

The Church of Saint Boniface

December 25, 2020

The Nativity of the Lord



"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light"

(Isaiah 9, 1)

CHRISTMAS 2020

A Message from the Bishop...

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As Advent gives way to Christmas, we find ourselves in a continued state of waiting, longing and expectation for a promised vaccine. How our world has changed in a year!

Last Christmas, none of us had heard of COVID-19. Since then our lives, jobs, recreation and worship have been shaped by it. COVID precautions have led to COVID-fatigue as we long for a return to normal life. Anxious waiting and expectation for the vaccine marks and impacts our celebrations. Gatherings in church and at home will be smaller, travel truncated, carols fewer, precautions increased and parties cancelled.

But Christmas is not cancelled. Our way of celebrating has changed, but our reason for celebrating remains the same. While the world awaits the arrival of a vaccine, we celebrate the arrival of the world's Savior. We hope for a vaccine that for a time will ward off illness and death. The Divine Savior whose birth we celebrate gives us resurrection and reunion. We pray the vaccine will restore normal life on earth. The grace Christ offers promises eternal life in Heaven.

For two millennia Christians throughout the world have celebrated Christ's birth. Many of these Christmases have been marked by famine, plagues and wars. Through those hardships and others, Christians have found in Christ the strength, hope and joy to persevere, endure and triumph over all of life's uncertainties.

As we wait for the vaccine to come, let us rejoice, give thanks and find peace in the Savior who has already come, defeated sin and death and will come again to share His definitive triumph of eternal life.

With every prayerful best wish for a Blessed and Merry Christmas, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester



This weekend, December 26/27, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family.

Our Mass schedule will be as usual:
Saturday 4:00 PM
Sunday 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM

We will have a special First Christmas Blessing Mass at 12:00 PM for all children baptized this year for whom this is the first Christmas.

MASS INTENTIONS

Dec. 27	8:00 AM	Bernard, Larry & Joseph Paton , by their siblings
	10:30 AM	Souls in Purgatory , by Joan Conroy
Jan. 8	8:00 AM	Lillian McCann , by Mary O'Malley
Jan. 10	10:30 AM	John McShane , by Carol McShane
Jan. 14	8:00 AM	Souls in Purgatory , by Mary O'Malley
Jan. 16	4:00 PM	Peter Charpentier , by Mom and Dad
Jan. 17	10:30 AM	Charlie Blanchard (10th Anniversary) & Tricia Blanchard (1st Anniversary) by Meghan Blanchard

PRAY THE ROSARY every Saturday at 3:30 PM in the church, led by members of the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus.

NEW YEAR'S EVE ADORATION

All Day Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Thursday, December 31: The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed from 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM. Come away for a while for a One-on-One with the Lord. You can come in as a family or an individual. We thank the Lord for his goodness to us.

NEW YEAR'S EVE MASS

Thursday, December 31: 6:30 PM
(No Mass on New Year's Day)

DAILY MASS NEXT WEEK

ONLY on Wednesday, December 30 at 8:00 AM.

COLLECTION REPORT

Week of December 20	
– Sunday Offering	\$3,245
– Fuel/Maintenance	140
– Christmas Flowers	50
– Christmas Offering	65
– Other	11
Total	\$3,511

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org



Saint Boniface parishioners were especially generous this year. Top left: baskets of food and other necessities were delivered to the African Ministry in Worcester; Bottom left: gifts for needy rest home residents at the Penny Lane home in Fitchburg; Above: gifts for Village Rest Home residents in Leominster.

Tidings of Great Joy

The first people to experience the coming of the savior were shepherds, those lowly, uneducated ones who lived among the animals. They were not the only ones, of course, but they were the first to welcome the savior.

It was no accident that such lowly people would be called in first to pay homage to the savior. It is to the lowly, after all, that Christ came first as Lord and Redeemer. The circumstances of his birth testify to that: his **mother “wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged.”**

Christmas is the great annual renewal of our being a Church filled with wonder at the nearness of her God. The nearer we are to our God, the nearer we should become to **those lowly ones who are God’s special ones.**

We are challenged at Christmas to do what Jesus and the angels did: bring the good news of redemption to the outcast and the **lowly. The “tidings of great joy [are] to be shared by the whole people,” and no one is to be left out, not even the most hopeless or despicable person.”**

*Our holy Mother (the Church) does not neglect the care of the poor or omit to provide for their necessities; but, rather, drawing them to her with a **mother’s embrace, and knowing that they bear the person of Christ himself, who regards the smallest gift to the poor as a benefit conferred on himself, holds them in great honor.***

She does all she can to help them: she provides homes and hospitals where they may be received, nourished, and cared for all the world over, and watches over these.

Pope Leo XIII, *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, 1878:9

— Gerald Darring

Saints of the Week

December 27.

SAINT JOHN THE APOSTLE

Saint John the Apostle, also known as the Beloved Disciple, was the writer of the fourth Gospel, and presumably, the only apostle who was not martyred. He is also the disciple to whom Jesus entrusted his mother from the cross.

Symbolized as an eagle, Saint John’s Gospel “soars” in its theological treatment of the good news. *Saint John the Apostle is the patron saint of Turkey.*



December 28.

HOLY INNOCENTS

Based on an account in Saint Matthew’s Gospel, King Herod slaughtered a number of male babies in an attempt to rid himself of the perceived threat of a usurper of his throne. What he didn’t realize is that Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world—a fact that emerges later in Saint Matthew’s Gospel.

The Holy Innocents are the patron saints of babies.



December 29.

SAINT THOMAS BECKETT

Saint Thomas Becket, the well-known archbishop of Canterbury, England, is a saint with a checkered past. As depicted in the movie “Becket,” Thomas did not at first take his responsibilities as a

deacon seriously, but when King Henry II tried to use his friend’s lukewarm devotion to his advantage, he found a converted cleric who was a worthy match for any king. *Saint Thomas Becket is the patron saint of Roman Catholic Secular Clergy.*



December 30.

SAINT EGWIN

Saint Egwin was a Benedictine monk who became the bishop of Worcester, England. He seems to have had a good reputation — except with the clergy; they found his reforms a bit too strict. He was exonerated by Rome, however, and he continued to function as the diocesan bishop.

December 31.

SAINT SYLVESTER

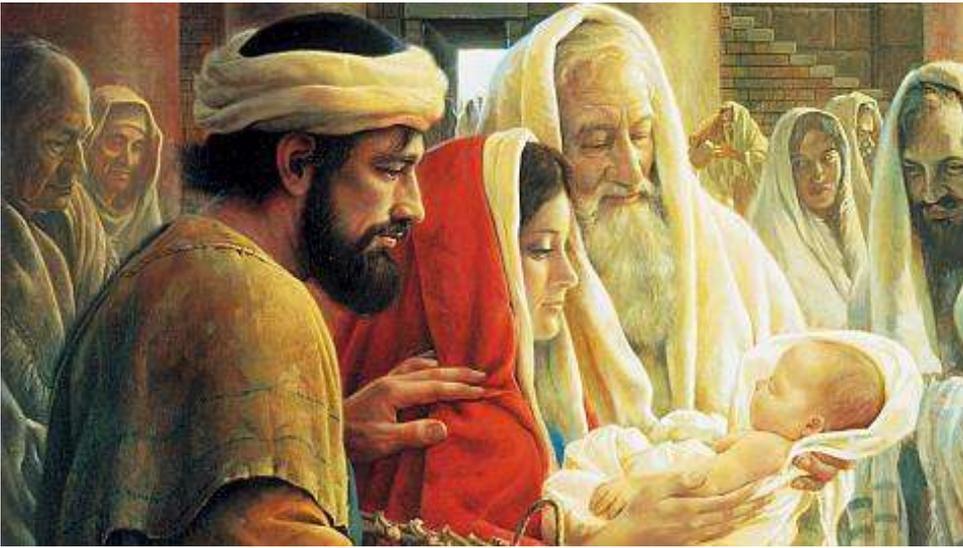
Saint Sylvester lived during the time of Constantine when the Church was coming out of hiding and becoming the Church of the empire. Little is known about him, but much is presumed.



January 1.

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Mary’s divine motherhood broadens the Christmas spotlight. Hers role as mother of God places her in a unique position in God’s redemptive plan.



Jesus' parents have him circumcised and name him on the eighth day after he is born.

Children of God

Defining the family is never easy. The challenge was no different in the ancient world than it is in modern cultures. Even more difficult is deciding what kind of family is good and decent, and what kind of family is not.

As today's Gospel indicates, the family into which Jesus was born and raised is unquestionably devout and pious. They observe the Torah meticulously. In accord with Lev 12:3, **Jesus' parents have him circumcised and name him on the eighth day after he is born.** In accord with the larger context of Lev 12:1-8, the family accompanies Mary to the Temple in Jerusalem for her purification forty days after the birth of Jesus.

In the ancient Middle East, circumcision was practiced in many societies. Its origins are obscure. Originally, scholars thought it had originated in Egypt and moved thence east and north into the Semitic world.

Contemporary opinion rooted in recent archaeological discoveries holds that the practice of circumcision began in the northwest Semitic world and moved south where the Egyptians adopted it. It was not until Abraham was circumcised that Sarah was able to bear a child, the proper child whom God would bless.

The meaning of the procedure varied. For instance, in early Israelite history, males were circumcised at puberty (see Gen 17:25) or at the time of marriage (Gen 34:13). In this connection, the rite has a functional meaning: the man is now able to get married and to function as a married person. Later in Israelite history, circumcision was performed on the eighth day after birth, a custom that was **retrojected into Abraham's life (Gen 17:10-14).**

The Palestinian Targum, that is, the Aramaic paraphrase and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, reports an interesting, and very likely fictional, argument between Isaac and

Ishmael. Isaac argues for his superiority over Ishmael because Isaac was circumcised, therefore pleasing to the Lord, at a very early age. Ishmael, acknowledging that he was circumcised at the age of thirteen, argues for his superiority over Isaac by noting that at puberty he could have resisted and rejected circumcision, but willingly accepted it. Who knows what Isaac would have done at puberty?

To appreciate the significance of circumcision and naming, it is important to recall the ancient understanding of conception. It was widely believed that the male deposited a fully formed miniature person in the woman **who served merely as the "field" in which the "seed" would grow to maturity.**

But women in the ancient Mediterranean world were considered to be lascivious and untrustworthy (read Sirach and Proverbs for illustrations of this concern). A husband never knew for sure whether the child born was actually his. Such uncertainty would weaken the family by making potential heirs suspect, thereby rendering the family treasure vulnerable to theft.

So by circumcising and naming a boy as early as eight days after birth, the father made a public proclamation formally accepting this child as his son, no matter what other charges might be made later.

In Luke's Gospel, Joseph does not receive a "revelation" about Jesus and his divine origins, such as he does in Matthew's Gospel. Nevertheless, Joseph demonstrates that he is truly an honorable and just man by seeing to the circumcision and naming of his son in accord with the prescriptions of the Torah. Joseph's honorable behavior solidifies the bonds of his young family.

Love Child

Some years ago I suddenly understood how God Almighty could become an infant, human child.

Here is the story. A dear friend visited her niece in California and invited me to come along, since I was studying there at the time. The niece was living with a man, in a neighborhood just a few blocks from San Quentin Prison. The two were not sure they would ever get married or even stay together. But they had given birth to a child.

In the midst of great losses, God is still here.

This infant boy had suffered a terrible birth, deprived of oxygen during parts of it. The result was a well-formed, beautiful newborn except for one thing: he could do nothing whatsoever on his own, including breathe. His brain damage was severe.

The young mother admitted that they easily could have let the boy slip away there in the operating room. No **reason to make the poor child suffer. But they couldn't do it**, she said, could not just write off this tiny personality and just get on with their lives. They were struck with great love for the tender, fleeting, sweet soul that had issued from God through them.

So they bestowed a name on him. They baptized him and took him home. They rented a machine to do the breathing process for him.

During his life of six months or so, one of the parents had to remain close enough to him to hear even the tiniest change of tone in his breathing. So they traded off. One would go out for a walk while the other lingered with the tiny self. Next, the other would shop and tend to necessities while the first bore duty at home. As I conversed with them, I saw that they were not terrified or burdened, but

calm. Death was on its way, no illusions, but they just plain loved this utterly helpless child anyway.

*In the midst of great losses,
God is still here.*

I found I was in a holy place. I could feel it. A quiet understanding came over me. Something was holding all of us, gently, quietly, with an embrace that was not a restraint, but a loving caress. It was palpable. It was a stabil-

ity, not a fancy display. And I was not the only one to notice. The mother told me that others had reported a love emanating from the boy, a subliminal, barely readable message from him. Something of God was softly but firmly in place.

And that was my lesson.

It still is today in the midst of our world-wide pandemic.

That the journey through life can be short, seemingly bizarre, and yet sacred. Love and human life are meant for **each other. This infant's very tiny passage through life** showed that fact with mysterious clarity.

And it showed how God could make his home in a newborn child. In the midst of great losses, God is still here.

I think of this story at Christmas. The same subliminal holiness must have filled the manger and the stable on Christmas night long ago. A tiny charming soul, bathed in love, Jesus was undamaged at birth, though he would be injured and mangled in the process of completing his (and our) loving trip from God and back to God.

The rest of the story? Well, the little boy in California went sweetly to the place he was bound for. His parents did in fact get married and have other children now.

And Jesus is born.

And we are in a holy place.

— John Foley, SJ

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

"...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive." (Colossians 3:13)

Forgiving is one of the hardest things for people to do. **We can't give what we don't have. We need to receive God's mercy and forgiveness first before we can give it to others. Go to the sacrament of Reconciliation and receive God's mercy and forgiveness.** Then, share give the gift of forgiveness with someone – a family member, a friend or a co-worker. Pick up the phone or text someone right now.

Saint Boniface Church

817 Massachusetts Avenue, Lunenburg, MA 01462

Parish Office: 978-582-4008 email: stbonifaceparish@verizon.net

Discover St. Boniface ~ Visit our website: www.StBoniface-lunenburg.org

Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>
Rev. Anthony Mpagi, Pastor	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Jo-Anne Poirier, Administrative Assistant	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Lucy Marcil, Religious Education Coordinator	978-502-7993	lmarcil419@gmail.com
Claire Garrity Neas, Music Ministry	617-823-4237	cmkakosgarrity@aol.com
Louise Nadeau, Sacristan		
Ministry Schedule	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK	978-582-7110	

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

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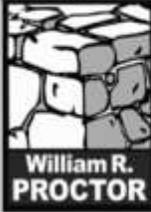
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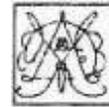
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