



SAINT CECILIA'S CHURCH

Alma Mater by Virginie Demont-Breton



WITH THE HELP OF SAINT CECILIA A CHRISTMAS STORY

Dear brothers and sisters,

Here's an old story about the meaning of Christmas for your meditation and enjoyment. Merry Christmas!

Once upon a time there was a great tall tree on a hill in the woods. He stood there all day long, dreaming of what he might become. Some days he would dream that he would be carved into a great treasure chest, filled with gold, silver and precious gems and decorated on every side so that everyone would admire his beauty. On other days he would dream that he would form the massive timbers of a mighty ship which would carry kings and queens across the oceans to the four corners of the world. He wanted to be great and powerful.

One day a woodsman came and looked up at the tree and cut it down, making it into neither a beautiful chest nor a mighty ship, but a feed box for the animals. He placed it in a barn and filled it with hay. The tree was very sad, because he would never be great nor powerful.

Then one day, a man and woman came to the barn. She gave birth and placed her baby in the feed box, because there was no place for them in the inn. But then a strange thing happened, as the whole manger seemed to fill with light, and there were angels and a star above the baby's crib, and shepherds and wise men came to worship the child, not like a baby in a crib, but like a King upon the finest royal throne.

But soon they all left and the memory of that wondrous night began to fade, and over the years the barn grew old and the crib grew rickety, until it was sold for scrap to some Roman soldiers and carted off to Jerusalem, where it was made into a Cross for the execution of criminals.

That was the cross they placed on the shoulders of a man who was made to carry it, a man who seemed to glow with the same light as the baby so long ago in Bethlehem. The man fell three times and was finally affixed to the wood with nails which dug deeply. The people jeered at him and mocked him, while only his mother and a younger man stood weeping at his feet, until the man looked to heaven, prayed and breathed his last.

And three days later, when the sun rose, so did the man rise from the dead, and the tree stood taller and prouder than he had since he lived in the forest, for he knew now that now he was, indeed, great and powerful, having been made little and weak. He had never been a chest for earthly treasures nor a ship for powerful princes, but he had been a throne for the Son of God, as his crib and his cross.

And what about us? Do we want to be rich and powerful? Do we want the whole world to acclaim our beauty and our strength? Sure we do.

In fact, especially at Christmas we expect that everything is going to be perfect. It's that idea of Christmas that people my age got from the Cleaver family in the 1950's. Everyone sitting around a beautifully decorated Christmas Tree while a perfectly constructed fire burns in the fireplace, decorated with overflowing Christmas stockings with the name of each child neatly inscribed on each.

And everyone is singing Christmas carols as they smile at each other with understanding and love. There's grandma in the rocking chair sharing her wisdom with all who sit in rapt attention, while mom and dad look lovingly on, holding hands with the trace of a tear in their eyes. Meanwhile, each child asks permission to open their next gift and giggle with joy at each lovely surprise. Soon they will leave for Church as snow gently falls from the sky and dad leads them in Christmas carols until they genuflect and kneel in their pews dressed in their new Sunday clothes....

At Christmas time we expect everything to be perfect, but most of the time it is not. Many of you lost someone you loved this year, and they are not here this Christmas because they have died. Some who hear my voice fought about some stupid little thing all the way to Church and are not particularly looking forward to going home in the same car. Some worry about what the doctor said or about the people at work who already got laid off or about their son who did not come home from school this year. Some worry about addiction, or that one who drinks too much, or about how hard it is to pray or even to sleep.

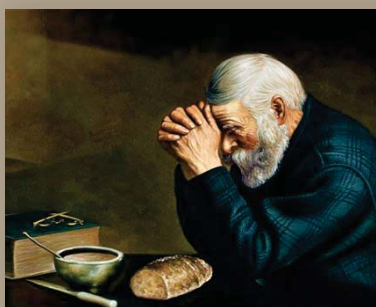
But the great good news of this night is that you do not have to be powerful or perfect. The great good news of this night is that, like the tree on the top of the hill, you need only be little enough to be a throne for the Son of the Living God. Little enough to make your hands into a throne to receive his incarnate flesh...Little enough to prepare your heart to be a crib where the incarnate Son of God might rest this night...with his healing, his love and hope.

So God does not expect from us perfection or power. We are not made for that. God waits for us to make ourselves as little as the Babe of Bethlehem, that we might receive him this night and he might rest in our hearts.



Merry Christmas!

Monsignor Moroney



PRAY WITH US!

Pray for all who are sick, and especially for:

Rhea Girouard, Annie Moore, Ken Lavoie, Francis Wada, Judith Arnold, Elaine Nasal, Yvonne Champagne and Linda Kinsey.

Pray for all who live in the Holy land, that God might bring peace to that troubled land.

Join us in praying for those who have died recently, especially: Gerald Allain and Jane Walsh. Pray for their families, as well, that they may be consoled by the promises of Christ.

If you know someone who needs prayers, call the rectory or email office@stceciliachurch.net and we will add them to our prayer list for the next several weeks.



*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
you may abound in hope.*
(Romans 15:13)

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth involve a disparate group of people, the sinless virgin, the upright Joseph, an indifferent innkeeper, Jewish shepherds, pagan magi, the ruthless Herod, incurious scribes, and murderous soldiers. Among this radically varied group, there was one thing in common. They were all each one of them-loved by God. They were each the reason Christ was born. To each He would call. For each He died.

What was true that long ago night in Bethlehem remains true this day in our world.

God loves each one of us. He loves those in the pews each week, twice a year or not at all. He loves those who have just come from the confessional and those who have not yet made it there. He loves those who acknowledge and worship Him and those who do not recognize Him and are far off.

Jesus Christ is the one savior of the world. He loves us all and He calls us all. As people whose freedom God respects, our response is critical. It determines if we find peace in this life and in the next. His peace is a gift. We do not earn it. We can only accept it. We accept it by believing in Him and what He has revealed, by striving to follow Him with our lives, and, by our repentance, accepting His freely offered, limitless mercy for our failures.

I pray that, whatever our situation and circumstance this Christmas, we may all be deeply moved by the wondrous love of God who so loved the world that he sent His Son as our Savior. May we turn anew to Jesus Christ, find a welcome place in His Church, and with it the joy, peace and hope God intends for us all.

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

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester

COME HOME!



CHRISTMAS MASS
4:00pm
MIDNIGHT
9:45 and 11:15am

We are so grateful to our friends at Wright-Roy Funeral Home for the 2024 calendars which are available at the entrances to the Church.

Did you get yours yet?



\$15 each or 3 for \$40 **ST. CECILIA'S WINTER CALENDAR RAFFLE - JANUARY 2024**

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1		\$450	\$100	\$150	\$100	\$100	\$150
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7	\$100	\$150	\$100	\$175	\$100	\$150	\$100
8							
9							
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14	\$100	\$200	\$100	\$150	\$100	\$100	\$175
15							
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17							
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20							
21	\$100	\$100	\$150	\$100	\$150	\$100	\$150
22							
23							
24							
25							
26							
27							
28	\$100	\$150	\$150	\$1100			
29							
30							
31							

\$5,200 WORTH OF PRIZES
JANUARY 2024

* total value of daily prize is a combination of cash and/or gift card. See complete list of prizes on the back.

St. Cecilia's January Calendar Raffle, thirty-one days of prizes ranging from \$100 to \$1,100 in cash and or gift cards. Suggested donation for each calendar \$15 or three for \$40. Calendars can be purchased at the parish office Monday through Friday from 10am to 3pm, at Friday Night Bingo or give us a call at 978-537-6541 for more information. Good Luck to All!

thank you!

**Last Weekend's
Parish Collections
totaled \$8,345!**



St. Vincent de Paul donations are greatly needed. You will find donation boxes at each entrance to the church.

Due to this year's storm, with all the flooding damage, the St. Vincent de Paul Conference of St. Cecilia Parish has received a record number of

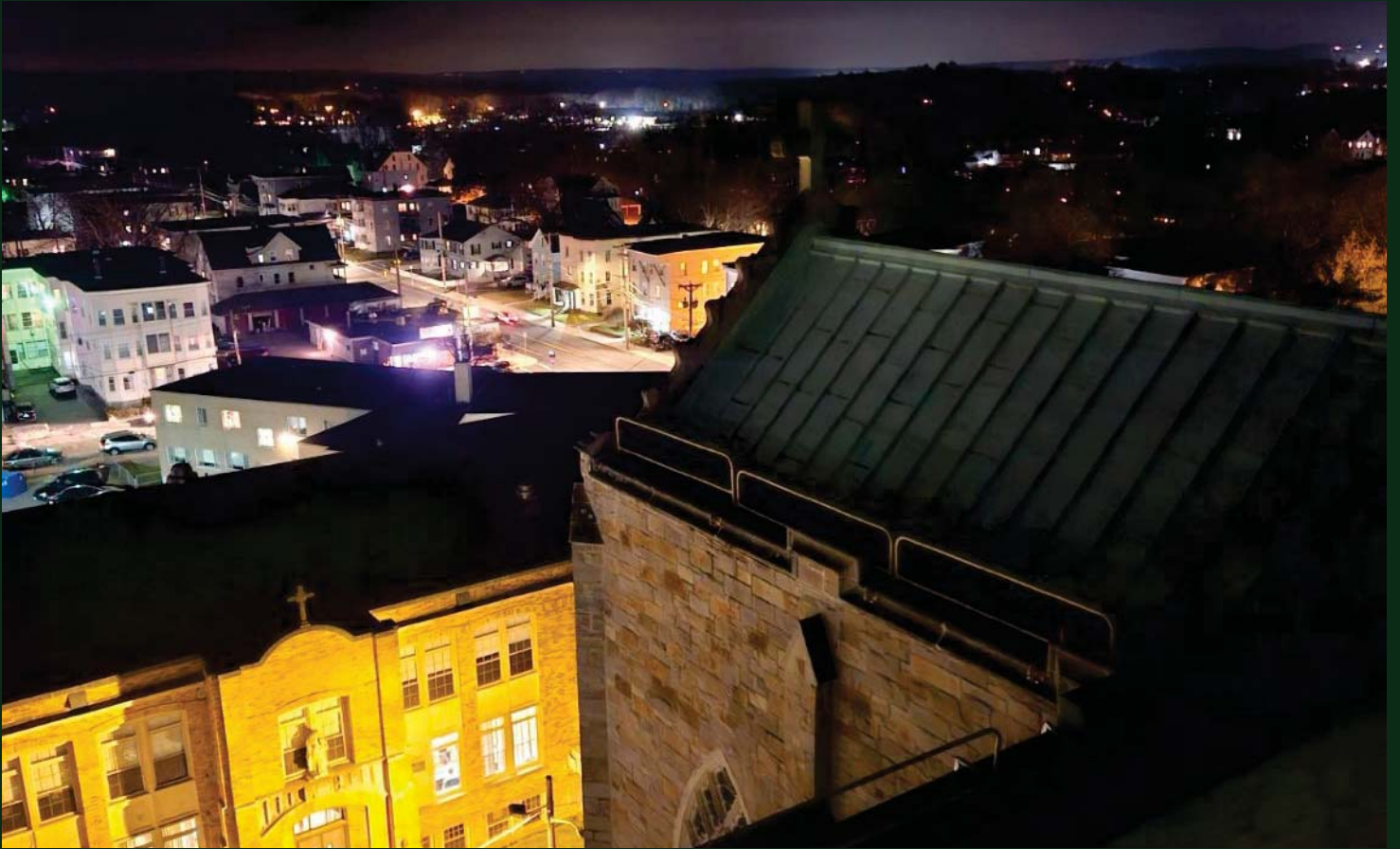
calls for help. With your donations they are able to provide food, emergency shelter, rental assistance, gas money, heating expenses, and aid in avoiding utility shut-off as well as several other services to individuals and families with children in our area. **Sincere thanks go to our generous and largely anonymous benefactors for helping them to help others.**

CHRISTMAS IN ACADIA REPORT

The generosity and hard work of each and every one of you whom volunteered to make Christmas in Acadia such a wonderful success is overwhelming! In total, we raised \$41,422 to keep the heat and lights on! Nothing less than amazing!



LAST WEEK, AT YOUR FAVORITE CHURCH



A view from the gutters, as they work late into the night.



Members of the Serra Club singing carols at their annual Christmas Party, along with Seminarian Ricardo Reyes.





THIS WEEK AT SAINT CECILIA



Saturday December 23 Vigil *Breaking Bread, page 41*

3:00pm Confessions (Church)

4:00pm Mass for James and Theresa Provo, by Mr. and Mrs. James E. Provo (Church)

Sunday December 24 Fourth Sunday of Advent *Breaking Bread, page 41*

7:00am Mass for Leo Bolduc (8th anniv.), by Cecile and Larry Gladding (Church)

9:45am Mass for Gloria Lefebvre (2nd anniv.), by her family (Church)

9:45-11:00am No Religious Education Classes Today (Parish Center)

10:00-11:00am RCIA Group (Rectorry)

11:15am Mass for Gerald Allain, by the Allain family (Church)

Sunday December 24 Christmas Eve *Breaking Bread, page 43*

4:00pm Mass for Romeo Poirier, by Valeria Ermini (Church)

Midnight Mass for Monsignor Francis Goguen and Father Robert Brusio (Church)

Monday December 25 Christmas Day *Breaking Bread, page 50*

NO 7:00am Mass on Christmas

9:45am Mass for Andrew Zephir (13th anniv.), by Joan and Doug Romano and family

11:15am Mass for Thomas McDermott, III (34th anniv.), by Mom and Dad

3:00pm Rosary and Divine Mercy Novena (Chapel)

7:00-8:15pm No Religious Education Classes

Tuesday December 26 Saint Stephen

9:00am Mass for Parishioners of St. Cecilia's Parish (Chapel)

3:00pm Rosary and Divine Mercy Novena (Chapel)



Wednesday December 27 Saint John

9:00am Mass for Robert Doiron, by Marcel and Annette Leger (Chapel)

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament follows Mass

Noon Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament (Chapel)

3:00pm Rosary and Divine Mercy Novena (Chapel)

6:00pm Mass for All who have died in Ukraine this year (Chapel)

6:30pm Confessions (Church)

7:00pm Rosary (Chapel)

Thursday December 28 The Holy Innocents

9:00am Mass for Lawrence Vaillette (30th day), by Kevin and Michele Mack (Chapel)

9:30am Confessions (Church)

3:00pm Rosary and Divine Mercy Novena (Chapel)

Friday December 29 Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

9:00am Mass for Lee Tucker (30th day), by Keven and Michele Mack (Chapel)

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament follows Mass

Noon Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament (Chapel)

3:00pm Rosary and Divine Mercy Novena (Chapel)

6:30pm BINGO (Parish Center) Doors open at 4:00pm; Game starts 6:30pm

Saturday December 30 Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

9:00am Mass for Alexander and Sophranie Tellier, by the family (Chapel)

9:30am Confessions (Church)

Saturday December 30 Vigil

Breaking Bread, page 53

3:00pm Confessions (Church)

4:00pm Mass for James Leach (20th anniv.), by his children (Church)

Sunday December 31 The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph *Breaking Bread, page 53*

7:00am Mass for Norman and Tina Melanson, by Paul and family (Church)

9:45am Mass for Alfred Laverdiere, by his children (Church)

10:00-11:00am RCIA Group (Rectorry)

11:15am Mass for Linda and Thomas McDermott, by their children (Church)





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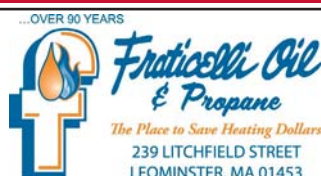
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