

CHRISTMAS 2023

PEACE ON EARTH

Saints Simon and Jude Catholic Church

9350 High Free Pike, West Jefferson, OH 43162
614-879-8562 www.stsimonjude.org

MASSES FOR THE WEEK

Saturday, December 23 ❖ Vigil
 4:00 p.m. † Dick & Winnie
 (Deacon Joe & Amy Knapke)

Sunday, December 24 ❖ Fourth Sunday of Advent
 9:00 a.m. † Jane Gallagher (Gary & Debbie Palatas)
 – 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38

Sunday, December 24 ❖ Vigil of The Nativity of The Lord
 4:00 p.m. † Virginia Tanzie (Janet Dunham)
 6:00 p.m. Living & Deceased Members of
 Youngpeter & Miller Families
 (Kevin & Becky Miller)
 – Vigil Is 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Mt 1:1-25 or
 1:18-25

Monday, December 25 ❖ The Nativity of the Lord
 10:00 a.m. Parish Family
 – Is 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

Tuesday, December 26 ❖ Saint Stephen, The First Martyr
 6:00 p.m. NO MASS
 – Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Mt 10:17-22

Wednesday, December 27 ❖ Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist
 8:30 a.m. NO MASS
 – 1 Jn 1:1-4; Jn 20:1a, 2-8

Thursday, December 28 ❖ The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
 8:30 a.m. NO MASS
 – Jn 1:5-2:2; Mt 2:13-18

Friday, December 29 ❖ Fifth Day within the Octave of The Nativity of The Lord
 8:30 a.m. † JoAnn Dunham (Laura Sanders)
 – 1 Jn 2:3-11; Lk 2:22-35

Saturday, December 30 ❖ Vigil of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
 4:00 p.m. † Deceased Members of the Kavanagh
 Family (Eileen Schumaker)

Sunday, December 31 ❖ The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
 9:00 a.m. Parish Family
 6:00 p.m. † Rev. Ernest Hepner (Laura Sanders)
 – Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Lk 2:22-40

Monday, January 1 ❖ Mary, The Holy Mother of God World Day of Pray for Peace
 10:00 a.m. Charlene Casey (Pat & Victoria Capretta)
 – Nm 6:22-27; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21

Tuesday, January 2 ❖ St. Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops & Doctors
 – 1 Jn 2:22-28; Jn 1:19-28
 NO Mass

† = Deceased

Third Sunday of Advent Sunday
MASS ATTENDANCE – 573

THIS WEEKEND, OUR FEATURED ADVERTISER IS
Dwyer Insurance Agency

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, December 23 Mass, 4:00 p.m.
 (4th Sunday of Advent)

Sunday, December 24 Mass, 9:00 a.m.
 (4th Sunday of Advent)
 NO PSR, Youth Group,
 Confirmation Class
 Christmas Eve Vigil Mass,
 4:00 p.m.
 Christmas Eve Vigil Mass,
 6:00 p.m.

Monday, December 25 Christmas Day Mass,
 10:00 am.

Tuesday, December 26 NO Holy Hour
 NO Mass

Wednesday, December 27 NO Mass
 Nativity Sets Display in the
 Social Hall (open to the
 public) 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 28 NO Mass

Friday, December 29 Mass, 8:30 a.m.

Saturday, December 30 Holy Family of
 Jesus, Mary and Joseph
 Mass, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 31 Holy Family of
 Jesus, Mary and Joseph
 Mass, 9:00 a.m.
 NO PSR, Youth Group,
 Confirmation Class
 Mary, The Holy Mother of
 God Vigil Mass, 6:00 p.m.

Monday, January 1, 2024 Mary, The Holy Mother of
 God Mass, 10:00 a.m.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY



This week to the following parishioners:

Betty Boyle	Hadley Cole	Kathleen
Patricia Haney	Caroline Sussman	Finnegan
Emily Neal	James Thompson	Megan McNeill
Deborah Palatas	Brian Hackett	Finley Hiss
Debra Ricker	Brent Long	Karen Segovia
Noah Sollars	Anthony Wilmoth	Jared Ysseldyke
Kaleigh Dulin	Hayden Covert	



**CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS
 FROM THE PARISH STAFF**



The Three Wise Men gave the gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. There are reasons for these gifts. The gold is symbolic of the Kingship of Jesus. Frankincense, for the fact that He is a priest and He will actually be a sacrifice. And Myrrh would be used to anoint the dead. So, Jesus didn't just come to die but He came to establish the Kingdom of God.

– Mark Mandel

Change – for many it brings feelings of unease and a very real unsettled sense of apprehension about the future. My wife Lisa and I experienced real change this year as we decided to leave our wonderful lake house for a London (Ohio) condo less than half its size. Talk about CHANGE! We're still adjusting, probably not nearly as well as our 8-year-old goldendoodle Tucker. Many reasons prompted this change, the least of which was a desire to spend more time out East – we both grew up in Baltimore, MD – to balance time with family both here AND there. Anyone having lived through this life experience can understand our angst and trepidation. Life IS about CHANGE – as we move through the changing seasons of the year – much like the Church seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Each changing season challenges us to BE better, to DO more, to ACKNOWLEDGE our blessings and to SEE the grace of God in our lives. My wish for parishioners of SS. Simon and Jude this holiday season – no matter our life circumstances or where we are in our busy, changing lives – that we pause to see the hand of God working in our community, friends, and families.

Merry Christmas!

Steve Gruzs

“Truly He taught us to love one another. His law is love, and His gospel is peace.” For more than thirty years, it was a tradition for me to sing O HOLY NIGHT for the Christmas Eve Communion meditation. My mother was the organist at our church, St. Williams, where I began to cantor when I was in the 7th Grade. We always had three Masses on Christmas Eve and mom and I “worked” all three and it was easily my favorite night of the year.

Throughout High School and college, I sang in every ensemble the schools had to offer. We started practicing our Christmas music in September so, by the time Christmas came around I was all caroled out. However, I always looked forward to Christmas Eve and the tradition of spending time with my mom, making music. It was always a special ending to a very busy season of performing.

My Mom suffered a stroke a few years after I graduated from college and lost the ability to play the organ and piano. I only went back to St. William's for Christmas once after her stroke. The new organist asked me to sing O HOLY NIGHT, and I did, but it wasn't the same. It was much harder to sing with my mom watching me from her pew and not sitting next to me at the piano.

I did go on to sing O HOLY NIGHT for many years at other churches and it was a sweet reminder of the special tradition mom and I had shared. When I worked with Fr. William Hahn, he once told a seminarian, “It's not Christmas until Valerie sings O HOLY NIGHT.” He repeated that story at mom's funeral, at St. William's, where the tradition had started so many years before. I pray you each have a blessed Christmas filled with love, laughter and good music. Make all the memories and remember your loved ones celebrating Christmas with Jesus.

Merry Christmas,

Valerie

The Season of Christmas has always been my favorite time of year. There is something magical in the air – the sights and sounds, the joy and laughter, the spirit of generosity and goodness, as well as spending time with loved ones. As a child, my parents thought of creative ways to teach me (and my 4 younger sisters) about the true meaning of Christmas; this preparation began with Advent. Our home was decorated in pinks and purples, our kitchen cabinets were covered with words chosen by each of my family members representing what Advent meant to us – LOVE, JOY, EXPECT, AWAIT, REPENT, PREPARE and REBIRTH. During our Advent wreath prayer time, we took turns lighting candles, reading the daily reflection and story of Christmas, opening the daily door on our Advent calendar, and pulling a link from the “good deed” paper chain counting down to Christmas. Once completed, we wrote our good deed on a yellow construction paper star and hung it on the closet door to remind us that Christmas isn't about the presents we receive, but about offering our gifts of service to Jesus. *And the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the father.*

~ John 1:14. At the Incarnation, God offered His most precious gift by sending His only Son as a pure baby in a manger; the Eucharist is a visual reminder of His gift to us. “St. John Chrysostom in the 4th century encouraged his congregation to attend Mass on Christmas Day, where they could approach the altar as if they were going to the manger. For if we approach with faith, we shall surely behold Him lying in a manger. His holy table will supply the place of a manger. For there will be spread the body of our Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes as then, but on all sides surrounded by His Holy Spirit.” Quoted from “The Eucharistic Symbolism of the Manger” by Philip Kosloski. God continues to offer the very gift of Himself every time we receive His precious Body and Blood in the Eucharist. As we continue the Eucharistic Revival here in our parish, I invite you to focus on Christ and His real presence to us in the Eucharist. Mary proclaimed her “Yes” to God and became the holy dwelling place for the child Jesus. Each time we receive the Eucharist, we offer our “Yes” by proclaiming “Amen! I do believe.” This Christmas, let us become living tabernacles by preparing our hearts and creating a holy place for Christ to dwell inside us. I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Blessed New Year!

Bonnie Creeger



“They shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us’” (Mt 1:23). This sign that was promised in Isaiah and recalled in the Gospel of Matthew is what Christmas is all about: the fact that God is with us – here, in our midst, in our struggles and joys, in our doubts and in our praise. Sometimes it’s hard to remember that. It’s hard to hold on to the simple truth that we are not alone. We often lose sight of the truth of God’s presence – we try to plan on our own, carry the burdens on our own, struggle to keep hope alive on our own, juggle all of the expectations on our own. Life becomes busy, chaotic, and overwhelming when we depend on ourselves. But the joy of this holy season is that none of us existence is alone! GOD WITH US is a truth that promises the comfort and peace of knowing that Someone loves us, someone is here for us, someone is fighting for us and that we are not alone! The gift of Emmanuel is the gift of God whose abundant and faithful love is always present and offered to us as an unconditional gift. So, I pray that this holy Christmas Season and in every season of your life, you are able to open your heart to receive this wonderful gift and dwell in Emmanuel. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

*In His Joy,
Katie Jones*

My Christmas memories as a young girl: I remember being in the church Christmas play. I was a star and memorizing my lines and wearing this silver star made from Reynolds Wrap foil. Believe it or not, I still have a picture of me wearing that star on my head.

Going to Christmas Eve service was and has always been a huge part of my life. On the way out of Christmas Eve service, the ushers would hand out small white bags filled with Christmas candy. I would always save the candy that I wasn’t too fond of and say, “I’ll eat that later,” always pretending that I liked it but those chocolate drops were just too sweet!

I loved to watch the Christmas movies on the Early Show with Flippo the Clown (as fate would have it, I later would become Jr. High School friends with Flippo’s daughter and remain friends through high school and now see her at our class reunions) and this one December evening as I was watching out the window waiting for my mother to come home from work, *The Bells of St. Mary’s* (which is now my favorite Christmas movie) was playing. I would keep going to the window to see if my mother was coming yet. I could always tell when she was coming up the street as she wore this black velvet coat with one button at the neck, three-quarter in length, and it would stand out against the white snow. We had lots of snow in those days back in the sixties. It was only my mother and I when I was growing up. We would get invited every Christmas Eve to one of my mother’s friends’ houses she worked with in the baby department at Lazarus Department store downtown. Ruth and her husband Walter treated us as family. We had no vehicle so Mr. Davis, as I called

him, would pick us up and on the way home he would always take the long way home so I could see the Christmas lights on people’s homes. We continued to visit every Christmas Eve including the first year that I met my husband. This would be the last Christmas Eve we would spend time together as their son married and the nieces and nephews had other commitments. When I think of Christmases that have passed and the ones who are not with us anymore it brings tears to my eyes. May each and every one of you have a Merry Christmas this year and hold your loved ones in your heart until we are all united together with Jesus.

*Merry Christmas,
Janet Dunham*

One of my earliest childhood memories of Christmas is of how my family would always get a live Christmas tree and set it up in our living room. Since I was one of the youngest/smallest (#7 out of 8 kids and I am 4 minutes older than my twin sister) my job was to water the Christmas tree since I could fit under it. We would set up our Nativity Scene, which was a homemade manger scene with twigs for a fence around it and reeds for a roof, under the tree. We would also decorate the tree with small multi-colored lights, ornaments, and tinsel.

I used to love to lay on the living room floor with all the lights off and “squint” at the lit Christmas tree to make the Christmas tree “glow.”

One thing that I would always do is make sure one small Christmas tree light, usually white, would stick through the top of the red roof so that it lit up baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph along with the cow, donkey and sheep that were in there with them.

I am not sure that as a child I contemplated the true meaning of Christmas as I gazed upon the Nativity Scene, but I knew that I liked looking at it a lot. Now I can reflect on this miraculous event that captures the essence of Christ’s humble birth in that stable in Bethlehem.

It reminds me of the power of faith, as Mary and Joseph trusted in God’s plan despite the challenges that they faced. And it emphasizes the significance of God’s love for us and how Jesus’ birth brings hope and redemption to a broken world.

We are all loved by God, we are worthwhile! Christmas means that we are very worthwhile in God’s eyes. For all our bruises and our failures and our sins, and whether we are regulars or irregulars in our faith and at Sunday worship, we are called by God and we are the beloved of God. You and I, dear friends, are worth the Christmas that God’s love makes possible for us. That is what the infant in the manger is telling each one of us this blessed Christmas Day!

So, go and squint at your lit Christmas tree and ponder baby Jesus’ love!

*Merry Christmas!
Deacon Joe Knapke*

In the Nativity scene at my childhood home, Jesus was a fixture – and not just metaphorically. He was made of a piece of plaster, laid in a straw-filled crib he rested in, and securely fastened to the middle of the little wooden shack that sheltered him. We would then place it under the Christmas tree.

Christmas is a time of joy, but all too often it is a manufactured joy, made up of food, gifts, decorations, cards, family visits, special outfits, indulgent confection, and spectacular messes of gift wrap and dirty dishes.

For me, Christmas was attending Masses – many times, Midnight Mass. As early as five years old, I remember entering church with all of the beautiful flowers and calm, and the peace of the Nativity Set where I always went to kneel down to pray to baby Jesus.

Before you get caught up in the madness that is Christmas in America, take a few minutes to remember who Jesus was, and what He was about. This something St. Francis never forgot. Yes, this is one part of why I became a Secular Franciscan.

This Christmas, make sure that Jesus is the reason for your season, so that when He's in His crib on Christmas morning, He'll look right at home.

This Christmas, let's remember that who you are matters far more than what we do. In the creche, Mary is not braiding the straw into garland, she is simply present and prayerful.

A lot of our traditions at Christmas center around family, and this can be the source of as much headache and frustration as joy. We must find a way to be the men and women God created us to be, and to encourage and respect that same struggle in everyone around us. This Christmas, celebrate the uniqueness of each person in your life and do so in your unique way.

Saint Francis' desire to be like Jesus in every way extended to his desire to suffer the wounds of the cross. In the same way, our faith should make a permanent mark on who we are and how we behave. If our Christianity is nothing more than a weekend get-together or a box checked on a survey, it is no faith at all. We must find a way to imitate Jesus in our own time and place, and in our own way.

The question we must ask ourselves is not so much, "What would Jesus do?" but "What should I, as a follower of Jesus, do?"

This Christmas, let the angels remind you of the great change that Christ makes in your life, and let that change shine through in everything you do. I suggest this Christmas, step outside your four walls. Take a walk in the snow, have a romp with a puppy, feed the birds, or marvel at the stars. Remember that the world God created for you is quite a bit nicer than the one you've created for yourself.

*Blessed Christmas,
Dr. Teena A.F. Gallagher, OFS*

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

At this special and sacred time of the year, I wish to extend to you and your loved ones Christmas greetings and best wishes for the New Year. While we might recall difficult times and frustrations from the past Covid days, we continue with faith, love, joy and hope, in 2023 to grow closer to the Lord.

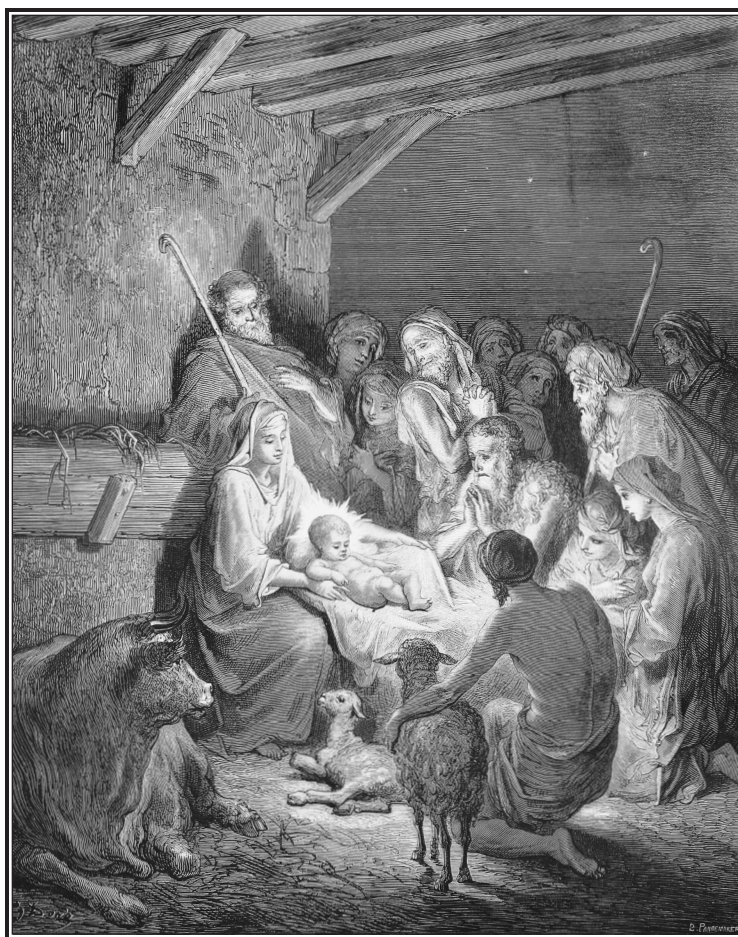
The generosity of this parish always humbles me and is modeled upon what the Three Kings presented to the newborn King. The times spent on Tuesday Holy Hour in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the many gatherings of prayer and praises to the Lord spent by you, are very moving and a blessing.

The talent you share from ministering at Mass to making others feel Christ's compassion and love by visiting the home-bound, bringing a meal or just a smile to many, is impressive. All you offer in support and sustenance of our Church, as well as shaping its future is indeed a blessing to all. The debt on the church building was paid off this year and we reduced the debt on the new expansion construction loan.

At "this most wonderful time of the year" may you and your loved ones find joy and fulfillment as surely did Joseph and Mary.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of goodwill.

*Sincerely in the Lord,
God bless you and keep you safe.
Fr. Dwayne McNew*



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