

Dear Faithful and Friends of All Saints Parish,



Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we turn the page into January and February, the Christmas echoes still linger in our hearts. The shepherds have returned to their fields, the Magi are still navigating by starlight, and some of us are still navigating our way out of Christmas leftovers—remember, salvation is not by croquette alone, though baked turkey croquettes *can* certainly point us in the right direction (Psalm 34:8: “*O taste and see that the Lord is good*”).

In these early months of the year, we are reminded that God does not merely dwell in sanctuaries of stone, but in the living temple of His people. St. Paul writes, “*Rejoice in the Lord always... let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near*” (Philippians 4:4-5). Near, indeed—closer than our troubles, warmer than winter, and more faithful than any New Year’s gym membership that started boldly but may now be... spiritually month-to-month.

All Saints continues to be a parish rich in faith, compassion, and generosity. Every prayer spoken, every hand extended in charity, every rosary shared, and every visitor welcomed reflects Christ’s abiding promise: “*And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20). His presence is our strength, our comfort, and our joy.

As we begin this year together, let us seek nourishment in the Word and the Eucharist, allowing God to renew us from within. Isaiah reminds us of God’s steadfast care: “*Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles*” (Isaiah 40:31). A helpful Scripture for cold mornings, long weeks, and yes—occasionally mounting up with wings like *Detroit Zoo Wild Lights* and joyful parish gatherings.

Thank you for your faith, your laughter, your perseverance, and your love for this parish. It is a privilege to serve you, pray with you, and walk beside you in this sacred journey. May these months ahead be filled with hope, renewal, and the quiet confidence that Christ walks with us in every season.

With gratitude and pastoral love,

Father Jim

All Saints Parish PNCC

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Check out the last pages for a pictorial year in review!!!

Thank you to All Saints and FOSS from the Maple Group Home

The residents and staff of Maple group home along with myself would like to



extend a big "thank you" to all who made donations of food, home supplies, money and gift cards during this past month. The lack of funds in food assistance cards was felt by many group homes, veterans' homes, and families etc. that

needed to feed 6 or more people for a month. Your donations were very generous and helped to feed the residents of this home. I made four trips to the group home with a full

trunk of supplies! I would also like to thank The Friends of Sunday School for sponsoring the home on their Giving Tree as a special type of family in need.

Thank you for your kindness,

Marianne Markiewicz (mother of one of the residents)

Parish Committee Elections Results!

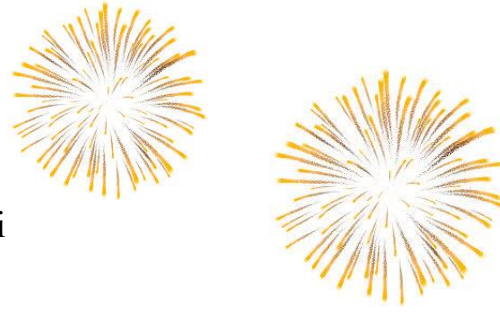
President: Jeff Kotelnicki

Vice President: Dwight Berend

Recording. Secretary: Pat Konrad

Financial Secretary: Carol Szydowski

Treasurer: Jennifer Kotelnicki



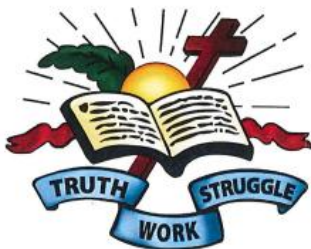
DIRECTORS: Sharon Stachurski, Donald Wechselberger, Marcia Berend

PARISH TRIBUNAL: Rody Yezman 2 Years, Pat Kotelnicki 1 Year, Larry Bawol; 1 Year

AUDITORS: – Michael Szydowski., William Konrad, Ron Rogers

Congratulations and you have our support, commitment and love!!

THE CONSTITUTION, BY LAWS and CODE OF FAITH



OF THE
**POLISH NATIONAL
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

2022

Regulation 9 — Duties of the Parish Committee Members

SECTION 1. The Chairman of the Parish Committee calls the Pastor, announces all Committee and Parish Meetings and presides over them. He signs all legal documents pertaining to Parish property and its administration.

SECTION 2. The Vice-chairman of the Parish Committee performs the duties of the Chairman in his absence.

SECTION 3. The Recording Secretary keeps the minutes of the Parish and Committee meetings and keeps an accurate inventory of the Parish property.

SECTION 4. The Financial Secretary keeps an accurate record of all Parish financial transactions and signs all orders drawn on the Treasurer and keeps an accurate list of the Parish members.

SECTION 5. The Treasurer keeps an accurate record of all monies received and disbursed by the Parish Committee. He pays all orders drawn on him, approved by the Parish Committee, for the payment of the salary of the Pastor, the salaries and wages of all other Parish employees, and all Parish obligations and signs all checks.

SECTION 6. The Directors together with the officers of the Parish Committee have charge of all the material matters of the Parish and perform such duties as are assigned to them by the Parish Committee.

SECTION 7. The Auditors together with the officers of the Parish Committee have charge of all the books, records, and inventory of the Parish and shall open them for examination by the Pastor and Parish Committee.

SECTION 8. All of the aforesaid books, records and property of the Parish, in the custody or possession of the Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and every other officer of the Parish Committee, shall be open at all times for examination by the Pastor and Parish Committee.

Regulation 10 — Parish Auditors

Each Parish shall elect at its annual meeting an Auditing Committee consisting of three (3) members of the Parish, who shall audit, at least quarterly, the books and records of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer.

Holiday Lights, Shared Joy, and Youth Fellowship



On December 19th, the youth of All Saints Parish gathered for an unforgettable evening of fellowship and celebration at the



Detroit Zoo, sharing in a season filled with wonder and community. The night was marked by laughter, connection, and a truly amazing time together, as our young people explored the beauty of creation



illuminated in brilliant holiday splendor. We extend our sincere gratitude to FOSS for their generous support in assisting with event expenses,



making this meaningful gathering possible. The experience strengthened bonds, lifted spirits, and reminded us of all the joy found when faith and friendship come together. It was, by every measure, a wonderful celebration—full of fun, warmth, and shared delight—and we are deeply thankful for the continued support that invests in the lives of our youth.



Valentine's Day 2026 – A Celebration of Faith, Love & Family



All Saints Parish is delighted to invite our parish family and community friends to our Valentine's Day Celebration on Saturday, February 14, 2026, from 6:00–9:00 PM in the parish hall. This evening promises music, games, laughter, dancing, fellowship, and a great time for all. The cost is \$25.00 per person, which includes food and refreshments. Soda, water, beer and wine will be available, or you may Bring Your Own Beverage (BYOB). Business casual attire is encouraged—think

business casual with a dash of celebration and come ready for a wonderful evening.

Valentine's Day offers more than flowers and cards—it reminds us of the sacred calling to love one another as God loves us. Spiritually, love is nourishment for relationships, for family, and for home. In Scripture we are reminded that *“Love is patient, love is kind... it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”* (1 Corinthians 13:4,7, NRSV). This is the love that sustains marriages, strengthens children, unifies families, and becomes the foundation of thriving homes.



At the heart of every faithful relationship is a holy vocation to honor, cherish, forgive, and serve one another. When love is rooted in faith, it becomes more than an emotion—it becomes a sacrament of daily life, forming bonds that feed the soul and build strong families. Our parish desires to celebrate that love, encourage that love, and strengthen that love in a joyful community.

Join us for an unforgettable evening! Bring your smile, your dancing shoes, and your joy. Let's fill the hall with fellowship, celebration, and the kind of love that glorifies God and strengthens family life.

We look forward to seeing you there!



New Year with God

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Sunday School
 Holy Spirt
 Hebrews
 Church
 Prayer

Congregation
 Sanctuary
 Respect
 Pastor
 Jesus

Holy Bible
 Offering
 Worship
 Praise
 God

| # | Scrambled |
|----|------------------------------|
| 1 | LTERONCBIAE |
| 2 | PAHPY NEW AEYIR |
| 3 | IFHAT |
| 4 | LEOV |
| 5 | TRELVA NEH CRECHHU MYTLFA |
| 6 | ACEPE |
| 7 | HCEANG |
| 8 | IKN,TH T,KNH HT,KNUI |
| 9 | VTIOITTSPi |
| 10 | YAHOL PTSSIIR |
| 11 | EENRW |
| 12 | OLUTEEVORNS |
| 13 | IIIRNTTY |
| 14 | PHEO |
| 15 | AHPY |

Herbed Goat Cheese & Lemon Cheese Ball

Ingredients

- 8 oz goat cheese, room temperature
- 4 oz reduced-fat cream cheese *or* Neufchâtel cheese, room temperature
- 4 oz plain Greek yogurt (2% or whole), strained if needed for thickness
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh chives
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme leaves
- 1 Tbsp finely grated lemon zest
- ¼ tsp garlic powder (optional, replaces heavier seasonings)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts **or** a blend of pine nuts and chopped walnuts (for added omega-3s)
- For serving: whole-grain seeded crackers, cucumber rounds, or sliced multigrain baguette



Directions

1. Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat goat cheese, reduced-fat cream cheese (or Neufchâtel), and Greek yogurt until smooth and well incorporated, about 1–2 minutes. Add parsley, chives, thyme, lemon zest, and garlic powder if using. Mix until evenly combined. Season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Chill for 30 minutes, or until the mixture begins to firm slightly.
2. Place the toasted pine nuts (or pine-walnut blend) into a shallow dish. With clean, slightly damp hands, form the chilled cheese mixture into a compact ball, smoothing the surface. Roll the cheese ball gently in the nuts until fully coated. Chill again for 1–2 hours, or until completely firm.
3. Serve on a chilled platter with whole-grain crackers, cucumber rounds, or multigrain baguette slices. Garnish with additional herbs or lemon zest if desired.

All Saints Supports the

Food Ministry of St. Mary's Polish National Catholic Church

The Food Ministry of St. Mary's Polish National Catholic Church stands as a living witness to the Gospel made tangible—faith not only proclaimed, but practiced with humility, consistency, and love. Week after week, this ministry quietly yet

powerfully answers Christ's call: *"Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you"* (Matthew 5:42). Through simple acts of generosity, lives are touched, dignity is honored, and hope is renewed.



Each week, Father Jim gathers with those who come with the same reverence and care. Every car full and walk-up receives a personal blessing, affirming that no one arrives unseen or unvalued. Beyond food, the ministry offers nourishment for the soul.

Weekly Scripture reflections and teachings from Catholic tradition accompany each distribution, gently reminding recipients that God's Word is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). At times, special gifts are included: rosaries to encourage prayer, Bibles to

invite reflection, American flags to honor sacrifice and service, flowers to say we love you, and desserts that simply bring a moment of joy. These gestures, though small in appearance, often carry profound meaning. They say, unmistakably: *you matter*.

This work is not done in isolation. We are grateful for the support and partnership of All Saints PNCC, whose generosity and solidarity strengthen the broader mission of service. This collaboration reflects the unity of the Body of Christ—many members, one purpose, one love (1 Corinthians 12:12).



Perhaps most moving are the quiet testimonies of changed lives—faces once burdened now lifted with gratitude, conversations once hesitant now filled with trust. The Food Ministry does more than distribute necessities; it builds relationships. It restores hope. It reminds all involved—those who give and those who receive—that God's grace flows freely when hearts are open.

To every volunteer, supporter, and faithful soul who makes this ministry possible: thank you. Your service proclaims the Gospel without needing a pulpit. Your generosity echoes the words of Proverbs 19:17: *"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done."* May God continue

to bless this ministry, and may it always remain a place where faith is lived, love is shared, and Christ is encountered.

The 2025 Food Ministry data reflect a mature and increasingly predictable ministry with sustained growth, clear seasonality, and improving operational efficiency. In 2025, the ministry served 6,121 meals, establishing a new annual high and representing an 11.82% increase over 2024 (5,474). This growth continues a multi-year expansion pattern since 2022, when totals rose from 4,148 (2022) to 4,682 (2023), then to 5,474 (2024), and finally to 6,121 (2025). The overall trajectory indicates not a temporary spike, but a stable shift to a higher operating level, particularly when contrasted with pre-2020 norms, when annual totals generally remained under 1,000 meals. The post-2021 period therefore represents a structural change in demand, suggesting the Food Ministry has become a central, ongoing community service rather than an episodic outreach. Cumulative meals served reflect, **33,719**.

If you would like to know more about this ministry or how you can assist, please contact Father Jim.



The Epiphany Home Blessing remains one of the Church's most cherished and meaningful traditions, and as we enter 2026, it continues to speak powerfully to our desire for faith, peace, and God's abiding presence in our homes. Rooted in the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, this custom invites Christ Himself to

dwell with us throughout the coming year.


One of the most recognizable elements of the Epiphany blessing is the chalk inscription placed above the main entrance of the home: **20 + C + M + B + 26**. These letters recall the names of the Wise Men—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, and proclaim, “May Christ bless this house.” With this simple yet profound sign, families publicly profess their faith and entrust their home to God's protection and grace.

During an Epiphany visit, prayers are offered for all who live in the home, for health, harmony, hospitality, and holiness in the year ahead. Some families choose

a simple gathering in one room; others invite a blessing of each room, asking God's presence to fill every space of daily life. In every case, the blessing transforms an ordinary house into a sacred dwelling.

For me, Epiphany visits are deeply personal and profoundly joyful. I love doing Epiphany visits, please invite me. These moments of prayer, conversation, and blessing strengthen the bonds of our parish family and renew our shared faith.

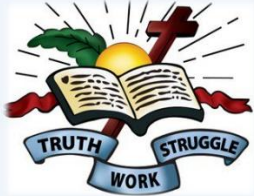
If you would like your home blessed for Epiphany 2026, please contact Father Jim to arrange a time that works for you.





PNCC YOUTH CONVO - RETREAT 2026


AUGUST 3 - 7, 2026 - SAVE THE DATE!


@ Camp Monadnock - Jaffrey, NH














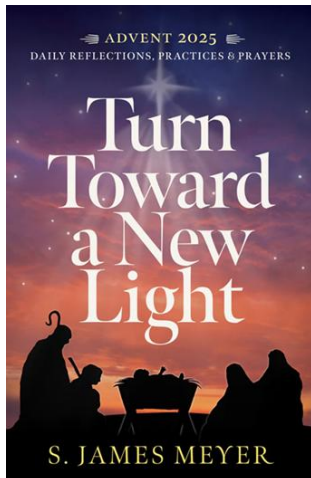


**Congratulations Father Jim on the Anniversary of
Your Ordination, December 10th.**

Thank you!!!!

Advent Preparation

At All Saints Parish, we are blessed not only by sacred tradition, but by the faithful hands that make those traditions possible. This year, we extend heartfelt gratitude to a dedicated parishioner who generously supplied our Advent Scripture readings for 2025. Week after week, as the season of preparation unfolded, these printed



readings became more than pages—they became quiet companions of prayer for our families, our youth, and every household seeking light in a busy world. By providing the Word so faithfully, this parishioner ensured that spiritual nourishment was never out of reach, even on the most demanding days. We are especially grateful for the gentle but powerful witness behind this gift—one that did not draw attention to itself, but faithfully directed our gaze toward the true Light, Jesus Christ. In offering Scripture to the parish, you helped us do exactly what Advent invites us to do: turn away from distraction and fix our hearts on Emmanuel, God-with-us. Thank you for pointing us toward the Light

that no darkness can overcome, and for guiding our community toward spiritual radiance through the Word of God. Your generosity reflects the heart of Christ, who calls us to share freely what we have received. This act of service reminds us that gratitude is not passive—it moves, it gives, it prepares a way for God's glory to be welcomed and proclaimed. To serve one another in this way is to strengthen the whole Body of Christ. For this gift of sacred Scripture, we say thank you—with sincere appreciation, deep respect, and abiding joy. May God return this blessing to you in grace, peace, and holy joy, as you have so beautifully helped us lift our eyes toward heaven's dawn.



Christmas at All Saints



2025

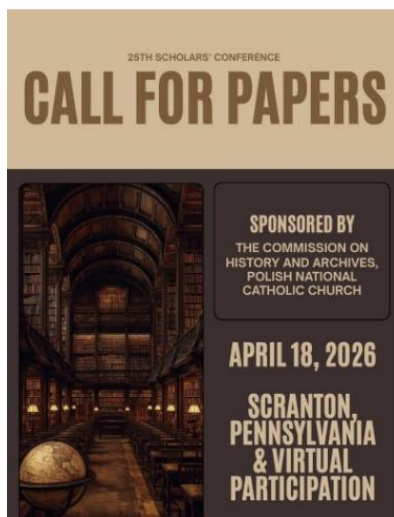


In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

THE COMMISSION ON HISTORY AND ARCHIVES
of the
Polish National Catholic Church

is honored to announce the 25th Scholars' Conference, scheduled for April 18, 2026, to take place in celebrated Scranton, Pennsylvania, with virtual participation opportunities available.

We extend an invitation to academic scholars specializing in the social sciences, theology, and humanities to submit proposals for individual papers. The conference will focus on topics related to the Polish National Catholic Church, its various associations and outreaches, as well as the independent movements that either preceded or developed contemporaneously with the Church. Proposals on related subjects are also welcomed.



Submission Deadline

Proposals must be submitted no later than March 1, 2026. Selected papers will be presented at the conference and subsequently published in the *PNCC Studies Journal*, under the auspices of the PNCC Commission on History and Archives (1031 Cedar Ave., Scranton, PA 18505).

In addition to formal paper presentations, we are pleased to continue the option for poster presentations, offering a flexible alternative for sharing scholarly work. Details regarding submission requirements for both papers and posters are provided below.

Graduate Student Incentive

Graduate student presenters are eligible for a \$500 stipend/scholarship.

For Submissions and Inquiries

Please email your proposals, article submissions for publication consideration, or direct any questions to:

dr.ploskonka@savonarola.net



Merry Christmas



Wesołych Świąt

Advent Tea via the Altar Society

It has been a wonderful year filled with many blessings, spiritual and social events for our parish family to enjoy! On Saturday, December 6, our society presented our annual Advent Tea which was attended by 48 ladies and 5 (*brave*) gentlemen and focused on the light of Jesus in our lives.



Our hostesses set tone of the day with their own beautiful China teapots, cups/saucers and plates on tables adorned with red & white Christmas lanterns nestled on gold charger plates and green pine

wreaths, all of which set the tone for a cozy, elegant and joyful afternoon.



After welcoming our guests, a tasty luncheon consisting of homemade scones, chicken salad with croissants, tossed salad, fruit tray, an array of dainty desserts and, of course, plenty assorted teas were served.



During the lunch and in between courses, Fr. Jim and co-chair Carol presented a meaningful presentation intertwined with beautiful music and songs relating to how the “light of Jesus” leads us on our journey in our daily lives and during this special Christmas season. The program, music and songs were beautiful and

emotionally moving for everyone.



As the afternoon went on, the ladies were invited to attach prayers and good wishes for loved ones past and present on cards attached to glittering silver and gold Christmas bulbs and hang on our Advent prayer tree, which will remain in the parish hall throughout the holidays.

The afternoon ended with a final prayer and song that touched our hearts at the end of this wonderful tea with the warm and loving fellowship shared which we would take with us to remember during this time of advent.



Thank you to our sister hostesses—Darise, Pat, K., Sarah, Pat F, and Andrea for helping with setup/cleanup and making this tea a memorable success... Many “thanks” to Carol & Father Jim for the wonderful uplifting program and to Andrea for providing the beautiful, heart-touching music and songs.



Blessings to all for a healthy, happy Christmas and New Year filled with the “Light and love” of Jesus.

Sharon



Loved Ones Remembered: November

Wypominki is a Polish Catholic tradition of prayers for the dead. It involves



submitting a list of names of deceased loved ones to a priest so they can be read aloud and remembered in special prayers and Masses, particularly during November, which is dedicated to the remembrance of the dead.

- **Process:** Family members write the names of the deceased on an envelope and give it to the priest. The priest then reads these names aloud during the Mass or before the Mass, and the congregation joins in praying for their eternal rest.
- **Cultural Context:** This practice is part of a broader Polish tradition during this time, which also involves visiting cemeteries, placing flowers (especially chrysanthemums), and lighting special long-burning candles (znicze) on graves, creating a glowing, spiritual atmosphere of remembrance.

Veterans Remembered



Ayad “Eddie” Mansoor Sakat, brother-in-law of Linda Alsakaat, rendered the ultimate sacrifice in faithful service to the United States on December 13, 2026, in Syria, defending the liberties and principles upon which the nation stands. His courage and devotion place him among those whom history will forever remember with honor. Upon the dignified transfer of his remains to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, Eddie was received by President Donald J. Trump, a moment that reflected the nation’s solemn gratitude and recognition of a fallen American hero.

With profound respect for his service, we commend Eddie to the mercy of Almighty God. May he rest in eternal peace. We continue in prayer for Linda and her entire family, asking God to grant them strength, comfort, and His abiding consolation in their sorrow.

Deceased Veterans from All Saints

Teofil Szydowski

Louis Markiewicz

John Koltenicki

Frank Kozlowski

Russell Filipis

Anthony Jezierski

Walter Sobiechowski

Chester Szydowski

Michael Smart

Henry Kielbowicz

Bernice Karson

William Ziemczyk

Wanda Kielbowicz

Frank Stahurski

Albert Filipowicz

Marion Jezierski

Peter Chlubitski

Edward Tuczek

Edward Lesko

Michael Springer

Walter Tamulewicz

Robert Wawrzyniak

Peter Kozlowski

Edward Kohut

Walter Worek

Roger Kohut



Additional Church and Affiliate Websites:

Polish National Catholic Church www.pncc.org

Western Diocese PNCC www.westerndiocese.org

National United Choirs <https://nucmusicscholarship.weebly.com/>

Polish National Alliance www.pna-znp.org

Spojnia Credit Union (SCU) www.spojniacreditunion.org

Additional Church and Affiliate Facebook Information:

Polish National Catholic Church Western Diocese PNCC

National Youth Convocations (Convo '22) National United Choirs

PNA Council 306-PNU / PNA District 19 National United YMSofR

January Birthdays

16 Daria Markiewicz
18 Shane Carr
19 Sarah Szydlowski
21 Dwight Berend
21 Sharon Stachurski

January Anniversaries

February Birthdays

1 Jill Carr
27 Larry Bawol

February Anniversaries

4 Mary Chebaa/ Raced Kena
16 Gloria/Larry Bawol
20 Pat/John Kotelnicki +



| JANUARY 2026 | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| 28 Solemnity — Humble Shepherds | 29 | 30 No confirmation Class | 31 | 1 New Year's Day | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 Epiphany Confirmation Class 7:00 pm | 7 | 8 | 9 Parish Committee gathering 7:00 | 10 Parish Committee 10:00-2:30pm |
| 11 Solemnity— Baptism of Our Lord 10:00 am Coffee Hour and Sunday School 11:00 | 12 | 13 Confirmation Class 7:00 pm AA Meets 7:00 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 Holy Mass 10:00am Coffee Hour and Sunday School 11:00 | 19 M L King Day Confirmation Class 9:00 pm | 20 Confirmation Class 7:00 pm AA Meets 7:00 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 Youth Night |
| 25 Holy Mass 10:00am | 26 Feast — Conversion of Paul, Apostle | 27 Confirmation Class 7:00 pm AA Meets 7:00 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 Reservations due for Valentine's Day Party |

6th: Epiphany is the feast revealing Jesus as Messiah and King, shown through the Magi. It celebrates Christ's manifestation to all nations and the blessing of homes.

9th and 10th: The newly elected Parish Committee for 2026 will gather for an extended planning assembly—beginning Friday evening with a social hour and continuing through a full day of discernment on Saturday. This important session will focus on identifying our parish strengths, acknowledging areas for growth, and embracing new opportunities for ministry in the year ahead. The meeting will be prayerfully facilitated by Father Senior John Kowalczyk, a skilled facilitator and speaker, whose pastoral guidance will help anchor our discussions in faith, honesty, and shared purpose.

31st: Reservations are due for Valentine's Day Party



Each Sunday, Coffee Hour follows immediately after Holy Mass, providing a welcoming space for fellowship, renewed friendships, and shared testimony. It is a time to become better acquainted, exchange encouragement, and reflect together on God's blessings and activity in our lives.

| FEBRUARY 2026 | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------|----------|--|--|
| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| 1 Pre-Lent 1 — Septuagesima Holy Mass 10:00 Coffee Hour and Sunday School 11:00 | 2 Solemnity — Presentation of Our Lord | 3 Confirmation Class 7:00 pm AA Meets 7:00 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Pre-Lent 2 – Sexagesima Holy Mass 10:00 Coffee Hour and Sunday School 11:00 | 9 | 10 Confirmation Class 7:00 pm AA Meets 7:00 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 Valentine's Party 6:00 – 9:00 pm |
| 15 Holy Mass 10:00 | 16 <i>Presidents' Day</i> Confirmation Class 9:00 pm | 17 Confirmation Class 7:00 pm AA Meets 7:00 | 18 Ash Wednesday 7:00 pm | 19 | 20 Stations of the Cross 7:00 pm | 21 Private Auricular confessions 10:00am Youth Night |
| 22 Holy Mass 10:00 | 23 | 24 Feast — Matthias, Apostle Confirmation Class 7:00 pm | 25 | 26 | 27 Stations of the Cross 7:00 pm | 28 |

14th: Valentine's Day Party—looking forward to seeing you there!!!

20th: The Stations of the Cross are a traditional Lenten devotion inviting the faithful to walk spiritually with Christ on His final journey to Calvary. Through 14 prayerful moments—from His condemnation to His burial—we meditate on the reality of suffering, the cost of redemption, and the mercy of God revealed in the Passion. This devotion forms the heart in repentance, strengthens compassion for the suffering, and inspires renewed commitment to live the Gospel courageously, carrying our own crosses in union with Christ's sacrificial love.



All Souls Day

“This Is the Will of My Father.” *Offered at St. Mary’s PNCC, Parma, OH*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This Monday morning, we gather as the family of St. Mary’s to commemorate All Souls Day. It’s fitting that we begin our week in remembrance and gratitude—for all those who have gone before us in faith, and for the promise that our Lord Jesus Christ will never let them be lost.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks words that bring comfort to every heart that has known loss: His words remind us that our loved ones, though no longer with us in body, remain forever in the care of God. They are not forgotten, nor are they gone. They live now in the light of Christ, awaiting the fullness of resurrection.

All Souls Day calls us to remember—not with sorrow alone, but with faith. We pray for our departed loved ones not because we doubt God’s mercy, but because we trust in it. Our prayers are an act of love that unites heaven and earth, and through them, we continue to care for those who once cared for us.

Here at St. Mary’s and All Saints parishes, as the candles glow and names are spoken, each prayer whispered is a thread of faith binding us together—past, present, and future—in the communion of saints.

As we begin this new week, let us carry that hope with us: that death is not the end, but the doorway to life everlasting. May our prayers this morning rise like incense before God, and may our hearts find peace in the Savior who promises, “I will raise them up on the last day.”

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

SERMON: Ordinary 32C



“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living!”

2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5, Luke 20:27-38

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the words of Jesus echo with timeless power: “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

These words call us to a faith that is alive—not rooted in memories

or monuments, but in the living presence of God who moves among us now. Our religion is not one of tombs and shadows, but of resurrection and renewal. Christ's voice invites us to live fully, hope deeply, and trust completely that His love always leads to life.

In the Second Book of Maccabees, we encounter remarkable courage—a mother and her seven sons who, under threat of death, remain steadfast in faith. Their strength was not born of defiance alone, but of conviction that the same God who gave them life would restore it. They looked beyond suffering to the promise of eternal life. Their hope was not naïve; it was anchored in trust that God does not abandon His children.

We may not face persecution like they did, yet our trials are real: illness; loss; uncertainty. Their witness teaches us that faith is not merely believing God exists; it is trusting His presence in every storm. Hope is not wishful thinking, but confidence in the God who brings life out of death and meaning out of pain.

Saint Paul reminded the Thessalonians, “The Lord is faithful; He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.” They too lived with fear and struggle, waiting for Christ's return. Paul's reassurance reminds us that God's promises endure even when the world feels unstable. His love does not shift with the seasons. To live as Catholic Christians is to walk in that hope—to keep faith when the path feels long and to trust when the answers seem delayed.

Speaking of delays, I once tried to “beat” traffic on a three-hour drive by skipping the EZ Pass lane. Confident in my wisdom, I joined the cash line—right behind a driver counting coins and asking for a receipt. It was a gentle reminder that God values patience more than cleverness! In life, we may try to rush ahead, but God often teaches us through the waiting. Even our frustrations can become lessons in faith, reminding us that His timing is perfect and His faithfulness unshakable.

In today's Gospel, the Sadducees confront Jesus with a question about resurrection meant to trap Him. They were intelligent, powerful, and skeptical—unable to see beyond this life. Jesus refuses to argue on their terms. Instead, He reveals the truth of eternity: “Those who are worthy of the resurrection neither marry nor are given in marriage... they are like angels.” Heaven is not a continuation of earthly life but a transformation into divine life itself. Then He silences them with the truth that

defines our hope: “God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

This means that the covenant endures beyond death. The patriarchs live, and so shall we. God’s promises do not decay in the grave—they blossom into eternal life. This truth reshapes how we live now. It calls us to be people of courage and conviction, alive with faith and radiant with love.

Here at All Saints Parish, we encounter that living God every Sunday. This is where hope takes root, where hearts are renewed, and where love becomes visible. Each Mass is an encounter with Christ—through His Word, His Body, and one another. And yes, sometimes a homily runs long, or a hymn hits a heavenly note, but that’s the beauty of a living Church: imperfect yet filled with grace. Christ came not to make us flawless, but to make us faithful.

Our community lives because Christ lives within us. Every act of kindness, every prayer offered, every smile shared becomes testimony that the God of life reigns among His people. So, my friends, invite others into this living faith. Someone you know needs to see that Church is not about guilt but about grace, not about rules but about relationships.

Let us go forth as people of resurrection—alive in hope, steadfast in faith, and joyful in love. For truly, ***He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*** †

SERMON: Ordinary 33C



“See That You Not Be Deceived!”

As the Church year draws to a close, our readings turn our hearts toward the great mystery of what lies ahead the fulfillment of God’s promises, the return of Christ in glory, and the coming of His Kingdom. These passages aren’t meant to frighten us with thoughts of the “end times,” but to remind us of something much deeper: God is still in control. He has not abandoned His creation or His people. The message is one of hope, vigilance, and faithfulness—a call to live each day with eyes fixed on Christ and hearts grounded in truth.

In the first reading, the prophet Malachi steps into a world that feels very much like our own—distracted, weary, and morally confused. Judah has returned home

from exile in Babylon, but the people have lost their spiritual focus. The priests are careless, and the people are complacent. Into this fog of faithlessness, Malachi's voice rings clear and strong. He warns of "the Day of the Lord," a day when God's justice will burn away all deception, hypocrisy, and sin. Yet he doesn't speak to destroy hope, he speaks to revive it. For those who revere the Lord, that day will not bring fear but healing. The same fire that consumes evil will also purify and renew what is good. God's message through Malachi is timeless: *return to Me, and I will return to you.*

This same spirit of vigilance carries into the second reading. The early Christians in Thessalonica believed that Jesus would return soon. But some misunderstood that hope and began to grow idle. "Why work," they thought, "if the Lord is coming any day?" Others allowed distraction and gossip to take the place of purpose. St. Paul, as a wise and loving pastor, corrects them gently. He reminds them that faith in Christ's return is not an excuse to stop living—it's a reason to live even more intentionally. Waiting for the Lord isn't about retreating from the world; it's about transforming it through love and service.

Paul holds himself up as an example—working with his hands, preaching with his heart, and reminding his followers, "If anyone is unwilling to work, neither should that one eat." His point is simple but profound: do not be deceived into thinking that holiness means passivity. True discipleship is active. It means showing up each day for the work God has placed before us—caring for our families, serving our communities, praying for others, and building the Kingdom of God one small act of love at a time.

This message leads us naturally to the Gospel, where Jesus speaks directly about the final things. He describes wars, earthquakes, and persecutions—real signs of turmoil that can shake our confidence. But Jesus doesn't tell these stories to fill us with dread. His purpose is to strengthen us, to remind us that even when the world feels unstable, *God is still sovereign over history*. The Gospel of Luke shows us that apocalyptic language is not about predicting the future but about living faithfully in the present. When Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple, His listeners can hardly believe it—but within a generation, it comes to pass. And even then, God's plan moves forward. What looks like the end becomes a new beginning for His people.

That's the heart of this Sunday's message: what seems like loss or collapse is never the end for those who belong to Christ. The early Church grew stronger through persecution because its members refused to be silenced. What looked like defeat

became evangelization. And that is our call as well—to witness to Christ not just with our words but with our daily faithfulness, especially when life feels uncertain.

In times of confusion, temptation, or fear, the Lord gives us a clear and steady command: **“See that you not be deceived.”** Do not let the noise of the world drown out the quiet truth of the Gospel. Do not let false promises, quick comforts, or passing fears distract you from God’s eternal plan. The light of Christ still shines, guiding His people toward hope, courage, and renewal.

As we end this Church year and prepare for Advent—the season of watchfulness—may our hearts stay awake to His presence. Let us live with clarity and conviction, serving faithfully and standing firm in truth. The Lord is near, His word endures, and His promise remains:

“See that you not be deceived.”



Solemnity of Christ the King



“This is the King!”

2 Samuel 5:1-3; Colossians 1:12-20; Luke 23:35-43

This Sunday, the 34th in Ordinary Time, we joyfully celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, which brings our liturgical year to its graceful conclusion. Over the past 51 Sundays, since last year’s First Sunday of Advent, we have journeyed through every sacred season—Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. The word “ordinary” simply means “ordered,” reminding us that every single Sunday—no matter its season—is holy. Week by week, we have listened to the Word proclaimed, been nourished by the Eucharist, and walked together in faith. Today we stand at the summit of that journey.

The first reading from Samuel brings us to a milestone in Israel’s history. The tribes come together—unified and full of hope—and choose David as king. They do not choose him for his perfection or his military prowess, but because they recognize in him the heart of a shepherd. They see a leader who will guide with strength, protect with love, and hold the nation together. His reign sets a standard—so much so that when future generations imagined the Messiah, they envisioned someone even greater than David, someone who would fulfill every longing of the human heart.

In the second reading, St. Paul takes our eyes beyond earthly kingship. He reminds us that the true King has already come—and His reign extends beyond space and time. Paul quotes an early Christian hymn proclaiming Christ as supreme over every power and every dominion. His kingdom is not built by force or fear, but by the saving love poured out on the cross. Through Him all things were created, and through Him all things find their fulfillment and peace.

Everything that David foreshadowed, Christ completes. And everything we hope for in a perfect King—Christ is.

Today, the Church celebrates a King like no other. His throne is mercy. His scepter is truth. His crown is love. And His kingdom is open to all.

Christ the King Sunday is not about earthly glory or royal pageantry. It celebrates a King who stoops to wash feet, who welcomes the outsider, who seeks the lost, who embraces the forgotten. When the world says, “You are alone,” this King says, “You are mine.” He is not distant; He is near walking with us, strengthening us, lifting our hearts, and reminding us that hope endures through every circumstance.

When we declare Christ as King, we are not merely reciting a title—we are making a commitment of faith. We are saying:

“Lord, You lead—and I will follow.”

“Your love shapes the direction of my life.”

“Your mercy forms my choices, my attitude, and my mission.”

Christ’s kingdom begins here—at this altar, in this parish, among the people sitting beside you. And in this kingdom, everyone belongs. There are no tests of worthiness—only hearts open to God’s grace.

This is where our calling begins. Christ the King invites us not just to recognize His kingdom—but to help expand it. How? By inviting others in. One person at a time. One conversation at a time. One sincere welcome at a time.

If you love this parish, if you feel God’s presence here, if you know this is a spiritual home—then extend the invitation. Bring someone to church this week. You never know whose heart is waiting for that invitation—whose faith may be rekindled—whose hope may be restored.

Today let us celebrate with joy and conviction. Let us affirm with our words, our actions, and our hospitality: **Christ is King.**





SERMON: Advent 1 A

“Be Prepared!”

Isaiah 2:1-5 Romans 13:11-14 Matthew 24:34-37

Someone once said, “Live every day like it’s your last, and one day you’ll be right.” For us at the beginning of Advent, it might be more fitting to say: “Live each day as though Jesus were coming back today, and one day you’ll be right.” This holy season is not about anxiety or dread, but about cultivating a heart of attention and reverence. Being prepared does not mean scanning the skies or calculating timetables; it means living with purpose, compassion, mercy, and grace.

Readiness for us as Catholic Christians means staying anchored to Jesus, encountering Him in the Eucharist, noticing Him in the faces of those we meet, and approaching Him daily in prayer. When we pray “give us this day our daily bread,” we are not just asking for food, it is a prayer for grace, for clarity, for God’s presence in this present moment. Advent teaches us that Jesus does not appear only at the end of time, He is revealed in gratitude, in mercy, in reconciliation, in patience, and in hope.

As we open a new liturgical year, I invite us to treat this moment much like the world treats January 1st—but with deeper spiritual intention. Soon people will be planning New Year’s resolutions: better health, better finances, better organization. But today, in Advent, we are invited into something more lasting. We stand not merely at the edge of a new calendar year, but at the threshold of fresh spiritual possibility. I ask each of us to consider a New Year’s spiritual resolution—one that draws us nearer to Christ, strengthens our soul, and shapes our readiness for His presence.

This is not merely personal improvement or self-betterment, it is awakening. It is living with intention. And I encourage you: let it not remain a vague desire. Let it become a covenant—something firmly and reverently promised before God. In Scripture, the covenants God made with His people were not casual—they were binding, life-defining pledges. A covenant is something we guard, sustain, and return to faithfully even when challenges arise.

So, what might a spiritual resolution look like?

It might mean beginning or deepening a disciplined daily prayer life, perhaps offering a prayer before leaving bed in the morning. It might be reading Scripture regularly—maybe a Psalm each night, or a paragraph of a Gospel each morning. It might include taking up a form of fasting—not only from food, but from pessimism, harsh words, rushing, distraction, or ingratitude. It might mean choosing times of silence and reflection—simply being present before God. Or perhaps it means choosing acts of love: reaching out to someone who feels forgotten, writing a note of encouragement, volunteering time, offering forgiveness even when it is difficult.

Advent is the season of beginning again. It is not passive, it is active, deliberate preparation. So, let us prepare tangibly:

Perhaps it is time to purchase a Bible you will truly engage with—highlighting, noting, marking. Or establishing a prayer corner in your homeplace, a cross, an icon, a candle. Perhaps you may begin a prayer journal. Or introduce a prayer at family dinner. Maybe choose a patron saint to accompany you this coming year. Or simply commit to arriving at Mass early, allowing your heart to settle and prepare rather than rushing in distractedly.

Let your resolution stretch you, challenge you, refine you. Preparation is not only for a distant coming of Christ—but for encountering Him here and now, in each hour of each day.

And we do this together—not as isolated individuals but as a united body. Perhaps your resolution might include inviting someone back to church. Offering a ride. Reaching out to someone who has drifted away. Extending kindness or reassurance.

Imagine our parish if each of us fully embraced Advent as it is intended. Imagine renewed faith, deeper prayer, stronger fellowship, more radiant discipleship. This could be your strongest spiritual year yet, a year of transformation.

So let us step into Advent intentionally, joyfully, faithfully. Let this year be different. Let it be the season when we truly prepare the way of the Lord—within our community, and within our hearts. Be prepared.





SERMON: Advent 2 A

“Produce Good Fruit as Evidence of Your Repentance!”

Isaiah 11:1-10, Romans 15:4-9, Matthew 3:1-12

Imagine for a moment—really picture it—that John the Baptizer were to walk right down the center aisle of our church this morning. The doors open, he steps in from the wilderness, with a rugged presence, a voice like thunder and truth, eyes burning with conviction. He looks at us—not with condemnation, but clarity—and says: *“Good morning. I’m glad you’re here... now show God you mean it by how you live.”*

That would wake us up, wouldn’t it? Because Advent is not about passive waiting or warm sentiment—it is active preparation. It is a check-in of the heart. And today, the theme we are given is unmistakably clear: **Produce Good Fruit as Evidence of Your Repentance.**

We begin with Isaiah. He speaks to people who are drained, emotionally, spiritually, and nationally. Their kings had failed them, their institutions had let them down, and their faith was slipping. Yet God does not scold them. He comforts them. He promises a new King, the true Shepherd, from the line of Jesse, one who will rule with wisdom, justice, and mercy. Isaiah tells them to hope again, to trust that God is still working, even when human leadership fails. Repentance bears fruit in hope.

The Psalm strengthens this picture of the Messiah ruler who will lift the poor, defend the vulnerable, and show mercy to those forgotten by society. The Messiah’s kingdom is one of compassion—justice that heals. Repentance bears fruit in mercy.

Paul, in the second reading, writes to a divided community in Rome and urges them to look to Scripture for encouragement and endurance. They must welcome one another—Jew and Gentile—as true siblings in Christ. Real repentance leads to real unity, not judgment, not superiority, not exclusion. Repentance bears fruit in unity.

And then John the Baptizer appears in the Gospel with a voice that shakes the crowd awake. He calls *everyone* to conversion, including the religious elite. Lineage is not enough. Reputation is not enough. Religious identity is not enough. John says that repentance must be demonstrated through action—through the shape

of one's life. Live justly. Care for others. Let your choices reflect your conversion. Repentance bears fruit in transformation.

This is where Leonardo da Vinci's story enlightens us. While painting *The Last Supper*, he harbored resentment toward another painter and used that man's face for Judas. Yet when he tried to paint Jesus, he couldn't. The hatred in his heart blocked the holiness in his art. Only when he reconciled—only when he repainted Judas' face—was he able to paint Christ. Repentance bears fruit in forgiveness.

And so, Advent asks us:

What bitterness am I holding onto?

What habit is keeping me from holiness?

Whom do I need to forgive—or ask forgiveness of?

What good fruit has God been waiting to see in my life?

When Christ comes—into our hearts, into our relationships, into our homes—He should find hearts ready, not cluttered, not hardened. The true preparation of Advent is inward. The true decoration is a renewed soul.

It is the father calling the estranged child.

It is the neighbor choosing peace.

It is the believer returning to prayer.

It is the Christian practicing patience and generosity.

This is how hearts prepare room. This is how lives bear fruit.

So, as we journey toward Christmas together, this season may not just change our environment—but change our hearts. May our repentance be real, deep, visible, and alive. And may we, as God's people, live the message of John the Baptizer through every choice we make:



Produce Good Fruit as Evidence of Your Repentance.

The Light of the World: As We Come into God's Awesome Presence

Father Jim's remarks at the Altar Society's Advent Tea

There is something wonderfully peaceful about gathering during Advent for a simple tea. The warmth of the cup in our hands, the glow of a Christmas tree nearby, and the sound of friendly conversation all remind us that this season is not meant to rush us forward but to gently prepare our hearts. Advent gives us space to breathe, to reflect, and to welcome again the Light who is coming into the world.

Scripture tells the story of God working through light from the very beginning. His first words — *“Let there be light”* — continue to echo into our lives today. Yet we all know that there are days when we feel dim rather than radiant. We joke about Christmas lights that blink on one side and refuse to cooperate on the other, but that image rings true for many of us: some days we glow with joy, and on other days we feel as if our fuses need replacement. But God’s light does not depend on our perfection. His light never burns out, never tangles, and never weakens.

Advent proclaims that a great light shines in the darkness — and *“the darkness has not overcome it.”* Each candle on the Advent wreath, lit week by week, reminds us that hope grows, love deepens, and Christ draws nearer. Christians have long marked this season with light precisely because the world grows darker around us. The earliest believers chose to celebrate the Nativity in the heart of winter so the brightness of Christ’s coming would be unmistakable. Every flickering candle continues to tell the same truth: faith still burns, hope still shines, and love still warms the world.

But the message of Advent goes further. Christ not only says, *“I am the light of the world,”* but also, *“You are the light of the world.”* That is our calling. Whenever we speak gently, forgive generously, or lift someone who is struggling, we reflect the light of Christ. Often, we may not notice our own glow, but someone else may find their way because of it.



Here at All Saints, that light is unmistakable. It shines in the way parishioners serve quietly, welcome warmly, and support one another with steady faith. It appears in our teachers, our volunteers, and every person who offers simple kindness without seeking recognition. And this year, that light will travel in a special way as we send a lantern to Holy Cross Parish in Hamtramck in memory of Bishop Rafalko — a man whose ministry embodied faithful, humble light. This lantern symbolizes how the flame of faith passes from heart to heart and parish to parish, linking us together in Christ.

Advent invites each of us to tend the flame within us. Some days we may feel like only a small spark, but God can shine brightly through even the faintest glow when we remain close to Him. Through prayer, patience, grace, and love, that light quietly transforms the world.

As we continue this holy season, may we carry the Light of Christ with renewed joy. And as we look toward the manger on Christmas morning, may we proclaim with hope and confidence: *“The Light has come into the world, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

SERMON: Solemnity of the Conception of the BVM



“May It Be Done!” December 8th

Today we pause in quiet wonder to honor the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a solemnity that draws us into the mystery of God’s planning long before we ever realized we were part of it. This is not merely a story about Mary. It is a story about God’s eternal love reaching into human history with precision, tenderness, and purpose.

The Book of Proverbs today speaks of Wisdom existing “before the depths, before the hills, before the earth itself.” In this poetic language, we hear that God’s saving plan was never improvised. It was not reactive. It was intentional from the beginning. Long before Mary ever drew breath in time, she existed in God’s heart as part of the unfolding of salvation. Her life reminds us that God’s grace always goes before us, preparing the way even when we are unaware.

The early Church reflected deeply on this truth. As Christianity spread across the ancient world, believers wrestled with the mystery of how God could enter human flesh. Over centuries of prayer, struggle, and theological discovery, the Church came to understand Mary not merely as a passive figure in salvation history, but as one uniquely prepared by God. Her conception reminds us that holiness begins not with achievement but with grace.

Saint Paul echoes this beautifully in Ephesians, proclaiming that we, too, were chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world.” Before we sinned. Before we doubted. Before we stumbled. God already loved us. God already desired us. God already intended good for us. Mary stands before us today as the living proof that God’s grace is not limited to the extraordinary few—but reaches into every human life that dares to say yes.

And in Luke’s Gospel, we hear that yes—simple, trembling, courageous: “Let it be done to me according to your word.” Mary does not fully understand the road ahead. She does not receive guarantees of comfort or safety. What she receives is a calling, and the grace to trust. This is where Mary becomes deeply personal for us.

Every Christian vocation, every hard decision, every moment of faith requires that same surrender. Faith is not certainty, it is trust.

Today's solemnity encourages us not to be afraid of God's work in us. The same God who prepared Mary also prepares hearts still, your heart, my heart, for grace, healing, and purpose. You may not see the full picture of your life, but God does. You may not feel ready, but God already knows what He is building within you.

So today, let us ask for the courage of Mary. Let us trust the wisdom of God. And let us believe, with hope and confidence, that the Lord who began a good work in us will bring it to completion.

And like Mary, may we find the faith to say, again and again: *"May it be done."* ✝

SERMON: Advent 3 A

"What Did You Go Out to See?"

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11



Today's readings carry a quiet yet unmistakable power—a deep current of joy, hope, and patient expectation flowing beneath every word. At the heart of them stands a single question from the Gospel, one that becomes the lens through which we hear everything else: *"What did you go out to see?"* At first, it sounds simple, almost casual. Yet it reaches directly into the soul. It invites us not only to look back at John the Baptist in the desert long ago, but to look honestly at ourselves here and now. As Advent continues to unfold, what are we truly seeking—comfort, control, quick answers—or the living presence of Christ amid everyday life?

This Third Sunday of Advent is known as **Gaudete Sunday**, *"Rejoice!"* The rose candle breaks into the darker tones of the season, signaling a subtle but important shift. The waiting has not ended, but it is now filled with light. Advent's deep violet softens, much like the sky just before sunrise. That is precisely where we stand today—on the threshold between darkness and light, between longing and fulfillment. Christmas draws near. Hope feels closer. Christ is nearer than we often realize.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah speaks to people who are weary in spirit and burdened in heart. They live in exile. Their future feels uncertain. Their confidence is worn thin. Into that exhaustion, Isaiah dares to proclaim courage: *"Be strong. Do*

not be afraid. Your God is coming.” The desert will bloom. The weak will grow strong. The blind will see. The lame will leap. Isaiah paints a vision of what happens when God enters broken places. That promise still speaks powerfully today, especially when life feels heavy or overwhelming.

The second reading brings us the voice of James, addressing Christians who are growing weary from waiting. Beneath his words echoes the same Gospel question: *What did you go out to see?* Did you enter faith expecting instant transformation? Did you believe that hardship would disappear quickly? Or did you seek a faith strong enough to grow slowly, steadily, and deeply?

James reminds us that Christian patience is not passive resignation. It is active trust. He points to the farmer who plants seed and waits for the harvest. That farmer works the soil, protects the seed, and trusts what cannot yet be seen. This is Advent faith. We wait not because God is absent, but because God is already at work beneath the surface. And so, James urges us plainly: *“Be patient. Strengthen your hearts. The Lord is near.”*

The Gospel then moves from teaching to testimony as we encounter John the Baptist in prison. The bold prophet who once thundered repentance now sits in darkness. The one who proclaimed the Messiah now struggles with doubt. From that place, John sends his question to Jesus: *“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”* In his own way, John asks the same question we all face eventually: *What did I go out to see?*

If doubt can find its way into the heart of John the Baptist, we should not be surprised when it finds its way into ours. We ask similar questions, often quietly and privately. Is Jesus truly who we believe Him to be? Is He present in suffering, loss, and uncertainty? And if He is, why does pain remain?

Here is one of the great graces of today’s Gospel: Jesus does not rebuke John. He does not shame him. Instead, He points to lived reality: *“Go and tell John what you hear and what you see.”* The blind see. The lame walk. The poor receive good news. Faith is built not on words alone, but on encounter.

This is how faith grows strong for us as well. Not simply because we learned about Jesus long ago, but because over time we begin to recognize His presence at work in our lives—through prayer, struggle, worship, and return to the altar. Each of us will face moments of confinement: illness, loss, disappointment, or doubt. When that moment comes, the Gospel’s question rises again. And like John, we are invited to bring it directly to Christ.

On this rose-colored Sunday of joy, Jesus turns His question toward us—not as pressure, but as invitation: “*What did you go out to see?*” Not merely a teacher or a distant figure, but a living Savior who walks with us in waiting, doubt, weakness, and hope.

That is why today is called Gaudete—Rejoice. Not because every burden has lifted, but because Christ is near. The dawn has begun. And the One we went out to see is already walking beside us.



SERMON: Advent 4 A

“God is with us!”

Isaiah 7:10-14; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24

Let me begin with a story that still settles heavily in my heart every time I recall it.

When my son Jimmy was young, one of his closest friends was a boy named Josh Land. Josh’s early life was shaped by profound tragedy. He was involved in a devastating car accident that claimed his mother’s life and left him paralyzed. In a single moment, his childhood changed forever. Ordinary things became difficult. Life became slower, more complicated, and filled with challenges no child should have to face.

Years later, Josh and his father visited a local animal shelter. In a quiet corner lay a dog that had been struck by a car. The veterinarian had determined the dog would lose a leg, and because of that, the shelter was preparing to put the animal down. Josh’s father, trying to protect his son from more pain, gently urged him to move on. “That dog’s life will be very hard,” he said. “Maybe too hard.”

Josh looked at the dog, then back at his father, and replied with words that remain unforgettable: “He deserves a chance. He’ll be like me—and I know what it means to live like that.”

Josh understood something many of us struggle with a lifetime to grasp: brokenness does not erase worth. Circumstances may change, bodies may fail, and dreams may unravel—but dignity remains. Love remains. Hope remains.

That, dear friend, is Emmanuel. God is with us.

This truth stands at the very center of today’s readings. In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah speaks to King Ahaz during a time of fear and political turmoil.

Judah is threatened, alliances are unstable, and the future feels uncertain and dangerous. God, through Isaiah, invites Ahaz to ask for a sign—any sign—to reassure him that God is still present and faithful. Ahaz refuses, cloaking fear in pious language: “I will not ask; I will not tempt the Lord.” Yet his refusal is not humility but avoidance. He is afraid to trust.

Instead of relying on God, Ahaz makes alliances with foreign powers, even allowing foreign worship to enter the Temple. God responds with a promise that cannot be undone: “The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be Emmanuel.” God will be with His people—not in theory, not someday, but in a real and lasting way.

That promise is fulfilled centuries later in Mary. When the angel tells her, “Do not be afraid,” she does not retreat or calculate the cost. She entrusts herself to God: “Let it be done to me according to your word.” Where Ahaz hesitated, Mary believed. God remained faithful.

Saint Paul, writing to the Romans, reminds us of who this promised child truly is—fully human, descended from David, and fully divine, revealed as the Son of God through the Resurrection. Paul also describes himself as a servant of Christ, showing us that in God’s kingdom, true authority always takes the shape of service. Faith, Paul teaches, is not passive belief but a way of living that transforms how we love, forgive, and endure.

The Gospel then draws our attention to Saint Joseph. He speaks no recorded words, yet his actions speak powerfully. Faced with a situation he does not understand, Joseph chooses trust. When God speaks to him in a dream, “Do not be afraid,” Joseph listens. He takes Mary into his home and Jesus into his life. Through his quiet obedience, God’s plan moves forward.

Joseph teaches us that faith is often lived one faithful step at a time, even when the path ahead is unclear.

And this brings us back to Emmanuel. God did not remain distant from human suffering. In Jesus, God entered it. He embraced vulnerability, poverty, and uncertainty. He came to be with us, especially when life is difficult.

Josh recognized that truth when he saw dignity in a wounded dog. As we approach Christmas, may we make room for Christ in our own lives. He does not wait for perfection—only for welcome. God is with us, and that changes everything.



SERMON: Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, Pasterka

“Glory to God in the Highest!”

Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

The season of Advent has passed. The waiting, the longing, the quiet anticipation are complete. Tonight, we do not prepare for Christmas, we *enter* it. We gather to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, born some two thousand years ago, yet living and present among us now. Looking back through the light of His Resurrection, the writers of the New Testament, the Fathers of the Church, and the prophets tell of something remarkable: God had been telling this story all along.

Again and again, one phrase rises like a refrain that cannot be silenced—like a cheer that bursts from the heart: **Glory to God in the Highest.**

The prophet Isaiah speaks to people who know real darkness. Not poetic sadness. Not symbolic gloom. But fear, invasion, and uncertainty. The Promised Land had been torn in two. The northern kingdom groaned under Assyrian oppression, while the south waited anxiously, wondering when the next blow would fall. Into that moment—into *that* darkness—Isaiah dares to proclaim something almost reckless: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”*

That light first appeared in a way that the people could understand. A new king would rise from the house of David. For Israel, that hope was embodied in Hezekiah, a ruler whose reign signaled renewal and reform, a reminder that God had not abandoned His people. The yoke would be broken. What felt permanent would prove temporary in the face of God’s faithfulness.

Yet tonight, at Midnight Mass, we hear Isaiah with deeper ears. We know this promise was never meant to stop there. The child foretold, the son given, points beyond one king and one moment in history. It reaches forward—boldly and joyfully—to Christ, the true Son of David, the Light no darkness can overcome.

Wonderful Counselor, who knows our hearts. Mighty God, strong enough to save. Everlasting Father, whose love does not fade. Prince of Peace, who reconciles what sin has divided.

This is why the angels sing. This is why the night glows. The darkness was real—but it was never final. Tonight, the Light has come. **Glory to God in the Highest.**

On that holy night in Bethlehem, heaven could not remain silent. The angels proclaimed: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.*” This was not a lullaby. It was a declaration. God had acted. History had turned. And the first to hear it were shepherds—ordinary people doing ordinary work—swept into extraordinary grace.

That angelic hymn becomes the heartbeat of Christmas. Glory rises to God, and peace flows toward humanity. Not the fragile peace of politics or promises, but God’s *shalom*—life made whole. When we give God glory, peace takes root within us.

Saint **Irenaeus of Lyons** reminds us, “*The glory of God is the human person fully alive.*” In the Incarnation, God unites Himself completely to our humanity. In Christ, we see what humanity was always meant to be: alive with God, radiant with hope.

Our world still aches for peace. The headlines remind us how fragile it is. Yet tonight, our eyes are drawn not to the noise of the world, but to the quiet Light shining from the manger. In that Light, peace enters hearts. Christ Himself becomes our peace.

And Christmas does not end tonight. It unfolds. Twelve days of joy send us forth to live what we celebrate. Peace is God’s gift—but it is also our calling.

And yes, this joy deserves enthusiasm. Think of cheering for the UK Wildcats—even after a tough loss. Fans cheer not because everything is perfect, but because hope remains. Christmas joy is like that—only infinitely better. We cheer not for a team, but for a Savior. And this cheer never loses.

So, let heaven hear us again tonight. Let joy rise. Let peace begin here.

Christ is born. Glory to God in the Highest! Alleluia!





SERMON: Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Day)

“And the Word Became Flesh!”

Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18

At the very heart of Christmas is one short sentence—simple, powerful, and life-changing: *“And the Word became flesh.”*

Not a slogan. Not a metaphor. Not poetry meant to sound nice once a year. This is the bold claim of our faith. This is the foundation of Christmas.

John’s Gospel does not begin with shepherds or angels or a journey to Bethlehem. It begins before time itself. “In the beginning was the Word.” John wants us to understand that the baby in the manger is not merely a child born into history, but God Himself entering history. Christmas is not just about where Jesus was born; it is about Who was born.

The Word—God’s own self-expression, God’s eternal truth, God’s living voice—did not remain distant. The Word did not shout instructions from heaven. The Word did not send another prophet or messenger. The Word became flesh. God stepped into skin and bone, into breath and heartbeat, into vulnerability and weakness. God chose to be human.

That single truth changes everything.

We often think of Christmas as sentimental, gentle, and familiar—and it is—but it is also daring and astonishing. The Creator enters creation. The eternal steps into time. The infinite becomes small. God does not come to impress us, but to be with us. Not above us, but among us.

Isaiah speaks today of restoration—of God bringing His people home after exile. The psalm reminds us that this salvation is not reserved for a few but meant for all the earth. Saint Paul tells us that God, who once spoke through prophets, now speaks through His Son—not only with words, but with a life. And John gathers all of that into one breathtaking sentence: *“And the Word became flesh.”*

This means God understands. God knows what it is to be tired, misunderstood, rejected, joyful, afraid, hopeful. God knows what it is to live in a family, to work with His hands, to sit at a table with friends. God knows suffering—not from a distance, but from the inside. Christmas tells us that God did not avoid the human condition; He embraced it.

John also tells us that the Word “dwelt among us”—literally, that God pitched His tent among us. God moved in. God made His home where we live: in houses and apartments, in nursing homes and hospitals, in moments of celebration and moments of sorrow. The Word became flesh and chose not to leave.

And that light still shines. Christ is the Light that the darkness cannot overcome. Darkness still exists, fear, division, uncertainty, but it does not win. Christmas is God’s declaration that light is stronger. Love is stronger. Life is stronger.

But Christmas also asks something of us. If God became flesh, then faith is no longer abstract. It becomes personal. It becomes lived. Christ comes to us not only once in Bethlehem, but every day—in the Eucharist, in the Scriptures, and in the people around us. And He asks for room.

There is only room in the manger for honesty. No room for pride. No room for bitterness. No room for the baggage we refuse to release. There is room only for who we truly are—fragile, imperfect, deeply loved—and for the grace God longs to give.

Christmas challenges us to open the doors of our hearts. To see Christ in the poor, the elderly, the lonely, the struggling. To recognize that every human life is a dwelling place of God. To live as people shaped by love, mercy, justice, and peace.

A rabbi once said that people no longer see God because no one stoops low enough. Christmas tells us that God stooped very low indeed. He came close. He stayed close. And He remains close.

This is why we rejoice today—not because everything is perfect, but because God is present. Not because life is easy, but because God is with us. Not because we have it all together, but because God chose to come anyway.

And the Word became flesh.





God has truly blessed us!!



God has truly blessed us!!



All Saints