



A Member of the St. Juan Diego Deanery  
Sister Parish with Sacred Heart of Jesus

## Parish Staff & Contacts

**Father Jeff Smith** Pastor  
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419-683-2015

**Joann Palm** Business Manager  
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**Bonnie Cochran** Parish Secretary  
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**Lisa Simmons** Pastoral Assistant  
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**Deacon William Horning** (Retired)  
419-683-3775

**Kim Legge** OCIA Coordinator  
419-689-3033

**Stephen Marek**  
Maintenance Committee Moderator  
419-683-3671

**Don Alt** Finance Council Moderator  
419-205-5763

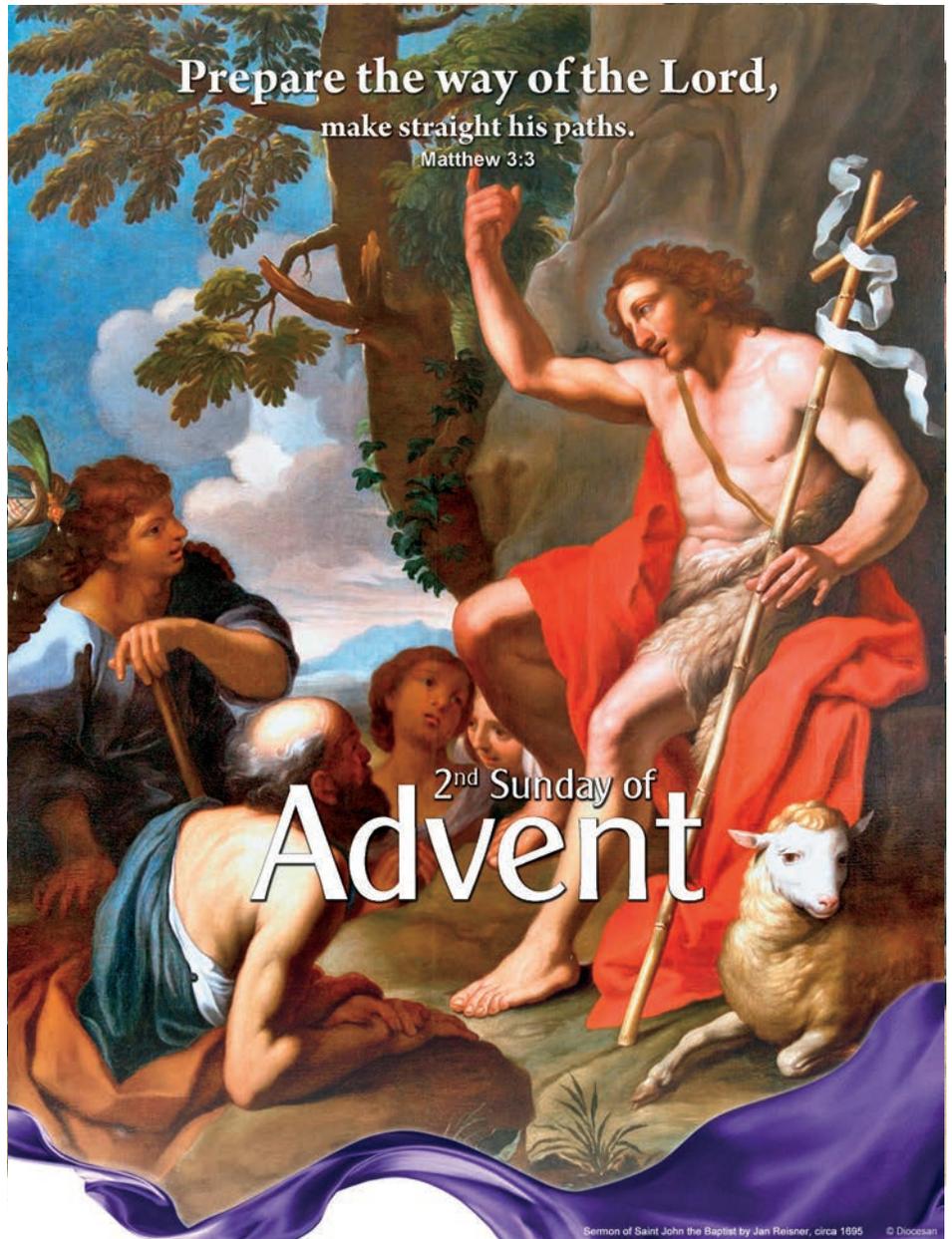
**Denise Belcastro**  
School Advisory Council Moderator  
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419-565-7925

**Sean & Laura Beeson**  
Natural Family Planning Contacts  
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**Bernadette Karasko** 419-529-6086  
Funeral Dinner Coordinators



## School Staff

**Sue Sanders** Elementary School Principal  
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419-683-1284

**Andrea Burton**  
Elementary School Secretary &  
Convocation Center Coordinator  
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**Jonah Studer** Athletic Director  
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419-543-0119

## Address

331 N. Thoman Street  
Crestline, Ohio 44827

**Office** 419-683-2015

**Website** [stjosephcrestline.org](http://stjosephcrestline.org)

## Office Hours

Monday - Friday, 8:00am to 1:00pm

## Bulletin Deadline

Monday by 9:00am before the  
desired Sunday. To submit items for  
the bulletin, please email  
[lsimmons@stjosephcrestline.org](mailto:lsimmons@stjosephcrestline.org) or  
call the Parish Office.

## Letter From the Principal

Dear St. Joseph Families,

As we begin the new Church liturgical year, the school children are busily learning about Advent. We will gather each Monday of Advent as a school community for an Advent Prayer Service and the lighting of the Advent Wreath. On our last day before Christmas Break, we will gather in the Church to pray the "Stations of the Nativity" – all are invited!

The students are also preparing for our annual Christmas program. Please join us on Tuesday, December 16 at 6:30 PM for an evening of joy and laughter as students perform "A Charlie Brown Christmas".

In mid-December students in grades 3-6 will be participating in a "spell-off" to determine St. Joseph's representatives for this school year's Crawford County Spelling Bee. We look forward to representing St. Joseph School at this annual county event.

**Calling all Sr. Citizens! Please join us for some Christmas cheer at our next Sr. Citizen luncheon on Tuesday, December 16 at 12:15 PM in the Convocation Center. The cost is \$5.00, and the menu will be: Pasta with meatballs, salad, garlic bread, applesauce and dessert. At this luncheon, students will entertain with songs from this year's Christmas program. Please RSVP by Friday, December 12 to the school office (419-683-1284).**

We are extremely grateful to Mrs. Andrea Burton for her many years of service at St. Joe's. Mrs. Burton has accepted a new position at Crestline High School beginning December 8th. We wish her the very best in this new chapter of her career.

The school will be on Christmas break December 22-January 2. Wishing everyone a blessed Advent and a very Merry Christmas!

In His Name,  
Sue Sanders  
Principal

## Scripture Readings

*For the Week of December 7, 2025*

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Second Sunday of Advent</b> Is 11:1-10; Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Rm 15:4-9; Mt 3:1-12
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</b> Gen 3:9-15, 20; Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38
<b>Tuesday</b>	Is 40:1-11; Ps 96:1-2, 3 and 10ac, 11-12, 13; Mt 18:12-14
<b>Wednesday</b>	Is 40:25-31; Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10; Mt 11:28-30
<b>Thursday</b>	Is 41:13-20; Ps 145:1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab; Mt 11:11-15
<b>Friday</b>	Zech 2:14-17 or Rev 11:19a; 12-1-6a, 10ab; Judith 13:18bcde, 19; Lk 1:26-38 or Lk 1:39-47
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Memorial of Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr</b> Sir 48:1-4, 9-11; Ps 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19; Mt 17:9a, 10-13
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Third Sunday of Advent</b> Is 35:1-6a, 10; Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10; Jas 5:7-10; Mt 11:2-11

## Immaculate Conception Holy Day Mass Schedule

*Monday, December 8*

*St. Joseph at 8:30 am*

*Sacred Heart at 10:30 am*

**This is a Holy Day of Obligation.** Other Mass times in the area are as follows:

12:30 pm at St. Joseph in Galion

6:00 pm at St. Bernard in New Washington

6:30 pm at Holy Trinity in Bucyrus

7:00 pm at Most Pure Heart of Mary in Shelby and at St. Peter in Mansfield.



## Retirement Fund for Religious

**A lifetime of service deserves care in return.** "Thanks to your generosity, we can provide the very best care to the sisters in our community," says Sister M. Stephanie Belgeri, 73, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George in Alton, Illinois. Donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious provide housing, medical assistance, and essential support for thousands of aging religious. Please consider giving this week.

Saint Joseph Catholic Church

## Mass Schedule & Intentions

*Monday · December 8 - Immaculate Conception*

**8:30 am Mass at St. Joseph**

*Mary Jo Manocchio*

**10:30 am Mass at Sacred Heart**

*Rev. Robert J. Kill; Rev. James E. Risacher*

*Tuesday · December 9*

**6:30 pm Mass at Sacred Heart**

*For the People of St. Joseph and Sacred Heart Parishes*

*Wednesday · December 10*

**8:30 am Mass at Sacred Heart**

*For an Increase in Vocations*

*Thursday · December 11*

**5:30 pm Confessions at St. Joseph**

**6:30 pm Mass at St. Joseph**

*Gladys Burkhart*

*Friday · December 12*

**8:30 am Mass at St. Joseph**

*For Those Who are Alone or Grieving*

*Saturday · December 13*

**3:30 pm Confessions at Sacred Heart**

**4:30 pm Mass at Sacred Heart**

*Ron & Barb Finnegan; Margaret Bell*

*Sunday · December 14 - Third Sunday of Advent*

**7:00 am Mass at St. Joseph**

*Bunny Hauck; Gladys Burkhart; Rita Solowey*

**8:30 am Mass at Sacred Heart**

*Dorothy Blum; Bob & Charlie Niese*

**10:30 am Mass at St. Joseph**

*Patty (Livengood) Galland; Lindsey & Lisa Anatra*

## St. Joseph Senior Citizen Luncheon

Please join us for some Christmas cheer at our next Sr. Citizen luncheon on **Tuesday, December 16 at 12:15 PM in the Convocation Center**. The cost is \$5.00, and the menu will be: Pasta with meatballs, salad, garlic bread, applesauce and dessert.

At this luncheon, students will entertain with songs from this year's Christmas program. **Please RSVP by Friday, December 12 to the school office (419-683-1284).**



<i>Check Ministry Pro for updates.</i>	<i>Sunday, December 14 7:00 am</i>	<i>Sunday, December 14 10:30 am</i>
<i>Lector</i>	Morgan Frye	Dan Salvati
<i>Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion</i>	Morgan Frye Adam Link Steve Marek	Tracy Dzugan Dan Legge Dave Sharrock
<i>Altar Servers</i>	Samantha Link Sydney Link	Mayson Davis Natalee Davis Gavin Parsons
<i>Gift Bearers</i>	Don & Sharen Alt Family	Matt & Adrienne Ruhe Family
<i>Ushers</i>	Doug DeNero Dave Horning	Bernadette Karasko Matthew Ruhe

## Catholic Women's Club

Catholic Women's Club for the St. Juan Diego Deanery will hold the December gathering on **Wednesday 12/10 at Resurrection Parish**, 2600 Lexington Ave. Lexington, Ohio. We will gather for Mass at 11:00am in the church, with a luncheon to follow in the hall at 12:00. Cost of lunch is \$20. Entertainment will be provided by Granny Creek Musical Group. All ladies from the deanery are welcome to attend and invite a friend to join in the fun.

## Job Opening at St. Joseph School - Secretary

St. Joseph Catholic School is currently accepting resumes for a **School Secretary**. This position plays an important role in fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for students, families, and colleagues in alignment with our school mission.

Top Qualifications:

- Supporting daily office operations and administrative functions
- Handling parent and student communication with professionalism and compassion
- Assisting the principal with general office support as directed
- Demonstrates kindness, patience, and sensitivity to the needs of children
- Practicing Catholic preferred

For more information and a complete job description, please contact Sue Sanders at 419-683-1284 or at [ssanders@stjosephcrestline.org](mailto:ssanders@stjosephcrestline.org)

## A Charlie Brown Christmas

*Tuesday, December 16 at 6:30 PM in the Convocation Center*

Please join us for an evening of joy and laughter as our students perform this beloved story!





**Weekly Offering**

*From November 23 & 30, 2025*

**Total Offertory Collection ..... \$8,194.00**

Sunday Envelopes ..... \$3,312.00  
 Loose Checks ..... \$1,090.00  
 Loose Currency ..... \$1,140.25  
 Online Giving ..... \$952.75  
 Votive Lights ..... \$104.00  
 School Support ..... \$265.00  
 Parish Maintenance ..... \$250.00  
 School Endowment ..... \$295.00  
 Caritas ..... \$15.00  
 Church Building Maintenance ..... \$605.00  
 Flower Fund ..... \$20.00  
 Retired Religious ..... \$125.00  
 Catholic Campgn Human Devlp ..... \$20.00

**Thank You !**

*To sign up for weekly or one-time online contributions, you can use the QR code or visit our parish website: <https://stjosephcrestline.org/announcements>.*



**Holy Hour**  
 Please join us as we pray a Holy Hour on Tuesdays in St. Joseph Church at 11:00 am. Please come and pray the Rosary and other prayers for our beloved country. God bless us all and the USA.

**Pray the Rosary With Us!**

*Every Sunday at 9:55 am in church before the 10:30 am Mass*  
 Extra rosaries can be found in the narthex.



**2nd Sunday of Advent**

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

- Reign
- Desert
- Jordan
- Proclaim
- Repent
- Forgiveness
- Prepare
- Path
- Winding
- Salvation



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**Gift Cards from SCRIP**

Please remember our SCRIP program for your shopping and gift-giving needs this upcoming holiday season.



Information about SCRIP can be found on our school's website at [stjosephcrestline.org/school-news](https://stjosephcrestline.org/school-news) or in the back of church.

Lindsay Mills is our program coordinator, and she can be reached at 419-961- 4276 for assistance. Thanks for your support of our school.

**Thank You!**

The Funeral Lunch Committee wants to thank everyone who donated prepared food, desserts, and money towards the Anatra funeral lunch. All donations were much appreciated!



**Rita (Vuckovich) Solowey**, of Haysville, Kansas, passed away on Tuesday, November 4, 2025. She is the daughter of the late Joe and Geri Vuckovich, and sister of Paula, Carol, and Linda.



**Matthew "Lindsey"**, 63, and **Lisa (McMichael) Anatra**, 61, of Crestline, passed away on Wednesday, November 19, 2025. Lindsey is the son of Pat Carey and brother of Mike and Jeff Anatra. Lisa is the daughter of Linda McMichael, and sister of David and Dan McMichael.



**Rosemary M. Haffner**, 80, of Galion, passed away Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at her home. She is the mother of Heidi Hocker and Gretchen Cantelmo.

St. Joseph Parish sends our sincere condolences to all of these families.

*"Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen."*

## Crestline Assistance and Ministries Program (C.A.M.P.)

As C.A.M.P. prepares for the upcoming holiday season, we are reaching out once again to ask for your help. We aim to assemble and distribute even more Christmas boxes this year, and we cannot do it without your generous donations. Any support you can provide, whether it be monetary contributions, non-perishable food items, or volunteer time, would be greatly appreciated.

### How You Can Help

- **Monetary Donations:** These help us purchase turkeys, canned goods, toys and other essentials. Please send any monetary donations to PO Box 426, Crestline, Ohio 44827.
- **Non-Perishable Food Items:** Canned goods, pasta, rice, juices and other shelf-stable products are always needed. Please contact Sue at 419-689-2708.
- **Volunteer Time:** Assisting with the assembly and distribution of boxes for Community Christmas.

Your involvement makes a significant impact on our community. Together, we can ensure that no family goes without the warmth and happiness that the holiday season should bring. Please contact Sue at 419-689-2708 if you are able to contribute in any way.

Thank you once again for your continued support and generosity!



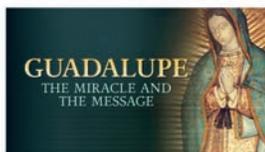
## This Week on Formed

Week of December 07, 2025



### What Is the Immaculate Conception?

Join Drs Tim Gray and John Sehorn as they examine Mary under her title of the Immaculate Conception. This dogma of the Catholic faith, promulgated in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, speaks of Mary's conception and what it means to the Church.



### Guadalupe: The Miracle and the Message

Enjoy this film narrated by Jim Caviezel that walks us through our Mother's miraculous appearance to Juan Diego, an encounter that has influenced the conversion of millions of people.



### Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego | Catholic Saints

Dr. Ben Akers sits down with Dr. James Prothro to discuss Mary's apparition to Saint Juan Diego on Tepeyac hill under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Our parish has a Formed subscription.  
Visit [signup.formed.org](http://signup.formed.org) and select our parish name.

An offering from the  AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE



## C.A.M.P. Giving Tree

*The deadline to return all purchased items with tags attached is Today - Sunday, December 7.*

Thanks so much for your annual support of this outreach program for CAMP which helps so many people in our community.

## Pack-A-Pickup Thank You!

Many thanks to everyone who brought in grocery items to pack the pickup! Your donations will be used to help many people who need a little extra help. Thanks for sharing the love of Jesus with the Crestline community!

## Check Out Formed for Advent

Explore the wonderful programming Formed has to offer to help you journey through Advent and prepare for the birth of Jesus. It's all free! To create an account, visit: <http://signup.formed.org/> and enter your parish zip or name, then enter your name and email and enjoy!

## An Evening with the Sisters of Life

*Saturday, December 20*

*Resurrection Parish, 2600 Lexington Ave., Lexington*

5:00 pm Holy Hour with music led by Sisters  
6:00 pm Mass with music led by Sisters  
7:00 pm Social in Fellowship Hall with Sisters

## A Festival of Lessons and Carols

*Sunday, December 21 at 3:00 pm*

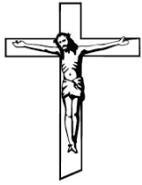
*St. Peter Church, 60 S. Mulberry St., Mansfield*

Presented as part of the St. Peter Music Series.



## Catholic Worldwide Marriage Encounter

As you prepare your hearts for Jesus, the Greatest Gift God has ever given, consider enriching another great gift, the gift of your marriage. Apply today at [wwme.org](http://wwme.org) to attend a Catholic Worldwide Marriage Encounter Experience. Jan. 30-Feb.1 Comfort Inn & Suites - Grand Rapids, MI; Feb. 6-8 Procter Camp & Conference Center, London, OH; Feb. 13-15 Mar Eliya Retreat Center - Oxford, MI; March 13-15 Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center - Cincinnati, OH. For more info, contact Amy & Joe at 517-667- 0433.



# We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

## St. Joseph Catholic School

St. Joseph  
Pray for us!

### December Events

- 12/2 Advent Prayer Service
- 12/5 Field Trip to Nutcracker
- 12/8 Advent Prayer Service  
Feast of the Immaculate Conception  
Mass 8:30 AM
- 12/10 Dress down day  
Staff Christmas Party
- 12/12 Mass 8:30 AM; Penance Service  
School Spelling Bee
- 12/13 OCIC with Father Jeff
- 12/15 Advent Prayer Service
- 12/16 Sr. Citizen Luncheon 12:15 PM  
Christmas Program 6:30 PM
- 12/17 Dress down day
- 12/18 Crawford Soil and Water visit
- 12/19 Mass 8:30 AM  
Stations of the Nativity 2:00 PM
- 12/22-1/2 Christmas Break

We were thankful for Deacon Vogt teaching us about C.A.M.P.



Come,  
O  
Come,  
Emmanuel

Mrs. Woodard's class display their "Thankful Turkeys".



Annie, Austin, Sully and Greyson work on an activity during a monthly visit to the Crestline Public Library.



The Salvati family is ready to enjoy a great meal during the school family Thanksgiving luncheon.

### Tinsel, Toes, and Undies

The school will participate in a Giving Tree theme of collecting socks and underwear all month long. All donations will be given to Children Services.



Della, Alice, and Maddie watch intently during the Sacraments Dragonslayers program.



Students enjoy a game of bowling during Friday recreation time.



“Donors like you have made it possible for me—and religious like me—to continue our mission in spirit and in prayer. Thank you for helping us live with dignity and peace.”

Sister Maria Cigolini, MSCS, 86, center

# Retirement Fund for Religious

**Please give to those who have given a lifetime.**

**Our senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests need your help.** They have spent decades caring for those in need, but years of service for little or no pay have left many religious communities without sufficient retirement savings. Today, over 20,500 elderly religious depend on the Retirement Fund for Religious to help cover their rising health care costs, medication, and daily living expenses. Your gift can help ensure they receive the care they deserve. Please give back to those who have given a lifetime.

*From left:*  
Brother Jordan Coonen, OP, 84;  
Sister Maria Cigolini, MSCS, 86;  
Sister Sharon Glumb, SLW, 76.  
Visit [retiredreligious.org/2025photos](http://retiredreligious.org/2025photos)  
to meet the religious pictured.

[retiredreligious.org](http://retiredreligious.org)

**To give at your parish:** Make your check payable to your parish. (Write RFR on the memo line.)

**To donate by mail:** Make your check payable to Retirement Fund for Religious. Please do not mail cash.

Amount:  \$1,000  \$500  \$250  \$100  \$50  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (for e-newsletters) \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)diocese \_\_\_\_\_

**Data Preference** (Please check Yes or No.)

The data I provided may be used to complete this transaction and may be used and stored in the records of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Retirement Fund for Religious.

Yes, I agree.

No, the data I provided may only be used for this transaction.

**Please check with your employer about matching gifts.**

Parents of Priests  
*Prayers for Priests*

**PRAY FOR CLERGY, RELIGIOUS, OR THE SPECIAL INTENTION FOR EACH DAY**

*Dear Lord, we pray that the Blessed Mother wrap her mantle around your priests and through her intercession strengthen them for their ministry. We pray that Mary will guide your priests to follow her own words, "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5). May your priests have the heart of St. Joseph, Mary's most chaste spouse. May the Blessed Mother's own pierced heart inspire them to embrace all who suffer at the foot of the cross. May your priests be holy, filled with the fire of your love seeking nothing but your greater glory and the salvation of souls. Amen.*

## December 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Pope Leo XIV	2 Bishop Daniel E. Thomas	3 Your Parish Priests	4 Parents of Priests	5 Rev. Matthew Rader	6 Increase of Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life
7 Rev. Anthony Recker	8 Seminarist Declan Reimer	9 Rev. Robert Reinhart	10 Rev. Daniel Ring	11 Rev. David Ritchie	12 Rev. Charles Ritter	13 Deacons and Missionary Priests
14 Rev. Patrick Rohen	15 Rev. Geoffrey Rose	16 Rev. David Ross	17 Rev. James Sand	18 Rev. James Sanford	19 Rev. James Say	20 Religious Brothers and Sisters
21 Rev. Jerome Schetter	22 Rev. Eric Schild	23 Rev. Edward Schleter	24 Rev. Ronald Schock	25 Rev. Paul Schreiner	26 Rev. Roger Schroeder	27 Deceased Priests of our Diocese
28 Rev. Stephen Schroeder	29 Rev. Rudi Schwarzkopf	30 Rev. James Seibert	31 Seminarist Evan Sekerak			

*Saint John Vianney, patron of parish priests, pray for us.*



Diocese  
of Toledo

# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

December 2025

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Rev. Jeff Smith, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. Lucy

St. Lucy was born into 4th century pagan Syracuse, Sicily, and is one of the most famous martyrs of the early Church. Her family arranged for her to marry a pagan, but since she had consecrated her virginity to Christ, St. Lucy refused him. Offended, he betrayed her to the authorities for her Faith. She was questioned and tortured, but all attempts to discourage her failed. She was finally executed. She is the patron saint against eye problems.

### The three comings of Christ

This season of Advent, we celebrate the three comings of Christ: in glory at the end of time, in time when He was born in Bethlehem, and His coming in our own lives and hearts. Advent is a time of "busy stillness," of preparing and waiting, like Mary certainly did, for the arrival of the Savior. This Christmas, let's renew our "Yes" to God's request to dwell in our hearts and be "born" in the daily living of our lives.

"The King comes as a helpless infant, born of insignificant parents in a small town of a distant outpost of the Roman Empire. He will conquer through the finally irresistible power of love, the same power with which he made the universe." Most Reverend Robert E. Barron

## Find peace before Christmas by slowing down

The busyness leading up to Christmas can be exhausting, but the Advent season is the perfect time to breathe, reset, and prepare our hearts for the coming of the King. Advent is a built-in gift, a chance to slow the pace and lift our eyes to what matters most.

**Renew a sense of the holy:** Advent is a chance to wake up the soul. When we lean into our Faith with intention, the season stops feeling rushed and starts feeling radiant. Light the Advent Wreath and let its glow steady your heart. Go to Confession and feel the weight lift as mercy takes over. Spend a few quiet minutes before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and let His presence ground you. Pray the Joyful Mysteries, the "Christmas mysteries" that still speak powerfully to our lives today.

**Tune out the noise:** Advent becomes richer when we clear space for God to speak. The world buzzes with distractions, but your soul needs room to breathe. Build small pockets of

silence into your day and let stillness sharpen your awareness of God's presence. Reach for a spiritual book instead of a scroll through your feed. Cut back on the constant stream of news that crowds the mind. When the noise quiets, the Holy Spirit has space

*"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).*

to guide, steady, and renew you.

**Streamline and prioritize:** Choose what draws you closer to Christ. When your heart is ordered toward what matters, even the cooking, decorating, singing, and gift-giving gain a deeper beauty. You may decide to attend fewer events, keep the décor simple, or choose more modest gifts. Far from taking away joy, this clears space for it. You move through the season with more peace, more purpose, and a heart in step with Jesus.

## Why Do Catholics Do That?

## Why do Catholics believe Jesus is God?

Every Christmas, we remember that Jesus, the Son of God, took on our humanity without losing His divinity. It is a mystery, yet we hold it with confidence because God, who is Truth, has revealed it.

During His earthly life, Jesus spoke and acted with divine authority. He

said, "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30). He forgave sins, clarified the Law, and worked miracles. His Resurrection stands as the clearest confirmation of His identity, showing that His claim to be God was real. As man, He could suffer and die. As God, He rose and conquered death.

## The most meaningful gifts of Christmas aren't wrapped

We know that the most valuable gifts are often the ones we cannot wrap. Alongside whatever you give your loved ones this year, do not let Christmas pass without offering these gifts as well:

**Your time:** Being present with the people we love is one of the simplest and strongest ways to show care. A short visit, an unhurried coffee, or an evening without phones can mean more than any item we put under a tree. When we give someone our attention, we affirm their worth.

**Your forgiveness:** Forgiveness does not excuse the hurt. It frees you from the weight of anger and resentment. It

also gives the other person room to grow and seek healing. Letting go is often the first step toward real peace. In many ways, forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.

**Your gratitude:** Giving thanks to God at Christmas is more than a warm sentiment. It is a heartfelt response to the depth of His love.

Look at the Crucifix, the Nativity, or the Eucharist and consider the humility behind such a gift. Our gratitude matters to God (see Luke 17:17-18). So after attending Mass on Christmas Day, take a moment to say, "Thank you." It is a small act that carries real meaning.

### from **S**cripture

#### Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23, Obedience is trust in action

By the time Mary gave birth to Jesus, Saint Joseph had already formed a habit of steady obedience to God. So when the angel spoke to him in a dream and instructed him to flee to Egypt, Joseph acted without delay. He trusted that God would care for him and for the family entrusted to him.

This trust is even more striking when we consider the circumstances of Jesus' birth. Mary and Joseph had traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem during the final stages of her pregnancy. Whether by foot or by donkey, the trip would have been long, uncomfortable, and

exhausting. When they finally arrived, they found no suitable place to stay and settled among animals. Soon after, they faced the threat against Jesus' life and fled to Egypt, living for years in a foreign land without the support of relatives or friends. Through every hardship, Joseph relied on God to protect his family.

The Holy Family was perfect in love, yet not spared from difficulty. Mary and Joseph met each challenge with faith and allowed God's Word to guide them. We can follow the same path.



#### Why is it said that Mass brings us closer to God than anything else?

At every Mass, Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374). In this moment, the Sacrifice of Christ is made present to us in a mysterious but real way. His self-giving is the greatest act of love, and our participation at Mass is our strongest response, our way of saying, "I love you, too."

Worshipping together also strengthens our faith in the God who is everywhere yet unseen. Faith grows in community. It grows through the physical actions of the Mass as well. When we sit, stand, bow, and kneel, we express with our bodies what we believe in our hearts.

Finally, the Real Presence of Jesus on the altar draws us into a closeness to God that we cannot find anywhere else in this life. Nowhere do we meet Him more directly than when He feeds us with His very life. In the Eucharist, He is as present to us as He was to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem and to His apostles in the Upper Room.

### Feasts & Celebrations

**December 6 – St. Nicholas of Myra (4th century).** St. Nicholas had a very generous heart and always gave to the poor. He is credited with saving three girls from being sold to pay their father's debt. St. Nicholas is also the patron saint of children.

**December 8 – Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.** We commemorate that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without original sin, preparing Mary to be the Mother of God. Though given to Mary, this special grace was for our sake. Pope Pius IX declared this doctrine in 1854. This year, it's considered a holy day of obligation.

**December 9 – St. Juan Diego (1548).** St. Juan Diego was visited by Our Lady at Tepeyac Hill, Mexico. She requested a chapel be built and sent him with roses to the bishop as a sign. When St. Juan emptied the roses before the bishop, his cloak retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

**December 29 – St. Thomas Becket (1170).** Thomas enjoyed power and riches as a close friend of England's King Henry II, who appointed him chancellor of England. In 1162, King Henry had St. Thomas named Archbishop of Canterbury. St. Thomas refused to allow the King to regulate Church matters and was exiled. He fled to France for safety. Thomas returned to England and was martyred.

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