



ST. JOHN
THE EVANGELIST PARISH
115 MIDDLESEX STREET
NORTH CHELMSFORD

ST. MARGARET
OF SCOTLAND PARISH
374 STEVENS STREET
LOWELL

ST. MARY PARISH
25 NORTH ROAD
CHELMSFORD



December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.”

- Luke 1: 31



Parish Office Location and Hours

115 Middlesex Street • North Chelmsford, 01863
(978) 256-2374 | www.theholyrood.org

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday • 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Wednesday • 9:30 am - 5:00 pm
Friday • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Weekend Mass Schedule

St. John • Saturday, 4 pm | Sunday, 9:30 am and 6 pm
• African Liturgy | Sunday, 12 pm
St. Margaret • Saturday, 4 pm | Sunday, 7:30 and 10 am
St. Mary • Saturday, 4 pm | Sunday, 7 and 11 am

Daily Mass Schedule

Monday - Friday
7 am at St. Mary • 8 am at St. Margaret • 9 am at St. John

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Monday • 4:30 - 5:30 pm • St. John
Tuesday • 4:30 - 5:30 pm • St. Margaret
Wednesday • 4:30 - 5:30 pm • St. Mary
Saturday • 11 am - 12 noon at St. Mary
• 1 pm - 2 pm at St. Margaret
• 3 pm - 3:45 pm at St. John

Eucharistic Adoration

Wednesdays (Sep-Jun) • 9 am - 3 pm • St. Margaret OLL Chapel
Thursdays • 12:00 - 9:00 pm • St. Mary Adoration Chapel
First Fridays at St. John OPC Adoration Chapel
2:00 - 10:00 pm; following Saturday 6:00 - 8:00 am
Third Sundays • 3:30 - 4:30 pm • St. Mary Church

LIVEVIEW Devotions

Monday - Friday
3 pm • Chaplet of Divine Mercy at St. John
7 pm • Rosary at St. Mary

Prayer Line

(978) 256-2374, ext. 223. After hours, press 5.

*Please read entire bulletin for potential schedule changes

weekly calendar

Monday December 25

Merry Christmas!



Tuesday, December 26

** Parish Offices Closed **

Wednesday, December 27

Adoration • 9 am - 3 pm • SMS OLL Chapel
Chaplet of Divine Mercy • 3 pm • SJE Church & LIVEVIEW
Confession • 4:30 - 5:30 pm • SM Church
Rosary • 7 pm • SM Church and LIVEVIEW

Thursday, December 28

Adoration • 12 - 9 pm • SM PC Adoration Chapel
Chaplet of Divine Mercy • 3 pm • SJE Church & LIVEVIEW
Rosary • 7 pm • SM Church and LIVEVIEW
SM 11 am Choir/Ensemble • 7:30 pm • SM Church

Friday, December 29

** Offices Close at 12:30 pm **

Saturday, December 30

Confessions • refer to cover
Hope & Healing • 10:30 am - 12 pm • SJE OPC
St. Mary Bell Choir • 2:30 - 3:30 pm • SM Choir Loft

Sunday, December 31

Crossover Event (see page 4) • 10 pm • SJE Church

happy new year

**DUE TO THE HOLIDAYS, THE PARISH OFFICES
ARE CLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:**

- Monday, December 25
- Tuesday, December 26
- Friday, December 29: close at 12:30
- Monday January 1
- Tuesday, January 2

WHEN IS A HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION NOT OBLIGATORY?

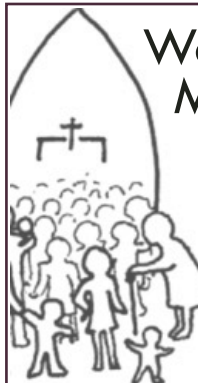


Other than Christmas or the Immaculate Conception, if a Holy Day of Obligation falls on a Saturday or a Monday, one is not obliged

to attend Mass. Therefore, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God celebrated on Monday, January 1st, is **NOT a Holy Day of Obligation** this year. Our Mass schedule will be as it normally is on weekdays.

On this day, we are reminded of the role that the Blessed Virgin played in the plan of our salvation. Christ's Birth was made possible by Mary's fiat: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word."

Weekend Mass Attendance



Due to an early submittal to the printer because of the Christmas holiday, the December 16th/17th weekend Mass attendance will be published in next Sunday's bulletin.



What did Adam
say on the day
before Christmas?

(answer on page 5)

Bob, The Builder

For those staff members that have extensions listed, the number to call is (978) 256-2374.

To send an email, please visit our website at <https://theholyrood.org/staff>.

Clergy

Rev Brian E. Mahoney, Pastor | (978) 254-0560
Rev Fernando Ayala, Parochial Vicar | (978) 401-9844
Rev Patrick Alemayo, C.S.Sp., Parochial Vicar | (978) 451-6767
Rev Arnold F. Colletti, Sr. Priest in Residence | ext 116
Rev Raymond Benoit, Sr. Priest in Residence | ext 115
Dcn John C. Hunt, Jr., Permanent Deacon | (978) 254-2696
Dcn Frank Perez de Alderete, Permanent Deacon | (978) 254-0638
Dcn Barry V. Lloyd., Sr. Permanent Deacon | (978) 454-6505

Outreach & Parish Ministry

Sr. Lori Fleming, SNDdeN, Pastoral Associate | ext 225

Business Office

Paul Firicano, Business Manager | ext 220
Tina Sousa, Finance Coordinator | ext 219

Family Faith Formation

Heather Hannaway, MA, Dir of Faith Formation | ext 226
Courtney Callanan, MA, Asst Dir of Faith Formation | ext 227
Shaun Bradley, MA, Faith Formation Associate | ext 232
Elaine Kindler, Faith Formation Program Administrator | ext 216
Lynn Anne LaDuke, Faith Formation Coordinator | ext 240

Office Administration

Sue Beechin, Administrative Assistant | ext 236
Jamie Brown, part-time Scheduling Coordinator | ext 239
Donna Gambon, part-time Administrative Assistant | ext 248
Rae Russo, part-time Funeral Coordinator | (978) 306-5882

Facilities

Chris Goglia, Director of Facilities | (978) 341-4203
Dan Heider, Facilities Project Manager | ext 213

Bulletin, Website, Social Media

Christine Trznadel, Communications Director | (978) 254-4406

If you would like to submit a notice to be published in the bulletin, please do so no later than 12 noon, **two** Fridays prior to the weekend in which you would like it published.

Email submittals to christine@theholyrood.org or mail:

Parish Offices/ ATTN Christine Trznadel
115 Middlesex Street
North Chelmsford, MA, 01863

We will do our best to accommodate your request.

We warmly welcome all new parishioners to our family!

If you haven't already, please complete a registration form by contacting us in the parish office, or by visiting us at www.theholyrood.org/parish-registration



Why Register? Isn't it enough that I attend Mass?

Registration is the official way to join a parish community. It is a commitment; a way to be included in the religious, social and ministerial activities of your parish. Your registration affects the parish in many ways. Census numbers help determine how many priests are assigned to a church; what benefits and obligations the community has to the diocese in which it belongs; and how Masses, Confessions and devotions are planned and scheduled. Registration shows you belong! It lets the parish count on you, to call on you to assist in its mission. Registering in your parish is a statement of faith and confidence in the life and work of your parish!

We welcome you and ask that you check out the many, many ways you can be involved and part of the community... being fed and feeding others through your very presence!

"Lord, it is good that we are here..."

-Matthew 17:4a

Catholic Charismatic Prayer

Our Catholic Charismatic Prayer Community will begin meeting on Thursday evenings—starting January 4—IN ADDITION to their Thursday morning gathering. Now there is an option for those who would like to include this prayer style in their faith journey, but don't have the ability to attend a weekday morning.

They meet every Thursday, September—June in the St. John Old Parish Center!

Morning gathering: 10 am - 12 pm
Evening gathering: 7 - 8 pm

here's what's happening in The Holy

New Year's Eve Crossover Night Mass

celebrated by Fr. Patrick O. Alemayo, C.S.Sp.

Sunday, December 31 | 10 pm – 12:30 am
St. John the Evangelist



It is a customary practice in the Roman Catholic Church in Africa to celebrate New Year's Eve Crossover Mass of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God during the night of December 31 into January 1 of

the following new year. This is always a great festival of thanksgiving, prayer, singing and dancing. The crossover night will usually begin at 10 pm with a solemn Eucharistic adoration, confessions and prayers. Then, there will be the New Year's Eve Crossover Mass during the night that begins at 11 pm and closes any time after 12 midnight.

Usually, the celebration of Christmas extends into the New Year such that the New Year Mass and celebrations are considered the climax of the festive season. **This New Year Eve celebration is a time of reflection on the passing year, of gratitude to God for seeing the end of the year, of making new year resolutions, and of commending the new year into God's hands. Africans believe that beginning the new year with the Lord in Church is the best thing to do at the turn of the year.** Families, friends and relatives look forward to it. In Africa, both Christians and Muslims, Catholics and non-Catholics and even African Traditional Worshippers come into the Church on New Year's Eve to participate in the prayers, praises and the Holy Mass. There are usually highlights of praises, singing, dancing, and exchange of happy new year greetings with joy, hugs and happiness. The joyful mood is like what the Psalmist says in Psalm 149 and 150:

"Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of his faithful people. Let Israel rejoice in their maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp. Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary."

Please join the African Catholic Community for this Holy and Blessed event! It will conclude as we enter the new year with smiles and with the joy and happiness of entering the new year in God's house.

Come and be blessed!



ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE PICK UP

Each winter, Chelmsford Boy Scout Troop 70 provides a Christmas tree collection service in the town of Chelmsford. For a \$10-\$20 donation, they will pick up and recycle your tree. It is important to leave the donation in an envelope taped to your front door after 8 am on the day of pickup.

The pick-up dates are as follows:

- Saturday, December 30th
- Sunday, December 31st
- Saturday, January 6th
- Sunday, January 7th

To make the required reservation for them to pick up your tree, visit www.troopseventy.com. You will receive an e-mail confirming your request.

Questions?

email xmastrees@troopseventy.com.



Rood Collaborative community

Fatima Lourdes & Medjugorje pilgrimage

Join Deacon John on Pilgrimage!

April 10-24, 2024

\$4,849 per person (double occupancy) from Boston.
To learn more and book, visit...

www.pilgrimages.com/dcnhunt/marian
BOOKING CODE: JH041024

Flyer can be found at church entrances, or downloaded
from our website...

<https://theholyrood.org/marian-pilgrimage-dcn-john>

That Deacon John has a
blog on our website?
Check it out TODAY—and
tune in weekly—at
[https://theholyrood.org/
deacon-johns-blog](https://theholyrood.org/deacon-johns-blog)

**DID YOU
KNOW?**



answer: It's Christmas, Eve!



MINISTRY OF PRAYER

Baptized into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we become members of the family of God, the Church. Belonging to this family calls us to live together as brothers and sisters in a community of faith that witnesses to the Love that transforms and supports us as we journey to our eternal dwelling place to live forever in the presence of our Triune God.

As a family of believers, we are committed to love and care for one another. Here in the three parishes of The Holy Rood Collaborative this commitment impels us to pray for one another—to place our needs, our pleas for help, our expressions of praise and gratitude before our loving and merciful God and to seek the promises of healing, comfort, and peace that God provides.

The prayer intentions and intercessions we place before our God come from the prayer requests of families in our Faith Formation program, our Collaborative Prayer Line, our Rosary and Chaplet groups, and from prayers we know that we and our fellow parishioners hold in our hearts. This is a shared Ministry of Prayer.

To keep this Ministry of Prayer more intentionally in our minds and hearts, a prayer of intercession has been added to the Prayers of the Faithful that we offer as a community of faith each week at our celebration of Mass—our Eucharistic celebration.

O'Donnell Funeral Home

A generous donation from The O'Donnell Funeral Home to St. Margaret of Scotland Parish has been received in loving memory of the people of St. Margaret of Scotland Parish whose families The O'Donnell Funeral Home was privileged and honored to have served from December 15, 2022 through December 15, 2023.

It is the hope of Jim O'Donnell and the staff of The O'Donnell Funeral Home that the support of family, friends, and faith may guide these families through this holy season and bring them blessings into the New Year. And may their deceased loved ones, whom we name here, rest in the peaceful and loving embrace of Jesus Christ.

Leonardo D Fitzgerald

Francis R "Frank" Diaz
George A Bettencourt

Robert P Phaneuf Jr
Louise A Kilmartin

Support our Parishes

with an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) before December 31, 2023

People who are 72 or older and have traditional IRAs may use them to make charitable gifts in 2023. Both convenient and tax-advantaged, a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from an IRA allows a donor to direct pre-tax assets to charitable organizations, like St. Mary's, St. John's or St. Margaret's, without incurring any tax. The QCD is not recognized as income, so donors receive a tax benefit and could possibly decrease the amount of your taxable social security benefits. Gifts of any amount, up to a maximum of \$100,000 per IRA plan owner per calendar year, may be made this way.

As we need to keep the finances separate, when making a gift, please be sure to indicate to which parish—St. Mary, St. Margaret of Scotland or St. John the Evangelist—you would like your gift processed.

Your generosity will help our parishes to continue building the programs and ministries for the present and future growth of our faith communities. Please feel free to contact your financial advisor for additional information about using your IRA to make a gift to your parish.

Due to early bulletin submittals because Christmas Holiday, below please find the offertory for the weekend of December 2nd/3rd. The offertory for the weekends of December 9th/10th and 17th/18th will be reported in next week's bulletin!

ST. MARY WEEKLY OFFERTORY	Weekend of December 2nd/3rd	Fiscal Year-To-Date December 3rd	Fiscal YTD Average/Week
Offertory Required to cover Budgeted Expenses	\$14,500	\$333,500	\$14,500
Actual Received	\$15,957	\$292,125	\$12,701
Shortfall/ Overage	\$1,457	-\$41,375	-\$1,799

ST. JOHN WEEKLY OFFERTORY	Weekend of December 2nd/3rd	Fiscal Year-To-Date December 3rd	Fiscal YTD Average/Week
Offertory Required to cover Budgeted Expenses	\$10,300	\$236,900	\$10,300
Actual Received	\$8,685	\$193,989	\$8,434
Shortfall/ Overage	-\$1,615	-\$42,911	-\$1,866

ST. MARGARET WEEKLY OFFERTORY	Weekend of December 2nd/3rd	Fiscal Year-To-Date December 3rd	Fiscal YTD Average/Week
Offertory Required to cover Budgeted Expenses	\$4,800	\$110,400	\$4,800
Actual Received	\$5,182	\$98,359	\$4,276
Shortfall/ Overage	\$382	-\$12,041	-\$524

20
23



Christmas Giving Ministries

**St. Margaret
of Scotland
St. Vincent de Paul**

**Giving
Tree**



St Margaret St Vincent de Paul would like to thank all parishioners who donated to the giving tree.

We had another successful year of gifts that made Christmas a little brighter for school children, veterans and nursing home residents.



Thank you to our parishioners who generously and compassionately gave gifts and donations to Spirit of Christmas.



It has been such a blessing to see our parish come together to bring Christmas

cheer to those in need. We would also like to thank the many "elves" who shopped, sorted, and bagged – it wouldn't be possible without your efforts.

Almost 400 gifts were distributed to six different non-profits in Chelmsford and surrounding towns – Merrimack Valley Catholic Charities, Alternative House, House of Hope, St. Patrick School, Secret Santa (families in the Chelmsford Schools), and St. Vincent de Paul.

We wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2024!



**St. John
the Evangelist**
giving
tree

Sincerest thanks to all parishioners who took part in this year's Giving Tree. You made this year one of the easiest yet!

The tags went quickly and close to 100% were returned on time!

Also a big thanks to those who came out on a rainy Sunday night to help with the sorting. It was much appreciated; we couldn't have done it without you!



Thank you to those who donated hand knit and crocheted scarves, hats and mittens. We collected 173 items which were distributed through the Spirit of Christmas Program and the Lowell Wish Project. Your talent and generosity will warm hand and hearts this winter.

For more information, or if you would like to learn to knit, contact Cathy Latina at 978-256-0721

thank you

Family Faith Formation

Uniting the Heart of the Church with the Heart of the Home



Heather Hannaway, MA • Director of Faith Formation • (978) 256-2374, ext 226
 Courtney Callanan, MA • Assistant Director of Faith Formation • (978) 256-2374, ext 227
 Shaun Bradley, MA • Faith Formation Associate • (978) 256-2374, ext 232
 Elaine Kindler • Faith Formation Program Administrator • (978) 256-2374, ext 216
 Lynn Anne LaDuke • Faith Formation Coordinator • (978) 256-2374, ext 240

JANUARY P.L.A.N.S. PREPARE TO LEARN AWESOME! new Stuff

Grade 1
 Epiphany
 Lil Christmas!
parents must attend last 30 minutes of class

Grade 2
 In Class:
 Angels and the Holy Mass
 At Home...
 Catch-Up/ Complete
 Blessed First Reconciliation
 Parent Guide
parents must attend last 30 minutes of class

Grade 3-6
 Children remain in hall and
 parents separate in
 Disciples Groups to learn
 about confirmation

Grade 7&8
 Altaration Session 4
 "What is our Response"

Confirmation I
 Prayer:
 Who Do You Say that I Am?

Confirmation II
 Prayer: Saints
 Chosen (various lessons):
 "Loving as God calls
 us to Love"

GRADE 1
SUNDAY, JANUARY 7
 9:15 - 10:45 AM
 St. Mary Hall

GRADE 2
SUNDAY, JANUARY 28
 9:15 - 10:45 AM
 St. Mary Hall

JANUARY CLASS SCHEDULE

GRADE 3-6 | SUNDAY, JANUARY 21 | PARENTS IN DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

SESSION A
 9:15 - 10:45 AM
 St. Mary Hall

SESSION B
 12:15 - 1:45 PM
 St. Mary Hall

SESSION A
 10:45 AM - 12:15 AM
 St. John Hall

GRADE 7&8
SUNDAY, JANUARY 7
 11:15 AM - 12:45 PM
 St. Margaret Hall
parents attend class

CONFIRMATION I
SUNDAY, JANUARY 21
 4:15 - 5:45 PM
 St. John Hall

CONFIRMATION II
SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 28
 4:15 - 5:45 PM
 St. John Hall

JANUARY DEEP DIVES

details for each deep dive can be found at <https://theholyrood.org/deep-dives>

Epiphany Lessons and Carols
 Saturday, January 6
 2-3 pm | St. John Church

Going on a Prayer Hunt (*RSVP)
 Saturday, January 20
 9:30—11 am SM Hall and PC

Teaching Mass
 Sunday, January 28
 11 am St. Mary Mass

St. Ambrose Candle Craft (*RSVP)
 Thursday, February 1
 6:30—8 pm | St. Margaret SH Hall



The link for ALL Deep Dive Events that require an *RSVP can now be found at a single location. Visit <https://bit.ly/3PKbNmn> and **select the tab of the event** you are interested in attending. Or, scan the QR code.



A word from the Director, Otie Dolt-Harpin...

What's Christmas all about?

All About That Baby!

On Saturday, December 9th, in St. John's Hall, about 150 guests were transported to Bethlehem around the time of Jesus' birth. Thirty children and youth—4 to 18 years of age—became , townspeople, jazz angels, wisemen, Mary, Joseph, young worshippers, and a flock of very smart and clever sheep, in our Collaborative's Second Annual Christmas Musical, "All About That Baby".



It was a fantastic production with great performances and wonderful songs and dances, some lively and some lovely. We got an idea what it must have been like for the folks in the actual Bible stories to recognize that the baby Jesus truly was the Messiah—and we learned it in a most delightful way!

It's not only the cast who deserves applause, but kudos to the Production Crew as well. The costumes, sound track, lighting, set, props, and refreshments were all very well done.

Everything about the show came together to honor, praise, and glorify Jesus, celebrating His birth then, and His Holy Reign now.





A few weeks ago, I was watching a program that involved two people dancing, and it somehow brought me back to my childhood, watching my parents dance. When we went to social events and dancing was involved,

you would see my parents on the dance floor. It always amazed me how much they danced in sync; it seemed like they almost flowed as one body, and it did not matter what type of dancing they did. Their movement was graceful and had a beautiful sense of harmony. It was clear that they sensed the direction the other wanted to go in and responded with almost no effort. I honestly loved to watch my parents dance: it really symbolized their relationship.

As we are about to celebrate the wondrous season of Christmas, it is a reminder to us that God wants to be our dance partner. Christmas is a celebration of the Incarnation. As Christians we must believe that at Jesus' conception, his two natures—human and divine—came into union. In the one person of Jesus, each nature remains separate and unique to itself. In Jesus we see the dance partnership that God has always wanted with us, but the reality is what we learn from the story of Adam and Eve. Humanity from its inception decided to dance to a different tune, and with a different partner than God, and that choice made sin, suffering and evil a reality in the world. But the wonderful thing about our God is that He did not want us to remain in this state. Even as we rejected his offer to dance, He came up with an alternative plan—to write a new invitation to dance.

Christmas, in a real sense, is God's invitation to dance with Him. He gave us the gift of the Infant Jesus who was born to die for us: his unconditional love truly has no limits. He knew that only through his direct intervention would we be able to truly dance the dance of salvation. Only by his actions could we be God's dance partner once again. Each year we are reminded of this wondrous opportunity.

What does it mean to be God's dance partner? It is about seeking to live out a life of faith. It is about making use of God's great gifts. It is about embracing our relationship with God.

Living a life of faith is simple enough. It means that as we live out our life, we must make choices that are in line with God's will for us. As Christians we do not get to determine what our life is about or how we should live it. Rather, we recognize that God is our creator and has endowed our life with meaning, purpose and order, and has given us specific gifts according to his plan for us. It is our responsibility to discern what those gifts are and to live out our lives accordingly.

What are those gifts? There are many, but most

importantly: the Church, the scriptures, the sacraments and prayer. The Church gives us the ability to know definitively how God views the world and his expectations of us. The role of the Church is ultimately to continue the mission of Christ. It is to open the world to Christ's saving actions and bring the world to Christ. The Holy Spirit ensures that when it comes to faith and morals, the Church can never go into error. We have in the Church a certainty of understanding of how we are called to live out our life as a Christian. The scriptures are the very word of God: God is speaking his directions to us and we are called to apply them to our particular and unique circumstances. To discern what the scriptures are telling us, we need to have an open ear and ready heart. They have as much meaning today as when they were first written. They are a living word intended to be a powerful guide in understanding how our God desires to lead us in the dance of life. Prayer, whether using scripture or other means of prayer, is our way to truly communicate with God, and there is no right or wrong way to pray. Prayer is simply responding to God's conversation with us. God always begins the conversation and we simply respond. He determines the best way to have his conversation with us: He knows best how we will hear Him. But to help strengthen us in this conversation He has given us the sacraments. Starting with baptism which begins the dance, He strengthens us on the journey with the Eucharist which is his very Body and Blood—*not* a sign or symbol but really, truly, substantially, the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ is present to us in this gracious gift. And He feeds and strengthens us with his presence to help us live the life we are called to live. And when we falter, He gives us the ability to repent and move forward with his gift of confession.

God wants to be our dance partner and will give us all the help we need to make this happen. Christmas is not simply about remembering what God did for us over 2,000 years ago. It reminds us of what God is doing for us in the here and now. It reminds us that our God wants to have a personal and intimate relationship with us. May we be willing to take up the dance and truly dance with our God.

I wish you all a Most Blessed Christmas and a wonderful new year.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to call me at (978) 254-0560. If you prefer to email, please visit...

<https://theholyrood.org/email-fr-brian>.

Please keep me in your prayers.

From our Faith Formation Associate
Shaun Bradley

The Twelve Days of Christmas and *The Twelve Pains of Christmas* two of my favorite Christmas songs that, when taken together, have an important message to teach us.

Many of us have likely seen the viral social media posts that claim to explain all the religious symbolism in *The Twelve Days of Christmas*: how each gift and the quantity of it has some spiritual or Biblical significance. While I do not doubt that there are subtle religious references in the song, I am skeptical that every verse has the precise meaning that someone on the internet has proposed. As for the *Twelve Pains of Christmas*, I find it ironic that the song about pain is exclusively about secular Christmas. Now, I am not poo-pooing secular Christmas; I do think there is joy to be found in “rigging up the lights and finding a Christmas tree.” However, I think it is important to reflect on how the pain comes—both when we make Christmas purely secular and when we change it from “12 days” to just one day.

Ultimately, that’s all secular Christmas is: all the hustle and bustle, shopping, bills, cooking, traveling; it’s all just for one day. We try to cram too much into one day. It is no wonder we are trying to extend the “holiday season” as much as possible, trying to stretch it from Halloween to Christmas and completely skipping Thanksgiving. This is where the pains come from. And yet, the alternate, and original, version of the song is *not* about the pains of one day but about the joy of many days. This is how Christmas was always intended to be and how we as a Church still celebrate it today.

For us, our Christmas season is not the buildup to just one day, but the celebration over many days afterwards. For Catholics, the Christmas season doesn’t start until December 25th, and lasts roughly two weeks until the Feast of the Epiphany in January (hence, the 12 days). Rather than trying to cram all the joy and excitement into 24 hours or less, the Church gives Christmas (and us) time to breathe over a period of two weeks.

This year, don’t give up the holiday cheer at 11:59 pm on Christmas night. Don’t take down your decorations and throw out your tree on December 26th. In the week that follows, don’t just focus on the gifts, but continue to remember the people who gave them to you. Don’t just sit down together for Christmas dinner, but continue to share time together as family afterwards. And don’t just pray to Him for one hour on the day of His birth but remember Him each day. Allow Him to be born again in your life, nourishing and cherishing the precious, young life of our baby Lord and Savior.

“For behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ the Lord.”

- Luke 2:10-11

From our Parochial Vicar
Fr. Fernando Ayala

Embracing the Cross

The more you love, the more you suffer. I will repeat it again—the more you love, the more you suffer. Love by its very nature seeks to give of itself to the other. There is a certain sense of self-emptying in loving. For centuries, the world has tried to offer relief from this reality but it has failed. If we love, we will suffer. There is no real love that does not bring some sort of self-emptying or some sort of sacrifice. Think, for instance, about Him who is Love Himself. Love Himself loved so much that He suffered the greatest of sufferings for our sake. He suffered death itself. He took the devil’s weapon of death against humanity and turned it around to point against the devil himself. He took the cross—a symbol of suffering and death—and made it into a sign of joy and life. Our Lord embraced the cross for our sake. He embraced His death and His suffering and transformed it into a reason to hope—hope in eternal life.

The world has tried and continues to try to offer a sort of love sacrifice or a love without suffering, but it has continuously failed in doing so. We Christians—we Catholics—embrace that Cross. We embrace that which used to be a symbol of death and turn it into a symbol of hope. We do not ask for our cross to be taken away if that is not His will, but we ask that we are able to carry it until the end. If this season brings us some memories that cause us sadness or reminds us of some sort of suffering, remember that it is just a sign of how much you loved. So, let us embrace that cross and use it as fuel to bring us hope.

annual festival of lights

Our Lady of La Salette Shrine
947 Park Street, Attleboro

Lights on daily, 5-9 pm • November 23—January 1

As Christmas nears, Isaiah's words, "**Comfort, comfort my people**" (Isaiah 40:1), resonate. These words, once aimed at those seeking solace after Jerusalem's fall and exile in Babylonia, hold contemporary relevance. In today's uncertain, divided world—with conflicts like Ukraine, Myanmar, Sudan, and the Middle East, cultural polarization, and climate concerns—there's a clear need for comforting words of hope and healing.

Amid La Salette's enchanting Christmas Festival of Lights, we gather to celebrate Jesus Christ, our wellspring of hope. Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, walks with us, inspiring and guiding us.

In this Advent and Christmas Season, may Isaiah's message and La Salette's Christmas Lights ignite hope and comfort. May Christ's presence bring you peace, serenity, and joy, inspiring you to share comfort with those who struggle and hope with those who are disheartened.

Worcester Diocesan Catholic Men's Conference

Saturday, March 16, 2023
DCU Center, Worcester

Men of all ages—including teens and college students—are invited to attend this well-known annual conference. Come and hear dynamic talks from outstanding Catholic leaders: Dcn Harold Burke-Sivers, James Wahlberg, Michael Nicholson, Bishop Robert McManus and Msgr. Thomas Sullivan. Adoration is available all day. Conference closes with the celebration of Mass at 4 pm.

Visit www.firstmensconf.org for information and to purchase tickets online. Adult tickets are \$50 until March 4, 2022; afterwards \$60. Student tickets are always \$30. Tickets will NOT be available at the door!

For further information email cathmenworc@gmail.com



WHY ADORATION?

IT IS THE WAY TO A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS By spending time with Jesus in the Eucharist, we can establish a truly personal relationship with Him. Because Jesus loves us with an infinite love, we bring unlimited joy to His Sacred Heart when we spend an hour with Him in the Blessed Sacrament.

JESUS GIVES US HIS GRACES Jesus stays with us day and night in the Blessed Sacrament, calling out to each one of us: "Come to Me all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you."

IT BRINGS PEACE The Eucharist brings peace to hearts, which bring peace to marriages, families, and communities. Peaceful hearts make a more peaceful world.

EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE Everyone can participate because everyone can find at least one hour each week to spend with Jesus or find family members or friends to share a weekly commitment of an hour with Jesus.

**I am the living bread that came down from heaven;
whoever eats this bread will live forever;
and the bread that I will give is my
flesh for the life of the world.**
-John 6:51



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

YEAR OF PARISH REVIVAL

June 11, 2023 – July 17, 2024

The second phase of the Eucharistic Revival will foster Eucharistic devotion at the parish level, strengthening our liturgical life through faithful celebration of the Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, missions, resources, preaching, and organic movements of the Holy Spirit.

The National Eucharistic Congress is taking place in Indianapolis, IN from July 17-24. Tickets are available at:

- <https://www.evangelizeboston.com/event/national-eucharistic-congress/>
- or... <https://www.eucharisticcongress.org/register>

*Fr. Brian, Fr. Fernando, Fr. Patrick, Fr. Colletti, Fr. Ray,
Dcn John, Dcn Frank, Dcn Barry and
the entire collaborative staff wish
you and those you love a most
Blessed and Merry Christmas.*

Today is born sweet Jesus, the Lord.
Let us be glad, let us rejoice.
Today is born sweet Jesus, the Lord.
Let us be glad, let us rejoice.

Sweet Jesus is born, great joy does He bring.
Let trumpets sound and church bells ring.
The gifts He brings this holy night
are peace, hope, and joy, and love's pure light.

Quiet your heart and hear the Lord's name.
Sweet Jesus the Lord, this night He came.
He came to be with us on Earth.
The Heavens and Earth rejoice His birth.

Sweet Jesus is born. His birth was foretold.
God's only Son is to behold.
On bended knee we come to adore
Sweet baby Jesus, Christ the Lord.

Love is the heart of Jesus the Lord.
His birth opened up God's heavenly door.
The joy and hope that sweet Jesus brings
will live in the hearts of those who believe.

O Holy Night

Remembering A Loved One

Below are a number of ways in which you can give remembrance and honor to a loved one or personal intention. To schedule any of these intentions, please contact the Parish Offices at (978) 256-2374.

Please note that the scheduling of your intention requires a 2-week notice.



Mass Intentions

If you would like to request that a Mass be celebrated for a specific intention or person, please call the parish office. A donation of \$10 per intention is requested when you schedule your intention. Please note that a **2-week notice is required for scheduling all intentions.**

St. John the Evangelist

SAT, DEC 23	4 pm	4th Advent: Raymond St Pierre: 27th Anniversary
SUN, DEC 24	930 am	4th Advent: People of the Parish
	4 pm	Christmas Eve: People of the Parish
	10 pm	Christmas Eve: People of the Parish
MON, DEC 25		All Christmas Day Masses: People of the Parish
TUE, DEC 26	9 am	Nat Serra: Memorial
WED, DEC 27	9 am	Robert Dini: Memorial
THU, DEC 28	9 am	Dan O'Neill: Memorial
SAT, DEC 30	4 pm	People of the Parish
SUN, DEC 31	930 am	Special Intention
	6 pm	People of the Parish

St. Margaret of Scotland

SAT, DEC 23	4 pm	4th Advent: Frank LaPan: Memorial
SUN, DEC 24	730 am	4th Advent: People of the Parish
	4 pm	Christmas Eve: People of the Parish
MON, DEC 25		All Christmas Day Masses: People of the Parish
TUE, DEC 26	8 am	Liberty Rodriguez Lally: Memorial
		Guadalupe Miranda: 1st Anniversary
WED, DEC 27	8 am	Rita Doherty: Memorial
THU, DEC 28	8 am	Fr Paul F Manning: Memorial
FRI, DEC 29	8 am	Theresa Bourassa: 15th Anniversary
SAT, DEC 30	4 pm	Zacharie Maillet: 46th Anniversary
SUN, DEC 31	730 am	Vincent Latham: Memorial
	10 am	People of the Parish

St. Mary Parish

SAT, DEC 23	4 pm	4th Advent: Lilian and Raymond Rousseau: Memorial
SUN, DEC 24	11 am	4th Advent: People of the Parish
	4 pm	Christmas Eve: People of the Parish
	6 pm	Christmas Eve: People of the Parish
MON, DEC 25		All Christmas Day Masses: People of the Parish
SAT, DEC 30	4 pm	Josephine Sorbello: 3rd Anniversary
SUN, DEC 31	7 am	Souls of those in abate:
		Nasser, Metro and Cherney Families
	11 am	People of the Parish

Altar Flowers

Parishioners are invited to donate a floral arrangement to be displayed on the altar in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one. The requested donation for an arrangement is \$40.



Lamps

At any of our churches, you can request that the sanctuary lamp burn in memory of a loved one. St. Margaret also has two additional lamps—the Blessed Mother Lamp and the Sacred Heart Lamp. The stipend for any of these lamps is \$25.

St. Margaret Blessed Mother Lamp
In Memory of Raymond St Pierre

St. Margaret Sacred Heart Lamp
In Memory of George Chase

St. John Sanctuary Lamp
In Memory of John B Snyder

St. Margaret Bells

The steeple bells at St. Margaret toll daily at 12 and 6pm, followed by the ringing of the Angelus bell and 2 hymns. At 3pm, they play 2 hymns, and 15 minutes prior to each weekend Mass, the bells toll a 'call to worship.' We invite you to dedicate the Ringing of the Bells in Memory/In Honor of someone.



Recent Funerals

May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.



Margaret Emerson
Friday, December 15 • St. John

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A black and white portrait photograph of Mary Jo Metro, a woman with dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark top. The photo is positioned to the right of her name and contact information.

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Recent Funeral at St. John's

Marjorie Janeiro

of Chelmsford, MA

Scan to read Marjorie's obituary.



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-Mother Teresa

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