

Immaculate Conception Parish



Please visit our website at
www.icworc.com and Facebook
Email: icworc@live.com

SUNDAY MASSES
SATURDAY VIGIL: 4:00 PM
SUNDAY: 7:30 AM, 10:00 AM

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION
Saturday 2:45 - 3:45 PM
(or by appointment)

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM
Parents and godparents of infants to be baptized are expected to participate in a preparation session. Call the Rectory to register for this process and set a date for the actual Baptism. For Baptism of adults please contact the Rectory.

SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE
Please contact the rectory one year prior to your desired wedding date

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK
Father Walter can be called whenever someone can benefit from this sacrament of healing.

PROTECTING OUR YOUTH AND CHILDREN
If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a priest, religious or lay person working for the Church, and you want to share feelings of hurt or betrayal, call Cathaleen Peloquin, Victim Services Coordinator, Office of Healing and Prevention, 508-929-4363 (direct, confidential line).

RECTORY ADDRESS

353 Grove Street, Worcester, MA 01605
Phone: 508-754-8419
Fax: 508-306-9718
Religious Education Phone: 508-868-8119
Rectory Hours: M: 9:30am-2:30pm, T: 9:30am-2:30pm
W: 9:30am-2:30pm, F: 9:30am-2:30pm

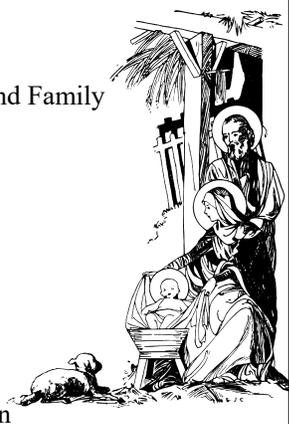
MOST REV. ROBERT J. MCMANUS, Bishop of Worcester
REV. WALTER RILEY, PASTOR
REV. ENOCH KYEREMATENG, IN RESIDENCE
KEVIN DEIGNAN, PERMANENT DEACON
FRANK MYSKA, PERMANENT DEACON
**MARY SYCKS, ADMINISTRATOR OF RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTER**
C. HENRY MASON, MUSIC DIRECTOR
BRIDGET KLOFFT, CANTOR
ROBERT NOBERINI, PARISH OFFICE MANAGER
MATTHEW FOSTER, PASTORAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN
LYNDA MONAHAN, SAFE ENVIRONMENT COORDINATOR

WEEKDAY MASSES
MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY 9:00 AM
THURSDAY 8:00 AM

NEW PARISHIONERS
Anyone is welcome to join the Parish Community.
Please contact the Rectory and introduce yourself.

MASS INTENTIONS

Sat.	Dec 19	4:00 PM	Ellen Geheran, from Husband
Sun.	Dec 20	7:30 AM	Cecelia E. Geheran, from Husband
		10:00 AM	Muriel Foley Casey, 26th Anniversary, from Mike Casey and Family
Mon.	Dec 21	9:00 AM	Raymond Toloczko, from Family, <i>(St. Peter Carisius)</i>
Tues.	Dec 22	9:00 AM	Kathryn Tran, 5th Anniversary, from Family
Wed.	Dec 23	9:00 AM	Daniel Butler, from Family, <i>(St. John of Kanty)</i>
Thurs.	Dec 24	3:00 PM	Robert and Barbara Gingras, from Family
		6:00 PM	John F. Murdoch, from Family
Fri.	Dec 25	8:00 AM	Grace L. Shea, from Family, <i>(Christmas)</i>
		10:00 AM	Mary Early, from Family
Sat.	Dec 26	4:00 PM	Alicia and Henry Michalak, from Family
Sun.	Dec 27	7:30 AM	Edward Groden and Dorothy Groden, from Family
		10:00 AM	Helen Queenan, 2nd Anniversary, from Family and Richard Deignan, 4th Anniversary, from his wife, Helen



CHRISTMAS LETTER FROM BISHOP MCMANUS

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As Advent gives way to Christmas, we find ourselves in a continued state of waiting, longing and expectation for a promised vaccine. How our world has changed in a year!

Last Christmas, none of us had heard of COVID-19. Since then our lives, jobs, recreation and worship have been shaped by it. COVID precautions have led to COVID-fatigue as we long for a return to normal life.

Anxious waiting and expectation for the vaccine marks and impacts our celebrations. Gatherings in church and at home will be smaller, travel truncated, carols fewer, precautions increased and parties cancelled.

But Christmas is not cancelled. Our way of celebrating has changed, but our reason for celebrating remains the same. While the world awaits the arrival of a vaccine, we celebrate the arrival of the world's Savior.

We hope for a vaccine that for a time will ward off illness and death. The Divine Savior whose birth we celebrate gives us resurrection and reunion. We pray the vaccine will restore normal life on earth. The grace Christ offers promises eternal life in Heaven.

For two millennia Christians throughout the world have celebrated Christ's birth. Many of these Christmases have been marked by famine, plagues and wars. Through those hardships and others, Christians have found in Christ the strength, hope and joy to persevere, endure and triumph over all of life's uncertainties.

As we wait for the vaccine to come, let us rejoice, give thanks and find peace in the Savior who has already come, defeated sin and death and will come again to share His definitive triumph of eternal life.

With every prayerful best wish for a Blessed and Merry Christmas, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester

HOPE FOR HOUSING FOOD CARDS

Because of the situation with the present pandemic, there will be times when no one will be available after Mass to sell food cards for Hope for Housing. In this situation, please speak with Fr. Riley before or after Mass so he can sell what you would like to purchase. This ministry is much too important for our Parish and local community to place aside as it assists families who are struggling to find and maintain proper housing. Purchasing cards makes it easy for us who shop at any of the stores represented, while supporting a most important form of Christian ministry. Thank you for your understanding and continued support for Hope for Housing in and through our Parish. This past week card sales amounted to \$140.00.

RELIGIOUS QUOTE OF THE WEEK

THE VIRGIN BIRTH A DIVINE MYSTERY: Lk 1:34-35; "Here Mary seems to have disbelieved, unless you pay close attention, for it is not right that she who was chosen to bear the only begotten Son of God should seem to have been without faith. And how could this be? Although the prerogative of the Mother, on whom a greater prerogative is straightway to be conferred, is intact, how could it be that Zechariah who had not believed was condemned to silence, but Mary, if she had not believed, would be exalted by the infusion of the Holy Spirit? But with a greater prerogative, also a greater faith must be reserved for her. But Mary must both believe, and not so heedlessly usurp. She must believe the angel and not you usurp divine things. Nor is it easy to know 'the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God,' which the higher powers could not know either. Nevertheless she did not deny the faith, she did not refuse the duty, but she conformed her will, she promised obedience. For truly when she said, 'How shall this be?' she did not doubt concerning the outcome but sought the nature of this same outcome."
St. Ambrose of Milan (c340-397)

FRIDAY FASTING AND INTENTION

We thank all our parishioners who continue to fast for one meal and abstain from meat each Friday as we commemorate our Lord's saving act. This wonderful Catholic tradition is reemerging, calling us to be mindful of our Lord's crucifixion every Friday of the year. Such a particular awareness in our lives can only deepen our faith and love in Christ. As we fast and abstain, we do so each week for an intention that is to us on a local, national, or world level, always effecting our faith. Next Friday's intention is for a deeper trust in our lives that God never abandons us, but walks with us always.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER ENVELOPES

Envelopes for Christmas flowers have been placed at each entrance to the Church. These envelopes will be placed on our altar during the Christmas season in remembrance of loved ones. All donations help to offset the cost of the many beautiful flowers placed around the altar and throughout the sanctuary. Thank you.

READINGS FOR NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27th, THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

1st Reading: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14
Psalm: 128
2nd Reading: Colossians 3:12-21
Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT 12/13/2020

Sunday Ordinary	\$ 4,150.00
Retirement for Religious	\$ 463.00
Feast of the Immaculate Conception	\$ 531.00
Christmas Flowers	\$ 265.00
Online Donations 07-13 Dec 2020	\$ 540.00

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - There are no Religious Education Classes on Sunday, December 20th. Merry Christmas!**NO DAILY MASS THIS THURSDAY**

A reminder that there is no daily on Christmas Eve morning, December 24. Masses on Christmas Eve are 3:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m., and Christmas day at 8:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m. Thank you.

PARISH ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE RAFFLE WINNERS

Congratulations to the following winners of the Parish Activities Committee Raffle that were picked this past Monday, December 14 from our raffle wheel: Grand Prize Winner of \$3000.00 was Michelle Lavigne; 2nd place winner of \$1000.00, Tim & Kathy Cavan; 3rd place winner of \$750.00, Thomas Freeman; 4th place winner of \$750.00, Rita Stukowski; 5th place winner of \$500.00 was Betty Regele; 6th place winner of Pampered Chef, Anthony Consolmagno; 7th place winner of an Irish Pillow, William Lee; 8th place winner of a box of 5-piece cooking utensils, Alicia Consolmagno; 9th place winner of miscellaneous items, Kevin Moylan; 10th place winner of miscellaneous items, Patrice O'Connell; and the 11th place winner of miscellaneous items, Randi Marhefka. Thank you to all who participated in the raffle to help raise finances for the good works of our Parish Activities Committee, and congratulations again to all the winners.

From the Pastor continued from the following page

have a lousy voice and don't know it, sing anyway, but be humble enough to allow yourself to be "corrected" by your family or neighbor, and then continue singing *We Wish You A Merry Christmas* at a lower tone. If you have a mediocre voice like myself, sing *Silent Night* in a semi-soft way that won't scare the animals away. And, if you have a delightful singing voice like Bridget, Jane, or Travis in our Parish, then keep a distance from everyone else and bring forth from the bottom of your lungs as loud as you can *Joy To The World*. Give the neighbors a free concert, mask not included.

Why do this? Again, because singing at Christmas and throughout the year is uplifting, Spirit-driven, joyful, and tingling. Singing causes the good juices to flow in our bodies. Singing Christmas songs will ensure that we will not imitate *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* during a year of pandemic. Allow not your voice to be silenced when *Feliz Navidad* is played on 96.1 WSRV for the 300th time in two weeks. You may be sick of the song by the time Christmas roles around this week, but sing it anyway in an obstinate manner directed at a virus attempting to silence us (or any Governors for that matter). *For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord*. Not pre-pandemic or post-pandemic, whenever that happens. **FOREVER!**

To all our parishioners, both in person and those staying at home, we wish all of you and your families a blessed Christmas as we all look forward to moving past 2020. As mentioned a few weeks ago, the start of a new Church year on the first Sunday of Advent was an opportunity to "move on" from the setbacks of this year. We don't have to wait until the clock turns on December 31. When searching for a new start for whatever the reason, connecting a new, hopeful in our lives start to our faith is, in my humble opinion, much better than waiting for the secular year numbers to change on a clock. Unless, of course, you want your new start to begin on January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. In that case, January 1 is fine.

Either way, **SING!** The Psalm this week is calling all of us to sing. Be lifted up from any doldrums, belt out a tune directed at God's unconditional love for us, and let loose in your own way. Heed the words of the Psalmist this 4th Sunday of Advent, and include yourself in the words *For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord*. Amen.

Peace, Fr. Riley

CHRISTMAS MASSES FOR 2020 AND TICKETS REQUIRED

This year our Parish will have four (4) Masses for Christmas instead of the normal two Masses. The reason, of course, is the limited number of seats available for each Mass resulting from the social distance requirements caused by the pandemic. Our Mass schedule will be Christmas Eve at 3:00 p.m. (SOLD OUT), & 6:00 p.m., and Christmas Day at 8:00 a.m., & 10:00 a.m.. Our Parish will create a signup & ticket system for each of the four Masses. All who attend will need to present a ticket at the door to ushers who will collect them. Ushers will check off names from the signup sheet as you enter. Ushers will also assist in seating congregants to ensure there are no issues with space availability in the Church for each Mass. *There can be no standing in the back of the Church for any Mass. Every attendee has to be seated per request of our Diocese.* The signup & ticket system can now be accessed on our Parish website, allowing our parishioners ample time to sign up prior to others from outside the Parish. Any elderly folks who do not have a computer *must speak to Fr. Riley or call the rectory ASAP to ensure your name is placed on the list of attendees for the Mass you would like to attend.* As of now, we are maximizing our congregation number to 125 people for each Christmas Mass. With 4 Masses, this will allow for all our parishioners, their family members, and others from outside to be able to attend Christmas Mass under present circumstances. Please be open to the possibility of adjusting to the Mass you wish to attend because of limited seating. For those who normally attend on Christmas Eve, you may have to attend on Christmas Day because of limited space. This system is only for Christmas Masses. All other Sunday and Holy Day Masses will not need this system in place since our Church has the capacity to handle social distance requirements based on the number of people who normally attend. Any questions, please speak with Fr. Riley. Thank you for your patience and gentleness in this matter.

SCRIPTURE STUDY ON WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

Fr. Riley is holding a one-hour Scripture study class each Wednesday evening from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the Church Basement. We will read, study, and discuss the Gospel of Matthew. The next class will be held on Wednesday, January 6. In preparation for this class please read chapters 6 & 7. Masks are required and social distance will be practiced.

THE DAY IS NOW FAR SPENT

THE ERRORS OF THE WEST: "Modern man takes care of his body and completely neglects his soul. He talks all day about the growth of the economy, about money, production, well-being, working conditions, and summer vacations. But he no longer knows God. It is not a matter of being against comfort. There are immensely rich persons who have not lost their spiritual dimension - who, like Job, keep the faith while putting God at the center of their lives and their activities. However, there is a modern obsession with money and luxury. Acquisition seems to be synonymous with happiness. This snare becomes a form of slavery, bringing jealousy and hatred along with it. Advertising perpetually keeps this illusory quest alive. It profoundly pollutes relations between men. How can people accept the fact that it is posted everywhere, on the smallest free wall of our cities and rural areas? Abolishing or at least reducing it as a public health issue. I know that some cities in Brazil have already had the courage to forbid it in the public space. This is a prophetic, courageous stance. Christians should unite with people of goodwill to drive out of our cities this invasion of ugliness and vulgarity. Maybe then we will rediscover a taste for works of art, which offers the comfort of beauty to everyone at no cost!"

Cardinal Robert Sarah, from the book *The Day Is Now Far Spent*

FROM THE PASTOR

Five days out from Christmas, we have the perfect Psalm (89) this Sunday for our preparation of God's birth in the flesh: "*For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*"

Most people like to sing. If not, at least listen to good music in countless forms, beats, and varieties. Music, like many parts of nature, including trees, flowers, and birds, is a wide expression of God's imagination. Most music is of the good sort; a small part of it can be left in the dustbin of history. Just my opinion. But the good music, with a good beat and uplifting words that truly do reflect the imagination of God, is heard and sung in numerous styles.

The problem this year, however, at least at Holy Mass, is that music, because of the ongoing pandemic, has been somewhat scaled back to two verses and songs that not everyone will know. When Henry our organist played the four songs that accompanied the Mass (Opening, Offertory, Communion, and Recessional) on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, it was the first time I knew the words to all four songs since we returned to an opened Church back in May. They were songs that have been ingrained in my heart, mind, and soul over the years.

Every Sunday since May, however, that has not been the situation for myself and likely everyone else in the Church. This "not being familiar with the song" is done with a certain intention in mind: to try to keep the entire congregation from singing in unison because doing so (without a mask) will increase the chance of spreading the virus if one has it who is singing. This is why our Diocese has strongly recommended that no one sing in Church except for the Psalm, the Holy, Holy Holy, the Great Amen at the Doxology, and the Lamb of God. This is also why anyone who is not feeling well has to stay home, so you don't come here and sing to your heart's content. Allow Bridget to take care of *all the singing*, except for the Mass parts noted above. This situation has placed Henry in a sort of pickle by not choosing each Sunday a popular song while playing and singing (Bridget) a song that sounds pleasing to the ears. Because of the number of popular liturgical songs, especially at Christmas, this has not been easy for our maestro organist.

With that said, if you like to sing, belt it out to your hearts content at home in the shower, while you're cooking dinner, while you're out walking (just stop when you cross paths with someone); or when you're mowing the lawn or shoveling snow. But please, *do not stop singing*. Especially if it's a song about the goodness of the Lord. Singing makes us feel pretty good about ourselves, and to stop singing altogether is to lose a key part of our inward, personal happiness and joy. Even if your voice is less than stellar, which is most of us, continue to sing in those places and times when it's safe to do so. As this pandemic passes we pray in the not-so-distant future, and we can return to the social people that God created us to be, and we can begin to hug and shake hands once again, in the meantime, singing is a part of our lives that does not need to stop altogether. Sing *Amazing Grace* in your dining room; sing *For All the Saints* in your basement; sing *Immaculate Mary* in your garage; and sing *Holy, Holy, Holy* in the bathroom. Why? Because *for ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord*. For ever means now and always, in spite of a God-forsaken pandemic.

As we look forward to the celebration of Christmas this coming Friday, make singing part of your walk into Jesus' birth. If you have a lousy voice and know it, sing Christmas songs like *Angels We Have Heard On High* when no one is in your immediate vicinity. If you have a lousy voice and don't know it, sing anyway, but be humble enough to allow yourself to be "corrected" by your family or neighbor, and then continue singing *We Wish You A Merry Christmas* at a lower tone. If you

Continued on Previous Page

THIS WEEK AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Sat.	Dec 19	2:45 PM 4:00 PM	Confession Mass
Sun.	Dec 20	7:30 AM 10:00 AM	Mass Mass
Mon.	Dec 21	8:30 AM 9:00 AM	Rosary Mass
Tues.	Dec 22	8:30 AM 9:00 AM	Rosary Mass
Wed.	Dec 23	8:30 AM 9:00 AM	Rosary Mass
Thurs.	Dec 24	8:00 AM 3:00 PM 6:00 PM	<i>NO MASS</i> Vigil Mass Vigil Mass
Fri.	Dec 25	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Mass Mass
Sat.	Dec 26	2:45 PM 4:00 PM	Confession Mass
Sun.	Dec 27	7:30 AM 10:00 AM	Mass Mass



**YES, WE WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER
AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!!**

Name _____

Address: _____

**City
& Zip** _____

Phone _____

Envelopes yes ____ No ____

Number of People in Household _____

**PLEASE, TEAR THIS OFF AND PLACE IN THE
COLLECTION BASKET! THANK YOU!**