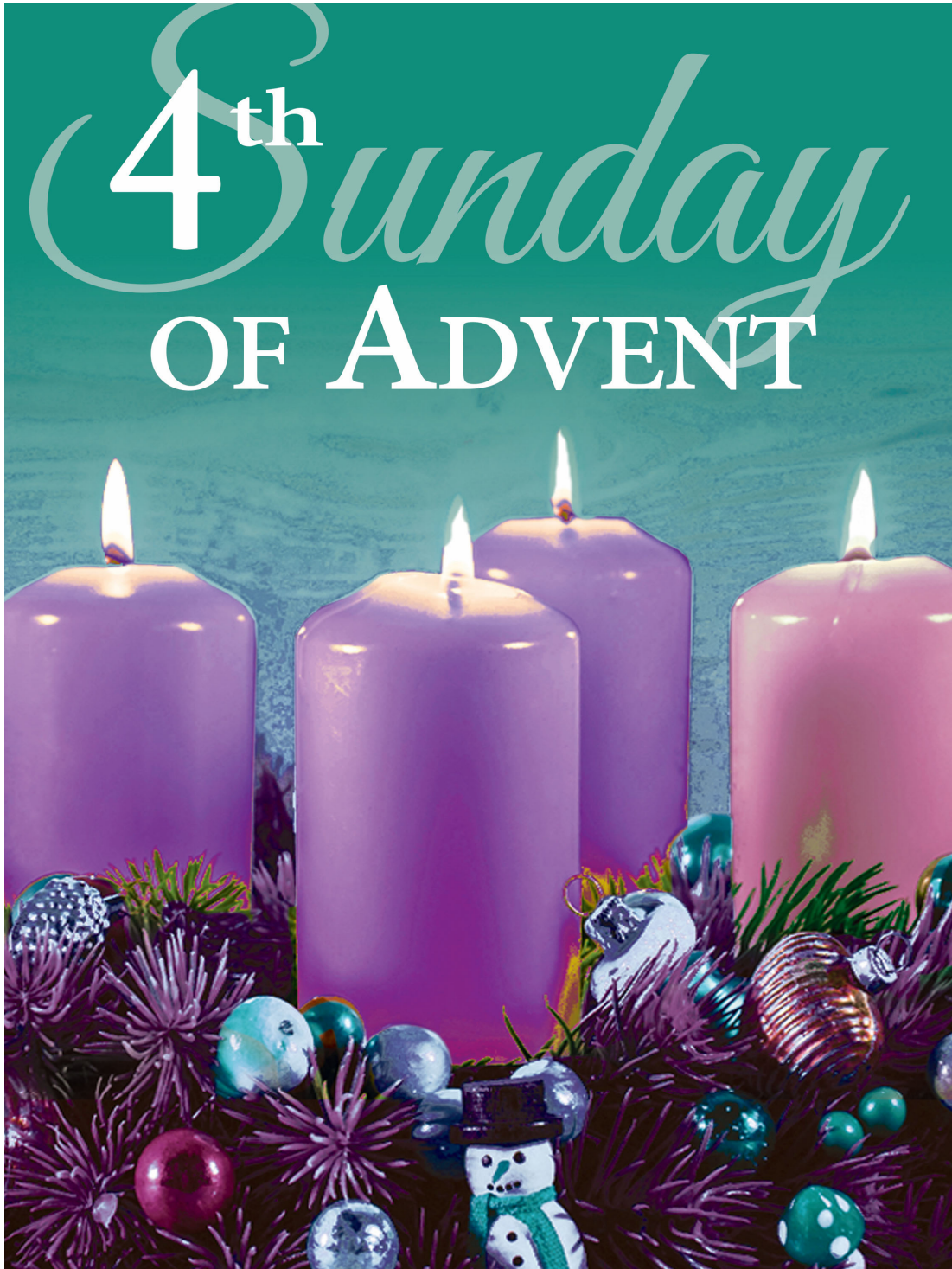


Immaculate Conception Parish Bulletin

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 24, 2023

Welcome

Very Reverend Thomas Paul, V. F. K.H.S., Pastor
Reverend Jeremy Leganski, Parochial Vicar





Fourth Week of Advent

STAR-GIVING

What I'd really like to give you for Christmas
is a star...
Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket of your
jeans
or in the pocket of your being,
Something to take out in times of darkness,
something that would never snuff out or tarnish,
something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas has always meant:
God's Advent Light into the darkness of the
world.
But stars are only God's for giving
and I must be content to give you words and
wishes and
packages without stars.
But I can wish for you life
as radiant as the Star
that announced the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe as the shepherds who
stood
beneath its light,
And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given to me,
ignited countless times by others
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.
Perhaps, if you ask, God will give you a star.



Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent, when we light the fourth candle on the Advent Wreath. Today's candle is the Angel Candle, or sometimes called the Candle of Love. We are reminded that the Angels announced the Good News of a Savior. We are also reminded of God's great love for us, and his only Son Jesus, who was sent to save us.

If you have an Advent Wreath at home, consider reciting this scripture passage as you light the first candle of Advent:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."
(John 3:16-17)

O Jesus, You are the Light of the world! You have come to strengthen the weary, to guide the lost, to walk with the lonely. You are hope to all people. Help us to see Your will. Always be with us so that we will come to know You in many ways. In the Eucharist we see You as the bread of life. And we recognize the glory of Your love when we see a smile on a little child's face. Dear Lord, whatever the way, teach us to recognize You and the gift of hope You bring.

THE ANGELUS PRAYER

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary...

Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail Mary...

And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary...

Pray for us O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

"Prepare the Way of the Lord"

Bishop Hicks' Column

December 2023

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL AND SYNODALITY, TOGETHER



ARE YOU A CUBS FAN? OR ARE YOU A WHITE SOX FAN? If you have any roots in Chicagoland, you instinctively understand that you must declare one or the other. It is common practice to choose one team — one is never a fan of both!

During these past two years, throughout our country and within the Catholic Church, that same principle seems to have been applied to the National Eucharistic Revival and the Synod on Synodality. As you know, the Eucharistic Revival is a three-year initiative of the Church to enkindle a living relationship with Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist. The Synod on Synodality is an international, multiyear undertaking during which Catholics give feedback and deeply listen to each other — so, as a Church, we can all discern together where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

Curiously, many people seem to be taking sides; they are in favor of one, but not the other.

The week before Thanksgiving, I joined over 250 bishops in Baltimore for a week of meetings hosted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We began the meetings with prayer, adoration, benediction, and Mass. The first address to the assembly was given by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the Papal Nuncio. When it comes to the Eucharistic Revival and the Synod, he encouraged us to move away from an “either/or” approach, and to instead embrace and promote both. The special connections between the Eucharistic Revival and the Synod prevailed through our week of meetings.

At one point, Cardinal Pierre beautifully reflected on the road to Emmaus story from the Gospel of Luke (24: 13–35). Along their journey, the disciples debated their theological points of view while Jesus listened to them. “Listening, corresponds to the humble style of God,” said the cardinal, quoting Pope Francis. “God loves humanity: that is why he addresses his word to them, and why he ‘inclines his ear’ to listen to them.”

You see, *listening* is essential for a synodal Church because it is a dimension of love. Through this Emmaus moment, Jesus accompanies, listens, and discerns with His disciples. Then, their hearts were set on fire because they recognized His true presence in the Eucharist. After this Eucharistic encounter, they go

back to the other disciples and proclaim that Jesus is alive and — with missionary zeal — are committed to sharing the risen Christ with the world.

Cardinal Pierre concluded his presentation with these moving insights: “Our people need us to be adventurers for the Lord. They need us to be united with one another. They need to see how our diversity, harmonized, displays the beauty of the Church and of the Catholic faith. They need to be reminded that salvation comes not from one idea or another, but through a shared encounter with the living person of Jesus, who is love.”

Most of us can agree we are a stronger Church when we both listen *and* keep the Eucharist as our source and summit. Let’s look for ways to stay united with each other and with Christ.

From the onset, I announced that the Diocese of Joliet was going to participate in both the National Eucharistic Revival and the Synod on Synodality. Walking in numerous Eucharistic processions and attending many talks about the Eucharist, I am proud of how robustly our clergy and parishioners have promoted and embraced this Eucharistic Revival. I look forward to participating in our continued celebrations of the Eucharist in the Diocese of Joliet, and will joyfully attend the Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in July 2024. That event will launch us into the next phase of the revival by enthusiastically taking the Eucharistic Lord into the world and putting our faith into action as missionary disciples.

At the same time, I am also proud of how we have participated in the Synod on Synodality. For over six months, groups gathered throughout every deanery of our diocese to listen intently to each other. The themes from these listening sessions were gathered and compiled into a report sent to Rome. The first half of the synod concluded in the Vatican this October. With faithful hope, we await the next steps for the second half next October.

As a baseball fan, I am fiercely loyal to my team, while politely ignoring the other. Gratefully, that’s not what our Church does when it comes to the National Eucharistic Revival and the Synod on Synodality. Like you, I love Jesus so much — especially in the Eucharist — *and* at the same time — through Him, with Him, and in Him — I desire a *listening* Church that calls us to be on mission! With faith and trust in God, I look forward to walking on this all-connected journey with you ahead.

DIOCESE OF JOLIET





Readings and Intentions

TODAY'S READINGS

First Reading: "Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever." (2 Sm 28:16)

Second Reading: The revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith. (Rom 16:25-26)

Gospel: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus." (Lk 1:31)

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.
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READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Vigil: Is 62:1-5/Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29/
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25/Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25
Night: Is 9:1-6/Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13/
Ti 2:11-14/Lk 2:1-14 Dawn: Is 62:11-12/
Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12/Ti 3:4-7/Lk 2:15-20
Day: Is 52:7-10/Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6/
Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
Tuesday: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Ps 31:3cd-4, 6 and
8ab, 16bc and 17/Mt 10:17-22
Wednesday: 1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12/
Jn 20:1a, 2-8
Thursday: 1 Jn 1:5—2:2/Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8/
Mt 2:13-18
Friday: 1 Jn 2:3-11/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6/
Lk 2:22-35
Saturday: 1 Jn 2:12-17/Ps 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10/
Lk 2:36-40
Next Sunday: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3/
Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 orPs 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9/
Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 or Heb 11:8, 11-12,
17-19/Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

SAINTS AND SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Sunday: 4th Sunday of Advent; Christmas Eve
Monday: The Nativity of the Lord
Tuesday: St. Stephen, First Martyr
Wednesday: St. John the Apostle
Thursday: The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
Friday: St. Thomas Becket
Sunday: The Holy Family; New Year's Eve

MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25

7:30AM †Annie & Mary Jane Le Gere
9:00AM †Rita & Urban Phillips
†Rose & Stephen Paul
†Deceased members of the Wojinski
Gallagher Family
11:30AM †John O'Connor / Cathy & George
Valaika

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26

8:00AM †Alan Montella / Family

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27

6:15AM †Henry Engo
7:30AM †Alan Montella / Jo & Don LaMonica
†Special Intention
†John O'Connor / Family
†Ed Burke / Diana Sullivan

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

6:15AM †Olivia Davidson
7:30AM †Pat Hill / Wally & Joyce Callahan

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29

6:15AM †Dan Orth
7:30AM †Rennell Brown / Tom & Sue
Westhoff

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30

8:00AM Wedding Anniversary of Grace and Jo
Barney
4:30PM †Rose & Erik Hawkinson / Jean &
Mary Hawkinson

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

7:30AM †George Molloy / Donna Chaplin
9:00AM In Thanksgiving / Olivia Gow
†Anne Vertovec / Family
†Teddy Anne & John Biggio
†Angelo Battaglia / Frank Boenzi
11:30AM †Parish Family

†Denotes deceased

*Living Intention

You can follow the readings for Mass each day by
visiting <http://usccb.org/> and selecting the date on
the calendar on the right.

You can visit the parish office to have a candle
lit in honor of a living or deceased loved one at
the Shrine of Saint Peregrine or the Sacred Heart
Shrine. Each intention will be for a full week.

Week of December 24-30
Sacred Heart Candle: †Maria Thu Tran



Stewardship of Our Prayer for...



We pray for those suffering from illness. Loving God, give strength and protection to all who struggle with illness of any kind. Calm their fears and uncertainties. Provide them with loving and tender care. Grant them courage when they are afraid and comfort when they are in pain.

Adkins, Finley	Koch, Susan
Bloc, Michael	Kuzlik, Therese
Bohn, Rob	Livorsi, Tom
Burke, Debbie	Lucchesi, Jim
Campbell, Donna	McCann, Mary
Devin	Pacurek, Michelle
Durgan, Bob	Quinn, Jack
Durgan, Lindsey	Reedy, Barbara
Durgan, Terri	Schramm, Colleen
Earnisse, Diane	Stella, Dawn
Earnisse, Dick	Teruel, Ellen
Ericksen, Kim	Toepfer, Al
Gow, Olivia	Vogel, Renee Moran
Kaprelian, Jean	Wilki, Carl

Please remember recently deceased family, friends and parishioners in your prayers. Grant them eternal rest and may your light shine on them forever.

**“HEAVENLY FATHER, ACCEPT OUR PRAYERS
WHICH WE OFFER FOR THEM”**



We pray for the newly baptized babies in our church. May their journey of faith be one that is close to Jesus. We pray for their Godparents and parents as they bring Christ to the lives of the next generation of Catholics.

Baptized at Immaculate Conception in November:

- ◆ Isaac Zachary Denny
- ◆ Nathan Dale Denny
- ◆ Connor James Kirby
- ◆ Ashton James Peronto
- ◆ Malia Ann Wilkinson
- ◆ Elayna Catherine Stanko
- ◆ Daniel Brennan Naughton
- ◆ Francesca Marie Hermanek
- ◆ George Patrick Brophy
- ◆ Sebastian Fletcher Bettinazzi

2023 ENGAGED COUPLES

Moir Hillsman & John Woodhull 12/29

Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. Give us peace. I ask this in the name of Jesus.

Maj. Joe Doyle, US Army, Son of Deb and Tom Doyle
1st Lt. Ryan Kenny, USMC, Son of Mary Beth Kenny
Pvt. Jeffery Crones, US Army, Grandson of Joan Leyden
Specialist Jonathan M. Pichler, US Army

Son of Ginny & Mark Gronek
 Grandson of Catherine Young

Sgt. Vincent Joseph Genthe, USMC Son of Denise Genthe

Capt. Jeffrey Robbins, USMC, Son of Barb & Larry Robbins, Grandson of Georgiana Ryan

Maj. Kevin Mott, US Army

Lt. Col. Andrew Tyson USMC

SGM Bill Benesi, US Army

Nephews of Greg & Mary Pat Vanderlaan

Paul Hornstra, USMC, ICHS Class of '09

Son of Paul and Dawn Hornstra

Cpl. Brittney Young, US Army,
 Cousin of Denise and John Doherty

Lt. Joe Shannon, US Navy

Son of John & Maria Shannon

SSgt. Ethan Zielinski, USMC

Son of Michele & Dolph Zielinski

Capt. Christopher Bertucci, USMC,

Nephew of Mary Anne & Greg Luczak

Lt. Andrea Bertucci, US Navy

Niece of Mary Anne Luczak

Cpl. Joseph Fischer, USMC

Son of George & Sharon Fischer

Capt. Kathleen M. Donofrio, US Army Reserves,

Daughter of Tom & Marge Donofrio

Cpl. Cavan Sullivan, US Army

Grandsons of Mary Sullivan

Capt. Samuel Westhoff, US Army

Nephew of Tom and Sue Westhoff

1st Lt Matthew Kizys, US Army, son of

Marky and Nancy Tinsley

Chf. Warrant Officer John Dal Pino, US Army

Son of Joe and Valerie Dal Pino

1st Lt. Francesca Cervone, US Army, ICCP Class of '15,

Daughter of Jeanmarie Cervone,

Granddaughter of Cay Calcagno

Capt. Molly Manion, EOD US Army,

ICCP Class of '15,

Daughter of Tom & Nancy Manion

Granddaughter of Rita Manion

MAJ Thomas Gildea, US Army, Husband of Karina,

Father of Enya, Grace, and Ignacio

1st Lt. Kyle Koch, 1st Cavalry Division US Army, ICCP

Class of '15, son of Laura & Paul Koch

Capt. Carla A. Schuit, US Army Reserves,

Daughter of Lisa Schuit

1st. Lt. Grayson Becker, US Army

Lt. Keith Wolfe, CHC, US Navy



75th Anniversary Diocese of Joliet



The second episode of the 75th Anniversary of the Diocese of Joliet podcast series launched this month. This month features St. Francis Xavier. Episodes will be released the first Monday of each month during the Jubilee celebration. Use the links below to watch or listen!

Watch: <https://bit.ly/3GomANh>

Listen: <https://bit.ly/3sYbH1Q>



75th Anniversary Prayer

All-knowing and loving God,
we give you thanks for your blessings upon
the Diocese of Joliet.

For 75 years, we have been
founded in faith,
called to witness, and
sent forth to serve.

In thanksgiving
for your abiding presence among us,
and with gratitude for the life and service
of those who have gone before us,
we recommit ourselves
to carrying out this mission entrusted
to them, to us, and to future generations.

Relying on the intercession of our patron,
St. Francis Xavier,
may our diocese continue to be a source of hope
for the Church and all peoples,
now and in the years to come.

We pray this in the name
of Jesus, your Son
by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Peace

On this night, when we look towards Bethlehem, let us pray in a special way for the birthplace of our Redeemer and for the men and women who live and suffer there. We wish to pray for peace in the Holy Land: Look, O Lord, upon this corner of the earth, your Homeland, which is so very dear to you! Let your light shine upon it! Let it know peace!

The word "peace" brings us to a key to the liturgy of this holy Night. The Child foretold by Isaiah is called "Prince of Peace". His kingdom is said to be one "of endless peace". The shepherds in the Gospel hear the glad tidings: "Glory to God in the highest" and "on earth, peace..."

Among Christians, the word "peace" has taken on a very particular meaning: it has become a word to designate communion in the Eucharist. There Christ's peace is present. In all the places where the Eucharist is celebrated, a great network of peace spreads through the world. The communities gathered around the Eucharist make up a kingdom of peace as wide as the world itself. When we celebrate the Eucharist we find ourselves in Bethlehem, in the "house of bread". Christ gives himself to us and, in doing so, gives us his peace. He gives it to us so that we can carry the light of peace within and give it to others. He gives it to us so that we can become peacemakers and builders of peace in the world. And so we pray: Lord, fulfil your promise! Where there is conflict, give birth to peace! Where there is hatred, make love spring up! Where darkness prevails, let light shine! Make us heralds of your peace! Amen.

Pope Benedict XVI's homily Christmas Eve 2005.

Coming Events

Spiritual Classics

St. Alphonsus Liguori was the founder of the Redemptorist Order which focuses on imitating the life and virtues of Christ. His writings are practical and emphasize the love and mercy of God. These writings are so popular that he has become one of the best selling authors of all time. For our discussion we will use the short book, *Talking with God*, which includes four of his treatises on the Interior Life, ISBN 978061556370. Our discussion will begin on Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024 from 10:15 – 11:15 in the Dyer Center, and will continue for 10 sessions. For more information, please call Len Hohbein at 708-544-7928.



Morning of Reflection Saturday, January 6, 2024

8:00 - 11:30 am

Marian Room in Parish Administration Center



Are you missing the light of Christ in your life? After the bustle of the holidays, do something for yourself and your relationship with Jesus Christ. Spend a Morning of Reflection with other women contemplating the light of Christ in our lives and how we reflect it to others.

We will begin with 8:00 Mass, followed by breakfast and fellowship.

A guest speaker from Mayslake Ministries and a small group discussion will help us gain perspective on the light of Christ in our lives.

RSVP preferred by January 1st to Donna Campbell at donnacampbell@att.net or 630-805-0935. Or contact Donna for more information. Walk-ins welcome!



Christian Ministry



We are so grateful to all who donated to our Thanksgiving and Christmas gift card outreach. . We had an overwhelming response this year. May God continue to bless you for answering our many "asks." **THANK YOU.**

What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has the eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of all. That is what love looks like. -St. Augustine

If you or a loved one are in the hospital, please let us know. The priests of the Eastern DuPage deanery, and specifically priests from IC, Visitation, and Mary Queen of Heaven visit Elmhurst Hospital on most days. Call the office at 630-530-8515 or email us at info@icelmhurst.org so that we can make sure you're visited and that we can pray for you.



Calling or texting 988 will connect you with mental health professionals 24/7.





**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
GRADE SCHOOL**

630.530.3490

**FAITH. FAMILY.
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**



The Immaculate Conception
Grade School Staff wishes all
of you a Merry Christmas!

**ICGS Distinguished Graduate Award
Nominations Being
Accepted!**

Do you know an ICGS alum (graduated
10+ years ago) who has made a
significant impact on the Catholic
Church or American Life?

Nominate them for this special award!

Email nominations to:

development@icgradeschoolelmhurst.org

Have an ICGS Alumni update? Email us at
development@icgradeschoolelmhurst.org



**COACHES VS.
CANCER
EVENT**

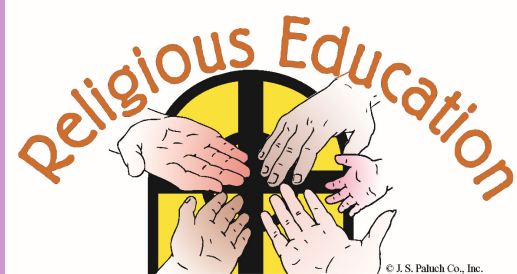
**ALL BASKETBALL LEVELS WILL PLAY
ON SATURDAY 1/20**

**BOYS BASKETBALL WILL TAKE
ON CHICAGO HOPE ACADEMY**

**GIRLS BASKETBALL WILL TAKE
ON TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN**

MASS at 4:30PM





<u>Children's Church</u>	<u>Sunday RE</u>	<u>Wednesday RE</u>
January 7	January 21	January 10
February 4	February 4	January 17
February 25	February 11	January 24

Christmas wishes and blessings to all our families. May this celebration of the birth of Jesus bring much peace and joy to you and your family.

The Christmas/New Year vacation days provide an added opportunity for parents to review the RE lessons covered during this first semester. Classes resume January 10th and January 21st.

Youth Ministry



All teens and friends are invited to the "Students of Impact" monthly Youth Nights in Costello Hall from 5:30-7:00 pm. Teens will meet new and friendly people, enjoy great food, and be empowered to connect with God and become their BEST SELF!

Find out more on at ICElmhurst.org (under Faith Formation & Youth Ministry).

Or contact Jenny Krumdrick
jkrumdrick@icelmhurst.org or 815-514-0051

The Parish office is currently closed for the holiday.
 We will reopen on Tuesday, January 2nd at 8:30am.



Parish Office Hours: Monday—Thursday 8:30 a.m. ~ 4:30 p.m.

Friday: 8:30 a.m. ~ Noon

Phone: 530-8515

Website: icelmhurst.org

Eastern DuPage Deanery: easterndupagedeanery.org

Facebook @ICElmhurst

NEW PARISHIONERS, WELCOME!

Please click on "New to IC?" on our parish website homepage or call the office at 530-8515 for more information.

Mass Times: Monday-Friday 6:15am and 7:30am

Saturday 8:00am and 4:30pm

Sunday 7:30am, 9:00am, 11:30am, and 7:00pm

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: Saturdays after 4:30pm Mass until 6pm

First Fridays after 6:15am Mass & First Saturdays after 8am Mass



THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

December 25, 2023

"For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you
who is Christ and Lord." - Lk 2:11

Immaculate Conception, Elmhurst, IL

**Christmas Eve Masses****Sunday, December 24****3:00 pm Church, Sacred Heart Chapel* and Plunkett Hall****5:00 pm Sacred Heart Chapel****11:00 pm Sacred Heart Chapel**

Preceded by a program of Christmas music at 10:30pm.

(Incense will be used at the 5:00pm and 10:30pm Masses on Christmas Eve.)

Christmas Day Masses**Monday, December 25****7:30 am Church****9:00 am Sacred Heart Chapel****11:30 am Sacred Heart Chapel****(No 7pm Mass will be celebrated on Christmas Day)**

(Incense will be used at the 9:00am and 11:30am Masses on Christmas Day.)

Tuesday, December 26 8:00 am Mass Church**(No 6:15 a.m. or 7:30 am Mass will be celebrated)**

**PLEASE NOTE: At the 3:00 p.m. Mass on Christmas Eve, in the Chapel (only), a special focus will be given to the children of the Parish. Children four years old, in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades will have the opportunity to participate in the Living Nativity. Patterns of sheep, stars and angels can be downloaded. You can simply print the pattern and trace and cut it out on poster board or cardboard. Decorate the sheep, star or angel and attach a paint stick or ruler to it. When Father is proclaiming the gospel and calls for the sheep, all who are sheep will come to the front, etc. The patterns will be available in the Grade School, Religious Education office and on the parish website. The Children's Choir will perform at this Mass.*

Feast of the Holy Family**Saturday, December 30**

8:00am Mass Church

4:30pm Mass Sacred Heart Chapel *Reconciliation will follow Mass

Sunday, December 31

7:30am Mass Church

9:00am Mass Sacred Heart Chapel

11:30am Mass Sacred Heart Chapel

*(No 7:00 p.m. Mass)***Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God****Monday, January 1**

7:30am Mass Church

9:00am Mass Church

11:30am Mass Church

The Epiphany of the Lord**Saturday, January 6**

4:30 pm Mass Sacred Heart Chapel *Reconciliation will follow Mass

Sunday, January 7

7:30am Mass Church

9:00am Mass Sacred Heart Chapel

11:30am Mass Sacred Heart Chapel

7:00pm Mass Church

The Baptism of the Lord**Monday, January 8**

6:15am Mass Church

7:30am Mass Church

(The end of the Christmas Season)

A Warm Christmas Welcome

The Catholic faith community of Immaculate Conception offers a special welcome to all members of our parish and to all visitors, both Catholic and non-Catholic, attending our Christmas liturgies. We are pleased to have you join us on this special feast day of the Birth of Christ. Whether you are a visitor, guest, or are here with us every Sunday, we are blest with your presence. We invite you to join us weekly. You are most welcome here.

Christmas Greetings

As we celebrate the Birth of Our Lord, we thank God for the gift of His Son Jesus and for the gift of each and every one of you, the Parish Family of Immaculate Conception. Together we Celebrate Our Faith as we worship as One Church during this Holy Season. We wish you a Blessed Christmas and a most Holy and Happy New Year!

Very Rev. Thomas Paul, V.F. and the Immaculate Conception Parish Staff

Rev. Jeremy Leganski, Deacon John Feely, Mr. Frank Perrotta, Mrs. Colleen Lewandowski, Mr. Jon Muchowski, Ms. Catey Cohen, Mrs. Maureen Kolar, Ms. Marianne Sajn, Mrs. Ana Dimailig, Ms. Pam Stefik, Mrs. Josephine Bastianoni, Sr Mary Francis, SSFCR, Mrs. Julie Blaszak, Mrs. Christine Brazeau, Mrs. Jenny Krumdrick, Mrs. Anne Hohbein, Ms. Lisa Grisolia, Mr. Nick Simpson, Mrs. Sharon Meyer, Mrs. Mary Koykar, Mrs. Sheila Wachholder, Mrs. Barb Repking, Mrs. Marci Wolbeck, Mrs. Elizabeth Bulthuis, Mr. Brad Johnson, Mrs. Danielle Wagner, Mr. Bob Cronin, Ms. Katie Pool, Mr. Justin Camp, Ms. Peg Slavik, Mrs. Marianne Betenia, Mr. Gary Wheaton, Mr. Rick Bertenshaw, Mr. Bryant Romero, Mrs. Jen Goworowski, Mrs. Lavonne Czech, Mrs. Jen Ryan, Mrs. Lisa Groppi-McMillan



Christmas Infancy Narrative

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and

Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to those on
whom his favor rests."

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

Luke 2:1-20





The Christmas Crib



Did St. Francis of Assisi invent the Christmas crib? Not exactly, but his devotion to the Incarnation and his love for the poverty of the Christ Child certainly popularized this beloved custom. Long before Francis, it was a custom at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome to enshrine a rich image of Mary, gilded and bejeweled, embracing the child Jesus. This church was founded as a kind of home for the feast of Christmas in the fourth century. In 1223, Francis was ready to celebrate this feast in a new way. In the tiny city of Greccio, he asked friends to prepare a place where they could experience the poverty and suffering embraced by Christ in his birth. It was a living scene: an ox from the barn, an ass from the stable, and peasants standing in for shepherds and kings. The night of the celebration was beautiful, the weather was warm, and people came in

crowds, bearing candles and singing hymns that echoed through the forest. Francis himself chanted the Gospel and preached. The custom spread quickly, and by the sixteenth century cribs were seasonal features not only in church, but in the home.

Lighting Candles in Church

Question: Why do Catholics light candles in church?

Answer:

Candles have been part of the Church's worship from the earliest times. In the days before electricity, candles and oil lamps were the ways that people lighted buildings. Even today, we often still depend on candles during power outages, relying on their flickering flames to bring light into the dark.

Like our ancestors, we also light candles on special occasions. Think about a festive family meal or a romantic dinner for two — there will often be candles on the table, special objects for a special event. We light candles on birthday cakes and carry them in processions. We also place candles at makeshift memorials that appear when there has been an accident or act of violence. In these moments, their light casts aside a different kind of darkness — the darkness of grief, fear, and death.

The custom of the early Christians lighting candles and lamps at the tombs of the martyrs gave way to the practice of having candles at Mass, honoring the sacredness of the celebration.

As Christians decorated their worship spaces with statues and icons, they would burn candles in front of sacred images and the relics of the saints, basically “shining a light” on what they held to be sacred. When pilgrims would visit these shrines, they would often bring candles to light before the image or relic. These candles came to be a symbol of the person, and their prayer and the burning these candles came to be understood as an extension and continuation of the prayer that was offered. What began as a practical way to provide light has come to be a symbol of the hopes, desires, loves, losses, fears, and faith of everyday Christians offering their prayers to God and his saints.



CHRISTMAS MASSES—NEIGHBORHOOD PARKING

It does not take long for a newcomer or a visitor, or even a parishioner, to discover that parking can be quite an adventure at IC, especially during the busy seasons of the year. On our block alone, there are three churches, all of which offer simultaneous services on Sunday mornings. On December 24th, all three churches will be offering simultaneous Christmas Eve services. **Please respect the parking lots that belong to our neighboring churches when attending Mass at IC.** The lot directly behind the Chapel/Gym belongs to the First United Methodist Church. The lot directly behind the Rectory and east of the High School belongs to St. Peter's United Church of Christ. The entrances to these lots are clearly marked with the names of the appropriate churches. Please do not park in the lots of these churches.

Busy seasons call for creative responses. In addition to our parish lot on York Street, we have some additional parking in the Hawthorne School lot on weekends, with its entrance on Arthur Street. Additional areas are available on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. There are a few spaces in Wilder Park at the intersection of Cottage Hill and Arthur. The Dist. 205 Main Office lot is a half block north of the Chapel on York Street. Gibbons Funeral Home lot is just one block north of the Chapel, also on York Street. A little advance planning might save some of the aggravation when all of the regular parking spaces are taken.

If you are new to our church or just visiting, please stop and introduce yourself. We are pleased to have you share in this celebration of the Eucharist. If you do not have a church home, or your church is not a home to you, we invite you to become part of our parish family. We are so glad you're here and hope you will come back again for Mass or become a parishioner.

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

We the people of Immaculate Conception Parish are Christians who worship and glorify God as a sign of our faith. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we proclaim our faith to the world through prayer, education, concern, and service to our community. By participating in the sacraments and giving of our time, talent and treasure, we help to make Christ present and share God's love in our community and the world around us.



Christmas Memorial Flowers



This year, we are giving our parishioners the opportunity to remember their deceased family members by donating flowers in their memory. The many beautiful Christmas plants that will adorn our Church and Chapel can be given in memory of loved ones. A list of those remembered will be included in the bulletin at a later date.

A flower envelope was included in your envelope packets - they are also available in the Narthex. You can also fill out the form below and place it in the collection basket or return it to the Parish Office.

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

In Loving Memory of: _____

Donated by: _____

Amount Donated: \$_____ (Suggested donation is \$20 per plant)



Learn about some unique Christmas traditions from around the world!



VENEZUELA

Every year, roads are closed to traffic in the city of Caracas to let people participate in *las pantinatas* — "the skating" where everyone roller skates to Christmas Mass.



GERMANY

Starting in the 16th Century, Germans hide a pickle somewhere within the branches of their Christmas tree. Whatever child finds it receives a gift!



NEW ZEALAND

On the island, Christmas trees look a little different. Residents use the native pōhutukawa tree, with its bright crimson flowers, as their symbol for Christmas.

DECEMBER PRAYER

**Stir up our hearts, O Lord,
to prepare the ways of Your Only begotten
Son, that we may attain to serve You with
purified minds, through His advent. Who
with You lives and reigns in the unity of
the Holy Spirit, God, world without end.
Amen.**



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He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race.

— - J n l : 2 - 4



Year End Giving

Advent is a time of preparation. The days ahead will seem to go by quickly as we decorate our homes, go shopping and attend the many gatherings that come with the holiday season. Yet, we encourage everyone to carve out time for quiet prayer and create a special place to welcome Jesus at Christmas.

Another way to prepare for the end of the year is through charitable giving. When we look back at the countless blessings many of us have received throughout the year, we hope that you will consider special ways to give back to the Lord for all He has given us. Please remember your spiritual home, Immaculate Conception, as well as our We are IC! Capital Campaign, as you discern your year-end gifts. For traditional monetary donations, contributions may be deductible for tax purposes. Whether you are using offertory envelopes or taking advantage of the safe and convenient Online Giving program, proper credit will be reflected on your Parishioner statement. As a reminder, you can access the Online Giving program on the IC Parish website by clicking the orange "Donate Online" button on the left.

Following are a few alternatives to traditional donations for your consideration. Please know that any form of donation is humbly and greatly appreciated.

Qualified Charitable Distributions

These typically include contributions from Donor Advised Funds, Required Minimum Distributions (RMD), or annuities. If you have an established Donor Advisor Fund or are contemplating creating one, please consider including Immaculate Conception as a charitable recipient of a donation from the fund. A Donor Advised Fund is administered by a third party for the primary purpose of managing contributions to charitable organizations, such as Immaculate Conception Parish.

Additionally, if you are age 70 ½ or older, you can contact your IRA Fund Administrator and arrange for a tax-free direct transfer of your RMD to Immaculate Conception as a charitable donation. By doing a direct transfer from your IRA, the donation may satisfy your required distribution yet may not increase your adjusted gross income for tax purposes.

Stock Donation

For those who may own stocks, a review of your stock portfolio before year end is possibly advantageous. For example, if you have stock(s) that have decreased in value over the past years, you may want to consider donating this stock to Immaculate Conception Parish. The donation could be eligible for a charitable contribution tax deduction, but also may offset capital gains for this year. If stock has increased in value, you may be able to claim a deduction for the full fair market value and eliminate any tax on the appreciation.

Employer Matching Gifts

Companies frequently match their employee's monetary contributions. If your employer has this type of program, please consider utilizing it on behalf of our Immaculate Conception Grade School or High School. Many corporations offer employee matching gift programs for educational institutions.

Charitable Gifts from Your Will or Trust

An easy way to make a gift to Immaculate Conception is to include a bequest in your will or trust. You can give a specific sum, a percentage of your gross estate or your residuary estate. The diocese has partnered with FreeWill to make planned giving easier than ever. Visit freewill.com/dioceseofjoliet to write a will at no personal cost, and include the necessary language to support Immaculate Conception with a gift in your plans. FreeWill's online will writing tools allow you to make a lasting gift to IC quickly and easily.

If you have any questions relative to year end giving options, please contact Colleen Lewandowski at 630-530-8848 or at clewandowski@icelmhurst.org.

Thank you for your continued support. We are I.C.!