



Catholic Church of St. Stephen, Martyr

December 24/25, 2020

**“FOR TODAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR HAS BEEN
BORN FOR YOU WHO IS CHRIST AND LORD.” — LK 2:11**

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

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Christmas Message from Fr. Brian

22 December 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Stephen, Martyr Parish and Visitors during this Holy Season,

As we take stock of the past ten months, there is no question that this has been a momentous year, and not in the best of experiences. This time has seemingly been defined by fear, anger, anxiety, concern, misunderstanding, frustration, restrictions and an assortment of other emotions as we were confronted and dealt with the coronavirus “pandemic”. Without a doubt our lives have been changed, plans have had to be put on hold and the future pretty much left as an unknown as we wait to see the impact of the recently released vaccines. Yet there is so much more for us to consider.

As we entered into Advent four short weeks ago we were admonished by Jesus to stay awake, to be alert, for we do not know the day, or the hour of Jesus’ coming. Knowing that Jesus is faithful to His promises we are able to look beyond the immediate and hope for a future that is unknown but rooted in His Word. We can look beyond the many details that surround us, even seemingly weigh us down as we approach the Holy Day, holiday of Christmas itself. Christmas is not about parties, presents, decorations. It is not about the size of the tree, the lights on the house, the food, the festivities... It is not the greenery or the number of garlands, not the number of cards received or sent, or the credit cards that are stacked in a smoking pile, or the carols, tinsel or even the beloved traditions.

The fact is simply this: Christmas is solely about God; about God fulfilling His promise, saving His people, coming to us – as one of us – in Jesus, His Son, His Word. Christ came to earth to reveal an extraordinary message, a message of love, hope, joy and peace. This message is so simple yet profound that it is often lost in the secular world of consumerism, commercialism and materialism or at a time such as we have experience buried by anxiety.

The Christmas message is a message of ‘fear not.’ This message came to Mary when she was told, ‘Fear not, for you have found favor with God.’ It was the same message to Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1:20, ‘Fear not to take Mary as thy wife.’ Secondly, the message of Christmas is a message of great joy to all people. That night in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, the angel announced good news of great joy to all people. It was a message of the Savior’s birth – a Savior available to all, one through whom all people, no matter who you are, can be saved. Thirdly, the message of Christmas is a message of peace and good will.

Finally, the message of Christmas is a message that we must share. After the shepherds saw the baby lying in a manger, they ‘made known abroad the saying which was told to them concerning this child.’ Each of us has been entrusted with a special gift, a sacred responsibility: to show others how the mystery of God is among us. We are called to go out into the world and share the message of God’s love for all mankind.

“And so, this is Christmas” in the musical words of John Lennon. This is a simple story that we have heard our entire lives, in these celebrations and the accompanying readings it is before us. The mysterious pregnancy, the labored journey to Bethlehem, the star, the stable, the myriad angels in the blazing sky, the haste of the shepherds discovering the newborn, and the broad proclamation that from this inauspicious place everything in the whole world had changed. All because this singular event has made a place for you and me. Despite the immensity of the universe of stars, galaxies and planets in their courses... the birth of God with us has shown that God is – with us.

And so my dear people of God, let us celebrate Christmas by personally sharing this message that we have received; speaking the language of love, promoting a spirit of hope and fostering it among all we come in to contact with.

My greeting, my wish for each of you is that you may have the gladness of Christmas which is HOPE, the spirit of Christmas which is PEACE and the heart of Christmas which is LOVE.

Go gcoinne Dia thu,

Fr. Brian

How to Join

My Own Church

To register with the parish, update your family information, view your financial giving history, and access your tax statements, create or log into your My Own Church account.



Get My Own Church (MOC) in 5 easy steps!

Step 1: Visit:

<https://richmond.parishsofffamilysuite.com> and click on "New User?" (This initial step must NOT be done on a mobile device.)

Step 2: Fill out the New User Registration Form.

Step 3: Submit the Registration and wait 1-3 business days for approval.

Step 4: Once you have been approved, you will receive an email inviting you to log on and visit your My Own Church account.

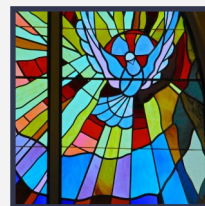
Step 5: Return to the login screen and enter the username and temporary password from the email into the applicable fields.



Stay Connected

St. Stephen, Martyr Website

Our website has all the details on our ministries, Mass sign ups, and events. The site is home to our calendar which has the most up to date information. Please visit www.ssmrcc.org today!



Weekly E-Blast

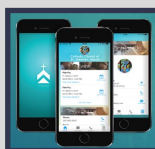
Each week we highlight the events of our church in an e-mail. Visit our website, www.ssmrcc.org, and click the blue Subscribe to our Eblast icon button.

Facebook

Stay up to date with current events, watch Mass, and more! Like us on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/ststephenmartyr/>



Parish App



Download our parish app to stay up to date with any "breaking news!" Enjoy new features like easy Mass RSVP and ministry messages. For directions to download the app, click [here](#). From the app, click on More, then Message Settings and tap the toggle switch to receive messages from any Ministry that interests you. Make sure General is turned on!

Prayer List

If you would like to add someone to the St. Stephen, Martyr prayer list, please email communications@ssmrcc.org with the following information: Full name of the person that needs prayers, are they to be added to the sick or the deceased list, and are they a parishioner.

For the entire prayer list, please visit www.ssmrcc.org, About, Prayer Requests.



About SSM

1544 Battlefield Boulevard South
Chesapeake, Virginia 23322-2041
Phone: 757-421-7416 Fax: 757-421-7488
e-mail: ssm@ssmrcc.org
website: www.ssmrcc.org

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 9:00am-4:00pm
Closed for lunch from 12:30pm-1:30pm
Friday: 9:00am-12:00pm

Celebration of the Eucharist

By RSVP at www.ssmrcc.org

Saturday Vigil, 5:00pm (In person and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ssmrcc))
Sunday, 7:00am, 8:30am & 11:30am (In person)

Daily Mass Open to ALL (RSVP not required)

Tuesday-Saturday, 8:30am
Wednesday, 6:30am
Thursday, 6:30pm

Reconciliation: Saturdays, 1:30-4:30pm and by appointment.

Baptism: Families who would like to have a child baptized should call the church office.

Marriage: Six months notice is required to the priest before a date can be set. During the six months, the couple will be required to complete the Diocesan Marriage Preparation Program.

St. Stephen, Martyr Ministries

We invite you to join one of our many active ministries at SSM. For complete description of all our ministries, visit www.ssmrcc.org under the Ministries tab.

Ways to Give

Envelopes - Mailed out each month for Offertory and all special collections.

E-Giving - A secure online way to make a donation, please visit:
<https://giving.parishsoft.com/App/Giving/ststephen>
to make a gift to any of our funds.

Text Giving - Text the amount you would like to give to 757-300-1796.

Religious Education

Children and Youth Ministries

Wonder - Children in grades 1 through 5. Guided by the *Alive in Christ* series from Our Sunday Visitor, children will learn about our Catholic Faith. This year's program is virtual learning with engaging videos and lessons.

First Sacraments - Children, 7 years old and in the second grade, are eligible to study to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

Discovery - Middle school aged children, grades 6-8 meet every Sunday in person from 3:00pm-4:30pm for fellowship and small group sessions to discuss and learn more about our Catholic faith.

Legacy/Action - Our high school programs are Legacy, for grades 9 and 10, and Action, for grades 11 and 12. Both groups meet in person on Sundays from 5:30pm-7:00pm. We begin together and then split into small groups for the lesson that day.

Confirmation - Teenagers in grade 10 and at least 15 years of age, who were baptized in the Catholic Church, are eligible to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

For more information contact:

Religious Education (1 - 5 grade) Traci Baker
traci@ssmrcc.org

Religious Education (6 - 12 grade) Ashley Weaver
ashley@ssmrcc.org

Adult Faith Formation

Bible Timeline - A journey through the entire bible.

Upper Room Prayer Fellowship - Meditates on the Divine Mercy Chaplet and seeks a deeper prayer life.

Men of St. Joseph International - A men's group that meets monthly to grow in holiness.

Book Discussion - Ralph Martin's *A Church in Crisis, Pathways Forward*.

FORMED - Over 4,000 programs available online. Visit <https://formed.org/> and sign up for free as a parishioner under Catholic Church of St. Stephen, Martyr.

For more information, contact:
Scott Turbitt at scott@ssmrcc.org.