



The Parish of Saints Philip and James
1 Carow Place, St. James, NY 11780

631-584-5454

Third Sunday of Advent

December 16, 2018



Joy

“With Philip & James we pray to live lives worthy of the call to be
Apostles of Hope”

Daily Mass: 7:30am and 9:15 am
Saturday 5pm Sunday: 8am 10 am 12noon

Sunday ~ Closed
Monday: 9am-8pm

Parish Center office Hours
Tuesday & Wednesday: 9am-8pm
Thursday: 9am-5pm

Friday: Closed
Saturday: 10am-2pm

Parish Center Phone ~ 631-584-5454

Parish Center Fax~ 631-862-9675

Web ~ www.sspj.org

Pastoral Team

Father Tom Haggerty
Father Patrick Osei-Poku
Deacon Ronald Blasius
Deacon John Keenan
Deacon Ken Maher
Sister Theresita Donach, CSFN
Margaret Adams
Virginia Portanova
John Cordes
Lynn Sisti
Charlotte Czujko
Barbara Luna
Dominick Avento
Catherine Darrow
Frank Brancaccio

Pastor
Associate Pastor
Deacon
Deacon
Deacon
Pastoral Associate
Music Director
Business Manager
Director of Facilities
Coordinator of Parish Social Ministry
Religious Education Coordinator Grades 1-2
Religious Education Coordinator Grades 3-6
Religious Education Coordinator Grades 7-8
Religious Education Administrator
Youth Minister

Pastoral Council

Michael Sharkey , Richard Frazita, Lou Guerra, Kelsey Greco, Cynthia Lombardi,
Martin Marut, Ann Mondrone, Connor Donnelly, Paul Damato, Maureen Burke

Trustees

Jerry Linder ~ Tina Cafaro

SSPJ School—Principal Diane M. Anderson

School Phone : 631-584-7896 School Fax: 631-584-3258

Sacraments

Baptism— Celebrated twice per month. Parents are asked to register at the Pastoral Center for Pre-Baptism Program.

Marriage—Couples are asked to contact the Pastoral Center before visiting the reception hall. The Marriage Preparation process is nine months before your proposed wedding date.

Confirmation—Seventh and Eighth grade students are prepared to celebrate through Religious Ed or SSPJ School. Adults prepare through RCIA.

Reconciliation— Available Saturdays from 4:00pm-5:00pm in the Church or by contacting the Parish Center for an appointment.

Anointing of the Sick— In case of serious, unexpected illness, please contact the Parish Center office to arrange for a Priest to pray with the person who is ill. Anointing of the Sick is held on the first Sunday of the month following the 12:00mass please see the Sacristan before mass.

RCIA— Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (non-Catholic adults desiring to become Catholic) are asked to contact the Parish Center Office.

Eucharistic Adoration In The Church— Thursday 2-4pm Friday 8-9pm

Father Tom's Letter

Dear Friends,

Rejoice! Today, the third Sunday of Advent, is Gaudete or Rejoicing Sunday! The third candle lit on the Advent Wreath is pink, to symbolize the joy we are called to. The readings today bring this joy home. Here's part of a reflection by Fr. John Foley, SJ:

*Zephaniah says that the Lord "will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals."
Because of you! Have you ever in your life thought that God's might be singing because of you? Have you ever let your image of God expand that far? We are God's song....Let your life be what it is: God's joyous, interweaving, always consonant melody, sounding outwards in deepest joy.*

Sister Joyce Rupp in a meditation for today entitled "A Joyful Heart, A Cheerful Attitude" suggests that *"Advent invites us to open the eyes and ears of our heart to a joyful receptivity of Christ's presence. Joy can move us toward overt self-orientation, but it most often promotes gratitude, praise, eagerness to share and enthusiasm of the Creator's gifts. Perhaps the best present we could give one another this Christmas is a joyful heart and a cheerful attitude."*

I'm looking forward to this evening's Christmas concert! Our Music Director, Margaret Adams and the combined choirs have once again put their whole hearts into presenting us with what always is a most delightful evening. Give yourself a treat. Sunday evening, 6:30pm in the church. Free admission. I hope to see you there!

Today at the 10am Mass, we meet those enrolled in our RCIA program this year as we celebrate with them the Rite of Acceptance. These Apostles of Hope are preparing to receive the Easter sacraments and they call us as a community to deeper conversion as they look to us to meet the living Christ. After Christmas they will begin being dismissed from each of the Masses to reflect more deeply on the Word and to immerse themselves in the study of our faith. At that time we will all be invited to take one of their names and be invited to pray for them as their journey continues.

On Monday evening at 7 pm in the church we will hold a communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to assist in our Christmas preparation.

To help us welcome and prayerfully celebrate Eucharist on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist are kindly asked to check the schedule in the prayer room and to fill in any available spots. Let's again each of us go out of our way to welcome those joining us to celebrate the Lord's birth with full voice and opened hearts.

And, in the spirit of the season:

Q. What do you get if you cross Santa with a detective ?

A. Santa Clues!

Q. What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?

A. It's Christmas, Eve.

Q. Why does Santa Claus like to work in the garden?

A. Because he likes to hoe, hoe, hoe!

Peace,

Father Tom

Apostles: We Who Are Sent...Hope: God's constant gift of new possibilities

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation during the season of Advent is a powerful way to prepare for the celebration of Christmas. This sacrament celebrates God's love for us, and God's desire that we relish that love and allow it to overflow into our lives.

The sacrament of Reconciliation has a long and varied history. As with all our sacraments, it has a personal and communal dimension. The revision s in the ritual following the Second Vatican Council reminds us of importance of both dimensions. We're called to: Gather-Reflect on God's word-Reflect on our response-Confess our sins, our sorrow, and our desire to respond more generously to God's love-Receive God's mercy and go forth to live that love.

On Monday evening, December 17th, 2018 there will be a Communal Reconciliation Service in Sts. Philip & James Church at 7:00pm.

We will gather in song as the candles of the Advent Wreath are lit, reminding us that Christ our Light overcomes any and all darkness.

We will listen and respond to the Word of God proclaimed.

The homily will invite us to reflect on God's love for us and God's invitation to deepen our experience of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness.

As a community, we will be led in a simple examination of conscience, and allowing God to gently reveal to us and sinfulness we need to admit.

As a community, will be given an act of penance to help us heal our relationships with God, others and ourselves and will pray an Act of Contrition together.

As music plays we are invited to approach on the priests stationed around the church, confessing the sin revealed and receiving individual absolution.

We continue on our almost concluded Advent journey, praying that all of us feel and nurture Emmanuel, God-with-us, this Christmas and throughout our lives.



Help Wanted: Eucharistic Ministers

We are in need of a Eucharistic Minister to assist at Thursday's Eucharistic Adoration to expose and repose the Blessed Sacrament.

Your assistance will be assigned on a rotating basis, approximately once every six (6) weeks.

If you are interested, please contact Dan Liddy at 631-751-2869



To All Our Ministers of Holy Communion

We greatly appreciate all of your help throughout the year, especially during the holidays.

If you are able, kindly sign up for one of the Christmas masses.

The sign up sheet is in the prayer room, inside the closet door.

Many thanks

Advent Preparation with Formed

sspj.formed.org



Session 5: Part I

Prepare the Way, An Advent Journey Series

No one has ever had a greater impact on the world than Jesus of Nazareth—and the question of Jesus's identity is central to our faith.

FORMED PICK



Brother Francis: O Holy Night

Celebrate the Birth of Jesus

Recall the wonder and joy of Christmas with Brother Francis in this heartwarming presentation that will remind you Who we celebrate during the Christmas season!

Watch on formed.org



"Awesome for the kids big and small."

—Toby J., Toledo, OH

FORMED PICK



1531: A Story That Is Not Finished Yet

Our Lady of Guadalupe Came to Change the World

1531 shares the history of why millions of Aztecs converted to the Catholic Faith and the little known truth that this incredible story is not finished yet.

Watch on formed.org



"This is a powerful story. Amazing."

—Constance A., Euclid, OH

RCIA ~ Rite of Welcoming

***Sister T:** Well Leo is still away and so I thought I would share with you a part of the prayers that will be offered to the Catechumens and Candidates this weekend. At one part of the ceremony Fr. Tom will call the group up with their sponsors and then asks the Sponsors to place a sign of the cross on their person as he prays the following:*

Receive the cross on your forehead it is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know and follow him.

...on your ears, that you may hear the voice of the Lord.

...on your eyes, that you may see the glory of God.

...on your lips, that you may respond to the word of God.

...over your heart, that Christ may dwell there by faith.

...on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.

...on your hands, that Christ may be known in the work that you do.

...on your feet, that you may walk in the way of Christ.



It is a powerful expression of how each part of our body glorifies God.

Faith Formation Religious Studies Program Beginning in January, 2019 At Sts. Philip & James Parish

Under the auspices of the Diocese of Rockville Center, Father Patrick Osei-Poku will offer Basic Adult Religious Education Courses at Saint Philip and James Parish.

The Program begins on January 8th, 2019 to offer certification to Lay Adults Catechists in the Religious Education Program.

Interested persons should contact the Parish Center 631-584-5454 for enrollment or reach Fr. Patrick by his email (patosepo.21661@gmail.com) for further information. Kindly find below the detail schedules for the courses:

Classes to be held in the SSPJ Room from 4:30-6:30pm

The Basic Studies courses include:

Old Testament ~ January 8, 15, 22, 29 and February 5, 2019

Participants will be introduced to the basic principles in the Old Testament

New Testament ~ March 5, 12, 21, 28 and April 4, 2019

Participants are introduced to the basic principles in the New Testament

Christology ~ April 30, May 7, 14, 21 and 28

An introduction to the Principles of Christology

Church ~ August 27, September 3, 10, 17 and 24, 2019

Liturgy & Sacraments ~ October 1, 8, 15, 22 and 27

Morality

Spirituality and Morality

Future dates will be announced in upcoming bulletin publications and on the Diocesese website:
www.drvc-faith.org

If interested please contact the Parish Center at 631-584-5454

SSPJ Christmas Concert This Evening!



**The Parish of
Saints Philip and James**

*One Carow Place
Saint James N.Y. 11780*

**Music Ministry
presents**

**A Christmas Concert
December 16, 2018**

6:30pm

in the Church

Free Admission

**This is our Christmas gift to you, so
plan on joining us for a special evening of
spiritual, seasonal favorites, and
our annual sing-along.**

**Please make time to join us for an evening
Of music.**



Stained Glass Club Sale~ This Weekend

**Saturday & Sunday
December 15th & 16th
After All the Masses**

**Please stop by and support them by purchasing
some unique pieces of art!**

Religious Education Ministry : For Week of December 16th, 2018

ATTENTION TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND FAMILIES

THERE WILL NOT BE ANY REFLECTIONS IN THE DECEMBER 16TH
OR DECEMBER 23RD BULLETINS



WISHING ALL OF YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS

REFLECTIONS WILL RESUME ON DECEMBER 30TH, 2018

You have to be In It To WIN IT!!
LAST WEEKEND TO PURCHASE
RAFFLE TICKETS

*Prayer of the Month
For
December, 2018*

THE GLORY BE PRAYER

*In the name of the
Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit,*

Amen

*Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit.*

*As it was in the
beginning, is now,
And ever shall be,
World without end,
Amen*



Saints Philip & James School Christmas Raffle



Raffle tickets \$10 each or 6 for \$50

Drawing to be held on
Sunday, December 16th, 2018
at the SSPJ Parish Christmas Concert

Winner need not be
present at drawing

2018 SSPJ Christmas Tree Fundraiser

Make a difference
this holiday season.



is an important fundraiser for our school, so do not miss out on this opportunity.

The sale begins Saturday, December 1st, with the Annual SSPJ Christmas Tree Lighting and a special blessing to our trees from Father Tom. We will continue the sale throughout all of December and up to the 23rd! Come and choose your tree from our large selection located in the parking lot near 25A. We will be open:

Sunday 8:00 am – 7:00 pm

Monday through Thursday 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Friday 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am – 9:00 pm

SSPJ School News

This past week fifth grade took part in a Lego Stem Challenge. One person from each team had to act as the Holy Spirit speaking to the Apostles in order to recreate the creations they observed. They gave directions on how to build their labeled creation, but could not touch the pieces. Each team had one minute to look and two minutes to build. Once time was up, another person from each group went out to help their team. This was a lesson on teamwork, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Fifth grade had a blast.



SSPJ Parish Calendar For The Week of December 16th, 2018

Sunday, December 16th, 2018:

8:00am	Stained Glass Sale	School Lobby
8:30am	RCIA	Cantina
10:00am	Children's Liturgy	Auditorium
11:00am	Peanut Butter & Jelly Gang	Auditorium
12:00pm	Guild Christmas Tree Sale	Monte Building
6:30pm	Parish Christmas Concert	Church
7:00pm	AA Meeting	Philip & James Room

Monday, December 17th, 2018

7:00pm	Communal Penance Service	Church
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Tuesday, December 18th, 2018:

1:30pm	Spirit of Love Prayer Group	Prayer Room Main Church
4:30pm	Children's Choir	Choir Loft & Church
7:30pm	Chords of Faith	Church & Choir Loft

Wednesday, December 19th, 2018:

7:00pm	Youth Ministry	Bethany Center
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Thursday, December 20th, 2018:

2:00pm	Eucharistic Adoration	Church
7:30pm	Adult Choir	Church

Friday, December 21st, 2018:

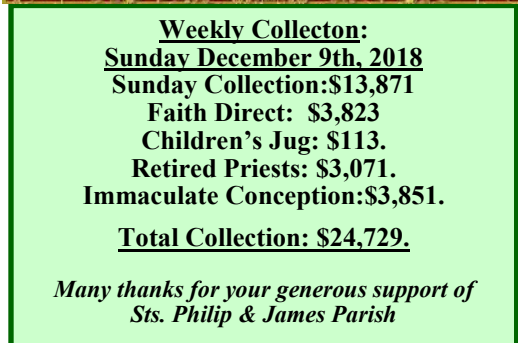
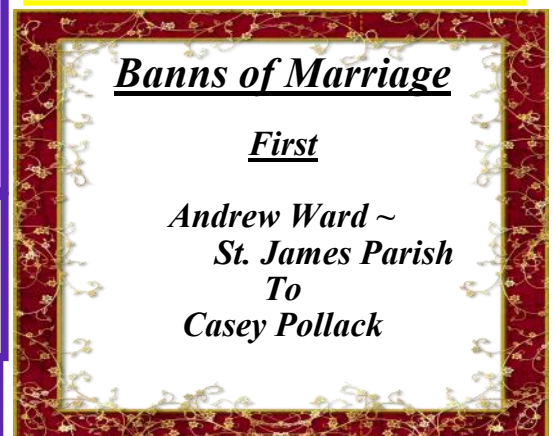
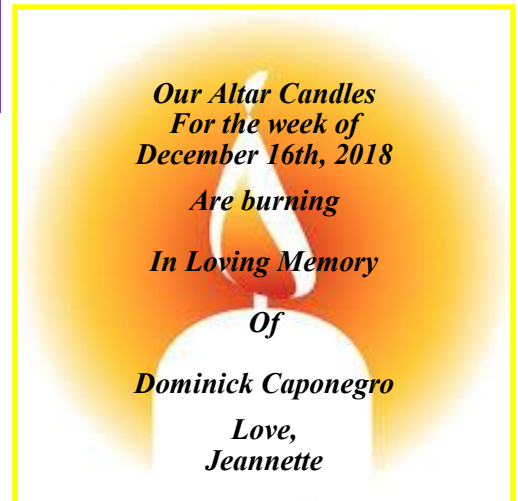
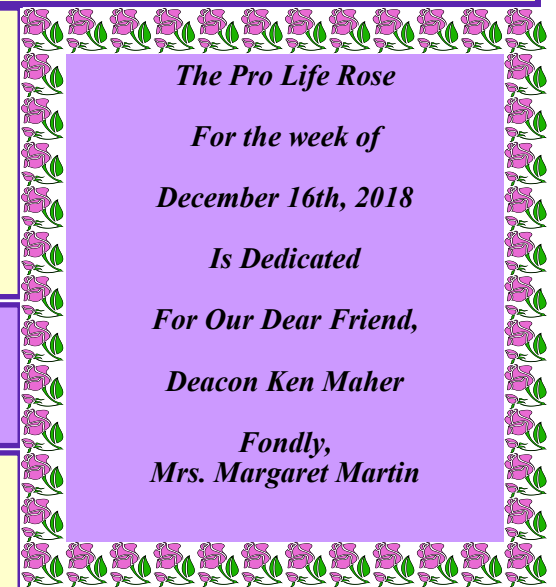
3:00pm	Stained Glass Club	Stained Glass Wkshp
7:00pm	AA Meeting	Philip & James Room
8:00pm	Eucharistic Adoration	Church

Saturday, December 22nd, 2018

No Events Scheduled

Sunday, December 23rd, 2018:

8:30am	RCIA	Cantina
7:00pm	AA Meeting	Philip & James Room



Robert Lindemann
Mary Napolitano
Eugene Krug
Catherine J. Riepe
Adelaide Tschinkel

Mass Intentions, For the week of December 16th, 2018

Saturday, December 15th, 2018

5:00pm Louise Tyminski

Sunday, December 16th, 2018

8:00am For the Parishioners of SSPJ

10:00am Margaret Castiglie

12:00 Noon Collective Mass:

Paul Winski

Peg Gorla

Madeline Ida Gadue

Anthony Luckiewicz

Rudolph Bonitch

Monday, December 17th, 2018

7:30am Paul Winski

9:15am William Schlott

Tuesday, December 18th, 2018

7:30am Carol Walz & Karl Walz (Living)

9:15am Elizabeth Harris

Wednesday, December 19th, 2018

7:30am Mary Reid

9:15am David McCulloch

Thursday, December 20th, 2018

7:30am Leo Ramos

9:15am Collective Mass:

Ryan Murray (Living)

Eva Maria Alaimo

Friday, December 21st, 2018

7:30am Russell Armstrong

9:15am

Saturday, December 22nd, 2018

9:15am Kopcinski, Belot, and Dunn Families

5:00pm Eva Maria Alaimo

Sunday, December 23rd, 2018

8:00am For The Parishioners of SSPJ

10:00am Philip Giarraputos, Sr., Theresa & Angelo Marinelo

12:00 Noon Collective Mass:

William T. Fischer

Olga Oelerich

Manuela Gates

Michelle Albi

Alexander Budd

We Ask You to Remember Our Brothers & Sisters In your Prayers

Anna Capizzio
Angela Amoroso
Angelo Peluso
Angela Boccio McComb
AnnMarie M.
Baby Mattia Lubrano
Betty Schmidt
Brett Dowling
Brennan Steinorth
Bryan Van Colt
Camden Bailey
Carmela Massaro
Carole Hennessy
Catherine Burseind
Charlie Keenan
Christel DeBlasio
Christina Meringolo
Christopher Paul
Daisy Abruzzo
David Shankles
Dawn Kopel
Dolores Weisenreider
Dominic Pace
Dylan Lauro
Eileen Zink
Elinor Glasser
Eugene Krug
Florence Donahue
Frank Orlik
Frank DeFranco
Gerard Duffy
Ginny McAuley
Greg
Helen McDowell
Hillary Boehme
James Gietzen
James P. Klouda
Jane Prato
Jane Wigutow
Jeanine Esposito Tansey
Jim Kelly
Joseph
Joseph Perconti
Joe Alberigo
John Capizzio
Jean McCue
John Harney
John Hernandez
Jordan Marvelli

Julianne
Joan Ward
Kathleen N.
Kathleen Corcoran
Kitty Cronin
Krista Farley
Kylie Quigley
Joseph
Lance Mallamo
Laura Andrucki & family
Linda Sue
Livia Parrella
Louis Giordano
Mark Montesano
Marie DelCielo,
Marie Fabry
Mary McDonough
Michael LaVecchia
Michael Vasiento
Nancy Fornabia
Nicole Theresa
Nicole Devlin
Pam Brandon
Pasquale Santoro
Patricia Casey
Pat Corey
Patricia Fontana
Patricia Monetti
Patricia Thompson
Paulette Agoglia
Regina Powers
Richard Cembrale
Roe Hetterich
Russell Caiola
Robert & Madeline Gaude
Robin Graham Denis
Rosemary Morgan
Sean Winters
Suzanne McCue
Terence Hobbes
Teresa Orlik
Thomas McKay
Thomasine Morrison
Tim Kelly
Tim Cavooris
Terry Pace
Vivien Cordes
Vickie Archdeacon Gibb



We Pray for those Who Serve

LCDR. MEGAN M. SHUTKA-VIK, USN
CAPT. WILSON MARKS- USN
CAPTAIN MICHAEL DOLAN- JR.
LT. COL. JOHN KAIRES
SPC. NICOLE A. CANNON
SGM. MICHAEL P. BORRELLI-US ARMY
CAPT. JOHN TULLY- USN
LT. COL. JAMES TULLY-US ARMY
JOSEPH SAGGIO- USNC
CAPTAIN PAUL WILLMS
STAFF SGT. MICHAEL LONGHENRY
LT. COL. PAUL T. JACKSON-
STAFF SGT ALEXANDER PARRELLA-USAF
RICHARD SOTOMAYER- USAF
SGT. CONNOR F. SCOTT- USMC
CORPORAL DANIEL P. STEELE-USMC
SGT. CORY O'HARA -USMC
CDR. ROBERT J. MARSH-USN
PFC. CHARLES CHRISTOPHER HOWELL
STEVEN CAVA-USN
ERIC SEELIN- USMC
CW2 CHRIS MUNZ
CW2 NATASHA WORTMAN
CORPORAL JAMES T. CASEY-USMC
GREGORY DEVANEY- USMC
SGT. JOSHUA MAHONEY- US ARMY
KEVIN JONES-USCG
PRIVATE JOSHUA OLSEN-USARNG
GLEN CRIMA-US ARMY
SGT. ANTHONY SCIAMETTA- US ARMY
MARIO CATANIA-USMC
RYAN ANTHONY NASCIMENTO-USMC
ENS. RYAN M. SHOWS -USN
STAFF SGT. RYAN REXRODE-USMC
DR. KARA VANDEKIEFT, LT.COL.-USAF
SGT. STEPHEN D. OUTCAULT-USMC
PAUL MUMOLO-USN
VICTORIA ZEMAN, USCG
KYLE J. GRUNER -US ARMY

Celebrating the Liturgy- With Grateful Hearts We Serve

PRESIDER SCHEDULE-FOR December 22nd & 23rd, 2018

Saturday, December 22, 2018 5:00 PM	Sunday, December 23, 2018 8:00 AM MASS	Sunday, December 23, 2018 10:00 AM MASS	Sunday, December 23, 2018 12:00 MASS
Father Tom Haggerty	Father Tom Haggerty	Father Patrick Osei-Poku	Father Patrick Osei-Poku
Deacon John	Deacon John	Deacon Ron	Deacon Ron

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS SCHEDULE-FOR December 22nd & 23rd, 2018

Saturday, December 22, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018
5:00 PM	8:00 AM MASS	10:00 AM MASS	12:00 NOON MASS
D. Coppola	P. Martin	M. Koke	B. Chandler
G. Alfano	W. Ramos	M. Sehne	M. Laub
I. Arevalo	K. Rapp	J. Alternative	E. Sotomayer
R. Byrne	E. Sica	G. Amen	M. Hoonhout
P. Damato	T. Sica	D. Bleggi	E. Law
D. Doran	W. VanGostein	R. Bleggi	M. McCreesh
J. Duffy	S. McKie	T. Boboris	M. Peykar
D. Earl	M. Morbillo	T. Cafaro	P. Roman
M. Fox	P. Rizzo	M. Dolce	C. Rubano
G. Priebe	N. Locastro	C. Donnelly	V. Rubano

ALTAR SERVERS SCHEDULE-FOR December 22nd & 23rd, 2018

Saturday, December 22, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018
5:00PM MASS	8:00AM MASS	10:00 AM MASS	12:00 NOON MASS
A. Balocca	K.. Dobkowski	G. Cusuamano	N. Hoonhout
C. Nigro	T. Dorrian	N. Cusuamano	Samchez-Rincon
S. Nigro	V. Chiappone	P. Cusuamano	D. Sanchez-Rincon
		O. Jacobs	

LECTOR SCHEDULE-FOR December 22nd & 23rd, 2018

Saturday, December 22, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018	Sunday, December 23, 2018
5:00PM MASS	8:00 AM MASS	10:00AM MASS	12:00 NOON MASS
L. Auletta	S. Cavoorthis	E. Nicastro	A. Latino
M. Drechsler	E. Dobres	C. Rubano	M. Hoonhout

Getting Ready for Next Sunday

December 23rd - Fourth Sunday of Advent - Cycle C

Scripture Readings ONLINE

The website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops provides the text of the Scripture Readings. Go to: www.usccb.org . Click on the date.

Reflections on Next Sunday's Scripture Readings

Micah 5:1-4a

Psalm 80

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

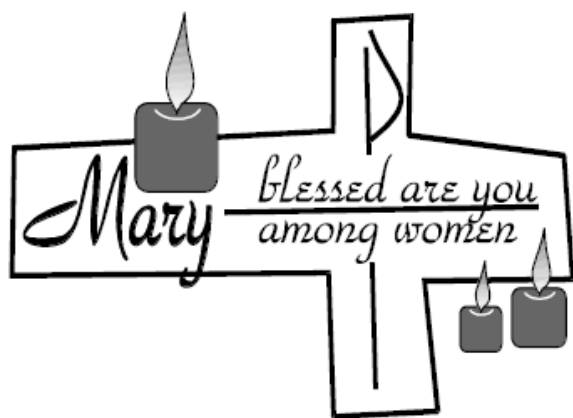
We live in an age of technological marvels. Events in the most remote corners of the world are flashed to our television sets in an instant. Diseases thought to be untreatable are now cured by miracle drugs. Computers process vast stores of knowledge in seconds. Today's readings would not have us ignore these valuable innovations; they would only have us pause in order to remember that our God is the infinite source of all help.

In the first reading Micah announces a future Davidic king who will conquer his people's enemies. Seemingly lowly Bethlehem will be God's birthplace of salvation. To everyone's surprise this ideal king will put more stock in Yahweh than in military power: "He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord" (verse 4). For Micah, the point is to trust in God for deliverance.

In Psalm 80, Israel appeals to Yahweh to intervene against the enemy. The psalmist outlines the role of the divine shepherd. Human resources are inadequate, the earthly shepherd needs the protection of the divine.

Mary is the model Christian since she is the very embodiment of trust in God. In the Annunciation scene (Luke 1:26-38), Luke contrasted her faith response with Zechariah's incredulity. In this visitation scene Elizabeth says, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." Luke conveys Mary's enormous capacity to trust.

What is God's plan for our lives? Human resources may reveal part of the answer. True faith, however, will trust in divine resources for the final resolution.



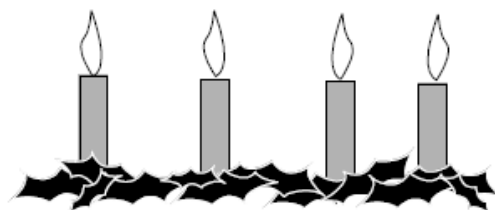
For reflection...

Mary set out to visit Elizabeth, a difficult journey. Why do you think Mary sought out Elizabeth? Who are the people in your life whom you seek out in challenging situations?

Elizabeth recognized the presence of God in Mary, and responded. When have you recognized God's presence in the people in your life? How did you respond?

Besides being the birthplace of David what were some other reasons that God chose Bethlehem, which was too small to be among the clans of Judah, and a stable and manger for Jesus' birth?

If you were expecting a majestic ruler how would you have felt about the stable and manger? When you experience poverty in your life, do you accept it as a meeting place with God or do you run from it?



OUTSIDE THE CITY

God, it seems, favors the powerless, the unnoticed, children, babies, outsiders, and refugees with no resources or place to go.

That's why Jesus was born outside the city, in a stable, unnoticed, outside all fanfare, away from all major media, and away from all the persons and events that were deemed important at the time, humble and anonymous. God works like that. Why?

In the rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, that question is asked of Jesus: *Why'd you choose such a backward time in such a strange land? If you'd come today you could have reached a whole nation. Israel in 4 BC had no mass communication.*

Scripture answers by telling us that God's ways are not our ways and *our ways are not God's ways*. That's true here. We tend to understand power by how it works in our world. There it works through popularity, through mass media, through historical privilege, through financial clout, through higher education, through idiosyncratic genius, and, not infrequently, through raw aggression, greed, and insensitivity to the needs of others and of nature.

But even a quick reading of scripture tells us that's not how God works. The God that Jesus incarnates doesn't enter into this world with a huge splash, as a royal birth eagerly anticipated and then announced by all the major media outlets, with photos of him and his parents on the cover of every popular magazine, with universal predictions as to his future greatness and influence, and then with privileged access to the best educational institutions and circles of power and influence.

Clearly, clearly, that's not the story of Jesus' birth, nor of how his life unfolded. God, as scripture shows, works more through anonymity than through the headlines, more through the poor than the powerful, and more through those outside the circles of power than those inside them. When we examine how God works, we see it's no accident that Jesus was born outside the city and that after he was crucified he was also buried outside the city.

God's work in our world generally does not make the headlines. God never breaks into our world or into our consciousness by showy displays of power. God works more discretely, in quiet, touching soul, touching conscience, and touching that previously touched part inside of us where we still unconsciously bear the memory of once, long before birth, being touched, caressed, and loved by God. That's why Christ was born into this world as a baby and not as superstar, as someone whose only power was the capacity to touch and soften the hearts of those around him. Babies overpower no one, physically, intellectually, or athletically. They lie helpless and cry for love and care. That's why, paradoxically, at the end of the day, they're more powerful than anyone else. No physical, intellectual, or athletic power can ultimately touch the human conscience as can a baby – and similar sights of innocent helplessness, a wounded bird, an abandoned kitten, a young child alone and crying. What's best in us enflames, healthily, in the presence of powerlessness and innocence.

That's how God enters into us, gently, unnoticed. No big splash. That's also why God tends to bypass circles of power to favor the abandoned and vulnerable. For example, when the Gospel of Luke records how John the Baptist came to be specially blessed, it takes a scathing swipe at both the civic and religious powers of its time. It names all the major civil and religious leaders of the time (the Roman rulers, the kings in Palestine, and the religious high priests) and then tells us plainly that the word of God bypassed them all and came instead to John, a solitary, living in the wilderness. (Luke 3, 1-3) According to the Gospels, the wilderness is where we're most likely to find and experience God's presence because God tends to bypasses the centers of power and influence to find a place instead in the hearts of those outside those circles.

You see this too, though admittedly without the same theological weight as is manifest in scripture, in the various apparitions of Mary, Jesus' mother, that have been approved by the church. What's common to all of them? Mary has never appeared to a president, a pope, a major religious leader, a Wall Street banker, the CEO of a major company, or even to an academic theologian in his study. None of these. She's appeared to children, to a young woman of no earthly importance, to an illiterate peasant, and to various other persons of no worldly status.

We tend to understand power as residing in financial influence, political clout, charismatic talent, media influence, physical strength, athletic prowess, grace, health, wit, and attractiveness. On the surface, that assessment is accurate enough, and indeed none of these are bad in themselves. But, looked at more deeply, as we see in the birth of Christ, God's word bypasses the centers of power and gestates instead in the hearts and consciences of those *outside the city*.