	MASS 7:00AM, CHURCH
Divine Mercy Chaplet 8:30AM, Church	Divine Mercy Chaplet 8:30AM, Church	Divine Mercy Chaplet 8:30AM, Church	Adoration 8:30AM, Church	Divine Mercy Chaplet 8:30AM, Church		MASS 8:30AM, CHURCH
	Charismatic Prayer Group, 9am, Chapel		Parish Campus & Office Closed	Parish Campus & Office Closed		CONFESSION, 9:15 AM, MUSIC/ WORSHIP
	Adoration & OMPH Devotion, 6:30PM, Church					MASS 10AM, CHURCH
						MASS 11:30AM, CHURCH
		LIVE STREAM CHRISTMAS CONCERT @				
		8pm, on all media channels		MASS 6:00PM, CHURCH	MASS 4:00PM, CHURCH	

Consecration to the Holy Family



Thank
You

ST. MARK
PARISHIONERS

CONSECRATION PRAYER WILL BE RECITED ON 12/26 AT THE 10AM MASS

O LORD JESUS,
YOU LIVED IN THE HOME OF MARY AND JOSEPH IN NAZARETH.
THERE YOU GREW IN AGE, WISDOM AND GRACE
AS YOU PREPARED TO FULFILL YOUR MISSION
AS OUR REDEEMER.

WE ENTRUST OUR FAMILY TO YOU.

O BLESSED MARY,
YOU ARE THE MOTHER OF OUR SAVIOR.
AT NAZARETH YOU CARED FOR JESUS
AND NURTURED HIM IN THE PEACE AND JOY OF YOUR HOME.

WE ENTRUST OUR FAMILY TO YOU.

O SAINT JOSEPH,
YOU PROVIDED A SECURE AND LOVING HOME FOR JESUS AND MARY,
AND GAVE US A MODEL OF FATHERHOOD
WHILE SHOWING US THE DIGNITY OF WORK.

WE ENTRUST OUR FAMILY TO YOU.

HOLY FAMILY,
WE CONSECRATE OURSELVES AND OUR FAMILY TO YOU.
MAY WE BE COMPLETELY UNITED
IN A LOVE THAT IS LASTING, FAITHFUL
AND OPEN TO THE GIFT OF NEW LIFE.
HELP US TO GROW IN VIRTUE,
TO FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER FROM OUR HEARTS,
AND TO LIVE IN PEACE ALL OUR DAYS.
KEEP US STRONG IN FAITH, PERSEVERING IN PRAYER,
DILIGENT IN OUR WORK, AND GENEROUS TOWARD THOSE IN NEED.
MAY OUR HOME, O HOLY FAMILY,
TRULY BECOME A DOMESTIC CHURCH
WHERE WE REFLECT YOUR EXAMPLE IN OUR DAILY LIFE.
AMEN.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, PRAY FOR US!

Thank you parishioners
for your support during
our ICS Drive Thru Food
Drive.

We raised an
outstanding 602
pounds of food in a
single day.

*What an amazing show
of generosity!*

Christmas
Food Collection



New to St. Mark?

Thank you for coming to worship our Lord with us.

We are blessed with your presence and it gives God the Father joy to see all His children together. We hope you to see you next weekend!

Until then, scan these QR Codes to discover ways to connect with our faithful community.

Get Connected



Visit our Website



Explore Ministries



AMERICAN HERITAGE
GIRLS

CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS
OF AMERICA

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS



A Special Thank You!

- ◆ Darrell Treu
- ◆ Russell and Hazel Treu
- ◆ Laurie Treu
- ◆ Richard Hintze
- ◆ Mr. and Mrs. Martin Moynihan
- ◆ Mr. and Mrs. Rhea Wood
- ◆ Celia Horwood
- ◆ Bruce Robertson
- ◆ Lorraine Wheeler
- ◆ Dennis Duffy
- ◆ Mary Ann Duffy
- ◆ Mary Sump
- ◆ Sid Sump
- ◆ Mary Conroy
- ◆ Dick Conroy
- ◆ Sophie and John Frappolli
- ◆ Charles Jewell
- ◆ David Jewell
- ◆ Robert and Mary Bareis
- ◆ Aunt Lolly
- ◆ Bareis Family
- ◆ Mullen Family
- ◆ Ralph Rausch
- ◆ Ruth Rausch
- ◆ Joyce Caskey
- ◆ Carol Wells
- ◆ Ralph W. Rausch
- ◆ Emma and Joe Shevlin
- ◆ Bob and Mary Schmelzle
- ◆ Mary O'Boyle
- ◆ *more to thank in our next bulletin!*

The following have made a special donation towards our Christmas flowers for our Church. Thank you for your generosity!



In chapter two of the Gospel according to Matthew, the birth of Jesus is followed by a massacre from which the Holy Family narrowly escapes. An angel warns Jesus' father Joseph that King Herod intends to kill the child, whom the Magi have identified as the newborn king of the Jews. The angel instructs Joseph to flee with his family into Egypt. Herod's soldiers arrive in Bethlehem after the Holy Family has departed. They slaughter all the male children in the town and surrounding region who are under two years of age. This event is known as "the slaughter of the Innocents." Holy Innocents' Day, observed on December 28, mourns this act of cruelty.

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HOW TO REPORT ABUSE

1. Call 911 to make a police report
2. If the abuse happened in any other state, call the Police or Sheriffs Office in the specific area of that state.
3. Call the Victim Assistance Program of the Diocese of Tucson 1.800.234.0344 and/or the Office of Child, Adolescent and Adult Protection at 520.838.2513

Prayer for Holy Innocents

We remember today, O God, the slaughter of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by King Herod. Receive, we pray, into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims; and by your great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants and establish your rule of justice, love and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the union of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

ETERNAL REST

*In your hands, O Lord,
we humbly entrust
our brothers and sisters.
In this life you embraced them
with your tender love;
deliver them now
from every evil
and bid them eternal rest.
The old order
has passed away:
welcome them into paradise,
where there will be no sorrow,
no weeping or pain,
but fullness of peace and joy
with your Son
and the Holy Spirit
forever and ever. Amen.*



To view our recent obituaries, scan the QR Code with your phone app to be directed to our webpage.



CHRISTMAS



We just want to remind everyone that you can listen to Mass from your car in our parking lot!

LISTEN FROM YOUR CAR 106.1 FM

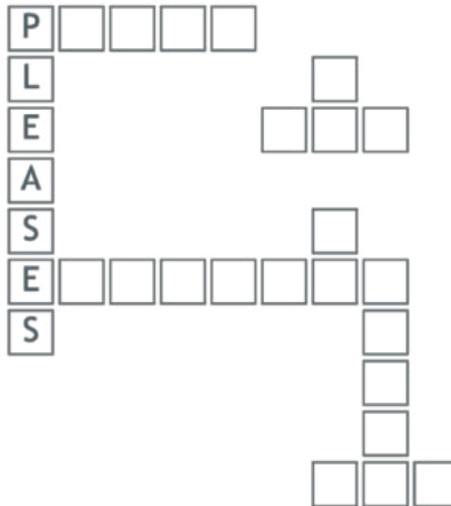
A MESSAGE FOR OUR PARISHIONERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS:

Our T-Coil system has had issues with our audio system. We have found a less expensive option for our parishioners who need audio-assistance. A T-Coil hearing aid runs around \$100 on the low end, however, if you purchase a personal FM Tuner, you can tune into the radio frequency 106.1FM and have clear audio for the Mass.

PUZZLE

Fit this Gospel message into the empty squares:

Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God.



MISSION

You can praise God like the angels did. Go Christmas caroling together as a family. Sing all of your favorite songs together.

My Mass Checklist

Check here if you blessed yourself with holy water as you entered church.

Check here if you joined in the Our Father Prayer today.

How many people joined you at Mass today?

Who are you praying for at Mass today? _____

CLOW WILL RESUME January 9, 2022





GROWING WITH THE Gospel

CYCLE C



COLOR

Read the Gospel of the week and color the image.



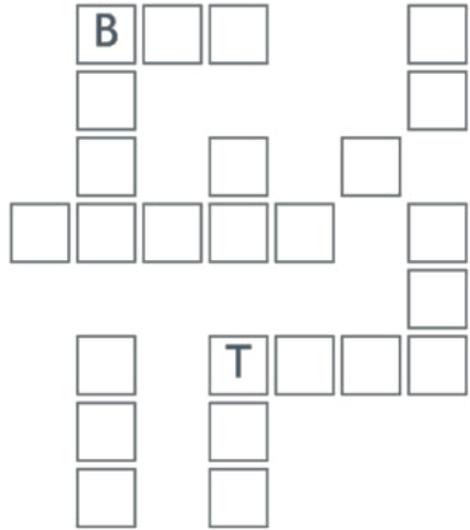
Christmas • Luke 2:1-14



PUZZLE

Fit this Gospel message into the empty squares:

They saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.



PUZZLE

Find and circle these words from today's Gospel:

MARY
JOSEPH
HOLY SPIRIT

WEDDING
ANGEL
DREAM

BABY
JESUS
VIRGIN

V I R G I N T H W I S
 J C S H U J O S E P H
 D R E A M R W I D A O
 S O B Y A O N U D G W
 M E N G R W E A I S D
 T B A B Y B M O N A E
 R E N D R O I T G J O
 S P G O H F J E S U S
 K A E I V N A G M D L
 H O L Y S P I R I T Y
 S R H N E D L S E H A



PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus into the world. I want to praise you like the angels did.



MISSION

You can praise God like the angels did.
Go Christmas caroling together as a family.
Sing all of your favorite songs together.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

At first glance, we can often find the image of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and the Christ Child intimidating — who are we to aspire to that level of discipleship? How could we ever hope to conform ourselves to that mold? Sometimes, it can even be painful — perhaps we hail from a broken family or struggle with a broken relationship within our family, or perhaps we long to be a mother or a father ourselves and that state in life has eluded us.

But the image of the Holy Family is, in reality, a beautiful invitation to us all, no matter our vocation or our state in life, and the example of Mary, Joseph and Jesus is rich with the symbolism of stewardship.

You need not be a biological mother who has carried a child in her womb to be a mother

in spirit. Who in your world needs you to love them with the heart of a mother?

The same goes for fatherhood. The Church and the world are crying out for the courageous witness of Christian men like St. Joseph. Who can you love with the steadfast, selfless protection of a father?

Who in your life needs you to love them with the faithful, unconditional love of a son? Who needs your gentle and constant love as a daughter?

We are the Body of Christ, friends. Those of us rejoicing in heaven, those of us suffering in purgatory, and those of us struggling here on earth. We are the great family. Let us love each other well.

—Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

I HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM THE CHURCH FOR A FEW YEARS AND REALLY WANT TO GET ACTIVE AGAIN, NOT SO MUCH FOR ME, BUT FOR MY CHILDREN. IS THIS A BAD REASON TO COME BACK TO CHURCH?

If you are on your way to the supermarket, and you are forced to detour from your usual route because of road work, does the food you buy taste different? Is the meal less filling? Are the vegetables less tasty? Of course not. In our faith journey, there are many detours called sin. Some are greater than others, some are even a bit longer.

But God's grace comes to us in ways we understand and recognize and need. Your children leading you back to the Church is not as important as the fact that you are back.

This is an opportunity for you to renew, strengthen, and deepen your faith. Regardless of how we get to Church, or what draws us closer to God, the fact is

we are there. Do what you need to do to get right with God and the Church. Go to confession, begin good family religious practices, and be involved in the ministries your parish offers. Be more than a lukewarm parishioner. Be the kind of Catholic you want your children to be.



GOSPEL MEDITATION

ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

Families can be very difficult things to negotiate. This is true not only of our families of origin, the current family of which we are a part, the family of our Church, our society, and our global family as well. Everything human can be found in family stories. Those stories speak of wonderful life-giving successes as well as painful spirit-robbing abuses. Our greatest joys and our greatest wounds are usually connected with the experience of family. Our needs, experiences, and unresolved baggage often color what we bring to our familiar relationships. They contribute to our level of defensiveness, how guarded and protected we become, and what prejudices we believe.

In order to break the cycle of dysfunction we have to remember that it is not only by human effort that we negotiate the difficult and challenging events of our lives. There is a Divine Effort at work as well. For sure, the human effort can create quite a mess and easily destroy lives. This is true of



any family with which we are associated. Today's Feast of the Holy Family serves to help us understand that there is a Divine Story being told as well. It is a story of perseverance in the face of hardship, determination in the face of despair, healing when we see nothing but wounds, and light where there is darkness.

Do we believe that God is always working, guiding, restoring, and leading? Unless we do, we will never be free from the imperfections and wounds that bind us and never be able

to understand what it really means to forgive. Pope Francis tells us that the "light which comes from the Holy Family encourages us to offer human warmth to other families." While this is most certainly true, we can only really begin to do this when we realize that we are still works in progress, not anchored to the wounds and sins of our past, and still a leading star in God's continually unfolding story of love. The Holy Family persevered and radiated warmth because they knew they were not alone. We can too.

He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.
- Lk 2:51-52

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On Epiphany, it is traditional for families to bless their homes, remembering the hospitality of the Holy Family to the Wise Men and asking for protection and blessing on the home and all who enter. We will be blessing and providing our parishioners with a piece of chalk to take home.

The home blessing is done by writing on the door or door frame with chalk the symbols 20+C+M+B+22. The 20 and 22 represent the current year. The + reminds us of the cross on which our Savior died. The C, M, and B stand for the traditional names of the Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, as well as an abbreviation for the Latin phrase "*Christus mansionem benedicat*" which means "Christ bless this house." Writing on the door also brings to mind the Passover of the Jews during the final plague in Exodus, when the blood of the lamb protected the inhabitants within.

To join in this tradition visit our website by scanning the QR Code to right to access the **Epiphany Home Blessing Kit** which includes suggested scripture passages, songs, prayer, and how to bless your door.



WE HAVE GREAT NEWS! The Individual Tax Credit limits have increased

The amount you can now contribute to Arizona's Catholic Tuition Support Organization (CTSO) has increased. If filing as a single taxpayer you can give up to \$1,219, and a married couple filing jointly can contribute up to \$2,435, and you, the donor can receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit off your Arizona tax liability. Brochures are in the vestibule or visit www.ctso-tucson.org to make an online contribution.

IN ADDITION TO THE WISE MEN, WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THE EPIPHANY?

Epiphany means "manifestation," or public display. The feast is usually celebrated January 6. In the US, it is celebrated on the Sunday nearest to January 6. It originates from a story unique to Matthew (2:1-12). Magi from the East come to offer homage to the newborn King, presenting him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

This part of Matthew's infancy narrative differs from Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. In Luke there are no Magi, star, nor gifts. Luke has Jesus being born in a stable after Mary and Joseph's long travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Matthew seems to have the family living in a house in Bethlehem, where the Magi find them.

Why these differences? They stem from the needs and concerns of the audience the authors were addressing, as well as the theological stance of each author. Knowing the original intention helps get at the correct interpretation of the text.

Since Matthew was writing primarily to a Jewish community, his concern was to show that Jesus did not come just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well. From his very birth, Jesus not only manifests himself to Jews, but also to Gentiles, who are prominently included in the manifestation, symbolized by the Magi and their journey. This is the most significant aspect of the feast of Epiphany. How do you manifest Jesus to all with whom you come into contact?



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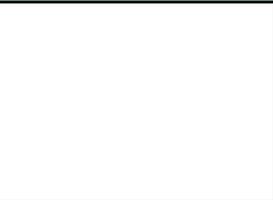


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