

Third Sunday of Advent

December 16, 2018

Mass Intentions

Monday, December 17th

7 A.M. – Leo G. Janak

Tuesday, December 18th

7 A.M. – No Mass

Wednesday, December 19th

7 A.M. – August Pekar

Thursday, December 20th

7 A.M. – Janie Migl

Friday, December 21st

7 A.M. – Clifton Hranitzky

Saturday, December 22nd

5 P.M. – Henry & Corrine Wagner,
F. M. & Adele Janak

Sunday, December 23rd

7 A.M. – Robert & Frances Anderle
9 A.M. – Ben Kopecky

Sanctuary Candle Intention

The Sanctuary Candle will burn this week in memory of Otto, Lydia & Toni Havel.

This Sunday's Holy Scriptures

Zep 3:14-19-8a; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18

Your Gift to God: December 9th

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|--------------------|----------|
| Sweet Home | \$1,577 |
| Online Giving | \$20 |
| Building Fund | \$10 |
| DSA | \$10 |
| Special Collection | \$299 |
| Koerth | \$1,113 |
| Building Fund | \$195 |
| DSA | \$31 |
| Special Collection | \$210.75 |

May God reward your generosity!

Celebrate the Lord's Abundant Mercy

Each Saturday the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) is available from 4:00 P.M. to 4:40 P.M. in the Sweet Home confessional.

Welcome, Bishop Cahill

We welcome Bishop Cahill who joins us for the official installation of Father Dominic as pastor of Queen of Peace and St. John the Baptist. The official installment of Fr. Dominic could not have been celebrated on a more appropriate day...Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday. We sincerely thank Bishop Cahill for appointing a permanent pastor to our parishes.



Third Week of Advent Prayer

Let us pray.

We humbly beg Thee, O Lord,
to listen to our prayers;
and by the grace of Thy coming
bring light into our darkened minds.
Who livest and reignest for ever and ever.
Amen.



Feast of Christmas Mass Schedule

Sweet Home - December 24th – 5:00 P.M.
10:00 P.M.

Koerth - December 25th – 9:00 A.M.

FYI: Parish Office Schedule

The Parish Office will close at 12-noon on Friday, December 21st and re-open at 8:00 A.M. Wednesday, January 2nd. **Deadline for the December 23rd and December 30th bulletins is noon Wednesday, December 19th.**

Consoling the Heart of Jesus Small-Group Retreat

Join us for a 10 week small-group retreat that delves into the simplicity and grandeur of Consoling spirituality. This retreat is based on the popular book by Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, *Consoling the Heart of Jesus*.

Gain new insights into how you can console Jesus; learn the keys to the great sanctity of the saints and blessed like Therese of Lisieux, Faustina Kowalska, and Mother Teresa; and have all the tools you'll need to "Become a saint, a great saint, and quickly."

The Small-Group Retreat will be held at 6:00 P.M. at the St. Joseph Family Center beginning on **Sunday, January 6th** and will continue for the following Sundays ending on March 10th. For more information, contact Joan Macha at 361-293-1371 or Joyce Harper at 361-798-6325.



**I Baptize With Water
But One Mightier
Is Coming**

The Liturgical Christmas Season Does Not End on December 26th

The majority of people think Christmas is over on December 26th. They have spent weeks, even months preparing; shopping, decorating, baking, etc. On December 26th everyone has had enough – the tree and decorations come down and everything is stored away until next year. Many are busy rushing to the store to exchange gifts or take advantage of the "After Christmas sales". However, the Church tells us that the Christmas Season has just begun.

Christmas Season December 25 – January 13

Christmas is one of the most important days of the Church year, second only to Easter itself. It is the feast of the incarnation, the feast of God becoming flesh (the Latin "in carne" means "enfleshment"). It is a uniquely Christian teaching, the Divine choosing to become one of us. Because of this belief, God is not only Transcendent, but also wholly Immanent, Emmanuel (God-with-us). While remaining Transcendent (meaning we must rise above our present condition to reach Him), He is at the same time Immanent (meaning He is with us as we rise toward Him). Every Eucharist is like Christmas where the bread and wine are transformed into His flesh, His Body and Blood, and, in a sense, He is born anew on the altar.

The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. During this season, we celebrate the birth of Christ into our world and into our hearts, and reflect on the gift of salvation that is born with him...including the fact that he was born to die for us.

The Christmas tree and the Nativity scene are popular symbols of the season and a tradition in many Christian homes. It is also traditional to exchange Christmas gifts with family and friends as a way to honor God the Father's gift of his only son to the world. Having received the gift of Christ, we naturally want to pass that gift along to our loved ones.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Joyful sadness: More than a day, Christmas is a state of mind

Larry Peterson

If you are mourning someone this year, don't feel bad if your spirituality can't quite catch up to your humanity.

I never viewed Christmas as just a *day*. Thanksgiving is a *day*. My birthday is a *day*.

You get what I mean.

But Christmas is much more than simply a day. It is a state of mind, an uplifting, spiritually charged season that changes many people into joy-filled, happy adult-children.

Unfortunately, not everyone feels the joy. Rather, they experience a muddled, confusing sort of emotional and psychic hybrid. Joy rendered incomplete by sadness; sadness tinged with a deep, spirit-settling joy.

It's a joyful sadness.

Life moves forward; it cannot be stopped. And change happens. The people we love die, and leave a void that hangs before us in this season of carols and lessons, and we try to reabsorb the familiar readings in a way that speaks to our new state of aloneness.

Well-meaning people say, "Oh, she is in a better place, now." I have no doubt she is. But I am not. I am filled with joyful sadness. There is unbearable sadness sharing the same space as my joy. Joyful sadness: an interior and individual space and time where two opposite worlds collide in the solitude of the human heart.

If you are mourning someone this year, don't feel bad if your spirituality can't quite catch up to your humanity.

As the emotional upheaval within continues, a convoluted mix of emotions leaves behind a trail of combined smiles and tears. For some, their death wound opens and festers during the Christmas season. Their grief is renewed. Others move forward with a heavy scar tissue protecting them from renewed grief. But none forget.

Every Sunday, I visit a number of elderly shut-ins. For the most part I am the only person they get to see and talk to each week, and they truly look forward to my arrival. I may only be with them for 10 to 15 minutes but they receive their church bulletin and tell me about this physical ailment or that negligent family member. They mostly are not bitter; they just need someone to hear them, and validate their personal suffering. Then they receive Holy Communion.

This is their weekly highlight, and my great privilege to witness.

Yet they all decorate for Christmas. One lady has a tree that is under a foot tall. On Thanksgiving Day, she puts lights on it and some tiny decorations, places it on a piece of cotton and puts the baby Jesus under it. Mary and Joseph are there too. It is a beautiful thing, her Christmas state of mind, in all of its sadness-speckled joy.

Many of these folks are in their early 90s. They are not in nursing homes, but an assisted living facility. On Christmas Day, most of them will be picked up by a family member, to spend the day together. But there is one who will not. His name is John, and he is a retired Army officer. He is 91. He is all alone except for his beloved wife, Mary, whose cremated remains are in an urn in his bedroom. She passed away in 2011 and theirs was a beautiful love story. Their wedding picture sits on his makeshift desk where a jumble of random papers are strewn about.

Next to Mary's picture is a small Christmas tree.

John is almost totally deaf and it is hard to talk to him, but he "talks" to Mary every day and she "talks" to him. Anticipating the inevitable, he has made arrangements with the local funeral director for when he passes: He and Mary will be picked up together and taken to the local VA Hospital, where there is a cemetery. The two of them will be laid to rest together.

He reaches over and gently grabs hold of the picture frame. While looking at it he tells me, "This would have been our 65th Christmas." He shakes his head, and a powerful sigh comes from somewhere deep within him. A tear runs down his face. Another runs down my face. I miss my wife, too.

Maybe we might just say a little prayer for all those who will be experiencing this joyful sadness during this Christmas season. At some point, we will all experience it: the light of Christmas, taken deeply, to pierce our lonesome shadows.

