

December 15, 2024

From Father Kirby...

Happy Sunday, Team Grace! Today, we celebrate Gaudete “Rejoice” Sunday. As the midpoint of Advent, this Sunday marks the shift from the first part of Advent to the second. Our focus at the beginning of Advent is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, whereas now, in this latter part of Advent, our focus is celebrating his First Coming among us. We are now actively preparing for the holy Nativity of our Lord!

“Gaudete” is a Latin imperative, a command, which means “Rejoice!” In observance of Gaudete Sunday, the Church tempers the penitential violet and gives us a festive rose for the altar and vestments. We are not yet at the joyful white or gold of Christmas, but we’re getting close! In addition, for Gaudete Sunday, the Church allows for flowers and more festive music. This is also the time in which we can begin to wish one another a “Merry Christmas.”

Traditionally, Gaudete Sunday is when homes would begin to be decorated to welcome the Christ Child at Christmas. For this reason, you’ll see wreaths on our church doors this Sunday.

Our parish Christmas cards were sent out and every household should have received theirs late this past week. *Merry Christmas!*

In observance of Gaudete Sunday, and as a way of recognizing the German portion of the universal Church, we’re having the hymn *Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming* sung in its original German during our 11:00 AM Mass today. *Frohe Weihnachten!*

Some things happening at the parish this week:

The work on our Marian Grotto continues. The statue of Our Lady was placed in the Grotto late this past week. There is still more work to be done, but we are eager to see its completion and to bless this beautiful shrine in honor of Our Lady!

As work is being done on the Marian Grotto, we are still waiting for a couple of different permissions to be given so we can complete the grading and beautification of the rest of the front hill.

I’m happy to announce that starting today, December 15, my daily reflections are starting back up. Through the generosity and resources of some unexpected Catholic

leaders from outside the parish, the videos are being produced and distributed again! Please visit www.DailyDiscipleship.org and sign-up to have these free, 3-4 minute reflections sent right to your in-box every morning.

The parish is happy to host a pilgrimage to the holy places of Saint Augustine, Florida, from January 14-16. [Here's a flyer](#) with more information.

The third anniversary of my father's passing is this Tuesday, December 17, and so I'll be in Columbia that day with my mother and siblings. There are no Confessions or daily Mass that day, but all other devotions are still available.

This Tuesday, December 17, we have devotional prayers at the Holy Angels Columbarium at 9:30 AM, Morning Prayer (Lauds) at 10:00 AM, the holy Rosary at 11:30 AM, and then the Saint Peregrine Novena at 12 Noon. Adoration follows the novena and concludes with Benediction at 2:15 PM. Please come and join your parish family in prayer!

Everyone is invited to come and watch the children of the parish in the Live Nativity this Wednesday, December 18, at 7:00 PM. The children will reenact the birth of the Lord Jesus and sing some Christmas songs for us. A fellowship with cookies and hot chocolate will follow the event. All are welcome!

The [calendar for the program year](#) 2024/2025 is posted on our parish website. The calendar describes all our events and programs for the year. This is posted for your reference and information.

Some other future events I'd like to highlight:

As we near the Christmas season, please note the change of hours for our campus and church building. The campus and building will be closed for staff holidays on December 23. We'll be open for the Christmas Masses on December 24-25. The campus and building are closed for staff holidays on December 26-27. We have regular hours for the weekend of December 28-29 but are then closed on December 30-31. We're open for Masses on Mary, Mother of God (January 1), but are closed on January 2. On Friday, January 3, we have our regular First Friday schedule, and then return to a normal schedule across the board. These holidays allow our staff to celebrate the holy days with their families and enjoy some well-deserved rest.

All are invited to come and celebrate the Mass of our Lord's holy Nativity (Christmas)! It's a time for us to rejoice that God is with us! As a reminder,

Christmas is a Holy Day of Obligation. Our Mass schedule is Tuesday, Christmas Eve (December 24) at 4:00 PM, 6:00 PM, 8:00 PM, and 10:00 PM; and then Wednesday, Christmas (December 25), at 10:00 AM.

Please note that Christmas has both a proper Vigil Mass and a Mass of the Day. The Masses on Christmas Eve are not “anticipated” Masses but are celebrations of the proper Vigil of the Holy Day.

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, January 1, is an opportunity for all of us to start a New Year under Our Lady’s protection and guidance. The solemnity is a Holy Day of Obligation. The Mass schedule is January 1 at 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, and 7:00 PM.

I’m happy to announce that our Bishop will be visiting the parish on March 1, 2025. The Bishop will be visiting to confer Confirmation on the young people of our parish. Any young adult, who is in the 7th grade and above, can petition for Confirmation. The petition is made to me as your pastor. As a help in this process, I ask that anyone who wishes to petition for Confirmation, please reach out to Carrie Scibelli, our Liturgy Coordinator. Carrie will walk you through the paperwork and process. She can be reached at: cscibelli@charlestdiocese.org. Please note: *If a young person is not regularly attending Sunday Mass, and if they are not living the Christian way of life, then they are not yet ready for Confirmation.*

Some general announcements for the good of the parish:

I’m also happy to host a [pilgrimage in the footsteps of Saint Paul](#) (Greece and Turkey) in June. I’ll post more information on this pilgrimage in the months to come.

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

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

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