Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative
Home to St. Mary and St. John the Evangelist Parish Families
Parish Offices located at 115 Middlesex Street, North Chelmsford, Massachusetts, 01863
(978) 251-8571 · (978) 256-2374 · fax (978) 293-0303 † www.chelmsfordcatholic.org

Just as our Blessed Mother Mary and the Evangelist, called John, came together at the foot of the Cross to serve Christ crucified, so also do the parish families bearing their names come together to serve God by serving each other and all who make up the Body of The Risen Lord.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST</th>
<th>ST. MARY</th>
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<tr>
<td>115 MIDDLESEX STREET</td>
<td>25 NORTH ROAD</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORTH CHELMSFORD</td>
<td>CHELMSFORD</td>
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**Weekend Mass Schedule**
- St. John: Saturday • 4:00 PM
- St. John: Sunday • 8:30 AM, 10:30 AM & 5:00 PM
- St. Mary: Saturday • 4:00 PM
- St. Mary: Sunday • 7:00 AM, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 6:00 PM

**Weekday Mass Schedule**
- St. John: Monday - Friday • 9:00 AM
- St. Mary: Monday - Friday • 7:00 AM

*Saturday 9:00 am Mass alternates between parishes. Refer to calendars.*

**Reconciliation**
- St. John: Saturday • 3:00 - 3:45 PM or by appointment
- St. Mary: Saturday • 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM or by appointment

*During Advent 7-8 pm: St. John Monday evenings: December 16th, 23rd St. Mary Wednesday evening December 18th*

**Eucharistic Adoration**
- St. John: First Friday of the Month • Monday - Wednesday • 9:30 - 11:30 am in OPC Chapel
- St. John: 2nd, 3rd, 4th Wednesday • 6:30 - 8:30 pm in OPC Chapel
- St. Mary: Thursday • 3:00 - 9:00 PM
- St. Mary: Friday • 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM
- St. Mary: Saturday • 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM in the Parish Center Chapel

**Masses are Available via Live Stream**
Visit www.chelmsfordcatholic.org
LIVEVIEW resides on the right-hand sidebar of the home page

**PRAYER LINE**
To have prayers said for yourself or a loved one, call the parish office and ask for ext 223.
**St. Mary Calendar**

- **Sunday, December 15** -
  Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 6
  11 am Choir Ministry Rehearsal • 9:45 - 10:50 am • Choir Loft
  Children’s Liturgy of the Word • 11 am Mass • PC Chapel
  6 pm Music Ministry Rehearsal • 5:00 - 5:45 pm • Church
  High School Youth Group, begins with 6 pm Mass - 9 pm • Parish Hall

- **Monday, December 16** -
  Matthew Bible Study • resumes January 6, 2020
  Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • St. John Church
  Catechism Presentation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church (or LiveView)
  Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Tuesday, December 17** -
  Epic Bible Study • resumes January 7, 2020
  Fr. Brian Presentation • 7:00 - 8:30 pm • Church
  Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Wednesday, December 18** -
  Boy Scout Troop 77 • 7:00 - 8:30 pm • Parish Hall
  Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church
  Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Thursday, December 19** -
  Rosary Makers • 10:30 am • PC Conf Room 2
  Rosary • 12:00 - 1:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel
  Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room
  Adoration • 3:00 - 9:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel

- **Friday, December 20** -
  Adoration • 7:30 am - 9:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel
  Knitting and Crocheting • 2:00 - 4:00 pm • Parish Hall
  Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Saturday, December 21** -
  Catholic Men’s Group • 7:45 - 8:45 am • PC Conf Room 2
  NO 9:00 am Mass: Mass at St. John this week
  Adoration • 9:30 am - 3:00 pm • PC Chapel
  Reconciliation • 11:00 am - 12 noon • Church
  Music Ministry Rehearsals • 2:30 - 3:45 pm • Conf Room B
  Anointing of the Sick, following 4 pm Mass • Church

- **Sunday, December 22** -
  Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 6
  Grace Notes Rehearsal • 8:10 - 8:45 am • Church
  11 am Choir Ministry Rehearsal • 9:45 - 10:50 am • Choir Loft
  Children’s Liturgy of the Word • 11 am Mass • PC Chapel
  6 pm Music Ministry Rehearsal • 5:00 - 5:45 pm • Church

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**holiday office closures**

**CHRISTMAS**

The parish offices will close at 12:30 pm on Tuesday, December 24th. We will remain closed on Wednesday (25th), Thursday (26th) and Sunday (29th). We will be open Friday (27th).

**NEW YEAR’S**

The parish offices will close at 12:30 pm on Tuesday, December 31st and remain closed on Wednesday, January 1st.

**St. Mary Spirit of Christmas**

There is still a healthy amount of gift tags available on the tree. If your time and budget allows, please, stop by the church and pick up a tag or two. Your gift can be dropped off to the Parish Offices.

Contact Rae for more information at (978) 505-4589.

**The St. Mary Table Ministry served 145 in December**

**Deepen Your Faith this Fall**

Our seminarian, Andrew John, continues with his weekly one-hour teachings on the Roman Catechism. Sessions are informal with faith-related questions most welcome. Only 1 session left... December 16th!

Live view or St. Mary Church ~7-8 pm

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“Lord, come and save us.”

- Responsorial Psalm 146

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Merry Christmas from Catholic Radio Boston
St. John Christmas Decorating

Help is needed to decorate the Church for the arrival of the Christ Child on Christmas.

If you can lend a helping hand, please RSVP to Maureen Gearin at (508) 254-1488.

We are looking for people to help us with the placement of the nativity, poinsettias, wreaths, Christmas trees, etc. We are also looking for a couple of people who are comfortable working on ladders in order to place garlands and fabrics.

ST. MARY AND ST. JOHN CHRISTMAS FLOWER ENVELOPES

Beginning this year, the names submitted along with your Christmas Flower donations will no longer be published in the Christmas bulletin. However, there will be a special Prayer of the Faithful for the intentions of all our flower donors. Thank you!

St. John Calendar

- Sunday, December 15 -
  Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 7
  Children’s Liturgy of the Word • 8:30 am Mass
  Coffee and Donuts, following 8:30 am Mass • Mariotti
  African Liturgy • 12:30 pm • Church

- Monday, December 16 -
  Adoration, following 9:00 am Mass • OPC Chapel
  Chelmsford Quilter’s Guild • 6:00 - 9:00 pm • Hall
  ACTS Core Meeting • 6:30 - 8:00 pm • Linehan
  Families with Addiction Support Group • 7:00 pm • NPC
  Lessons and Carols • 7:00 pm • Church
  Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church
  Catechism Presentation • 7 - 8 pm • St. Mary Church (or LiveView)

- Tuesday, December 17 -
  Adoration, following 9:00 am Mass • OPC Chapel
  Tuesday Morning Coffee, following 9:00 am Mass • Hall
  Open Music Rehearsal • 6:30 - 8:00 pm • Church
  Fr. Brian Presentation • 7:00 - 8:30 pm • St. Mary

- Wednesday, December 18 -
  Adoration, following 9:00 am Mass • OPC Chapel
  Adoration • 6:30 - 8:30 pm • OPC Chapel
  Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • St. Mary Church
  Children’s Choir Rehearsal • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church

- Thursday, December 19 -
  Charismatic Prayer Group • 10:00 am • OPC
  BINGO • 6:45 pm (doors open at 3:00 pm) • Hall
  Charismatic Prayer Group • 7:00 pm • OPC

- Friday, December 20 -
  Christmas Family Movie Night • 7:00 pm • Hall
  African Community Rosary • 6:30 pm • Library

- Saturday, December 21 -
  Daily Mass • 9:00 am
  Contemplative Prayer Group • 9:30 - 11:00 am • Linehan
  Altar Server Training • 11:00 am - 12 noon • Church
  Reconciliation • 3:00 - 3:45 pm • Church

- Sunday, December 22 -
  Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 7
  Children’s Liturgy of the Word • 8:30 am Mass
  Coffee and Donuts, following 8:30 am Mass • Mariotti
  African Community Christmas Celebration • 12:30 pm • Church

Turn page for more
Following are questions received from our Faith Formation Students...

Q. How can you be forgiven for so many things?

A. It really is simple: God loves us so much that no matter what we do, and no matter how many times we do it, if we are truly contrite He will forgive us. The important thing is that we must be truly contrite, or sorry, for what we have done. God understands that in the human condition sin has a large hold on us. The only way we can overcome sin in our life is by the grace of God. God's grace brings healing to our soul and helps us to desire God more than our desire to sin. God is therefore not concerned about how often we sin, but rather, how willing we are to change.

Q. Is not going to confessions in a while a sin that I can say at confession?

Yes, it is. There is no sin that you cannot confess. Plus, when you start confession you should always start by telling the priest how long it has been since your last confession. The requirement, though, is to go to confession at least once a year. However, it is important to realize that frequent confession is a good thing and helps us grow in our relationship with God. Mother Theresa went every week and Pope John Paul II went every two weeks. It is not because they were the worst sinners in the world, but rather, because they recognized the healing power of the sacrament of penance. Furthermore, they realized it would deepen their connection with Christ. Therefore, though technically required to go only once a year, going more often is a wonderful gift God offers to us, to help us reject sin and embrace Christ more fully.

Q. If we forget to mention a sin at confession, are we still forgiven?

This question is a little tricky. First, the answer is ‘yes’ but with an important caveat. Any sin, intended to be mentioned and inadvertently was not, is forgiven. Or, if a person did not realize at the time that what they had done was sinful, God does not hold that against the person. Again, God is concerned with the person’s heart, and if they are truly contrite for their sins—and sins in general—God will always be merciful. However, in the future if the person remembers that they committed a mortal sin and realizes it was not confessed, then they must confess that sin as soon as possible.

Q. How many confessions have you heard?

Honestly, I do not know. I do not keep track of this number. The reality is that most priests work not to remember confessions. Therefore, how many would be tricky to determine.
of what’s happening in our Collaborative!

Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative
Christmas Family Movie Night presents

THE STAR

THIS Friday, December 20, 2019
7:00 - 9:00 pm St. John Church Hall

Wear your PJ’s • Bring a cozy blanket
Popcorn and drinks provided
Have fun with family and friends

In the Spirit of Giving, we will be accepting donations of
new, white socks for both women and men in need.
~Thank you!

This week, we celebrate Gaudette Sunday!

“Literally translated from Latin, the word “gaudete” means “rejoice.” And that message comes through loud and clear in this week’s readings.”

“This mid-Advent celebration offers us a short timeout to stop, catch our breath and refocus on the joy and purpose of the season. And if we didn’t notice the change in the Advent message this week, the rose-colored candle and vestments we see for this week only during Advent certainly provide a subtle stop — or at least a slowdown — sign for us.

Taken from “Answering the Call of Joy”
December 2018 Article in CatholicSun.org
Susan Hines-Brigger
Co-Executive Editor of St. Anthony Messenger.

the season of Advent

Christmas Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve: Tuesday, Dec 24
St. Mary 4:00 pm (upstairs and downstairs)
6:00 pm and 12:00 midnight
St. John 4:00 pm (upstairs and downstairs)
10:00 pm

Christmas Day: Wednesday, Dec 25
St. Mary 7:00, 9:00 and 11:00 am
St. John 8:30 and 10:30 am

Solemnity of Mary: Wednesday, Jan 1
Holy Day of Obligation
St. Mary 7:00 am and 7:00 pm
St. John 5:00 pm (vigil) and 9:00 am

Advent Confession Schedule
In additional to regular Saturday schedule

St. John Church
Monday Evening; 7 - 8 pm
December 16th, 23rd

St. Mary Church
Wednesday Evening; 7 - 8 pm
December 18th

Only 2 Nights Left!
Come and spend some time with us as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. As Christ came for all, each evening will represent and honor a different culture. Readings and Songs will be read and sung in the native language of that particular evening:

December 16: African December 23: English
Refreshments and fellowship will follow afterwards.

Advent Lessons and Carols

This week, we celebrate Gaudette Sunday!

“Literally translated from Latin, the word “gaudete” means “rejoice.” And that message comes through loud and clear in this week’s readings.”

“This mid-Advent celebration offers us a short timeout to stop, catch our breath and refocus on the joy and purpose of the season. And if we didn’t notice the change in the Advent message this week, the rose-colored candle and vestments we see for this week only during Advent certainly provide a subtle stop — or at least a slowdown — sign for us.

Taken from “Answering the Call of Joy”
December 2018 Article in CatholicSun.org
Susan Hines-Brigger
Co-Executive Editor of St. Anthony Messenger.
Upcoming
Deep Dive Events

Lessons and Carols
Monday Evenings: December 16 and 23*
7:00 pm at St. John Church

Lessons and Carols is a prayer service of Scripture and song. Originating in England in the late 19th century, Lessons and Carols was originally conducted on Christmas Eve and consisted of exactly nine Lessons. It has since been adapted and can be found being celebrated throughout Advent with a variable number of Lessons. Regardless of the number of Lessons or when in the season leading up to Christmas it is observed, a Lessons and Carols service will focus on the mystery of the Incarnation and its role in salvation history. As Christ came for all, each evening will represent and honor a different culture each of the four evenings. Readings and Songs will be read and sung in the native language of that particular evening.

December 16: African • December 23: English •
*You only need to attend one to fulfill the Deep Dive obligation, but feel free to attend all!

Completion of a reflection sheet is REQUIRED for ALL deep dives. Downloadable or online reflection can be found on website as part of the specific deep dive page.

December 15th Family Gathering Sessions
In the Parish Hall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1 FGS, Group C</th>
<th>Grade 2 FGS, Group D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:30 am</td>
<td>11:00 am - 12:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 3 FGS, Group C</td>
<td>Grade 3 FGS, Group D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:30 am</td>
<td>11:00 am - 12:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4 FGS, Group C</td>
<td>Grade 4 FGS, Group D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:30 am</td>
<td>11:00 am - 12:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5 FGS, Group C</td>
<td>Grade 5, Group D</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:30 am</td>
<td>11:00 am - 12:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6 FGS, Group C</td>
<td>Grade 6 FGS, Group D</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:30 am</td>
<td>11:00 am - 12:30 pm</td>
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Confirmation I: 4:15 - 5:45 pm Hall

Deep Dive Calendars can be found on our website
Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/Calendars and Schedules

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Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/Calendars and Schedules

We are in need of additional classroom supplies.
- broad-tip washable colored markers
- scotch tape (disposable dispenser)

Thank you, as always.
December 15th Family Gathering Sessions
In the Parish Hall

Lessons and Carols
Monday Evenings: December 2, 9, 16 and 23*
7:00 pm at St. John Church

Lessons and Carols is a prayer service of Scripture and song. Originating in England in the late 19th century, Lessons and Carols was originally conducted on Christmas Eve and consisted of exactly nine Lessons. It has since been adapted and can be found being celebrated throughout Advent with a variable number of Lessons. Regardless of the number of Lessons or when in the season leading up to Christmas it is observed, a Lessons and Carols service will focus on the mystery of the Incarnation and its role in salvation history. As Christ came for all, each evening will represent and honor a different culture each of the four evenings. Readings and Songs will be read and sung in the native language of that particular evening.

• December 9: French •
• December 16: African • December 23: English •

*You only need to attend one to fulfill the Deep Dive obligation, but feel free to attend all!

Completion of a reflection sheet is REQUIRED for ALL deep dives. Downloadable or online reflection can be found on website as part of the specific deep dive page.

Deep Dive Events

Lessons and Carols
Monday Evenings: December 2, 9, 16 and 23*
7:00 pm at St. John Church

Lessons and Carols is a prayer service of Scripture and song. Originating in England in the late 19th century, Lessons and Carols was originally conducted on Christmas Eve and consisted of exactly nine Lessons. It has since been adapted and can be found being celebrated throughout Advent with a variable number of Lessons. Regardless of the number of Lessons or when in the season leading up to Christmas it is observed, a Lessons and Carols service will focus on the mystery of the Incarnation and its role in salvation history. As Christ came for all, each evening will represent and honor a different culture each of the four evenings. Readings and Songs will be read and sung in the native language of that particular evening.

• December 9: French •
• December 16: African • December 23: English •

*You only need to attend one to fulfill the Deep Dive obligation, but feel free to attend all!

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www.chelmsfordcatholic.org

Deep Dive Calendars can be found on our website Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/Calendars and Schedules

All Deep Dive details can be found on our website Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/ Deep Dives (choose deep dive)

Full Class schedules can be found on our website Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/Calendars and Schedules

We would appreciate donations of the following items.
small glue sticks • quart & gallon size zip storage bags
hand sanitizer
for your support of our program.

ST. JOHN FAITH FORMATION SCHEDULE AND EVENTS

December 15th Family Gathering Sessions
In the Parish Hall

GRADE 1 FGS, GROUP B
9:45 - 11:15 am
GRADE 2 FGS, GROUP B
9:45 - 11:15 am
GRADE 3 FGS, GROUP B
9:45 - 11:15 am
GRADE 4 FGS, GROUP B
9:45 - 11:15 am
GRADE 5 FGS, GROUP B
9:45 - 11:15 am
CONFIRMATION I: 11:30 am - 1:00 pm in Parish Hall

December 22nd Class Schedule

GRADES K-3 CLASS
No Classes due to Christmas Break

GRADES 7-8 CLASS
9:45 - 11:15 am in Parish Hall

December 29th Class/FGS Schedule

DUE TO CHRISTMAS BREAK
There will be no classes or events today!
Classes/ Sessions resume next Sunday, January 5th

follow us on Instagram
instagram.com/chelmsfordcatholic
Upcoming Deep Dives can be found on our Instagram page!
"You, dear young people, are not the future but the now of God."
~Pope Francis, World Youth Day Homily, Panama

The Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative’s Youth Ministry program seeks to ensure that the young people of the Collaborative feel known, valued, and loved by God and by their parish community. By providing opportunities for youth to encounter Christ in their lives and connecting them with mature Christian mentors, youth ministry strives to equip and empower our young people to be lifelong disciples of Jesus.

Please signup 10 days PRIOR to your requested date by contacting Barbara at dwsmiths@comcast.net or (978) 649-6745. We meet in St. John’s parking lot at 3:15 pm and arrive back by 7:30 pm.

RSVP by THIS Wednesday, December 18th if you wish to serve Friday, December 27th

Catholic Heart Workcamp 2020 Theme: I AM
July 21-26, 2019 in North Haledon, New Jersey

I AM. These words can be found in the Bible hundreds of times. They refer to God, who is the Great I AM. These words can be found in the Bible hundreds of times. They refer to God, who is the Great I AM. Through all space and time, God continues to declare “I AM who I AM.” God is not dead; He is not only the God of long ago. He is the God who will always live forever and ever, who is alive today and beckons us into relationship by reassuring us, “I AM who I AM.” He is the God we meet in the Eucharist, in prayer, and in our service to His kingdom. We are pulled in an overwhelming number of directions when trying to discover our identity. We seek belonging and purpose in so many places. Still, the fullness of our worth can only be found in one place. Our truest identity is being children of the Great I AM.

This summer, CHWC invites you to ask yourself the question: “Who am I?” Join us as we discover the answer to this question by encountering the great I AM through love, service, and connection to His people.

Deadline to sign up: February 1, 2020

Online Sign-ups available on our website. Choose Youth Ministry under the Faith Formation.

Click on Catholic Heart Work Camp from the left hand sidebar.

$500 ($100 non-refundable deposit due at registration)

The Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative would like to announce two upcoming ACTS® Retreats

Men’s Retreat Weekend: February 13-16, 2020: contact Drew at andrewjubinville@verizon.net

Women’s Retreat Weekend: April 23-26, 2020: contact Beth at bjacavanco@comcast.net

The ACTS® Retreat is a three-day Catholic retreat that runs from Thursday evening and ends with Sunday morning Mass. It is based on the Gospels and teachings of the Church and provides retreatants with the opportunity to deepen their faith. The retreats are organized and facilitated by lay people in the collaborative. Please consider joining us for the weekend.

"The Lord’s call is not an intrusion of God in our freedom; it is not a “cage” or a burden to be borne. On the contrary, it is the loving initiative whereby God encounters us and invites us to be part of a great undertaking. He opens before our eyes the horizon of a greater sea and an abundant catch.”
~His Holiness, Pope Francis
In order to promote communication and transparency throughout the Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative, you are encouraged to forward any comments and concerns you may have directly to the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils.

**COLLABORATIVE PARISH COUNCIL**

Parish council matters can be sent to: CollaborativePPC@chelmsfordcatholic.org or 978-256-2374/ 978-251-8571, ext 145

**St. John Members**
- Angela McMaster (co-chair)
- Mike Condor
- Scott Davidson
- Katrina Horan
- Beth Jacavanco
- Drew Jubinville
- Ellen St. George
- Augustine Tweneh
- Ray Wagner (secretary)

**St. Mary Members**
- Peter Lando (co-chair)
- Laura Conte
- Rob Donnelly
- Karen Drake
- Jessica Hägg
- Cathy Latina
- Lori McDonald
- Steve McMillan
- Alma (Chicki) Rigazio
- Paul Therrien

**ST. JOHN FINANCE COUNCIL**

Finance matters concerning St. John’s can be sent to: SJ.FC@chelmsfordcatholic.org or 978-251-8571, ext 146

**Current Council Members are …**
- John Bagni
- Paul Brzezenski
- Jeff Brown
- Celeste Dunn
- Grace Ann Steed

**ST. MARY FINANCE COUNCIL**

Finance matters concerning St. Mary’s can be sent to: SM.FC@chelmsfordcatholic.org or 978-256-2374 ext 147

**Current Council Members are …**
- Armand DiLando
- Lauren Desforge
- Jack Parsons
- Ted Powers
- Paul Therrien

If you would like to submit a notice for the bulletin, please submit it no later than 12 NOON, TWO Fridays prior to the weekend in which you would like to have it published. Submittals should be emailed to christine@chelmsfordcatholic.org or via US Mail to the Parish Offices at 115 Middlesex Street, North Chelmsford, MA, 01863, ATTN Christine. We will do our very best to accommodate your request.
A few weeks ago, I was helping a friend of mine move from one parish to another and I stayed overnight at his new rectory. When I was getting ready for bed, I went to brush my teeth and one of my front teeth started to move. I have crowns on three of my front teeth from an incident in the seventh grade (a story for another time), and I assumed it had somehow just come loose. I called my dentist in the morning and they told me to come in that day. My friend and I first went out to breakfast and all I had was some eggs over easy and wheat toast. As I started to chew the tooth came all the way out. I asked the waitress for something to put it in, and then I brought it with me to the dentist.

It turned out that the steel post in my gum actually split. My dentist told me this almost never happens. And he wasn’t really sure why it happened this time. But he was able to use the crown and simply put in a different post and secured the crown to the new post. He did tell me that I could not bite into apples anymore. And I do love my apples! Now I simply have to cut them up to eat them—not really a big deal.

This whole incident was rather unexpected. I was simply going through my usual brushing routine when all of a sudden things changed. At first I was not really sure what to do, and especially what to do when the tooth came completely out. With the tooth gone, I had a gap in my teeth and that was a little unsettling, but I did trust that my dentist would know exactly how to fix it.

If we think about what happened to Mary on that day some 2000 years ago, there is some parallel. Mary was simply going through her normal day’s routine when ‘bam!’—the Archangel Gabriel appeared. Now obviously this is far more momentous than what happened to me. But I often wonder what Mary must have thought in that moment before she replied to the angel’s request. For me there is an assumption that Mary was doing some mundane, daily task when she experienced this most sublime of moments.

What has floored me, though, is how Mary responded to Gabriel. There was no sense of fear or being overwhelmed. As I say to people, if the Archangel Gabriel appeared to me, there is no doubt in my mind that I would freak out. Instead, Mary is calm and truly open to what is occurring. Why? What is her secret?

There are three specific things about Mary that this story can reveal to us. One, she is a woman of prayer. There is little doubt that Mary was familiar with hearing the voice of God in her life. Her openness to hear whatever the angel had to say is a clear sign of someone who has an intimate relationship with the Lord. And a relationship that is truly intimate can only occur when there is real communication with, and understanding of, the other. A life of prayer opens us to hear God in the way He believes is best for us to receive his message. We should have little doubt that God communicated with Mary many times before, but most likely in ordinary ways. God chose this extraordinary way of presenting his message because of the extraordinary nature of that message. He would choose to become one with humanity through Mary’s ‘yes.’

The life of faith that Mary lived was both the foundation of her prayer life and what allowed her prayer life to grow. Again, her faith is a testament to her trust in the Lord as shown by her response to Gabriel. Her response was simple, clear, and demonstrative of her desire to live out the will of God—no matter what it might cost her, and no matter how it might endanger her life! Her faith was one of complete trust in God’s will. It was a trust based on a real relationship and knowledge of who God is. In her life of faith, she must have been a person who understood the history of salvation as shown through the history of her people. She knew God was always faithful even when we are not. His faithfulness would allow everything to work out for the good.

She was a person filled with grace and lived a life of grace. So often people will say, well, of course, Mary was good: look at her great gift of grace. But the reality is that she could have chosen to act as Adam and Eve did and ignore that gift and simply acted in accord with her own self-centered desires. Grace does not force us to cooperate with God: rather, it is an aid to strengthen us to follow his will, but—and this is a big ‘but’—we must choose to cooperate with God’s grace God. Mary was so blessed because, in her humility, she chose always to cooperate with God’s grace in her life.

Mary lived a life we can all strive to live, in exactly the same way she did. We too must become a people of prayer and not simply when it is convenient. We need to recognize that if we want a real relationship with God, it is essential that we actually communicate with Him to get to know Him. If it is an intimate relationship we yearn for, it is impossible without prayer. We must be people of faith and our entire life must be imbued with that faith. Every word we speak and action we take must allow Christ to be heard and seen. Our faith is not something we put on for Sundays and then discard the rest of the week. It is intended to be lived out each and every day of our lives. And for any of this to happen we must become people filled with God’s grace. It is impossible to accomplish anything of value or meaning without the grace of God. And God is offering that grace to you and me at every moment of our life.

Let us prepare the best way we can for the coming of Christ, by living our lives with Mary as our example.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,
Do I have Skin in the Game?

In preparing for Advent, I tried to follow my own advice: to “fall back” from some of my usual activities. I wasn’t 100% successful, but what I did let go of made more room for prayer and listening for God’s voice. What got my attention the most was how many places in the world have discord and strife, and how much the entire world needs the peace that only Jesus the Christ can bring.

Still, prayer can remain almost academic until you know someone who is actually in a place of strife, whether it’s drug cartel murders on the southern border of the USA, stabbings on London Bridge in England, or any other place that is violent or torn by war.

Last week, my prayer got instantly personal and very intense because the son of very dear friends is in imminent danger in Hong Kong. He works as a photojournalist and university teacher in China. His wife’s family are Hong Kong citizens and he has been reporting on the protests in Hong Kong since they started.

Professionally he is ethically bound not to take sides when reporting, and I know that he follows this expected standard. However, the Chinese authorities don’t see it quite that way. He was fired from his teaching job and is being threatened with other sanctions, if not imprisonment.

All of this is very close to home. I know the love his parents have for him and his wife. They want him to be true to himself, but they also want him to be safe. Me, too! So, my prayer has gotten very intense and very personal. I have skin in the game!

The world needs Jesus Christ. We each know and believe this. But, how intensely do we pray for it? We should absolutely have skin in the game, because we all know at least one person who doesn’t know Jesus, and who has never experienced the love of God made tangible through Jesus.

The rest of this Advent season, and through the Christmas season, my prayer and hope are that I will pray for others as intently and personally as I’ve been praying for my friends’ son.

Praying that you have a blessed Advent and Christmas.

In Communion, Catholics receive bread and wine, and the Church teaches that when the bread and wine are consecrated by an ordained priest they become the sacramental body and blood of the risen Christ.

This belief comes from the Gospel of Matthew at the Last Supper: “As they were eating, Jesus took a small loaf of bread and blessed it and broke it apart and gave it to the disciples and said ‘Take it and eat it, for this is my body,’ and he took a cup of wine and gave thanks for it and gave it to them and said, ‘Each one drink from it, for this is my blood sealing the New Covenant. It is poured out to forgive the sins of multitudes.”’ (Matthew 26:26-29; also look at 1 Corinthians 10:15-16).

Jesus foretold what He was going to do and it was recorded in St. John’s Gospel, chapter 6. Jesus said: “I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven. Anyone eating this Bread shall live forever: this Bread is my flesh given to redeem humanity. With all the earnestness I possess I tell you this: unless you eat the flesh of the Messiah and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you.” (John 6:47-54). Many walked away for they knew He was not talking about a symbol.

In a recent Pew Research Survey we find that nearly seven-in-ten Catholics (69%) say they personally believe that during the Mass, the bread and wine used in Communion “are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.” Just one-third of U. S. Catholics (31%) say they believe that “during the Catholic Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus”.

“Overall, 43% of Catholics believe that the bread and wine are symbolic and also that this reflects the position of the Church.”

“It is not a complete surprise that lots of Catholics struggle with (or flatly reject) the idea that Jesus Christ is substantially present, body, blood, soul and divinity, in the elements of bread and wine at Mass. We might have trouble integrating that belief into the rest of our life and faith.” writes Brett Salkeld in his book Transubstantiation: Theology, History and Christian Unity.

Many of the people who stop attending Mass say they do not believe that Jesus is present in the Eucharist, but they also tell me that what they miss most is the Eucharist. I find that strange.
Whether they are working to enrich our parishes, or seeing to the needs of the broader communities in which they serve, priests have dedicated their lives to helping all of God's children. Each Christmas, we have the opportunity to support our priests through the special collection benefitting the Clergy Health and Retirement Trust, which offers preventative health and wellness programs, offers one-on-one support and advocacy to priests with health concerns, and operates Regina Cleri, a state-of-the-art facility where senior priests live in community. Please support our priests who through their ministry, create stronger communities for all, by giving generously to this year's Christmas collection.

Due to an early submittal to the printer due to the upcoming holiday season, the collection figures for the weekend of December 7th/8th will be posted in December 21st/22nd.

### St. Mary

- **Weekend of Nov 30th/ Dec 1st**
  - Offertory Needed to Cover Budgeted Expenses: $17,140
  - Actual Received: $16,004
  - Variance: -$1,136
  - Collection for Retired Religious Sisters: $4,494
  - Offertory Needed to Cover Budgeted Expenses: $17,140
  - Actual Received: $19,899
  - Variance: $2,759

### St. John

- **Weekend of Nov 30th/ Dec 1st**
  - Offertory Needed to Cover Budgeted Expenses: $11,040
  - Actual Received: $9,599
  - Variance: -$1,441
  - Collection for Retired Religious Sisters: $3,395
  - Offertory Needed to Cover Budgeted Expenses: $11,040
  - Actual Received: $11,319
  - Variance: $279

### FY 2020 Year-to-Date Stewardship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Offertory Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Variance</th>
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<td>$332,808</td>
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</tr>
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### 2019 End-Of-Year Donations
If you are planning on a year-end tax deductible gift to either St. Mary's or St. John’s, please do so by December 31st. Anything received by this date will be appropriately dated to be included with your 2019 contributions.

Supporting St. Mary and St. John Parishes with an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) before 12/31/19

If you are 70½ or older, you may be eligible* to use an Individual Retirement Account to make charitable gifts, and enjoy several tax-advantaged benefits. Gifts transferred directly from your IRA account to a qualified charity, like St. Mary or St. John, may:

- Count toward your annual Required Minimum Distribution
- Be excluded from federal and state income taxes

This is because your gift would pass directly from your IRA to St. Mary or St. John
- Allow you to make a gift of pre-tax dollars, rather than an after-tax gift
- Provide you with a tax savings regardless of whether you itemize

As we need to keep parish finances separate, please be sure to indicate to which parish—St. Mary or St. John—you would like your gift processed when you are making your gift. Your generosity will help St. Mary and St. John to continue building the programs and ministries for the present and future growth of our faith communities.

*Please be sure to consult your tax advisor to determine if your IRA qualifies for QCD treatment.
Who did you come to see? A version of this question is posed by Jesus many times in the Gospels. He asks it of Andrew and John when they begin to follow him. He asks it of Mary Magdalene in the garden of the resurrection. He asks it in today’s Gospel. “What did you go out to the desert to see?” There is something innately human about “seeing.” Animals have eyes — some with much more powerful vision than our own — but that’s not the kind of seeing Jesus is talking about. We could phrase the question several other ways. “What are you looking for?” “What are you longing for?” “Whom do you seek?”

It is in seeing for ourselves that our suspicions or hypotheses are confirmed, that our desires discover their fulfillment, and that we can rest for a moment in certainty. John the Baptist sought certainty of Jesus’ identity. “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” Jesus sends word to him based on the testimony of sight, observations of the mighty deeds Jesus has begun to work. “Go and tell John what you hear and see.”

God recognizes our desire to see. In the Incarnation, the Word is made flesh. The invisible is made manifest in an infant who can do little more than the most natural of movements as he feeds, cries, sleeps. We don’t need to wait for Christmas to see God. The work of God is all around us. Those blinded by sin “regain their sight.” People overcome backgrounds of poverty and violence to make world-changing contributions. Addicts grow and heal. Truth is spoken, and people listen.

Let’s pray for the grace to see God’s movement in our lives this week.

How have you seen the work of God?

A WEEKEND FOR GOOD MARRIAGES TO BE EVEN BETTER!

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is designed to give married couples the opportunity to examine their lives together . . . a time to share their feelings, hopes, disappointments, joys and frustrations . . . and to do so openly and honestly in a face-to-face, heart-to-heart encounter with the one person they have chosen to live with for the rest of their lives. The emphasis of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend is on communication between husband and wife, who spend a weekend together away from the distractions and tensions of everyday life, to concentrate on each other. It’s not a retreat, nor a marriage clinic, nor group sensitivity. It’s a unique approach aimed at revitalizing Christian Marriage. This is a time for you and your spouse to be alone together, to rediscover each other and together focus on your relationship for an entire weekend. Every marriage deserves that kind of attention! For more information, please call: 1-800-710-WWME, or visit the web site at www.wwmema.org.

~UPCOMING WEEKENDS~

March 13, 2020: Betania Retreat Center, Medway MA
April 18, 2020: Brewster, MA
June 5, 2020: Betania Retreat Center, Medway, MA
September 11, 2020: Betania Retreat Center, Medway, MA
October 16, 2020: TBD in New Hampshire

If you would like a more local resource, please feel free to contact St. John Parishioners Jerry and Julie Wright at (781) 249-3199 or Jerryjuliewright@gmail.com.
If you would like to request that a Mass be celebrated for a specific intention or person, please call the parish office. A donation of $10 per Mass intention is requested to be made when you schedule your intention.

St. John

SAT, DEC 14 4:00 pm: Richard DeFreitas: Memorial
SUN, DEC 15 8:30 am: For the People of the Parish
10:30 am: Nicholas Denisevich: Memorial
MON, DEC 16 9:00 am: LIVING INTENTION
Successful treatments for Marc Lowe
TUE, DEC 17 9:00 am: Johanna O’Neill: Memorial
WED, DEC 18 9:00 am: William O’Connell: Memorial
FRI, DEC 20 9:00 am: LIVING INTENTION
Robert Cash: For Healing
SAT, DEC 21 4:00 pm: Richard DeFreitas: Memorial
SUN, DEC 22 8:30 am: Ann Lizotte: Memorial
10:30 am: For the People of the Parish

St. Mary

SAT, DEC 14 4:00 pm: Lillian & Raymond Rousseau: Memorial
SUN, DEC 15 9:00 am: For the People of the Parish
11:00 am: Robin Mullin: Memorial
6:00 pm: Robert Hague: 31st Anniversary
THU, DEC 19 7:00 am: Czeslawa M. “Tessie” Kijanka
15th Anniversary
SAT, DEC 21 4:00 pm: Thomas Pucci Sr, Thomas Pucci Jr, and deceased relatives of their extended family
SUN, DEC 22 7:00 am: Louise and Raymond Fuller: Memorial
11:00 am: For the People of the Parish
6:00 pm: Ralph B. Hickey and Barbara Renison

Parishioners are invited to donate a floral arrangement, to be displayed on the altar in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one. The requested donation for an arrangement is $40, and includes an acknowledgement in the bulletin.

If you would like to donate altar flowers, please call the parish office.

St. Mary Memorial Altar Flowers

FUNERALS RECENTLY CELEBRATED

Mary Caires December 7 at St. Mary

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.

Kathryn Challingsworth

“YOUR WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET AND A LIGHT UNTO MY PATH”
-PSALM 119:105

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Serving Chelmsford, North Chelmsford, Westford and Surrounding Communities Since 1927

Monday, Dec 16
Numbers 24: 2-7, 15-17
Psalm 25
Matthew 21: 23-27

Tuesday, Dec 17
Genesis 49: 2, 8-10
Psalm 72
Matthew 1: 1-17

Wednesday, Dec 18
Jeremiah 23: 5-8
Psalm 72
Matthew 1: 18-25

Thursday, Dec 19
Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25
Psalm 71
Luke 1: 5-25

Friday, Dec 20
Isaiah 7: 10-14
Psalm 24
Luke 1: 26-38

Saturday, Dec 21
Songs 2: 8-14
Psalm 33
Luke 1: 39-45

Sunday, Dec 22
Isaiah 7: 10-14
Psalm 24
Romans 1: 1-7
Matthew 1: 18-24

Rose for Life

Someone special you’d like to honor? You can do that by having a rose signifying your intention placed in the church, as well as having your intention published in the bulletin. To book a Rose for Life, contact the parish office. Be sure to let them know at which parish you would like the rose placed. The suggested offering for a rose is $5.00.

This week’s St. John Rose for Life:
Happy Birthday Emmelia Faith Clark

This week’s St. Mary Rose for Life:
Happy Birthday Wishes to Kathryn Challingsworth

Roses Provided by Mahoney’s Garden Center
Mr. Thomas W. Regan, 84, a longtime resident of Chelmsford, MA died Sunday afternoon, October 20, 2019 at Blaire House of Tewksbury, MA. He was married to the late Mrs. Barbara (Norton) Regan who died October 29, 2013. Born in Boston, MA, he was the son of the late Thomas and Mary Regan. Tom was a graduate of Cathedral High School with the class of 1953. He served with the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War as a crewmember of a B-36 Peacemaker. He retired in 1992 from Instrumentation Laboratories. He was a communicant of St. John the Evangelist Church in Chelmsford, MA. He was a life member of the Knights of Columbus. He enjoyed traveling with his wife worldwide touring 55 countries, and traveled throughout the US with his family. Tom is survived by two daughters, Barbara Regan-Najm of Chelmsford, MA and Maureen and her husband, Michael Pashby of Cary, NC; four sons, Thomas and his wife Noreen Regan of Dover, MA, Dennis and his wife Jennifer Regan of Pepperell, MA, William and his wife Karen Regan of Wyckoff, NJ and David and his wife Pamela Regan of Long Beach, NY; a sister Helen and her husband Joseph Gattuso of E. Falmouth, MA; 20 grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

He was the grandfather of the late Jessica Najm, and the brother to the late Marie Keefe.

Relatives and friends were respectfully invited to attend his visiting hours Wednesday, October 23rd from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. His Funeral was Thursday, October 24th at 8:00 AM from the DOLAN FUNERAL HOME, 106 MIDDLESEX ST. CHELMSFORD, MA, with a Funeral Mass at 9:00 AM at St. John the Evangelist Church in N. Chelmsford. Burial followed in Pine Ridge Cemetery, Chelmsford. Online guest book is available at www.dolanfuneralhome.com.

ARRANGEMENTS BY DOLAN FUNERAL HOME 978-256-4040.