

The Nativity of the Lord CHRISTMAS

December 25, 2016



Did you ever wonder how many people celebrate Christmas? I don't mean just here in Ridgefield or in Connecticut or even in our own country. But around the world, and it's a big planet. Well, I don't have a number for you. But there is one thing we do know - Christmas transcends national boundaries. It rises above ethnic and political differences, and it pays no attention to social and economic class. It's also an ecumenical holy day because we Catholics are not alone in celebrating the Lord's birth. Down the street at Saint Stephen's they're doing the same thing. And if you take a ride up Main Street to Jesse Lee and go up a little further to the First Congregational Church, you'll find their families commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ.

In Ridgefield, Connecticut, where we are gathered for our Christmas celebration, in Rome where Pope Francis is celebrating the Midnight Mass in Saint Peter Basilica, in Jerusalem, in Mexico City, in Baghdad, in new Delhi, in Rio di Janeiro, in Melbourne, in Prague, and yes, even in Hollywood, California, Christians are getting together as they do every year to remember in solemn fashion the arrival of the first child in a poor family that lived 20 centuries ago in a small country that was part of the Roman Empire.

My guess is that if you went to one of the cities I just mentioned, the figures in its crèche would look a bit different – Mary in Mexico City might look a little more Mexican than our version of her, and so might Joseph. Of course, that is as it should be. After all, no nation, no ethnic group, no political body, no social or economic class owns Jesus Christ. The Messiah was born in Bethlehem of Judea, raised in the Jewish faith, and he spoke Aramaic. But Jesus really does not belong to any one country or culture or language. His message, and His life and His death and His resurrection speak to every heart and soul. Christmas transcends the differences that history and politics and economics have created – the differences that divide us. So Mary and Joseph and Jesus can look like Indians or Italians or Arabs or Ridgefielders.

Christmas reminds us that Jesus Christ belongs to the world – all of it, not just the part of it or piece of it that we inhabit. Christmas reminds us that the Word became flesh for one reason – to save the human race – all of it, not just the people we know and love but also the people we don't know or don't like. The Nativity Story belongs to everyone, no matter who you are or how important you are, no matter how old you are, or how smart or successful you may be or may not be. The story we retell today belongs to all of us.

The Christ Child lying in front of our altar came into the world to be picked up and held and loved by every human being without exception. The man He grew up to be died on the cross to prove that.

Christmas, my brothers and sisters, still has something to teach us.

Msgr. Larry Bronkiewicz

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Msgr. Larry Bronkiewicz".

Pastor



MASS READINGS & INTENTIONS

MONDAY, December 26

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Mt 10:17-22

9:00 AM The Burnett Brothers

TUESDAY, December 27

1 Jn 1:1-4/Jn 20:1a, 2-8

7:00 AM Bernadette Meyler

12:00 PM James Whalen

WEDNESDAY, December 28

1 Jn 1:5—2:2/Mt 2:13-18

7:00 AM Geno Tarsi

12:00 PM Alfred Kaletta

THURSDAY, December 29

1 Jn 2:3-11/Lk 2:22-35

7:00 AM Lillian Sturz

12:00 PM Carey Depuy

FRIDAY, December 30

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17/Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

7:00 AM Deceased Members of the Regan Family

12:00 PM Louise & Elma Waltz

SATURDAY, December 31

1 Jn 2:18-21/Jn 1:1-18

8:00 AM Frances Carboni

4:30 PM Henrietta & Pat Quaranta

SUNDAY, January 1

Nm 6:22-27/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21

Church

7:30 AM Conrad and Mary Sponberg

9:15 AM Parishioners of the Parish

11:15 AM Margaret Anne Keane

Hall

10:30 AM Edna & Ralph Johnson

12:00 PM Marjorie McLean

5:00 PM Mildred Kwalwasser



GOD'S PLAN FOR GIVING

This week's second collection is for Facilities Repair. Thank you for your continued support.

Due to holiday bulletin deadlines, offertory numbers were unavailable before this Bulletin went to print. Updates will appear in our next Bulletin.

Please remember our sick in your prayers, especially Theresa Avento, Joseph Barone, Mary Jo Calamai, Megyn Caldwell, Patti Capilli, Dina Casavecchia, Bill Casey, Emmy Jane Jones, and Luke Whitbeck.

(For the sake of privacy, only immediate family members may add someone to our prayer list. Individuals will be removed monthly unless we are otherwise notified.)



Wedding Banns

III. Daniel White and Susan Thomas Bray



Billboard sponsored by our Knight of Columbus located on Federal Road in Danbury and US1 in Bridgeport.

A Church Altar Candle is Burning in Loving Memory of Ellen & Thomas Flynn



2016 DONATIONS

Remember St. Mary Parish this Christmas!

The end of the month is approaching. There is still time to make donations for the 2016 tax year. You can do it easily with *Online Giving*. Go to www.smcr.org to sign up and make giving a snap!

Contribution Tax Statements

Contribution Tax Statements will be mailed out in January 2017 to all Parishioners who contributed to our Parish Offertory this year. All contributions must be received by December 31, 2016, in order to be acknowledged for 2016 tax status.

Candle Intentions

Remember a friend or loved one with a candle lit in their name. Candle Intention options:

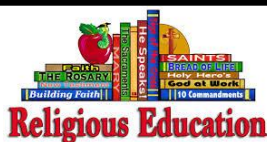
Adoration Chapel Tabernacle Candle - \$40 donation, for one week

Church Sanctuary Candle - \$40 donation, for one week

Church Altar Candles - \$20 donation each, for one week

Hall Sanctuary Candle - \$20 donation, burns at Sunday Mass

All intentions will be noted in our Bulletin during the week requested and each Candle Intention purchased includes a card with envelope. Please purchase at our Parish Office.



Religious Education

Our Catechist and Aide In-Service Event is on Sunday, January 15th, beginning at the 10:30am Mass. Brunch will be served, followed by our Guest Speaker, Mr. Patrick Donovan, Director of Strategic and Pastoral Planning of the Diocese of Bridgeport! Patrick will address the Diocesan plans for the Institute, which are being launched that very week as well as the Catholic Service Corps, which is already off to a strong start in the Diocese.

GIFTS FOR ALL: Liturgy of the Word for Children with Special Needs is scheduled for January 8 and January 29. Please see our website for more dates. If you can volunteer to be a Special Ed Teacher, Peer Witness or Music Minister, please call Pat Postiglione, (438-6538) or Sharol Signorelli (438-2302).

RESPECT LIFE COMMITTEE



Join us for our next Respect Life meeting, Monday, January 9th at 7pm in the Day Chapel (behind the Altar in the Parish Hall). *"In its seventh week [the unborn baby] bears the familiar external features and all the internal organs of the adult...The brain in configuration is already like the adult brain and sends out impulses that coordinate the functions of other organs...The heart beats sturdily. The stomach produces digestive juices. The liver manufactures blood cells and the kidneys begin to function by extracting uric acid from the child's blood...The muscles of the arms and body can already be set in motion. After the eighth week...everything is already present that will be found in the full-term baby."* - Interview with Bernard Nathanson, M.D., 1986 (the most infamous abortionist in history)
www.smcr.org/respect-life



DEFENDING OUR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The Catholic Church is not asking for special treatment when it comes to the federal healthcare mandate, she is simply asking that every American's right to religious freedom be protected. This right is not only about our ability to go to Mass on Sunday, or to pray the rosary at home. It is about adhering to the tenets of our faith, so that we can contribute to the common good of all Americans.

If you haven't done so already, please voice your opposition to the federal health care mandate by calling U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell at 202-205-5445, and your elected representatives. Let them know that the mandate is in violation of our First Amendment right to religious freedom.

20th ANNIVERSARY



Saint Mary School
 RIDGEFIELD

The True Reason for the Season

As the season of Advent ends and our Christmas celebrations begin, let us reflect on the joy and love a small infant child brought to the world. Those who believed followed the light to find a child born in the most humble beginnings. That infant child, a baby boy, became Jesus Christ our Savior. We are humbled by the glory of God the Father who gave us his only son. This Christmas, let us reflect on the light that brings us together in a community of faith and remember the true reason for the season.

Blessings for a Christmas filled with love and peace!
 —Anna O'Rourke and the entire SMS Community

Saint Mary School is currently enrolling students in select grades of Preschool through Grade 8 for the 2016-2017 school year, as well as accepting applications for the 2017-2018 school year. For more information, or to set up a tour, please contact Anna O'Rourke at (203) 438-7288, or visit www.smsridgefield.org.

FAITH FORMATION CORNER



Reading the Bible (cont'd)

Today's Catholic is called to take an intelligent, spiritual approach to God's Word in the Bible.

Additional pointers for more fruitful Scripture reading:
Know what the Bible is – and what it isn't. The Bible is the story of God's relationship with the people he has called to himself. It is not intended to be read as history text, a science book, or a political manifesto. In the Bible, God teaches us the truths that we need for the sake of our salvation.
The sum is greater than the parts. Read the Bible in context. What happens before and after – even in other books – helps us to understand the true meaning of the text.
The old relates to the new. The Old Testament and the New Testament shed light on each other. While we read the Old Testament in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, it has its own value as well. Together, these testaments help us to understand God's plan for human beings.

CATHOLIC ACTION

Volunteers Needed



Elders in our community need YOUR help. We need the following at Congregate Housing, Prospect Ridge:

1. **BINGO CALLERS** - 1 (or 2) needed. Wednesdays 1-2:30pm, once a month.
2. **LUNCH SERVERS** - 3 or 4 needed. Weekdays 11:45am-1:00pm, 2x/month. You can choose the days to volunteer.

CONTACT: Suzanne MacAvoy for info and to volunteer, sdmacavoy@hotmail.com H 203 438-7056

DONATE: Midnight Run

Midnight Run: Friday January 27. Items needed: heavy jackets, hooded sweatshirts, jeans, hats, gloves, scarves, new underwear (M-XXL), socks, lightly used sneakers, thermal underwear, blankets, sleeping bags, backpacks & travel sized toiletries & toothbrushes. Drop off items at the Barn between 7:30am and 3:30pm on Jan 20 to 26. Volunteers are needed to sort and fold clothing, pick up and return the van and to go on the run. Any questions or for more info call Elma or Jim Stoveken at 203-894-1341.

DONATE: Food Pantries

During the month of December, all food collected goes to Dorothy Day Hospitality House. Suggested food items include cereal, pasta, canned food, vegetable oil and baby food. Also needed: full-size toiletries. Thank you!

Mass of Remembrance

A Mass of Remembrance for the loss of a child will be held on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, Wednesday, December 28, 2016 at 7 p.m. at St. Ann Parish in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. Father Perter Lynch, pastor, will celebrate the Mass. More info, email OfficeofFaithFormation@diobpt.org



You Can Play an Important Role in Our Ministry

Do you know someone going through a difficult time who could benefit from the focused care, encouragement and support of a Stephen Minister? If you know of someone who is hurting, talk to one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders, Mary Ann O'Grady – 203-438-5610 or Jack Hughes – 203-665-0054. They can talk with you about how we can connect the person you know with one of our Stephen Ministers. Reach out and show your care.

PILGRIM VIRGIN



To honor the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, consider inviting the Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima to your home to pray the Rosary daily, a wonderful Marian devotion. The message from heaven for us is more urgent than ever to pray for world peace and the conversion of sinners. To invite the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima to your home contact Elma Stoveken at 203-894-1341.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

O = permanent or substitute adorer urgently needed.
X = 1 additional adorer needed.
Empty boxes = there are 2 or more adorers.

	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
12M-1am	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1am-2am	X	O	O	X	O	X	X
2am-3am	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
3am-4am	O	X	X	X	X	O	X
4am-5am	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
5am-6am	X	X			X		X
6am-7am	X		X	X	X		X
7am-8am	X		X	X	X	X	X
8am-9am				X			X
9am-10am	X	X		X	X	X	X
10am-11am	X			X		X	X
11am-12N	X						X
12N-1pm	X				X	X	X
1pm-2pm	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
2pm-3pm	X	X	X	X		X	X
3pm-4pm		X	X	X	X	X	X
4pm-5pm	X		X	X	X		X
5pm-6pm	X		X	X	X		X
6pm-7pm	X			X	X	X	X
7pm-8pm	X						X
8pm-9pm						X	X
9pm-10pm	X	X			X	X	X
10pm-11pm			X	X		X	X
11pm-12M	X		X		X	X	X

Happy Birthday, Jesus! Thank you for giving us the wonderful gift of you! None of us are worthy of such a great gift. Let us all try to live up to your expectations of us & tell of your glory among all nations. By abiding by your directives, we bless your name hoping to share in eternal happiness with you. With open hearts, let us accept your precious gift of true love. May we share this gift by spending time with you! Please sign up by calling Bill or Monica @ 914-533-2832. God bless you all.

EVERY Thursday evening, 7-9pm, in our Adoration Chapel, the Chaplet of Mercy, 7 Sorrows of Our Blessed Mother and 15 decades of the Rosary are sung and prayed. Please join us!



ST. MARY PARISH MEN'S MINISTRY

Membership in the STMMM is a lifetime invitation to come whenever you can! Once a member always a member. Come join us any Saturday @ 6:30AM for bagels, coffee and fellowship. Perhaps your spiritual life needs a tune-up. Come and see how Jesus' teachings can enrich your life and the life of your loved ones. stmmm.org

MARQUETTE COUNCIL OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS



Don't you want to be the best role model for your child? The easiest way is to share the faith with your children by spending time with them and "walking the talk." Connect the words to action! Join the Knights of Columbus for the opportunity to serve our church and community together WITH your children. We are looking for Dads and their kids to help us throughout the year. Contact John McNicholas at jmpmcnich@yahoo.com or visit www.kofc245.org for more info.