



DECEMBER 24, 2023 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

312 Tazewell Avenue, Tazewell, VA 24651

(276) 988-4626 | parishoffice@holyfamilyswva.org | facebook: search Holy Family SWVA

ST. THERESA'S

312 Tazewell Ave.
Tazewell, VA 24651

ST. ELIZABETH'S

160 Merrick Lane
Pocahontas, VA 24635

ST. MARY'S

1122 Farmer Street
Richlands, VA 24641

ST. JOSEPH'S

1007 Independence Rd.
Grundy, VA 24614



The sign of the cross

The sign of the cross is not simply a way to begin praying. It is itself a powerful prayer that is meant to pour out tremendous blessings on our lives. Whenever we make the sign of the cross—whether at Mass or in our private devotions—we enter a sacred tradition that goes back to the early centuries of Christianity, when this ritual was understood to be a source of divine power and protection. In making this sign, we invoke God's presence and invite him to bless us, assist us, and protect us from all harm.

We should make every sign of the cross with careful attention and reverence!

The Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus

We read from the letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians (Galatians 4: 4-5): “When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

For this act of salvation, God did not choose a well-educated woman from the royal court or from a priestly or aristocratic family in Jerusalem. Rather, God chose a humble girl, barely fourteen years old, a resident of the lowly town of Nazareth. Truly, God does not look at our social status. He does not check whether we have a luxury car. He does not investigate our bank books. All these may be important in modern society, but they are irrelevant to God. God looks into the heart of a person. What will God see if He looks into our hearts? Will He find in us faith and humility like Mary had?

When we speak about Mary's humility, let us not forget what real humility is. Real humility demands courage. And Mary had that courage—she asked questions. Faith, therefore, is not saying a blind yes to everything. Faith is a searching for God's will and a total entrusting of oneself to Him because we are convinced that our understanding is limited, and that God knows better. Mary did not fully understand what the angel said. But then she answered, “I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to Your Word.” That is humility at its best. That is faith at its best. The future that lies ahead of us may be uncertain. However, we are called not to know everything, but to believe and to have faith in God's plan. God loves us! God knows best!

Let us thank the Blessed Virgin Mary because it was through her that the Savior is born. There is Christmas because she believed and trusted.

Amen.



Fr. Renier Supranes

Luke 1:26–38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the house of David,
and the virgin's name was Mary.
And coming to her, he said,
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end."
But Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be,
since I have no relations with a man?"
And the angel said to her in reply,
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
Therefore the child to be born
will be called holy, the Son of God.
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,
has also conceived a son in her old age,
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;
for nothing will be impossible for God."
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."
Then the angel departed from her.

PRIEST ADMINISTRATOR

Fr. Renier Supranes
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(276) 385-7312

OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office
to make arrangements for
the **Sacraments of Baptism,**
Anointing of the Sick or
Holy Matrimony as well as
funerals. **Reconciliation** is
available from 30 minutes
before a scheduled Mass.

MASS TIMES

SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph's
6PM – St. Mary's

SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth's
11:30AM – St. Theresa's

TUESDAY & FRIDAY

10AM – St. Theresa's

Cover image:

Giulio Cesare Procaccini, *The*
Annunciation, 1605–15

A walk through the Christmas Season

Michael R. Heinlein / *simplycatholic.com*

THE CHURCH's liturgical season of Christmas is one of its shortest, but also one of its most unique. Within it is the eight-day celebration of the Lord's Nativity—known as the Christmas octave—as well as other feasts pertaining to the manifestation that Jesus is Lord of the nations. And there are feasts of several saints, many of whose stories contain special significance to the season.

The configuration of the calendar relative to the season of Christmas is a bit complex. It always begins on the solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord—Dec. 25—and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, a movable feast roughly three weeks after Christmas.

In the U.S., Dec. 25 is always a holy day of obligation.

Christmas Day

The liturgical celebration of the Lord's Nativity has many variables and components. There are four particular timeframes during which Mass might be celebrated in observance of this great feast: a vigil, a Mass at night, a Mass at dawn and a Mass during the day. Each of these Masses have their own unique prayers and readings. The newness of life made possible because of the Incarnation pervades the prayers and feasts of the Christmas season.

The four different Gospel readings assigned for use at the different Masses of Christmas all speak of the variety of the people affected by the Savior's coming. The beginning of St. Matthew's Gospel (see Mt 1:1-25), which lists Jesus' family lineage, is proclaimed at the Vigil Mass. This includes major figures of Judaism like Abraham and David, whose covenants with God foreshadow the new and everlasting

covenant that will be sealed in the blood of Christ. But Christ's lineage also emphasizes that he came to save the poor and lowly, shown by connecting him to ancestors of low degree, socially or morally—like the four women mentioned, including David's mistress Bathsheba. Jesus came to save them all.

The Gospel read at the Mass at night (see Lk 2:1-14) also underscores the importance of Christ's coming for the marginalized and outcast, embodied by the news of his birth being shared firstly with the shepherds and not the rulers endowed with earthly power, who might be perceived as entitled to receiving such news on behalf of their subjects.

It is important to note that on Christmas, the faithful all are to genuflect or kneel during the Creed at the words relative to this central mystery of Christian faith, “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.” This helps us keep our hearts and minds focused on what the feast is all about. As the popular Christmas carol “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” phrases it, Jesus was “born that man no more may die; born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth. ...”

Dec. 26: Feast of St. Stephen

Within the octave are various feast days that have rich histories and traditions. It is interesting to note that the first feast day after Christmas—the very next day, Dec. 26—is the feast of a martyr. Recalling the purpose for which Christ came and the assignment of his divine mission, Christians are reminded, at this early stage of the celebrations of the Christmas season, of the Lord's exhortation that anyone who wishes to follow after him must take up his cross. St. Stephen, the first martyr of the

Christian faith, is held up as a living witness of what it means to proclaim that Christ is savior without counting the cost.

Dec. 27: Feast of St. John

Dec. 27 is the feast of the apostle and evangelist St. John. Regarded as the disciple closest to Jesus, St. John—believed to be the author of a Gospel, the Book of Revelation and three New Testament letters—is the one who teaches us that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Because St. John’s Gospel alone includes the miracle at the Cana wedding feast, when Jesus miraculously changes water into wine, this feast has long been associated with the blessing of wine.

Dec. 28: Feast of the Holy Innocents

The Holy Innocents celebrated on Dec. 28 were martyrs killed as the result of Herod’s murderous rage, resulting in his desire to eliminate any threats to his power by killing anyone who fit the profile of the newborn king he learned about from the Magi (see Mt 2:13-18). Taking no chances for the babe’s survival, he ordered the murder of all boys in or around Bethlehem under the age of two. Christ, of course, survives thanks to the heavenly intervention manifested by the angelic admonition to St. Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus in the middle of the night to Egypt. The Gospel proclaimed on this day, referenced above, evokes two major issues about which the Church is concerned today: immigration and abortion.

Feast of the Holy Family

Many of the few details we know of Jesus’ early life relates to his familial relationships. As a young man, we know he grew in the ways of faith as the obedient son of Mary and Joseph. The Church holds up annually the Holy Family of Nazareth as a model for all families, as a model for all human relationships. As Blessed Pope Paul VI said during a visit to the Holy Family’s town in 1964, “Nazareth is the school in which we begin to un-

derstand the life of Jesus. It is the school of the Gospel.” The feast of the Holy Family is celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas, except for the years when Christmas falls on a Sunday. Then it is celebrated on Dec. 30.

Jan. 1: Solemnity of Mary

The octave of Christmas ends with the celebration of the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God on Jan. 1. It is a holy day of obligation, except the obligation for Catholics in the United States is lifted when the feast falls on a Saturday or Monday. Jan. 1 also marks the Church’s commemoration of the World Day of Peace, first observed 50 years ago in 1968. It seems appropriate and fitting to be celebrated on a Marian feast day, for peace is only possible through total self-sacrifice and surrender—through total love and obedience to the will of God, of which Mary is an icon for the Church.

It bears noting that Jan. 1 previously had been known as the feast of the circumcision of the Lord, because Jewish ritual prescribes that Jewish males would have been circumcised on the eighth day after birth, in accordance with the covenant God made with Abraham. As a member of a pious, practicing Jewish family, Jesus would have received this ritual induction into the Abrahamic covenant (see Lk 2:21).

Solemnity of the Epiphany

Traditionally celebrated on Jan. 6, the Twelfth Day of Christmas, is the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. The feast is transferred to the Sunday between Jan. 2-8 in the United States, however. In commemoration of Christ’s manifestation to the Magi—who represent how Christ came to save all mankind, not just the Jews—this feast celebrates how Christ’s identity is revealed, as is summed up in the gifts the Three Kings presented him. The gold and frankincense they gave

(continued on last page)

mass intentions

| Date | Intention |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 12/23 SATURDAY | |
| 4PM | Charlotte Stanley by Doug Vance |
| 6PM | Celia Peralta ☩ |
| 12/24 SUNDAY | |
| 9AM | Louie Drosick ☩ |
| 11:30AM | Jackson family members ☩ |

stewardship of treasure

| Donations Received as of December 17 (Week 25) | | |
|--|------------|------------|
| CHURCH | ATTENDANCE | OFFERINGS |
| St. Joseph's | 7 | \$345 |
| St. Elizabeth's | 23 | \$745 |
| St. Mary's | 13 | \$600 |
| St. Theresa's | 72 | \$1,993 |
| Total | 115 | \$3,683 |
| Outside Donations | | \$2,100 |
| Year to Date Received | | \$81,080 |
| Goal | | \$70,675 |
| Ahead/Behind Goal | | + \$10,405 |

OUTSIDE DONATIONS—**THANK YOU!!**

Smyrna, GA donor: \$1,000
St. Michael's, Glen Allen, VA: \$800
Maryland donors: \$300

ST. MARY'S BACKPACK PROGRAM

Richlands, VA donor: \$500

please pray for

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Louise Serreno* | Clinard Coleman |
| Gerry Hankins | Joan Harrison |
| Clarence Moore | Joe & Yvonne Blevins |
| Lexi Cox | Kyle Brown |
| Sarah Wall | Sarah Walters |
| Tammy Bennett | Amelia Proffit |
| Margaret Wasilewski | Maurice Law |
| Nick Ulate | Dennis & Frances Savage |
| Frannie & Rayburn Minton | Nancy Jo Testerman |
| Sue Bailey | Josh Cornwell |
| Christian Lambert | John Shumate |
| Shane Neal | Doug Vance |
| Pete Belcher | Russ Hatfield |
| Lucas Boyd | Connie Pace |
| Ralph Heldreth | Jody Hamilton |
| Chris Jessie | Jeanne Ameli |
| Leo Brown | Annette Pike |
| Carolina Ferrare | Sharon Mullady |
| Junior Aiken | Veronica Ross |
| Jeanne Hash | Skip Reynolds |
| Lara Marshall | Danny McNamara |
| Carol & Jim Shumate | Louie Negroni |
| Andrew Satmary | Mary Gobble |
| Christian Marshall | Karen Hart |
| Alice Godin | The Dalton family |
| Bryan Gunter | Allen & Melody James |
| Michael Beavers | Betty Tabor |
| Natalie Dodge | Joseph Romeo |
| Roger Empson | Denise Campbell |
| Dreama Ritter | Joelle Bolling |
| Chris Lambert | Sara Griffith |
| Mary Muncy | Chuck Blevins |
| Cindy Lambert | Tom Farrell |
| Helen Petro | |

council members

PARISH COUNCIL:

Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert, Maria Farris, Zach Hash

FINANCE COUNCIL:

Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Lydia St. Peter

parish news & events

Schedule of Masses:

Monday, December 25: Mass at 9AM at St. Joseph's, 11AM at St. Mary's

December 30/31 weekend is normal schedule

January 1, Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God: Mass at 10AM at St. Theresa's

January 2, Birthday of St. Therese of Lisieux: Mass 10AM at St. Theresa's, followed by a Filipino lunch

Diocesan News:

Bishop Knestout has launched a \$500,000 Holy Land Emergency Appeal. This appeal is to benefit our brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, Gaza, Beirut and Amman. A special collection will take place the weekend of **December 31** to support emergency needs organized by the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) and Pontifical Mission.

birthdays & anniversaries:

DECEMBER 25: Chauncy & Ophelia (anniversary) | **30:** Larry Dameron

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."

-Lk 1:38



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(A Walk Through the Christmas Season, cont.)

Christ represent his status as king of the universe, the deity worthy of our true worship. And the myrrh tells of the bitter reality that the babe in the manger was born to die.

The Baptism of the Lord

The Christmas season ends with the feast of the Lord's baptism, which falls on the Sunday after the Epiphany. (That is, unless the Epiphany falls on Jan. 7 or 8, when it then is celebrated on the

following day, a Monday.) This feast commemorates the day on which Christ formally accepts his mission as the redeemer when he receives St. John the Baptist's baptism of conversion and repentance. He sets out from the waters of the Jordan, identified as God's own son by the Father's voice that resounded from the opened sky, and inaugurates his saving work as the long-awaited Messiah who will free us of our sins.