December 22, 2019

St. Mary’s - Stony Hill Christmas Mass Schedule

"O Come Let Us Adore Him"

Vigil of Christmas
Christmas Eve
4:00 pm Family Mass
6:00 pm Mass
11:30 pm Christmas Caroling
12:00 Midnight Mass

The Nativity of Our Lord
Christmas Day
9:00 am Mass
11:15 am Mass

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” - Mt 1:21
Welcome!

A warm welcome is extended to all who come to St. Mary’s-Stony Hill to join together in this community of worship and praise to Almighty God. We are grateful to our faithful parishioners and welcome our neighbors and guests who visit us occasionally. We want you to know that you are always welcome!

All parishioners should be registered with the parish office. Please notify the parish office if you change your address or move out of the parish. Certificates of eligibility to sponsor at Baptism or Confirmation will be given only to registered parishioners who are active and practicing Catholics.

Parish Directory:

Rev. Msgr. William Benwell, OFS, Pastor  
908-756-6524 ext. 12

Rev. Msgr. Eugene Prus, Weekend Assistant  
Deacon Peter D’Angelo  
908-963-0436; deaconpeter@stmaryswatchung.org

Deacon Walter Maksimik  
Frank Capobianco, Parish Buildings & Grounds  
building@stmaryswatchung.org

Catherine Cooney, Director of Religious Education  
908-756-6524 ext. 16; ccooney@stmaryswatchung.org

Karen Dill, Confirmation/Diocesan Catholic Schools  
908-756-6524 ext. 11; kdill@stmaryswatchung.org

Richard Dorsi, Cemetery Sales  
908-380-3321; cemetery@stmaryswatchung.org

Nancy Finn, Communications & Technology  
908-756-6524 ext. 14; nancy@stmaryswatchung.org

Suzanne Gallic, Director of Music  
suzannegallic@gmail.com

Pat Manfredonia, Parish Bookkeeper  
908-756-6524 ext. 17; patm@stmaryswatchung.org

Susan Minogue, Organist  
sminogue37@gmail.com

Darrin Nelson, Adult Formation/Evangelization  
908-756-6524 ext. 15; dnelson@stmaryswatchung.org

Nancy Stoll, Parish Administrative Assistant  
908-756-6524 ext. 10; parish@stmaryswatchung.org

Reverend Msgr. William Benwell, OFS, Pastor
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Religious Education

We offer religious education for children of registered parishioners who attend public school grades Pre-K thru 8. Preparation for the Sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation is also provided for students who attend Catholic schools. The Confirmation Program is a two-year preparation program. Students may not enroll into 8th grade, unless they complete our 7th grade program or attend a Catholic school. Please check our website or contact the Office of Religious Education at 908-756-6524 ext.16 for more information.

Sunday Eucharist
Saturday Vigil Mass at 4:00 pm
Sunday Masses: 7:30 am | 9:00 am | 11:15 am

Daily Masses:  Monday - Thursday 7:00 am
Friday 12:10 pm; Saturday 7:00 am
Rosary prayed daily at 7:30 am

Reconciliation
Saturday 3:00 - 3:45 pm (Also by appointment.)

Pastoral Care of the Sick and Homebound
We are grateful to know if there is someone who should be on our prayer list, or who would benefit from a visit from a Eucharistic Minister or anointing by a priest. Please ask the individual, or immediate family member to contact the parish office. In an emergency, phone the parish office and select “9”. Please use this option only for a genuine emergency requiring a priest.

Sacrament of Baptism
Celebrations are held at 12:15 pm on the 2nd & 4th Sunday of each month. Contact the parish office for scheduling.

Sacrament of Matrimony
Contact the parish office for an appointment at least one year in advance of the planned wedding date.

Ministry Leaders:

Bereavement Group  Cheryl Gatti  908-285-0330
Cemetery Sales    Dick Dorsi  908-380-3321
Cemetery Concerns Pat Manfredonia  908-756-6524
Children’s Liturgy  Melissa Camiolo  oloimac21005@gmail.com
Covenant Committee Florence Larkin  908-757-4029
Finance Committee  Nancy Finn  908-756-6524
Food Pantry      Mary Ann & Tony Pangi  732-764-0264
Food for the Needy (SHIP)  Bob Palasits  908-757-5728
Knights of Columbus  Al Germaine  973-896-7250  a.germaine2@icloud.com
Liturgical Ministries  Peter D’Angelo  908-963-0436
Making Music - Praying Twice  Roseann Sicola  908-755-2853
Moms & Tots  Paige Jasaits  908-753-0443
Morning Prayer Group  Mary Cooper  908-561-0854
Music Ministry  Suzanne Gallic  908-605-0097
RCIA/Adult Ed  Anthony Pangi  732-764-0264  a.pangi@comcast.net
Religious Ed. Grade K-6  Catherine Cooney  908-756-6524
Religious Ed. Grade 7-8  Karen Dill  908-756-6524
Religious Education Program  kdill@stmaryswatchung.org
Seniors Group  Pat Dorsi  908-917-5709
St. Ann’s Soup Kitchen  Sheryl Szlosek  908-616-2697
Stewardship Committee  Beth Mattiassi  908-561-0993
Youth Ministry  Tina Kelly  908-756-6524
THE WEEK AHEAD

Monday, December 23
Saint John of Kanty
7 am Mass • 7:30 am Rosary
No Religious Education Classes tonight

Tuesday, December 24
The Vigil of Christmas
No 7 am Mass this Morning • 7:30 am Rosary
Masses at 4 pm, 6 pm and 12 Midnight

Wednesday, December 25
The Nativity of Our Lord
Masses at 9 am and 11:15 am

Thursday, December 26
Saint Stephen
7 am Mass • 7:30 am Rosary

Friday, December 27
Saint John
7:30 am Rosary
12:10 pm Mass

Saturday, December 28
The Holy Innocents
7 am Mass
4 pm Vigil Mass for Sunday

Sunday, December 29
The Holy Family
7:30 am Mass; 9 am Mass; 11:15 am Mass
9:30 am RCIA
No Religious Education Classes today

Parish Office Hours

Please note that the parish office will be open from 9 am until 4 pm on Monday, December 23rd. **We will be closed from Tuesday, December 24th through Wednesday, January 1st.** The office will reopen at 9 am on Thursday, January 2nd and will resume regular office hours. In the event of an emergency, you may reach us via the parish emergency line: dial 908-756-6524 and select “9”.

Jesus, Infant of hope,
make our souls leap at the sound of your name.
Draw us into the hope of your coming among us.
Help us to see you in the midst of the burdens we carry,
that we might trust in the promise of your life.
Amen.

Your Sacrificial Offering

Thank you and may God bless you for your continued support of our parish!

Due to the accelerated bulletin publication schedule, the December 14 & 15 collection will be published next weekend.

Stewardship Reflection

“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.” -Matthew 1:24

Putting our complete trust in the Lord without expecting anything in return. Striving to put God first in all things and follow Him wherever He may lead us. As we prepare for the birth of our Lord, pray for the strength and courage to be a model of discipleship, just as Joseph was.
Holy Hour

“Come to me ... and I will give you rest.” - Mt. 11:28

Wednesday, January 8
7:00 to 8:00 pm

Join us for the whole hour—or just for a few moments, whatever your schedule allows.

Bus Trip to the Rally for Life in Trenton
The Diocese of Metuchen’s Office of Human Life and Dignity will be running a bus trip to the Rally for Life in Trenton, NJ on Wednesday, January 22, 2020. The bus ride is free of charge, but since space is limited all passengers must reserve their seats. Passengers will board the bus at the Diocesan Center in Piscataway at 9:30 AM. The Rally at the State House begins at 11:00 AM and ends at 1:00 PM. Passengers will attend a small reception afterwards. The bus will bring everyone back to the Diocesan Center around 3:00 PM. If you have any questions or would like to reserve a seat please call 732-562-1543 or email amarshall@diometuchen.org.

Seniors Group Christmas Luncheon
Our Seniors Group had a beautiful and festive Christmas Luncheon last week — and even enjoyed a performance by the Bridgewater Roxies dancers!

We wish you and your family a Merry Christmas!
MESSAGE FROM MONSIGNOR

(I thought you might appreciate this summary of a presentation I gave recently to my Secular Franciscan fraternity on the recent letter of Pope Francis on the Nativity scene.)

On December 1st, the First Sunday of Advent, Pope Francis released a letter to all Catholics on the meaning and importance of the Nativity scene. It’s titled Admirabile Signum, “Enchanting Image.” The Pope says he was moved to write the letter because he is aware that in some places displaying the crèche in homes and in the public square “has fallen into disuse;” where that has happened, he hopes the tradition “can be rediscovered and revised.”

The origin of the nativity scene is, of course, Sacred Scripture, in particular the first two chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, but the practice of recreating this scene each Christmas began with St. Francis of Assisi. The Pope recounts how Francis, on his way back to Assisi from Rome in the late fall of 1223, stopped in the little town of Greccio. The caves in Greccio reminded the saint of the area around Bethlehem, which he had visited a few years before. Francis may also have still been thinking of his recent visit to the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, with its beautiful mosaics depicting the birth of Jesus and which claimed to have relics of the original manger. Francis was moved “to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily lives the discomfort of his infant needs, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay.” He put the project in the hands of a local man known to us today only as John.

On Christmas Eve, friars and people from all around Greccio came with flowers and torches to the scene John had erected: a manger filled with hay, with an ox and a donkey—everything as it must have been that first Christmas night in Bethlehem. And to show the connection between the Incarnation—Christ becoming one of us—and the Eucharist—Christ becoming one with us—a priest celebrated Mass on an altar erected above the manger. But this first crèche was not only for Francis’ personal enjoyment and inspiration, he saw it as a tool for evangelizing in its most fundamental meaning: bringing Jesus to people.

The Pope then (like a good Jesuit, who always thinks in terms of “three points”) offers three reasons why we are, even subconsciously, drawn to the nativity scene:

- it shows us the “tender love of God,” who was willing to lower himself and take up our “littleness;”
- the new life that came out of Mary reminds us of wonder and beauty of human life; and
- in the baby in the manger, we’re reminded that “God has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side […] who forgives us and frees us from our sins.”

When it involves (as in some parish representations) real people and real animals, real sounds and smells, the nativity scene emphasizes that the Incarnation is a living reality, not a past event. Moreover, that Jesus was born into poverty summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial. The living nativity, the Pope writes, “asks us to meet [Jesus] and serve him by showing mercy to our brothers and sisters in greatest need.”

At this point in the letter, Pope reflects on nine specific elements in the nativity scene.
First, there is the “starry sky,” which is sometimes a backdrop to the crèche. As stars bring light to the dark sky, closeness to Jesus “brings light” to the spiritual, physical, emotional darkness in our lives.

Second, the ruined, ramshackle buildings that often surround the manger in nativity scenes are symbols of our “fallen humanity” and the fact that Jesus “has come to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendor.”

Third, the “guiding star” and the angels are the fulfillment of God promise through the prophets that “all creation” will rejoice “in the coming of the Messiah.” God has a plan, God is in charge.

Fourth, there are the shepherds. In an age when we are so often busy about many things, the shepherds know what is of greatest importance, and by immediately responding to the angels’ announcement and setting out to where the infant Jesus is, they teach us to focus on “the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation.”

Fifth, in some cultures, beggars and other noticeably poor persons are sometimes included in the nativity scene, in solidarity with the child born in poverty. The poor, the Pope writes, “are often the first to recognize God’s presence in our midst” and warn us against being fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. They also remind us “that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them.”

Sixth, other figures sometimes added to the nativity scene—a blacksmith, musicians, the townspeople of Bethlehem going about their daily tasks, children playing—all speak of how holiness can found in the “everyday,” doing “ordinary things in an extraordinary way” by bring our faith to them.

Seventh, as Epiphany approaches, the magi are added to the nativity scene. Their gifts are symbolic: the precious metal gold represents Jesus’ kingship; incense, his divinity; myrrh, the oil that would anoint the human Jesus’ body after his death. The magi also encourage us that sometimes we, and those close to us, don’t “come to the Lord [except] by a very long route.” We have hope, then, that with our prayers and God’s grace those we love whose relationship with the Lord has grown lukewarm or who are estranged from the church will be renewed, will come back; it took those travelers from the East a long time to adore the Christ Child.

Eighth, there are Mary and Joseph. Mary, who shows her son to everyone who wishes to visit him, who “does not keep her son to herself,” teaches us the importance of sharing our faith, of sharing Jesus, with others. Joseph is the “just man,” who, like Mary, “entrusted himself always to God’s will, and put it into practice. And because Joseph is usually associated with his trade or depicted as an old man (for which there is no basis in Scripture), we should not forget that Mary and Joseph were the first teachers of Jesus as child and young man.

Ninth and finally, there is the Infant Jesus, usually smiling and with open arms, just as God smiles on all and opens wide his arms to all.

The Pope concludes his letter:

“It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged: it can always be the same or it can change from year to year. What matters is that it speaks to our lives. Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition […] it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God’s love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him […] in that knowledge we find true happiness.”

The Pope’s letter can be found in its entirety at www.vatican.va > The Holy See > Francis > Apostolic Letters.
Let us pray for the sick:
Agapito Aquino
Joseph M. Angeleri
Carmen Antonelle
Josephine Balko
Eloy Bello
Rose Bello Buono
David Bestwick
Anda Braun
Diane Brown
Andrea Callejas
Genna Camiolo
Brian Carpenter
Lorena D’Amato
Calvin David
Sophie Fiegenbaum
Gregory Frisoli
Denise Gilmartin
Barbara Giordano
Jennifer Gonzalez
Robert Gonzalez
Andrew Grewe
Anthony Gottlick
Shannon Hardy
Eric Hartman
Laura Hinkley
John Hunton
Carol Jacob
Chet Janusz
Federico Jarantilla
Doris Kratson
Eric LeGrand
Anthony Leone
Veronica March
Cornell Marino
Kesla Marie Martinez
Daniel McCaffrey
Grace Mitchell
Brenda Mittenhuber
Carolyn Monday
Clare Murphy
John Oborne
Donna Palardy
Joanne Quense
Walter Quense
Theodore Scafuto
Rolando Severino
Karen Shanahan
Rose Simone
Frank Skopowski
Bessie Sullivan
Marie Summa
Emma Szanicz
Pat Turner
Audrey Waldron
Richard Walters
Maryellen Wilson

Let us pray for those in the military:
May God bless you for your service.
L. Cpl. Joseph Butrico, USMC
Corp. Michael F. Hogan, USM
Edward Paul Louis, USA
Eric Marsjanic, USN
Eric Merkle, USAF
Caplain Robert Monagle, USAF
Sgt. Patrick Noll USMC
Pvt. Jonathan Sims, National Guard
Morgan Slaninko, USN
Capt. Daniel Szurick, USMC
Major John Voorhees, USA

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel...”
- Mt. 1:23
Find the following words:
(letters can be forward or backward, up, down and across)

- angel
- inn
- shepherd
- star
- manger
- Lord
- Christmas
- King
- cattle
- Jesus
- myrrh
- baby
- Mary
- frankincense
- sheep
- Joseph
- gold
- Saviour