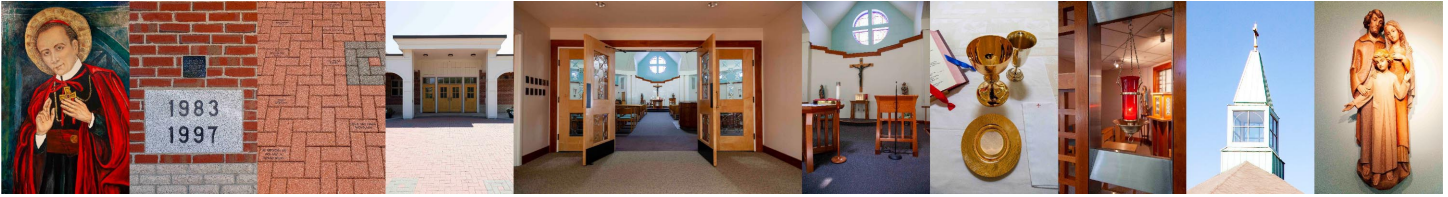


SAINT JOHN NEUMANN PARISH
708 Milford Rd (Rte 101A), Merrimack, NH 03054 — SJNNH.ORG



4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT
& NATIVITY OF THE LORD
December 24/25, 2023

Very Rev. Robert Glasgow, V.F.
Chaplain (LTC) USA (Ret.)
(603) 880-4689 x113, pastor@sjnnh.org

Deacon Brian Lester
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Office Manager
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MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday (Anticipatory) 5:30 PM
Sunday 8:00 AM
Sunday 10:00 AM
Sunday 6:00 PM
Daily (Mon, Wed-Fri) 12:15 PM

CONFESSION

Saturday 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
And before/after daily Mass, or by appointment.

BAPTISM

Parents must attend a Parent Baptism Class before the baptism of their child. The class is offered the first Sunday of each month following the 10:00 AM Mass.

MARRIAGE

Please contact the office at least six months prior to the wedding date. The diocese requires Marriage Prep.

**VISITS TO THE HOMEBOUND AND SICK,
ANointing OF THE SICK**

Please call the office to request home or hospital visitation.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

RCIA is the process of formation offered to those who seek to become Catholic. For information, please call the office.

ON CHRISTIANS

It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. —Acts 11:26



THE NATIVITY
by Simone dei Crocifissi (d. 1399)

Good news and great joy to all the world:
Today is born the savior, Christ the Lord!

The excerpts below are from the Letter to Diognetus (ca. 2nd-3rd c.). The author is unknown. He refers to himself as "Mathetes" [Lt., *disciple*]. It's believed he was the tutor of Marcus Aurelius [Roman Emperor, 161-177 A.D.], and possibly a catechumen or associate of St



Paul, Apostle. This letter is regarded as one of the most perfect literary and apologetic compositions handed down from ancient Christian times.

CHRISTIANS are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law.

Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen. The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself.



No man has ever seen God or known him, but God has revealed himself to us through faith, by which alone it is possible to see him. God, the Lord and maker of all things, who created the world and set it in order, not only loved man but was also patient with him. So he has always been, and is, and will be: kind, good, free from anger, truthful; indeed, he and he alone is good.

He devised a plan, a great and wonderful plan, and shared it only with his Son. As long as he preserved this secrecy and kept his own wise counsel he seemed to be neglecting us, to have no concern for us. But when through his beloved Son he revealed and made public what he had prepared from the very beginning, he gave us all at once gifts such as we could never have dreamt of, even sight and knowledge of himself.

When God had made all his plans in consultation with his Son, he waited until a later time, allowing us to follow our own whim, to be swept along by unruly passions, to be led astray by pleasure and desire. Not that he was pleased by our sins: he only tolerated them. Not that he approved of that time of sin: he was planning this era of holiness. When we had been shown to be undeserving of life, his goodness was to make us worthy of it. When we had made it clear that we could not enter God's kingdom by our own power, we were to be enabled to do so by the power of God.

When our wickedness had reached its culmination, it became clear that retribution was at hand in the shape of suffering and death. The time came then for God to make known his kindness and power (how immeasurable is God's generosity and love!). He did not show hatred for us or reject us or take vengeance; instead, he was patient with us, bore with us, and in compassion took our sins upon himself; he gave his own Son as the price of our redemption, the holy one to redeem the wicked, the sinless one to redeem sinners, the just

one to redeem the unjust, the incorruptible one to redeem the corruptible, the immortal one to redeem mortals. For what else could have covered our sins but his sinlessness? Where else could we, wicked and sinful as we were, have found the means of holiness except in the Son of God alone?

How wonderful a transformation, how mysterious a design, how inconceivable a blessing! The wickedness of the many is covered up in the holy One, and the holiness of One sanctifies many sinners.

WE LIVE AS WE BELIEVE AS WE PRAY

JESUS CHRIST is the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father [Salvation] except thru him (John 14:6). The Son of God—JESUS CHRIST—assumed human nature and became man to accomplish our salvation in that same nature. Born of the Virgin Mary, he became like us in all things but sin. God's saving plan was accomplished by his Son's redemptive death and resurrection which freed us from the slavery of sin and the power of death.

SALVATION is a gift of God, it cannot be merited.

Christ works in, with, and through the CHURCH. The faith of the CHURCH precedes, engenders, supports, and nourishes our own.

FAITH is freely offered by God to all. It is an assent to divinely revealed truths and—inseparably—an adherence to God's will. Amen means "I believe". It alone opens the heart to God's grace.

Faith is expressed in WORKS, that is, how we live our lives. As St Paul expressed it: "*faith WORKING through love*" (Gal 5:6). Or, as St Cyprian (d. 258) asked: "*How can a man say he believes in Christ if he does not do what Christ commanded?*"

It is by way of LOVE—which is CHARITY, the indispensable virtue and greatest commandment—that God draws near to us, and we to God. The Catechism defines CHARITY as the Theological Virtue "*by which we LOVE God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the LOVE of God*". Jesus' command—"I give you a new commandment, that you LOVE one another as I have LOVED you" (John 13:34-35)—entails a free choice of the will on our part, not a feeling. LOVE of God is inseparable from LOVE of neighbor. And fraternal CHARITY is the certain sign of our LOVE for God: "*We know that we have passed from death to life because we LOVE our brothers*" (1 John 3:14).

The two INDISPENSABLE FOUNDATIONS of the life of faith are PRAYER and SELF-DENIAL.

PRAYER. The Catechism defines PRAYER as "*the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God*". PRAYER IS INSEPARABLE FROM THE LIFE OF FAITH, and

without it no one can be saved. It has only the power to do good. It is the means of obtaining God's help/grace.

SELF-DENIAL. The path of holiness is the way of the CROSS, provided it is borne willingly: "*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his CROSS and follow me*" (Mt 16:24). Taking up our CROSS means renouncing our own will and embracing the will of God always and in every circumstance. It requires detachment, sacrifice, and self-denial. The CROSSES we must bear are found mostly in the duties, the life, the difficulties, and the sacrifices of each day/moment.

The DETERMINATION to be a Saint is the mainspring of the spiritual life. Persistence serves to arouse the DESIRE for God's gifts/graces, and it is much DESIRE—the beginning of love—, not many words, which is essential in prayer.

God so formed us that he himself is our only strength. Still, we must do our part. God admonishes us to do what we can [to shun evil, to do good], and to ASK/pray for what we cannot, that with his help/grace we may be able. "*It is our part to SEEK, his to grant what we ASK; ours to make a beginning, his to bring it to completion; ours to offer what we can, his to finish what we cannot*" (St Jerome, d. 420). While God certainly knows what we need before we ASK/pray, he requires we ASK/pray in order that we might be able [willing/eager] to receive his help/grace. And he would not urge us to ASK/pray unless he were willing to give. The grace of Salvation is not a single grace, but a chain of graces. "*ASK and it will be given to you; SEEK and you will find; KNOCK and the door will be opened to you*" (Mt 7:7).

To ask/pray properly requires Humility, Confidence, and Perseverance: "*You ask but you do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions*" (Jas 4:3).

HUMILITY is expressed as lowliness of heart, obedience, and gratitude. HUMILITY is the one virtue the devil cannot imitate. "*My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite, HUMBLED heart, O God, you will not scorn*" (Ps 51:19). The HUMBLE soul acknowledges itself wholly dependent upon God's grace—"As the eye cannot see without light, so man can do no good without grace" (St Augustine, d. 430)—, and therefore seeks always and in everything God's glory, not its own. It is, "*All for God and nothing for self*" (St Mary Magdalene dei Pazzi, d. 1607). HUMILITY is the one virtue that must precede/accompany all the others.

CONFIDENCE is the very soul of prayer. "*Therefore I [Jesus] tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours*" (Mk 11:24). If we expect much from God, he will do much for us; if we expect but little, we will receive little.

PERSEVERANCE. It's not a question of never failing, but of humbly rising after we do relying on the mercy/strength of God. "*Whoever PERSEVERES to the end will be saved*" (Mt 10:33).

It is through the divine worship of the Church—the LITURGY—that Christ continues the work of our redemption. The word LITURGY means "participation in the work of God". Therefore, as the Rule of St Benedict says, "*Nothing may have priority over the LITURGY!*"

The celebration of the LORD'S DAY is at the heart of the Church's life. **The MASS is the holiest act of religion.** We can do no more to glorify God, and we can do no more to profit our souls, than to assist at MASS. Baptism bestows the life of grace; the EUCHARIST sustains and perfects it. The EUCHARIST is the supreme proof of God's love for us. Receiving HOLY COMMUNION—the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ—preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received in Baptism.

OFFERING

17 Dec '23 (2nd Sunday of Advent):
Posted on the BB opposite the front office.
THANK YOU for your generosity!

WEEKLY CALENDAR

NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Holy Day of Obligation

CHRISTMAS EVE (Sunday)

24 Dec, Christmas Eve (Children's Mass) 4:00 PM
24 Dec, Vigil Mass 7:00 PM
24 Dec, "Midnight" Mass 10:00 PM

CHRISTMAS DAY (Monday)

25 Dec, Christmas Day Mass 10:00 AM

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

31 Dec, Vigil Mass 6:00 PM
1 Jan 2024, Holy Day Mass 10:00 AM

NOTE: With the exception of the 12:15 PM daily Mass (Wed, Thu, Fri) there are no other scheduled activities this week.

MASS INTENTIONS

Dec 23 (Sat), 5:30 PM	Raymond Weinstock (req.by Lauren & Denise Weinstock)
Dec 24 (Sun), 8:00 AM	St John Neumann Parishioners
Dec 24, 10:00 AM	Doris Patricia Zampino (req. by friends from Hollis)
Dec 24, 4:00 PM	Eugene Mooney (req. by Mark & Margaret Roy)
Dec 24, 7:00 PM	Deceased clergy of the diocese
Dec 25 (Mon), 10:00 AM	Holy Souls

Dec 31, 8:00 AM	Pat Davis (req. by Tom Davis)
Dec 31, 6:00 PM	Deceased clergy of the diocese
Jan 1, 10:00 AM	St John Neumann Parishioners

The Code of Canon Law confirms the practice of offering Mass(es for particular intentions is ancient: "The Christian faithful who give an offering to apply the Mass for their intention contribute to the good of the Church and by that offering share its concern to support its ministers and works" (945 §2).

ADVENT WREATH BLESSING

The following prayer is repeated each day. The purple candles are lit the 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays of Advent, the pink candle is lit the 3rd Sunday of Advent [Gaudete Sunday].

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. *Who made heaven and earth.*

V. O God, by whose Word all things are sanctified, pour forth Your blessing upon this wreath and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from You abundant graces. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. *Amen.*

V. O Lord, stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, and come, that by Thy protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins and saved by Thy deliverance. Through Christ our Lord.

R/. *Amen.*

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY

To add someone to the PRAYER LINE, please contact Teri at the parish office: (603) 880-4689, tschmitt@sjnnh.org. Please pray for:

Those in our Grief Share Group. Paul. Chris. Bonnie. Bob. Pat. Margery. Diane. Emily. Fr. John Grace. Rose. Lyric. Susan. Martha. Jeremiah. Margaret. Malik. Armonie. Steve. Mark. Phil. Gardner. Theresa. Bill. Robert. Priscille. Sierra. Wesley. Ann. Declan. Kim. Deb. Vivian. Tonya. The Rena Family. Sue. Tiffany. Hannah. Rob. Kim. Allen. Carol's family. Cheryl & her family. Kathy. Sue. Those traveling during the holiday season. Family and friends who have stepped away from the faith. Vocations. All of our parishioners and their needs.

For monthly Parish Updates, subscribe via FLOCKNOTES by going to: <<https://SJNMERRIMACK.flocknote.com>> or, by texting <"SJNMERRIMACK" to 84576> (message/data rates may apply).