

**December 17, 2023**

***From Father Kirby...***

Happy Sunday, Team Grace! Today, we celebrate Gaudete “Rejoice” Sunday. This marks the shift in the Advent season. Up until now, our focus has been the Second Coming and our particular judgment before God. Now the focus becomes our preparation for Christmas and meeting the Christ Child in the manger of Bethlehem.

As a sign of this shift in Advent, Mother Church clothes herself in rose. She tempers the penitential violet (purple) with rose as a sign of the joy that is coming to us in Jesus Christ.

As is our custom here at Our Lady of Grace, our Meditation Hymn at the 11:00 AM Mass this weekend 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!

Earlier this week with Gaudete Sunday on the horizon, the parish sent out our Christmas cards. Every household should receive a card from the parish. Please let us know if you do not receive one.

As we observe the sacred season, I want to once again recommend and highlight the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours. It's a blessing and a consolation to be united with the entire Church as we seek the arrival of the Lord Jesus.

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

*The work has begun on our Holy Angels Columbarium and the Front Hill! We've been waiting for a while, and now it's time! It is very exciting! Please be cautious since various construction equipment and building materials will be stationed around our campus. The anticipated conclusion of the work is sometime in March.*

This 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.

The campus and church will be closed this Thursday, December 21, so staff can celebrate Christmas with their families. Many of our staff work on the holy day and this time is very important for them and their families. There is no public Mass on this day and all parish events are suspended.

This year Christmas is on a Monday. Christmas is a Holy Day of Obligation. This means we get to participate in two Masses! One for Sunday and one for Christmas! Here is our Christmas Mass schedule: Sunday, December 24, at 4:00 PM, 6:00 PM, 8:00 PM, and 10:00 PM, and Monday, December 25, at 10:00 AM.

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:

As is our custom, the parish campus and church will be closed for the few days after Christmas Day. There is no public Mass and all events are suspended from December 26-28.

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, January 1, falls on a Monday this year and the Church has suspended it as a Holy Day of Obligation. There is no obligation for Mass on January 1. The parish campus will be closed. There is no public Mass. All events are suspended.

On Wednesday, January 3, our Wednesday formation nights pick back up. All the sessions begin at 6:30 PM. Confessions will be heard beforehand at 6:00 PM. Our Parish Office will be opened before and after the sessions in case anyone is in need of administrative assistance.

Our first weekend in January is Friday-Saturday, January 5-6. Please plan on joining your parish family in our all-night prayer vigil.

On Sunday, January 7 at 12:15 PM, in honor of the Epiphany, the parish is hosting an Epiphany Stocking Fellowship. At the fellowship, each person will receive a small stocking and be invited to walk through various candy stations and fill their stocking with holy day goodies! All are welcome!

On the weekend of January 13-14, the parish is hosting a Diaper Drive. All parishioners are asked to bring children's diapers to Mass with them. Parishioners can drop off the diapers before Mass at the pavilion. Members of our Helping Hands ministry will be on site to assist you.

On Sunday, January 14, we'll host two blood buses on our campus. There is a dire need for blood in our area and so I encourage all parishioners to consider giving blood. [Here's the link to sign up.](#)

Some general announcements for the good of the parish:

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.

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!

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](#).