



## Saturday, December 23

8:00 a.m. Special Intention  
8:30-9:00 a.m. *Confession*  
4:00-4:45 p.m. *Confession*  
4:35 p.m. *Rosary*  
5:00 p.m. Greg Mayer +

## Sunday, December 24

### Fourth Sunday of Advent

7:10 a.m. *Rosary*  
7:30 a.m. Parish Family  
9:40 a.m. *Rosary*  
10:00 a.m. Liam & Libby Dunn

## Sunday, December 24

### Christmas Eve Masses

4:00 p.m. Robert & Mary Haecker + and  
Trent Patterson +  
5:30 p.m. Christmas Carols with the St.  
Joseph Choir  
6:00 p.m. Parish Family  
Midnight Bob Bushee +

## Monday, December 25

### Christmas Day Mass

9:00 a.m. Emily Butler +

## Tuesday, December 26

7:00-8:00 a.m. *Adoration*  
8:00 a.m. Laura Schnerre +  
8:30 a.m. *Confession*

## Wednesday, December 27

8:00 a.m. Larry Sanders +

## Thursday, December 28

8:00 a.m. Mike Bickley

## Friday, December 29

8:30 a.m. David R. Burk +

## Saturday, December 30

8:00 a.m. Special Intention  
8:30-9:00 a.m. *Confession*  
4:00-4:45 p.m. *Confession*  
4:35 p.m. *Rosary*  
5:00 p.m. Lawrence Edward Robinson

## Sunday, December 31

### The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

7:10 a.m. *Rosary*  
7:30 a.m. Parish Family  
9:40 a.m. *Rosary*  
10:00 a.m. Bill & Elizabeth Dunn

### MASS READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Mon., December 25 - The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) - Is 52:7-10/ Heb1:1-6/ Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5,9:14

Tues., December 26 - St. Stephen, The First Martyr - Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/ Mt 10:17-22

Wed., December 27 - St. John, Apostle and Evangelist - 1 Jn 1:1-4/ Jn 20:1a,2-8

Thurs., December 28 - The Holy Innocents, Martyrs - 1 Jn 1:5—2:2/ Mt 2:13-18

Fri., December 29 - Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord - St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr - 1 Jn 2:3-11/ Lk 2:22-35

Sat., December 30 - Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord - 1 Jn 2:12-17/ Lk 2:36-40

Sun., December 31 - The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Gn 15:1-6,21:1-3/ Heb 11:8,11-12,17-19/ Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22,39-40

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - DECEMBER 24, 2023

**Merry Christmas!** Today, the Church celebrates both the **Fourth Sunday of Advent** (Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup>) and, immediately following, the **Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ** (Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup>). We welcome all those joining us as we prepare together and enter into the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ! Know that you are always welcome here at St. Joseph.

One of the first things you see upon entering the Church this **Christmas** is the Nativity in the narthex. This year marks the 800th anniversary of the first Nativity, which was a living nativity scene arranged by St. Francis of Assisi in a cave near Greccio, Italy. St. Francis, moved by his own travels to the Holy Land, wished to invite the local villagers to whom he ministered to gaze upon “the babe of Bethlehem,” leading to his creation of this first Nativity.

Prior to our **4 PM Christmas Eve Vigil Mass**, the manger in the Nativity lays empty as a sign of our continued preparation and longing for the babe of Bethlehem. To begin our Christmas celebrations, the Nativity will be blessed and the Christ-child will be placed in the manger at the start of this vigil Mass. The Nativity will remain out throughout the **Christmas season**, though we will find the Shepherds give way soon enough for the coming of the Magi.

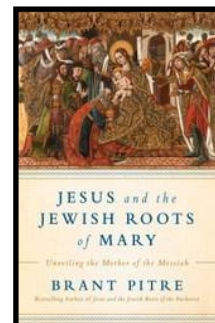
In front of the Nativity are two kneelers to allow for individual prayer throughout the Christmas season. I encourage you to use our beautiful Nativity (*and your own at home!*) as a point of prayerful contemplation throughout this entire **Christmas season**: Jesus Christ has entered *the* world! Jesus Christ has entered *our* world! What does this greatest of gifts mean to us today?

### PARISH CHRISTMAS GIFT - JESUS AND THE JEWISH ROOTS OF MARY

At Easter, we gave out Dr. Brant Pitre’s “*Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*,” which received great feedback from the parish. We are following up this work this Christmas with another book from Dr. Pitre: “*Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary - Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah*.”

Quite a fitting read as we enter the **Christmas Octave**, this work goes step-by-step through the Garden of Eden to the Book of Revelation to reveal how deeply biblical Catholic beliefs about Mary really are. Among other titles, it helps to show how the Bible itself teaches that Mary is in fact the new Eve, the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, and the new Ark of the Covenant.

In addition to this gift, we received an additional gift of the newest work by Matthew Kelly, “*The Rocking Chair Prophet*.” This work from *Dynamic Catholic* is both a captivating and imaginative novel that offers a variety of wisdom about relatable experiences common throughout life.



### MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

On Monday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Church celebrates the **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**. This ancient celebration, traced back to the 5<sup>th</sup> Century and the *Council of Ephesus*, recognizes Mary as *Theotokos*, or “God-bearer.” As this celebration falls on Monday this year, though a holy day, it is **not** a holy day of obligation this year. Though not obligatory, may we see it as a *holy day of opportunity*. To celebrate this solemnity and mark the end of the **Christmas Octave**, join us for a special Mass on **Monday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, at 7 PM**.

### FIDUCIA SUPPLICANS - ON THE PASTORAL MEANING OF BLESSINGS

This past Monday, December 18th, the **Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF)** released a declaration entitled “*Fiducia Supplicans - On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings*.” As this declaration was quoted heavily, often only partially or incorrectly, in various media outlets throughout the week, I wanted to offer a short summary of the work. As always, I would encourage you to read the declaration itself (available on our parish website) to see what it truly says as it truly is a very thoughtful document. (*cont. on Page 3*)



Becky Biberstein, Michael Green, Frances Carr, Tom Richhart, Troy Cook, Bobbie Jackson, Bonnie Burns, John Houlihan, Kimberly Abney, Sydnee Bradburn, Leanne Lee, Dr. Doug Phillips, Jeff Tillman, Margaret Pogue, Richard Payne and Ron Dresser.



## O Come Let Us Adore Him



Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Eve Mass* - 4:00 p.m.  
 Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Carols* - 5:30 p.m.  
 Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Eve Mass* - 6:00 p.m.  
 Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Midnight Mass*  
 Mon., Dec. 25 - *Christmas Morning Mass* - 9:00 a.m.  
 Mon., Dec. 25 - *Christmas Brunch*  
 Immediately after Mass in the Parish Social Hall.  
**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

The Parish Office will be closed on Monday, December 25th and Tuesday, December 26th for the Christmas Holiday.



### PARISH CALENDAR

- Sat., Dec. 23 - Confession 4-4:45 p.m. / Mass 5:00 p.m. (*Vigil Mass Fourth Sunday of Advent*)
- Sun., Dec. 24 - Mass 7:30 a.m. / Mass 10:00 a.m. (*Fourth Sunday of Advent*)
- Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Eve Mass* - 4:00 p.m.
- Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Carols* - 5:30 p.m.
- Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Eve Mass* - 6:00 p.m.
- Sun., Dec. 24 - *Christmas Midnight Mass*
- Mon., Dec. 25 - *Christmas Morning Mass* - 9:00 a.m.
- Mon., Dec. 25 - *Christmas Brunch*, in the Parish Social Hall, immediately following Mass. Sign up sheet in the narthex.
- Tues., Dec. 26 - Adoration 7-8:00 a.m. / Mass 8:00 a.m. / Confessions 8:30 a.m.
- Tues., Dec. 26 - *Parish Office Closed*
- Wed., Dec. 27 - Mass 8:00 a.m. (No Adoration or Confession).
- Wed., Dec. 28 - *Christmas Party Game Night* - 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Social Hall
- Thurs., Dec. 28 - Mass 8:00 a.m.
- Thurs., Dec. 28 - *Ask Father* - 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Conference Room.
- Fri., Dec. 29 - Mass 8:30 a.m.
- Sat., Dec. 30 - Mass 8:00 a.m. / Confession 8:30 a.m.
- Sat., Dec. 30 - Confession 4-4:45 p.m. / Mass 5:00 p.m.
- Sun., Dec. 31 - Mass 7:30 a.m. / Mass 10:00 a.m.
- Sun., Dec. 31 - NO Religious Education Classes - Christmas Break.
- Mon., Jan. 1, 2024 - *The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord & Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God* - Mass at 7:00 p.m.
- Tues., Jan. 2 - Adoration 7-8:00 a.m. / Mass 8:00 a.m. / Confessions 8:30 a.m.
- Wed., Jan 3 - Adoration 6-7:00 p.m. / Confession 6-7:00 p.m. / Mass 7:00 p.m.

### Weekend of December 30/31



5:00 Dan Lautzenheiser  
 7:30 Mike Morrissey  
 10:00 Teresa and David Smith



5:00 Ginny Fenstermaker  
 7:30 Barb Ault  
 10:00 Patti Clark-Johnson



10:00 Jeff Miller, Rick Singer, Jacque Johnson



5:00 Melanie/Isaiah Bedwell, Volunteers  
 7:30 Jacquelyn/Phillip, Angela or James Mayer  
 10:00 Sam Smith, Charlie Andrews, Luke Miller

### St. Joseph Parish Finance Report for the Weekend of Dec. 16/17

Adult Envelopes- \$4,646.00  
 Loose- \$259.77  
 Repair/Rainy Day Fund- \$1,469.97

Religious Education Fund- \$125.00  
 Christmas Flowers- \$35.00  
**Total- \$6,535.74**

### Our weekly budget is \$5,116.40

We are \$1,863.16 ahead of our budget for the month of December.

St. Vincent de Paul Fund- \$693.00

**Your gifts to St. Joseph Parish are greatly appreciated. Thank you!**

To set up Online Giving through Our Sunday Visitor, please visit:  
<https://www.osvhub.com/stjosephchurchbluffton/giving/funds>

### CHRISTMAS BREAK

As a reminder, we will not have Religious Education Class on December 31st due to our Christmas break. Classes will resume on Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

## ASK FATHER

*Ask Father* returns Thursday, December 28th at 5:30 PM in the Parish Conference Room.

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### From Death To New Life

In your charity, please pray for the repose of the soul of Geoffrey Frank, husband of Mary Lynn Frank, who passed away Friday, December 15, 2023 and was laid to rest on Thursday, December 21, 2023



May God welcome him home,  
 fill him with peace and bless those who will miss him.

Eternal Rest Grant unto him O Lord, and let Perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in Peace. Amen.

# What Christmas Means To Me...

**Christmas means getting together with family and the ones you love. My family makes a "Happy Birthday, Jesus" cake. We also open presents and play games.**

**– Landen Lautzenheiser, Grade 2**



**Christmas means meeting with my family and celebrating the Lord, Jesus Christ. I like to give presents to others who can't buy the presents themselves. That is what Christmas means to me. - Halleigh Valenti, Grade 3**

**Christmas is a time where we spend time with family and have fun.  
Christmas means Santa, friends and toys, but mostly it means Jesus.**

**- Barret Wisenbaker, Grade 2**



**Christmas means getting to spend time with my friends and have crazy parties with lots of good food. Also appreciating my mom for all the stuff she does to prepare for it and my father for all the work he does to provide for us. After Christmas it is a nice time to slow down, lose weight and spend time with the people I love.**

**- Merry Christmas! Annemarie Haiflich, Youth Group**

**What Christmas means to me. By: Angela Mayer, Grade 7**

**Christmas is a day to be joyful and happy. You gather with friends and family to celebrate the beautiful time. It means thanking Jesus and God and remembering the holiness of this time.**

**Presents and candy are just things to make you happy for a little while, while Jesus and God make you happy forever. Just like you say "thank you" to your parents for presents, we thank the Lord and Savior on this day.**

**Christmas means spending time with loved ones and sharing happiness. Laughing, telling stories, remembering the good and bad times, seeing people you haven't seen in a while, helping the poor, feeding the hungry, talking to the lonely, taking care of the sick, and lending our helping hands to everyone. While we sit and think about our Lord's precious day, we have gotten to see His amazing birthday. Thanking him for yet another day we got to live. And thinking about this precious Christmas Day.**



**What Christmas means to me is that Jesus was born. Getting family around to open presents. Eating good food. Christmas trees with a star on top.  
Praying and being nice. Making crafts.**

**- Amber Bedwell, Grade 1**

# Getting Involved in the New Year



## Knights of Columbus

If you're interested in helping others, serving your parish, growing in your faith, and having access to top-rated insurance protection, then the **Knights of Columbus** is for you. Our Council meets the **first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Social Hall.**

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 2, 2023**

## G.I.R.L.'s Night Out

*(Growing, Inspiring, Rejoicing, Loving)*

St. Joseph's **G.I.R.L.'s Night Out** acts through its membership to support, empower, and educate all women of St. Joseph Parish in their spiritual lives, leadership skills, and service opportunities.

Our meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month, September through May, at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Conference Room.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 9, 2023**

### FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - DECEMBER 24, 2023

#### BULLETIN COLUMN CONTINUED

For background, the **DDF** is an office within the Vatican whose focus is to defend Church teaching. A declaration is a document, written by an individual office within the Vatican, that offers guidance on how to best put into practice various aspects of Church teaching in the modern world. This particular declaration was written by the **DDF** and "recognized" by Pope Francis *ex audientia*, meaning that he met with the author to review the text.

The declaration is itself broken into three main parts: A review of the Church's teaching on marriage; A review of the Church's understanding and practice in giving blessings; and Pastoral guidance to priests. In brief, the document reaffirms the Church's consistent teaching on marriage and offers pastoral guidance on how we can walk with individuals who are currently in relationships that are outside of this teaching.

Specifically, the declaration is looking at blessings and the various types of blessings that can be given. For example, in the marriage ritual, there is a specific blessing, referred to as the Nuptial Blessing, offered to couples who are free and able to marry. This blessing "*is tied directly to the specific union of a man and a woman*" and cannot be bestowed upon relationships existing outside of this teaching. There are, however, other types of blessings that are available to all people, both Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

The declaration refers to this wider range of blessings as "spontaneous" blessings, or blessings asked for by individuals or groups as a means of recognizing God's presence in our lives and our need for Him. These blessings, offered outside of any liturgical context, are always (*and always have been*) freely given with the understanding that when one asks for such a blessing, "*one is expressing a petition for God's assistance, a plea to live better, and confidence in a Father who can help us live better.*"

Given this understanding of spontaneous blessings, even those who are not in a position to approach the Sacraments are able to request such a blessing as a recognition of our constant "*need of God's help*" in our lives. It is suggested that such spontaneous blessings can be used as a pastoral way to walk with couples in irregular situations (e.g. those married outside of the Church) and individuals in same sex relationships.

A spontaneous blessing is not to be confused with an acceptance of such relationships, but instead an encouragement to the individuals involved in their desire to grow closer to God. As the declaration concludes, it is hoped that all those who request such a spontaneous blessing receive it as a means "*to open one's life to God, to ask for His help to live better, and also to invoke the Holy Spirit so that the values of the Gospel may be lived with greater faithfulness.*"

~Faithfully in the Babe of Bethlehem, Fr. David

With humble gratitude to everyone who sent a card or a gift this Christmas season: *Thank you!*

**May God bless you and your family abundantly in the coming new year.**

Michelle Paxton, *Administrative Assistant/DRE*

I would like to give a heart felt thank you to all the choir members, cantors and instrumentalists who participated in providing music for all the Masses this weekend.

May the peace of Christ remain in you throughout the entire year.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

Teresa Smith, *Director of Sacred Music*



# Upcoming Events

Help Us Celebrate the Birth of Jesus

## Christmas *Party*

WEDNESDAY | 27 DEC | 7:00 P.M.

**PIZZA, CAKE, AND BYO  
CHRISTMAS TREATS**

Christmas Minute-To-Win-It,  
Christmas Games, and  
Christmas Bingo!

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**Catholic  
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**Welcome to The Catholic Parent,**  
a video series created *for* Catholic parents  
*by* Catholic parents!

**Starting Sunday, January 21, 2023  
8:45-9:45 AM in the Parish Social Hall**



# Upcoming Events



SAVE THE DATE  
**MARDI  
GRAS 2024!**

February 10, 2024  
St. Joseph Catholic Church

Sponsored by:  
G.I.R.L's Night Out

## Jesus and the Eucharist

A SMALL GROUP SERIES  
FOR EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL



### *Jesus and the Eucharist* Small Study Groups

Starting: 1st Week of Lent  
Feb. 18, 2024

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T - is it true?  
h - is it helpful?  
i - is it inspiring?  
n - is it necessary?  
k - is it kind?



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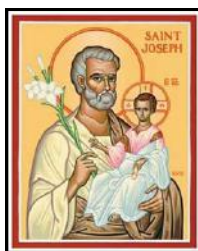


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