

St. Mary's of Parma, OH Monthly Newsletter

A PARISH OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

January 2025

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“Do You Believe This?”

Those words are taken from Chapter 11, verse 26 of St. John's Gospel and serves as the theme for the 2025 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The full scripture selection for this year's celebration follows:

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Encompassing the Gospel of John, 11:17-27, we hear this incredible declaration of faith

by Martha that not only does she believe in the Resurrection, she believes that her friend and rabbi, Jesus, is Messiah and Son of God.

Martha! The one before whom Jesus almost sighed and dismissed-away in frustration compared to her sister Mary in Luke 10: 41-42: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things. But only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Martha has come full-circle, and so has Christianity in its understanding that there is strength beyond local and denominational community. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was established over 100 years ago and takes place January 18-25 in the Northern Hemisphere each year.

Why is it different than the Southern Hemisphere? The same reason we wouldn't have it 6 months from now in the middle of July—it's vacation time for many and a lower-attended portion of church, which is the opposite in the other hemisphere.

The timing is significant: January 18 is the Feast of The Chair of St. Peter at Antioch. Peter's Chair at Antioch, a traditional date that notes his establishment of a church in Antioch of Syria (present-day Turkey) and his service as their bishop.

January 25 is the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Paul's conversion day allows us to meditate and pray upon the vastness of God's grace and mercy to even the worst

of sinners. The span of days shows that the Church is indeed built up from bishops to the worst sinners and everyone between!

As 2025 also marks 1700 years from one of the most important Ecumenical Events in history, the Council of Nicaea, the World Council of Churches (of which the Polish National Catholic Church is a member) has provided a daily prayer meditation focus, reflecting on aspects of the Nicene Creed, approved 1700 years ago:

- Day 1:** *The fatherhood and care of God who rules the universe*
- Day 2:** *Creation as God's work*
- Day 3:** *The Incarnation of the Son*
- Day 4:** *The Paschal Mystery: Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus*
- Day 5:** *The Holy Spirit, the giver of life and joy*
- Day 6:** *The Church: Community of believers*
- Day 7:** *Baptism into the Death and Resurrection of the Lord*
- Day 8:** *Waiting for the Kingdom and the life to come*

The *Week of Prayer* will remain in the prayer life of the liturgies at St. Mary's for those 8 days. The ultimate goal of Christian Unity is the understanding and sharing of faith in our Lord and Savior, without walls and rules separating brothers and sisters who are indeed “rowing the boat of faith” in the same direction.

Pray for the Unity of Christians this January, as Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:20-21a: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. “

Fr. Jason



December Worship at St. Mary's (p. 1 of 3)

The month of December, which brings about the Advent Season is such a special one in the life of the church. It spans what many call "the holiday season", roughly from Thanksgiving to the moment of our Lord's birth. It always encapsulates the 4 Sundays preceding Christmas Day, ranging from 21 to a full 28 days long.

On the First Sunday of Advent, December 1st, the Advent Wreath was blessed and the first candle (Hope) was lit. Brady took on the reading for this candle for the first time, happily proclaiming the hope we have in the promise of our Lord's coming.



The Second Sunday of Advent, December 8th, featured the lighting of the second Advent Candle (Peace), with the reading debut of Roland, confidently proclaiming the peace



we know in Jesus' coming. Fr. Greg then offered a blessing over the oplatki that many would later come to share at their Christmas Eve and Christmas Day meals. During announcements prior to Mass, Fr. Jason announced that he bumped into St. Nicholas a couple days earlier on his Feast Day of December 6. Though members of the Mission Team prepped the stockings, it seemed as if the magic of jolly ol' St. Nick filled them up with goodies for the faithful on their way out of church. Thank you to all whose fortuitous planning made this event take place!



On December 9 at a 9am Monday Morning Mass, we celebrated the Feast of Divine Love/Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was translated from December 8. This was the first of three pauses we make throughout

the Advent Season to directly focus on the Mother of God, Mary. In particular, this feast focuses on tradition of the Church and parenting of Joachim and Anna that led Mary to be chosen by God.

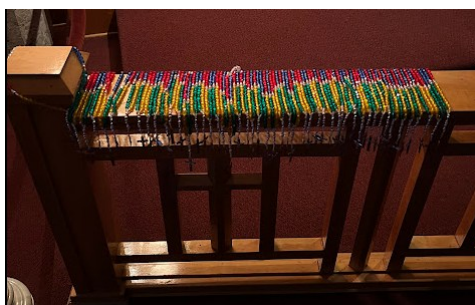


On December 12, Fr. Jim celebrated Holy Mass on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where for a second time in Advent, the focus again turns to the Blessed Mother and the interactions she has had with humanity in apparitions before us.

Sunday, December 15 was the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, or rose Sunday. The third Advent Candle (Joy) was lit and the reading was done by Brady once again. After Mass, the parish came together to hold its Election of Officers Meeting. Congratulations to all who were elected! Results are on page 5.



December Worship at St. Mary's (p. 2 of 3)



At 7am on Wednesday, December 18, a third pause in the Advent Season was taken to celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary as Rorate Mass was celebrated. This Mass, celebrated by candlelight only, is to begin in candlelit darkness and conclude with the rising of the sun, which took place at 7:48am as the faithful exited the church. It was preceded by a blessing of rosaries, which were provided by (Fr. Jason's old Convo friend!) Sarah from All Saints PNCC in Sterling Hts., MI and they were also distributed to those attending that afternoon's Food Ministry.

Hymns were sung in adulation before Mary, with the Mass's focus on her

role in becoming the Mother of our Lord.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent began with young Roland providing a reading before the lighting of the Fourth Advent Candle, and the Mass celebrated (back in Advent blue!) and Fr. Jason preaching on the interaction of Mary and Elizabeth, with the leaping infant in her womb. It was a nice, packed sanctuary (and a healthy amount of the faithful in the pews!) with three altar servers and Fr. Greg part of the liturgy. The PTO Christmas Party (page 6) followed Holy Mass.

Then it was Christmas! Our celebration has held the same schedule for years, with our choir providing a concert of carols beginning at 11:30pm on Christmas Eve and Pasterka/Shepherd's Mass at Midnight. The faithful at Mass were provided with candles as the statue of the infant Christ was processed into church preceding Mass. The manger scene was blessed, and the Christmas

Candle in the Wreath was lit, completing its change from an Advent Wreath to a Christmastide wreath, which would be lighted at each liturgy through the Epiphany on January 6.

A high Holy Mass followed, with incensing at the Entrance, the Gospel, and the Offertory. Carols were sung in English and Polish. It was an interesting change with how many young children from the parish attended Midnight Mass...some of them even stayed awake through its entirety!

Mass on Christmas Day was celebrated at 10am as the Lord was welcomed by more members of the parish. The Gospel was incensed and the homily focused on the light of the world present in our Savior.

The three days that follow Christmas are noteworthy: the Feast Days of St. Stephen on the 26th, St. John on the 27th, and the Holy Innocents on the 28th. Fr. Jim served as celebrant of St. Stephen's Day. Fr. Jason celebrated St. John's Day Mass, with Fr. Jim providing the blessing of wine that would be shared by all after Mass. Mass for the Holy Innocents was celebrated privately.

The Christmas Spirit continues so strongly in the first Sunday after



December Worship at St. Mary's (p. 3 of 3)



Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament took place. This has been our traditional end-of-the-year worship and adoration for over a decade, and places the presence of our Lord above us on our altars to remind us that no matter the good or bad that the year has served us, He has remained and will

remain the True Presence on which we can always re-center our lives.

Christmas, this year the Polish National Catholic Solemnity of the Humble Shepherds. The gospel continues that of Christmas, and shows the shepherd's further role in being hearers and doers of the Word of God.

And finally, to close a wonderful December of worship, at 4pm on New Year's Eve, a Liturgy of the Word followed by the Exposition, Litany, and



Election Results

A parish meeting to elect officers for 2025 was held after 9am Holy Mass on Sunday, December 15.

Congratulations to all who were elected! They will begin their terms upon being installed during Holy Mass on Sunday, January 12. The executive officers include: Parish Committee Chair- Susan Boehnlein; 1st Vice- Gene Stepanik; 2nd Vice- Mike Wisniewski; Treasurer- Cherie Kugler; Fin. Secretary – Pattie Dotson; Secretary- Patty Temesi. Directors elected are: Cathy Avondet, Jim Boehnlein, Carole D'Arcy, Josephine Ference, Ron Ference, Steve Fesz, Tom Kugler, Charles Repede, Elaine Repede, Stella Pietka, John Spilka, and Barbara Wisniewski. Auditors elected are Barb Bogzevitz, Debbie Moritz, Elaine Ploskonka, and Nancy Roharik. Parish Tribunal member elected for a 2-year term was Christine Paulus.



Sp. Linda Sobolewski

Linda Sobolewski, a cherished figure known for her warmth, compassion, and dedication to her family and profession, passed away on December 8, 2024, at the age of 75. Born on March 17, 1949, in Cleveland, Ohio, Linda's life was marked by her loving spirit and her unwavering commitment to those she held dear.

Linda was the beloved wife of the late Jan Sobolewski, with whom she shared 49 years of marriage filled with love and laughter. Together, they raised a family that became the center of Linda's world. She was a nurturing mother to John Sobolewski (Jennifer), Keith Sobolewski (MaryBeth), and Sandra Richards (Terry). The daughter of the late Lester and Dorothy Kortan, Linda was a caring sister to Nancy Taras (the late Dennis), Jean Ziemba (Dan), and the late Joseph Kortan. Grandmother of: August, Ian, Melanie, Ryan, Ashlee, Lauren, Ryan, Hailey, Coby, Tommy, and Henry.

Linda's family takes comfort in knowing that she lived a full and meaningful life, touching the hearts of everyone she encountered. Her legacy of love, compassion, and unwavering support will live on through her children, grandchildren, and all those who were privileged to know her.

A funeral service was celebrated by Rev. Jason Soltysiak at noon on Saturday, December 14 at Jardine FH in Strongsville, OH. Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon her!



Cookie Sale

Our second annual Cookie Sale took place on Saturday morning, December 14th. The work started much before that, with the "APB" sent out to all parish bakers to gather recipes, choose a cookie type, and plan to have cookies in-church (with full ingredients list!) by that Saturday or earlier.

With many parishioners chipping in their baking expertise, the event went along without a hitch. It was a complete sell-out last year and was every bit as successful this year, with thousands of cookies making their way home to holiday parties...or being eaten in the car on the way home!

Thank you to all bakers, decorators, preppers, and clean-up crew for this wonderful event and a new parish tradition.



Mission Team Supports our Police

On Tuesday, December 3rd, the Mission Team of St. Mary's held its monthly workshop, with the focus on putting together gift bags for the Parma Police as well as doggie bags for the K-9 unit. As always, this time of fellowship and workshoping was productive and enjoyable.

On Thursday, December 12th, members of St. Mary's Mission Team stopped by the Parma Police Station bearing gifts for our uniformed friends. A gift bag for each officer on the force was donated as well as two full baskets of

goodies for their break room, just in time for the holidays. Officers receiving the gifts were grateful on a cold, icy morning to be remembered by the community.



PTO Christmas Party

The Sunday before Christmas is the most anticipated post-Mass event on our calendar, as it has been home to the PTO Christmas Party for years. The PTO Basket Raffle items are displayed for the four or so weeks leading to Christmas, with parishioners and visitors throwing tickets in for the myriad baskets on display.

A display of fruit, donuts, and a cake were all at the ready for the good crowd that attended Mass to enjoy afterward. As everyone was settling in to their cups of coffee, the beckoning for the "big man" began and all of a sudden, Santa Claus was in our midst! He took the time to visit with each child who was present, fielding questions about what they wanted for Christmas and even giving out a gift to each kid. How blessed were we to have this visit?!



Many, many thanks to the PTO and their "helpers" for putting on this event each year. The work begins many months prior in securing donations from local businesses for the baskets, and the parish is very appreciative for this gift to her people.



Bowling Party!

As noted in the Sunday Bulletin and in the parish newsletter's calendar, the St. Mary's Bowling League takes place roughly every other Sunday at the Red Circle Lanes in Parma.

The league is made up of St. Mary's members and adjacent supporters. The league is run by members of the parish. They recently held their (Ugly Sweater) Christmas Party on December 22nd, which was a nearly- raucous affair for all involved!



St. Mary's of Parma, OH Monthly Newsletter

Various Announcements

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER – for all of January, we will use the 4th Eucharistic Prayer beginning on page 88.

JANUARY 12 – We have one Holy Mass at 10am. This is followed by our parish Christmas Pot Luck, where we will share opłatek and some Christmas food. All are invited, even if you did not bring a dish – appetites are appreciated!

REMINDER! – Just a kind reminder that the few minutes before Holy Mass are meaningful to many parishioners to prepare for the liturgy and perhaps, to take advantage of the examination of conscience that is in the first few pages of the Mass Book. While it is wonderful to share a smile and conversation with our Christian (and pew!) neighbors, just a reminder to reign it in a bit until, perhaps, after Mass at coffee hour.

CHRISTMAS CARDS – The PTO Christmas Card delivery closes soon. Make sure you stop by the envelope station in the Fellowship Hall to check for some cards – they are sorted alphabetically by last name.

FR. JIM – Continues his mid-week ministry to St. Mary's and the community in 2025. He will continue celebrating 9am Mass on Thursday as well as lead

the Food Ministry Team's weekly meals on Wednesday afternoon. He might even offer a home blessing if you were so inclined to ask him so you could have a break from Fr. Jason!

PARISH ANNUAL MEETING – We tentatively plan to have the Annual Meeting on January 26 – please set aside time that morning for our parish of St. Mary's.

ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS & AUDITS – A reminder that audits and reports are due before the Annual Meeting for all parish organizations. An audit must be done by someone from outside the organization. Please see parish chair Susan if you have any questions or concerns or need someone to provide an audit.

MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP – Info for scholarships from the National United Choirs is available by talking to Chris Paulus or Fr. Jim.

2025 MASSES – Fr. Jason is taking Mass intention requests for 2025. About half are filled already! As always, call, email, text, or try to speak to him after Sunday Mass.

PARISH EMAILS – Has anyone not been receiving emails from the parish/Fr. Jason on a periodic basis that would like to? Or, if you used to and do not anymore? Please let him know so our email lists can be appropriately updated.

PARISH ENVELOPES – For 2025 are available – pick yours up!

EPIPHANY – The Solemnity of Epiphany is celebrated each year January 6, with pastoral home blessing visitations now available by appointment. Please call, text, email, or speak to Fr. Jason to set an appointment. Visitations can take place into early February.

FAVORITE HYMN? – Do you have a favorite hymn, be it from another church, radio, or wherever that you would like the choir to consider learning? The choir wants to know your favorites! Drop a note to our Choir Director Chris so we can try new things.

WE CONTINUE – To participate in Acme's program, "Community Cash Back" which runs through February. Turn in receipts!

BIBLE STUDY NEWS – We continue our study of "Old Testament Characters" into 2025. It is never too late to join up with us! The Bible Study schedule is always printed in the weekly bulletin.

CLOTHES DRIVE – January 13, the YMSofR Men invite anyone who would like to lend a hand to collate, count, and bag clothing after 9am Holy Mass. It usually takes a couple of hours, so food will be provided for those in attendance.

Scheduled Mass Intentions at St. Mary's

January 5 – Love of God Sodality Members, living and departed

January 12 – Jane Hejduk of. by Cheryl Repko

January 19 – Zygmunt Nowak of. by Clergy of Western Diocese

January 26 – Open Intention

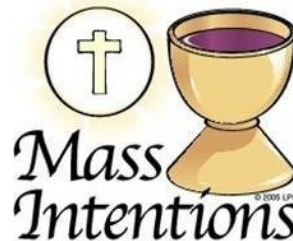
February 2 – Sophie & Martin Szpilka of. by John Spilka

February 9 – Open Intention

February 16 – Open Intention

February 23 – Helen Kasperczyk (birthday) of. by son John & family

Intentions are available to schedule by reaching out to Fr. Jason. Open dates for Sunday Mass intentions for the first half of 2025 are Jan. 26; Feb. 9, 16; Mar. 9, 23; Apr. 13; June 8, 22.



January Days of Note



January Birthdays

- 1 Barbara Wisniewski
- 5 Jeffery Tiffe
- 6 Katie Repede
- 7 Pattie Dotson
- Natalie Soltysiak
- 8 Mak Mak Petrella
- 12 John Kasperczyk
- 22 John Kobalka
- Tom Kugler
- Anna Dawidziuk
- 23 Pete Moritz



January Anniversaries

- 7 Andre & Audrey Spanjol
- 24 Mike & Barb Wisniewski
- 24 Rick & Julie Koehler

Have we missed a birthday or anniversary? Just give us a shout so we can fix any errors that have been made :-)

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"His Unfailing Presence"

Another year I enter
Its history unknown;
Oh, how my feet would tremble
To tread its paths alone!
But I have heard a whisper,
I know I shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."
What will the New Year bring me?
I may not, must not know;
Will it be love and rapture,
Or loneliness and woe?
Hush! Hush! I hear His whisper;
I surely shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."

--Unknown Author



Our Prayer List

Praying for St. Mary's Parishioners & Friends

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bill & Pat Glatzer | Bob Kaczmarek |
| Bill Kastak | Anna Dawidziuk |
| George Makovicka | John Spilka |
| Johanna Markiewicz | Patrick Kmitt |
| Kathleen | Sauna Smullen |
| Marty Bengela | Tom Putynski |
| Jeff Pardy | Millie Dominik |
| Kathleen Beres | Joseph Bischoff |
| Al & Donna Micka | Ron Ference |
| Ed Pierson | George Bennett |
| Greg Hodor | Pattie Dotson |
| Nicole McGivern | Jack Spilka |
| Elaine Repede | David Vaden |
| Wanda Clark | Beth Chihill |
| Michael Cosevin | Helen Cummings |
| Laina Dachtal | Michael McGivern |
| Jay Grabowsky | Pam Chesar |
| Cecelia Hall | Caroline Kunes |
| Linda Marks | Thomas Lill |
| John & Anne Nemetz | Rhonda Smith |
| Al Piniecki | Carol Boesch |
| Joanie True | Daniel Rinella |
| Penny Dennison | Tom Slomka |
| Wojciech Fedorowicz | Tom Pietka |
| Pam Tropiano | Linda Vect |
| Dennis and Sue Vect | Marcus Vaughn, Jr. |
| Bryson Dzuroff | Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak |
| Doreen Stanley | Jane Hunter |
| Dennis Thome | The Finnie Family |
| Carlene Fliss | Jim Fliss Jr. |
| John Wisniewski | Cathy Pieciak |
| Nan Cramer | Jim Lukas |
| Sage McLane | Dave Tuma |
| Phil Repko | Edna Samelson |
| Jim Giles | Kathleen Sobocinski |
| Bill Zychowski | Loretta Baldwin |
| Donna Kidd | Paulette Lilli |
| Joseph Zubel | Margaret & Lew Heifner |
| Marilyn Girard | Courtney Austin |
| Stephanie Milla | Shannon Alberino |
| Jayden Pieciak | Joyce Zeigler |
| Sam Bass | Katie Stallbaum |
| Marcia Klein | Kim Penney |
| Dan Avondet | Amanda Monyak |
| Roseanne & George Ziefle | Judy Alexin |
| Connie Benko | Joe Litto |
| Karsen Winters | Shyanna Tiller |
| Kathleen Ridzy | Laurie Slominski |
| Mike Paulus | Gail Perz |

WE ALSO REMEMBER
ALL ACTIVE & RETIRED CLERGY
ALL SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN
Bless them, O Lord.

