



The Nativity
Lorenzo Lotto (c. 1480 - 1556/1557)

A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

“You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

St. Matthew tells the story of Christmas not first through wonder, but through **obedience**. Unlike the Gospel of St. Luke, Matthew’s gospel does not begin with the annunciation of the birth of Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary, but to St. Joseph, the Son of David. An angel comes to Joseph in a dream, a just man troubled by a mystery he cannot resolve. Into Joseph’s fear and confusion comes the Word of God through the message of an angel: *“Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”* And then comes the heart of Christmas itself: *“She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”* Before shepherds, before angels singing, before Magi or gifts or light, Christmas is proclaimed as **salvation from sin**.

This is the meaning of the Incarnation. The Son of God does not come merely to console, inspire, or uplift. He comes to **heal**. He comes because something in us is wounded. He comes because humanity is clothed, as St. Alphonsus so starkly puts it, in *the unhappy flesh of Adam*. Christmas is not sentimental because sin is not sentimental. The Child laid in the manger comes precisely because man cannot save himself.

St. Francis de Sales reminds us that we do not come to God by climbing upward into the clouds, but by passing through the Sacred Humanity of Christ. There is no way to God except through this door. The Eternal Word takes flesh so that our flesh—weak, wounded, prone to sin—might be touched, restored, and transformed. God does not redeem us from a distance. He draws near. He enters our poverty. He assumes our condition. He allows Himself to be held, fed, carried, and

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Fourth Sunday of Advent
21 December 2025

Sacred Heart, Ronan
Immaculate Conception, Polson
St. Joseph Mission, Charlo

Fr. Kevin Christofferson, Pastor
Katie Devlin, Office Manager

Parish Office
PO Box 1477 Polson, MT 59860
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This week’s office hours: Tuesday 2-5 pm

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday at 6:00 pm
Confessions are available at 5:00 pm
Rosary is prayed at 5:30 pm

Sunday at 11:00 am
Rosary is prayed at 10:30 am

Vigil Mass of the Nativity of the Lord † Christmas Eve
Wednesday, December 24th at 5:00 pm
Children’s program will be performed 30 minutes before Mass.

Mass of the Nativity of the Lord † Christmas Day
Thursday, December 25th at 10:00 am
Christmas carols will be sung 30 minutes before Mass.
All are invited to come early and join together in joyful song!

SACRED HEART MASS SCHEDULE

Sunday at 9:00 am

Vigil Mass of the Nativity of the Lord † Christmas Eve
Wednesday, December 24th at 7:00 pm
Christmas carols will be sung 30 minutes before Mass.
All are invited to come early and join together in joyful song!

No Mass this Friday

Mass is offered at St. Joseph Mission in Charlo the **third Saturday** of each month at 4:00 pm.



Sacred Heart Parish Breakfast

December 21 after 9:00 Mass

All are welcome!



Immaculate Conception Christmas Decorating

Please stay after Mass on December 21 to help transform our sanctuary from Advent to Christmas. All help will be greatly appreciated. Call Sheila LeBrun with questions.
406-208-5788



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eventually rejected, so that nothing in human life would remain untouched by His mercy.

Joseph teaches us how to stand before this mystery. He does not speak a word. He does not demand understanding. He obeys. He takes the Child and His Mother into his life, into his home, into the hiddenness of daily existence. This is the posture of Christmas: humble acceptance of a salvation we did not earn and could not imagine.

St. Alphonsus insists that God is not a tyrant searching for reasons to condemn, but a Father who desires to save. And so the birth of Christ exposes a truth that is both humbling and liberating: we are not worthy—but we are loved. We are not whole—but we are sought. We are not strong—but we are invited. The Child comes not because we are righteous, but because we are sinners in need of a Savior.

This is why Christmas (Christ's Mass) leads us inevitably to the altar. The same Jesus born of Mary is the Jesus given to us in the Eucharist. And the proper disposition for receiving Him is not self-confidence, but **holy hunger**. We do not receive because we are worthy; we receive because we are unwell and in need of the Physician. St. Alphonsus is clear: the Eucharist is not the reward of the perfect, but the medicine of the weak. If we waited until we were worthy, we would never come. If we come knowing our need, we come rightly.

St. Thomas Aquinas puts this truth into prayer, asking not for entitlement but for healing. He begs that the reception of Christ's Body and Blood may cleanse him inwardly, heal what is wounded, correct what is disordered, and strengthen what is weak. He asks that the Sacrament not merely be received, but **received fruitfully**, so that grace may take root and grow.

As Christmas approaches, the Church invites us to stand with Joseph before the mystery of the Child who saves. To acknowledge our poverty without despair. To recognize our sin without fear. To come forward not as those who have earned a place at the table, but as those who have been invited by mercy. The Light enters the world not to shame us, but to heal us. And the manger points us toward the altar, where the same Jesus continues to come to His people, still saving, still healing, still clothing our unhappy flesh with grace.

Come, then, to Christmas. Come to the altar. Come not because you are worthy, but because you stand in need of a Savior.

Peace,
Fr. Kevin Christofferson

Liturgy Calendar & Mass Intentions

Sacred Heart & St. Joseph Mission

Sunday, December 21st *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
Repose of the Soul of Jan Schmitz

Immaculate Conception

Saturday, December 20th *Vigil of the Fourth Sunday of Advent*
Intentions of Pope Leo XIV

Sunday, December 21st *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
Intentions of the Parish Faithful

Wednesday, December 24th *Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord*
Intentions of the Parish Faithful

Thursday, December 25th *The Nativity of the Lord*
Intentions of the Parish Faithful

Congratulations to our newly baptized babies!

Achilles Evander Athanasius Arias

Baptized December 13th



Augustus Merle Nicely

&

Michael Alan Walters

Baptized December 21st

Baptism...now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. -1 Peter 3:21



Thank you to all who attended the Parade of Lights and to those who participated in our parish's float!

PRAYER CORNER

Humbly asking for your prayers...

Maryalice Rouselle, The Clay Family, Virginia Rubel, Michael Conrad, Kaylee Martin, Dave Evertz, Steve Ducharme, Bill Nash, Donna Jacobs, Derrie Edge, Heather Stocki, Betty Bjork, Jason Avison, Nash Niemeyer, Bud Cheff, Jr, Bill Rueth, Monte Jenkins, Chris Skinner, Ryan Johnson, Vicki Whalen, Laurel Cheff, Zane Kelly, Rod Clairmont, David Jenkins, Bruce Simpson, Debbie Tschida, Carolyn Fyant, Diana Cote, Shawna Lehner, Bill Efinger, Bruce Basler.



Please help to keep the list current by contacting the Parish Office. Also, out of respect for a person's privacy, please make sure that all individuals wish to be publicly identified.

The Holy Father's prayer intention for December

For Christians in areas of conflict:

Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation, and hope.

Please pray for our seminarians!

Dcn. Kaleb Mitchell, Riley Helgoe, Brett Rotz, Anthony Olmes, James Semling, Jamie Severson, Carter Anderson, Shae Bills, Matt Keck, Carson Gorton, Jake Smith, Ryan Frampton, Liam Aippersbach, Mason Yochum.

Advent Prayers

A little something to spiritually prepare in the final days leading up to Christmas

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Lord Jesus,
You took upon Yourself the unhappy flesh of Adam,
not standing apart from my weakness
but entering it from within.
Let me not hide my wounds from You.
You came because I need You—
heal what is broken in me by Your mercy.

“Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.”

Lord,
like Joseph, I do not always understand
what You are doing in my life.
Give me the grace to obey
even when the path is unclear,
to trust You more than my own explanations,
and to be faithful in the dark.

“Do not be afraid.”

Lord,
You do not wait for me to become strong
before You draw near.
You come while I am still afraid,
still imperfect, still in need.
Help me to believe
that Your mercy is greater than my fear,
and that You are already at work in me.

“You will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

Lord Jesus,
teach me how to come before You.
As I kneel before the manger,
so let me approach the altar—
with empty hands, a bowed head,
and a heart that knows it needs to be healed.

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.”

Lord,
I do not receive You because I am worthy,
but because I am wounded.
Come to me as medicine, not reward.
Cleanse what is stained,
strengthen what is weak,
and let Your Eucharist
restore my soul.

“The light shines in the darkness.”

Lord,
Your light does not expose me to shame me,
but shines upon me so that I may be healed.
Let me not fear Your truth.
Shine into every corner of my heart,
that I may walk into Christmas
not hidden, but restored.

Don't forget to bring your food pantry items for our local charities!

Polson Loaves & Fishes
904 1st St E, Polson

Ronan Bread Basket
10 6th Ave SW, Ronan
(across from St. Luke's Hospital)

Find donation bins at the churches' entrances.



Fourth Sunday of Advent

Entrance Antiphon:

*Drop down dew from above, you heavens,
and let the clouds rain down the Just One;
let the earth be opened and bring forth a Savior.*

Collect:

*Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever*

Readings:

FIRST READING: Is 7:10-14
RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
SECOND READING: Rom 1:1-7
ALLELUIA: Mt 1:23
GOSPEL: Mt 1:18-24

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is "Christ," that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples. Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." (CCC 486)



**Knights of
Columbus®**

The Knights of the Columbus would like to offer transportation services to Sunday Mass for parishioners who need assistance. Please call the parish office or John Winegart at (406) 270-6655, if you need help or know of anyone needing help getting to Mass.



PARISH WEBSITE



DIocese OF HELENA
WEBSITE



Download the **myParish** app on your App store or Google Play store on your iOS or Android!



ROSARY GROUP

St. Joseph Hospital
Chapel



Fridays at
9:00 am

DIVINE MERCY RADIO
90.7 FM



*DMR is a locally owned,
listener supported non-
profit 501(c)3
PO Box 568
Polson, MT 59860*



All homilies are available on YouTube and can be found by searching the full name Fr. Kevin Christofferson.



**Feeling
down this
holiday
season?**



- ❖ If you or a loved one are struggling this holiday and Christmas season, make sure to take care of yourself and make the season as joyful as it should be!
- ❖ Getting started is quick easy, just call or message us at [\(406\)442-4130x2](tel:4064424130x2) or www.cssmt.org/contact.
- ❖ Talking to a Catholic, caring, and non-judgmental counselor is 100% confidential and remember, if you are enrolled in a health plan through the Diocese of Helena, your employee assistance program (EAP) benefits should cover 3 sessions at no cost to you.

All parish communications are now through Evangelus! If you have accidentally opted out of text messages, you may text "Unstop" to **1-866-498-2036 (Immaculate Conception)** or **1-866-953-1870 (Sacred Heart)**. If you have not yet opted in for messages and would like to, please text "YES" to the appropriate number above. Please contact the parish office if you need assistance.



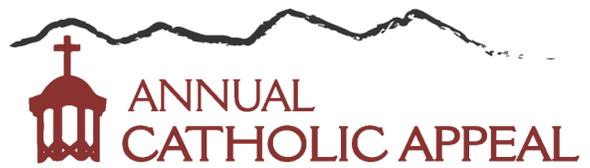
Consider adding these numbers to your phone contacts so you always know when you are receiving a message from the parish!



Call **406-442-4130** or visit www.cssmt.org/mental-health/ to get started today!



Payments to **Immaculate Conception** may be made online at GiveCentral.org (click on the big orange "Find Your Charity" button and type in our zip code, 59860).



FUNDING THE MINISTRY OF THE DIOCESE OF HELENA

HABEMUS PAPAM

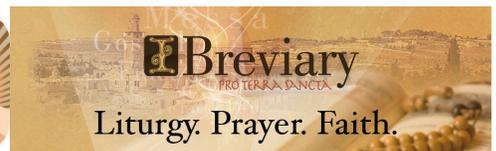


ACA 2025 PARISH PROGRESS

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION	SACRED HEART
60.0%	60.3%
Goal: \$29,700 Committed: \$17,837	Goal: \$9,100 Committed: \$5,490

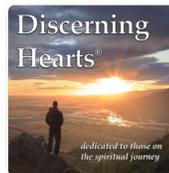


PrayAsYouGo.org is a daily online resource that offers guided prayer sessions to help individuals grow in their spiritual life. Each session typically includes scripture, reflective music, and prompts for prayer, making it easy to integrate spiritual reflection into your day. Designed for those on the go, it provides a simple way to stay connected to God amidst daily activities. Whether at home, work, or on the move, Pray As You Go supports deepening your relationship with God through accessible, reflective prayer.



Hallow

The #1 Catholic Meditation App



Discerning Hearts Catholic Podcasts
Available on your favorite podcast streaming apps!

Parish Offertory Progress Report

Fiscal Year beginning July 1st

Immaculate Conception
\$89,472 of \$183,150 (49%)
Sacred Heart/St. Joseph
\$20,721 of \$48,393 (43%)

I.C. Building Fund Progress:
\$1,350 of \$12,000 (11%)
S.H. Building Fund Progress:
\$1,920 of \$1,349 (142%)



Thank you for your generosity!

ADVENT REFLECTION

Standing at the Threshold of Christmas

The Fourth Sunday of Advent places us at the very threshold of the great mystery of Christmas. For three weeks we have watched, waited, repented, and hoped. Now, just days before the celebration of the Lord's Nativity, Holy Mother Church invites us to stand in reverent stillness before the staggering truth that God is about to enter His creation as a Child—to divinize what is human, to sanctify what is earthly, and to raise up what has fallen.

Advent teaches us to cultivate vigilant expectation, but the final days teach us something more intimate: how to receive the Lord with the heart of Mary. St. Leo the Great says, "Christ's birth is the birth of peace: let the Christian soul exult, seeing itself invited to share in the glory of the Lord." Just as Mary made room for Christ in her womb, we make room for Him in the interior sanctuary of the heart. Advent is the slow expansion of that inner place—stretching the soul in desire until the King can enter.

St. Augustine captures this beautifully: "The whole life of the good Christian is a holy longing. What you desire, you cannot yet see; but your desire prepares you to be filled." Advent has been this very work—the purifying of desire, the stripping away of lesser hopes, the inflaming of a deeper longing for God Himself.

Now, as Christmas draws near, the Church asks us not to lose the spiritual focus we have cultivated. The world around us explodes into noise, rushing, parties, travel, and gifts. But the Christian is invited to a different rhythm: to celebrate Christmas from the inside out, with a contemplative heart that knows why the feast matters.

St. Teresa of Avila helps us here. She insists that the Incarnation is not a sentimental idea but a living grace meant to touch the soul: "The Lord enters into the soul by humility, love, and detachment from every created thing." Thus Christmas becomes powerful only when our celebration reflects these same virtues: humility like the manger, love like the Mother, and detachment like Joseph.

Christmas is *Christ's Mass*. The very name teaches us how to celebrate it: *Christ* — the anointed One, the Word made flesh, God with us. *Mass* — the Holy Sacrifice, the offering of Christ's Body and Blood

Christmas is not fundamentally about feasting, though feasting is fitting. It is not about sentimentality, though sentiment can awaken the heart. Christmas is the celebration of the Incarnate Lord who offers Himself to the Father for our salvation—and who draws us into that offering every time we approach the altar.

The early Fathers repeatedly proclaim that the manger points directly to the Cross. St. Ephrem the Syrian writes, "The wood of the manger is the first altar upon which the Bread of Life is laid." Thus, at Christmas we come to adore the Child who has already begun His saving work simply by being born among us.

And what of our own hearts? St. Francis de Sales exhorts us: "Behold the newborn Jesus in the crib. Contemplate Him in poverty, humility, and silence. Make your heart into a little Bethlehem where He may find rest." In a season when everything pushes outward—toward shopping, travel, food, and noise—the Spirit gently invites us inward, to reverence, to prayer, to the Holy Mass.

Pope Francis echoes this: "Christmas is the feast of God's tenderness. He comes small and poor to teach us that what truly matters is love." The truest way to celebrate Christmas is simply to let ourselves be loved by God—and to love Him back with the simplicity of shepherds.

- So how should a Catholic celebrate Christmas in a way that lifts the soul above the mayhem?
- Begin with the Sacred Liturgy—Christ's Mass.
- Keep a contemplative heart in the midst of joyful gatherings.
- Visit the Nativity—either in church or at home—and pray quietly there.
- Practice concrete charity, especially toward someone lonely or forgotten.
- Take time for silence, as Mary did, for she "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Lk 2:19).
- Let your joy come from the presence of Christ, not from what you accomplish, cook, or purchase.

Christmas is not a generic holiday. It is a cosmic event that split history in two. The Creator entered His creation. Eternity stepped into time. The Infinite became an Infant. In one radiant night, God drew so near that we could touch Him. As St. Athanasius magnificently declares: “The Son of God became man so that man might become God.” That is the meaning of Christmas. And now, at the end of Advent, we choose not simply to remember it—but to enter it.

John 1:14

“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen His glory,
the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father,
full of grace and truth.”

This is Christmas distilled.
This is Bethlehem explained.
This is the entire Gospel in one sentence.
God became flesh—and nothing can ever be the same.