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.

**ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST**
115 MIDDLESEX STREET
NORTH CHELMSFORD

**ST. MARY**
25 NORTH ROAD
CHELMSFORD

**WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE**
Saturday • 4:00 PM
Sunday • 8:30 AM, 10:30 AM & 5:00 PM

**WEEKDAY MASS SCHEDULE**
Monday - Friday • 9:00 AM

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

**RECONCILIATION**
Saturday • 3:00 - 3:45 PM or by appointment
Final Advent Confession, St. John Monday, December 23rd

**EUCHARISTIC ADORATION**
First Friday of the Month •
Monday - Wednesday •
9:30 - 11:30 am in OPC Chapel
2nd, 3rd, 4th Wednesday •
6:30 - 8:30 pm in OPC Chapel

**EUCHARISTIC ADORATION**
Thursday • 3:00 - 9:00 PM
Friday • 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM
Saturday • 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM in the Parish Center Chapel

**PARISH OFFICE HOURS**
MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY • 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
WEDNESDAY • 9:30 AM - 5:00 PM
FRIDAY • 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
SUNDAY • 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

**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.

facebook.com/ChelmsfordCath twitter.com/ChelmsfordCath instagram.com/chelmsfordcatholic
**St. Mary Calendar**

- **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

- **Monday, December 23**
  - Matthew Bible Study • resumes January 6, 2020
  - Advent Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • St. John Church
  - Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Tuesday, December 24**
  - CHRISTMAS EVE: Parish Offices Close at 12:30 pm Today
  - Epic Bible Study • resumes January 7, 2020

- **Wednesday, December 25**
  - CHRISTMAS DAY: Parish Offices Closed Today

- **Thursday, December 26**
  - CHRISTMAS BREAK: Parish Offices Closed Today
  - Rosary • 12:00 - 1:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel
  - Adoration • Suspended for Christmas Break

- **Friday, December 27**
  - Adoration • Suspended for Christmas Break
  - Knitting and Crocheting • 2:00 - 4:00 pm • Parish Hall

- **Saturday, December 28**
  - Daily Mass at 9:00 am
  - Adoration • Suspended for Christmas Break
  - 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 29**
  - CHRISTMAS BREAK: Parish Offices Closed Today
  - 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

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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.

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**!! ATTENTION !!**

**St. Mary 11 am MASS GOERS**

Please be aware that the duration of the 11:00 am Mass next Sunday, December 29th will be slightly extended due to our welcoming of two siblings into the family through the Sacrament of Baptism.

We do hope you will decide to celebrate this joyous occasion with us.

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**The Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative announces 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.
Knights of Columbus Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest

Announcing St. John Winner

The local Bishop Ruocco council Knights of Columbus announces its winner this year for the Catholic Citizenship Essay contest. This year’s theme was “Discuss the Meaning of Virtue and how you Live and Embody the Virtue of Charity.” Participants in grades 8 - 12 in the four parishes of the Chelmsford and Littleton-Westford collaboratives that our council serves were eligible to submit essay entries.

We are pleased to announce that the 12th grade winner is a St. John youth parishioner...

JAMES TWENEH

In addition to a monetary prize of $100, James’ essay has been submitted to the State Council for judging among participants throughout Massachusetts.

The council thanks the Faith Formation Program for helping to promote this program.

This is the third year our council has promoted this program and encourages greater participation next fall among eligible students.

Congratualtions!

James and Good Luck in the State Judging!
Q. Where does Christmas come from? Why is it celebrated on December 25th?

A. There is a theory that the date of Christmas was based on the Roman celebration of Saturnalia, which fell on the Winter Solstice. For many reasons, however, a better, more recent theory for the calculating the date of Christmas has been put forth. But, to understand the early Church’s method of determining dates for important celebrations, it is helpful to know how the original date of Easter came about.

When the Church began celebrating Easter, probably in the first century, it was not always celebrated on a Sunday like it is today. It was celebrated on the date that Jesus died, which in the Jewish calendar was 14 Nisan. The Jewish calendar was a lunar calendar based on the cycle of the moon, and each month had 28 days. The Roman calendar was a solar calendar based on the cycle of the sun, and each month was a little different. Now, the early Church determined that March 25th in the Roman calendar was equivalent to 14 Nisan in the Jewish calendar, and so March 25th became the original date for the celebration of Easter.

At this time there was also the idea that part of the perfection of the great patriarchs of Israel was that they died on the same date they were born. We read that Abraham died at the age of 175, and Moses, at 120. The importance of this is not how old they were, but that their ages were recorded in years only, and not in years and months. They took this a step further with Christ: they believed that Christ died on the same date as his conception, March 25th, to show even greater perfection. This date is now the Feast of the Annunciation. It is also the feast of the Incarnation of Jesus, when God united his divine nature with a human nature. If Christ was conceived on March 25th, then add nine months and you get December 25th. The feast of Christmas is therefore a celebration of that incarnation being manifested to the world. It is a celebration of God’s self-revelation to us, bringing forth the hope of our salvation.

This is part of the reason that the original Christmas Gospel was not written by Matthew or Luke: it was not about the infancy narrative. But rather, the beginning of the Gospel of John was the original Christmas Gospel. It begins, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God…” It goes on to tell us, “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” The birth of Christ is about God’s fulfillment of his promise to save us from sin and death.

Can we say with certainty that Jesus was born on December 25th? No! But ultimately that is not important to the celebration. It is not really about celebrating his birth, but rather, what his birth means to us in relation to our salvation, and how both his birth and death are tied together. The babe born in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago was born to die so that we might live.
The Clergy and Staff of the Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative wish you and those you love a Blessed Christmas

One of the most beautiful things about the Christmas story is its human simplicity. How very ordinary! How relatable! We see a young family caught up in government regulations, encountering difficulty booking travel arrangements. We see a belated baby shower filled with the most unlikely attendees. Yet, if you attended Christmas Mass during the day, the Gospel does not contain the familiar story of over-crowded inns and hay-lined mangers.

It features something much more mysterious, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God … all things came to be through Him.” Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us the Christmas story from the human perspective. John’s Gospel tells the Christmas story from the divine perspective.

“What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race.” C.S. Lewis described Christmas as God parachuting down behind enemy lines. Jesus entered into a world darkened by sin, and it isn’t so different today. We can find it in the complications of our own lives and the lives of our families. We can find it in our cities, our nation, our world. But it wasn’t only the star that shone on Christmas night. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

In the midst of all that is so very human — whether the humdrum or the horrible — “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” No matter what we bring into this Christmas day, God enters our existence. He enters our experiences. When we allow God into our lives in a new way, when we surrender to Him our lingering areas of darkness, then we will “[see] his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” It’s time to welcome Him.

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
Upcoming Deep Dive Events

Eucharistic Adoration *
Wednesday, January 8 • 7-8 pm St. John Church
This evening of Adoration will begin with an introduction to Adoration, followed by a period of prayer that will be accompanied by music and silence.

This is also a Confirmation Deep Dive opportunity for Confirmation I and Confirmation II students.

* This is a required Deep Dive for grades 7 & 8. If you did not attend November 7th event, then you must attend this one.

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

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

We are in need of additional classroom supplies and would appreciate the donations of the following items.

• broad-tip washable colored markers
• scotch tape (dispenser)*
• small glue sticks
• hand sanitizer
• all size zip storage bags

Thank you, as always, for your support of our program.

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December 22nd Class Schedule

**Grade 1 - 6 Class**
No Classes due to Christmas Break

**Grade 7 & 8 Class:** 4:15 - 5:45 pm Parish Hall

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December 29th Class/FGS Schedule

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

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January 5th Class/FGS Schedule

**GRADE 1 FGS, GROUP A**
9:00 - 10:30 am Parish Hall

**GRADE 2 FGS: GROUP B**
11:00 am - 12:30 pm Parish Hall

**GRADE 3 FGS: GROUP A**
9:00 - 10:30 am Parish Hall

**GRADE 3 FGS: GROUP B**
11:00 am - 12:30 pm Parish Hall

**GRADE 4 FGS, GROUP A**
9:00 - 10:30 am Parish Hall

**GRADE 4 FGS, GROUP B**
11:00 am - 12:30 pm Parish Hall

**GRADE 5 FGS, GROUP A**
9:00 - 10:30 am Parish Hall

**GRADE 5 FGS, GROUP B**
11:00 am - 12:30 pm Parish Hall

**GRADE 6 FGS, GROUP A**
9:00 - 10:30 am Parish Hall

**GRADE 6 FGS, GROUP B**
11:00 am - 12:30 pm Parish Hall

**CONFIRMATION II:** 4:15 - 5:45 pm Hall

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follow us on [Instagram](https://instagram.com/chelmsfordcatholic)
ST. JOHN FAITH FORMATION SCHEDULE AND EVENTS

**Upcoming Deep Dive Events**

**Eucharistic Adoration** *
Wednesday, January 8 • 7-8 pm St. John Church

This evening of Adoration will begin with an introduction to Adoration, followed by a period of prayer that will be accompanied by music and silence.

*This is also a Confirmation Deep Dive opportunity for both Confirmation I Confirmation II students.

* This is a required Deep Dive for grades 7 & 8. If you did not attend the November 7th event, you must attend this one.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES K-3 CLASS</th>
<th>GRADES 7-8 CLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Classes due to Christmas Break</td>
<td>9:45 - 11:15 am in Parish Hall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

December 29th Class/FGS Schedule

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

January 5th Family Gathering Sessions

In the Parish Hall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE K FGS, GROUP A</th>
<th>GRADE 1 FGS, GROUP A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:45 - 11:15 am</td>
<td>9:45 - 11:15 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADE 2 FGS, GROUP A</td>
<td>GRADE 3 FGS, GROUP A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 - 11:15 am</td>
<td>9:45 - 11:15 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADE 4 FGS, GROUP A</td>
<td>GRADE 5 FGS, GROUP A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 - 11:15 am</td>
<td>9:45 - 11:15 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONFIRMATION II: 11:30 am - 1:00 pm in

We are in need of additional classroom supplies and would appreciate the donations of the following items.

* hand sanitizer
* small glue sticks
* scotch tape (disposable dispenser)
* all size zip storage bags
* broad-tip washable colored markers

Thank you for your support of our program.

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

follow us on Instagram

instagram.com/chelmsfordcatholic
Youth Ministry

"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.

Steubenville East 2020 Theme: RESTORED  July 10-12, 2020 in Kingston, Rhode Island

"Restore us, O God; Let thy face shine, that we may be saved."  -Psalm 80:3

Can you remember a time when you weren’t anxious about something? The chaos of our lives can overwhelm us and make it difficult to see anything other than confusion and brokenness. And somewhere along the way, we’ve forgotten who we are—and, more importantly, who God is. We have a good, loving Father in heaven who created us to share in His glory, to see everything and everyone with His eyes. His greatest desire is to raise us up out of our fear and anxiety and restore us to the hope and abundant life that only He can give. This summer, over 50,000 Catholic teens across North America will attend one of 25 Steubenville Youth Conferences to encounter the God who calls us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Will you be one of those teens? Lift your eyes to the glory of God. Be restored.

Deadline to sign up: March 1, 2020/ $275 per person
Online Sign-ups available on our website. Choose Youth Ministry under the Faith Formation tab.
Click on Steubenville East, from the left hand sidebar.

Catholic Heart Workcamp 2020 Theme: I AM  July 21-26, 2020 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/ $500 ($100 non-refundable deposit due at registration)
Online Sign-ups available on our website. Choose Youth Ministry under the Faith Formation tab.
Click on Catholic Heart Work Camp from the left hand sidebar.
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
Current Council Members are …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. John Members</th>
<th>St. Mary Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela McMaster</td>
<td>Peter Lando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(co-chair)</td>
<td>(co-chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Condor</td>
<td>Laura Conte</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Davidson</td>
<td>Rob Donnelly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katrina Horan</td>
<td>Karen Drake</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beth Jacavanco</td>
<td>Jessica Hägg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew Jubinville</td>
<td>Cathy Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen St. George</td>
<td>Lori McDonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustine Tweneh</td>
<td>Steve McMillian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Wagner</td>
<td>Alma (Chicki) Rigazio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(secretary)</td>
<td>Paul Therrien</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John Bagni</th>
<th>Jeff Brown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul Brzezenski</td>
<td>Celeste Dunn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace Ann Steed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armand DiLando</th>
<th>Lauren Desforge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack Parsons</td>
<td>Ted Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Therrien</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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.
Less than a year after I was ordained, my Mom invited me to join in. (Well, honestly, she set it up particularly for me.) One of the destinations on this tour was the city of Florence, and one of the biggest attractions in Florence is Michelangelo’s sculpture of David. While we were walking through the main square we saw a replica of the statute, where the original resided until it was moved into the museum for protection. As I looked at the copy, it really did nothing for me. The thought that came to mind was, I don’t know what the big deal is about this replica—it is simply a nice sculpture. In time we made it to the museum where the original statue of David now resides. Honestly, the moment I looked at it, I had a hard time taking my eyes off of it. David almost looked like he was getting ready to breathe. The effect of this work of art on the human eye is in many ways beyond words. Pictures cannot do it justice. It is just one of those things you have to see in person.

In time I learned more about this work and Michelangelo. He said that he never carved a statue. Rather, the statue already existed in the block of marble. He simply chipped away at the marble until the work revealed itself. His job was not to make the marble something it was not, but rather, to discover what lay hidden beneath and to bring it to life.

In our own lives that is what God does for us. We are somewhat like that block of marble, and God will slowly chip away at us until over time our true selves are revealed. But the difference is that—unlike Michelangelo—God already knows what is to be revealed. He knows what lays beneath and ultimately what it is He is carving, and it is really the same statue for all of us. He wants to reveal Christ through us. He wants our lives to be Christ’s life personified. Each and every one of us is to become the living embodiment of Christ. But not one of us will be a copy; rather, each one will show Christ in our own unique way and through our own particular gifts and talents.

The gift of Christmas is not simply the birth of our savior. The gift of Christmas is not simply the birth of the God incarnate (Jesus being fully God and fully human). The gift of Christmas is not simply God’s gift of love and mercy revealed. The gift of Christmas is not simply the consummation of all God’s promises realized and revealed in Jesus. The gift of Christmas is all of these, but also about the fact that in Jesus’ humanity He shows us what it means to be truly human. He helps us to recognize that we can only truly embrace the fullness of our humanity when we live our lives in accord with the will of God. And to live our lives in any other way is not simply sin, but truly a rejection of our humanity.

The gift of Christmas is to help us recognize what God is trying to carve out of the marble that is us. The problem is that we get in the way of God’s work. We choose to act in ways that prevent God from continuing to mold and shape us. It is not that God could not force the issue; rather, God will never tamper with our free will. Instead He will patiently wait until we are ready for Him to continue the process. How does He help us get back to being molded by Him? He gives us the sacraments—particularly the Eucharist and Confession. The Eucharist is the fuel that energizes us to desire that God be seen through us. As we receive his true Body and Blood, we are strengthened by Christ to grow in relationship with Him and to desire to act as He did. Confession helps us to get back on track when we mess up. All the sacraments in their own way are intended to help us experience Christ and become more grounded in Him.

God’s ultimate goal is that we will recognize the truth of who we are. We are children of the one true King. We were created in his image and likeness, and He wants nothing more than for us to express the reality of how and why we were created. By being open to our true nature, we will not only find ourselves but we will find true joy, peace, hope, and love. And the unconditional love God has for us is revealed through the birth of his Son.

May you truly come to know the gift of Christmas. May you truly come to experience the reality that just as Jesus was God’s gift to the world, so are you—but obviously not in the same way. As God carves and molds your true, inner self—many times hidden through our own intransigence—He displays his handiwork to the world. God is not concerned with who we think we are: He is concerned simply with allowing his work to shine through you. He wants the world to see the person He created you to be. And, in that way we allow Christ to be experienced and revealed anew.

May you experience the gift of Christmas and truly become the gift of Christmas to others.

A very Blessed Christmas to one and all!

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,
Sprinkled in my memory are many moments where I am being extra careful with young ones. I am 14 and babysitting a baby boy, tiptoeing into his room periodically to check on him as he sleeps. I am 17 and driving my younger siblings and their friends home from the movies, going slower than I ever go when it is just me. I am 19 and teaching at summer camp, counting to 10 dozens of times a day, making sure I have all of my kids, etc, etc.

Present in each of these memories is the experience of being acutely aware that other people have trusted me with their children. It is an incredibly powerful feeling: knowing that someone has entrusted to you that which they most care for in the world is at once both honoring and humbling. These memories and feelings return in a flood every time I come to a particular line in one of my favorite poems for this season. It reads, “You came, wearing no more than diapers, and trusting human hands to hold their Maker.” (From “Light Looked Down” by John Bell found in Cloth for the Cradle by the Iona Community)

...trusting human hands to hold their Maker. If I was (and still often am) awed by people trusting me with their children, how much more should we all be awed by the Incarnation. God sent His only Son to be born in a barn in an insignificant village to a poor young girl. He came not as one mighty and powerful, but as a fragile and vulnerable infant ...trusting human hands to hold their Maker. Now, it might be tempting to be relieved that the safekeeping of this baby, who was also God, was given to Mary and not us; caring for ordinary children is enough of a responsibility. However, I believe that Christmas is a beautiful time to pause and reflect on all the ways God has trusted His Son to us.

He has trusted us with His Word, alive and speaking to us in the Scriptures. He is present in the careful passing down of these testaments across centuries, in time spent in study and reflection on these writings, in the reverence given to these sacred texts. He has trusted us with His Spirit, given to us in baptism. He is present in our sharing the Gospel message with those around us, in our seeking to treat others as He would, in our willingness to sacrifice for Love. He has trusted us with the Eucharist, the Real Presence of Christ. He is present in tabernacles throughout the world, in our bodies after receiving Communion, in thrones made of our palms as we say “Amen” to the declaration, “The Body of Christ”...trusting human hands to hold their Maker.

Remember this Christmas season that we have been trusted: trusted by and with the Creator of the Universe to see that His Son is known and loved in this world; trusted to hold our Maker with human hands.

Beyond Gift-Giving and Hallmark Movies

American society has been preaching, even before the season of Advent began, that we are celebrating “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year.” In this ode that follows us whenever we enter a store or turn on the radio, we hear Andy Williams singing, “With the kids jingle belling / And everyone telling you be of good cheer... With those holiday greetings... There'll be parties for hosting... And caroling out in the snow... There'll be much mistletoeing / And hearts will be glowing / When loved ones are near!”

This secular hymn highlights what our Godless world makes of Christmas, which businesses and movies often abbreviate as “Xmas.” Whether this shortened word is about saving space, or rather, for the sake of keeping Christ out of Christmas, we can only speculate—though the letter X actually represents the Greek letter Chi, the first letter of the Greek word Christós, and this fact thwarts those who use “Xmas” to avoid the name of Christ!

What values emanate from “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year”? Certainly, there is some sentimentality of “Christmases long, long ago,” but overwhelmingly the song’s lyrics describe activities associated with the Christmas season. These revolve around family and friends and the love that binds them together. Today, Hallmark movies encapsulate this theme, though largely devoid of any mention of the Savior’s Birth or the Nativity in Bethlehem.

In addition, shopping malls this time of year play such songs as Andy Williams’s hit and others to capitalize (literally!) on gift-giving, the virtue extolled in the months and weeks leading up to the actual Feast of Christmas and start of the Christmas season on December 25th. While generosity and liberality are most certainly good virtues to be taught and practiced, the season of Advent has been exploited into a time of consumerism. In other words, we give and get not only good things but things in excess that no one possibly could enjoy.

Gift-giving and even the love shown and shared amongst family and friends at this time of year only makes sense in light of the true meaning of Christmas, about which we, like Charlie Brown, might ask in desperation: “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?” Linus, we recall with awe, provides the answer, quoting the Bible: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (St. Luke 2:11).

We are happy as we prepare for Christmas in the midst of Advent because God the Father sent His only-begotten Son into the world 2000 years ago in order to save us from eternal damnation. Jesus Christ took on human flesh and ultimately died on the Cross, after which He rose on the third day. We give gifts to those we love because God the Father provided the greatest of all gifts to us, Jesus Christ Whom He loves, for our redemption and sanctification. And, moreover, we express our love for our family and friends by gatherings and well wishes in imitation of the shepherds and gift-bearing magi who traveled to see the Holy Family in the stable of Bethlehem. It is in this context, and only in this context, that we can sing with Andy Williams, “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!”
This year's Christmas collection, as in years past, supports the Clergy Health and Retirement Trust which cares for the health and well-being of our priests in good standing. Our priests have dedicated their lives to serving all of us and those in need, bringing the love and hope of Christ to others so that they may see Him in today's world. Whether it is within our parish communities, or in the community at large, our priests our making a difference each day. When considering a donation to this cause, consider the retired priests from our own parish families who made a positive difference in your life, as this collection is a primary source of funding to care for them. Thank you for your generosity.

Supporting St. Mary and St. John Parishes before 2019 year end with an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

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.
Fourth Sunday of Advent
DECEMBER 22, 2019

Each Advent season, we prepare to welcome Jesus into the inns and stables of our hearts. But Jesus’ coming wasn’t welcomed by everyone with choirs of angels. For St. Joseph, the first coming of Jesus was a bit more complicated. “When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.” For Joseph, opening his heart (and home) to Jesus meant, at best, appearing to all the world like a man who had impregnated his wife out of wedlock. At worst, he appeared a cuckold, raising the child of another man. God doesn’t always appear the way we expect.

For some of us, the birth of Christ is a bit relationally complicated. Perhaps over the past few months, a loved one has died. This Christmas, you’re taking it upon yourself to keep up the traditions and hold the family together. Welcoming Jesus means welcoming grief. Perhaps it’s a difficult relative (or two or three) and it’s all you can do to bite your tongue and swallow your pride while they’re under your roof. Welcoming Jesus means welcoming strife, discord, and tension.

Yet “do not be afraid,” the angel says. Do not be afraid. Why? Because we celebrate the birth of “Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” Before Jesus’ earthly ministry would begin, Jesus would lose his father, Joseph. God is with us in our grief. Wherever Jesus went, he stirred up controversy and faced down challenging personalities. God is with us in our stress. The trick is, like Joseph, to allow supernatural grace to prevail. Joseph was a good man, filled with natural virtue in that he didn’t want to “expose [Mary] to shame.” Yet he was prepared to “divorce her quietly” all the same. Our natural abilities only take us so far. Where is receiving Jesus complicated this Christmas season? Are you relying on your own strength to get you through, or are you truly ready to accept the grace of Emmanuel, God with us?

Merrimack Valley Ringers
Always Different, Always Fun!

We Need A Little Christmas

St. Mary Church
SATURDAY, JANUARY 4TH . 7 PM

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 WWME 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, a marriage clinic, or group sensitivity, but rather 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. For more information, please call: 1-800-710-WWME, or visit the web site at www.wwmema.org, or for a more local resource, please feel free to contact St. John Parishioners Jerry and Julie Wright at (781) 249-3199 or Jerryjuliewright@gmail.com.

~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

CHELMSFORD RESIDENTS ONLY!

Boy Scout Troop 70 Christmas Tree Pick Up

Pick up dates:
- December 28th
- January 4th
- January 5th
- January 11th

For more information and/or to register for a pick-up, visit us at www.troopseventy.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 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
12:30 pm: In Thanksgiving for the Umunna Family
TUE, DEC 24 9:00 am: Agnes and Fred Johnson: Memorial
THU, DEC 26 9:00 am: Nat Serra: Memorial
SAT, DEC 28 4:00 pm: For the People of the Parish
SUN, DEC 29 8:30 am: Henry and Gertrude LaBelle: Memorial
10:30 am: Curran, Belke, Johnson and Finlay Families: Memorial

St. Mary

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
MON, DEC 23 7:00 am: Simone Kijanka: 8th Anniversary
FRI, DEC 27 7:00 am: Marguerite Farley: Memorial
SAT, DEC 28 4:00 pm: For the People of the Parish
SUN, DEC 29 9:00 am: Estelle Decker: 18th Month Anniversary
11:00 am: Robert Clark: Memorial Mass
6:00 pm: Ralph E. Barisano, Sr: Memorial

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.

If someone 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 Wishes and Special Intentions for Patty McElaney

This week’s St. Mary Rose for Life:
Happy Birthday Wishes to John Patrick McElaney

Roses Provided by Mahoney’s Garden Center

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

TUESDAY, DEC 24
2Samuel 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16
Psalm 89
Luke 1: 67-79

SUNDAY, DEC 29
1 John 1: 5-1-2-2
Psalm 124
Matthew 2: 13-18

MERRY CHRISTMAS

MONDAY, DEC 23
Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24
Psalm 25
Luke 1: 57-66

WEDNESDAY, DEC 25
1 John 1: 1-4
Psalm 97
John 20: 1-8

SATURDAY, DEC 28
Acts 6: 8-10; 7: 54-59
Psalm 31
Matthew 10: 17-22

SUNDAY, DEC 29
Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14
Psalm 128
Colossians 3: 12-21
Matthew 2: 13-15, 19-23

FUNDRAISERS RECENTLY CELEBRATED

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

Rosemary Ammirault December 14 at St. John

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Rosemary Ammirault December 14 at St. John
Gerald W. Hussey of N. Chelmsford

Gerald Winthrop Hussey, 83, a long-time resident of N. Chelmsford, MA died early Tuesday, October 29, 2019 at his home surrounded by his loving family after a long illness.

He was married to Joy Ann (Aveni) Hussey with whom they celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary on October 5, 2019.

Born in Fitchburg, MA, he was the son of the late Jesse J. and Frances M. (Sheppard) Hussey. He graduated from Townsend High School in 1954.

Mr. Hussey proudly served with the U.S. Navy, aboard the USS Destroyer Daly DD519 during the Korean War.

He worked at Raytheon for 28 years, followed by 15 years at Plastic Design, Inc. in N. Chelmsford.

Following retirement he began a selfless mission of collecting and returning recyclable bottles & cans for the sole purpose of gifting the proceeds to his grandchildren upon their graduation. He was a foster parent during the earlier family years. He was an avid fisherman and member of the SFH&FC in Townsend. He was a communicant of St. John the Evangelist Church of N. Chelmsford.

Besides his wife, he was survived by his sons Gerald Hussey II and his wife Jo, Gregory and his wife Susan, Teresa and her husband Jeffrey Sherwin; a sister, Judith Fontaine; 7 grandchildren; and 3 great-grandchildren.

He was the brother of the late Jesse J. Hussey, Frances Laitinen and Sharon Jones. He was predeceased by a great grandson.

His visitation was on Sat., Nov. 2, 2019 from 9:30 AM to 10:30AM at the DOLAN FUNERAL HOME, 106 MIDDLESEX ST. CHELMSFORD, MA. A Funeral Mass followed at 11:00 AM at St. John the Evangelist Church in N. Chelmsford. Burial in Heart Pond Cemetery, Chelmsford. In lieu of flowers, please consider performing an act of kindness. Share your pay-it-forward act of kindness experience at createjoy1234@gmail.com so we can honor Gerry knowing his spirit lives on as you spread goodwill. Online guest book is available at www.dolanfuneralhome.com. ARRANGEMENTS BY DOLAN FUNERAL HOME 978-256-4040.