

**December 3, 2023**

*From Father Kirby...*

Happy Sunday, Team Grace! Today marks the beginning of the Advent season. As Ordinary Time was all about discipleship, Advent is all about preparation. We are called to prepare for the coming of the Lord. This preparation is principally about the Lord's Second Coming and our judgment before him. Are we eagerly awaiting the Lord's return? Are we ready for his coming among us?

With the season of Advent, we now switch to a new cycle of readings for our Sunday Masses. We've finished Matthew's Gospel and now turn to Mark's Gospel for the coming liturgical year.

Please note the many Advent hymns, customs, and traditions at the end of this column. I encourage all parishioners to implement some of them into their family observance of this season of preparation.

Of the many ways to observe Advent, I particularly want to recommend and emphasize the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours. Nothing can compare with a devout participation in the prayers of the Church.

This Sunday, December 3, our 11:00 AM Mass will include a children's homily and a blessing of the Baby Jesus. All children are asked to bring the Baby Jesus from their home creches for the blessing. The parish will also give out little Baby Jesus statues to every child.

*Saint Nicholas will be visiting our parish this Sunday, December 3!* Children are asked to come to the 11:00 AM Mass and to leave their shoes along the hallway before Mass. Good Saint Nick will visit during the Mass and fill shoes with goodies! Parents are asked to put a note about allergies in the shoes of their children. After the Mass, the children are encouraged to grab their candy and come to the Parish Hall with their parents for fellowship.

Some things happening at the parish that I'd like to highlight this week:

Our landscape architect was hoping to start the work on our Front Hill and columbarium in November. There is a slight delay, compliments of Lancaster County, but things are moving forward now. It's our hope to see the work begin this month.

With the end of the month of November, I've taken the All Souls envelopes to my altar in the rectory. Thank you to those who submitted an envelope with the names of your beloved dead. I assure you of my private Masses and prayers throughout the coming liturgical year for the repose of their souls.

This weekend, December 2-3, we'll be singing the [Lourdes Ave, Maria](#). The tune is very similar to the one we're familiar with, but there are some differences. We'll be singing the *Lourdes Ave* since we'll be using that hymn for our Immaculate Conception Procession on December 7. It's my great hope that everyone will come and participate in the evening Mass and Procession.

Please note our [calendar for the program year](#) 2023/2024 is posted on our parish website. The calendar describes all our events and programs for the year.

Some other future events I'd like to highlight:

I encourage everyone to continue in their thirty-three-day preparation for Consecration to Jesus through Mary. The Consecration can be made *before* all the Masses on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8). Please come to Mass about five minutes early if you plan on making (or renewing) the Consecration.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is on Friday, December 8. It is a Holy Day of Obligation. The Immaculate Conception is the patronal feast of the United States, as well as the patronal feast of our parish. Our Mass times are: Thursday, December 7, at 4:00 PM, 5:30 PM, and 7:00 PM. Friday, December 8, at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM. Confessions are available after all the Masses except the 7:00 PM Mass. The 7:00 PM Mass on December 7 is our parish's Anniversary Mass. The Mass will be followed by a beautiful candlelight procession and crowning of Our Lady. *All parishioners are highly encouraged to come to the evening Mass!*

On Tuesday, December 12, we will not have Confessions or daily Mass. I'll be away with my mother, who is undergoing knee surgery. This will be her fifth surgery on the same knee. Please remember her – and her recovery – in your prayers.

During our daily Mass on Wednesday, December 13, we will have a Blessing of Eyes in honor of Saint Lucy. All are encouraged to come to Mass and receive this saintly blessing.

As is our custom here at Our Lady of Grace, our Meditation Hymn at the 11:00 AM Mass on the Third Sunday of Advent, December 17, will be the German rendition of the hymn, “Lo, How A Rose E’er Blooming.” We are very grateful for the German culture within the Church!

On Wednesday evening, December 20, at 7:00 PM, the children of the parish are hosting our annual Live Nativity. All are invited to come for the Live Nativity and stay afterwards for hot chocolate and cookies.

Some general announcements for the good of the parish:

We are currently working on our website. Our first task is to find a new company to design and carry the website since we want professional service and quality design. As soon as this task is complete, we’ll then begin to move things over and develop our current content. Please be patient, knowing that work is being done and we look forward to our website being more of a resource to everyone as soon as possible!

I’d like to encourage every household of the parish to register for [FORMED](#). This is a free digital platform with good Catholic, family-friendly content. I also want to strongly encourage every household to join [EWTN OnDemand](#), which is another free digital platform whose content is supportive of our faith.

As a reminder, our parish staff can be readily reached via email. [Here is the staff directory](#).

I was hoping to host a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Rome this coming June. With the situation in the Middle East, such a pilgrimage is not possible. In its place, however, I’ll be hosting a pilgrimage to the [Great Shrines of France](#). The tour will include Lourdes, Lisieux (Saint Therese the Little Flower), the holy places of Paris, Nevers (Saint Bernadette), Paray-le-Monial (Sacred Heart Apparitions), Lyon, LaSalette, Ars (Saint John Vianney), and the Beaches of Normandy with a Mass at the US Foreign Cemetery. This is not a parish pilgrimage, but I wanted to make the parish family aware of the opportunity. The pilgrimage is a personal pilgrimage of mine and many people from different parts of the United States will be participating in it. All are welcome!

More updates next week! Oremus pro invicem (let’s pray for one another)!

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Weekly spirituality column: <https://cruxnow.com/author/fr-jeff-kirby>

Daily Reflections available through [MorningOffering.com](#).

As we approach December, here are some links to help with Advent customs and traditions:

Information on the “O, Antiphons” can be found [here](#). The Jesse Tree can be found [here](#). The Advent wreath can found [here](#). The Las Posadas and the Aguinaldos can be found [here](#).

Here are some Advent Songs that were put together by our Director of Sacred Liturgy: [People Look East](#); [On Jordan's Bank](#); [Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates](#); [O Come, O Come Emmanuel](#); [Lo How a Rose](#); [The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns](#); [People Look East](#); [O Come, O Come Emmanuel](#) ; [Hark a Herald Voice is Calling](#); [Wake Awake for Night is Flying](#) ; [Emmanuel](#); [Watchman, Tell Us Of The Night](#); [Awake, Awake and Greet the New Dawn](#); [Behold! Behold He Cometh](#); [O Come, Divine Messiah](#).