

DEC 14-15, 2019



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*Our vision is to lead all whose lives we touch
into a living relationship with the person of
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REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS. AGAIN I SAY REJOICE.
Philippians 4:4

To our visitors... If you are just passing through, we are glad you chose to worship with us. If you are seeking a new church home, please know there is always room in our pews and a place in our hearts for you.

DEVIVO CENTRE

116 South 2nd Street
Connellsville, PA 15425

724.628.6840 (f) 724.628.0838

MON-THU 8:30am-noon / 1-4pm
FRI 8:30am-1pm

BRADY CENTRE

459 Ranch Road
Dunbar, PA 15431

724.277.4236 (f) 724.277.8954

MON, TUE, THU, FRI 9am-3pm

SATs 5:15-5:45pm at IC

Confession

and by appointment

We work with the Holy Trinity Conference of Saint Vincent DePaul to help our neighbors in need. Their number is 724.562.3341.

We are grateful for the advertisers who cover the cost of printing our bulletins.

Please frequent their businesses in support of them.

This week's featured advertiser is SOISSON SERVICE STATION.

Our Faith Community consists of the Parish Families of Immaculate Conception, Connellsville (1869), Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Dunbar (1874), Saint John the Evangelist, Connellsville (1895), and Saint Rita of Cascia, Connellsville (1915).



We also embrace the former Parish Families of Saint Vincent de Paul, Leisenring (1888-2008), Sacred Heart, Dawson (1889-2007) Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Connellsville (1901-1913), Saint Emory, Connellsville (1903-1970), Holy Trinity, Connellsville (1903-2008), Saint Polycarp, West Leisenring (1917-1997).

OUR STAFF - WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

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SAT-SUN, DEC 7-8, 2019 STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Adult\$4,288.00
Loose593.75
Maintenance3.00
Total:\$4,884.75

Cemetery\$45.00
Christmas Flowers\$684.00
Thanksgiving\$20.00
Christmas\$20.00
Accent\$90.00
Children & Family Services\$10.00



ST. ALOYSIUS

Adult\$3,894.00
Loose60.15
Children/Young Adults25.85
Parish Improvements352.00
Energy150.00
Total:\$4,482.00

Immaculate Conception\$351.00
Thanksgiving\$421.00
Christmas Flowers\$236.00
Catholic Relief\$125.00



ST. JOHN

Adult\$2,545.00
Loose Collection218.00
Maintenance55.00
Total:\$2,818.00

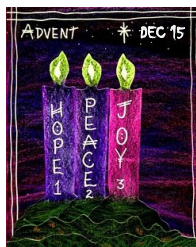
Cemetery\$5.00
Immaculate Conception\$536.00
Thanksgiving\$50.00
Accent\$60.00
Catholic Relief\$2.00



ST. RITA

Adult\$3,349.90
Loose434.00
Maintenance10.00
Total:\$3,793.90

Cemetery\$30.00
Christmas Flowers\$432.00
Immaculate Conception\$332.00
Accent\$32.00



James 5:7-10 PATIENT WAITING

Some things just take time. It takes time for crops to grow, for bread to rise, and for wine

to age. It takes time to learn how to play a musical instrument or to develop athletic skill. Some things cannot be rushed. We do what we can to prepare for the tasks at hand. But in the end, we wait.

It is hard to wait, especially when we anticipate good results. We wish that children would master the lesson, that the beloved would return from a journey, and that God would answer a prayer. It is hard to wait for what we want. Sometimes we do not behave our best while we are waiting. We grow impatient and irritable. God

is sometimes slow. It took thousands of years for God to deliver on the promise to Abraham. Eventually, the child was born in Bethlehem. Then people had to wait for the child to grow up.

Then Jesus died on the cross, and people had to wait for the Resurrection. Then he rose, appeared, and promised to come back again. But people had to wait. We are still waiting.

The Letter of James says, "Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord." We know we must be patient for Christ to come again. While we are waiting, we strive to live in harmony, because it is in our community where we experience even now the coming of our God.

Lectionary Bulletin Inserts: Reflections on the 1st and 2nd Readings, Year A © 2019 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. All rights reserved. Written by Paul Turner. Lectionary for Mass © 2001, CCD.

GAUDETE SUNDAY, the 3rd Sunday of Advent, symbolizes the joy and gladness in the Promised Redemption which should never be absent from the heart of the faithful.

LAST EARLY HOLIDAY BULLETIN DEADLINE
SUBMIT INFO BY **BULLETIN DATE**
TUE, DEC 17 **JAN 4-5**

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK:

MON: Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a; Ps 25:4-5ab, 6, 7bc-9; Mt 21:23-27

TUE: Gn 49:2, 8-10; Ps 72:1-4ab, 7-8, 17; Mt 1:1-17

WED: Jer 23:5-8; Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; Mt 1:18-25

THU: Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a; Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17; Lk 1:5-25

FRI: Is 7:10-14; Ps 24:1-4ab, 5-6; Lk 1:26-38

SAT: Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a; Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Lk 1:39-45

SUN: Is 7:10-14; Ps 24:1-6; Rom 1:1-7; Mt 1:18-24

There will be a 2nd collection for the CHILDREN/FAMILY SERVICES APPEAL, at the Christmas Vigil & Christmas Day Masses.

Please use the envelope in your packet.

When we take care of the poor among us we serve Jesus Himself in a most personal way.

St. Rita Christian Mothers and Rita Pratt would like to thank all who helped make their Christmas Cookie Sale such a huge success. Special thanks to the many women and men volunteers, those who gave monetary donations and baking supplies, and all those who came and supported the sale in any way. May God bless all of you for your continued dedication to the church. Total income was \$10,190.





DOES THE ADVENT LIGHT BRING WARMTH?

The light of the sun always brings warmth. It may shine on a cold winter day, when the thermometer reads below zero, but there is still some warmth coming with the sun's rays, just as the light of Christ comes with warmth and caring. At first sight, though, the light sometimes seems only to accentuate the cold and harshness of the life we find around us.

If we are to make Advent an unsentimental journey, we need to acknowledge any cold news that is there, identify the hurt, the flaws and the evil that lurks around us. Life can be difficult. Does Advent mean anything when life seems hard?

When life seems cold and the future appears dark, we need to remember the One who sends the light. We often forget that God is there, because our troubles seem closer and more real. But God does not leave us.

In our times of discouragement, the Giver of Light comes and holds us. Holding is a giving of security amidst danger, reassurance in times of despair. God holds us and calls us to appreciate the joys that are attainable and the good that still lies amidst the shadows. As God holds us and we rest in His care, our perspective is renewed. We come to realize that in the overall pattern, life is good. In the Advent light, turn toward the good, rest in God's care and you will begin to feel the warmth that the light brings.

What's Happening at home

Our own Advent Penance Services will be at 7pm on these dates:

- ♦ TUE, DEC 17 at St. Aloysius
- ♦ THU, DEC 19 at St. John

The final communal penance service will be held at 11am on SAT, DEC 21 at St. John in Scottsdale.



WED, DEC 18
in the former
CAPS building,
6-8pm.

Please bring a snack to share. Ugly sweater contest, games, prizes, music and FUN! Feel free to bring a friend.

IC Anniversary keepsakes still available for purchase:

- ♦ Christmas ornament - \$20
- ♦ Hanging stand - \$2.50
- ♦ Mug - \$10
- ♦ Christmas cards - \$20/box of 25 or \$2 each
- ♦ Cat's Meow of church - \$15

Please remember CODY CROSS, the newest addition to our prayer list.

Tom Severin's Bible study on Job will continue on **WED, DEC 18** in IC's Sciberras Hall, from 6:30-8pm.

St. Al's FRI Mary series will be held after 8:30am Mass on **DEC 20** and **JAN 3** in the social hall. The study on the Gospel of John will resume on JAN 10.

Our Children's Choir will rehearse on **SAT, DEC 21** at 11am in IC's choir loft. The Choir will also sing for IC's 6pm Mass on **SAT, DEC 21**.

Children in grades 3-6 in all 4 parishes are eligible for membership. In addition, junior/senior high students are invited to serve as leaders and cantors for the Children's Choir.

There will be no confessions heard in our region after SAT, DEC 21.

Just a reminder, that there is an envelope in your DEC packet for Christmas flowers. We will continue accepting them throughout the coming weeks. Donations may be given for deceased loved ones, the sick, your own intentions, etc. The 2 Masses celebrated on Christmas day will be for the intention of those who donated for the Christmas flowers.



Those who donated \$125 or more for St. John's Silent Festival can pick up their

appreciation set of 4 keepsake glasses on **SUNs, 10:30-11:15am** or after Mass in the social hall. Additional glasses are available for \$25/set and \$45/2 sets.

Anniversary Christmas ornaments are available for purchase, \$15 each or 2/\$25.

The Family Christmas Tree from the past has been resurrected in honor of St. John's 125th Anniversary, and will remain in the church through the entire Advent/Christmas season. Families from all 4 parishes are invited to decorate the tree with an ornament of their choice.

Because of the celebration of the special season of Christmas, the DeVivo and Brady Centres will be closed from **TUE, DEC 24** to **FRI, DEC 27**. Thank you for your understanding as we allow our staff to celebrate with their families.

THE WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ARE THE WINTER EMBER DAYS. All Wednesdays and Fridays of the year used to be fasting days. People tried to pray more, give more to charity, and eat less. Many people still keep the custom. The Wednesday, Friday and Saturday before the fourth Sunday of Advent were the winter Ember Days. In lands around the Mediterranean Sea, olives are harvested at this time of year. So the winter Ember Days were days of thanksgiving for the olive harvest. (The word “ember” means “season”.) The bishops of the United States have not yet set special dates for the Ember Days. Many people try to fast and pray and give extra to charity on these weekdays before Thanksgiving. Christmas too, is a harvest festival. That is why we bake and serve so many good, rich foods. Perhaps keeping the 12 Days of Christmas is like saying a long grace before the meals that have fed us in the past year, and like saying grace before the meals that will feed us in the new year to come. Extra prayer, fasting and giving thanks during Advent is a way to thank Our Father.



CHRISTMAS EVE

4:30pm	IC	7:30pm	St. Rita
4:30pm	St. Al	Midnight	IC
5:00pm	St. John		

CHRISTMAS DAY

9:00am	St. Rita
9:30am	St. Al



Congratulations to Adara Lillian, daughter of John Brant & Alexis Metros, baptized DEC 8 at St. John



Congratulations to TARA TIMPANO & JOHN WISILOSKY, married NOV 23 at St. Cecilia's, in Rochester, PA



Congratulations to CARSON VINCENT, son of Christopher & Heather Kennedy, baptized DEC 8 at St. Aloysius

ADVENT - IS NEW LIGHT POSSIBLE? “A Light shines in the darkness!” Isaiah foretold it. Jesus lived it. John proclaimed it.

Advent is a season of dawning light. Do these words have any practical meaning for us? Do we honestly expect to see any new light?

Advent calls us to be expectant, to look at ways in which Christ's coming can make our lives more whole. If, in doing this, we find things that we wish were different, do we genuinely feel that change is possible? Change does not come just by willing it. Often we need some new insight to give us a fresh start. But will that light and insight come?

Advent has a way of surprising us. At time its light may be like that of a shooting star, visible for a short

time but beautiful, if we are alert and ready to see it. Light often comes when we feel that our darkness is greatest. People in therapy may be in deep despair when, during conversation, suddenly a new perspective changes everything around. A lonely night at home is transformed by a loving phone call. Advent's light can come in the same way.

Be open to see the light wherever, whenever and however it may come for you, for light can make a difference. Advent assures us that God's light, like the sunlight, is renewed again and again. There is light somewhere that can bring brightness and vitality within whatever darkness may be found in your life. Look for it with expectation and with prayer, for “those who ask, receive, and those who seek, find.”



THE WOMAN AT THE WELL: THIRSTING FOR TRUTH

**HAVE YOU EVER MADE A PROMISE
THAT YOU COULDN'T KEEP? I HAVE!**

As a working mom with three young children, I have the BEST intentions. I try to be everything to everyone. I am a YES person. I want to be “that mom” who volunteers at their children’s school, works all day, goes to Church every Sunday, and still has the time to make a homemade meal and keep the house neat and tidy. I want to make meaningful memories with my children during the holidays, bake homemade treats for the school Christmas party, and remember to move the Elf on the Shelf. But inevitably, humanity takes over and one of the many balls that I promised to carry drops to the floor. The school work is being done at 8 o’clock at night. The laundry is piling up. I didn’t have time to exercise, or shower. Sometimes, I even forget to have my children pray. Yes, your Director of Evangelization occasionally forgets to light the Advent candle. I fall asleep in my work clothes with my contacts still in my eyes in my son’s Avengers bed. I feel defeated. Why can’t I keep my promises?

Humility steps in. The truth is, I

CAN’T ACTUALLY do it all. I need the Lord! I need a Savior; and our Savior ALWAYS keeps HIS promises! Did you know that there are over 3,000 promises in the Bible? The word “promise” itself, or a derivative, is used over 200 times. The people of the Old Testament were awaiting the promise of a Savior. They had to wait a LONG TIME! The book of Isaiah was written almost 700 years BEFORE Christ was born. They were suffering. They were broken. They saw their ancestors pass away, and still no Savior to come! They could have given up. They could have just relied on themselves. They could have turned away from God, thinking that He had broken His promise. But they had faith. They were patient. They cried out to God. Our Psalm for today, “Lord come and save us” relies on the faith and hope that someday, God WILL fulfill His promise in HIS TIME. Just because God promises something, doesn’t mean it’s going to happen RIGHT NOW.

Suddenly, the Savior is in their midst. Jesus has come! But the ironic part is... no one really seems to know WHO this man is!! Even Jesus’ own cousin John wants to make SURE; sending his disciples to Jesus to question him. Jesus tells John’s disciples to report back what they have seen: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, the leper is clean, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. Jesus is very clearly fulfilling the promises in Isaiah!

The Spirit of Advent is a season of waiting...of stillness...of patience.

WAITING. In the moments I feel overwhelmed and don’t FEEL Christ’s presence, am I willing to be faithful and wait?

STILLNESS. Am I able to be IN the moment instead of waiting and being anxious over the moments to come?

PATIENCE. Do I have the patience to recognize that some things don’t need done RIGHT NOW?

Even amidst the busyness of everyday life, our Savior is THERE! He promises to save us, to help us, to take away our reliance on earthly things so that our reliance would be on HIM alone. The promises of this world will NEVER fulfill us. Even if I was “that mom”....I am NOTHING without JESUS. HIS promises last forever and fulfill us completely. He makes us the best version of ourselves; perfectly imperfect in Him. Even on the worst days, you can rely on the beautiful promise of Christ’s unending love for you.



Will we relinquish the control that we think we have over our lives, ready and willing to give Him EVERYTHING? Will we make Him the center of all that we do? Will we recognize the times when Jesus is attempting to save us from ourselves?


Will we know Him when He comes?

Christ’s peace
and our Mother Mary’s love,
Mary Sampey

OPLATKI CHRISTMAS
WAFERS are available at
all 4 churches at SUN
morning Masses. \$3 for a package
of 4. You may also get them at the
DeVivo Centre.



**We are now scheduling
2020 Masses for all 4 parishes.**

 **TUE & THU Masses will be
held at ST. RITA if the Con-
nellsville School District has
a delay or cancellation for
winter weather.** Watch the news
on TV or listen to your favorite
radio station if the weather is bad.



MINISTERS: Please call/email Chris
Sparks with any JAN/FEB dates you
are UNable to serve at 628-7510 or
crsparks1@zoominternet.net

MASS SCHEDULE & INTENTIONS

MON, DEC 16		ADVENT WEEKDAY
8:00am	St. Rita	Barbara Swenglish (Husband & Family)
8:30am	St. Al	Catherine Lizza (Husband, Bedy)
TUE, DEC 17		ADVENT WEEKDAY
8:00am	St. John	Charlotte Durket (Judy Schroyer)
8:30am	St. Al	George & Anna Klepec (Granddaughter, Anna)
WED, DEC 18		ADVENT WEEKDAY
8:00am	St. Rita	Albert Ondik (The Ondik Family)
8:30am	St. Rita	Adoration until 4:30pm
THU, DEC 19		ADVENT WEEKDAY
8:00am	IC	Agnes Fitzgerald (Michael & David Fitzgerald & Families)
8:00am	St. Al	Prayers for Priests & Padre Pio Devotions
8:30am	St. Al	Harry & Dorothy Lizza (Richard & Mary Balena)
FRI, DEC 20		ADVENT WEEKDAY
8:00am	St. Rita	Mary Grace Osler (The Tiberio Family)
8:15am	St. Al	Divine Mercy Chaplet
8:30am	St. Al	John W. Taylor, Jr. (Wife & Sons)
SAT, DEC 21		VIGIL/ST. PETER CARISIUS, PRIEST & DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH
4:00pm	St. Rita	Joey Marciante, Jr. (Parents, Brother & Family)
5:00pm	St. Al	Bob DeCara (Wife & Family)
6:00pm	IC	Pro Populo
SUN, DEC 22		4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8:00am	St. Rita	Marian Stockman (Charlene LaFisca & Family)
9:00am	St. Al	Rudy DeGrazia (Diane Zinsky)
9:30am	IC	Theodore Zgorecki & Irene Zgorecki Koballa (Bob Broderick & Family)
11:30am	St. John	Howard & Kathleen Davanzo (Don & Sandy Davanzo)



the repose of the souls of JOSEPH RANKER and JOHN ROWMAN,
who died recently. May their souls and the souls of the faith-
ful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in eternal peace.

MINISTRY SCHEDULE - DEC 21				MINISTRY SCHEDULE - DEC 22			
	SR-4PM	ST. AL-5PM	IC-6PM	ST. RITA-8AM	ST. AL-9AM	IC-9:30AM	ST. JOHN-11:30AM
ACOLYTES/ SERVERS	A Bandemer L Bandemer	E Bohinski M Pascoe	S Zuccaro M Grimm	G Joseph E Armstrong	J Hustosky A Sampey	B Petrone E Snyder	L Kalivoda L Hampshire
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS	L Sparks R Pratt G McDermott	M Vinoverski T Bohinski P Herron	N Holonich E Aquino D Calinao	L Kozel C Porter G Bohinski	S Smith J Laurion T Dull	J Miller S Reagan P Akers	L Martin B Knizner D Siecinski
CROSS BEARERS	M Martray	W Trimbath	G Holonich	C Joseph	N Mongell	A Zavatchan	L Thomas
LECTORS	M Dunaway	T Szepesi	R Goron	T Kezmarsky	G Heller	L Galiardi	R Marciante
ROSARY		J Connell			Volunteer		



GREAT LITERATURE: THE LORD OF THE RINGS

Did you know that J. R. R. Tolkien was a Catholic author? I would forgive you if you didn't. After reading or watching

The Lord of the Rings, it's not immediately apparent. But the book is as Catholic-Christian as they come. Middle Earth, the fantasy world that Tolkien "subcreated", is steeped in a Christian theological understanding of the universe. It is a "pre-Abrahamic" world – a world in which God has not yet revealed himself to anyone. This is why there is nothing that resembles religion or worship in Middle Earth – only naturalistic prefigurings of it.

Tolkien weaves his stories with a deep, almost hidden allegorical theology. This is in stark contrast to his very close friend, C. S. Lewis, who wrote so that the Christianity underneath jumps up and slaps you in the face. After reading *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, if you don't realize that Aslan is a Christ figure then you missed something obvious. As much as I enjoy Lewis as an author, I far prefer his theology and philosophy over his science fiction and fantasy for this reason. I appreciate Tolkien's subtle style much more – it doesn't distract me from the story and there is a great deal more to explore and to uncover.

It may surprise you to know that there are three Christ figures in *Lord of the Rings*. Three different characters go through a type of death only to rise again from the dead more powerful than they began. The first and most obvious of these is Gandalf the Grey, who falls out of Moria into the depths of the earth, duels with the Balrog, and

returns as Gandalf the White. The second is Aragorn, the man who long hid from his destiny as the heir of Gondor and future leader of all humanity. But at a crucial moment, he enters the Paths of the Dead, from which no man has returned alive, and comes out with an army of the Dead Men of Dunharrow to fight in the great Battle of the Pelennor Fields. Finally, Frodo Baggins enters into Mordor – an allegory of hell itself – and defeats Sauron by carrying the ring to Mount Doom, the only place it can be destroyed. His success in this mission allows him to enter into the Undying Lands in the West, where only immortal beings were permitted to live.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS IS NOT CHILDISH FICTION. IT IS A MARVEL OF EMBEDDED CHRISTIAN STORYTELLING.

What is so beautiful about Tolkien having chosen three Christ figures for his story is that they also each highlight the three *munera*, or offices, of the Old Testament that Jesus takes up: priest, prophet, and king. Each of these offices were originally ordained by God to be carried out by different people. The Levite priests offered worthy sacrifice at the temple on behalf of the community. The ancestral kings ruled and governed the nation of Israel. And the God-chosen prophets spread the Word of God, teaching the people and speaking difficult truths at times.

In *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is the priest – he freely carries the ring in sacrificial service for the salvation of the entire world. Gandalf is the prophet – he has great wisdom and knowledge, his words carry power, and he was willing to speak the dif-

ficult truth to people everywhere. Aragorn is the king, the one who was destined to lead and to govern mankind when things were most bleak. All three of these figures were necessary to accomplish victory and all three played a different but essential role.

Jesus Christ has become our priest, our prophet, and our king. He is the primary force behind all Christian teaching, governance, and sanctification. When we ourselves are baptized and confirmed, we are anointed with the sacred chrism and can participate in these roles of Christ. Each of us is a prophet, priest, and king in this way. Just like Jesus (and Frodo), we can offer priestly sacrifice to God on behalf of ourselves and others when we pray, fast, and give alms. Just like Jesus (and Gandalf), our words carry power and can spread the prophetic message, helping others to come to know the truth. And just like Jesus (and Aragorn), we are given authority as Christians to build up God's kingdom here on earth.

While the early 2000's movies do an excellent job of transmitting the bulk of the story, many of Tolkien's theological insights are hidden in the rich text of his books. I highly recommend reading the books not only because they are entertaining but also because they are intellectually and spiritually enriching. (PSA: Don't get bogged down in the sections that are written in Elvish...I just skipped them.)

In his book *On Faerie Stories*, Tolkien spoke out against those who criticized fantasy stories as being "childish." History has shown Tolkien to be right. *The Lord of the Rings* is not childish fiction. It is a marvel of embedded Christian storytelling. In short, it is a masterpiece.