

# ST. MARY'S CHURCH

14833 Kutztown Road - Kutztown, PA 19530

[www.StMarysKutztown.com](http://www.StMarysKutztown.com) [www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown](http://www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown)

Church, Business Offices, Meeting Rooms and Parish Office:

Phone: (610) 683-7443 - Fax: (610) 683-7625

Email: [StMarysKtown@ptd.net](mailto:StMarysKtown@ptd.net)

Religious Education Center: (610) 683-6454



## PASTORAL MINISTRY

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Pastor  | Rev. Msgr. Walter T. Scheaffer |
| Permanent Deacon                              | Dcn. James Russo               |
| Pastoral Assistant                            | Sr. Marie Clark, MSC           |
| Coordinator of Religious Education            | Mrs. Ann Pergosky              |
| Coordinator of R.C.I.C.                       | Mrs. Carol Bogansky            |
| Coordinator of Home-Based Religious Education | Mrs. Ann Pergosky              |
| Director of Music Ministry                    | Mrs. Anne Sitarik              |
| Parish Secretary                              | Mrs. Anne Sitarik              |

## PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

|                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Baptismal Preparation      | Mrs. Ann Pergosky     |
| Building Committee         | Msgr. Scheaffer       |
| Faith Justice Committee    | Mrs. Barbe Fogarty    |
| Finance Committee          | Msgr. Scheaffer       |
| Ladies Auxiliary           | Mrs. Loretta Augustin |
| Liturgy Committee          | Msgr. Scheaffer       |
| Men of St. Mary's          | Mr. Tom Cengeri       |
| Pastoral Council           | Msgr. Scheaffer       |
| Pro-Life Committee         | Mr. John Tucker, O.P. |
| R.C.I.A                    | Msgr. Scheaffer       |
| Scripture Study            | Msgr. Scheaffer       |
| Small Faith Sharing Groups | Mrs. Dottie Boyle     |

## DIOCESAN INFORMATION

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator: | Wendy S. Krisak<br>Direct Telephone: (800) 791-9209                          |
| Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator:  | Sister Meg Cole, S.S.J., M.S.,<br>LMFT, Telephone (610) 332-0442<br>xt. 2019 |

## LITURGIES

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Sunday         | 9:00, 11:00 AM |
| Saturday Vigil | 4:30 PM        |
| Daily Masses   | 8:15 AM        |

## ADORATION

First Friday of the Month, 2PM-4PM  
Third Wednesday of the Month, 7-8 PM

**SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM** - Third Sunday of the month at 11AM Liturgy, except during Lent. Baptismal Prep Class required.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION** - Saturday, 4:05 to 4:25 PM, before Masses, or by appointment.

**SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK** - Call the Rectory to make arrangements.

**SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY** - Contact the Rectory one year in advance. Couples must attend the Marriage Preparation Program or Engaged Encounter.

**CERTIFICATES** - Parishioners in full Communion with the Catholic Church may submit requests to receive sponsorship certificates (for the Rites of Baptism and Confirmation). Please allow two weeks to process requests. One is required:

- to attend Mass regularly.
- to have celebrated the Sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation.
- Married individuals should be validly married in the Catholic Church.

**HOMEBOUND** - Call the Rectory to arrange visitations, made once a month by a Priest and at other times by a Eucharistic Minister.

**HOSPITALIZED** - Call the Rectory to notify of someone in the hospital so we can pray for and possibly visit him or her. Each hospital in our Diocesan boundaries is either covered by a local parish or has a priest on staff at the hospital.

**PARISH MEMBERSHIP** - Welcome to St. Mary's Parish. Please register for Parish membership by calling the Business office. Please inform us if you are moving.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION** - Please call the business office for more information:

### *Center-based*

- Levels Pre-K to 5 meet every week, Sunday mornings.
- Jr. High and Sr. High meet every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday evening.

### *Home-based*

- Families share faith at home and come together several times a year.



Rejoice in God

Third Sunday of Advent, December 17, 2017

## Third Sunday of Advent, December 17, 2017

|     |       |        |                                  |
|-----|-------|--------|----------------------------------|
| Mon | 12-18 | 8:15a  | Marek Starosciak                 |
| Tue | 12-19 | 8:15a  | Souls in Purgatory               |
| Wed | 12-20 | 8:15a  | Celeste Keller                   |
| Thu | 12-21 | 8:15a  | Edward and MaryAnne Guzowski     |
| Fri | 12-22 | 8:15a  | Souls in Purgatory               |
| Sat | 12-23 | 4:30p  | Memory of Msgr. Immanuel Vernon  |
| Sun | 12-24 | 9:00a  | For the Parish                   |
|     |       | 11:00a | Giuseppe Longo                   |
|     |       | 4:30p  | Parishioners, Family and Friends |
|     |       | 10:30p | Parishioners, Family and Friends |

### READING and CELEBRATIONS for the WEEK

|     |       |   |
|-----|-------|---|
| Mon | 12-18 | Jr 23:5-8; Mt 1:18-25                               |
| Tue | 12-19 | Jg 13:2-7, 24-25a; Lk 1:5-25                        |
| Wed | 12-20 | Is 7:10-14; Lk 1:26-38                              |
| Thu | 12-21 | Sgs 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a; Lk 1:39-45              |
| Fri | 12-22 | 1 Sm 1:24-28; Lk 1:46-56                            |
| Sat | 12-23 | Mal 3:1-4, 23-24; Lk 1:57-66                        |
| Sun | 12-24 | 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Ro 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38 |

| Collection Info from  | Income   | Expenses  |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------|
| Regular Collection    | 4,555.26 | 11,809.43 |
| Building Fund         | 1,500.00 |           |
| Capital Campaign      | 170.00   |           |
| Other Regular Income  | 123.00   |           |
| Parish Partnership    | 45.00    |           |
| Immaculate Conception | 1,272.25 |           |
| Retired Religious     | 2,027.00 |           |

*To sponsor altar flowers in memory of a loved one call the parish office*

### *Please Pray for the Sick, and their loved ones:*

|                      |                       |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Mary Sue Arnold      | Chloe Flowers         | Joceline Maldonado    |
| Sylvia Austermilller | Jim Fry               | Kail Maynard          |
| Barbara Bellus       | Sue Fry               | Barry & Sharon Miller |
| Mary Beth Benedict   | Eric Lee George       | Elaine O. Miller      |
| Betty Bennett        | Sandra George         | Loretta Montagner     |
| Thomas Bennett       | Garrett Goebel        | Nikolette Nolte       |
| Alayna Biltcliff     | Jim Goebel            | Dorothy Opilla        |
| Sande Blankenbiller  | Ken Gorski            | Joanne O'Connell      |
| Kayla Brown          | Marlow Graff          | Kathleen Parker       |
| June Bruno           | Jacqueline Hartz      | Norma Roche           |
| Ed Caffrey           | Linda Haurus          | Michelle Rodriguez    |
| Nadia Cahill         | Philip J. Haurus      | Dawn Rosales          |
| Meaghan Clark        | Hayduk, Hannah        | Nina Hertzog Rundle   |
| Frank Daddona        | Walter Heller         | Richard Rusconi       |
| Kolby Jos. Doerr     | Kathy Henry           | Mary Rutkosky         |
| Christine Dougherty  | Jane Hughes           | Dannielle Sands       |
| Annabeth Rose Ebert  | Joan Hullinger        | Karen Schinski        |
| Dave Ebling          | Allison Marie Innella | Rev. James Schlegel   |
| Mandy Engleman       | Lillian Karch         | Mark Sidler           |
| Floyd Falcone        | Robert Klucharich     | Faye Smith            |
| Helen Falcone        | Henry Kryeski         | William Stadalnik     |
| Patricia Farabaugh   | Christopher Lengner   | Amy Turko             |
| Orchid Fajardo       | Edward & Rosemary Law | Paul Vasko            |
| Jeannette Fayewicz   | Julie Lindsey         | Randall Vresko        |
| Niki Ferrizzi        | Gloria Maturi         | Susan Wechezak        |
| Kathleen Fink        |                       |                       |
| Ruth Fitterling      |                       |                       |

*To update the prayer list, please contact [stmarysec@ptd.net](mailto:stmarysec@ptd.net)*

| THIS WEEK             |                                | NEXT WEEK                       |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>MUSIC MINISTRY</b> |                                |                                 |
| 4:30                  | Gralinski, Jim<br>Casey, Peggy | DeWald, Heather<br>Casey, Peggy |
| 9:00                  | Spanier, Amelia<br>Lazar, Anne | Sitarik, Anne<br>Cebenko, Steve |
| Youth                 | None                           | Spanier, Julia                  |
| 11:00                 | Henry, Kathy<br>Klopp, Tom     | Pirnot, Tom<br>Talarico, Tim    |

| EXTRAORDINARY EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| 4:30                                | Arnold, Ellen<br>Arnold, Vince<br>Bennett, Jane<br>Gralinski, Robyn<br>Hadnagy, Muriel<br>Stadalnik, Arlene | Arentz, Bill<br>Arentz, Stephanie<br>Osenbach, Carol<br>Shurilla, Donna<br>Zawaly, Joe<br>Zawaly, Sue |
| 9:00                                | Coco, Joe<br>DelRio, Michael<br>Gray, Bob<br>Pangrazi, Dana<br>Pergosky, Ann<br>Spanier, Amelia             | Cengeri, Tom<br>Kokinda, Jeff<br>Otruba, Pam<br>Quinn, Devin<br>Quinn, John<br>Snyder, Pat            |
| 11:00                               | Augustin, Loretta<br>Hosterman, Ed<br>Hosterman, Eileen<br>Jones, John<br>Neumann, Sue<br>?                 | Cook, Brad<br>Pirnot, Ann<br>Sitarik, Tim<br>Thomas, Daniel<br>Wanner, Theresa<br>?                   |

| LECTOR MINISTRY |   |                                      |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 4:30            | c-Sosik, Carm<br>l- Zawaly, Patty       | c-Schmura, JoAnn<br>l-Osenbach, Anne |
| 9:00            | c-Kniss, Sylvia<br>l-DeWald, Casey Lynn | c-Pettit, Bill<br>l-Mehlretter, J.   |
| 11:00           | c-Thomas, Daniel<br>l-Brooks, Michael   | c-Kopchick, Karin<br>l-Thomas, Cathy |

| ALTAR SERVER |  |  |
|--------------|--|--|
| 4:30         | Beals, Juliet<br>Pritchard, Jessica<br>?               | Alaimo, Emmanuela<br>O'Reilly, Luke<br>Stitzel, Amaris |
| 9:00         | Skoronski, Thomas<br>Skoronski, Zachary<br>Touch, Lola | Cebenko, Bohdie<br>Cebenko, Steven<br>Skoronski, Mary  |
| 11:00        | Fortna, Jacob<br>Fullington, Jesse<br>?                | Cook, Celeste<br>Gow, William<br>Schmerhorn, M         |

| GREETERS |             |                   |
|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 4:30     | ?           | O'Reilly Family   |
| 9:00     | Youth Mass  | Pangrazi, Family  |
| 11:00    | Kern Family | Schmerhorn family |

| 9:00A-CHILDREN'S LITUGY of the WORD |            |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Leader                              | ~NONE~     | Phillips, Rita   |
| Reader                              | Youth Mass | Phillips, Makala |

| ROSARY LEADER - SATURDAY |               |                   |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 4:05                     | Zettle, Steve | Arentz, Stephanie |

### EVENTS THIS WEEK

Sun 12.17 **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
 Return Soup Kitchen donations today  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Collection - Parish Partnership  
 Breakfast served, 9-11a  
Youth Mass, Level 6 Enrollment, 9a  
 Decorate church, after 11a Mass  
 Communal Penance service, 4p  
 Senior High ministry, 6:30p

Mon 12.18 Be My Witness meeting, 7p

Tue 12.19 Choir practice, 7p

Wed 12.20 Adoration of Blessed Sacrament, 7-8p

Thu 12.21 Cook for Soup Kitchen, 12-4p

Sat 12.23 Soup Kitchen project  
 Pray the Rosary, 4:05p

### NEXT WEEK

Sun 12.24 **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent Masses: 9:00, 11:00a  
 Soup Kitchen Project  
 CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY MASS: 4:30P  
 CHRISTMAS CAROL SING: 10:00P  
 CHRISTMAS EVE MASS: 10:30P

12.25 CHRISTMAS DAY MASS: 10:00A

Sat 12.30 Choir brunch/practice, 9-11a  
 Pray the Rosary, 4:05p  
 VIGIL MASS OF THE HOLY FAMILY, 4:30P

**EARLY BULLETIN DEADLINE:** submit all info for the Dec. 31 bulletin by Tue. Dec.19. For other weeks submit info by 12n Monday; & full page items a week in advance.

**PROJECT HOPE** December contact: Darla Molnar: 484-350-2823. Info/join HOPE: [LOLCSW@ptd.net](mailto:LOLCSW@ptd.net)

**"THE HOLIDAYS"** are almost here! Are they a time of joyful and prayerful expectation or do they become a season of stress, anxiety and unrealistic expectations? Check out the display in the Gathering Space to: Find Holiness in the Chaos: Four Keys to a Simple Advent.

**DO YOU FEEL CALLED** to support parish youth? We need Religious Education substitutes, available on an "as-needed" basis, 10:30-11:45a or 6-8p Sundays. Federal, State & Diocesan clearances for working with children will be required. Learn more from Msgr. Scheaffer, Sr. Marie Clark or Mrs. Ann Pergosky or email [stmaryreled@ptd.net](mailto:stmaryreled@ptd.net)

Religious give thanks. A religious sister writes, "When we see the generous response of so many thousands of persons in order to help us, religious men and women, we are left speechless." Senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests across the country send heartfelt thanks and prayers for your donation to last week's Retirement Fund for Religious collection.

Thank you for supporting last week's collection

### Christmas Worship Schedule

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> **4th Sunday of Advent**  
 9:00am Sunday Mass  
 11:00am Sunday Mass

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> **Christmas Eve**  
 4:30pm Christmas Eve Family Mass  
 10:00pm Parish Christmas Carol Sing  
 10:30pm Christmas Eve Vigil Mass

Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> **Christmas Day**  
 10:00am Christmas Day Mass

**CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE:** Christmas 2017 falls on a Monday, and is always a Holy Day of Obligation, even when on a Saturday or Monday, distinct from Sunday Mass. Two obligations require two Masses to fill them; they may be met with one of the following combinations:

- † Saturday 4:30p and Sunday 4:30 or 10:30p
- † Saturday 4:30p and Monday 10:00a
- † Sunday 9:00 or 11:00a and Sunday 4:30 or 10:30p
- † Sunday 9:00 or 11:00a and Monday 10:00a

### DECORATING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

12:15p Dec 17 to decorate the Church for Christmas. To help, stay after Mass and meet in the gathering area. Questions? Contact Lynda Russo: 732-513-9620



St. Mary's next Soup Kitchen project approaches. It's next week, **Dec 23/24**. Visit the **donation board in the gathering area**. Please return all items by Dec 16/17. The Soup Kitchen serves 200-400 people. **Cooking for the soup kitchen takes place 12-4p, Dec. 21**. A few helpers could be used. Call Mary Alkons w/ any questions: 610-683-5443



**BREAKFAST** is served 9-11a Sunday, Dec. 17. Remember, breakfast is served on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month. *Get involved with this friendly team:* Suzanne Touch: 610-334-5385 or 610-401-2441



**SCRIPTURE STUDY:** Please note the next Scripture Study Session of the Book of Revelation will be 7p, **Thu. Jan. 4, 2018** in the REC.

**SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:** Rejoice Sunday reminds us that we should be people of joy. Without joy we can't fully celebrate Christmas. Joy comes from within oneself. Like John the Baptist knowing who we are. Recognizing God's presence in our lives. Constantly appreciating all we have as a gift with a spirit of gratitude. It is an attitude or disposition. The best gift you can give to someone at Christmas is not material but rather to help them know Jesus and the peace and joy he brings. A czar threw his wife in jail because she refused to participate in the corrupt behavior practiced at the court. After a day he brought her out before him. He wanted to know if she was ready to change. She said she had such a joyous day with Jesus in jail she would never change. Joy brings with it peace and conviction.

***Please Pray for these persons serving our Nation.***

|                 |                    |                   |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Keenan Albright | Timothy DeVall     | James Knight      |
| Kyle Albright   | Anthony DiPietro   | Nick Marakovits   |
| Michael Barron  | Charles Douglass   | Melissa Marks     |
| Andrew Barthol  | Timothy DuShaw     | Laura Miller      |
| Frank M. Bieda  | Keith Essig        | Heather O'Donnell |
| John Boyer      | Michael Allen Haak | James Quinn       |
| Matthew Boyer   | Diane Henry        | Phillip Talarico  |
| Jonathan Cardé  | Joshua Joseph      | Steve Ziegler     |
| Eric Cunningham | Dan King           |                   |

*Call the office to add/remove names from this list*



With your help, we are looking at 5 areas of parish life in order to develop plans to become a more vibrant and evangelizing parish.

*We begin with your St. Mary's Sunday experience. Visit: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/DY6MNR7?parish=%5bparish\\_va\\_lue](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DY6MNR7?parish=%5bparish_va_lue) before Dec. 30 and anonymously answer 12 multiple choice questions. Additional comments are welcome. The survey is a click away: [www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown](http://www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown) and [www.StMarysKutztown.com](http://www.StMarysKutztown.com)*

The results are sent to our Be My Witness Team. Paper surveys will be available in the gathering area Dec. 16-17. Let your voice be heard! *Note: the survey link will only accept one survey per device.* Find more info & updates at [www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown](http://www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown) Look for the logo!

**CONFIRMATION-** The date for Confirmation has been announced by the Bishop's office: 4:30p, Apr 19, 2018. Pray the Holy Spirit's fire burns in the hearts of our young people preparing to receive the Sacrament and fills them with the fire of his love.



**ALTERNATIVE CHISTMAS GIFT IDEAS:** LOOKING FOR CHRISTMAS IDEAS FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS EVERYTHING? A wonderful way to celebrate Christmas is by giving gifts that extend the joy of the Season to our less fortunate brothers and sisters in other countries: a sewing machine to help a poor family earn income, school supplies to help children learn how to read, clean water to improve the life and health of an entire village, clothing and shoes for an orphan. To purchase these or similar gifts **visit the gathering area display table** for more info. It's a heart-satisfying way to commemorate the birth of Christ that truly reaches the neediest among us.

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES** offers help and support to families relocating from Puerto Rico to Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton, and Schuylkill Counties as a result of devastation caused by Hurricane Maria. Info: [Catholic Charities Relocation Assistance Line-610.435.1541 xt. 286](http://CatholicCharitiesRelocationAssistanceLine-610.435.1541xt.286)

Make Donations to assist with local relocation efforts: Catholic Charities Diocese of Allentown Relocation Relief; 900 S. Woodward St; Allentown, PA 18103 - Or online: [CatholicCharityAD.org](http://CatholicCharityAD.org)

**IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED AN ADVERSE PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS...** You are not alone. There is help.

The Diocese of Allentown has a network of concerned parents and professionals who have experienced or worked closely with issues surrounding adverse prenatal diagnosis. For support contact Sr. Janice Marie Johnson, [jjohnson@allentowndiocese.org](mailto:jjohnson@allentowndiocese.org) or 610-289-8900 x 2280



The birth of the Christ-child was a sign of hope for this world. Consider attending a WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER weekend for hope and rebirth in your relationship. For info call 1-732-904-9636 or visit [www.aweekendforyourmarriage.org](http://www.aweekendforyourmarriage.org)

**CATHOLIC Q&A** -Do You Have Any Questions? Catholic Q&A is a new regular column in The A.D. Times. Readers are invited to submit questions about our Catholic faith that will be answered by the Diocese of Allentown Secretariat for Catholic Life and Evangelization. Please email your questions to [CLE@allentowndiocese.org](mailto:CLE@allentowndiocese.org)

Selected questions answered in the next possible issue. Questions may be edited for space, clarity or other considerations. Please include your name, town/ parish; questions will be published anonymously.

**MONTHLY HOLY HOUR:** The Office of Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry is partnering with twelve parishes in each deanery to offer a monthly Eucharistic holy hour specifically for families through October 2018. Bring your whole family to encounter Christ! Stay for a few minutes or for the whole hour. Babies, toddlers, children, teens, young adults, and adults are all welcome! Prayer resources will be provided for both children and adults in English/Spanish. Some Holy Hours will provide an opportunity for silent prayer, while others will have planned prayer services. Holy Hours at parishes with a large Hispanic population will be bilingual. Pick up a postcard at the parish for the schedule, or visit [www.allentowndiocese.org/encounter](http://www.allentowndiocese.org/encounter). Sign up for text message reminders, text your Deanery's code to 81010: @BerksFHH,

**RETROUVAILLE:** Does the distance between you seem wide? Are you already separated? *Retrouvaille offers hope for a better relationship.* This peer ministry of volunteer couples offers tools of healthy communication and healing that couples used in their own relationships. Christian based, Catholic in origin, all faiths are welcome; the next program begins Feb. 16 at the Family Life Center, Malvern, PA. Future weekends will be April and August. More info or to register: [www.HelpOurMarriage.com](http://www.HelpOurMarriage.com) or 1-800-470-2230. All inquiries strictly confidential.

**WORD of LIFE:** "He is always with us. Jesus promised this when he gave the disciples the same mission he gives to each of us: Go. ... Walk with each other. Do not be afraid to embrace God's gift of life. Whatever storms or trials

we face, we are not alone. He is with us." USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities 2017-18 Respect Life Reflection, [www.bit.ly/2x31e1X](http://www.bit.ly/2x31e1X)

**PROLIFE:** "Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents." Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), 50

#### **BLESSING of a CHRISTMAS MANGER or NATIVITY**

In its present form, the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi, who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time. When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.

*All make the sign of the cross.*

*Leader:* Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**R/. Who made heaven and earth.**

*One present or the leader reads a sacred Scripture:*

**Reader:** The holy Gospel according to Luke: 2:1-8

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

*Or Isaiah 7:10-15— The birth of Emmanuel.*

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**R/. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*The leader prays with hands joined:* God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Savior was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love.

Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

**R/. Amen.**

#### **REFLECTION...** by Rev. Leonard N. Peterson

The season of "Friday Night Lights" is just about over. The term describes the necessary ingredient for high school and college football games or soccer games at all levels that take place each Autumn as nature shortens the daylight hours. Fans of the game are delighted to see their teams go at it without interference from nature's timetable.

As we come to the second half of the fast-moving season of Advent, the liturgical focus shifts from the awesome Second Coming of Christ back to the more familiar and quieter First Coming of Christ at Bethlehem long ago and far away. In many ways, it's all about lights for Fridays and forever.

We know that the first Christmas had contradictory elements in it. Truly, we have a spectacular lighting: both the overhead star and angelic choirs in the sky making their announcement about the birth of the Babe. But at the same time the earthbound setting couldn't be more ordinary: a dim stable cave and a manger of rough straw for the Child's first crib. The only interior light most likely came from a lone lantern and a small fire for warmth.

The Holy Spirit knew that this scene needed an interpreter for future readers of the story. To translate the facts into meaning. That came later as the task of St. John the Baptist. He is that well-known "Man of Advent." He "testifies to the light shining on Jesus," never confusing it with any light aimed at himself. Moreover, John, in humility, orders his many followers to "make straight the way of the Lord" so that they will meet the real Messiah: Jesus the Christ.

That same advice about clearing up the drab detours, poorly lit at that, which we have taken from the straight and narrow path that leads to the Lord. If we're honest with ourselves, we've lowered the lights, as it were, on Christ's way forward so that we might slide backwards. We don't always rush to clear away the obstructions to a straightaway. We actually side with Satan for awhile, even if we might never admit it so bluntly. Happily, that need not be the end of our stories.

There is no need to be discouraged or stay frozen in place. We just have to open that confessional door and walk in to begin again. After that comes another walk up the church aisle for the happy reunion of a holy communion.

The moon shines in the December sky because of reflected light from the sun. Without that reflected light, the moon would become lost in the darkness of space. The believer in Christ shines only because of the reflection of Christ's light. Without that reflected light, the believer becomes lost in the darkness of the world and sin. What a grace it is that He finds us!

## Communal Reconciliation Service: Sunday Dec. 17, 4p

**An Examination of Conscience for Married Persons** God calls most men and women to the married vocation. This is a great honor and an immense challenge. To fulfill this marvelous calling we need Christ's help; we need his Spirit's power.

### Responsibilities to God:

Have I gone to Mass every Sunday? Have I participated at Mass or have I day dreamed or been present with a blank mind?  
Have I prayed every day (15-20 minutes)?  
Have I read the Bible? Have I studied the truths of our faith and allowed them to become more part of the way I think and act?  
Have I read any spiritual books or religious literature?  
Have I told God that I want to love him with my whole heart, mind and strength? Do I hold any resentments toward God?  
Have I recognized my need for Jesus and his salvation? Have I asked the Holy Spirit to empower me to live the Christian life, to be a proper husband/wife and parent?  
Have I been financially generous to the Church? Have I participated in parish or religious activities?  
Have I held resentments toward the Church or Church authorities? Have I forgiven them?

### Responsibilities to my spouse:

Have I cared for my spouse? Have I been generous with my time? Have I been affectionate and loving? Have I told my spouse that I love him or her?  
Have I been concerned about the spiritual well-being of my spouse?  
Have I listened to my spouse? Have I paid attention to his other concerns, worries, and problems? Have I sought these out?  
Have I allowed resentments and bitterness toward my spouse to take root in my mind? Have I nurtured these? Have I forgiven my spouse for the wrongs he or she has committed against me?  
Have I allowed misunderstanding, miscommunication or accidents to cause anger and mistrust? Have I nurtured critical and negative thoughts about my spouse?  
Have I manipulated my spouse in order to get my own way?  
Have I tried to bully or overpower my spouse?  
Have I spoken sharply or sarcastically to my spouse? Have I spoken in a demeaning or negative way? Have I injured my spouse through taunting and negative teasing? Have I called my spouse harsh names or used language that is not respectful?  
Have I physically abused my spouse?  
Have I gossiped about my spouse?  
Have I undermined the authority and dignity of my spouse through disrespect and rebelliousness?  
Have I been moody and sullen?  
Have I bickered with my spouse out of stubbornness and selfishness?  
Have I lied or been deceitful to my spouse?  
Have I misused sexuality? Have I used sexual relations solely for my own selfish pleasure? Have I been too demanding in my desire for sexual fulfillment? Have I been loving and physically affectionate in my sexual relations or have I used sexual relations in a way that would be demeaning or disrespectful to my spouse? Have I refused sexual relations out of laziness, revenge or manipulation?  
Have I refused to conceive children out of selfishness or material greed? Have I used artificial means of contraception?  
Have I had an abortion or encouraged others to have one?

Have I masturbated?  
Have I flirted or fostered improper relationships with someone else, either in my mind or through words and actions?  
Have I used pornography: books, magazines or movies?  
Have I committed adultery?  
Have I misused alcohol or drugs?  
Have I been financially responsible?

### Responsibilities to children:

Have I cared for the spiritual needs of my children? Have I been a shepherd and guardian as God has appointed me? Have I tried to foster a Christian family where Jesus is Lord? Have I taught my children the Gospel and the commandments of God?  
Have I prayed with them?  
Have I been persistent and courageous in my training and teaching? Have I disciplined them when necessary? Have I been lazy and apathetic?  
Have I talked with them to find out their problems, concerns and fears? Have I been affectionate toward them? Have I hugged them and told them that I love them? Have I played or recreated with them?  
Have I been impatient and frustrated with them? Have I corrected them out of love in order to teach them what is right and good? Have I treated them with respect? Have I spoken to them in a sarcastic or demeaning way?  
Have I held resentments against them? Have I forgiven them?  
Have I been of one heart and mind with my spouse in the upbringing of the children? Or have I allowed disagreements and dissension to disrupt the training, educating and disciplining of our children?  
Have I undermined the role of authority in the eyes of my children by speaking negatively against God, the Church, my spouse or others who hold legitimate authority over them?  
Have I been a good Christian witness to my children in what I say and do? Or do I demand one standard for them and another for myself?  
Have I been properly generous with my children regarding money and physical and material well-being? Have I been miserly? Have I been extravagant, thus spoiling them?

### Responsibilities to society:

Have I been a Christian witness to those with whom I work or associate? Have I spoken to anyone about the Gospel and how important it is to believe in Jesus?  
Have I held resentments and anger against those with whom I work, relatives or friends? Have I forgiven them?  
Have I been unethical in my business dealings? Have I stolen or lied?  
Have I allowed the Gospel to influence my political and social opinions?  
Have I had a proper Christian concern for the poor and needy?  
Have I paid my taxes?  
Have I fostered or nurtured hatred toward my "political" enemies, either local, national or international?  
Have I been prejudiced toward others because of race, color, religion or social status?

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