

Sacred Heart Church



260 High Street, Mount Holly, NJ 08060-1404

Telephone: 609-267-0209 • FAX: 609-267-9293 • Website: <https://sacredheartmh.org>

Parish Office Hours: Monday through Friday 9am to 4pm

Mass Schedule

Saturday: 4:30pm (Vigil)

Sunday: 7:30am, 9:30am Live Stream, 11:30am

Weekday: Mon.-Fri. 7:00am & 8:30am

Saturday: 8:30am

Confessions

Saturday: After 8:30am Mass

Parish Staff

Pastor: Rev. John P. Czahur ext. 308

Deacons: Deacon Jim Casa
fisherking13@comcast.net
Deacon John Hoefling
Deacon Stanley Orkis
Deacon William Rowley
Deacon Charles Moscarello

Parish Secretary: Mrs. Michele O'Toole ext. 301
secretary@sacredheartmh.org

Business Manager: Mrs. Deneen Thomas ext. 303
accountant@sacredheartmh.org

Cemetery Manager: Mrs. Paula Powell ext. 304
cemeterymgr@sacredheartmh.org

Coord. of Ministries: Ms. Merry Marcellino ext. 305
ministry@sacredheartmh.org

Parish Communications Facilitator:
Mrs. Jessica Donohue jessica@sacredheartmh.org

Sacred Heart School

250 High Street, Mount Holly, NJ 08060

Telephone: 609-267-1728

Email: schooloffice@sacred-heart-school.org

Website: www.sacred-heart-school.org

Principal: Mrs. Joanna M. Barlow ext. 316

Admin. Assist. Mrs. Kimberly Sheaffer ext. 316

Sacred Heart Religious Education

Telephone: 609-267-6319

Coordinator of Rel. Ed: Mrs. Barbara Kane
barbkane@sacredheartRE.org

Admin. Assistant: Mrs. Kellie Macrae
kmacrae@sacredheartRE.org

please visit our R.E. [website](#) for information.

R.C.I.A.

Coordinator: Ms. Mary Verme
mverme@sacredheartRE.org

December 16 – December 17, 2023
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Parish Registration

Our Parish family gladly welcomes new members. Please register at your earliest convenience by filling out a blue Registration Form located on the rack near the Altar Servers Sacristy in the vestibule of the Church or contacting Michele O'Toole, the Parish Secretary, by phone or [email](#) to have a Form sent to you.

The Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism is usually celebrated on Sunday at 1PM but other times and days are possible. We encourage parents who wish to have their child baptized to contact Michele by phone or [email](#) to have a Baptism Information packet mailed to you.

Once the Baptism Preparation session is attended, the Baptism Request Form completed and the Godparent Eligibility Certificates sent to the Parish House, a date for your child's Baptism can be set.

Baptismal Preparation

Catholic Godparents are required to complete an Eligibility Certificate and have the Certificate signed and sealed by the Pastor of the parish where they are currently registered and practicing their faith.

Sacred Heart offers a Baptismal Preparation Session required for all parents preparing for their child's Baptism. The date and time for this Session is arranged at the convenience of the parents and the Priest or Deacon who will minister the Sacrament.

Sacramental Sponsorship Letter

This is a form required to be a Godparent or Sponsor for Baptism or Confirmation. To receive this form from the Pastor of their parish, the Church requires the following:

- Must be at least 16 years of age.
- Received the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- If married, be in a valid sacramental marriage according to the laws of the Catholic Church.
- Be a registered and practicing member of a Catholic Parish.

The Sacrament of Marriage

Engaged couples who wish to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony at our Parish are asked to contact Michele O'Toole, the Parish Secretary by phone or [email](#). Arrangements are to be made at a meeting with the Pastor at least a year in advance of the requested date.

At least one person should be a registered member of the parish. All couples are required to attend Pre-Cana Sessions and a number of meetings with the priest or Deacon who will preside at the Wedding Mass/Ceremony

Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

Any Catholic who is seriously ill, advanced in age or wishes to receive the comfort and grace provided by this Sacrament may contact Michele O'Toole by phone or [email](#). In case of an urgent need for this sacrament please call our emergency number at 609-267-8940.

Care of the Sick, Homebound and Elderly:

The sick, the homebound and the elderly are valued members of our Parish. Please contact Merry Marcellino, our Coordinator of Ministries by phone or [email](#) to see how we may be of assistance.

Funerals

In all cases, the family of the deceased parishioner should contact the Funeral Home. They, in turn, will contact the Church to make further arrangements. Normally, a member of our Parish Staff will then contact the family to plan the Liturgy and provide any other assistance.

For information regarding our Parish Cemetery, please contact Paula Powell our Cemetery Manager by phone or [email](#).

Bulletin Articles

Articles for the Bulletin need to be submitted **No Later than Friday (9 days prior)** to appear the next weekend.

Please email bulletin

bulletins@sacredheartmh.org

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*Masses For
The Week*



December 18th - December 24th

MONDAY

7:00am **Philip Reillo** Req. By Kim & Earle Sheaffer
 8:30am **Fracisco M. Salvana** Req. By The Surrency Family

TUESDAY

7:00am **Arabella Martelli** Req. By The Burkes Family
 8:30am **The Special Intentions of The Surrency Family** Req. By Their Family

WEDNESDAY

7:00am **Lita Sandico** Req. By Maria & John Amper Family
 8:30am **Connie Schuren** Req. By The Spatz Family

THURSDAY

7:00am **Antonio Santos** Req. By The Amper Family
 8:30am **Elmer Dimen** Req. By His Wife Mariville

FRIDAY

7:00am **Patricia Brooks** Req. By Jeff & Teresa Redder
 8:30am **Eleanor Murdza** Req. By The Barlow Family

SATURDAY

8:30am **Michael Sanchez and Fraustiniano Sanchez** Req. By Their Family
 4:30pm **Edward and Antonia Mendys** Req. By The Nichols Family

SUNDAY

7:30am **Dolores Chepega** Req. By Her Husband and Family
 9:30am **The Children of the Parish**
 11:30 **William Morrison** Req. By The Morrison Family

CHRISTMAS EVE

4:00pm Church **The Vitone-Rumble Families** Req. By Janet Rumble
 4:00pm Auditorium **Joan Coughlin & Maryann Russo** Req. By Sacred Heart Parish
 6:00pm **Romayne Howe** Req. By Father John & The Parish House Staff
 Midnight **Walter Fox & Helen Ferrara** Req. By Tom & Barbara Fox and Family

*The Devotional Candle in the
Chapel of the Two Hearts*



*Will Light for Loving Memory of
The Kingston & Vecchiolla Families*



The Eucharistic Adoration – Come and spend time in the quiet with Our Lord in the Chapel of the Two Hearts located next to the Parish House. Our Chapel is open for you and Jesus to spend some time during the following hours:

**Monday through Friday
9:00am to 4:00pm**

READINGS FOR THE
WEEK



Monday, December 18, 2023 Jer 23:5-8, Mt 1:18-25
Tuesday, December 19, 2023 Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a Lk 1:5-25
Wednesday, December 20, 2023 Is 7:10-14 Lk 1:26-38
Thursday, December 21, 2023 Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a Lk 1:39-45
Friday, December 22, 2023 1 Sm 1:24-28 Lk 1:46-56
Saturday, December 23, 2023 Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Lk 1:57-66
Sunday, December 24, 2023 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Rom 16:25-27 Lk 1:26-38



Children's Worship Bulletins

Ages 3

https://sacredheartmh.org/documents/2023/12/pwb_gospel_bw_20231217.pdf

Ages 7

https://sacredheartmh.org/documents/2023/12/cwb_gospel_bw_20231217.pdf

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Please remember in your prayers:

Stephen Carbone, Aimee Buck, Anne DeFeo, Maureen Sampson, Sandy & Michael Grant, Nancy Beckett, Brian Burgos, Irene & Richard Moken, Connie Krzywicki, Barbara Hyer, Marianne O'Rourke, Clare Faber, Ed White, Rose & Vincent LoCascio, Dennis O'Donnell, Donald Dederick, Toni Rudd, Peggy Mahan, Lea Hodge, Lloyd Shanahan, Donna Matarese, Sheila Bender, Pete Giambalvo, Annemarie Sheldon, Charles Beckett, Sam Eckert, Josephine Nast, Mary Sconza, Hank Hess, Madeleine Loffredo, Dorothy Valeri, Catherine Verme, Bob Laraia, Joan Cole, Diane Laraia-Carr, Liz Finn, Tomas Carr, Monica Fredrick, Don Hartman, Noel M. Long, David Michael Benn, Sue Troise, Tammy Witt, Richard Dow, Frank Danley, Ann Graff, Clarence Pugh, III, Theresa Matrisciano, Megan Dezur, Ryan Clark, Jeanette McGhee, Frank Anton, William Bromley, Karen Buller, Crystal Faber, Catherine Jefferson, Harold Fahn, Carlyle Clark, Martha Evans, Peggy Stewart, Judith Gomez, Christopher Pierce, Vickie Robles, Margaret Jeffers, Greg MacDonald, Gail Marchese, Arleen & Raymond Bishop, Sr., Annmarie Laraia Bette,

As a parish family, we remember all who are struggling or suffering in mind, body, or spirit, especially those who have requested our prayers.

Please pray for the men and women now serving in the military, especially the loved ones of our parishioners who are serving overseas:

Capt. Chaplin Roberto Padilla
Sgt. Jason Brenner- U.S. Army
Anthony Dickenson, FCA3
Lt. Kurt Malinoski US Navy
Lt. Col. Stephanie Aaron, USAF
1st Lt. Troy McCrystal U.S. Army
Maj. Travis Aiello, USMC
Corporal Noah Stimiloski, U.S.M.C.
Maj. Karen Quintana, Army Reserve
Patrick Arpaia, TSgt. Paul J. Stoshak U.S.A.F.
Capt. Robert J. Boccio, U.S.A.F.
Douglas Schwenck, Army Reserve
Richard DeLorge U.S.M.C.
Peter Liedman, Dorinia Dibuono
Capt. James Rankin U.S.M.C.
SSgt. Daniel E. Naro, Sgt. Alison Lyport
Sgt. Stephanie Robertson, U.S. Army
2nd Lt. Russell Norton, NG Army
Capt. Matthew Carr, U.S.M.C.
SSgt Sean Curran U.S.M.C
SSgt Emily Curran U.S.M.C

Additional Confessions during Advent

In preparation for Christmas, Confessions will be available:

Saturday, December 16th, after 8:30am Mass

Monday, December 18th, 4pm – 4:30pm

Tuesday, December 19th 12pm – 12:30pm

Wednesday, December 20th 9am-9:30am

Saturday December 23rd, after 8:30 Mass

There will be no Confession times on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day or New Year's Day.



**CHRISTMAS MASS
SCHEDULE**

Christmas Eve

**4:00PM CHURCH [Livestream](#)
& AUDITORIUM**

6:00PM [Livestream](#)

MIDNIGHT CHURCH [Livestream](#)

(The choir will begin singing before Mass)

Christmas Day

7:30AM, 9:30AM [Livestream](#) & 11:30AM

Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God

December 31st 4:30pm

January 1st 7:30am, 9:30am, 11:30am

OPLATEK – The Christmas Wafer



Christmas wafers will be available in the vestibule of the Church.

Please take one home with you.

To use in your home...

Traditionally On Christmas Eve the eldest member of the family takes the Oplatek and turns to the person on his/her right and says, "I wish for you this Christmas... (whatever the wish is). That person breaks off a piece of the wafer and eats it then turns to the next person and the process is repeated.

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Religious Education News!

Looking for ideas to bring our faith into your home? Our Diocese provides a great resource for families: Faith at Home. Faith at Home is a monthly column coordinated by the Diocese of Trenton's Departments of Catechesis, Evangelization and Family Life, and Youth and Young Adult Ministry. For additional Faith at Home resources,

visit <https://dioceseoftrenton.org/faith-at-home>
All are welcome to stop by our bulletin board in the vestibule of the church for additional resources to celebrate this beautiful Advent season.



Testifying to Christ

How often do we take time to rejoice in God and to celebrate with joy all that God has done for us?

The Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as Gaudete Sunday (gaudete means "rejoice" in Latin). On this Sunday we pause to mark the midpoint of our Advent journey. We are given the time to "rejoice heartily in the Lord: and to look forward to all the ways in which the Lord will "make justice and praise spring up" in the future.

Workbook for lectors and Gospel readers

There is a theology of light present in John's Gospel today- a foreshadowing of Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist tells the priests and Levites that Jesus is among them at that very moment.

As members of the Church and the presence of Christ in the world today, we need to accept our responsibility of learning gospel values and testifying to the Jesus now in our midst.

**The St. Vincent de Paul food pantry is
Currently in need of the following:**

canned fruit, cereal, soap, soup, canned meals, spaghetti sauce and toilet paper.

Thank you for your continued support. If you would like to make a monetary donation, please make checks payable to: Society of St. Vincent de Paul

**Save the Date
Travel Opportunities Meeting with
Terry Rensman**

December 18th, 2023, 5:30 PM

A great presentation by Collette Tours
Explore the Great tours we have already planned, or you can find out information on the many options we offer you with setting up a Dream Trip you have been putting off.
Please call Terry Rensman 609-284-2517 to reserve your spot.

Take a Break from the hustle and bustle of this pre-Christmas time.

****for those of you who are interested in Faith Based Tours please plan to come.

**INVITATION FROM OUR LEGION OF MARY
PRAYER GROUP**

Every other Friday and every other Wednesday, the Legion of Mary hosts four decades of the rosary and Divine Mercy novena. All prayer gatherings will be after the 8:30am Mass in the Chapel of the Two Hearts located in the front of the parish house. There is an access door in the front of the building. The gatherings are as follows:

Wednesdays December 20

Fridays December 15

It will continue following the same schedule.

All are welcome. Please direct questions to Adele 609-668-8664 or Maridel 609-871-0222

The Friends of Sacred Heart School



Gala

Save the Date! FOSHS cordially invites you to our Blue and Gold Gala and Basket Auction next **April 20th** at Deerwood Country Club! Dinner, dancing, a super 50/50 and fantastic basket auction are some of the highlights of what will be a wonderful evening. Details to come!

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VOCATION PRAYER



***Prayer to Saint Joseph to
Know One's Vocation***

O Great Saint Joseph, you were completely obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Obtain for me the grace to know the state of life that God in his providence has chosen for me. Since my happiness on earth, and perhaps even my final happiness in heaven, depends on this choice, let me not be deceived in making it.

Obtain for me the light to know God's Will, to carry it out faithfully, and to choose the vocation which will lead me to a happy eternity. Amen

Thank you for praying for vocations.

Standing Together for Life – Mass for Life; Lunch & Seminar

On Friday Jan. 19, 2024, the faithful of the Diocese of Trenton will come together in prayer and solidarity to proclaim the sanctity of all human life! All are invited to an 11 a.m. **Mass for Life** celebrated by Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M., in St. Robert Bellarmine Co-Cathedral, 61 Georgia Rd., Freehold. No registration is needed for the Mass, seating is first come first served. Mass will be livestreamed on [Youtube.com/trentondiocese](https://www.youtube.com/trentondiocese). The Mass will be followed by a **Lunch & Seminar** in the Co-Cathedral's Dentici Hall. A panel of local expert speakers will offer practical, actionable, ideas and resources to take back to parishes where they can be immediately applied to build a culture of life in a spirit of inter-ministry collaboration and radical solidarity with vulnerable pregnant women and families. Advanced registration to attend the **Lunch & Seminar** is required by Jan. 10, 2024.

Full details for the day's events, including a registration link for the **Lunch & Seminar** can be found here: dioceseoftrenton.org/standing-together-for-life. Questions, contact Belem Perez 609-403-7133 bperez@dioceseoftrenton.org



**BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS CRÈCHE
OR MANGER SCENE**

God of Mary and Joseph,
of shepherds and animals,
bless us whenever we gaze on this manger scene. Through all the days of Christmas may these figures tell the story of how humans, angels, and animals found the Christ in this poor place. Fill our house with hospitality, joy, gentleness, and thanksgiving and guide our steps in the way of peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen

BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE



Dear God,
two thousand years ago,
You brought Your Son, Jesus
into this world to teach us the power of love and sacrifice. As we raise this tree, we remember His birth and the meaning of His life for us. Bless this tree as a symbol of our celebration of Jesus' birth and our gratitude for His sacrifice. May the joy this tree brings and gifts we place under it remind us of the many gifts You have given us. We ask Your blessing upon our loved ones, this day and always.

Amen

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A Christmas Blessing

May there be harmony in all your relationships.

May sharp words, envious thoughts, and hostile feelings be dissolved.

May you give and receive love generously.

May this love echo in your heart like the joy of church bells on a clear December day.

May each person who comes into your life be greeted as another Christ. May the honor given the Babe of Bethlehem be that which you extend to every guest who enters your presence.



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

If you would like to assist with the expenses of decorating our Church for Christmas, please mark your offering "Christmas Flowers." If you use weekly collection envelopes one is provided in your packet. Your envelope may be placed in the collection basket or you may bring or mail your donation to the Parish House.

Your generosity will be appreciated.

OUR PROMISE TO PROTECT

The Diocese of Trenton is committed to the initiatives outlined in the U.S. Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in regard to the reporting and investigation of sexual abuse allegations involving minors. If you have been sexually abused as a minor by a member of the clergy or anyone representing the Catholic Church, or if you know of someone who was, you can report that abuse through the diocesan Abuse Hotline: 1-888-296-2965 or via e-mail at abuseline@dioceseoftrenton.org The Diocese of Trenton reports any allegations of sexual abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. Anyone with an allegation is also encouraged to provide that information to local law enforcement authorities.



EVENING ZOOM ONLY

OFF TO A PRAYERFUL START: FOCUSING THE NEW YEAR

Tuesday, January 2 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Start out 2024 with an evening zoom retreat to set the direction for the year. "Well begun is half done," they say, and establishing a direction is essential for the journey. Where am I going in 2024? What is the desire of my heart, and God's as we begin this year together? Led by S. Marcy. Donation: \$15, includes materials.

IN PERSON ONLY

PERSONAL RETREAT DAY

Wednesday, January 3 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM

Take a day away from the busyness of your life. Come to Francis House for silence, personal prayer and optional spiritual direction. The day begins and ends with a brief prayer together. Please bring your lunch. Donation: \$10; \$40 with spiritual direction.

SIMPLIFYING LIFE: CLEANING UP & CLEANING OUT

Tuesday, January 9 9:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Winter teaches us to let go in order to make some room for God. Do you find yourself complaining, "I have too much stuff!" Is de-cluttering one of your desires for 2024? We are each going to make a plan to clean up and clean out, to simplify and enjoy life more, to have a lighter grasp and a freer heart for the more important things of life. We will gather again in Lent for a progress report. Step by step, with support and prayer, we will be clutter-free by Easter! With God's help, we can do it! Led by S. Marcy. Donation: \$25, includes lunch. Zoom: \$20.

LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT: STILL MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Friday, January 12 9:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Is your long-awaited, much-deserved retirement a blessing or a curse, or a little bit of both? Do questions arise, "Who am I now? Am I fulfilling God's will, God's plan? What do I do with this new gift of time? What are my deepest desires? What is my purpose now?" Come together with other retirees in this new or not-so-new chapter of your sacred journey.

Does your life still make a difference? Led by S. Marcy. Donation: \$25, includes lunch. Zoom, \$20

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Living the Good News Today

*“I rejoice heartily in the Lord,
In my God is the **JOY** of my soul.”*

During this very short Advent season with only eight days remaining until Christmas Eve, the Church celebrates *Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday* with some special traditions: rose-colored liturgical vestments that signify the **JOY** of our Advent journey; lighting of the third candle (rose) on our Advent wreath; and hearing Scripture readings that remind us of prophecies of Christ’s coming and their appreciation by both Mary and St. Paul as God’s joyful plan for our salvation.



On December 5th and 6th (St. Nicholas Day), I was present at the Advent services for our parish religious education program as a music minister. Led by Deacon Jim Casa, these services began (and ended) with joyful music and the

lighting of the first candle (Prophecy) candle that symbolized hope on the Advent wreath. While Deacon Jim interacted with the students after the reading of the Gospel, I looked at the students and wondered what kind of longing was in their hearts during this season of Advent. How aware were they of the significance of the Nativity? Would they appreciate and echo in their own hearts this weekend’s proclamation by the Prophet Isaiah? *“I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the **JOY** of my soul.”*

On the first Sunday of Advent, our parish hosted the Christmas Carol Festival (CCF) in the auditorium. Our last celebration of this event was in 2019, just before the coronavirus pandemic affected the entire world. Four years later, our theme focused on the Nativity and the Babe in Bethlehem. Through our caroling and fellowship, we entered deeply into the mystery of Christ’s coming and the joy that this birth brought to the whole world, waiting in silence for the Messiah to come!

As part of our program, we had a sharing activity in which everyone had the opportunity to share with the people at the table their response to this question: What is your favorite character in the Nativity scene and why? At each table, we had placed a flyer with pictures of the characters that are in the Nativity scene before the altar at Sacred Heart every year. Significant to the Nativity story this year as we celebrated the 800th anniversary of the Christmas celebration by St. Francis of Assisi in Greccio (Italy) was the presence of the ox and the donkey at the birth of Jesus lying in the manger. What a humble birth for Jesus, our Savior! This sharing activity brought much

joy to those who participated, On Gaudete Sunday, we might ask ourselves: what is it that makes us rejoice heartily in the Lord? How do we take time to ensure that God is the **JOY** of our souls?

There is a wonderful resource available on line and as an application for smartphones/tablets called Hallow (<http://www.hallow/advent/.com>). It offers so many Catholic sources for prayer, reflection, and liturgical celebrations to help us appreciate the beauty of our faith. In the site’s offerings for Advent, there are links that explain the Advent wreath as a gathering place for our waiting with longing and hope. In week one and two of Advent, the two candles symbolize hope (the Prophecy candle) and peace (the Bethlehem candle). On the fourth Sunday, we celebrate Love (the Angel’s candle). This weekend, though, we open ourselves to the grace of our shared anticipation with others in the Nativity story as Hallow describes the Advent journey:

“The third candle of Advent symbolizes **JOY**. As we continue to approach Christmas Day, our joy grows more and more. The third candle takes us back to the joyful anticipation of the shepherds who journeyed to see Jesus in Bethlehem, even before the wise men. On this third Sunday of Advent, which the Church calls ‘Gaudete Sunday,’ meaning **rejoice** or praise, we light the third candle and **rejoice** like the shepherds. For this reason, the third candle of Advent is called the ‘**Shepherd’s Candle**,’ and its color is **rose**, the liturgical color for **JOY**.”

Instead of the usual psalm between the first two readings this weekend, we share instead the Cantic of Mary. In her humility, the Blessed Mother teaches us how to be open to God’s grace and to do God’s will. How can we imitate her prayerfulness?

The Hallow website shares a special Advent prayer with from the late Fr. Henri Nouwen:

Lord Jesus, Master of both light and darkness,
send Your Holy Spirit
upon our preparation for Christmas.

We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear Your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things
look forward to Your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the complete **JOY** of Your Kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the **JOY** of Your
presence.

We are Your people,
walking in darkness yet seeking the light.
To You, we say, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

“Gaudete” is an imperative for us--to rejoice always! May our Advent prayers and encounters echo the Blessed Mother’s **JOY**:

“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

Teresa S. Redder, OFS

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Good News Reflection

Third Sunday of Advent
December 17, 2023

Pray: Beloved Father, I humbly ask for the grace to be a witness of Your light. I yearn to be Your witness and to take Your presence wherever You want to send me! Amen.

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

Luke 1:46-50, 53-54 (with Isaiah 61:10b)1

Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Testifying to the Light

This Sunday's Gospel reading tells us that John the Baptist came to "testify to the light." What does this mean?

We know that Jesus is the Light of Truth that shines in the darkness to draw us to eternal life. And we know that his Spirit enlightens us in the truth so that we can be saved from the destructive forces of our sins and follow our Savior to heaven. But what was the testimony given by John? How did he testify to the light? And how does this affect our lives today?

John's testimony was: "I am not the Christ. I am a voice. A voice in the wilderness. A voice in the desert." And his testimony brings us to the Light of Christ by challenging us with: "Where is your life arid and dry? Listen! Christ is coming to meet you there! Make a bee-line to him! Stop wandering around! Repent, change, do whatever is necessary to look for Jesus so that you can find him. He is coming to you!"

We've all experienced times when Jesus seems distant, unavailable, not present to us when we need him. What has opened your eyes to his presence? Whose voice has turned you back to God? It's time to do the same for others, to bring glad tidings to the poor (as it says in the reading from Isaiah), to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to those who are held captive in their sins, and to announce how to be blessed by a close friendship with the Lord.

We all have the same testimony and the same calling as John had: We are all supposed to be voices crying out loud enough to be heard above the din of the world. Many souls are lost in the wilderness of confusion, hopelessness, pain, heartache, and despair, not to mention sinfulness. Can we rightfully ignore their needs? Is it loving to be so quiet that they cannot hear the truth? Certainly not! Someday we will have to explain to Jesus why we ignored our baptismal calling to be the voice that could have helped others find him.

What kind of a voice do you have? Because we have Christ within us, our very lives are the voice. How we handle trials, revealing our faith in Jesus, is a voice that's audible to those who are lost in the wilderness. The more peace we have and the more love that we give, the louder is our cry.

Even if our vocal chords do not utter a single word, the way we live in the light is how we speak the truth of the light. The better we live the truth, the louder and clearer is our message.

What people choose to do with our message is up to them, but it's up to us to speak it so that they're given that choice.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

How has your life been changed by your faith in Jesus? What evil has been conquered, what darkness has been overcome? This is your testimony! Write a couple of pages about it to become more familiar with it. This will prepare you so that you can explain it to others when they ask you why you have faith.

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

How has the Spirit of the Lord anointed you? What gifts do you have that enable you to give to the poor (i.e., the financially poor or the emotionally starving or the spiritually hungry) or to heal the brokenhearted? How has God used you to provide liberty to captives and release to prisoners? How are these a testimony that teach others about Jesus?

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

WEEKLY PLANNER

SUNDAY December 17th
Third Sunday of Advent



7:30am Mass, 9:30am Mass Live Stream
11:30am

Parish Office and Chapel Closed

MONDAY December 18th

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am

Travel Meeting with Terry Rensman 5:30pm LIB

Basketball 6:30pm AUD

TUESDAY December 19th

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am

No Rel. Ed. Classes

Basketball 6:30pm AUD

WEDNESDAY December 20th

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am Live Stream

Legion of Mary Prayer in the Chapel 9:00am

Basketball 6:30pm AUD

THURSDAY December 21st

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am

Legion of Mary 3:30pm PHCR

Boy Scouts 7:00pm PHMR

Adult Choir 7:00pm

FRIDAY December 22nd

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am

Legion of Mary Prayer in the Chapel 9:00am

Parish Office Hours 9am to 12pm

SATURDAY December 23rd

Daily Mass 8:30am

4:30pm Vigil Mass

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Parish Office Closed



UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY December 24th
Fourth Sunday of Advent



7:30am Mass, 9:30am Mass Live Stream
11:30am

CHRISTMAS EVE

MASS TIMES

4:00 PM Church and 4:00pm Auditorium,
6:00 PM & 12:00 MIDNIGHT in the Church
(ALL CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES in the Church WILL
BE LIVESTREAMED

PARISH HOUSE AND CHAPEL CLOSED

MONDAY December 25th

CHRISTMAS DAY



7:30 AM, 9:30 AM (LIVESTREAM), 11:30 AM
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
PARISH HOUSE AND CHAPEL ARE CLOSED

TUESDAY December 26th

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am

No Rel. Ed. Classes

Basketball 6:30pm AUD

Parish House and Chapel Closed

WEDNESDAY December 27th

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am Live Stream

Basketball 6:30pm AUD

THURSDAY December 28th

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am

Legion of Mary 3:30pm PHCR

Boy Scouts 7:00pm PHMR

Adult Choir 7:00pm

Knights of Columbus Basketball 7:00pm AUD

FRIDAY December 29th

Daily Mass

7:00am, 8:30am

Legion of Mary Prayer in the Chapel 9:00am

Basketball 6:30pm AUD

SATURDAY December 30th

Daily Mass 8:30am

Basketball 8:30am AUD

4:30pm Vigil Mass

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

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