

**Saint Bernadette Parish**

**Saint Mary Parish**

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893  
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7929  
BREMEN, OH 43107

**stbernadetteparish . net**



**The Adoration of the Shepherds**

Painted (about 1505-1510) in oil on panel by Giorgione (1477-1510)

National Gallery of Art, Washington

**Christmas, the Nativity of  
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ !**

*DECEMBER 25, 2016*

### at both parishes

<b>Fr Thomas Kessler</b>	pastor	(614) 634-0499	<i>wnthomaskessler @ icloud . com</i>
<b>Kathy Kehnst</b>	pastoral coordinator	(740) 654-1893	<i>stbernparrish @ yahoo . com</i>
<b>Angie &amp; Kent Kerns</b>	religious education	(740) 654-2588	<i>kwkerns @ gmail . com</i>
<b>Julie &amp; Chase Stalford</b>	youth ministry	(740) 808-7294	<i>maristellasprrit @ gmail . com</i>
<b>Nikki Schmelzer</b>	bookkeeper	(740) 654-1893	<i>businessmstbparish @ yahoo . com</i>

### at bremen st mary parish

<b>Ben Factor</b>	liturgical music		<i>b_factor @ lancaster . kl2 . oh . us</i>
<b>Jim Schmelzer</b>	maintenance chair	(740) 215-3894	
<b>Tyna Fox-Schmelzer</b>	religious education	(614) 371-7702	<i>schmelifox @ earthlink . net</i>
<b>Bremen St Vincent de Paul</b>		(740) 569-3710	
The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.			
Hours are 9-11 AM, Tu	602 Marietta St, Bremen, OH 43107	(740) 569-7929	

### at st bernadette parish

<b>Deacon Mark Scarpitti</b>		(740) 438-3970	<i>dcn . mark @ frontier . com</i>
<b>Deacon Jeff Carpenter</b>		(740) 681-9918	<i>carpenter.277 @ osu . edu</i>
<b>Ann Essman</b>	pastoral minister	(740) 653-9347	<i>aessman001 @ att . net</i>
<b>Steve Huber</b>	facilities coordinator	(740) 654-3137	<i>shuber57 @ yahoo . com</i>
<b>Liz Latorre</b>	liturgical music	(740) 243-1872	<i>lizlatorre @ gmail . com</i>

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center, across the back parking lot from the school.  
Hours are: 9 AM-1 PM, M W Th F; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu 1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130

### at st bernadette school

<b>Pam Eltringham</b>	principal	(740) 654-3137	<i>peltring @ cdeducation . org</i>
<b>Barb Huber</b>	secretary	(740) 654-3137	<i>bhuber @ cdeducation . org</i>

Saint Bernadette School is at 1325 Wheeling Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701  
*stbernlan @ cdeducation . org* [www . stbernadetteschool . com](http://www.stbernadetteschool.com)

## the sacramental life

### baptism

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnst will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. The next session will be Wednesday, Feb 22. Take the class before your child is born. If you are expecting, call Kathy to register for the class.

Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; they are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. **Both godparents need to be practicing Christians, at least one a practicing Catholic.**

If you don't **attend Sunday Mass regularly**, there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass. If you can't come (health, severe weather, employment requirements, etc.), speak to your confessor. He will help you.

### penance

The priest is available for Penance

- at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
- at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

In addition to Advent and Lenten Penance Services, every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are

## let us pray together

### on this holy day

O God, who gladden us year by year as we wait in hope for our redemption, grant that, just as we joyfully welcome your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer, we may also merit to face him confidently when he comes again as our Judge.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Penance opportunities for parochial school children four times during the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession. The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance **at least once a year**.

### anointing of the sick

The Sick receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick **when dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age**. We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body." And, we are happy to bring Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the homes or hospitals of the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to **call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long** since the sacraments were last available.

### holy matrimony

Couples wishing to marry sacramentally should contact the parish office six months before they wish to celebrate the sacrament. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation**. And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. She tries to support couples through the years of their married life. For this reason our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn how, watch the weekly bulletin.

### with pope francis during december

His universal intention is the **end to child-soldiers**:  
That the scandal of child-soldiers may be eliminated the world over.

His evangelization intention is **Europe**:  
That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel which gives joy and hope to life.

## Mass times and intentions

at St Bernadette		at St Mary
6 PM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	<b>Christmas Eve Dec 24</b>	
	<b>Christmas Eve Dec 24</b>	9 PM <i>Helen Kunkler</i>
MIDNIGHT <i>for the people of the parish</i>	<b>Christmas, Dec 25</b>	
	<b>Christmas, Dec 25</b>	8:30 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>
11 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	<b>Christmas, Dec 25</b>	
8:20 AM <i>no Mass</i>	Monday, Dec 26	
	Tuesday, Dec 27	8:20 AM <i>no Mass</i>
8:20 AM <i>no Mass</i>	Wednesday, Dec 28	
6 PM <i>no Mass</i>	Thursday, Dec 29	
8:20 AM <i>no Mass</i>	Friday, Dec 30	
4 PM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	<b>Saturday, Dec 31</b>	
	<b>Sunday, Jan 1</b>	8:30 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>
11 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	<b>Sunday, Jan 1</b>	

## in our parishes

### christian initiation

Please pray for our **catechumens**. They are **officially welcomed** members (albeit not yet full members) of the household of Faith. These include **Ralph Mohler** and his son **Bryant** of Bremen St Mary, and **Jennifer Palmer** of St Bernadette. They have all publicly ratified their desire to become baptized members of the Catholic Church and are preparing for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

### youth choir

The **Saint Cecilia Society** (St Bernadette's parish youth choir) meets on Sundays at 6 PM in the church. All parish students in grades 2-8 (public, parochial, or home school) are invited. SCS members in grades 4-8 are also invited to be members of the Handbell Ensemble, which meets on Sunday evenings at 7 PM, right after the full SCS gathering. **Mrs Latorre can answer questions** and provide registration materials after Mass, or you may call or text her at (740) 243-1872.

### adult choir

St Augustine once said, "**He who sings, prays twice.**" The St Bernadette adult choir has resumed practicing on Wednesdays at 7 PM in the church. Our adult choir is both a vocal ensemble devoted to **making beautiful music for the Lord** and a small faith family within our parish. We love to welcome new members into this family. Membership in the choir is an opportunity to be involved in the parish and grow in your faith. Contact Liz Latorre at (740) 243-1872 if you have questions.

### psr (aka parish school of religion)

PSR has begun but it is not too late to enroll students. Remember: Catholic parents have a **solemn moral duty** to see that their children are **properly and completely instructed in the Catholic Faith**. And they have a duty to see that their children attend every week (barring health or weather deterrents). And children will find **getting to know Jesus and his Church is an irreplaceable and joy-filled part of their upbringing**.

### walking with purpose: living in the Father's love

Join local Catholic women for their next session, **Living in the Father's Love**, starting Jan 18. This six-lesson course is a brief but powerful study meant to revive and refresh us as we discover just how much God loves us. In this study, we learn how the Gospels are deeply relevant to our relationships, both with God and with those we love. For this session, we are partnering with Lancaster St Mary Parish. The morning group will meet weekly on Wednesdays at the Mary Good Center at St Bernadette from 9:30-11:00 AM. The evening group will meet at St Mary Spirit Center on Thursday evenings from 7:00 - 8:30 PM. Both sites offer free childcare, and there is no cost for this session. Please register by Jan 6, so needed materials can be ordered. **Walking with Purpose** is Catholic faith-sharing that aims to bring women to a deeper personal relationship with Christ. Through personal study and small group discussions, the group helps to link women's everyday challenges with solutions to be found in the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church. For questions or to register, contact Amy Woo at (414) 882-1863 or [acfaching@yahoo.com](mailto:acfaching@yahoo.com). For general program information, visit [www.walkingwithpurpose.com](http://www.walkingwithpurpose.com).

### christmas catholic charities collection

The annual Catholic Charities Christmas Collection allows our diocese to meet a variety of basic needs directly and through diocesan agencies and organizations including JOIN (Joint Organization for Inner-City Needs), St Stephen's Community House, Catholic Social Services, St Francis Center, St Lawrence Haven, St Vincent Family Center, and the Society of St Vincent de Paul. **You can help share in this important work** by generously supporting the Catholic Charities collection today. It will make Christmas celebrations in many central Ohio homes merrier.

### celebrate the merriness of the season in bremen

Please join us for the Bremen St Mary **Epiphany Gathering** on Saturday, Jan 7, at 6 PM in the Parish Hall. This is an event for all the adults and children who worship at our parish—especially the new ones! Dinner will be served, but we will only know how many to prepare for when you sign up on the bulletin board in the

vestibule telling how many will attend. Call Jodie Schmelzer with any questions at (740) 569-9343.

### sacristan / ushers

These are the people who make things flow smoothly during our Sunday (including Saturday evening) Masses. They get things ready, make sure all the other ministers are ready, and help late arrivals find a seat with a minimum of disruption. Would you like to help? Contact Kathy Kehnast or one of the folks you see doing the job.

### parish contributions

In December **St Bernadette parishioners** gave \$805 for the feast of the Immaculate Conception and \$588 to the Retirement Fund for Religious.

And **St Mary Bremen** parishioners gave \$73 for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, \$75 to the Retirement Fund for Religious, and an additional \$440 to St Vincent de Paul.

Due to early bulletin printing deadlines, the Dec 18 regular collections for both parishes will be reported in a future bulletin.

### seasonal giving and seasonal getting

Packets of offering **envelopes for 2017** are available on the table in the parish hall. If you do not find a packet with your name, take one of the packets without a name on it but with the lowest serial number. Write your name and the number of the packet on the paper for new envelopes. Just after Christmas we will mail out the remaining packets at a cost of over \$3-4 apiece. Please save your parish that expense by picking up your packet today.

When you have taken your envelopes, please also take a **2017 Catholic calendar**, given to our parishes courtesy of **Morgan Funeral Home** in Bremen and **Sheridan Funeral Home** in Lancaster and **Frank E. Smith Funeral Home** in Lancaster. It wouldn't hurt to thank these businesses for their generosity.

You could also pick up a copy of the book *The Lamb's Supper – The Mass as Heaven on Earth* by Scott Hahn. This book is a **Christmas gift for parishioners**. Its title comes from Saint John Paul II's description of the Mass as "Heaven on Earth" because what "we celebrate on Earth is a mysterious participation in the heavenly liturgy." Dr Hahn draws on **the Book of Revelation** (as did the early Christians) **as the key to understanding the mysteries of the Mass**. His book will help you pray the liturgy with a renewed heart and enter into the Mass more fully, enthusiastically, intelligently, and powerfully than ever before. We have 120 copies which will be **available at the main Church doors at Christmas** on a first come, first served basis.

### so says the IRS

Remember: Donations must be received by the parish on or before Dec 31 for them to be credited to 2016. So says the IRS.

### where everybody knows your name

If you aren't already registered in our parish or if there has been some change in your household (as to who actually lives there or address, phone number, etc), please contact Kathy at the parish office any morning.

## in the diocese of columbus

### late new year's day Mass

If you need to find a late Sunday Mass on New Year's Day, January 1, the Solemnity of Holy Mary, Mother of God, because of work or other obligations, Saint Joseph Cathedral, 212 East Broad Street, Columbus, will be offering a Mass at 5:15 PM as part

of the regular Sunday Mass schedule. For information call (614) 224-1295 or visit [www . saintjosephcathedral . org](http://www.saintjosephcathedral.org).

### catholic youth summer camp

Catholic Youth Summer Camp is Ohio's one week-long, residential high adventure camp for students entering grades 6-12. Activities typically include jet skis, water tubing, paintball, blobbing, high ropes, archery tag, zip lining, rock climbing, giant swing, and mountain boarding. CYSC offers **a truly Catholic and safe environment with daily catechesis that awakens faith and builds missionary disciples**. A week at camp includes daily Mass, adoration, reconciliation, small group conversations, worship, service and authentic community. This is especially valuable for young people who are not now receiving other catechesis as well as to reinforce catechesis for those who are. Go to [www . cysc . com](http://www.cysc.com) for information and to register for 2017 dates: high school sessions run the weeks of June 11, 18, 25, and July 2; middle school sessions run the weeks of July 9, 16, 23, and 30. Registration is open now.

### happily ever after ... despite the rough spots

Come to a Marriage Encounter weekend and learn ways to use your marriage's ups and downs to deepen your love for each other and for God. Why not **try a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend**? The next weekend in central Ohio is Feb 17-19. For information or to register, contact Paul or Marilou Clouse at (614) 834-6880 or visit [www . wmcecolumbus . org](http://www.wmcecolumbus.org).

### vehicle donations to the josephinum

The Pontifical College Josephinum is a Catholic Seminary in Columbus. Seminarians there are studying for the priesthood and need transportation from time to time for a variety of local needs. The Josephinum has a fleet of vehicles but could use additional vans. If you have a **used van that you could donate** to the Josephinum and would like to obtain an income tax deduction for 2016, contact their business office at (614) 985-2230 so delivery arrangements can be made before Dec 31. The Josephinum is a non-profit charitable organization and will provide you with the appropriate documentation for the donation of a vehicle.

### sts peter & paul retreat center needs help

Have you or a member of your family ever participated in a group or personal retreat at the Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center? If you have, the experience was spiritually uplifting and rejuvenating for your soul. They ask for our prayerful consideration and our continued support of the Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center. They need assistance through our tax deductible donations that will help **update and improve their facility**. They will continue to operate the Retreat Center in a frugal manner so that more retreatants will be able to enjoy the peace, tranquility and spirituality that Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center offers. The needed updates and required improvements to enhance current and future retreatant experiences include:

- energy efficient boiler system (replacing the unit from 1955)
- wifi accessibility
- refrigerated storage unit (compressors and condensers)
- air conditioning the chapel and north hall.

Mail your tax deductible donation to: Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center, 2734 Seminary Road, Newark, OH 43056.

### catholic conversations: the lessons of st Faustina

Come to the Upper Room at Sports on Tap, at 4030 Main St, Hilliard, on Sunday, Jan 15 at 6 PM to hear a talk by Michele Faehnle & Emily Jaminet. Catholic Conversations is hosted by St Margaret of Cortona and St Brendan parishes and is an outreach ministry open to all adults **to bring our Catholic faith into the every day**. The event is free of charge. They ask only that you pay

for your own food and drink of choice. They encourage registration, to ensure seating. Go to Eventbrite and search for Catholic Conversations. Contact Julie Naporano at julienaporano1@gmail.com.

### **catholic record society**

The Catholic Record Society, founded in 1974, is dedicated to preserving the history and bringing into better light the heroism of those who laid the foundation of today's Diocese of Columbus. The accomplishments of those early pioneers, despite tremendous hardships, is an inspiring and encouraging story for today's Catholic. The Society also supports the Diocesan Archives, which preserves the official records of the Diocese. Meetings are held quarterly. Society members receive a calendar year subscription to the monthly **Bulletin**, the "**Barquilla de la Santa Maria**", which contains **records, accounts and illuminations of the people and events of the historic Diocese of Columbus**. The Society maintains a wide variety of materials and records and responds to individuals seeking **genealogical information or historical information on the parishes, institutions**, religious orders, and clergy of the Diocese of Columbus. Basic membership is \$12 with digital Bulletin, \$25 with paper Bulletin, and an institutional subscription is \$35. Send check or money order before Dec 31 to the Catholic Record Society, 197 E Gay Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215. For information contact the chairman, Mike Finn, at fcoolavin@aol.com or (614) 268-4166.

### **support causes rooted in your catholic values**

**Support the legacy of St Bernadette Parish** by making a year-end gift to the parish endowment fund. Your tax deductible gift will benefit the parish for years to come. For information, contact James Anzelmo, VP Development, The Catholic Foundation, at (614) 443-8893 or janzelmo@catholic-foundation.org. Tax savings depend on completing your gift by Dec 31!

You can support your favorite charities with **gifts of cash, appreciated assets, real estate, retirement plans, life insurance and even a trust or bequest in your will**. Designate your parish, school, ministry, or other non-profit to benefit from your gift knowing that all gifts are invested in alignment with Catholic teachings. For donors age 70½ and older, the IRA Charitable Rollover is permanent law. Under this provision, these donors can transfer up to \$100,000 from their IRA to an endowment or scholarship fund at The Catholic Foundation. The transfer is made free of federal income tax and the gift qualifies for the donor's required minimum distribution. Should you have questions or need assistance, contact The Catholic Foundation soon. They can assist you in taking advantage of these opportunities in support of your beloved organizations and can be reached at (614) 443-8893.

### **young professionals group**

Join the Catholic Foundation's Young Professionals Group as they travel to St Vincent Family Centers. (<http://svfc.org/>) They will meet on Wednesday, Jan 18, from 6 PM until 9:30 PM at 1490 East Main Street, Columbus to learn about the mission and purpose of the center and how it helps our community. Tours will be available. They will finish the evening at Rusty Bucket, 2158 East Main Street, Columbus, for networking and drinks. To RSVP visit: [www.meetup.com/Catholic-Young-Professionals-Columbus-Meetup/](http://www.meetup.com/Catholic-Young-Professionals-Columbus-Meetup/) or contact Craig Heppner at (614) 443-8893.



## **et cetera**

### **christmas in the vatican**

Enrich your faith this **Christmas with special programming throughout the season** on EWTN. Attend Mass in Vatican City with Pope Francis, enjoy concerts from Europe and travel to the sacred sites of the Holy Land.

### **trial subscription to the register**

Receive EWTN's *National Catholic Register*. The Register is the **premier American Catholic newspaper**. It keeps you informed on everything happening in the Church and in the world — all through a faithful Catholic lens. Call 1-(800) 421-3230. This is not a paid ad. Just a very good idea for people who care about the truth of our Faith.

### **pilgrimage to fatima and lourdes**

Fr Stash Dailey, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Columbus, invites you to join him on a pilgrimage to Fatima and Lourdes from June 19-30, celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima. For details, contact Liz Grinder at the Lourdes Pilgrimage Office at (877) 276-7279 or [lourdespilgrimageoffice@comcast.net](mailto:lourdespilgrimageoffice@comcast.net) or go to [www.lourdes-pilgrimage.com](http://www.lourdes-pilgrimage.com). Reservation deadline is March 15.

### **a better way to ring in the new year?**

You could shout "Happy New Year" from your front porch. You could go to a party or to a bar. You could sit at home and watch television. You could be with family or friends. You could be alone and maudlin. Or you could just go to church and, **in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament**, begin the New Year in the happiness of prayer. A few parishioners are going to gather **at St Bernadette for an hour of prayer, from 11:30 PM on Dec 31 until 12:30 am on Jan 1**. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed on the main altar. There will be no refreshments, no bells rung, or fireworks exploded. We will not watch our clocks or interrupt prayer to greet each other at the turn of the year. It will just be a quiet hour or so of adoration of the Eucharistic Lord, of atonement for our sins of the preceding year and of fervent request for peace, prosperity, and renewal of our respect for the holy gift of life. Church doors will be open shortly before 11:30, and close up again soon after 12:30.

### **choose life**

"Every child with Down syndrome, every adult with special needs, in fact every unwanted, unborn child, every person who is poor, weak, abandoned or homeless – each one of these persons is an icon of God's face and a vessel of His love."

*Archbishop Charles Chaput*

### **did you know?**

**Bethlehem means "house of bread."** Many ancient commentators interpreted this as prefiguring the Eucharist. Jesus came to earth in the "house of bread" and comes to us in the form of Living Bread every time we receive him in the Blessed Sacrament.



*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.*

Luke 2: 4-7

## ministers at Mass at st bernadette

			lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion			
Christmas Eve	Dec 24	6 PM	Becky Kuhn	Mallory, Mason, McKenzie & Mitchell Ortiz	Tara Craaybeek Rosalie DeFillippo	Jim Kuhn Ben Peters	Teresa Scarpitti Shelia Taylor	
Christmas	Dec 25	MIDNIGHT	Marguerite Grimm	Logan & Tori Loy, Dominic & Emeline Neighbor	Terry Carpenter Joyce Guenther	Brad Rider David Shonk		
Christmas	Dec 25	11 AM	Dennis Forquer	Eve Darfus, Caroline Messerly, Anna Hartig, Daniel Turner	Nancy Griffith John Hartig	Teresa Hartig Jim Merk	Rita Merk Anna Sevigny	
Monday,	Dec 26	8:20 AM	Fr Kessler will be away the week between Christmas and next Saturday (New Year's Eve). So there will be <b>no weekday Mass this week.</b> There will, however, be solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesday from 9 AM through Benediction at 1 PM.					
Wednesday	Dec 28	8:20 AM						
Thursday,	Dec 29	6 PM						
Friday,	Dec 30	8:20 AM						
Saturday	Dec 31	4 PM						Brad Rider
Sunday	Jan 1	11 AM	David Shonk	Abby, Mary & Sam Frazier	Patricia Dreyer Patrick Gins	Sandy Landefeld Larry Sanford	Anna Sevigny Mary Jane Vajen	

## ministers at Mass at bremen st mary

			lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Christmas Eve	Dec 24	9 PM	Pete Kunkler	Reagan Conrad Spencer Conrad	Neil Boch, Irene Kunkler, Pam Redding	Nick Schmelzer	Jim Schmelzer
Christmas	Dec 25	8:30 AM	Jeanne Schmelzer	Abby Skinner	Leo Kunkler Sr, Angi Skinner, Jim Schmelzer	Maurice Schmelzer family	Jim Schmelzer
Sunday,	Jan 1	8:30 AM	Jeanne Schmelzer		Leo Kunkler Sr, Joe & Cathy Young	Maurice Schmelzer family	Joe Young

## the Church's plan for reading God's word this week

Sat	Dec 24	Vigil of the Nativity	Isaiah	62:1-5	Acts	13:16-25	Psalm	89	Matt	1:1-25
Sun	Dec 25	The Nativity of the Lord	Isaiah	9:1-6	Titus	2:11-14	Psalm	96	Luke	2:1-14
			Isaiah	52:7-10	Hebrews	1:1-6	Psalm	98	John	1:1-18
Mon	Dec 26	St Stephen, the first martyr	Acts	6:8-7:59			Psalm	31	Matt	10:17-22
Tues	Dec 27	St John the Evangelist	1 John	1:1-4			Psalm	97	John	20:1-8
Weds	Dec 28	The Holy Innocents of Bethlehem	1 John	1:5-2:2			Psalm	124	Matt	2:13-18
Thurs	Dec 29	St Thomas Becket	1 John	2:3-11			Psalm	96	Luke	2:22-35
Fri	Dec 30	The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph	Sirach	3:2-14			Psalm	128	Matt	2:13-23
Sat	Dec 31	Pope St Sylvester I	1 John	2:18-21			Psalm	96	John	1:1-18
Sun	Jan 1	Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God	Numbers	6:22-27	Galatians	4:4-7	Psalm	67	Luke	2:16-21

## confessions & weekday Mass nearby

These times sometimes change, though, so be sure to call ahead!

There will be no Mass or Confessions in our two parishes this week.

Bremen	St Mary	8 AM Sunday	8:20 AM					
Lancaster	St Bernadette	5:30 PM Thurs, 3 PM Sat; 8:30 AM on 1st Sat	8:20 AM	8:20 AM	6 PM	8:20 AM	1st Sat @ 9 AM	
	parish	confessions	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Lancaster	St Mary	4 PM Saturday	7 AM	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM		
Lancaster	St Mark	5:30 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	6 PM	8 AM	8 AM	
Sugar Grove	St Joseph	½ hour before Mass	8 AM	NOON	8 AM	NOON	8 AM	
Circleville	St Joseph	4 PM Saturday	9 AM	7 PM	9 AM		9 AM	10 AM
Logan	St John	4 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM		8 AM	9 AM

# The Festival of Jesus

The festival of Christmas is a birthday without any very important link to the actual date in the year of the birth of Jesus. But that doesn't matter. Because a birthday is seldom really a day to commemorate a person's birth.

I am old enough that I don't know of anyone who has a memory of my being born. When you get to be my age you have a certificate to prove you were born, but that's it. Otherwise, people have to take your word for it. When a small child has a birthday, her parents often recall the circumstances surrounding that birth. Perhaps the grandparents, some of the aunts and uncles and somewhat older brothers and sisters might share their memories. But no one else is likely to remember the day and the events surrounding it. My Mom and Dad have been dead for a number of years. My older brother was just three when I was born. No grandparents and only a very few other older relatives are left.

So what there is to celebrate in a person's birthday? It is not so much the memory of the birth as it is the person who is being celebrated. That's the way it is for the births of other historic persons. On Washington's or Lincoln's or King's birthday we don't give any thought to the birth of the baby George or Abraham or Martin. We think of—and rejoice in—the accomplishments of the person. Or just the joy of knowing the person, accomplished or not.

So, you might think of Christmas as a sort of **Jesus day**. He, more than any human person, is surrounded by the telling of the story of his birth, its prediction, his mother's activity during her pregnancy, the impoverished but glorious circumstance of his birth, the remarkable visits of angels, shepherds, Magi, the presentation of the baby in the Temple, Herod's attempt to destroy him, the exile, the finding in the Temple after Jesus had run away from home, or we might better say, had gone home to his Father's house.

But, in another sense, our celebration of Jesus on this Jesus day that is Christmas, is a day to reflect on him. Some people want to focus on his teaching about how we all ought to conduct ourselves. But that isn't the primary point of the Gospels or of the teaching of Christianity. Our Faith isn't so much about "Here's what you must do"—although Jesus had a moral message and there is certainly a moral imperative about being his follower. The primary focus all the way through the Gospels, the New Testament and the teaching of the Church, is on **who** is giving that new commandment and **by what authority** he gives it and what he has come to accomplish for us.

Christmas is **the day to celebrate Jesus**. He is the word of God became flesh. That "becoming flesh" actually occurred at the moment of his conception. The day to commemorate that is March 25<sup>th</sup>, the day nine months earlier when Jesus himself was conceived. The as-yet unborn John knew that the Incarnation, the becoming flesh of the Word, had already taken place before Jesus was even born. That's why he was jumping for joy at the presence of Jesus months before the birth of Jesus.

The miracle of his becoming flesh is not the limit of our Christmas joy, but what has happened and what he is getting ready for, and how great is that love that brings him to us.

What has happened is the seemingly impossible: The word of God through whom all things were made, the only begotten Son of God, God himself, the second of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, that God has become one of us. Actually has become flesh. Pure spirit, without losing his purity of spirit has humbled himself to share our humanity.

But this is not the recreation of God who has decided to go slumming among the humans, all dressed up in the human condition. That is all the better the pagan imagination could do with the stories of gods visiting the humans. We have something else going on here. He has humbled himself to share in our humanity so that we could come to share in his divinity. Now that doesn't mean you or I will become a god. That is logically impossible. It would be preposterous. But that I—and you—can share in the divine life, can be adopted into sonship, can become God's own children and not simply his creatures, well ... that boggles our minds. Of course, it is beyond our imagining. But God says that **it is not beyond God's imagining. It is what he has in mind for us.**

That sharing in divine life is what we celebrate when we celebrate Jesus.

The part of the Letter to the Hebrews which we read on Christmas morning says it beautifully:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets;  
in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son,  
whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,  
who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word.

So does the letter of Paul to the Philippians:

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.  
Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness;  
and found human in appearance, he humbled himself,  
becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.  
Because of this, God greatly exalted him  
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

*Father Kessler*

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