



The Parish of Saints Philip and James
1 Carow Place, St. James, NY 11780

631-584-5454

December 13th, 202 Third Sunday of Advent



A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

John 1:6-7

“I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,
make straight the way of the Lord”

John 1:23

“With Philip & James we pray to live lives worthy of the call to be
Apostles of Hope”

Daily Mass: 7:30am and 9:15 am
Saturday 5pm Sunday: 8am 10 am 12noon

STS. PHILIP & JAMES PASTORAL STAFF

Parish Center Phone: 631-584-5454 Parish Fax: 631-862-9675

Website—www.sspj.org

PARISH CENTER OFFICE HOURS

Open Monday, Tuesday Wednesday 9am-6pm

Open Thursday 9am-6pm

Closed Friday, Saturday and Sunday

CLERGY

Father Tom Haggerty, Pastor

Father Joe Lobo-Associate Pastor

Deacon Ronald Blasius

Deacon John Keenan

Deacon Ken Maher

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

Sister Theresita Donach, CSFN

BUSINESS MANAGER

Virginia Portanova

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 1-3

Charlotte Czujko

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 4-6

Barbara Luna

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 7-8

Dominick Avento

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Margaret Adams

COORDINATOR OF PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

Lynn Sisti

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Dominick Avento

DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES

John Cordes

SSPJ SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Diane M. Anderson

School Phone-631-584-7896 School Fax: 631-584-3258

TRUSTEES

Jerry Linder ~ Tina Cafaro

PASTORAL COUNCIL

Michael Sharkey, Lou Guerra, Cynthia Lombardi, Paul Damato
Martin Marut, Maureen Burke, Erin Nicastro



**FAITH DIRECT:
GO TO SSPJ.ORG
CLICK ON THE FAITH
DIRECT ICON**

Parish of Saints Philip and
James account code
NY232 when signing up

Sacraments

Baptism— Celebrated twice per month. Parents are asked to register at the Pastoral Center for Pre-Baptism Program.

Marriage—Couples are asked to contact the Pastoral Center before visiting the reception hall. The Marriage Preparation process is nine months before your proposed wedding date.

Confirmation—Seventh and Eighth grade students are prepared to celebrate through Religious Ed or SSPJ School. Adults prepare through RCIA.

Reconciliation— Available Saturdays from 4:00pm-5:00pm in the Church or by contacting the Parish Center for an appointment.

Anointing of the Sick— In case of serious, unexpected illness, please contact the Parish Center office to arrange for a Priest to pray with the person who is ill. Anointing of the Sick is held on the first Sunday of the month following the 8:00am mass please see the Sacristan before mass.

R.C.I.A.— Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (non-Catholic adults desiring to become Catholic) are asked to contact the Parish Center Office.

Eucharistic Adoration In The Church— Monday 1:30pm -7pm

PLEASE REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVE FOR US IN YOUR PRAYERS



LCDR. MEGAN M. SHUTKA-VIK, USN

CAPT. WILSON MARKS- USN

CAPTAIN MICHAEL DOLAN- JR.

LT. COL. JOHN KAIRES

SPC. NICOLE A. CANNON

SGM. MICHAEL P. BORRELLI-US ARMY

CAPT. JOHN TULLY- USN

LT. COL. JAMES TULLY-US ARMY

JOSEPH SAGGIO- USNC

CAPTAIN PAUL WILLMS

STAFF SGT. MICHAEL LONGHENRY

LT. COL. PAUL T. JACKSON-

STAFF SGT ALEXANDER PARRELLA-USAF

RICHARD SOTOMAYER- USAF

SGT. CONNOR F. SCOTT- USMC

SGT. CORY O'HARA -USMC

CDR. ROBERT J. MARSH-USN

PFC. CHARLES CHRISTOPHER HOWELL

STEVEN CAVA-USN

ERIC SEELIN- USMC

CW2 CHRIS MUNZ

CW2 NATASHA WORTMAN

CORPORAL JAMES T. CASEY-USMC

SGT. JOSHUA MAHONEY- US ARMY

KEVIN JONES-USCG

PRIVATE JOSHUA OLSEN-USARNG

GLEN CRIMA-US ARMY

STAFF SGT. ANTHONY SCIAMETTA— US ARMY

MARIO CATANIA-USMC

RYAN ANTHONY NASCIMENTO-USMC

KYLE ANTHONY NASCIMENTO-US ARMY

ENS. RYAN M. SHOWS -USN

STAFF SGT. RYAN REXRODE-USMC

DR. KARA VANDEKIEFT, COL.-USAF

SGT. STEPHEN D. OUTCAULT-USMC

PAUL MUMOLO-USN

VICTORIA ZEMAN, USCG

KYLE J. GRUNER -US ARMY

MARK GIORDANO—US COASTGUARD

KELLI MCLAUGHLIN—2ND LT. US ARMY NATL.GUARD

STAFF SGT MICHAEL J BANG SPECIAL FORCES US ARMY

MATTHEW PATRICK GALLAGHER US ARMY

Financial Support Needed weekly to meet Parish budget:

Weekly Collection: Sunday December 6th, 2020

Christmas

Faith Direct : (121 Participants)

Total Weekly Collection:

CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL DONATION:

Thank you for your generosity

\$17,890.

\$ 14,524.

3,137.

3,044.

\$20,798.

\$2,175.

Father Tom's Letter

Dear Friends,

This has been a challenging and stressful year. And in the midst of the challenges and stress of the effects of COVID pandemic and of divisions and concerns in our country and world – not to mention any family situations, St. Paul says, **“Rejoice always!”** Now Paul also lived in challenging and stressful times. What was he thinking?!

Perhaps part of a reflection by Fr. Richard Rohr, who in turn quotes a French Jesuit from the 1700s, Fr. John-Pierre Cassuade, might help us to understand Paul's words - and God's presence.

“Every moment we live through is like an ambassador that declares the will of God to us.” There is no more infallible way to seek the will of God than moment by moment to see that what this moment offers me is the grace of God... “True mystics seek the real; we seek the ephemeral. They want God as God is; we want God as we imagine or would like God to be.” The greatest ally of God is what is. God can always work with what is. That is why there can be no real obstacle to union with God except our own resistance. God can and will use everything, absolutely everything, even the worst things—which is the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. “Every moment we live through is like an ambassador that declares the will of God to us.... We find all that is necessary in the present moment.”

As Advent continues and we hear Paul encouraging us to *rejoice* and to *pray without ceasing*, might we do this by focusing on **God's grace in the present moment?** God is present in every aspect of our lives – in our joys and sorrows, our activities and our stillness. Let's pray to truly feel God's all-embracing grace moment by moment as we continue our preparations to celebrate the coming Christmas feast.

*Jesus, let us rejoice in you,
and then let everything work together for us,
whether listening to you or not,
feeling your presence or not—
still,
let it be our unceasing prayer,
as you embrace us with love.
Let us never quench your Spirit. Amen.*

(Anne Osdieck)

On Monday evening, December 14th, at 7pm in the church, we will have a **Communal Reconciliation Service**. This is a wonderful opportunity to pray in gratitude for God's love and to experience God's gentle and freeing mercy. Come and participate in this time of prayer in preparation for welcoming Christ more deeply into our lives.

And,

*Once you understand why the pizza is made round,
packed in a square box
and is eaten as a triangle,
then you will understand the year 2020.*

Peace,



Apostles: We Who Are Sent...Hope: God's constant gift of new possibilities

Mass Intentions, For the week of December 13th, 2020

**Our Bread & Wine
For the Week of
December 13th, 2020
Is Offered for,**



Michael Kaplon

**Dearest Michael,
We miss you every second of
every day.
All Our Love,
Mom & Dad**

**Our Altar Candles
For the Week of
December 13th, 2020
Are Burning for,**

**Carol Walz &
Carl Walz –Living**

**Happy Anniversary
With Love,
Tim and
Karl Jr.**



Remembering in Our Prayers~

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Angie Mingione
Angela Amoroso
Anna Ormsby
Antoinette Fisher
Arthur Gureck
Baby Ben
Barbara Bombace
Barbara Ruland
Mattia Rose Lubrano
Belinda Groneman
Belinda Vega
Brianna Florio
Bob Keenan
Claudia Chandler
Daniel Radice
Deirdre W.
Dolores North
Donna Patrissi
Dorothy Mitchell
Dylan Beach
Ellie Walsh
Gary McLean
Ginny & John Rief
Gladys Blake
Gregory Parker
Ida Wehman
Jack Donohue
John Cronin
John DeStefano
J.C.
Joseph S. | Luis Anthony
Antonette Sabatino
Judy Cunnius
Judy Rampola
Kathleen N.
Kitty Cronin
Leon Donach
Lisa McLean
Mary Fresi
Maryann Kevlin
Maria Clark
Marie del Cielo
Matthew Parrella
Michael Fisher
Mike Lofaro
Monsignor Iocavacci
Pasquale Savarese
Peter Donach
P.I.
Ricardo Buffit
Richard Cembrale
Riordan Cavooris
Sara Jean Andersen
Stephen Dolce
Theresa Kassay
Tara Cesarski
Vivien Cordes
Victoria Zubrycky
Vicki Archdeacon |
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**We Remember....
Bruce Ogilvie, Regina Anne Fischer,
Mary T. McDonough**

Saturday	December 12th 2020 Presider: Father Tom Lector: L. Halluska EM: L. Sisti	9:15am 5:00pm	Living~Pasquale Savarese Susan M. Ormiston
Sunday	December 13th, 2020 Presider: Father Tom Lector: B. O'Leary EM: M. Sehne	8am	For The People of SSPJ
	Presider: Father Joe Lector: M. Koke EM: H. Orlando	10:00am	Living Karl Walz & Carol Walz
	Collective Mass Presider: Father Joe Lector: V. Rubano EM: P. Parish	12:00pm	Toni Donals Gammino, Rizzo, Santo Spirito, Concert & Cillo Families Anthony LoGiudice
Monday	December 14th, 2020 St. John of the Cross	7:30am 9:15am	Joseph Napolitano Donna Marie DiIorio
Tuesday	December 15th, 2020~	7:30am 9:15am	Thomas McGrath Ettore Orlando
Wednesday	December 16th, 2020~	7:30am 9:15am	Giovanna Lo Re Pasquale Savarese-Living
Thursday	December 17th, 2020~	7:30am 9:15am	Matthew Bello Collective Mass: Michael Kaplon Evelyn Eustace Jerry Varricchio
Friday	December 18th, 2020~	7:30am 9:15am	Philip Spina Michael McCauley
Saturday	December 19th, 2020~ Presider: Father Tom Lector: C. Lombardi EM: D. Anderson	9:15am 5:00pm	Pasquale Savarese-Living Margaret Castiglie
Sunday	December 20th, 2020 Presider: Father Tom Lector: B. Luna EM: M. Kenny	8:00am	For the People of SSPJ
	Presider: Father Joe Lector: E. Nicaastro EM: L. Sisti	10:00am	Eva Maria Alaimo
	Collective Mass Presider: Father Joe Lector: A. Latino EM: P. Parish	12:00pm	John Boland Harry Schrader Ronald O'Connor Phillip Giarraputo, Angelo & Helene Giarraputo, Theresa Marinello

Banns of Marriage: First~ Michael Dimotsis & Alli Zegal ~ SSPJ

*Jesus has promised to be with you, to hear you when you call out to him, to wipe every tear from your eyes, and to forgive your every sin.
He has promised to nourish you with his Body and Blood so that you can “run and not grow weary” (Isaiah 40:31) Above all else, he has promised to love you always.*



**Communal Reconciliation
Service
Monday, December 14th, 2020
7pm in the Church**

I am happy to present to you our annual, though virtual, Christmas Concert. The adult cantors and instrumentalists have been working hard, using the proper safety measures, to bring to you this gift of music. It is our hope and prayer that peace fills your heart and the magic of Christmas comes upon you.

The concert will be up on the Parish Website and Face book page Sunday December 13 5pm. We, in the Music Ministry, hope you and your family and friends enjoy this 2020 presentation.

I want to acknowledge and thank the following people who were part of this concert. It could not have been done without them.

Cantors

*Barbara Meringolo
Barbara O'Donnell
Jane Lohmann
Jeannie Hill
Grace Cazzaniga*

Fr. Joe Lobo

Instrumentalists

*Susan Ricci - flute
Jim Scully - guitar
Steve O'Donnell - drums*

Terence Purtell - keyboard

Tim Adams – Producer

*Thank you all!
Margaret Adams—Director*

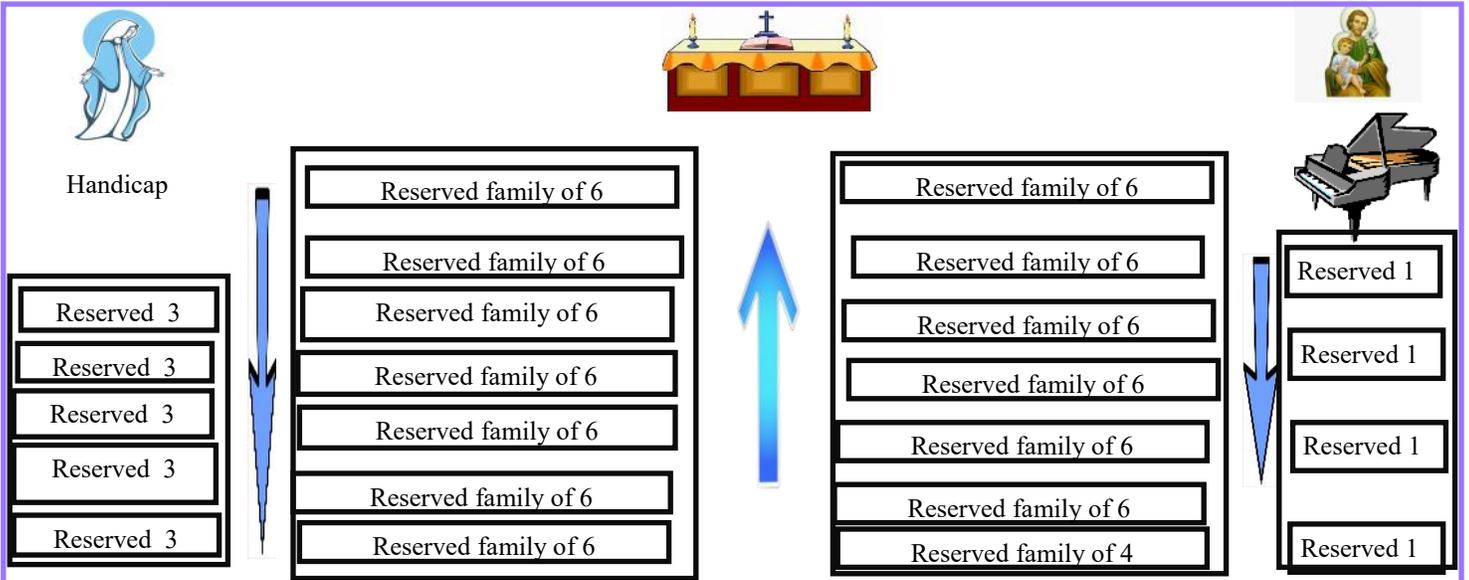
Because we are having additional Masses, in the Auditorium, we are in need of volunteer accompanists to accompany our cantors. All the music will be given to you in advance. If you can help please contact me, Margaret Adams at

sspjmusicministry@gmail.com or Call the parish center at (631)584-5454.

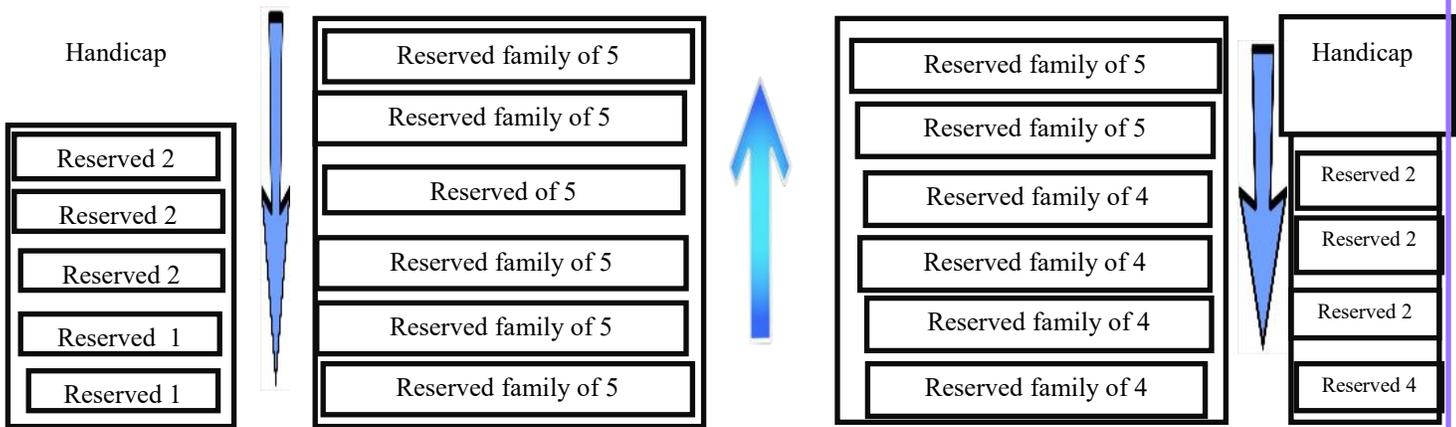


*Let Heaven &
Nature Sing*

EXAMPLE OF CHRISTMAS MASS SEATING CHART



Each reservation is separated by 1 pew



*WITH STRINGENT GUIDELINES AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN PLACE
 WE CANNOT ACCEPT WALK INS AT THE CHRISTMAS EVE OR DAY MASSES
 KINDLY MAKE A RESERVATION FOR ATTENDANCE AT SSPJ.ORG
 OR
 CALL THE PARISH CENTER OFFICE AT 631-553-9708.
 THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION*

**OH COME
 LET US Adore
 HIM**

Christmas ~ 2020 At Sts. Philip & James Parish

Advent Peace and Blessings to all. During this pandemic and our busy preparations for the celebration of Christ's birth in ancient Bethlehem, Christ is reborn in the Bethlehem's of our homes and daily lives. Slow down, be still, be awake to the Divine Mystery that appears common and so ordinary yet is wondrously present.

*Attendance at weekend Mass has been steadily increasing. While most are making reservations, **we are still faced with 20-30 "walk-ins" at every Mass.** It is commonplace and customary to have to "sign-in sheets" to office buildings, doctors' offices and places of business throughout the state. It is our desire to welcome all who wish to attend Mass, unfortunately as reservations **increase there will be less open seating for those "walk-ins"**. We encourage you to please register for the Mass you desire to attend. As COVID numbers increase, it is more important to have contact information to share any exposure information with you.*

For those still hesitant to return to church, especially to larger Christmas crowds, although within the parameters set for safe distancing and mask wearing – you may wish to consider attending Mass on weekdays. Attendance at weekday Masses generally range under 40 people. The same safety measures and protocols are followed at weekday Masses.

Masks are mandated, sanitizing stations are at the entrance and exit of church, safe distance seating is adhered to and procession to communion is safely followed cautious not to mix sections. Our church is cleaned and sanitized after every Mass – 7 days a week.

You may choose to "attend" Mass via livestreaming. Livestreamed Mass is offered daily Monday through Saturday at 9:15 and Saturday Eve at 5 pm., as well as Sunday at 8 am and 10 am.

Our Christmas Masses will be livestreamed as well. Reservations are open for Christmas Masses on our website: www.sspj.org. As Masses in our church fill to capacity of 180 we will open Mass in our auditorium.

*The 2:00 pm and 4:30pm Mass Christmas Eve in our church is currently full-to-capacity. Only seating in Auditorium is available for these two masses. Reservations will be accepted for our alternate site (auditorium). Please see the sample seating arrangement we will follow for every Mass. It is our prayer to welcome all who desire to attend Christmas Mass, however, **out of love and respect for our fellow parishioner's safety protocols will be strictly enforced. Attendance will not be permitted without a reservation.***

If you have difficulty making a reservation, please contact the parish office at 631-584-5454 and they will be happy to assist you.

Jesus is the key that unlocks doors that we have closed, relationships that need mending, hearts that have grown cold and fires that are extinguishing ...as we prepare for Christ to be reborn within us let us reach for the key that holds pure, unconditional love and let us share that with each other.

Prepare
the Way
of the
Lord

**Religious Retirement Collection THIS Weekend:
DECEMBER 12TH AND 13TH**

Many senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests served for little or no pay. Today, religious communities often do not have enough savings to meet retirement needs. Your gift helps provide medications, nursing care, and more for tens of thousands of elderly religious. It also helps ensure younger members can continue the good works of their elders.
Your kindness is greatly appreciated.

CHRISTMAS MASS RESERVATIONS : VISIT SSPJ.ORG

CHRISTMAS EVE MASS SCHEDULE:

2:00PM MASS UPSTAIRS-FULL
2:15PM MASS OVERFLOW AUDITORIUM
4:30PM MASS UPSTAIRS-FULL
4:45PM MASS OVERFLOW AUDITORIUM
8:00PM MASS UPSTAIRS
8:15PM MASS OVERFLOW AUDITORIUM



CHRISTMAS DAY MASS SCHEDULE:

8:00AM MASS UPSTAIRS
8:15AM MASS OVERFLOW AUDITORIUM
10:00AM MASS UPSTAIRS
10:15AM MASS OVERFLOW AUDITORIUM
12:00NOON MASS UPSTAIRS
12:15NOON MASS OVERFLOW AUDITORIUM

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS:

PARMALAT BOXED MILK

BABY WIPES



Concern for the environment needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.



**Go to SSPJ.org website
to view this Advent video**

**Loyola on the Potomac presents:
A Virtual Advent Evening of Prayer Series
*An Advent of Hope***

Join us on the four Tuesday evenings in Advent for this hour long evening of prayer series on ZOOM. Each evening will begin at 7:00 pm and end by 8:00 pm. There will be an opening prayer, an Invitation to Prayer offered by the Presenter on the Titles below, a period of personal prayer time, a time for sharing of graces and discussion and then a closing prayer. **To register, send an email to: Reservations@loyolaretreat.org** You will receive an email link to the ZOOM prayer series on Monday of each week.

The topics that will be covered during our Prayer Series, *An Advent of Hope* are:

Tuesday, December 15 "*Let the Lord be with You*"

Father Paul McCarren, SJ

Tuesday, December 22 "*Waiting with Hopeful Expectation*"

Kathleen McGuire-Zeiss

There is no fee for this prayer series.

Please join us as we journey through the Season of Advent.



Pick-a-Star ~ 2020~LAST DAY~12/17/20

This year, in a continued effort to keep everyone safe, we are changing the format for Pick-A-Star.

You can cut a tag from the attached page and affix to your gift, OR you may make your own from construction paper.

Please use the proper colored star, which indicates the recipient, label it with contents and size, place unwrapped item in a gift bag, adhere star firmly to the package.

There will be large boxes outside the church for your gifts.

As always, gift cards are a great replacement for shopping in the stores.

Purple Stars

*Needs: 8 year old Girl - Shoe size 1, Clothes size 8
3D craft and pen set, Toy/games/crafts for 8 yr. old girl*

*2 year old Boy - Shoe size 8/9, Clothes size 4/5, Diapers size 6,
Barn/farm animals, anything Mickey, Blues Clues Dinosaurs, Cars*

2 year old Girl - Shoe size 6, Clothes 2T, 2 year toddler learning toys

Gift Cards - Cards may be placed in the collection basket in an envelope clearly marked PSM or they may be brought to the parish office. Suggestions: Target, Kohl's, Walmart, Macy's, Visa, MasterCard, Gasoline

Red, Green and Orange Stars

*Needs: Men's warm clothing:
Men's sweatshirts and sweatpants, all sizes
Hats and gloves
Sweaters, all sizes
Casual tops, all sizes*

Yellow Stars: Visit www.sco.org/holiday-giving-2020

You will then be able to click on links to order gifts from Target, Walmart or Amazon and have them shipped directly to :

SCO Development Office, 151 Burrs Lane, Dix Hills, NY 11746

If you ship directly, please identify Sts. Philip and James Church.

Blue Stars

Needs: Women's and Children's warm clothing:

*Hats and gloves,
Sweatshirts and sweatpants, all sizes (adult or children's)
Sweaters, all sizes, Casual tops, all sizes (adult or children's)*

Brown Stars

*Needs: Men's and Women's Warm Socks, Men's and Women's Sweaters, all sizes
Men's and Women's warm tops, all sizes*

Gift Tag~ You can create your own, or use the labels on the opposite page

PICKING A STAR OF LOVE AND HOPE
PICK A STAR ~ 2020



*Thinking of you and wishing you a Blessed Christmas
Item Enclosed: SIZE:*



*Thinking of you and wishing you a Blessed Christmas
Item Enclosed: SIZE:*



*Thinking of you and wishing you a Blessed Christmas
Item Enclosed: SIZE:*



*Thinking of you and wishing you a Blessed Christmas
Item Enclosed: SIZE:*



*Thinking of you and wishing you a Blessed Christmas
Item Enclosed: SIZE:*



*Thinking of you and wishing you a Blessed Christmas
Item Enclosed: SIZE:*



*Thinking of you and wishing you a Blessed Christmas
Item Enclosed: SIZE:*



2020 CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL \$3,000 STANDS IN OUR WAY OF REACHING OUR PAYMENTS GOAL....

THE 2020 APPEAL CONCLUDES ON 12-25-2020

AT DECEMBER 7TH, 2020 SSPJ CMA PLEDGES ARE AT 99% OF GOAL!

PAYMENTS ARE AT 97% OF GOAL

Sincere gratitude to all who helped the thermometer rise...reaching goal will allow us a rebate which will help us defray unexpected expenses during this turbulent year.

If you are able, could you help us?

Payments and Pledges increase by: increased by: \$2,175.
PLEDGES ARE 99% OF GOAL!!!
PAYMENTS ARE 97% OF GOAL!!!

2020 CMA GOAL \$111,000



"All life has inestimable value even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect."

-Pope Francis



2020 CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL
Give Thanks - Give Hope is in 2 day!
 This campaign will raise additional money for the CMA!
 Thank you to everyone who has already given.



The appeal supports The Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics (Respect Life) which enunciates and promotes the sanctity of life from birth to natural death.

A gift to the Catholic Ministries Appeal reminds us that we are all God's children and life is precious!



Please consider donating to the Appeal and a difference in someone's life. Thank you!

Make checks payable to: Catholic Ministries Appeal

Parish _____ Pledge: \$ _____

Name _____ Down payment: \$ _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

To make a donation, you can also visit <https://www.drvc.org/CMA/> or call us at 516-678-5800 ext. 296

Dear Friends,

We now move into the third week of Advent, 'Gaudete' Sunday. There are many things that we have and will be joyful for. Let us not forget to celebrate them for they are gift.

Continuing to journey through "REJOICE" Advent Meditations with the Holy Family, we come to a part that we are familiar with, our lives being rerouted. How many times have you planned on what you are going to do or be and life takes a turn? It may be a sickness or death, a sudden turn of events, flat tire, delayed flight or a betrayal. Perhaps a birth, a reunion, a marriage or an unexpected visit that changes your life. We have certainly experienced at least one of these events.

What about Joseph. living in a small town and being a faithful Jew, he thought he had his life planned out. He was betrothed to Mary, they would marry, live in Nazareth raise a family and remain faithful to their love of God. But then came the Angel, Mary's conception of Jesus, the census, no room in the inns of Bethlehem, and the flight into Egypt. So many emotions had to be running through his mind and heart during these times. His whole life had been turned upside down. It definitely wasn't going the way he thought it would. In all these situations he knew where he had to turn.

All these situations required an adjustment in his expectations. Sometimes he needed space or quiet or the ability to be taught the answer. Mary faithfully supported him all these upheavals. The author reminds us that "Life is more like a pilgrimage, for the pilgrimage implies that God is not only the destination but the One accompanying us on our journey.

During this week take time to remember how you thought your life would turn out, what were your plans. How have things perhaps changed? If your life has been rerouted, then how did you deal with it? Are you willing to be taught, when was the last time you let someone teach you? Do you give your self the time and space necessary to deal with the unexpected turns of events in your life?

Joseph is a great example of one who had a deep relationship with god, spent time alone pondering the unexpected things and learning from Mary how to remain faithful. Pray with him this week. And be JOYFUL during the third week of Advent.

Till next week,

Sister Theresita

SSPJ SCHOOL NEWS



SSPJ Students are embracing the Christmas spirit! Students have been learning and singing new and classic Christmas songs. Seventh and Eighth are enjoying playing Christmas carols on their virtual pianos.

3rd Sunday of Advent, Cycle B

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
Luke 1:46-50, 53-54
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

Monday December 14
St. John of the Cross
Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a
Ps 25:4-9
Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday December 15
Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
Ps 34:2-3, 6, 7, 17-19, 23
Matthew 21:28-32

Wednesday December 16
Isaiah 45:6c-8, 18, 21c-25
Ps 85:9-14
Luke 7:18b-23

Thursday December 17
Genesis 49:2, 8-10
Ps 72:1-4ab, 7-8, 17
Matthew 1:1-17

Friday December 18
Jeremiah 23:5-8
Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19
Matthew 1:18-25

Saturday December 19
Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
Ps 71:3-6ab, 16-17
Luke 1:5-25

John the Baptist came to "testify to the light." What does this mean?

We know that Jesus is the Light of Truth shining in the darkness to draw us to eternal life. And we know that his Spirit enlightens us in the truth so that we can be saved from the destructive forces of our sins and follow our Savior to heaven. But what was the testimony of John? How did he testify to the light? And how does this affect our lives today?

John's testimony was: "I am not the Christ. I am a voice. A voice in the desert." His testimony brings us to the Light of Christ by challenging us with: "Where is your life arid and dry? Listen! Christ is coming to meet you there! Stop wandering around! Repent, change, do whatever is necessary to look for Jesus so that you can find him. He is coming to you!"

We've all experienced times when Jesus seems unavailable when we need him. What has opened your eyes to his presence? Whose voice has turned you back to God? It's time to do the same for others, to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to those who are held captive in their sins, and to announce how to be blessed by a close friendship with the Lord.

We all have the same testimony and the same calling as John had: We are all supposed to be voices crying

out loud enough to be heard above the din of the world. Many souls are

lost in the wilderness of confusion, hopelessness, pain, heartache, and despair, not to mention sin.

What kind of a voice do you have? Because we have Christ within us, our very lives are the voice.



Even if our vocal chords do not utter a single word, the way we live in the light is how we speak the truth of the light. The better we live the truth, the louder and clearer is our message.

What people choose to do with our message is up to them, but it's up to us to speak it so that they're given that choice.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. How has your life been changed by your faith in Jesus? What evil has been conquered, what darkness has been overcome?
2. How has the Spirit of the Lord anointed you?
3. What gifts do you have that enable you to give to the poor (the financially poor or the emotionally starving or the spiritually hungry) or to heal broken hearts?
4. How has God used you to provide liberty to captives and release to prisoners?
5. How are these a testimony that teach others about Jesus?

Spiritual Reflection by Ron Rolheiser, OMI

FROM SAINT TARCISIUS TO PEOPLE MAGAZINE: OUR EVOLUTION IN ADMIRATION AND IMITATION

When I was a young boy growing up in a Catholic community, the catechesis of the time tried to inspire the hearts of the young with stories of martyrs, saints, and other people who lived out high ideals in terms of virtue and faith. I remember one story in particular that caught my imagination and inspired me, the story of a third-century Christian martyr, St. Tarcisius.

As legend (or truth) has it, Tarcisius was a twelve-year-old acolyte during the time of the early Christian persecutions. At that time, Christians in Rome were celebrating the Eucharist in secret in the catacombs. After those secret masses someone, a deacon or an acolyte, would carry the Eucharistic species, the Blessed Sacrament, to the sick and to prisoners. One day, after one of those secret masses, young Tarcisius was carrying the Blessed Sacrament on route to a prison when he was accosted by a mob. He refused to hand over the Blessed Sacrament, protected it with his own body, and was beaten to death as a result.

As a twelve-year-old boy that story enflamed my romantic imagination. I wanted to have that kind of high ideal in my life. In my young imagination, Tarcisius was the ultimate hero whom I wanted to be like.

We've come a long way from there, both in our culture and in our churches. We're no longer moved romantically much by either the saints of old or the saints of today. Yes, we still make an official place for them in our churches and in our highest ideals, but now we're moved romantically much more by the lives of the rich, the famous, the beautiful, the pop stars, the professional athletes, the physically gifted, and the intellectually gifted. It's they who now enflame our imaginations, draw our admiration, and who we most like to imitate.

In the early nineteenth century, Alban Butler, an English convert, collected stories of the lives of the saints and eventually set them together in twelve-volume set, famously known as *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. For nearly two hundred years, these books inspired Christians, young and old. No longer. Today, *Butler's Lives of the Saints* has effectively been replaced by *People* magazine, *Sports Illustrated*, *Rolling Stone*, *Time* magazine, and the multiple other magazines which chronicle the lives of the rich and famous and stare out at us from every newsstand and grocery-store check-out line.

In effect, we have moved: from St. Tarcisius to Justin Bieber; from Therese of Lisieux to Taylor Swift; from Thomas Aquinas to Tom Brady; from St. Monica to Meryl Streep; from St. Augustine to Mark Zuckerberg; from Julian of Norwich to Marianne Williamson; and from the first African American saint, St. Martin de Porres, to LeBron James. It's these people who are now enflaming our romantic imagination and inviting our imitation.

Don't get me wrong, it's not that these people are bad or that there's anything wrong with admiring them. Indeed, we owe them some admiration because all beauty and talent take their origin in God who is the author of all good things. From a saint's virtue, to a movie star's physical beauty, to an athlete's grace, there's only one author at the origin of all that grace, God. Thomas Aquinas once rightly pointed out that to withhold a compliment from someone who deserves it is a sin because we are withholding food from someone who needs it to live on. Beauty, talent, and grace need to be recognized and acknowledged. Admiration is not the issue. The issue rather is that while we need to admire and acknowledge the gifts of the talented and the beautiful, these are not always the lives we should be imitating, unless they also radiate virtue and saintliness. We shouldn't too easily identify human grace with moral virtue. But that's a problem.

As well, one of the weaknesses in our churches today is that while we have vastly upgraded and refined our intellectual imagination and now have better and healthier theological and biblical studies, we struggle to touch hearts. We struggle to get people to fall in love with their faith and especially with their church. We struggle to enflame their romantic imagination as we once did by invoking the lives of the saints.

Where might we go with all of this? Can we find again saints to enflame our ideals? Can the fine work done today by Robert Ellsberg on hagiography (on the lives of the saints and other moral giants who have passed before us) become the new *Butler's Lives of the Saints*? Can secular biographies of some moral giants in our own age draw our imitation? Is there a St. Tarcisius out there who can inspire the young?

Today, more than ever, we need inspiring stories about women and men, young and old, who have lived out heroic virtue. Without such ideals to emulate, we too quickly identify moral virtue with human grace and deprive ourselves of higher spiritual ideals.