

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2017 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FROM THE PASTOR GAUDETE SUNDAY

The Third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete means "joy," and in the readings, we repeatedly are told to rejoice in the Lord. Saint Paul goes so far, in the second reading, to tell us to "rejoice always".

I recently was at the funeral of a friend who had died very suddenly and unexpectedly. His family had been devastated, and they will be dealing with great sorrow at their loss for months and years to come. Yet, what was obvious in this family was that even in the midst of their grief and shock, there was great joy. First of all, there was the joy of having had such a wonderful husband and father and grandfather in their lives. Even in this time of loss, they know that they were richly blessed. And there was joy in the gift of one another. The great love that they had for each other was, and has been, obvious to anyone who knows them. Finally, they were filled with joy because of their faith. They know that their God is with them through this crisis, and their faith tells them that they will see their father and husband again one day.

My friends were able to find joy even in such a terrible time because they are joy filled people on a regular basis. This is who they are. And their joy is grounded in their faith. Because they know God, they know that no tragedy is the final word. There is hope and there is joy, even on the darkest days.

This is what Saint Paul knew and wanted us to know when he wrote that we should rejoice always. We do not rejoice because our loved ones die, but in spite of that fact. We do not rejoice because we have lost a job or had some other kind of major setback in life, but in spite of our struggles, we rejoice. As we are told in Romans 8, "We are more than conquerors because of him who loves us." We do not rejoice because everything in our lives is wonderful, but because we know that our God is greater than any problem or difficulty that we face.

So, rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say, rejoice!

INVITE A FRIEND TO CHRISTMAS MASS

Many people who never attend church at any other time of the year are open to doing so at Christmas. Some of these are fallen-away Catholics, or those who have fallen away from the practice of another church. Some have never been a part of a faith community and have never really learned about Jesus Christ and the salvation that he has come to bring us.

Each of us should plan to invite someone to come to Christmas Mass with us. Perhaps it will be a family member, a co-worker, a neighbor, a friend. Take a few moments of prayer, and ask the Lord to help you

recognize someone in your life who might respond to a gentle and loving invitation to Christmas Mass. Call them. Visit them. Text them. Message them. Somehow, reach out to them.

You never know. It might be the beginning of a new relationship with God for them.

CHRISTMAS WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas falls on Monday this year, so December 24 is both the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. Christmas and the Immaculate Conception (December 8) remain as days of obligation even when they fall on a Monday or a Saturday. So we do need to attend a Mass for both the Sunday and for Christmas.

Our Mass schedule for Mother of God Church is:

December 24 9:30 am – Fourth Sunday of Advent
11:30 am – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Christmas Eve Mass 5 pm

December 25 9:30 am – Christmas Day Mass
11:30 am – Christmas Day Mass

NEW YEAR'S WEEKEND

The Church does not celebrate January 1 as New Year's Day. One major reason for that is that we are a universal Church, and although the West and most of the rest of the world celebrates that day as the beginning of the new year, there are nations and cultures that do not. The Church celebrates her own New Year on the First Sunday of Advent.

For the Church, January 1 is the conclusion of the Octave of Christmas, and is the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. I thought when I came to Mother of God Church that this would be our parish feast day but was informed that the full title of the church is the Annunciation of the Ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God. So our parish feast day is actually March 25, the date of the Annunciation.

Because January 1 falls on a Monday this year, the obligation to attend Mass on that day does drop out. So we will have only a 10 am Mass on New Year's Day. Even though there is not an obligation to attend Mass that day, doing so would be a wonderful way to begin 2018.

December 31 9:30 am – Feast of the Holy Family
11:30 am – Feast of the Holy Family

January 1 10 am – Solemnity of Mary

NEW PARISH COUNCIL GUIDELINES

For the past year or so, we have not had a parish council at Mother of God Church. When I was assigned here, Bishop Foy's suggested that I wait until the new guidelines for parish councils were released before resurrecting the Council. These guidelines have been released and were in last week's *Messenger*. I encourage everyone to read these, even if you have no interest in being part of the council. Parish Council represents you

in an advisory role to the pastor. All should know what council is and what it does.

Sometime right after the first of the year, I will begin seeking recommendations and volunteers to serve on the Parish Council. Please consider if you might be a good candidate or if there is someone else who you wish to suggest.

PRAY THE ROSARY

As you have probably picked up by now, I am a big promoter of the Rosary. Whenever I look at the problems that we face as individuals, families, as Church and as society, I become more and more convinced that the Rosary is the most important tool we possess, and that we need to turn to it more and more. We are in the last weeks of the Apparition of the Blessed Mother at Fatima, where she asked us to pray the Rosary daily. She promised us, through the three children of Fatima, that in the end, no matter how overwhelming the problems we face, that her Immaculate Heart would be victorious.

I encourage couples who are struggling in their marriages to pray the Rosary together and to ask Mary to pray that they will receive the graces that they need to overcome their difficulties. Families who are facing crisis and difficulties, pray the Rosary together. As Father Patrick Peyton, the Rosary Priest, taught, "The family that prays together, stays together." If you are battling an addiction of any kind, pray the Rosary. Especially if you are already in recovery, pray the Rosary. If you are dealing with sickness or chronic pain, pray the Rosary. Are you depressed or anxious? Pray the Rosary.

Saint Luke tells us in his Gospel of the Visitation, when Mary came to her cousin Elizabeth. He tells us that the child within Elizabeth's womb (John the Baptist) leapt with joy that our salvation was so near, and she said, "Who am I that the Mother of my Lord would come to me?" We may think the same thing -- "Who am I that Mary the Mother of Jesus and of the Church would take the time to concern herself with my problems, with my struggles?" And yet, that is her constant promise to us in her many apparitions.

Mary still comes to us today. Sometimes she comes in remarkable ways, as at Guadalupe, at Lourdes or Fatima. More often she simply comes to be with us as we open our hearts to her, to comfort us, to strengthen us, to pray with us and for us, and to bring the graces of her beloved Son to us.

When we pray the Rosary properly, meditating on the Mysteries of the Rosary, we reflect on the stories told to us about Jesus and Mary in the Bible. We reflect on the words of Jesus. And in doing so, we enter into the mystery of Jesus himself. Pope Saint John Paul II, the most Marian pope in the Church's history, taught that the Rosary is the school of Mary, where she will lead us into

deeper knowledge and understanding of Jesus. She will teach us how to contemplate his face and to be transformed by that encounter.

I have recently come across a couple of new books about the Rosary that I would like to recommend. The first is entitled *Rediscover the Rosary: The Modern Power of an Ancient Prayer*, by Matthew Kelly. I know that many of you are familiar with some of Matthew's other books or CDs. He is a great teacher of the faith, and this is a wonderful book on the Rosary for those who are new to it and those who have been praying it for a long time.

Another very good, very new, book on the Rosary is: *The Contemplative Rosary: With Saint John Paul II and Saint Theresa of Avila*. It is by Dan Burke and Connie Rossini. Along with meditations on the Mysteries of the Rosary, this book also contains great teaching on prayer itself from Saint Theresa of Avila, who is one of the greatest teachers on prayer that the Church has ever produced.

I have been reading these in the past few weeks and have found them very inspirational and informative. I highly recommend them.

PARISH NEWS

Mother of God Church 859-291-2288

Email: motherofgod@mother-of-god.org

www.mother-of-god.org

Rev. Michael Comer, Pastor

mcomer@mother-of-god.org

Cell: 859-816-3198

Deacon Tom Dushney

Cell: 859-750-8536

Sunday Masses:

9:30 am Mass Traditional Music

11:30 am Mass Contemporary Ensemble

Weekday Masses: M,T,Th, F and

Sat 12:05 pm No Mass on Wed.

Reconciliation: Tues. 11:15 am and

Sat. 11 am

NOTICE: Hearing Impaired Devices Available. Please see an usher if you need one.

NOTICE: The Catholic Extension 2018 calendars are in the back of church for you to pick up. These calendars are provided by a generous donation from the James and David Middendorf Funeral Home

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS: Envelopes are in the pews for donations to the Christmas Flower Fund. Please write the name of the person you wish to honor or remember on the envelope so we can acknowledge. The envelope can be placed in the collection basket.

GIVING TREE: Please stop by the Giving Tree in the back of church and select an envelope to make a monetary donation to Parish Kitchen, Welcome House or Be Concerned. Envelopes are addressed and ready for mailing.

SUNDAY MISSALS: We have 13 copies of the St. Joseph Sunday Missal for sale. If you wish a copy for an extra Christmas gift, please see Carole Lonneman by the Pieta statue. The missals are \$2, and they cover every Sunday of the church year including Holy Week.

BABY BOTTLES: The baby bottles for Care Net have been picked up. Anyone who still has one can return it to one of the ushers or contact Carole Lonneman at 859-291-8935. We do thank all those who have helped this important ministry to individuals experiencing a problem pregnancy.

PRO LIFE NEWSPAPER AD: In previous years the Diocese had collected names for the Faces of Pro Life Ad that was posted in the newspaper in January. This year the Pro-Life Commission has decided to use the ad to promote life in a different way. The ad still costs a significant amount of money and if you would like to help fund this effort, we have envelopes for your donation. We had placed them in some of the pews but didn't get them to all of them. You will find them at the door of the church. You can place them in the collection basket this week or next week. Thank you very much.

VIRTUS: Please be sure to read your December Virtus Bulletin.

PARISH REGISTRATION: If you have been attending or visiting Mother of God Church and wish to join our parish community, parish registration cards are available at the table in the back of church by the Pieta statue. You may fill out the card there or take it home and later drop in the collection basket. Or to register via email, call the office at 291-2288.

SUNDAY COLLECTION	DECEMBER 10, 2017
Envelopes	\$6,133.00
Loose	\$ 518.00
Online Giving	\$ 294.35
TOTAL COLLECTION	\$6,945.35

DIOCESAN NEWS

RETIREMENT FUND FOR RELIGIOUS: Aging religious need your help. In the United States today, there are more than 32,000 senior Catholic sisters,

brothers, and religious order priests. These religious worked tirelessly in Catholic schools, hospitals, and agencies, usually for little to no pay. As a result, many religious communities lack adequate savings for retirement and eldercare. Your gift to today's collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious helps provide medications, nursing care, and more. Please be generous.

CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM at Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center, from Dec. 4 – Jan. 5, featuring an outdoor starlit stable scene, crèches from around the world, and a poster display of approved Marian apparitions. In addition, we plan choral concerts, a family ornament making afternoon, and a family movie night. For details, see www.olhsc.org or call 513-351-9800.

ANNUAL DIOCESE OF COVINGTON NATIVITY SCENE 2017 AT ST. TIMOTHY PARISH:

Sponsored by: The Knights of St. John Commandary #94, Northern Kentucky. Hosted by: Boy Scout Troop 702, St. Timothy's Parish. Live manger from December 16 to December 23, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. For more information about the crib, contact Doug Eifert at 859-384-3689 or dkeifert@twc.com

CALLED TO LOVE VOCATION RETREAT: The Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker in Walton are sponsoring the 2nd Annual "Called to Love Vocation Retreat" for young ladies, 6th grade through 12th, on Saturday, February 17, from 9 am – 6 pm. It will be held in the parish hall of All Saints Catholic Church, exit 171, on I-75 South. It will be a packed day full of conferences by religious sisters, games, convent tour, Eucharistic Adoration, food, and individual group meetings with the religious communities. For more information or to register for the event, email your name to Sister Patricia Jean at sjwvocations@gmail.com Deadline is February 1, so don't delay!!

AN EPIPHANY EPILOGUE: Sunday, January 7, at 3 pm. The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption will resonate with festive music as the Cathedral Concert Series brings the Season of Christmas to a close with "An Epiphany Epilogue" concert. Seasonal selections from a wide variety of traditions offer something for music lovers of all ages. The Seven Hills Brass is a featured guest ensemble. LeeAnn Kordenbrock, Cathedral cantor and soloist, and principal organist, Dr. Gregory Schaffer, offer unique arrangements for voice, synthesizer and organ. Traditional adornments of the Nativity scene, poinsettias, and evergreen enhance the stunning interior of the Basilica while the music and sacred art surround the listener. All are welcome. There is no admission charge. A free-will offering will be accepted. <http://cathedralconcertseries.org>

RETROUVAILLE is a program for couples in troubled marriages. It is a program of healing and renewal consisting of one weekend and six follow up sessions over the course of three months. For more information, contact www.cincyretrouvaille.org.

NOTRE DAME URBAN EDUCATION CENTER (NDUEC) is currently seeking volunteers to help provide educational support services to young children in Covington. Tutors and receptionists are greatly needed. NDUEC will open for the spring program in early January. If you have a few hours a week to make a difference in a child's life, call Mary Gray at 261-4487 or email her at nduecvolunteer@ndky.org

NEW BEGINNINGS: An eight-week session of New Beginnings, a support group for divorced and separated persons, will begin January 9. Meetings will be held on Tuesday evenings, from 7-8:30 pm, through February 27. In this faith-based group, participants will find a new understanding of themselves and their relationships and gain the courage to discover a new life. This group is sponsored by the Diocese of Covington and hosted by the Dept. of Catechesis and Faith Formation. Registration is required. For more information or to register, call 859-392-1500, ext. 1529, or email isaak@covdio.org

CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

Sunday, December 17
Retirement Fund for Religious Collection
Tuesday, December 12
6:30 pm – RCIA (SAC)
Thursday, December 21
12:45 pm – Eucharistic Adoration
Friday, December 22 – Office Closed
Sunday, December 24 – Fourth Sunday of Advent
9:30 am and 11:30 am Masses
Christmas Eve Mass – 5 pm
Monday, December 25 – MERRY CHRISTMAS
9:30 am and 11:30 am Masses

MASS INTENTIONS

Dec. 17	9:30 am	Evelyn Hogan
	11:30 am	Don Sigl
Dec. 18	12:05 pm	Tom Wiehoff
Dec. 19	12:05 pm	Jayne Hatton
Dec. 20	12:05 pm	No Mass
Dec. 21	12:05 pm	Jennie Wong Wiehoff
Dec. 22	12:05 pm	Vernon Jenkins
Dec. 23	12:05 pm	Jim Dunn
Dec. 24	9:30 am	Tony Wirtz
	11:30 am	Betty Timon
	5 pm	Christmas Vigil

SCRIPTURE FOR DECEMBER 17, 2017:

Isaiah 61: 1-2a, 10-11; Psalm Luke 1;
1Thessalonians 5: 16-24; John 1: 6-8, 19-28.

HYMNS FOR 9:30 A.M. MASS

356	On Jordan's Bank
Response	“My soul rejoices in My God”
600	What Wondrous Love is This
738	I am the Bread of Life
364	Come, O Long Expected Jesus

LET US PRAY FOR OUR SICK

Les Miley	Hannah Donoghue
Tom Heidrich	Dan Ries
Pam Neal	Beth Redwine
Robert Gander	Trudy Koehling
Shirley Hensley	Ralph Kunkemoeller
Fr. Ralph Hartman	Margie Huesman
Mary Jo Schwartz	Greg Scanlon
Pat Ruttle	Makayla Borg
Greg Dahlenberg	Fr. Ray Hartman
Baby Eli	Bob Schroeder
Becky MacIntyre	Rosa Maria Santos
Mary Estelle Roesel	Jill Felix
Clarence Dickman	Kelly Bowman
Christopher & Clifford Browne	Peggy Beckman
Bob Shircliff	Al Haven
Joe Greis	Mark Wilmhoff
Tom Donoghue	