Faith IN WV
NOVEMBER 29, 2026
DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

Countdown to *Christmas* Challenge

DEC. 1-24
ONE CHAPTER A DAY

As we begin the Advent season take a moment to spend time with Christ in the Gospel of Luke. Consider it a countdown to Christmas challenge!

Luke's Gospel has 24 chapters. Starting on Dec. 1, read one chapter a day, so that you complete the Gospel on Christmas Eve.



Saint Luke is considered one of the most dedicated followers after Christ's ascension. He left his profession as a physician to become an evangelist with the Apostles, after Saint Paul's preaching inspired him.

He was intelligent and loved being emersed in the life of Christ. His writings make it obvious that he not only enjoyed talking to countless people who knew Jesus and witnessed His miracles, but also that he was in search of the facts – the truth.

He wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, which make up nearly a fourth of the New Testament. Saint Luke is a beautiful writer taking the reader through his messages and stories with such description the reader can envision and imagine themselves within them.

We can read St. Luke's words as if he were speaking personally to us. In fact, the Gospel of Luke (as well as the Acts of the Apostles) were letters written to his friend and Roman dignitary Theophilus, who must have asked the Apostle to detail the facts of the life of Christ.

Even though the world was male-dominated, St. Luke preached and wrote about how Jesus went out of his way to bring God's love to women, the poor, and all who were among the most forgotten and cast-out members of society.

It is believed that the story of our Savior's birth that St. Luke presents, was based on his personal conversations with Our Blessed Mother Mary.

His first lines in Chapter 1 of his gospel notes that he wrote it "after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write and orderly account for you. . . so that you may know the truth. . ." (Luke 1:3-4).

Throughout his writings he relates the teachings of Jesus with the early church as told in Old Testament. Writing as one who presents facts to convince others that we should all know and love Jesus – our God – St. Luke illustrates Christ's mercy, healing, and compassion.

Saint Luke urges us to be Christian disciples and model ourselves after Jesus, and for us to seek salvation and peace through prayer. He even used Jesus as the example in Luke 23:34, when Jesus asked forgiveness of his crucifiers.

So, let's take the countdown to Christmas challenge this Advent to do something for ourselves! Let us all be inspired by St. Luke, seeking to know as much as we can about the life of Christ and want to share that good news with others through our actions and words.

With Mary, We Wait in Hope for the Coming of Christ.



Our Advent wreath invites us to pray with hope, peace, joy, and love.

The Advent wreath, it is a tangible reminder of our preparation and anticipation of the birth of Christ. It has evolved through the centuries and across cultures and faiths.

A common custom is for the candles to be three purple (violet) and one pink (rose).

Purple, the color associated of royalty, represents prayer, penance, and works of mercy we take on during the season Sunday by Sunday as Christmas draws near.

The pink (rose) candle represents joy. This candle is lit on Gaudete Sunday (the third Sunday of Advent), which means "rejoice" for the Lord is near.

The weeks represent hope, peace, joy, and love. Each is lit to show reverence in our anticipation of Christ's birth.

Some traditions name the candles.

> The first candle is called the *Prophet's Candle*, representative of the prophecy of the birth of a Messiah in Isaiah and signifies HOPE.

> The second candle, the *Bethlehem Candle*, represents the humble town, seemingly at the time to be insignificant. However, God chose this town proving even the least is important to our Creator. This candle represents PEACE.

> The third candle is the *Shepherd's Candle* and recalls the shepherds and their JOY. According to Scripture, it was the shepherds who were first told by the angels of Christ's birth (Luke 2:8-14).

> The fourth candle is known as the *Angels Candle*, a candle of LOVE, symbolic of when they sang out, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of goodwill."

Regardless of your advent wreath appearance, the most important element is in the pause for prayer and reflection. It prompts us to remember Scripture, the prophecy, Mary's acceptance, and why Christ came to dwell among us.

Let us remember that God is always present in our life and sent his only son to restore light and peace within and for us.









Prayers for Lighting the Advent Wreath

Dear Jesus, as we light the candles on this Advent wreath, may the light of your presence bring joy to our hearts. Bless our family and our friends, and be with all those who are in need this holiday season. Amen.

First Week

Hope

All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Second Week

Peace

Dear Jesus, you entered our world on Christmas as the Prince of Peace. This Advent, as we strive to become the-best-version-of-ourselves, fill us with a deep and abiding peace. Help us share that peace with everyone we encounter, especially those who need it most. Amen.

Third Week

Joy

Dear Jesus, help us focus on you during this busy season. May we stay aware of the joy you bring into our lives. We want to find you in the everyday moments and come with hearts of gratitude to your manger on Christmas. Amen.

Fourth Week

Love

All-powerful God, your eternal Word took flesh on our earth when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan. Lift our minds in watchful hope to hear the voice which announces his glory and open our minds to receive the Spirit who prepares us for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle

A Simple Fisherman, A Bold Follower — November 30

When it comes to knowing what St. Andrew, the apostles, was like, we don't have much to go on, but Scripture tells us enough to honor him as a role model.

When Jesus called, Andrew left everything. Along with his brother, St. Peter, he heard Christ shout, a personal invitation to become a "fisher of men" (Matthew 4:18–20) — and he followed and did so with his whole heart.

Andrew walked with Christ, witnessed miracles, preached the Good News, and answered the call to holiness for he believed.

As Advent begins, St. Andrew's feast opens the door to a beloved tradition - the St. Andrew Christmas Novena.



A Beautiful Holy Habit for All Catholics

Starting November 30, pray the St. Andrew Christmas Anticipation Prayer 15 times daily until Christmas.

The repetition may seem daunting, but its rhythm gently draws our hearts and minds eye to the true beauty and meaning of the season — the coming of the Christ Child.

Pray it as you get ready for the day, as you exercise, in the car, or during random moments throughout the day.

Let it become a holy habit – a simple family ritual that builds peace, hope, and holy anticipation.

Artwork of St. Andrew reading is by Artus Wolffort, 1600s — the scroll reads: "Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."

St. Andrew
Christmas Prayer

Hail and blessed
be the hour and moment
in which the Son of God was born
of the most pure Virgin Mary,
at midnight, in Bethlehem,
in the piercing cold.
In that hour vouchsafe,
I beseech Thee, O my God,
to hear my prayer
(state request here)
and grant my desires
through the merits of Our Savior
Jesus Christ,
and of His blessed Mother.
Amen

St. Andrew Prayer,
Recite 15 times a day until Dec. 25

The Feast Day of St. Barbara

December 4

On December 4 the Church honors St. Barbara, the patron saint of mining, artillerymen, and builders.

She was the stunningly beautiful daughter of the anti-Christian Royal Bithynian Dioskurios of Nikomedia (a region that is now Turkey and Lebanon). He locked her up in a tower after she proclaimed she was Christian.

This just made her will stronger.

When a bathhouse was being constructed for her, she convinced the builders to add a third window. For St. Barbara this was to pay tribute to the Trinity.

She eventually escaped her tower and ran into the mountains. Legend has told that a giant rock formation opened up for her so she could hide.

However, a shepherd eventually discovered her and turned her over to her father. She refused to denounce her faith, and her own father had her beheaded in 306 AD.

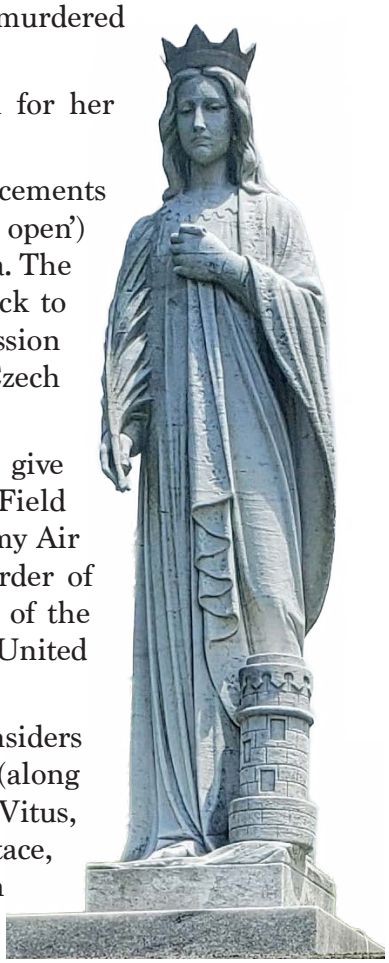
Immediately after, a forceful lightning bolt hit and instantly killed him, turning him into ashes. The sword that murdered St. Barbara was amid the ash.

Miners around the world honor her and call for her intercession and protection.

Many areas of the world greet their shift replacements with the German "Glück Auf" (meaning 'luck open') referring to the rock that opened for St. Barbara. The greeting is a way for the miners to ask the rock to open and give them its ore. The German expression carried over to other regions including the Czech Republic, Austria, Poland, or Slovenia.

The US armed services – Army and Marines – give her special distinction. The United States Army Field Artillery Association and the United States Army Air Defense Artillery Association maintain the Order of Saint Barbara as an honorary military society of the United States Army Field Artillery and the United States Army Air Defense Artillery.

The Early Church of the 15th Century considers her one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers (along with George, Blase, Erasmus, Pantaleon, Vitus, Christopher, Denis, Cyriacus, Acacius, Eustace, Giles, Margaret, and Catherine) to call upon in times of desperation.





Prayer for Intercession of St. Barbara

O Saint Barbara
You are revered
among the faithful
as one of the
Fourteen Holy Helpers.
Your life serves
as a vivid reminder
that our world
is filled with extreme
anger and pain,
but that our faith
and hope in the
Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit
can alleviate our burdens.
Pray for me from Heaven
that I may follow
your example
by treating God
with His established
plan for my life. Amen.

Editor's note: St. Barbara's Memorial Nursing Home in Monongah was named after the saint to pay tribute to the 362 men and boys that lost their lives in a nearby mine on Dec. 6, 1907. It was the worst mine disaster in U.S history.

St. Francis Xavier

Model of Faith, Hope, and Joy

The Feast Day of St. Francis Xavier, December 3rd, is a time to recognize this great missionary and also consider our own works of evangelization and care for others.

A Jesuit friend said of him,

"I have never met anyone more filled with faith and hope, more open-minded than Francis. He never seems to lose his great joy and enthusiasm. He talks to both the good and the bad. Anything he is asked to do, Francis does willingly, simply because he loves everyone."

He chose that attitude, mirroring the good he saw in his parents and those who put God first.

In a quick summary of his life, St. Francis Xavier seemed pretty dynamic, happy, and confident; but he had his own struggles with depression and loneliness. His father died when he was just a young boy; in his teens he left home to study in Paris; while there his mother and sister died; and his other siblings were all married with families of their own.

He considered his faith as the greatest gift from his reverent parents. He chose to be a fisher of men and share his love of Christ.

He earned degrees in philosophy and theology. While studying at the University of Paris, he met St. Ignatius Loyola. They became close friends. In 1534, together with five other men they founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit order).

In 1537, St. Francis Xavier was ordained a priest and became one of the Church's greatest missionaries in India and Japan.

Despite what had to have been dangerous and often miserable travel and living conditions, he focused on God to keep him balanced and grateful. Not every stop or plan was successful for him, but he remained determined.

He believed that we could face any challenge and danger as long as we love God. In his words: "In this life, we find our greatest comfort living in the midst of danger, that is, if we confront them solely for the love of God."



On his feast day, let us pray we are enthusiastic, adventuristic, and passionate about evangelizing as he was. Do not be afraid to share the love of Christ in your words and actions, mirroring those who nurtured that love in you.

Don't forget St. Nicholas Day!

Plan ahead, honor him on Dec. 6

Celebrate St. Nicholas Day on Dec. 6th as an opportunity to experience the joy of giving and performing good deeds.

Throughout the world Saint Nicholas is remembered as Santa, Père Noël, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle.... No matter what fond name you call him the love of good ole' St. Nick is rooted in reality not fairytale. He is a true saint and was a respected bishop with a generous spirit, choosing to live his life as a reflection of the love Christ has for each of us. He inherited great wealth but didn't spoil himself: he chose to use it to help others.

The good saint died on Dec. 6, 343, AD.

On St. Nicholas Day act like the good bishop! Some families have the custom of placing the shoes of their little ones by the front door at bedtime on Dec. 5, so that St. Nicholas may surprise them with treats like oranges, chocolates, or small trinkets, bringing his loving story to life.

Other ways to honor him, donate food to a food pantry, donate shoes to a local shelter, take toys and children's activities to a local hospital. The possibilities are endless.

For activities for your family and to learn more about the real Santa – including what he might have looked like based on forensic science go to:
WWW.STNICHOLASCENTER.ORG.



The Month of December

The Church Honors the

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY

Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us!



While the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is December 8th, the Church invites us to reflect on the grace God gave Mary all month as we prepare our hearts for Jesus and celebrate His birth.

Recognize her as the model of faith, patience, hope, and devotion to God.

As God chose Mary to be the Mother of Christ, he chose to bring her into the world through Saints Joachim and Anne. Mary is the Immaculate Conception, and remained immaculate, without a sin, and "full of grace" (Luke 1:28) for her entire earthly life.

We can look to Pope Leo XIV's Marian devotion to strengthen our own.

Two weeks ago, Pope Leo XIV returned to the church where he served as bishop to the people of Chiclayo (Peru): the Cathedral of St. Mary. On that day, he crowned Mary as "the loving Mother and Protectress of Chiclayo."

In his homily he said, "To your Immaculate Heart, I entrust my life and my ministry today as the Successor of Peter. I also ask you to watch over and protect the People of God making their pilgrimage in this land, and always guide them toward your Son, Jesus Christ."

Weeks earlier, the Regional Government of Lambayeque, a secular authority responsible for the social, cultural, and economic development in Peru, declared the Immaculate Conception the patroness of the entire region, allowing it to adopt the same devotion shared internationally with countries like the US.

Pope Leo XIV said our Marian devotions are "part of the Christian roots that shape your identity and strengthen your faith.

"Trusting in her intercession and protection... keep walking forward together, as one family of God. A family that longs for a world marked by love and compassion, forgiveness, and the pursuit of justice. A family confident that Mary, Most Holy, always shows us the sure path that leads to Jesus, who is the source of abundant life and truth, and who continually offers us new opportunities."

Pope Leo XIV concluded his homily with a prayer for Mary's intercession,

"We beg you to continue walking with us, and to obtain for us from your Son, Jesus Christ, through your maternal heart, the gift of listening attentively to the Holy Spirit, so that, with the help of His grace, we may be ready to follow Him faithfully, to be builders of peace and reconciliation, and servants of the Kingdom of God and of our brothers and sisters."

BLUE CHRISTMAS: HONORING YOUR GRIEF WHILE EMBRACING THE SEASON

When: December 7, 2026

Time: 6:30 p.m. -8:00 p.m.

Where: St. Joseph Retreat Center

Cost: $20

Refreshments will follow

We are partnering with best selling author, speaker and host of the Graduating Grief Podcast, Sherrie Dunlevy to bring you a workshop to help you with the Holiday Blues.

In this workshop you will learn:



- How to Navigate the holiday the holiday season in a way that makes it less stressful for you
- How to set healthy boundaries and set up lines of loving communication
- How to deal with expected or unexpected emotions as you experience them
- Creative ways to incorporate your loved ones into holiday traditions that can provide meaning and comfort
- Self Care strategies that will keep you physically, emotionally, and mentally healthy throughout the season

Reserve your spot today!

Contact Anna Marie Troiani at 304-907-0171

or email at: atroiani@csjoseph.org

St. Joseph
RETREAT CENTER

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First Reading: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

The prophet Isaiah pleads to God to come to earth and rescue those who have wandered away and give focus of those who are stubborn and do not have hope.

Responsorial: Psalm 80

"Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved."

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

We wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: Mark 13:33-37

Be prepared! The servants in Mark's Gospel have many tasks – some are time consuming, some difficult, some easy – regardless of which, the lesson is to always be ready to receive Christ.

CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For all who represent Christ's Church that we live and serve in such a way we are the example of hope, alert and ready for the coming of Jesus in our world, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That leaders of nations work together to honor life from conception through natural death, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all who have wandered away from the Church, as well as those of us who are present, but in a rut just going through the motions, may Advent awaken our hearts and minds to receive Jesus, and rejoice in the love God has for each of us, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all who care for and support the unborn, expecting mothers, soon-to-be fathers, may the Lord bless them in all ways with strength, compassion, and resources to do His will, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

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Liturgy of the Hours

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour! EBREVIARY.COM LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Scan the QR code or visit the link below to view a PDF version of the Liturgy of the Hours.

MASS ONLINE

Saturday 6pm Masses will continue to be livestreamed from the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and will be available on our website each Sunday at DWC.ORG.