



# *The Messenger*

ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION

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December 2025

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AND OUR YES**

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# Music

## ***A Ministry of Music and Prayer***

Music has always been close to the heart of our faith, and at St. Mary's, the choir helps the entire community lift that faith in song.

For **Director of Music Ministry, Paula Benalcazar**, the journey into sacred music began early. Her first piano teacher, Sister Clare, was also her schoolteacher and church organist—and Paula was captivated by the instrument from the start. Later, another teacher had a small organ at home, and Paula announced one day that she wanted to learn. Within a month of transitioning from piano to organ, she earned her first job at a small Methodist church. From there, she went on to serve at a large Catholic parish under a choir director who became a great mentor.

During college, Paula studied both piano and organ, serving in various churches—and even a Jewish temple—broadening her appreciation for sacred music across faith traditions.

At St. Mary's, Paula now leads a devoted group of lifelong parishioners and newer members who share a love of singing. "We really try to enhance the Mass by bringing our talents and voices together to glorify God through song," she says. "We're a talented group, but very laid back—we truly enjoy our rehearsals and one another's company."

Each piece is chosen with care, reflecting the readings and the liturgical season. "The music is so important in supporting prayer during the Mass," Paula adds. "It sets the tone for reverence and helps us enter into the sacredness of the liturgy. It's truly a ministry—helping others to worship."

**New members are always welcome!** Come share your voice and be part of this vibrant ministry of prayer and praise.

Next month, we'll be highlighting our Contemporary Group and the meaningful, spirit-filled contribution their music brings to our parish.



# WELCOME

Dear friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ, the Word who became Flesh! Welcome to the December edition of *The Messenger*. Our main theme for December is *Mary's Yes*. For most of the month, we are in Advent - the season to wait with Mary for the birth of the Son of God.

Our cover art portrays the Annunciation, nine months before Christmas, when the Archangel Gabriel went to Mary with words that amazed her: *Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you*. He told her that she was chosen to be the mother of the Savior of the world. Mary, like Eve of the most ancient time, had a choice. The Most High revered her freedom.

Eve chose to reject the way of God and tried to place herself above God. With Adam, Eve said no. They thought their no would bring power and fulfillment outside the ways of God. What it brought was the sorrow and disorder that always follow the rejection of God.

However, Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word." Mary said yes. Mary's yes called down the Holy Spirit, and God became flesh. He grew in her womb. Mary waited to see the face of her Son, the God-man and Savior of the world.

There are many ways in this issue of *The Messenger* to be inspired by Mary's yes, and imitate it in our own lives. In the *month in review*, we see countless ways that our ministries say yes to God's call of service and sacrifice. We'll even learn how to be inspired by the yes of the saints, honoring them with icons and statues.

The lives of the saints, different Advent and Christmas events, and ways to serve those in need - all here and more. I hope this issue of *The Messenger* inspires you to thank God for sending His Son, thank Mary for her yes, which brought Him to earth, and say yes to however God is calling you to trust, love, and follow Him.

God is with us. He loves us. He is worthy of our yes.

Peace,  
Fr. John

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*Merry & Bright*

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# Go Deeper

## Fiat! Mary's "Yes" and Ours

***"Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done unto me according to your word."***

We are called to give our own yes to God. He gave us Mary so we can ask for her help and be inspired by her example. Jesus said, *"I have come that they might have life, and have it in abundance,"* and *"I have told you this so that my joy might be in you, and your joy might be complete."* Following God's will means following the One who created us.

In this month's Deeper Dive, we explore what it means to say yes to the Lord – to know His will and follow Him with our own. The first question is simple but essential: **What is God's will?**

***"Love one another as I have loved you."***

It all starts from love and ends in love. To follow God is to freely choose love. God gave us freedom to choose Him and His ways. He also gave us minds to know what those ways are in the first place. There are several levels here, and there's no way we can get to all of them. But hopefully diving into the main ones will help.

### **The first step deeper into that is the Ten Commandments.**

These are for everyone and are the basics for living as we are meant to live. The first 3 are about love of God, and 4-10 are about loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Every once in a while, I'll hear something like "Well, the commandments are negative, and part of the Old Testament, so do Christians really need to believe they're God's will?"

The very definition of Christian is to follow Jesus. A quick glance at what He says tells us that the commandments are a part of the Christian life.

Jesus said, *"If you love me, keep the commandments."* To the rich man who asked, *"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* Jesus' first response is, *"You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and mother."*

I think that this can make sense to anyone who's ever had any good relationship with another human. The bigger ideals need to be lived in concrete ways.

For example, a person can't claim to be totally respectful, then constantly interrupt others or scroll on their phone as soon as others start talking. It doesn't mean that there's no respect in the person's heart. It just means that it could use some work, and needs to be applied in real life.

It's like that with faith, religion, and love. A person can have a more general faith in a loving deity, or belief in a spiritual system, or some sort of moral code. Eventually, though, that needs to be shown in actual prayer, worship, behavior, and habits.

Jesus also knew the danger of just following the externals. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7), Jesus says, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not kill'... but I say to you, whoever is angry against his brother is liable to judgment."* To feed anger and let it become rage, vengeance, accusation, judgment, etc., is to go against the commandments. It is easy to see how this is related to the commandment of love.

### ***Love is patient, love is kind...***

In First Corinthians (13:1-13), St. Paul teaches that love is the priority, but that it's not a vague affirmation or a vague tough love. Love is patient, kind, not envious, does not rejoice in the wrong, and the whole list of answers to the question **"What does love really look like?"**

## ***Whoever hears you, hears me...***

Jesus said this to the Apostles. They were the first bishops, and they and their successors are the shepherds and the institution that was established by Christ.

In the 1st century, when the New Testament was written, they didn't know the answer to the question, "**How are love and the commandments connected to internet and phone use?**" They didn't even know that was a question. They had just gotten their first modems and the AOL compact disk only worked one out of every five tries.

So Jesus gave us the church, the Scriptures, and Sacred Tradition - the Sacraments, liturgy, and teaching of Church Councils throughout the ages. He also gave us the Magisterium - the popes and bishops in their teaching office - to interpret the Scriptures and Tradition, and to answer specific questions in specific times, like with matters of technology.

Most of these are found, in one way or another, in the Catechism. These are very concrete answers to the question, "**What does it mean to love?**"

## ***As I have loved you...***

Jesus' love for us starts with His relationship with the Father and His prayer. From there comes His identity and mission. From there comes also His humble service - He washed the feet of the disciples. He identifies with the poor - "*whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me.*"

This is why the imitation of Christ - loving as He loved - starts with love of God. Prayer and worship are where we get the power to love others as ourselves. It's only if we nurture our relationship with Jesus, that we can love like Jesus.

The commandment of love always looks like Jesus. Not just the parts of the Gospels that prove our own personal points. For anyone who makes the blanket statements, "we need to be more firm" or "we need to be more affirming," many Gospel passages say otherwise. Sometimes more firm, sometimes more gentle. But love will always start with looking to Jesus Himself.

## **So, if the will of God is love, how does that play out for me personally?**

We start with the Commandments, Scriptures, and Catechism as the basis. If a person believes God is telling them to break a commandment, then they are not listening to God. It doesn't mean they're possessed or following the devil. While the devil is real and wants to tempt us to sin, there are other reasons a person believes they're being led to break from Scripture or Church teaching.

Sometimes it's a habit of sin or selfishness. Sometimes it's a fear or a wound: a person who wants to lie but has had an experience where telling the truth brought some difficulty or suffering. The person still needs to be truthful - or at least prudent - but there are deeper wounds that need healing before that person can feel the desire to be truthful all the time.

In our next issue, we'll continue to reflect on following the will of God. We will look at things that aren't included in the Bible or Catechism. These include the use of specific gifts and talents, professions, vocations, or specific life decisions.

However, it always starts with love, and how that is expressed in the Scriptures and teaching of the Church. If something goes against those, then part or all of a decision is not the will of God.

Let us ask Mary to help us say yes to all that God has revealed, and to live that in our relationships and day-to-day life.

Peace,

*Fr. John*

# Your “Annunciation” Day: What Does “Yes” Mean?

by Ellen Dumer, LCPC



Each of us experiences a moment in life when we are invited to say “yes” to a call. Even if our discernment unfolds over months or even years, there is always that singular moment—quiet, unmistakable, and deeply personal—when the decision ultimately rests with us alone. We weigh the circumstances, worry about how others may be affected, and feel the tension between responsibility and desire. The questions accumulate, the pressure mounts, and we often wonder how anyone can ever feel ready. Yet, somehow, we choose.

That decisive moment becomes our own personal “Annunciation”, our freely given “yes” to God’s plan for our one precious life. When we reflect on the depth of Mary’s “yes,” we discover why the Annunciation serves as such a powerful spiritual compass. Mary showed remarkable leadership in her immediate and wholehearted response. She asked only one clarifying question and then surrendered completely to God’s design. No hesitation. No delay. Her certainty flowed from her faith.

Unlike Mary, we are usually blessed with the gift of time, time for discernment, formation, and honest, even messy, questioning before arriving at our final “yes.” Think back on your own moment of clarity. What surfaced for you in that experience? Relief? Awe? Fear? Gratitude? The memory itself may still hold wisdom for your journey today.

Saying “yes” to God requires faith that goes beyond understanding. We will never have every answer, and we may exhaust ourselves trying to control outcomes that only God can shape. Putting belief into action can feel frightening. Yet, the Holy Spirit, gifted to us at Baptism,

empowers us to move forward with courage. In Mary’s life, trust allowed her to remember that God’s grace is always sufficient. The same grace accompanies us in every decision, large or small. We are never alone.

I often return to the saying, “When you say Yes to something, you are also saying No to many other things.” As we enter Advent, this feels especially meaningful. Your “yes” to God was not merely consent - it was a gift, an offering of yourself, and a quiet witness to all who know you. Your life continues to express a holiness lived faithfully in the unfolding ordinary.

Your wholehearted “yes” may require sacrifice - fewer spontaneous plans, fewer free weekends, less predictability. Yet these sacrifices deepen the meaning of your commitment. In the end, every faithful “yes” bears fruit, often in ways we never could have imagined.

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# Christmas in My Hometown of Saulheim, Germany

By Christi Miller

Longtime parishioner Christi Miller has lived in the United States with her family for 40 years, carrying many of her cherished German Christmas traditions into her home as her children grew. Though she now celebrates across the ocean, she still has brothers and sisters in Germany, and her heart returns there each Advent season.

"Christmas in my hometown of Saulheim, Germany, began at the start of December or even earlier, depending on when the first Sunday of Advent fell on the calendar. Every year, my family had an Advent wreath, and each Sunday after Mass, we would light a candle and recite a familiar poem:

## Advent, Advent

*Ein Lichtlein brennt*

*Erst eins, dann zwei, dann drei, dann vier*

*Dann steht das Christkind vor der Tür!*

*(Advent, Advent, a candle burns—first one, then two, then three, then four, then the Christ Child comes to the door!)*

No matter when Advent started, we always needed to have our Advent calendar ready by December 1. Each calendar had 24 little doors because we celebrated Christmas on Christmas Eve, December 24.

On the night of December 5, we placed our shoes outside the door in hopes that St. Nicholas would leave candy for us to find in the morning! On St. Nicholas Day, December 6, St. Nicholas himself often came to our door with his tall staff and a big bag of treats for the children who had behaved, and a bit of coal for those who hadn't. Seeing him appear at the door asking, "Have you been good this year?" could startle some of the younger children, who sometimes ran to hide!

When I was older, I loved visiting the nearby Christmas markets, filled with lights, music, and the smells of the season.

Each Christmas Eve, we had only a half day of school. My father would bring home the Christmas tree, and my parents decorated it while we were gone. We weren't allowed to see it until later that evening after Mass. When we returned home, we would hear the bell ring, "Das Christkind war hier!" ("The Christ Child was here!"), and the doors to the living room would open to reveal our beautiful tree lit with real red candles and shining glass ornaments. It was magical.

We sang Christmas carols around the tree before enjoying what my mother called our "birthday party meal" - hot dogs and bratwurst, potato salad, macaroni salad, and crusty bakery rolls - because we were celebrating Jesus' birthday. One year, my parents even set up a little toy shop for us, and we played late into the night.

Our Christmas Day and December 26 holidays in Germany, were spent visiting relatives, enjoying pheasant at my grandmother's house or rabbit at my uncle's, always surrounded by family.

Across Germany, Christmas traditions vary by region. Krampus might appear with St. Nicholas in Bavaria, or Santa might be known as der Weihnachtsmann ("the Christmas Man"). But what all these traditions share is the joy of gathering with loved ones to celebrate the birth of Jesus—the true reason for the season.

**Frohe Weihnachten!**

Our parish hall came alive once again with a little friendly competition at this month's Bingo and Luncheon. From sharing a meal to celebrating winners, it was a wonderful way to spend time together with our bingo friends. And did we mention **TURKEY DINNER, YUMMY!!!**



# NOVEMBER IN REVIEW

Our parish hall was filled with sparkle, spirit, and a whole lot of handmade charm at this year's Belles' Craft Fair! The Fair featured beautifully crafted gifts and festive decorations, baked goods by the Belles, and delicious grilling by the Knights of Columbus.

Teen Connect lit up the night at our Bonfire gathering! From s'mores and snacks to laughter and real conversations, it was the perfect mix of fun, faith, and friends.



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Our parish community gathered for a beautiful Anointing of the Sick Mass, followed by a heartfelt luncheon hosted by our Care Ministry. It was a special time of prayer, healing, and fellowship, sharing not only in the grace of the sacrament but also around the table with one another.



Thank you to everyone who shared their time, talent, and treasure for our Samaritan's Purse Shoebox project. Thanks to your generosity, our parish packed and delivered 270 shoeboxes to the donation center. Please keep in prayer the children who will receive these gifts and the joy they will bring!

After our staff meeting, we took a moment to gather and give thanks - for one another, for our shared mission, and for the blessing of serving our parish community together. Grateful for this team and the work God has called us to do!



This season, our parish came together in love and generosity through our Thanksgiving Food Drive, gathering meals and essentials for families in our community who could use a helping hand. Thank you to all who gave. Your kindness made a difference and shared Christ's love in a very real way.



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*"yes"*

As Mary said her courageous "yes," we, too, are invited to say yes each day. Yes to faith, yes to service, yes to love made visible in our parish community.

# QUESTION OF FAITH



Why do some women wear a veil at Mass, while others choose not to?

For many Catholics, seeing women wear veils, or mantillas, at Mass sparks curiosity. Why do some choose this tradition while others don't? The answer lies in a blend of history, symbolism, and personal devotion.

Veiling is one of the oldest practices in the Church, rooted in Scripture and tradition. In *1 Corinthians 11:2-16*, St. Paul refers to women covering their heads as a sign of humility and reverence before God. For centuries, Catholic women veiled as an outward expression of inward faith, recognizing the sacredness of being in God's presence, especially before the Holy Eucharist. The veil symbolized both modesty and mystery, reflecting the way sacred things are often veiled: the tabernacle and the chalice.

After the Second Vatican Council, the Church lifted the requirement for women to cover their heads. Today, the practice is entirely voluntary. Many women feel drawn to return to it as a personal act of devotion and love, a quiet way to focus their hearts on the Real Presence of Christ at Mass. Others choose not to veil, finding different ways to show reverence - through modest dress, prayerful attention, or silent adoration.

The beauty of the Church's teaching is that both paths are welcome. Veiling is not a measure of holiness, but a matter of personal discernment and love for the Lord. Whether veiled or unveiled, what matters most is that our hearts are open, humble, and reverent before the mystery of the altar.

Ultimately, the veil serves as a simple, beautiful reminder that we stand on holy ground, and that Christ is truly among us.

## When to Wear It

You can wear a veil anytime you enter a Catholic church, especially during:

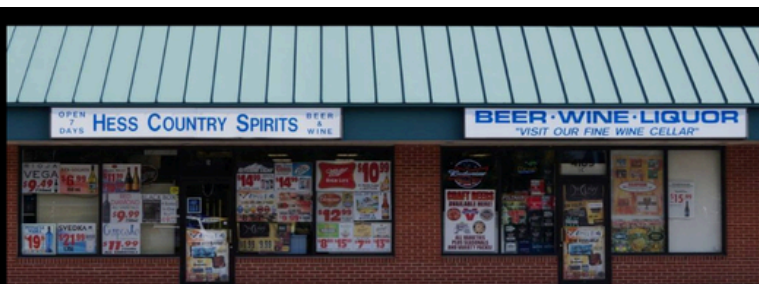
- Mass
- Adoration
- Confession
- Benediction

## How to Wear It

**Placement:** Drape the veil gently over your head so it rests on your hair and shoulders.

**Position:** The front edge usually starts about two inches back from your forehead - not covering your face.

**Securing it:** Use bobby pins or small clips to hold it in place (especially if it's lace or light fabric).



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# Salt and Light: Catholic Social Teaching and the Works of Mercy

## The Corporal Work of Mercy: Feed the Hungry

It fulfills one of the most basic needs. It is at the heart of any secular or religious charity. It is one of Jesus' most basic commands, and one of His consistent actions throughout His public ministry.

There are many blessings that come with following this work of mercy. The first, however, is the most basic and the most obvious: there are people without food, and they are given food. Even if we can't see any other blessing, this need is provided.

But there is more. On some level, those in need are shown human warmth. They are shown that they are seen and worthy of sacrifice and love.

The person who gives has their heart expanded – more opened to grace, virtue, and sacrificial love in other areas of their life.

Finally, we meet Jesus and are opened to eternal life: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father," says the Lord. "I was hungry, and you gave me food... Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me."

We can act on this work of mercy in many ways. Some suggestions:

- Donate food to a local pantry or holiday food drive (*we have these at St. Mary's!*).
- Volunteer at a charity to prepare, serve, or clean up from a meal.
- Make a casserole for Our Daily Bread.
- Donate money to a charitable organization.
- Minimize waste and donate the savings.
- Do an internet search on local, national, and international charities. Pick one to support. Catholic Charities or Catholic Relief Services are good places to start.

## Spiritual Work of Mercy: Bearing Wrongs Patiently

This is essential any time of the year, but can be most challenging during the holidays. Our faults and weaknesses flare up, sensitivity is heightened, and even things that don't normally bother us become irritating and a source of contention.

This spiritual work of mercy means not letting wrongdoing lead us into despair or bitterness. It is often a daily choice – or really many times daily.

There are many parts to practicing this, and here are some:

- Pray for patience – with ourselves and with others.
- Prayer reminds us of a simple truth: we need God.
- His love and patience are far greater than our own.
- God not only can help us – He wants to help us.



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## BLESSED HERMANN: THE WISE AND GENTLE MONK

By Rayma Young

Blessed Hermann of Reichenau was born in Germany in 1013, and his feast day is September 25th.

Hermann had incredible talents. He could speak seven languages and wrote about math, music, and the stars. He was even the first person in Europe to build an astrolabe and a portable sundial! Many people thought he was a genius.

What makes Hermann even more amazing is that he did all this while living with serious disabilities. He had a cleft palate, cerebral palsy, and spinal muscular atrophy. This meant he couldn't walk, could barely hold a pen, and had trouble speaking. His kind brother built him a special chair with supports to help him write. When Hermann needed to move rooms, others had to carry him. Even though his challenges were very hard, Hermann chose not to be angry. He knew that getting upset wouldn't make him better.

When Hermann was just seven years old, his parents sent him to a Benedictine abbey to learn from the monks. His teachers quickly saw how smart he was. By the time he was 20, he was teaching other students! Even with all his studying and teaching, Hermann prayed often, especially to Mary, because he felt she understood his pain and suffering.

Hermann became a monk at age 30. One day, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him and asked what he wanted most: wisdom or healing. Hermann chose wisdom, not for himself, but to help others.

As he grew older, Hermann's health got worse, and he eventually became blind. Even in darkness, he continued to create beautiful music. We still sing some of his hymns today, like "Salve Regina" and "Alma Redemptoris Mater." Hermann died in 1054 at age 41, full of peace and joy.

Today we remember Blessed Hermann as a kind, gentle man who loved God deeply. He was incredibly smart, yet humble. Even though his life was difficult, he knew that God's love made every moment worth living.



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## Looking for Wholesome Movies to Watch with Your Kids This Christmas?

These family-friendly films are perfect for cozy, Christ-centered movie nights this season!



### Animated & Kid-Friendly

- **The Star** (2017) – Nativity from the animals' point of view.
- **Nicholas: The Boy Who Became Santa** – True story of St. Nicholas.
- **Brother Francis: The King is Born** – Simple Nativity for young children.
- **The First Christmas: The Story of the First Christmas Snow.**

### Biblical & Faith-Focused

- **The Nativity Story** (2006) – Beautiful live-action retelling.
- **VeggieTales: The Little Drummer Boy.**
- **A Charlie Brown Christmas** – Features the Gospel of Luke.

### Bonus Pick

- **The Fourth Wise Man** – A meaningful Wise Men story for all ages. (Check out the movie review on pg.18!)

## Find the Difference

Can you find five differences between these two pictures?



## Saint Nicholas: The Real Gift-Giver (The Origins of Santa Claus)



Have you ever wondered how the jolly man in red, who fills stockings and delivers gifts on Christmas Eve, began as one of the great saints of the early Church? Long before “Santa Claus” became a symbol of holiday cheer, there was St. Nicholas of Myra, a man whose deep faith, generosity, and courage helped shape both Christian tradition and Christmas joy.

St. Nicholas was born around A.D. 270 in Patara, a coastal town in modern-day Turkey. Raised by devout Christian parents, Nicholas was known from a young age for his compassion and love for the poor. After his parents died, he used his inheritance to care for those in need. His most famous act of charity tells of a poor father with three daughters who could not afford dowries. Quietly, Nicholas dropped bags of gold through the family’s window at night, saving the girls from slavery and providing for their future. This humble act of mercy gave rise to the tradition of secret gift-giving, which lives on today in the legend of Santa Claus.

Nicholas later became Bishop of Myra, a city in Asia Minor, during a time of great persecution under Emperor Diocletian. He was imprisoned for his faith and released when Constantine became emperor. Nicholas courageously defended the truth of the Gospel, especially at the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.), where bishops from around the world gathered to affirm that Jesus is truly the Son of God, “begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.” It is said that Nicholas spoke passionately against the heresy of Arius, who denied Christ’s divinity.

Beyond his theological strength, Nicholas was known for his pastoral heart. He provided food during famine, cared for orphans and sailors, and interceded for those unjustly condemned. Stories of miracles and answered prayers spread throughout the Christian world, making him one of the most beloved saints of both the East and West.

Centuries later, his name and memory traveled north through Europe. In the Netherlands, he became Sinterklaas, and when Dutch settlers came to America, Sinterklaas eventually became known as Santa Claus. Though modern culture has added reindeer, elves, and bright red suits, the heart of the story remains: a faithful bishop who reflected the generosity and love of Christ.

St. Nicholas reminds us that giving is not about extravagance, but about sharing God’s love and mercy with others. His life invites us to serve quietly, love deeply, and give joyfully in the name of Jesus, the greatest gift of all.

**St. Nicholas, pray for us!**



## *Top 10 Funny (but True!) Catholic Truths About Advent*

### **The Meaning Behind the Candy Cane – A Catholic Refresher**


Have you ever wondered why candy canes are shaped the way they are? Or why they have red and white stripes? They're not just sweet treats – they can remind us of Jesus and His love for us!

#### **The Shape – A Shepherd's Staff**

The candy cane is shaped like a shepherd's staff – just like the ones shepherds used to guide and care for their sheep.

- Jesus is our Good Shepherd (John 10:11).
- He came to guide us and lay down His life for us

Flip it upside down and...

 **It becomes a “J” – for Jesus!**

#### **White – Purity and Holiness**

The white part of the candy cane reminds us that Jesus was pure and without sin.

- When we are baptized, our souls are washed clean and made white like snow (Isaiah 1:18).

#### **Red Stripes – His Sacrifice**

The red stripes remind us of the blood Jesus shed for us on the cross.

- The small red stripes can remind us of the wounds He received when He was beaten.
- The thick red stripe reminds us of His great love and the blood He poured out for our salvation.

#### **Peppermint – A Symbol of Hyssop**

Some say the peppermint flavor is like hyssop, a plant used in the Bible for purification (Psalm 51:7).

**It's not Christmas yet—put the Baby Jesus down!**

**Advent: The only time purple candles make people this excited.**

**Mary waited nine months. You can wait four weeks.**

**Advent is basically the Church saying, “Slow your fruitcake down.”**

**Yes, you can listen to “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” 47 times. It's holy.**

**That pink candle? It's called Gaudete, not “the flamingo week.”**

**Advent is spiritual carb-loading for Christmas.**

**It's less about wrapping gifts and more about unwrapping your heart.**

**Every time you light a candle, you're telling the darkness: “Not today.”**

**When Christmas finally comes, you'll be ready to celebrate like the shepherds—joyfully and half-awake.**

*Follow Us!*



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Catholic Church Pylesville, MD

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# Catholic Apologetics

## Why We Have Statues, Icons, and Nativity Sets

Walk into any Catholic church during Advent and you'll likely see something familiar – statues of saints, icons of Mary and Jesus, and the beloved Nativity scene. To some, these may look like decorations. To others, they raise questions: Why do Catholics have so many images? Isn't that against the Commandments? Let's take a closer look.

### We Don't Worship Statues

We remember the Holy person the statue represents, not the material it's made of. Just as you might keep a photo of a loved one, we keep visual reminders of those who showed us what faith looks like. It's not about marble or paint, it's about memory, love, and connection.

### God Used Images First

In the Book of Exodus, God told Moses to craft golden cherubim for the Ark of the Covenant. Art and imagery were part of worship from the very beginning, as long as they pointed to God, not away from Him.

### The Incarnation Changed Everything

When Jesus was born, the invisible God took on a visible face. From that moment, we could paint, carve, and imagine what Love looked like, in the flesh. Every holy image now reflects that mystery – the Word made visible.

### The Nativity Set Is a Visual Gospel

Each figure in the crèche tells part of the story: Mary's "yes," Joseph's "faith", the angels' "song", and the shepherds' "awe." Even the animals remind us that all creation awaited the Savior's coming. It's more than décor, it's catechesis made visible.

### We're Visual Learners of the Faith

For centuries, art has taught what words could not. Before most people could read, stained glass, statues, and icons told the story of salvation. Today, they still do, gently pointing our hearts back to God.

### A Holy Reminder

So the next time you pass a Nativity scene or light a candle before a statue, remember: we're not bowing to clay or plaster. We're bowing to Christ – the One who became visible so that we might see, believe, and love Him more deeply.



### Did You Know?

The first Nativity scene was created by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 in Greccio, Italy.

He wanted people to see and feel the wonder of Christ's birth, so he set up a living Nativity with real people and animals – not for decoration, but for devotion.

From that humble beginning grew one of the Church's most beloved traditions, reminding us that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

**Fun fact:** In 2019, Pope Francis visited Greccio and encouraged every family to keep a Nativity scene at home as a sign of faith and joy.



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# Around the Archdiocese



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## A CHRISTMAS DISPLAY BUS TRIP

**SATURDAY,  
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**DEPART: 9AM  
RETURN: 4:30PM**

- Group Rate Tickets and Bus: \$80.00 for adults; \$50.00 for youth; \$30.00 for children ages 1-4.
- Continental Breakfast foods served on bus.
- Pick up at West Park-n-Ride and East Park-n-Ride locations
- Café Dining and lunch areas available
- If interested, complete form at:  
<https://st-ignatius.net/longwood-gardens-christmas-display-bus-trip> or click on QR code.
- A member from the Arts and Culture Ministry will respond to you.



THE BALTIMORE BASILICA  
PRESENTS

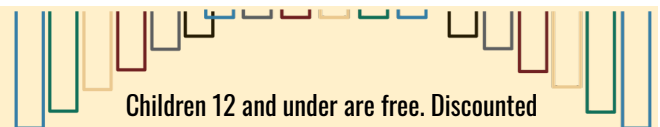
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**SATURDAY,  
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The Baltimore Basilica Chamber  
Orchestra and Schola Cantorum

### HANDEL'S MESSIAH

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2025 |  
7:00pm**

**SATURDAY,  
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### MOZART GREAT MASS AND PIANO CONCERTO NO. 20 in D minor

**FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2026 | 7:30PM  
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comfortably?



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# A LOOK AHEAD

## DEC



2

### Monthly Bingo / Luncheon

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Admission includes lunch.

Doors open at 9:30 AM, games begin at 11:00 AM



6

### First Saturdays

Confessions  
8:30-9:30 AM

Adoration  
8 - 10 AM



6-7

### Shepherds of Bethlehem Visit

Shop this weekend and help this amazing group in their mission to support the crafters of Bethlehem

After All Masses



### Support Group

In the Conference room. This group provides a safe and welcoming church atmosphere for those grieving.

10 AM



7

### Donut Sunday

Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus



After All Masses



5

### First Fridays

Confessions  
7 - 8 PM

Adoration  
6 - 9 PM



Annual Blessing and Lighting of the Parish Christmas Tree and Splendor of Light Display

After 4 PM Mass



### Upper Chesapeake Health

They'll be giving free shots, blood pressure screenings, and diabetes risk assessments

After the 10:30 and 12:15 Masses

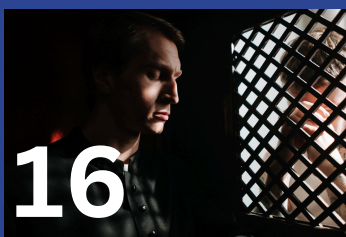


13-14

### Christmas Food Drive

Share Christmas joy by donating to our parish Christmas Food Drive and supporting families in need. Details in the bulletin.

10 AM - 11 AM



16

### Penance Service

Is a time to pause, reflect, and receive God's mercy.

6:30 PM



21

### Jesus' Birthday Bash

Children ages 5-13 years will join us in the hall for various activities, and practice for the Christmas Pageant

11:30 AM drop off and Pageant at 4 PM



### Christmas Mass Schedule

**Eve: December 24**

4:00 PM / Church & Hall

6:00 PM / Church

& Live Streamed

8:00 PM / Church

**Day: December 25**

10:00 AM / Church

& Live Streamed

# GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, MYRRH...AND JEWELS?

By Greg Mank

Weary of Christmas shows about the Grinch, Rudolph, and Frosty?

If so, the 1985 film *The Fourth Wise Man* is for you! It's an inspiring movie based on the 1895 novella *The Other Wise Man*, by Henry Van Dyke.

Artaban, a Persian astrologer, wishes to give a gift of jewels to the promised King of Kings.

However, he fails to join the three other Magi following the guiding star because he stops en route to save a dying man.

For 33 years, Artaban spends his health and wealth helping others in need while continuing his search accompanied only by his slave Orontes. Finally in Jerusalem, during the Crucifixion, Artaban spends his final energy and the last of his gems saving a young girl from slavery. As he dies dejected, a vision of Jesus comforts him with the words from Matthew's Gospel: "Whenever you did these things for the least of my brothers, you did them for Me."

Martin Sheen as Artaban, Alan Arkin as Orontes, and the rest of the cast are all excellent. The entire film is a profound experience.

*The Fourth Wise Man* is available on various streaming services and also through Maryland's interlibrary loan system, Marina.



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Come, Lord Jesus,  
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hearts. Prepare us with joy and  
hope as we await Your coming.  
Amen.



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