

*"Do not be
afraid, Mary,
for you have
found favor
with God."*

LUKE 1:30



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Mass Intentions

for the Week
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**THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 24, 2023**

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

The Mass of Anticipation for 4th Sunday of Advent

4:00PM Michael Romano—Memorial

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

7:30 AM Jeanne Toole—Birthday Remembrance

9:00AM Pat Franzone—21st Anniversary

10:30AM Dr. John H. Duffy—7th Anniversary

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24 CHRISTMAS EVE

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

4:00PM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25 CHRISTMAS DAY

The Nativity of the Lord

7:30AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy

9:00AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy

10:30AM The Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26

Saint Stephen, The First Martyr

7:30AM James J. Kenny—Memorial

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27

Saint John, Apostle & Evangelist

7:30AM Carolyn Perretta—Memorial

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

7:30AM Bishop Robert E. Mulvee—5th Anniversary

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29

Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

7:30AM John E. Gardner, Jr. —Memorial

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30

Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

8:30AM Jack Murphy—Memorial

The Mass of Anticipation for the Feast of the Holy Family

4:00PM Gene & Mary Verri—Memorial

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

The Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

7:30AM Bill Daly—Memorial

9:00AM Edward Coleman—Memorial

10:30AM Antonetta Marzilli & Eileen DiMillio—Memorial

5:00PM Pope Benedict XVI—1st Anniversary





Dear Parishioners:

The celebration of Christmas is an occasion for great joy and deep faith. We rejoice in the birth of Our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. We remember his First Coming in the stable at Bethlehem and long for the Prince of Peace to come into our homes and hearts now.

This year, we long fervently for the Prince of Peace to return to the land of his birth. Christmas is subdued and solemn in the City of our Savior's Birth. No Christmas tree adorns Nativity Square. The City of Bethlehem, which neighbors Jerusalem in the West Bank, is just 30 miles from the war in Gaza.

So, our fervent prayer this Christmas must be for peace. Peace in our home and country, and also in Ukraine, the Holy Land, and worldwide. Pope Francis said: *"Let us pray for peace: peace in the world and in each of our hearts."*

As we look for the meaning of Christmas, we need to unwrap Jesus from all the glitter and tinsel around us. We must see that Christmas is about something other than giving expensive presents or having the perfect meal. Rather, Christmas is about God's precious gift to us, His Son Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

With the violence and destruction of war in too many countries today, we need that *"peace that the world cannot give."* As the Prophet Isaiah reminds us: *"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests, They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-*

Forever, Prince of Peace."

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, whose birth two thousand years ago, we celebrate at Christmas, is the same God-made -Man who died thirty-three years later upon the Cross. He did so to bring us true peace and eternal salvation. For Christmas cannot be divorced from the events of Easter.

Our faith teaches us that Jesus Christ is the One who can bring true peace to the nations and the peoples of the world. And so, as we celebrate Christmas in peace and tranquility amid the security of our homes and the love of our friends and family, let us remember those who have no peace.

During the First Week of Advent, I made my annual retreat at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. The Monks dedicate their entire lives to *ora et labora* (work and prayer). Manual labor daily except on Sundays. Prayer daily five times a day, beginning at 2:30am. Yet, to look upon them is to see not only deep faith but also true joy and peace.

On retreat, I read a published letter from a young monk written to his parents at Christmas. In it, he writes of his first Christmas in the Monastery: *"You perhaps cannot comprehend how we celebrate Christmas here; on Christmas Day, we stay in our cell all day, except for communal prayer in church, occupied with nothing but contemplating what happened in the stable near Bethlehem. No Christmas carols, no crib, no Christmas tree (not even a little branch of it), no gifts, and no candles: nothing, quite nothing save what*

happened at Bethlehem. And yet, I can assure you quite honestly that I have never experienced such a joyful Christmas. Here, the joy is deeper."

We don't have to go to a Monastery to find the joy and peace of Christmas. Simply look for it amidst the noise and distractions of the holiday. On Christmas Day, contemplate the birth of our Savior quietly and prayerfully. If we do, we can gratefully appreciate, truly comprehend, and joyfully celebrate the gift of Christmas: God's only Son born on that cold and dark night in the stable at Bethlehem so long ago.

Because of Christmas, we can never be alone. Those who live in war, injustice, and persecution are not alone. Those in hospitals and nursing homes who suffer from sickness and isolation are not alone. Those who are sorrowful, fearful, lonely, addicted, homeless, and hungry are not alone. For *"God is with us!"* Emmanuel has come! This is the cause of true joy, the joy of Christians.

Father Mahoney, Father Connors, and I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas. May it be full of joy, peace, hope, and faith! You and your families are remembered in prayer and at our celebration of Christmas Masses. May the blessings of the Prince of Peace be yours this Christmas and in the New Year. A Blessed Christmas Season. Be well. Do good. God Bless. *"Peace on earth, goodwill to men!"*

Father Healey

Christmas on Monday

WHEN CHRISTMAS falls on a Monday, it causes temptation. In the Catholic Church, we begin celebrating Sundays and holydays on the previous evening. This practice stems from a custom that reckoned the start of the day at sunset. Saturday night Mass provides a convenience for individuals and families making alternative plans for Sunday morning, but it more deeply alerts us to the holiness of the most important day of the week.

Many families find Christmas Eve Mass an ideal way to begin observing this holyday. They gather for the Eucharist at church, then perhaps go home for a meal and exchange gifts. The next morning, their Christmas becomes a day of rest.

But when Christmas falls on a Monday, things get confusing. Two eves and two days intersect. Your parish will probably offer Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent on Saturday evening December 23 and Sunday morning December 24. Then on Sunday evening December 24, it will begin celebrating Christmas. That's a lot of church in 48 hours.

You may be tempted to skip a Mass either for the Fourth Sunday of Advent or for Christmas. You may be tempted to go to one Mass on December 24 and count it for both events. Advent is very short in such years, barely over three weeks, and it deserves our full attention. Christmas, of course, is one of the primary celebrations of the Church Year. These two distinctive liturgies draw us into the mystery of the Word Made Flesh.

Yes, it is extra effort to go to church twice during a busy interval of time, but there is no better way to prepare for and celebrate the reason for the season—the birth of Jesus Christ!

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Weekly Collection

Collection Results from last weekend are unavailable due to the Christmas Print Deadline.

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***Leave a Legacy of Faith for the next
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Mercy Church in your will or estate.***

For a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us! They call Him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace! -Isaiah

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**

The OLM Parish Office is closed for the Christmas Holiday from Monday, December 25 until Tuesday, January 2, 2024

**There Will Be No Monday Evening
Confessions on Christmas Day**



Birth Date of Jesus

THE OPENING of the third millennium harmonized with the traditional date for the first Christmas. Without a doubt, the birth of Jesus is the most important event to celebrate in a new millennium. But there is plenty of doubt about when that birth took place.

There is no clear historical record of the date and year of Jesus' birth. Although two of the Gospels record incidents pertaining to the event, neither assigns a date.

Two main theories surround the choice of December 25 to commemorate the Nativity. The first theory looks to a third-century Roman pagan celebration coinciding with the winter solstice. As the days began to lengthen each year, December 25 became a festival for the rebirth of the unconquered sun. Christians, who believed Christ was the real unconquered source of light, put his birth date on the same day.

The second theory looks to the passion of Jesus. According to early conjectures, the actual day of Christ's passion fell on March 25 in the year Jesus died. Some Christians believed that Jesus died on the anniversary of his conception. For this reason, March 25 became also the celebration of the Annunciation. Looking forward nine months, the birth of Jesus was placed on December 25.

The traditional year of Jesus' birth was fixed in the mid-sixth century by Dionysius Exiguus, a monk and scholar who set the calendar according to the system we now know as AD. (*anno domini*, "in the year of the Lord"). However, Matthew and Luke both say Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great, which scholars now calculate from 37 to 4 BC. Oddly then, Jesus was probably born "before Christ."

Although the actual birth date of Jesus cannot be known, he was born, and we continue to commemorate his birth by recognizing that all of time hinges on his life.

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Fr. Mahoney's Christmas Roast

This whole adventure into the monthly recipe with the saints began two years ago when I was asked after Mass what I would be cooking for Christmas dinner. The answer is a prime rib roast. Then, I was asked if I could put my recipe for it in the bulletin at some point, and here we are. Cooking a roast, especially beef, can be intimidating as many are concerned about overcooking it. So here is my tried-and-true method for my Christmas prime rib roast and a few personal secrets to get the best out of it. I hope you enjoy it!

What you will need:

One Bone in Prime Rib Roast Any Size (Serving size for prime rib is 2-3 servings "per bone." I ask the butcher to remove the bones and tie them back onto the roast. Cooking meat on the bone adds more flavor, but carving around the bones can be painful. By having your butcher tie the bones back on, you get that extra flavor but can remove the meat easily for slicing after it is cooked. Also you'll need: Salt, Pepper, Crushed Garlic, Fresh Chopped Rosemary, Onion, Celery, Carrot, A Roasting Pan and Digital Thermometer

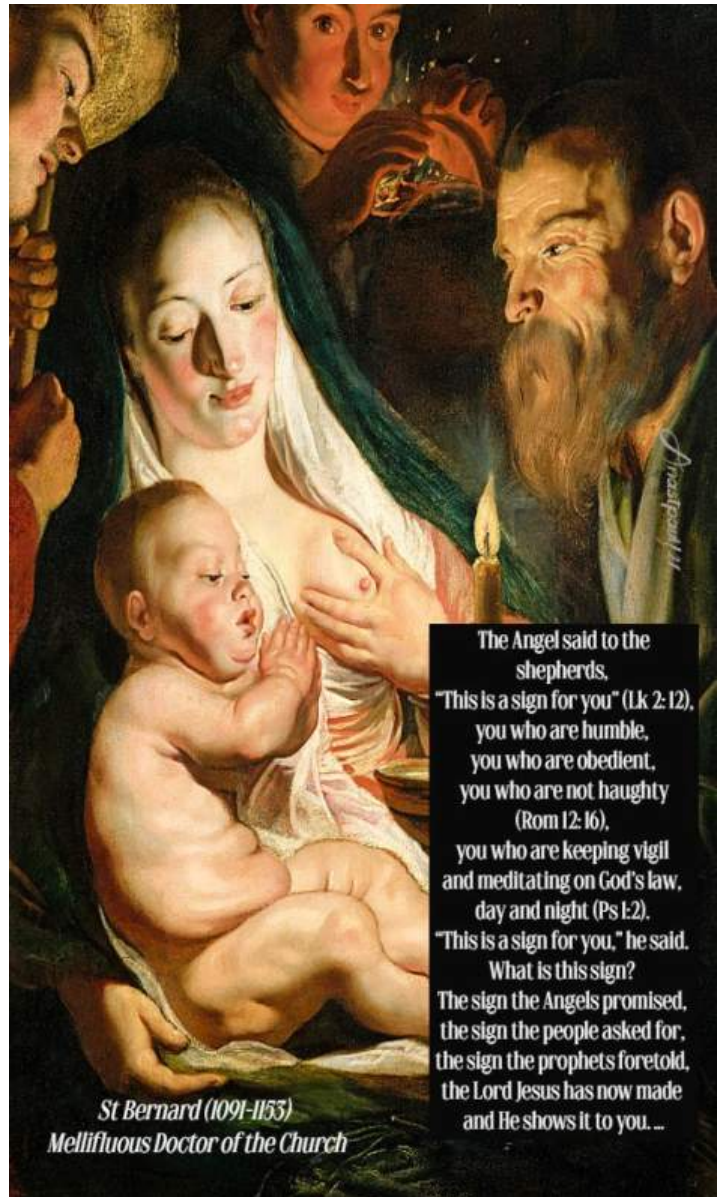
Method:

Step 1-The day before cooking: roughly chop carrots, celery, and onion and place in the bottom of the roasting pan. HEAVILY season the roast with salt, pepper, garlic, and rosemary. Place in refrigerator uncovered overnight (24 hours if possible).
Step 2-You will need to calculate the cooking time for your roast. Here is the formula: 15 minutes per pound, minus one pound. For a 5lb prime rib that comes to 1 hour. This is for medium rare
Step 3-Remove roast from refrigerator 2 – 3 hours before cooking.
Step 4-Preheat your oven to 500 degrees. No that is not a typo, 500 degrees.
Step 5-Cook roast at 500 degrees for 15 minutes, then drop oven temperature to 325 degrees for the remaining time.
Step 6-As each oven and roast will cook slightly different, you will want to use a digital thermometer to check the temperature periodically throughout the cooking process.
(Beef is rare at 115 degrees, medium rare at 120 degrees, and medium at 130 degrees. All the feel and skill in the world is not a substitute for an accurate digital meat thermometer. Prime rib is too expensive to take any chances!)
Step 7-Remove the roast from the oven when the temperature is 7-10 degrees lower than your desired final temperature. The roast will continue cooking as it rests.
Step 8-LET IT REST. The most often overlooked step. Let the roast rest for 30 minutes to allow the juices to reabsorb into the meat. During this time, you can make a great gravy with what is in the roasting pan.
Step 9-After resting, remove the strings, separate the roast from the bones and slice. Enjoy!



We Wish All OLM School Faculty, Staff , Students, Families, Alumni and Benefactors a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year! May God's Abundant Blessings Be Yours this Christmas and in the New Year!

Patrick H. McNabb
OLM School Principal



The Angel said to the shepherds,
 "This is a sign for you" (Lk 2:12),
 you who are humble,
 you who are obedient,
 you who are not haughty
 (Rom 12:16),
 you who are keeping vigil
 and meditating on God's law,
 day and night (Ps 1:2).
 "This is a sign for you," he said.
 What is this sign?
 The sign the Angels promised,
 the sign the people asked for,
 the sign the prophets foretold,
 the Lord Jesus has now made
 and He shows it to you ...

*St Bernard (1091-1153)
Mellifluous Doctor of the Church*



We thank all the OLM Parishioners for their generous support and abundant charity to the OLM Outreach Office in this holy season and throughout the year. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Doug E. Green
OLM Outreach Director



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