

CHRISTMAS EVE VIGIL MASS

Holy Cross Church, Morris, NY

Celebrant: Fr. Chris Welch

Pianist: Julie DeLaurentiis

Servers: Reigan Aikins, Mary Tabone

Processional Hymn: O Come, All Ye Faithful #300

“Las Posadas”: Procession of the children with Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus

Opening Prayer: Fr. Chris Welch

Readings #870

First: Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 89: Forever I will sing of the goodness of the Lord, forever I will sing of your love. Forever will I sing.

Second: Acts 13:16-17, 22-25

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

Homily: Children proceed to the front/altar, “The Friendly Beasts”

Offertory Hymn: Away in a Manger #324

Communion Hymn: Silent Night #309 (with Night of Silence)

Post-Communion Hymn: Happy Birthday to Jesus

Closing Hymn: Joy to the World #303

The Friendly Beasts (traditional)

Jesus our brother, kind and good,
Was humbly born in a stable rude.
And the friendly beasts around him stood,
Jesus our brother, kind and good.

“I,” said the donkey, shaggy and brown,
“I carried His mother up hill and down;
I carried her safely to Bethlehem town.”
“I,” said the donkey, shaggy and brown.

“I,” said the sheep with the curly horn,
“I gave Him my wool for His blanket warm;
He wore my coat on Christmas morn.”
“I,” said the sheep with the curly horn.

“I,” said the camel, yellow and black,
“Over the desert, upon my back,
I brought him a gift in the Wise Men’s pack.”
“I,” said the camel, yellow and black.

Thus every beast by some good spell,
In the stable dark was glad to tell
Of the gift he gave Emmanuel,
The gift he gave Emmanuel.



Holy Cross Parish

DECEMBER 24, 2023

Christmas Eve Vigil

Isaiah 62: 1-5

Psalm 89

Acts 13: 16-17, 22-25

Matthew 1:18-25

A HUMAN AND HOLY BIRTH

Shortly after giving birth herself, author Kat Armas had new insights into the nativity through the experience of Mary: I’ve often said that the Bible is a book written by men, for men. Throughout the centuries most of its interpreters and preachers have been men as well. It’s no surprise then, that the story of the incarnation—and its rendering and interpretations thereafter—would glide over the messy realities of pregnancy and labor. Indeed, we’re told about the politics requiring Joseph to register in his hometown, about the shepherds keeping watch, and about heavenly hosts of angels celebrating, but we hear nothing of the blood, the nakedness, the primal groans, the fear, the strength and power of the human body, the first-time shrieks of new life bursting into the world....

God is in love with us. He draws us to Him with tenderness by being born poor and fragile among us, like one of us. –Pope Francis

Perhaps this is where we received our first antiseptic views of holiness, from a sterilized story of incarnation far removed from its reality. We’ve come to understand the concept of holiness as uncontaminated from the realities of the world, but is this truly the story of divinity? The story of God entering into our grief, our sorrows, our joys?

Like so many renderings of the narratives in Scripture, the birth of Jesus has been domesticated and dulled to make it more palatable. But there’s something subversively fleshly and carnal about Mary birthing God and her role as an ac-

tive agent in the messy, material, and imminent.

I wonder, What was it like for Mary to birth God? What was it like to feel God squirm and settle as he pressed against her organs? She probably got short of breath and had trouble finding a comfortable position for sleep at night....

This matters because a broken, refugee, brown, female, naked, stretched, hormonal, marginalized body is how divinity entered this world and where divinity still makes itself most known today....

The nativity scene, like much of Western theology, is far removed from the very bloody and very raw and very human process of birth. But these are the kinds of things that make up our faith: the naked, the primal, even the offensive. And while Mary’s story turned out the way she’d hope it would—with a newborn child in her arms—not

all stories turn out that way. What the nativity scene as we’re used to seeing it fails to show us is that our faith is made of that too: the sadness, the questions, the longing, the despair, the anger. Encompassed within the birth of Jesus is the deeply difficult and deeply beautiful, the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the material. Like our lives, it was fleshly and carnal—and it was also holy.

Armas, Kat. *Sacred Belonging: A 40-Day Devotional on the Liberating Heart of Scripture*. Brazos Press, 2023, pp. 154, 155.
from: <https://email.cac.org/t/d-e-vkjiutl-tdduxulkd-f/>

Holy Cross Parish

96-98 Main Street
PO Box 118
Morris NY 13808

holycrosschurch@gmail.com

MISSION

To care for the poor, abandoned, and the marginalized.

SCHEDULE

Mass: Sunday, 8:30 a.m.

Liturgy of the Word: Tuesday, 10 a.m.

PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM

Parish Leader

Matthew Tabone (360) 559-4098

Trustees

Michael Stensland (607) 783-2764

Richard Meyers (607) 263-5588

Parish Pastoral Council Chair

Kerry L. Mess (607) 386-1951

Parish Pastoral Council Members

Dana Mochovciak, Jenna Turner, Carol Tyson, Marguerite Webster

Liturgical Ministry

Marguerite Webster (607) 263-5478

Faith Formation

Daphne Thompson (607) 263-2410

Ministry to the Homebound

Matthew Tabone (360) 559-4098

Jenn Spivey (207) 539-5094



DECEMBER 24, 2023 CHRISTMAS EVE VIGIL

Celebrant

Rev. Chris Welch

Lector: Kerry L. Mess

Eucharistic Minister: Daphne Thompson

Mass Intention

For the peace of Christ to reign in our hearts

If you would like to request an intention for a mass, simply call the office to schedule: (607) 263-5143.

Pray for

- ✕ the deceased members of our parish and their families and friends
- ✕ the sick, their caregivers, and all who have asked for our prayers, especially Sr. Theresa Ahern MSBT, Amy O'Brien, John O'Brien, Tom DeLaurentiis, Jo Franklin, Aggi Huff, Louisa Joy, Lynn Joy, Maureen Joy, Rebecca Joy, Michelle Lee, Teresa Meyers, Clara Murphy, Diane Neczesny, Maria Papendrea and sister Camella, Karina Tabone and (welcome to) new baby Thomas Tabone, Joe and Carol Tyson, Lorraine Tyson, Fr. Chris Welch, John Zaleski
- ✕ all the men and women of our parish family serving in the military and all first responders and emergency personnel: Ryan Barry, Jim Barry, Meghan Barringer

WELCOME TO HOLY CROSS PARISH! CURIOUS? BEING CALLED?

RCIA is the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults into the Catholic faith.

For more information, go to myrcia.org.

Holy Cross Parish RCIA Contact:

Maureen Joy (607) 263-5132

Pope Francis's intention for December: For people with disabilities to be at the center of attention in society and institutions to value their participation

Engage in Living Community

ROOM FOR CHRIST

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." —Matthew 25:40

It is no use saying that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts.

But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that He speaks, with the eyes of store clerks, factory workers, and children that he gazes; with the hands of office workers, slum dwellers, and suburban housewives that He gives. It is with the feet of soldiers and tramps that He walks, and with the heart of anyone in need that He longs for shelter. And giving shelter or food to anyone who asks for it, or needs it, is giving it to Christ...

It would be foolish to pretend that it is always easy to remember this. If everyone were holy and handsome, with "alter Christus" ["another Christ"] shining in neon lighting from them, it would be easy to see Christ in everyone. If Mary had appeared in Bethlehem clothed, as St. John says, with the sun, a crown of twelve stars on her head, and the moon under her feet [see Revelation 12:1], then people would have fought to make room for her. But that was not God's way for her, nor is it Christ's way for Himself.

In Christ's human life, there were always a few who made up for the neglect of the crowd. The shepherds did it; their hurrying to the crib atoned for the people who would flee from Christ. The wise men did it; their journey across the world made up for those who refused to stir one hand's breadth from the routine

Upcoming Events

12/25: Christmas mass, 10:30 a.m., St. Mary's Oneonta

12/26: **Liturgy of the Word, 10 a.m., in memory of Fr. John Burns**

01/01: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, mass 10 a.m., St. Mary's Oneonta

01/02: **Liturgy of the Word, 10 a.m. Bible study, "Praying the Names of God" after mass**

SAVE THE DATE:

**We host the Service for Christian Unity
Sunday, January 21, 3 p.m.**

of their lives to go to Christ. Even the gifts the wise men brought have in themselves an obscure recompense and atonement for what would follow later in this Child's life. For they brought gold, the king's emblem, to make up for the crown of thorns that He would wear; they offered incense, the symbol of praise, to make up for the mockery and the spitting; they gave Him myrrh, to heal and soothe, and He was wounded from head to foot....

We can do it too, exactly as they did. We are not born too late. We do it by seeing Christ and serving Christ in friends and strangers, in everyone we come in contact with.... For a total Christian, the goad of duty is not needed ... to perform this or that good deed. It is not a duty to help Christ, it is a privilege.

from <https://email.cac.org/t/d-e-vkjdrlt-tdduxulkd-f/>

Dorothy Day, Selected Writings: By Little and By Little. ed. Robert Ellsberg. Orbis Books, 1992, pp. 94, 96, 97.

<http://eliasbejjaninews.com/archives/73575/elias-bejjani-faith-and-persistence-do-miracles/>