



Advent/Christmas Newsletter 2020

Welcome to a New Year. Now that may sound odd, given that we are still in November, but according to the Church's Calendar, Sunday, November 29th, is the beginning of a new Liturgical Year. Unlike a calendar year or a fiscal year, the Liturgical Year measures time a bit differently; through it, we recall and are invited to participate in the greatest gift to come from our good God – the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This remarkable story begins anew every Advent. That time is now -- come, let us begin our journey together.



The season of Advent begins on the Sunday closest to the feast of St. Andrew (November 30) and lasts for four Sundays in total. It is a time of spiritual preparation for the faithful before the great feast of Christmas. Traditionally, three things are emphasized – recalling the coming of Jesus in Bethlehem two thousand years ago, actively seeking Him in our lives in the present moment, and looking forward in anticipation to His return at the end of time.



The Advent Wreath is a good way to remind ourselves of this time of preparation. As each of the four candles is lit, it symbolizes the growing light of Christ in the world; it all culminates with the lighting of the Christmas candle on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. **On Saturday, November 28 and Sunday, November 29th, Masses will begin to be held in the church proper to begin the Advent season.**

“I am the Immaculate Conception.” With these words, our Lady greeted St. Bernadette on March 25, 1858 and confirmed what had been promulgated four years before in 1854. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception teaches that Mary, from the moment of her conception and by the “grace and privilege granted by almighty God,” was “preserved free from all stain of original sin.”

Although some form of this feast existed in the Western Church as early as the eleventh century, the Immaculate Conception in its present form was not made a feast in the Universal Church until Pope Pius IX proclaimed it as such in 1854.

This feast is celebrated on December eighth; as the Immaculate Conception, Mary is also the patron saint of the United States and Brazil. **Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday, December 8 at 12:10 p. m. and 7:00 p.m.**

The Feast of Christmas is, of course, observed on December 25. In the midst of our celebration, however, we need to keep in mind just how wonderful a day this is – when God Himself entered our world as one of us, in order to bring salvation to all humankind. *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.” (Isaiah 9:1)*



Christmas Eve Vigil Masses will be celebrated on Thursday, December 24 at 4:00 and 7:00 p.m., and on Friday, Christmas Day, at 10:00 a.m. For Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses only, please telephone the office to reserve your seat(s). (518) 654-2113.

According to the Liturgical Calendar, the Christmas season does not end December 25; it continues for another two weeks.

Celebrated on the Sunday within the octave of Christmas, the Feast of the Holy Family commemorates all three members of the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In honoring them, we also honor all families, big or small. This year, this feast is celebrated on December 27. **Vigil Mass will be on Saturday, December 26 at 4:00 p.m. and on Sunday, December 27 at 9:00 a.m.**



The designation, Mother of God, highlights Mary’s role in the Incarnation, when she declares her “Fiat” in response to the angel Gabriel’s invitation. Some theologians have asserted that while Jesus was “first” in God’s mind for humankind’s redemption, Mary was second, chosen from all eternity to be His mother. Celebrated on January 1, this feast is also a day of prayer for world peace. **Vigil Mass will be on Thursday, December 31, at 4:00 p.m. and Friday, January 1 at 10:00 a.m.**

Though traditionally celebrated twelve days after Christmas, the Feast of the Epiphany in the United States has been moved to the first Sunday after January 1; this year, the feast is commemorated on January 3. By way of the story of the Magi, recounted in the Gospel of Matthew, Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah, Son of God and Savior of the whole world. **Vigil Mass will be on Saturday, January 2 at 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, January 3 at 9:00 a.m.**



The Baptism of the Lord marks the conclusion of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It’s a feast of transition from Jesus’ hidden life to that of His public ministry. Though Jesus did not need Baptism, it was nevertheless a moment of manifestation: “And a voice came from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased.”” (Matthew 3:17) **Vigil Mass is Saturday, January 9 at 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, January 10 at 9:00 a.m.**