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

**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

**Reconciliation**
- Saturday • 3:00 - 3:45 PM
  or by appointment

**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

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 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

- **Monday, December 30 •**
  Matthew Bible Study • resumes January 6, 2020

- **Tuesday, December 31 •**
  NEW YEARS EVE • Parish Offices Close at 12:30 pm Today
  Epic Bible Study • resumes January 7, 2020

- **Wednesday, January 1 •**
  NEW YEARS DAY • Parish Offices Closed Today
  Solemnity of Mary • Masses at 7 am and 7 pm

- **Thursday, January 2 •**
  Rosary • 12:00 - 1:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel
  Adoration • Suspended for New Year’s Break

- **Friday, January 3 •**
  Adoration • Suspended for New Year’s Break
  Knitting and Crocheting • Cancelled this week
  Baptism Preparation • 7:00 pm • PC MR 5

- **Saturday, January 4 •**
  Catholic Men’s Group • 7:45-8:45 am • PC MR 2
  9:00 Mass at St. John this week
  Table Ministry • 9:00 am - 12 noon • Kitchen
  Adoration • Suspended for New Year’s Break
  Reconciliation • 11:00 am - 12 noon • Church
  Music Ministry Rehearsals • 2:30 - 4:00 pm • Conf Room B
  Anointing of the Sick, following 4 pm Mass • Church
  Merrimack Valley Ringers Concert • 7:00 pm • Church

- **Sunday, January 5 •**
  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
  Parish Council Meeting • 7:00 pm • PC Conf Room 1

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**holiday office closure**

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

**St. Mary Table Ministry**

Please consider a donation of canned ham, canned corn, canned green beans, regular drip coffee, or juice mix.

Donations are most welcome the first Saturday of EVERY month.

Please leave this month’s donations at the kitchen door in the hall **NEXT Saturday, January 4th** before or after the 4 pm Mass.

**You are a child of God. You are wonderfully made, dearly loved, and precious in His sight.**

—Psalm 139

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**CAUTION**

**COLD & FLU SEASON**

As we enter the season of colds, flus and viruses, we encourage parishioners to exercise discretion in shaking hands at the Sign of Peace when they are either recovering from, have been exposed to, or are afraid that they may be coming down with an illness… if they have concerns about the strength of their own immune system in resisting disease. A friendly smile, wave and/or slight shake of the head is always an acceptable substitute in wintertime.
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God  
Holy Day of Obligation

**Tuesday, December 31**  
St. John at 5 pm

**Wednesday, January 1**  
St. Mary at 7 am & 7 pm  
St. John at 9 am

This year marks the 127th Anniversary of St. John the Evangelist Parish!

**Est. January 1, 1893**

- First Mass celebrated in present building on October 20, 1963
- Dedicated by His Eminence Richard Cardinal Cushing on November 13, 1963
- Rectory & Parish Center built in 1980
- New Parish Center built in 2009
- Collaborated with St. Mary’s in June, 2015

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

St. John Calendar

- **Sunday, December 29**  
  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

- **Monday, December 30**  
  Adoration • Suspended for New Year’s Break  
  Families with Addiction Support Group • CANCELLED

- **Tuesday, December 31**  
  NEW YEARS EVE: Parish Offices Close at 12:30 pm Today  
  Solemnity of Mary Eve • Mass at 5:00 pm  
  Adoration • Suspended for New Year’s Break

- **Wednesday, January 1**  
  NEW YEARS DAY: Parish Offices Closed Today  
  Solemnity of Mary • Mass at 9:00 am  
  Adoration • Suspended for New Year’s Break

- **Thursday, January 2**  
  BINGO • 6:45 pm (doors open at 3:00 pm) • Hall

- **Friday, January 3**  
  Nocturnal Adoration • Fri, 9:30 am - Sat, 9:00 am • OPC Chapel  
  African Community Rosary • 6:30 pm • Library

- **Saturday, January 4**  
  Daily Mass at 9:00 am  
  Reconciliation • 3:00 - 3:45 pm • Church

- **Sunday, January 5**  
  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

St. John’s First Friday Nocturnal Adoration will begin THIS Friday, January 4th, following the 9 am Mass, and will continue through Saturday morning.

You can show up at any time. If you would like to commit to an hour, contact Joe at joseph.ricciardi@gmail.com.
Q: Is Mass boring?
A. I guess this would depend on your perspective. My answer is ‘no!’ I really do not find Mass boring, particularly considering what happens every time Mass is celebrated. God comes to be with us. He talks to us through the readings. Think about it: you go to Mass and you get to hear God! That is truly awesome! God also strengthens and nourishes us when we receive the Eucharist. Each time we go to Mass we experience a true miracle. Bread and wine are transformed into the very body and blood of Christ. As Catholics this is not some mere symbol. Rather, we must believe that God changes the very substance of the bread and wine into Jesus’ body and blood. It is the Bread of Eternal Life and the Chalice of Salvation. How could this ever be boring?!

Q. What is your favorite part of the Mass?
A. Hands down and without any need to think about it—the Eucharistic Prayer! And it is because of what happens when this prayer is said. The word “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word meaning “to give thanks.” The Eucharistic Prayer, then, is a prayer of blessing and thanksgiving, corresponding to Christ’s blessing of the bread and wine. In this prayer, which is the high point of the entire celebration, we celebrate and are invited to experience in faith the very mystery of salvation. We are united to Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension and the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. What we pray for is not simply the transformation of bread and wine into the very body and blood of Christ: as we enter into this prayer, we are united in heart, mind, and voice with the heavenly host, crying out to the Father, “Holy! Holy! Holy!” As the prayer ascends to the Father, He hears the voice of his beloved one, Jesus Christ, and responds. We ask the Father to pour forth the Holy Spirit (epiclesis) so that our human gifts of bread and wine become Christ’s body and blood. Christ’s own words are solemnly repeated: “This is my body… this is my blood.” And our God responds by sending the Holy Spirit down upon our gifts.

We are now not only in the presence of God, but also in the very heart of the eternal God. For the Church, this prayer opens us to eternity and, therefore, unites us to Christ’s very act of salvation—his self-offering on the cross. We make memory (anamnesis) as Christ commanded us, but in a way that brings the death and resurrection of Christ and its fruits into our here-and-now. In making this prayer, we unite ourselves to the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. With this one offering of Christ to the Father, we empty ourselves of all that is not of God. This is possible because we now pray that not only the gifts of bread and wine be transformed, but that we, too, will be transformed into the Body of Christ.

St. John the Evangelist
Old Parish Center Chapel
Weekly:
Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays
9:30 - 11:30 am
Monthly:
First Friday Nocturnal Adoration
Begins 1st Friday following 9 am Mass; concludes at 9am on Saturday
Last 3 Wednesdays of the Month
6:30 - 8:30 pm

Why do we go to Adoration?
Maybe better put, why do we adore God? The simple and obvious answer... because he is God and we’re his creations. It’s a unique and basic form of prayer.
God doesn’t need our adoration.
We’re the ones who benefit from this prayer form because it sets our relationship with Him in its proper order and, at the same time, deepens the personal relationship we can have with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

St. Mary
Parish Center Chapel
Weekly:
Thursdays 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Fridays 7:30 am - 9:00 pm
Saturday 9:30 am - 3:00 pm

A Special Evening of Adoration
Wednesday, January 8
7:00 - 8:00 pm St. John Church
This evening is planned as an event for our Faith Formation Families, but open to ALL!
It will begin with a presentation on Adoration, followed by periods of silence, accompanied by live acoustic music.
A similar event was held at St. Mary’s back in November and was a beautiful, faith-filled experience for all who attended.
Feast of the Holy Family

The Feast of the Holy Family is not just about the Holy Family, but about our own families too. The main purpose of the Feast is to present the Holy Family as the model for all Christian families, and for domestic life in general. Our family life becomes sanctified when we live the life of the Church within our homes. This is called the “domestic church” or the “church in miniature.” St. John Chrysostom urged all Christians to make each home a “family church,” and in doing so, we sanctify the family unit. Just how does one live out the Church in the family? The best way is by making Christ the center of family and individual life. Ways to do this include: reading scripture regularly, praying daily, attending Mass at least on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, imitating the actions of the Holy Family, going to confession frequently, and so forth, all done together as a family unit.

The Holy Family feast is a good time to remember the family unit and pray for our human and spiritual families. We also may take this feast to reflect on the value and sanctity of the family unit, and to evaluate our own family life. What ways may it be improved? What would Jesus, Mary, and Joseph do?

The family is the most essential space for the formation of values and character. Practicing your faith as a family can happen both internally and externally. Consistent prayer together builds habits that can last a lifetime. With younger children, praying together as a family in the evening or at dinnertime could be fairly doable most nights. In the evening, select a few common prayers such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, or Guardian Angel prayer. Ask each of your children to thank God for three things that day and include a time for children and adults alike to pray out loud for special needs in your family. This practice could be done with older children, committed to intentional efforts in the midst of increasingly busy schedules.

Look for other opportunities to practice the faith outside the home as well. Sunday Mass is hopefully already a part of your family’s weekly routine. Consider setting other monthly goals as well. This could be a family service project in your city, attending the sacrament of Confession together, or hosting a hospitality night in your home. Get your children involved in the planning process. Ask them where they’d like to volunteer or who they think is having a hard time and might need a special night just for them. Rather than simply imposing new practices, your whole family can have a dynamic role understanding and integrating faith and life.

Finally, we can use this feast to ask ourselves what we are doing to promote the family within our own cultures, neighborhoods, and communities.

Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative announces two upcoming ACTS® Retreats

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.

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

Registration forms can be found at the entrances of both churches or can be downloaded from our website.
WWW.CHELMSFORDCATHOLIC.ORG: Click on Parish Life, then choose ACTS from the left hand side bar.
ST. MARY 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 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 • rolls of scotch tape • small glue sticks • hand sanitizer • quart-size zip storage bags

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

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.

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.
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.

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. 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.

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.
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 ...

- **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
The other day, when I walked into the rectory chapel, our seminarian Andrew John was sitting and praying. On his lap was my cat Harry, sprawled over his lap and purring away. It was clear that he was quite happy and content where he was, and so I tried not to disturb either of them. But as soon as I sat down, Harry noticed me and immediately jumped down from Andrew’s lap, came over to me, and jumped onto my lap. After he made himself comfortable, he started purring all over again. I felt kind of bad and apologized to Andrew John; I did not mean for the cat to move.

Harry, of course, is like most cats: he has a mind of his own. He clearly enjoyed being with Andrew John, but Harry is really very much my cat. When I go on vacation and I am gone too long, he will start eating less. He doesn’t like it when I am not around, and though he is not on me all the time, he likes to be near me. In the morning he will come looking for me in the chapel, and he will either hang out there or come directly onto my lap. He knows very much what he wants—and what he wants is me!

God is like that too. God knows very much what he wants—and what He wants is you! Just think about what God has done for you to show you how true this is. God chose to create you. You were not an accident, nor were you just like one of the many other people God created. God creates each person uniquely and with deliberation. In the moment that God spoke your name and brought you into creation, He called you into a relationship with Him. Your relationship with God is singular and special. In all of human history no one is exactly like you, and God truly revels in the wonder that is you.

When we think of the great things God has done throughout human/salvation history, we can so easily see it in the aggregate. We learned that Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary and in that moment our God became incarnate (Jesus being fully God and fully human). We listened to His words as He came forth to proclaim the Gospel, the Kingdom. We believe He suffered, died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. It is so easy to look at these events and not see them as a personal invitation to us. Rather, we look at them as events by which Jesus came to save all humanity. That, of course, is certainly true, but He did not come to save humanity in the aggregate, but in the particular. Jesus came to save you—personally! God created you so that you might know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world and be happy with Him in the next.

God created you because He wants a relationship with you—one that is loving and truly intimate. He is not a God who is simply out there, somewhere beyond our reach. He resides right in your soul and in your heart. In your baptism you were united as one with Christ, and so the Holy Spirit dwells in your heart. You are now a living temple of the Lord. Your God walks with you each and every day. Your God desires to communicate with you in order that you might know Him more fully and come to know yourself better.

All that God has done since the beginning of time is prepare for the relationship He desires to have with you. The question is, are you ready to have a relationship with God? Are you ready to be claimed by God as one of his own?

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.  
1 Peter 2:9

Are you ready to be one of the chosen? Are you ready to embrace that royal priesthood? Are you ready to announce His praises everywhere? Are you ready to walk always in the light?

God is ready for you! God desires you! God loves you unconditionally! God only asks that you desire to embrace a relationship with Him and make it the foundation of how you live. As we prepare to enter into a new year, it is a good time to stop and look critically at our lives. It is a time to ask some important questions. What am I truly living for? What are my innermost desires? Where do I put most of my efforts? Where do I put my best effort? Where do I spend most of my time? What is usually foremost in my mind?

The answers to these and similar questions will tell you what is really most important to you—what it is you truly want in life.

God truly knows what He wants—and what He wants is you! The real question then is, do you want God as much as God wants you?

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,
As a child, I loved Christmas. Growing up in a very loud and hectic home, Christmas was one of the few ‘moments’ that I was able to find peace. I would get up in the middle of the night, turn on the tree lights (or the rotating color wheel for those years that we owned a Silver Tinsel Christmas Tree), lie on the floor and just be. I would get lost in my thoughts, none of which come to mind today. But I DO know that they were thoughts of love, kindness and goodness; of good days, distant dreams and a future happiness. I would wake up a few hours later, turn off the lights, and quietly head back to bed before my peace could be interrupted by the blare of the awakening new day. This was my modus operandi for many, many Christmases; a personal tradition that I once held near and dear to my heart.

Tradition is very important to many of us. Yet, even though we hold it as such, we sometimes just get too busy or too tired to keep up with them. So we—or at least, I—slowly fall away from them, and in the process, squelch the spirit and misplace the “memories of days past” that once fueled all the excitement.

This year is a first for me. My oldest son is only able to be home for the Christmas holiday for a mere two days. Of those two days, one will be spent with his fiancé, Ali, and her family, so my time with him will be limited. Nathan is HUGE into tradition and family, making him a pure sentimentalist, so if I get only one day with him, I better turn up my game and be open to the beginning of something new.

So here it is, December 20th… less than a week away from Christmas, and still no Christmas tree, no gifts purchased, and only a partially planned menu for the small and intimate Christmas Eve festivities. But all will be well, because Christ is at the center of it all, and His light will shine forth and through any shadow that my fatigue and forgotten memories may cast. And the lights on the tree (or the rotating color wheel for the new Silver Tinsel Christmas tree I just purchased… for PURELY sentimental reasons) will be turned on in the wee hours of the morning; and there I will, once again, find my childhood peace. This peace, I wish for all of you!

Here’s to creating NEW traditions and resurrecting OLD ones.

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Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased!

“What is the true meaning of Christmas?” If you were to ask enough people this question, you would probably get a whole range of answers. Christmas means so many things to so many people.

Some would say that Christmas is about helping their fellow man. Because Jesus was born into a poor, lowly state, Christmas means giving to the less fortunate, who, like Jesus, do not have the financial advantages of others. Then, there are those who would say that Christmas is really about ensuring good will among all peoples. Since Jesus is the Savior of the World, the true meaning of Christmas is doing all we can to promote and create understanding and acceptance of all people, regardless of their race, beliefs, or national origin. It is part of our Christian calling.

I would like to offer my definition of the true meaning of Christmas: it is about love. It is a love story about how God loves mankind with a love that will never be matched. Everything that happened on the night of Jesus’ birth has to do with love.

On a human level, it is a love story about a husband and wife. Joseph loved Mary so much that he would go to any length to protect her and care for her. Joseph was willing to do all that he could to guard and protect his espoused wife so that she could bring forth the savior.

Christmas is a story about the love of a mother for her child. No human has been as devoted to Jesus as his mother. Mary loved her child Jesus so much that she was willing to face possible death and certain alienation to fulfill her calling to be the Mother of God. No one would know Jesus better than his Mother Mary.

Christmas as a love story can be witnessed in the shepherds’ awe and wonder when the multitude of angels appeared to them. The shepherds were told the good news by an angel, and they knew the sense of love, wonder, and praise that the Christ Child deserved and ran to the manger to worship him.

The greatest revelation of Christmas as a love story is God’s love for all mankind. It is that love that God has for mankind that had Him enter time and space and become a man in the person of Jesus Christ. As the Bible says, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. To give oneself so completely as to share the very nature of man is truly the highest form of love. God loved us so much that He was willing to humble himself and become one of us. That is the most amazing love story.

But, then, we are talking about the true meaning of Christmas. Why would God do that? He would do it out of love, but the true end and purpose is salvation. God loved us so much that He came to save us; there is the true meaning of Christmas. If we look at all the love in the Christmas story, we will discover the true meaning of Christmas.

God blesses us on this holy night by loving us so much that He came to redeem us. What better form of giving? What better form of peace and harmony? What better form of love?

*Wishing each and every one of you a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year!*
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.
Happy New Year, but Wait! It’s still Christmas!!!!

Catholics in England, during the period from 1558 to 1829 (when Parliament finally emancipated Catholics in England), were prohibited from ANY practice of their faith by law – private or public. It was a crime to BE a Catholic.

“The Twelve Days of Christmas” was written in England as one of the “catechism songs” to help young Catholics learn the tenets of their faith – a memory aid, when to be caught with anything in “writing” indicating adherence to the Catholic faith could not only get you imprisoned, it could get you hanged, drawn and quartered, or shortened by a head. The song’s gifts are hidden meanings to the teachings of the faith. The “true love” mentioned in the song doesn’t refer to an earthly suitor, but to God Himself. The “me” who receives the presents refers to every baptized person. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus.

In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge which feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, much in memory of the expression of Christ’s sadness over the fate of Jerusalem… “How often would I have sheltered you under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but you would not have it so.”

The other symbols mean the following:

2 turtle doves: the old and new testaments
3 French hens: faith, hope, and charity (the theological virtues)
4 calling birds: the four gospels and/or the four evangelists
5 golden rings: the first five books of the old testament
6 geese a-laying: the six days of creation
7 swans a-swimming: the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and/or the seven sacraments
8 maids a-milking: the eight beatitudes
9 ladies dancing: the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit
10 lords a-leaping: the ten commandments
11 pipers piping: the eleven faithful apostles
12 drummers drumming: the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles’ Creed

1 I believe in One God, the Father the Almighty, 2 Creator of heaven and earth. 3 I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, 4 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; 5 born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, 6 was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. 7 On the third day he arose again in fulfillment of the scripture. 8 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. 9 I believe in the Holy Spirit, 10 the holy Catholic church, 11 the communion of saints, 12 the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.
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 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, Belken, Johnson
10:30 am: Finlay Families: Memorial
MON, DEC 30 9:00 am: Robert and Paul Cole: Memorial
THU, JAN 2 9:00 am: Liz Kent: Memorial
SAT, JAN 4 4:00 pm: Maurice Pontbriant: 7th Anniversary
SUN, JAN 5 8:30 am: For the People of the Parish
10:30 am: J. Edward Clancy: 7th Anniversary

St. Mary

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
TUE, DEC 31 7:00 am: Joseph Quinn: Memorial
FRI, JAN 3 7:00 am: Norah Venning: 13th Anniversary
SAT, JAN 4 4:00 pm: William Watt: 2nd Anniversary
SUN, JAN 5 9:00 am: For the People of the Parish
11:00 am: Kathie Nisco: 41st Anniversary

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.

FUNERALS

RECENTLY CELEBRATED

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

Anna Flavia Prabhy December 21 at St. Mary
Frank Huber December 28 at St. Mary

St. Mary Memorial Altar Flowers

Roses Provided by Mahoney’s Garden Center

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

“MONDAY, DEC 30”
1 John 2: 12-17
Psalm 96
Luke 2: 36-40

“TUESDAY, DEC 31”
1 John 2: 18-21
Psalm 96
John 1: 1-18

“WEDNESDAY, JAN 1”
Numbers 6: 22-27
Psalm 67
Luke 2: 16-21

“THURSDAY, JAN 2”
1 John 2: 22-28
Psalm 98
John 1: 19-28

“FRIDAY, JAN 3”
1 John 2: 29-3:6
Psalm 98
John 1: 29-34

“SATURDAY, JAN 4”
1 John 3: 7-10
Psalm 98
John 1: 35-42

“SUNDAY, JAN 5”
Isaiah 60: 1-6
Psalm 72
Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6
Matthew 2: 1-12
Maureen E. Bell, a lifelong resident of Chelmsford

Maureen Elizabeth Bell, 65, a lifelong resident of Chelmsford, MA died Sunday, Nov. 10, 2019 at her home.

She was married to the late Richard Bell.

Born in Lowell, MA, she was the daughter of Wesley Harper of Chelmsford and the late Catherine Harper.

Maureen graduated from Chelmsford High School with the class of 1972, and Middlesex Community College with an associate degree in Medical Coding. She retired in 2017 from Edith Nourse Veterans Hospital in Bedford, MA.

She was a communicant of St. John the Evangelist Church.

Maureen loved her cats and her dog. She enjoyed traveling, spending time at the beach and with friends at Stony Brook Sportsman Club in Westford. Maureen always had an eye for fashion and appreciated a good wardrobe.

Besides her father, she is survived by her son, Wes McEnany of Somerville, MA; three step grandchildren, Sara, Grant and Garrett Hillard; brothers, Tim and his wife Deborah Harper of Lowell, MA, and Jack and his wife Laura Harper of Dracut, MA; sisters, Julie and her husband, Jonathan Podgorni of Dunstable, MA, Kathy and her husband Neil Robinson of Westford, MA, Laurie and her husband Rick Finnegan of Sudbury, MA, and Joan and her husband Chris Jones of Chelmsford; and many nieces and nephews.

She was the sister of the late David Harper and Dennis Harper.

Family and friends were respectfully invited to attend her Funeral, Friday, November 15, 2019 at 10AM from the DOLAN FUNERAL HOME, 106 MIDDLESEX ST., CHELMSFORD, MA, with a funeral Mass at 11AM at St. John the Evangelist Church, Chelmsford. Burial in Fairview Cemetery, Chelmsford. Online guest book is available at www.dolanfuneralhome.com. ARRANGEMENTS BY DOLAN FUNERAL HOME 978-256-4040.