

Mass Intentions

December 26 - January 1

Monday , 12/26	9:00 a.m. Fr. Don Worch
Tuesday , 12/27	9:00 a.m. Rose & Peter Attig (L)
Wednesday , 12/28	9:00 a.m. Catherine C. Dillon 7:30 p.m. Steven Lewis
Thursday , 12/29	9:00 a.m. Brian Kegins
Friday , 12/30	9:00 a.m. J. Nick Hahn
Saturday , 12/31	9:00 a.m. Rosalinda Quemuel 5:00 p.m. Fr. Don Worch
Sunday , 1/1	8:00 a.m. <i>Pro populo</i> 9:30 a.m. Manuel B. Roxas 11:15 a.m. RE Catechists & Families (L) 1:00 p.m. Daniel Ball

No 5:00 p.m. Mass

Please pray for the sick ...Carolyn Maltz, Tom Carrington, Bob Coyne, Jeni Stepanek, Robert Dax. *(Names will remain on this list for four consecutive weeks, but can be repeated by calling the Office.)*

+ In Memoriam Aeternam +

In your charity, please pray for the repose of the souls of Catherine Frank, mother of Trish Olin; Reverend Matthew E. Thompson, Archdiocese of Washington; Peter Erskine, brother of Terri Celmer.

Readings for the Week of December 25, 2016

Sunday:	Is 52:7-10/Ps 98/Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18
Monday:	Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Ps 31/Mt 10:17-22
Tuesday:	1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97/Jn 20:1, 2-8
Wednesday:	1 Jn 1:5--2:2/Ps 124/Mt 2:13-18
Thursday:	1 Jn 2:3-11/Ps 96/Lk 2:22-35
Friday:	Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 /Ps 128/Mt 2:13-15, 19-23
Saturday:	1 Jn 2:18-21/Ps 96/Jn 1:1-18
Next Sunday:	Nm 6:22-27/Ps 67/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21

Altar Servers Schedule

Saturday, December 31

5:00 p.m. J. Gacuma, A. Potter

Sunday, January 1

8:00 a.m. M. Kimball, Z. Marquez

9:30 a.m. P. Bowers, D. Gomes

11:15 a.m. B. Bell, M. Cannetti

1:00 p.m. A. Hall, R. Sui

It is the responsibility of the Altar Server to get a replacement if you cannot serve at your scheduled time.

Scripture Corner

CHRISTMAS IN THE GOSPELS

Mark, who wrote the first Gospel, has no Christmas section. But he does have a great statement by Jesus telling why he came into the world. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for all." (Mark 10:45)

The Gospel of Matthew uses the conception of our Lord to teach that "It is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:2) ["Jesus" means "Yahweh saves."] This evangelist also uses a famous quote from Isaiah, "Behold the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." (Matthew 1:23)

After Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the magi from the east appear in Jerusalem, looking for the new born king of the Jews. They are told that based on Old Testament texts Bethlehem is the place of that king. The magi come to see Jesus and present gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The terrible situation with Herod has the magi avoiding him and the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt.

The Gospel of Luke has very well-known Christmas scenes. A census decree from Caesar Augustus forces Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem. Their child was born there in a manger "because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7) Terrified shepherds in the area were helped by the angel of the Lord. There is no reason for fear but rather there should be joy because "Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord." (Luke 2:11) A multitude of the heavenly host appear, praising God as they sing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14) Finally the shepherds arrive to visit the Holy Family: Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in a manger." (Luke 2:16)

What may be considered the Christmas scene in the Gospel of John is quite different. John identifies Jesus as the Word, which is also used as a name for Yahweh. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) Later in his first chapter John speaks of the birth of Christ, saying, "And the Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Merry Christmas!

~ Fr. Ralph

**PARISH OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED
MONDAY, DECEMBER 26
FOR CHRISTMAS**

Merry Christmas from the Parish Staff!

The Nativity of the Lord

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

For whom and how can I "prepare a manger," by offering Christ's own welcoming and nourishing love this Christmas season?

CHRISTMAS 2016 SCHEDULE



**Sunday, January 1, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Holy Day of Obligation**

Vigil Mass, Saturday December 31 - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 1 8:00, 9:30, 11:15 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.

No 5:00 p.m. Mass

RETROUVAILLE:

A LIFELINE FOR MARRIAGES IN TROUBLE

Many marriages may experience four stages: (1) Romance, (2) Disillusionment, (3) Misery, and (4) Awakening. Marriages that end in divorce never make it to the 4th Stage of Awakening. Don't give up without learning about the 4th Stage of Awakening. If your marriage suffers from disillusionment or misery, please contact Retrouvaille (pronounced "retro-vie" with a long "i"). The next Retrouvaille weekend is January 27-29, 2017. Please visit www.HelpOurMarriage.com, call 443-400-7017, or email 3015@Retrouvaille.org to obtain more information. All calls and inquiries are confidential.

THE MUSINGS OF THE PASTOR (continued)

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all read? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank GOD! He lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all!

Until next week,

~ Fr. John Dillon
Pastor

THE MUSINGS OF THE PASTOR

On Sunday, December 11, I preached at 11:15 a.m. Mass. Since St. Nicholas was scheduled to make a visit here sometime during that Mass, I gathered the children around me and talked about St. Nicholas. I am happy to tell you that St. Nicholas did pay us a visit and left some candy for those children who left their shoes in the Gathering Space in anticipation of his visit. Today, on Christmas Day, I want to talk about what is probably the most reprinted editorial in any newspaper in the English language. In 1897, the New York Sun received a letter to the Editor from Virginia O'Hanlon, who was eight years old and a resident of New York City. Her letter was only a four sentences long:

Dear Editor:

I am eight years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says: "If you see it in THE SUN it's so. Please tell me the truth: is there a Santa Claus? Virginia O'Hanlon. 115 West Ninety-Fifth Street.

Francis Pharcellus Church was the editor of THE SUN who was assigned to answer little Virginia's letter. Church had served as a war correspondent during the American Civil War, a time that saw a great deal of suffering and lack of hope and faith in much of society. He saw in Virginia's letter (for which she may have had some help in composition from her father, Dr. Philip O'Hanlon) an opportunity to address this. Let's enjoy reading this wonderful piece for Christmas day.

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except [for what] they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exists, and you know that they abound and give joy to your live its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would the world be if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and delight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's not proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

Continued in the column to the left.....

December 25, 2016

LAMB OF GOD PRAYER MEETING The Lamb of God Prayer Group will **NOT** meet on Tuesday, December 27. For more information, please call Louise, (301) 977-5217.

POOR BOX DONATION – The donations for next weekend will go to Gaithersburg Help. *Thank you for your generosity.*

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PRAYER CHAIN If you have a prayer request, please contact Marianne Bullen, (301) 963-3420 or mariannebu@comcast.net with your requests.

ROSARY FOR PRIESTS

Every Wednesday evening at 6:45 p.m. we pray the rosary for our priests before the 7:30 p.m. Mass.

ROSARY CENACLE OF OUR LADY, QUEEN OF PEACE

Cenacle of Our Lady, Queen of Peace to pray for priests and vocations, 3:00-5:00 p.m. in the St. Clare's Chapel (Rectory) every Sunday. Please join us.

HOLY HOUR FOR THE DYING

On Thursday evenings in the St. Clare Chapel in the Rectory a prayer group meets at 7:00 p.m. to pray for the dying. This is a Holy Hour Devotion for the Dying. As a central work of our Catholic faith, we are called to pray for the dying, especially for those who may die suddenly, unprepared to face God. For additional information, please call the Parish Office, (301) 840-1407.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS - COUNCIL 2323

The Knights of Columbus are actively pursuing new members. Our council incorporates members from St. Francis, St. Mary's and St. Martin's. Though best known for our many charitable projects, we also have a lot of fun with dinners, fund raisers, family nights and many other fraternal social occasions. If interested in learning more, please contact Gary Palmer, (301) 412-1237 or e-mail gtdbpalmer@verizon.net.

FAITH DIRECT

With the busy Holiday Season, enrolling in *Faith Direct* is a great way to take one item off your weekly to-do list. Pick up an enrollment form from the parish office today or enroll online at www.FaithDirect.net, our church code is **MD110**. Already using *Faith Direct*? Don't forget to add your Christmas or End of Year contributions to your account. Thank you in advance for your support and for using *Faith Direct*!

2016 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

To receive credit in 2016, your contributions must be dated December 31, 2016. If you are mailing a contribution, it must be received in the parish Office on or before Wednesday, January 4, 2017. As a reminder, the parish statement of contributions will not include your FAITHDIRECT contributions. You will receive a statement from them.

POPE FRANCIS HAS ISSUED THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD DAY FOR PEACE - JANUARY 1, 2017:

“Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace”

“At the beginning of this New Year, I offer heartfelt wishes of peace to the world’s peoples and nations. . . . I wish peace to every man, woman and child, and I pray that the image and likeness of God in each person will enable us to acknowledge one another as sacred gifts endowed with immense dignity. Especially in situations of conflict, let us respect this, our ‘deepest dignity’ and make active nonviolence our way of life.

“This is the fiftieth Message for the World Day of Peace. . . . On this occasion, I would like to reflect on nonviolence as a style of politics for peace. I ask God to help all of us to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values. May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life. When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.”

You can read the whole message by searching “USCCB World Day for Peace 2017” Click: “2017 Message for the World Day for Peace”.

CATHOLICS IN ANNAPOLIS WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2017 3:00 - 8:00P.M.

Mark our calendar for the 33rd Annual “Catholics in Annapolis,” Meet your legislators and build a positive relationship with them by sharing the great work and the Good News of the Church in Maryland lived out through the works of our ministries, charities, hospitals, schools, parishes and communities. How? Mingle with like-minded Catholics at Catholics in Annapolis! Save the date now and watch for further information.

A REMINDER FROM FR. JOHN ... If anyone is living in a marriage that has not been recognized by the Catholic Church, it would be wise to consult with a priest to see whether that situation might be rectified. It could be as simple as repeating your marriage vows quietly in front of a priest and receiving the Church's blessing. In that way, one would become eligible to receive the Sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist.

CELEBRATE THE GIFT OF ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

Sunday, January 8, 2017

5:00 p.m. Youth Mass

The Feast of the Epiphany

A special Mass for Adults and Children

with Developmental Differences

St. Francis of Assisi Parish

Sponsored by the Up County Special Needs Ministry

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS/EVENTS

RE CLASS SCHEDULE & CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

There are NO Religious Education classes on the following days:

Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, December 25, 26 and 27
Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, January 1, 2 and 3

Religious Education classes will resume on January 8, 9 and 10.

CATECHISTS AND AIDES NEEDED

Additional volunteers are still needed! Please consider whether you can serve as a catechist or classroom aide for our children and young people. We especially need catechists for the 6th grade on Monday and Tuesday evenings, from 6:45-8:00 p.m. If you would like to learn more about this important ministry, please contact Susan Anderson, Director of Religious Education, at 301-258-9193.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SNOW CANCELLATION POLICY

If Montgomery County Public Schools are closed, and if schools are dismissed early, Religious Education classes, including FRED, are also cancelled. This applies to Sunday classes as well if Montgomery County Public Schools announces cancellation of weekend school activities. Cancellation announcements will be recorded on the Religious Education Office phone (301-258-9193) and posted on the St. Francis Parish Facebook page ("St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church").

Whenever in doubt, please use your own judgment about local weather and driving conditions, and err on the side of safety when making decisions about bringing your child to class.

MOTHER OF GOD SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Looking for a good Catholic education for your children? Attend the Mother of God School Open House, Sunday, January 29, 1:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., 20501 Goshen Road, Gaithersburg. We have the largest Catholic Pre-K program (3's & 4's) in the area, with before and after care available year-round. Check out our rigorous academic programs for K-8th grade as well. For more information or to schedule a tour call Alice Garvey, (301) 990-2088, Ext. 11 or e-mail agarvey@mogschool.com or you can visit www.mogschool.com.

FATHER STACK'S PLAQUE UPDATE

The final layout of the plaque has been sent to the producer. Upon acceptance of the plaque's layout by Fr. John, a contract will be let. At this time some funds are lacking and if you would still like to contribute to the plaque, please submit a check for your donation, made out to St. Francis of Assisi Church, and send it to the Parish Office. Thank you again for your monetary and spiritual support of this effort honoring our founding pastor. ~
The Fr. Stack Plaque Committee.

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS/EVENTS

ST. FRANCIS YOUTH MINISTRY

Upcoming Events
FRED & FRED JR.

We are taking a Holiday Break.
We will gather again starting the weekend
of January 29, 2017!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

GET SOCIAL

**Instagram "SFASusie"*

**FRED group on FACEBOOK: friend "Susan FRED Lea"*

**"St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church" page on Facebook*

YOUNG ADULTS

FOR YOUNG ADULT CATHOLICS - Epiphany Party at St. Catherine Labouré Church, Saturday, January 7, 7:00 p.m. - Midnight. Mingle with local Catholics and enjoy a delicious Greek dinner, dancing and DJ, and more. Tickets are \$21 by January 2 or \$25 cash at the door. St. Catherine Labouré, 11801 Claridge Rd., Wheaton, MD 20902. RSVP and you can pay online at: <http://slsociety.org/epiphany/>. **All are welcome!**

ST MARTIN'S FOOD PANTRY MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

Are you looking for a ministry to join in the New Year? How about giving one hour every other month helping with the Food Pantry Ministry Team? Duties consist of removing the non-perishable food in the bin located by the glass doors and delivering it to St. Martin's Food Pantry, which is only a short 10 minute drive to Old Town, Gaithersburg. Please contact Carolyn Brauer at carolyn_brauer@yahoo.com or Christine Young at youngbodywork@hotmail.com for more information or to join.

ST. MARTIN'S FOOD PANTRY

The Food Pantry Ministry here at St. Francis collects and delivers non-perishable food donations weekly to St. Martin's. There is a large brown bin in the Gathering Space marked "St. Martin's Food Pantry" where donations can be placed. A list of items needed can be found on the top of the bin. **Please note: due to health/safety concerns, the pantry CANNOT distribute dented cans, opened items and food beyond its expiration date.** Help those in our community struggling to feed their families by donating one or two non-perishable items at least once a month. This is not a onetime collection, but rather an ONGOING PROJECT!
Thank you for your continued support!

MASS FOR THE HOMEBOUND

Do you know someone who can't get to Mass? Please tell them about the Sunday TV Mass, which is produced by the Archdiocese of Washington and taped in the Crypt Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is a wonderful ministry for those members of our Catholic family who are unable to be physically present with a local worshipping community for the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy. The Mass airs every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. on WDCW-50:

- No cable; Dish or Direct TV subscribers: Ch. 50.
- Comcast: Ch. 23 in Washington, DC & Montgomery County; Ch. 3 in Prince George's County and Southern Maryland
- RCN: Ch. 15
- Verizon: Ch. 3

DONATE YOUR USED CLOTHING

If you are sorting through gently used clothing to give away, remember that there is a St. Vincent de Paul clothing collection bin in the lower parking lot of the parish. Please make sure your clothing donation is clean and in good repair. Put the items in a plastic bag and deposit it in the bin. It is collected weekly and will be a great blessing to those in need in the region.

SERVE WITH CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Are you inspired by Pope Francis to serve? Volunteer with Catholic Charities to care for people in need. To get started and for additional information on how you can serve visit www.CatholicCharitiesDC.org/volunteer.

HOPE CORPS

Catholic Charities is recruiting young adults to work in teams to lead volunteer events once a month for the next year. Choose your project. Each month, Hope Corps members lead volunteers in one-time, short projects that make a big difference in a few hours: clean up a shelter, pack breakfast bags (Cup of Joe) for people who stay in our shelters, help load up food packages, and more. Hope Corps members receive training, swag, and gratitude! Get information and apply at www.CatholicCharitiesDC.org/volunteer.

ADULT & FAMILY RALLY

The Adult and Family Rally & Mass for Life is an occasion for people of all ages to come together in prayer on the morning of the March for Life on Friday, January 27. All parishioners of the Archdiocese of Washington are invited to attend this event, which will be held at 9:00 a.m. at the St. Matthew's Cathedral (1725 Rhode Island Ave., NW). The rally will feature keynote speakers Mary and Seamus Hasson, who are pro-life advocates and defenders of religious liberty. Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Mario Dorsonville with Msgr. Bill Parent as homilist. Attendees will depart for the National March for Life around 11:30 a.m. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington and the Association of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities. Please visit adw.org/familyrally for more information.

YOUTH RALLY & MASS FOR LIFE

Friday, January 27, 2017

Verizon Center, 601 F. Street, NW

7:00 a.m. Doors Open
7:30 a.m. Rally Begins
8:00 a.m. Confessions Begin
9:30 a.m. Mass Begins

DC Armory

2001 East Capitol Street, SE
6:30 a.m. Doors Open
7:30 a.m. Rally & Confessions Begin
9:30 a.m. Mass Begins

Visit YouthRallyandMassforLife.org for more information.

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION ON SAINT THOMAS MORE

In a new landmark exhibition, God's Servant First: The Life and Legacy of Thomas More, the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington DC presents the life, martyrdom, and legacy of the 16th century English philosopher-statesman whom Pope John Paul II named the heavenly Patron of Statesmen and Politicians. The exhibition also explores the connection between Thomas More, the Carroll Family of Maryland, and the foundations of religious liberty in America. It features over 60 artifacts from England and the United States, including numerous period objects from Stonyhurst College in the United Kingdom that have never been exhibited in the United States.

The exhibit runs through March 31, 2017 and is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst. The Saint John Paul II Shrine is located at 3900 Harewood Road, NE, Washington. Visit www.jp2shrine.org for additional information.

A WAY TO GROW.....Teams of Our Lady was founded by Father Henri Caffarel in France in 1947 and has spread to over 10,000 Teams world-wide. Teams came to the United States in 1958 where they are currently over 700 Teams. Teams of Our Lady is a lay movement officially recognized by the Holy See under the Pontifical Council for the Council for the Laity. A team is a group of five to seven couples and a spiritual advisor who meet once a month to share, pray and discuss challenges of living a Christian marriage and life. Couples use a time-tested format to meet their needs and desires of growing closer in love and faith through Teams of Our Lady and in the process they discover support for one another and for their marriage. For more information, please contact Fr. John in the parish office or Joe and Jeanne McElhane at joenjeanne@mcelhaneysonline.com.

CELEBRATING REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

On Saturday, January 14, the Archdiocese of Washington will celebrate the national recognition of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with our annual liturgy, celebrated this year at St. Thomas More Church (4275 4th Street SE, Washington, DC). The 5pm Mass will be celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville. The Mass will be preceded by a concert and a Veneration of the Relics of the African Saints, and music will be provided by the Archdiocesan Gospel Mass Choir. For more information, email culturaldiversity@adw.org or call 301-853-4469.