

St. Joseph of Stratford National Catholic Church



December 24-25, 2022 – Christmas

Parish Contacts

PASTOR
Fr. Tom Walsh

CHAIRPERSON
Jeanine May

VICE
CHAIRPERSON
Dee Smith

Financial
Secretary
Barbara
Chernesky

Office
Administrator
Lisa Vasas

Dear Parishioners,

"What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

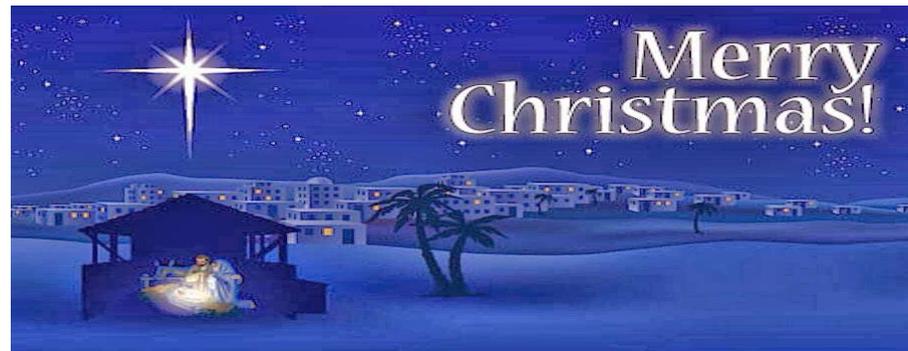
This verse from today's Gospel passage (John 1:1-18) reminds us that the light of Christ continues to shine in the world through each one of us, to the extent that we allow it. Darkness in the world is real, we know this, so be encouraged by the words of St. Francis of Assisi, *"All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle."* May your light continue to shine today and in the New Year to come. The world needs you.

Grace and peace,
Fr. Tom

Mass Times

Vigil Mass – Saturday 4:00pm Sunday morning Mass – 9:30am.

1300 Stratford Road, Stratford, CT 06615 / (203) 377-9901
www.saintjosephsofstratford.org / sjosparishpncc@outlook.com



TODAY'S READINGS: SEE CENTER INSERT

PRAYER INTENTIONS

We remember in our prayers Jane Pelland, Joe Pelland, Wanda Copple, Nancy Anzalone, Jean Macionus, Fr. Henry Smolinski & Margo, Rich Lasecki, Joyce Bresh, Edmond Bresh, Helen Reynolds, Helen Popp, Florence Rasmussen, Robin Lupinski, Judy DiLorenzo, Frank Bonitatebus, Lizzie Mast, Carol Murdzia, Dom Zumbo, Tom Nuckowski, Greg Baktis, Martha Lesnick, Bill Homa, Jesse Matthews, Chip & Patrice Matthews.

For those new to our church (and even those who aren't!)



To follow along with the Mass, begin on **page 63** in the Mass booklet. Father will announce which page to turn to for the Canon at the appropriate time and where to pick up the service following the Canon.

And please remember – there is no eating or drinking inside the church proper (small bottles of water excepted).

Attention: Lectors

The schedule for readers for the first half of 2023 (January – July) has been posted to the Rosters bulletin board. Please check it out and note what Sundays you have been assigned. If you are unable to read on a particular date, please inform Dee or Father Tom in advance so a substitute can be arranged.

Wigilia – what is it?

No, it's not like Wikipedia. The Polish immigrants who helped found the National Catholic Church brought their customs for celebrating Christmas with them to this, their new country. One of those is the Wigilia or Christmas Eve (Vigil) dinner.

Usually celebrated as soon as the first star is spotted in the evening sky, Wigilia consists of up to twelve courses of food, representing the twelve apostles and the twelve months of the year. Size and content of the courses varies by region, but includes soups, fish, pasta, and vegetable dishes. The opłatek, or Christmas wafer, is shared before the meal to exchange wishes for good health and prosperity in the coming year. An extra, empty, seat is often prepared for someone who might stop by unexpectedly – Poles believe no one should be alone during the holiday – but can also be an homage to family and friends who have died.

The meal itself is meatless, out of respect for the animals in the stable who were among the first to greet the newborn Christ. Some traditions specify that no pepper or bitter herbs be set out lest these symbols of Christ's suffering overshadow the joy of His birth. Other traditions set the table in white linens with pieces of straw underneath to represent the manger in which the Baby Jesus slept.

After dinner, gifts are exchanged and carols sung before the family attends the Pasterka, or Midnight Mass.

Eastern Diocese Winter Youth Retreat this week

The Annual Winter Youth Retreat for the Eastern Diocese will take place on **27-28 December 2022** at Blessed Trinity Parish in Fall River, MA. This overnight lock-in event starts at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday and ends Wednesday afternoon. It's a fun way for youth of the diocese to meet/catch up with each other while learning more about their religion in lecture sessions, activities, and community service projects.

See the bulletin board or the office for more information or to register.



Spread the Word
change a heart 

Evangelism. A word we hear often but tend to associate with foreign missionaries and television preachers. Rarely do we consider ourselves in the category of evangelists.

But we are, each and every one of us. Every time you talk to friends, acquaintances or strangers about God and the Church, you are an evangelist.

And it's time to spread the word about what the National Catholic Church is! Last week Father passed out wallet-sized cards with a small synopsis of what it means to be a National Catholic Church. Pass those cards out to friends, neighbors, strangers, or anyone dissatisfied with their current path to God. Refer people to our website www.saintjosephsofstratford.org for a more detailed description of the church. Invite people to come to worship with you and stay for coffee hour to experience our unique community first-hand. Or bring them to a special event/program like Quarter Night, a dinner, Coffee & Catechism (to name just a few) where they can participate as much or as little as they are comfortable.

Help grow our church! Encourage those you meet to give us a try. And welcome visitors when they come to church. Make them feel at home with us – many are shy or reserved when they first step in the door, unsure of how they'll be received. A friendly face can make all the difference. Remember, you're the only Jesus some people will ever see.

Local Blood Drive this Tuesday



The need for blood does not take a holiday when we do. In fact, the demand increases dramatically. To bolster the low supplies, the Red Cross is holding a Blood Drive this **Tuesday** from 1:45 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the hall at the **Baldwin Senior Center**. Please call 1-800-733-2767 or visit www.RedCrossBlood.org and enter 1460 to schedule an appointment.

READINGS FOR CHRISTMAS

First Reading

Is 52: 7-10

A Reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!"

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry, together they shout for joy, for they see directly, before their eyes, the LORD restoring Zion. Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

The Word of the Lord

R: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS. 98: 1,2-3, 3-4, 5-6

R: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
his right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

R: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

The LORD has made his salvation known:

in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.

R: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.

Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise.

R: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.

R: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Second Reading

Heb 1: 1-6

A Reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word. When he

had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say: *You are my son; this day I have begotten you?* Or again: *I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me?* And again, when he leads the firstborn into the world, he says: *Let all the angels of God worship him.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God.

C. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

R: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

C. A holy day has dawned upon us.

Come, you nations, and adore the Lord.

For today a great light has come upon the earth.

R: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

THE GOSPEL

Jn 1: 1-18

C: The Lord be with you.

R: And also with you.

C: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John.

R: Glory be to You, O Lord.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life,

and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God.

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

R: Praise be to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

A Message from the Tai Chi Class

Phylis Satin, who teaches the 10:00 a.m. Friday morning Tai Chi class that meets in our church hall, sent this note to Father Tom with a sizeable donation to our parish:

“Dear Saint Joseph’s Church,
Today the hoar frost sparkles
The air is crisp
It is a day for thanksgiving,
Thanks to Saint Joseph’s Church
For allowing each of us to nourish
Our body and mind
Through the practice of Tai Chi,
A combination of breath, movement,
Massage, and meditation,
In your sacred space.

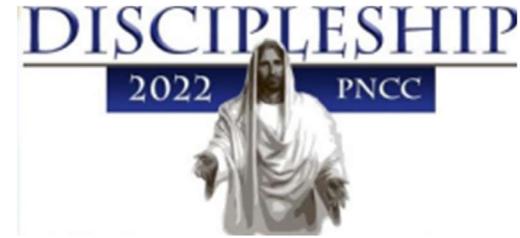
This overture of kindness and generosity says much about your church community.”

Several of the class members have also independently made donations to the food pantry collection and the parish in gratitude for the welcome extended to the class in using the facility. We thank them all for their thoughtful generosity.

Altar Flowers

A wonderful way to remember a special person or occasion as well as beautify the church. Contact Fr. Tom or Dee Smith if you wish to donate flowers for a particular week. Also, please let them know if the flowers will be in memory or celebration of someone so the donation can be acknowledged. There are vases in the cabinets in the right side altar room if you want to donate flowers for the side altars.

Please note: Flowers are not permitted on the altar during **Lent** or **Advent**.



Prayer Blanket Project Update Gearing up to make more blankets

All of the blankets made and blessed in the first batch have been distributed. Response to these gifts has been overwhelmingly positive. **Your participation in making them has enriched a dozen lives in so many ways.** See the bulletin board by the classroom for a thank you note from one of the recipients.



Of course, **we are still collecting donations toward more fabric.** A second batch has been purchased and will soon be ready for your assistance in completing them. As Father has said, the need for these blankets is great and the supply not enough to meet that demand.

The fabric costs approximately \$40 per blanket. **There is a donation box at the back of the church, on the table near the bulletins.**

Many thanks to Mercy Tabernacle for the donation of four pre-packaged blanket kits to the project and to all those who've already made generous contributions towards the purchase of fabric!

SPECIAL MASS INTENTIONS

If you would like to sponsor a Mass to memorialize a loved one or celebrate a special occasion, please contact the office at 203-377-9901 or email sjosparishpncc@outlook.com

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YOUR CHURCH

Tuesday, 27 December 2022 – No adult study class this week.

Tuesday-Wednesday, 27-28 December 2022 – Eastern Diocese Winter Youth Retreat, Blessed Trinity Parish, Fall River, MA

Sunday, 8 January 2023 – Post-Holiday potluck brunch

‡**Sunday, 15 January 2023** – Memorial Mass for †S. Shah, given by Linda Chehy

Sunday, 22 January 2023 – Annual parish meeting after Mass

‡**Sunday, 29 January 2023** – Memorial Mass for †Paul McGuinness, given by John & Cheryl Hewitt

Sunday, 29 January 2023 – Coffee & Catechism. Topic: “The Last Four Things – Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.”

‡**Sunday, 5 February 2023** – Memorial Mass for †Michael Chernesky, given by daughter Barbara

Items for the bulletin

Deadline for submitting items for the bulletin is Thursday. Items turned in after Thursday are not guaranteed inclusion in that Sunday's bulletin.

The Lord's Kitchen needs your help!



Food insecurity is a growing issue for individuals and families, even in a thriving town like ours. For many years we've helped out at the Lord's Kitchen serving hot meals to those in need.

But we need more hands!

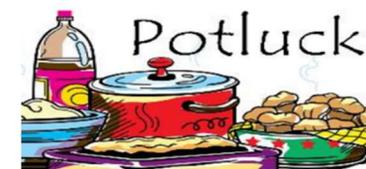
It's not a large commitment – a few hours on one Wednesday every four to six weeks – but the impact on the community is huge. **See the bulletin board for a note on how your contributions made Christmas brighter for over 120 people!** Meals are served from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Christ Episcopal Church on Main Street. Allow a little time on either end for setup and cleanup and you're done! If you are thinking of volunteering, or would like more information, please contact the office via phone or email.

Holiday Potluck brunch – Signup sheet out

Only two weeks away! A Holiday Potluck Brunch will take place in the church hall after Mass on Sunday, 8 January 2023.

Use the signup sheet posted in the foyer to indicate what favorite breakfast or lunch dish you are bringing to share with everyone. We

would like to have a good balance of offerings on hand. It doesn't have to be a lot – a casserole, a tray of muffins or bagels, a vegetable dish – whatever you are able to contribute. Coffee and orange juice will be provided. See you there! Bring a friend!



Interested in serving on the Parish Board?



It's a great way to give back to the parish community. The Parish Board is responsible for guiding the parish along in its day-to-day operations, the upkeep of the church and its property, and spearheading events of fundraising and outreach to the community. Anyone interested in possibly serving on the board should speak to Jeanine May or Father Tom for further information.

Coffee & Catechism



The next Coffee & Catechism session will take place on Sunday, 29 January 2023, after Mass. The topic will be: “The Last Four Things – Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.”

Calendars – grab one!

The 2023 Liturgical Calendars for the parish are waiting for you on the table in the foyer. Take one and hang it up at home or work. The pictures are beautiful, taken by members of the PNCC. Each page is full of information, from saints' days to celebrations specific to our church.

