

Grow as a disciple I pray, study, engage, serve

Grow: Today we have blogs and life coaches, Facebook groups and self-help books, all of which can help us become better human beings. These resources come to mind as I read St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians – I think St. Paul would be the ultimate life coach! All of his letters to the early Church offer wisdom, encouragement, and instruction, and the words we heard today are particularly significant as we prepare for Jesus' coming this Advent: "the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus." Unlike some of our modern-day resources, Paul's words go beyond simply helpful advice; they are rooted in faith and prayer, and in the truth of the Paschal Mystery. These words assure us that we are not alone on our journey, that what God has promised in the person of his Son will come to fruition: Christ will come again! And so, as John the Baptist did, we who are disciples are meant to witness to his coming, announcing the Good News and preparing for his – second – coming. Repent. Believe. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." How do we do this? Engage with Scripture – read it and really hear what the Word of God is saying to you. Pray for insight, that the grace of God might transform you to go forth and announce the Gospel.



Go Evangelize I prayer, invitation, witness, accompaniment

Go: Even pre-Google, I spent more time than perhaps I should have hunting down the perfect gifts, especially for my young boys. I'd scour the ads, then get up early on black Friday and hit the stores in search of deals and hard-to-find items. Perhaps that's why these words from St. Paul stopped me in my tracks: "And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, *to discern what is of value* [italics added], so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ." During Advent, these words can both assure and challenge us – to grow in love, knowledge, and a sense of what really matters during our time on earth. For me the challenge will be to spend less time shopping this season and more time focusing on deepening my relationship with God, who is preparing to turn the darkness into light. This doesn't mean we can't take delight in finding that perfect gift; but we ought also to increase our recognition that all gifts come from God, including our ability to have access to and means to purchase material gifts. We can find joy in God's presence (and presents?) among us.

ACTIONS: Re-read today's Gospel, and then consider how Saint Paul followed in John the Baptist's footsteps in his Letter to the Philippians. Think of ways you, like John and Paul, can encourage one another, and be a voice crying out in the desert. Participate in the sacrament of reconciliation and pray that God may cleanse your heart to welcome him at Christmas, and when he comes again.

We ask you to pray...

Please pray for those who have died, especially John Armstrong.

Please pray for those are sick, especially Sylvester Checinski, Deacon Leo Gulikers, Norma McIver, Alfred Heinbuck, Hermina Reurink, Claire Nicholson and Pauline Patterson.

Please pray for vocations, especially this coming week for Fr. Dwayne Adam, Fr. Robert Weaver, Deacon Lyle Lalonde, Fr. Bernard Pinsonneault, Colleen Keane (Pastoral Minister), Christine Coyle (Coordinator of Youth Ministry), Fr. Steve Wlusek, religious communities, Bishop Fabbro, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Dabrowski, and Pope Francis.

**Mass Schedule and Intentions for the week of December 6—11****Tuesday - 7:00 pm. at St. Joseph's Church**

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| 1. Leslie Psutka | Laurie Ash |
| 2. Peter Bokkers | Annie Bokkers & family |
| 3. Stan Mazur | Alexandra Mazur & family |

Wednesday - The Feast of the Immaculate Conception**8:00 am. at Immaculate Conception Church**

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| 1. Rita & Arnold Brewer | Their family |
| 2. Frank Krauskopf | Jane Gladding |
| 3. Marj Vere | Harry & Eileen Thomas |

12:00 pm. (noon) at Immaculate Conception Church

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| 1. Julieta Bayani | Her family |
| 2. Joey Chisholm | Virginia Rogers |
| 3. John Armstrong | Parish staff |

Thursday - 10:00 am. at Holy Name of Mary Church

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| 1. Len Lavelle | Shirley Ann Beecroft |
| 2. Wilma Healy | Her family |
| 3. Phyllis Mathieson | Rob & Maureen Leyser & family |

Friday - 8:00 am. at St. Joseph's Church

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| 1. Jean & Pat O'Donovan | Marg & Jim Brickman |
| 2. George Brickman | Marg & Jim Brickman |
| 3. Rose Whaling | Sharon Whaling |

Sacraments**Confession times:**

Saturdays: 11:00 am. —noon at St. Joseph's church &
4:00 pm. —4:30 pm. at Immaculate Conception church.

Sundays: 9:00 am.—9:30 am. at Holy Name of Mary church.
(or by appointment by calling the office and speaking with one of the priests.)

Baptisms - Baptisms are celebrated on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 1:00 pm. with the preparation class held the Tuesday evening before at 7:40 pm. Please call the office and register your child, or email Elizabeth at emanto@dol.ca or Mary at mchisholm@dol.ca

First Reconciliation Preparation has now been postponed until the new year.

First Holy Communions - Completed for 2021

Confirmation - Completed for 2021

Weddings—should be booked six months to a year in advance by calling either church office to speak with one of the priests.

Parish Groups

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul We continue to take donations for **The Giving Tree Program**. The trees are displayed in St. Joseph and Immaculate Conception Churches with gift tags that request donated gift cards from designated locations and in various amounts. Please take one or more of these tags, purchase the gift card(s), and return to the offertory collection boxes. Parishioners that are unable to access the Giving Tree and would still like to participate, please drop any denomination of gift card(s) from Walmart, No Frills, and/or Food Basics in a clearly marked envelope into the locked secure box on the right outside the Parish Office.

This program enables parents to purchase a gift for their child aged 17 or under and provides families with a grocery gift card - all to help celebrate the Christmas Season. Your gift of giving will be greatly appreciated.

Immaculate Conception CWL Are you searching for something worthwhile that makes the best us of your time and talents? Consider the CWL! Your commitment could be as easy as maintaining an inexpensive yearly membership, even when you are unable to attend meetings or other events. As time permits thought, you may find you can help out with a project or two. Fresh ideas are always welcomed. Share them with your CWL sisters and join us! Please contact Mary Kay at 519-301-8297 or Sharon at 519-273-1995 if you are interested in a \$25.00 a year membership. This membership adds power to the CWL's voice as the League lobbies government on Social Justice issues on behalf of a national sisterhood of Catholic Women.

St. Joseph's CWL Our next meeting will be Monday, December 6 at 7:00 pm. Please note that masks are mandatory and proof of vaccination is required. Membership dues are \$25 and can be dropped off to the mailbox located outside of the office or in the offertory box at church. Please mark to the attention of St. Joseph's CWL. Questions or concerns are directed to Neves Pereira at 519-305-0525.

We still have some Epicure fundraising kits available. Cost is \$25. This fundraising event is open all parishioners in our family of parishes. Please contact Gisella Bennett at 519-703-0055.

Holy Name of Mary CWL Once again the owner of the Independent Grocery Store is allowing us a small rebate on cash register tapes. Please leave only Independent Grocery Store cash register tapes in the red basket at the registration desk at Holy Name of Mary Church. The funds we raise will be used for the charities we support.

A message of hope from our 3 Leagues—As we begin a New Liturgical Year we look forward with hope to new beginnings. During these past two years many of us have experienced loneliness and sadness. Some among us have questioned if belonging to the Catholic Women's League makes any difference. Your prayers, compassion and reaching out to fellow members and your parish do make a difference! As our country and province are working to combat covid and move towards greater freedom in the future, many of you have renewed your membership in CWL for 2022. If you are wondering how to get your dues to your CWL Council, your presidents would love to help you. Please give us a call! **St. Joseph CWL**—Mary Cobb (519) 275 – 1842 **Immaculate Conception CWL**—Sharon Twamley (519) 273 – 1995 **Holy Name of Mary CWL**—Shirley Ann Beecroft, (226) 661 - 0164.

Diocesan News

Learning about the Vision: What does it mean to be Mission-Oriented? "The Church is God's family in the world. In this family no one ought to go without the necessities of life... The parable of the Good Samaritan remains as a standard which imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter "by chance", whoever they may be. -Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 25

Diocese of London: Being a Mission-Oriented Church that Forms Disciples of Jesus

Community News

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School invites you to its '**Live Nativity**' on Thursday, December 9th, 6 pm.—8 pm. Come enjoy a live viewing of the Christmas story, receive Advent gift bags and visit our barn yard friends! Admission is free and all are welcome! We kindly ask everyone to wear a mask as you visit and stay within your family grouping. Sanitizer will be available.

Avondale United's Annual Blue Christmas gathering is Sunday, December 5th @ 7 pm. This can be a difficult time of year for many and this evening is a way to honour the harder dimensions to this season. It will be a quiet, reflective & gentle time together and all are welcome.

Christmas Flower Memorials We invite parishioners to participate in our tradition of making a donation toward the purchase of flowers in memory of their deceased loved ones. As a special way to honour your deceased family and friends, these flowers will decorate all 3 of our churches during the entire Christmas season.

Please complete the form below and drop it in the collection basket at one of the churches or to the lock box outside the office door at St. Joseph's. You may also leave the name of your deceased loved one(s) by calling the office or emailing Mary at mchisholm@dol.ca or Elizabeth at emanto@dol.ca and e-transfer the Parish as follows:

St. Joseph: stjosephstrat@dol.ca **Immaculate Conception:** immaculatec@dol.ca

Holy Name of Mary: hnmstmarys@dol.ca ****please put 'Christmas Flowers' in the message line.**

We will display the names of our deceased loved in sanctuary by the flowers.

(Please print clearly—thank you)

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Envelope Number: _____

In Memory of: _____

Donation: \$ _____ Parish: _____



AVON-THAMES CATHOLIC FAMILY OF PARISHES

Website: www.avonthamescatholic.dol.ca

Email: avonthamescatholic@dol.ca

Parish Family Office:

96 Huron Street, Stratford ON N5A 5S6

Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Phone: 519-271-6722 Stratford or

519-284-2593 St. Marys

Staff are working from the office - Access by appointment

DONATE

During these difficult times

your financial support is appreciated:

Holy Name of Mary: <https://dol-hnom.llplenty.com/>

Immaculate Conception: <https://dol-ic.llplenty.com/>

St. Joseph's: <https://dol-sjcc.llplenty.com/>

To e-transfer, please email Maureen or leave a message at Extension 23.