

OUR LADY OF THE LAKE

203 VAUGHN RD., BRANSON, MO | 417.334.2928 | OFFICE@OLLBRANSON.COM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2025

Third Sunday of
ADVENT





THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 13 - December 19



Events

SATURDAY Dec. 13

Sacrament of Reconciliation
3:00 - 4:30pm - Confessional

SUNDAY Dec. 14

Coffee & Christ
Will NOT meet today
Resumes Dec. 21

Advent Penance Service
3:00 - 4:00pm - in the Church

MONDAY Dec. 15

No events today

TUESDAY Dec. 16

OCIA
6:30-8:00pm - Heritage Room

WEDNESDAY Dec. 17

Stitchers
9:00am - 12:00pm - St. Francis Room

Music Practice
3:45 - 5:15pm - In the music room

PSR
5:30pm - Mass

6:15 -7:00pm - Food/Class

THURSDAY Dec. 18

OLL Game Day
1:00 - 3:30pm - Faith Formation Room

FRIDAY Dec. 19

No events

SATURDAY Dec. 20

No Am events

Page 2

Mass Times

SATURDAY

5:00pm
7:00pm (Spanish)

SUNDAY

8:00am
10:30am

MONDAY

9:00am

TUESDAY

9:00am

WEDNESDAY

5:30pm

THURSDAY

9:00am



Adoration

TUESDAY

No Adoration
Will Resume Jan. 13th

THURSDAY

No Adoration
Will Resume Jan. 15th

Important Links

[Click Here For PARISH CALENDAR](#)

[Click Here For MASS INTENTIONS](#)

[Click Here For FLOWER INTENTIONS](#)

Flower Intentions available for December & January

Mass Intentions

Sat.	12/13	5:00pm	Michael & Whitney Axelson (Special Intention-Living)
Sat.	12/13	7:00pm	Taney County Parish Family (Living)
Sun.	12/14	8:00am	Sarah Buzzard (Living)
Sun.	12/14	10:30am	Debbie Keller †
Mon.	12/15	9:00am	Peter Parascondola †
Tue.	12/16	9:00am	Danny Martin Sr. †
Wed.	12/17	5:30pm	Deceased Members of Baumgard Family †
Thu.	12/18	9:00am	Debbie Keller †



[Click Here to Make a Prayer Request](#)

[Click Here to Donate Online](#)

[Haga clic aquí para el boletín en español](#)

[Click Here to Contact Parish Staff](#)

WORSHIP WITH US



[Click here](#) for Mass Times & Sacrament of Reconciliation



[CLICK HERE FOR DAILY MASS READINGS](#)

Collection through Dec. 7, 2025

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Envelopes:		\$6,049.00
Plate:		\$ 330.00
Green Envelopes:		\$3,250.00
Total:		\$9,629.00

A silhouette of a nativity scene set against a dark background with white stars. The scene includes two angels with trumpets at the top, a central manger with Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus, and various animals like camels, donkeys, and sheep. Palm trees are visible on the left and right sides.

Mass Schedule For Christmas & New Year's

**Christmas Eve
Wednesday, Dec. 24**

Our Lady of the Cove
20 Kimberling Blvd. ~ Kimberling City
5:00PM

Our Lady of the Lake
203 Vaughn Dr. ~ Branson
6:00PM & Midnight

**New Year's Eve
Wednesday, Dec. 31**

Our Lady of the Cove
20 Kimberling Blvd. ~ Kimberling City
4:00PM

**Christmas Day
Thursday, Dec. 25**

Our Lady of the Ozarks
951 Swan Valley Dr. ~ Forsyth
9:00AM

Our Lady of the Cove
20 Kimberling Blvd. ~ Kimberling City
10:00AM

Our Lady of the Lake
203 Vaughn Dr. ~ Branson
10:00AM

**New Year's Day
Thursday, Jan. 1**

Our Lady of the Ozarks
951 Swan Valley Dr. ~ Forsyth
9:00AM

Our Lady of the Lake
203 Vaughn Dr. ~ Branson
Noon



Coffee and Christ Sundays

9:15am to 10:15am

Faith Formation Room

*'The Lamb of God,'
'The Bread of Life,'
'The Body and the Blood of Christ'...*
These are phrases we know from the Mass.



But do we understand what they mean in the greater and deeper context of Scripture and Church teaching? We'll discover firsthand how Christ's Body and Blood are an integral and wondrous part of God's plan for our salvation.



Acclaimed author and teacher Dr. Brant Pitre digs down to the biblical roots of the Eucharist, through its foreshadowing in the miraculous events of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and Apostolic teaching.

Dec. 14

WE WILL NOT BE MEETING

Dec. 21

Episode 7 - Bread of Life Discourse: John 6 and the Real Presence

Jesus shocked the Jews of his time by offering his own flesh and blood as real food and real drink to gain eternal life.

Dec. 28

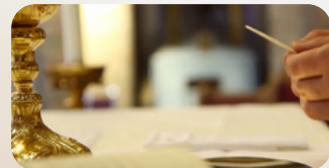
Episode 8 -The Last Supper and the Cross: The New Passover of Christ

What is the connection between the Old Testament celebration of Passover and Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples-and how does that impact the Mass as we know it?

Jan. 4

Episode 9 -The Mass: Emmaus and the Mystery of the Eucharist

"The Eucharist affected the thinking of the early Church in all aspects of its worship and practices. But how did the Apostles put into practice Christ's command to "'Do this in memory of me?'" Two men and the miraculous encounter they had on the road to Emmaus could show us more than we realize.



The experience is personal, inspirational, and fulfilling.

Welcome is a two-day renewal weekend unlike any you have attended. Parishioners share with one another ways they have found meaning, hope, peace, and love in their lives through Christ.

SCAN TO REGISTER



Women's Welcome Retreat
Our Lady of the Lake in Branson, MO
March 7th & 8th 2026

OR GO TO:
OLLBRANSON.COM/WOMENS-WELCOME-RETREAT

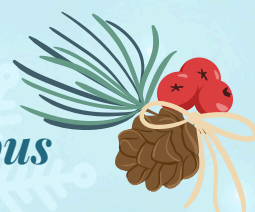


Here is the mailing list of names of our homebound parishioners.

If you are sending to our homebound, you may drop off the homebound cards in the basket in the gathering space.

Just write the person's name on the envelope.

Mary Vanderwheel	Frances Deall	Marie Houck	Richard (Dick) and Angelica Ginn
Eric Williams	Ronald Willis	Cathy Murphy	Marliss Timm
Margaret Kaiser	Carol Dunn	Guy Buelens	Dorothy Gray
Ann Forster	Bobbe Froelich		Rich & Marge Schmitz



Mailing addresses for our former Clergy & Religious

If mailing to priests and religious, please mail directly from your home.

Rev. Rick Jones
St. Vincent de Paul
1913 Ritter Dr
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Rev. Joseph Kelly
Guardian Angel
604 Church St.
Oran, MO 63771

Rev. Dave Hulshof
Immaculate Conception
3555 S. Freemont Ave
Springfield, MO 65804

Rev. Nicholas Newton
St. John Vianney Parish
808 State Rt. Y
Mountain View, MO 65548

Rev. Samson Dorival, SMM
St Benedict Parish
P.O. Box 595
Doniphan, MO 63936

Sr. Charlotte Rarlong SSND
4222 Summit Knoll Dr Apt E
St Louis, MO 63129

Rev. Simon Enudu
Sacred Heart
1050 Bus. Hwy 60-63
Willow Springs, MO 65793

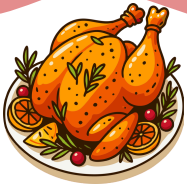
Rev. Joji Vincent
La Veiren de Guadalupe
P.O. Box 300
Mesquite, NV 89024

The Most Rev. John Leibrecht
1152 W. Camino Ave
Springfield, MO 65810



Hey Deacon!

By Deacon Dan Vaughn



**You blessed your food;
You blessed your Advent Wreath –
What about your Christmas Tree?**



The Church has many beautiful rituals and customs to draw upon in Advent. There is the Advent Wreath, the Jesse Tree, Advent hymns, Mary on the Mantle, the Nativity Scene (properly staged) and the countdown to Christmas Advent Calendar. In my family, on the first night of Advent, I would pray the Advent Wreath blessing prayer -- no priest or deacon required. On other Advent evenings before dinner, Beth and I would lead our family in the daily Advent prayer with our children taking turns each night lighting the Advent candles.

A new tradition that Beth and I have is blessing our Christmas Tree on the first night that we set it up, usually the third Sunday of Advent. I emphasize that this is a fairly new tradition because we were unaware that the Catholic Church had such a wonderful ritual blessing for the Christmas Tree. And again, no priest or deacon required.

Below is the Christmas Tree Blessing if you wish to add this to your family tradition. I have included the complete blessing which can be found on the USCCB's website. [Blessing of a Christmas Tree | USCCB](#)

The leader makes the sign of the cross, and all reply "Amen."

Leader: Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.
R/. Amen.

Leader: My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

Then the leader can offer a short bible verse and add these intercessory prayers:

Leader: Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.
R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.
R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord.
R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord.
R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

Following the intercessory prayers, the leader says the following prayer with hands joined together:

Lord our God, we praise you for the light of creation; the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night. We praise you for the light of Israel: the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures. We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son. He is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace, who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R/. Amen.

May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and forever.
R/. Amen.





Have you thought about setting aside resources for the parish through your will or trust?

Did you know that there are ways to leave money to the parish while you are still living?

You can make these commitments to financial stewardship by:

- Naming the parish in your will.
- Purchasing an annuity to benefit the parish through the diocese.
- Naming the parish as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy.
- Transferring ownership of stocks to the parish. This avoids taxation for the donor.
- Designating your minimum required distribution (MRD) on retirement accounts to the parish. This also avoids taxation for the donor.
- Making a substantial one time or recurring donation to the parish.

If you would like more information about designated giving, please contact the parish office.

Your gifts of financial stewardship are greatly appreciated.



OLL Games



Join us on December 18th
OLL Game Day
1:00pm Faith Formation Room

OLL Train -The Odd Couples

BIG Winner is Joe -171 Pam -183

2nd Week in a Row 1st Place for Joe & Pam

Julie -186

Lil' Winner is Ed -238

even though he went out 5 times!



Thanks to Fr. Johny & Fr. Dhaneesh
we played a new card game Canadian Sets

BIG Winner is Dan -630

Judy O -565 Sharon S -475 Julieann -300 Sharron -270 Joyce -140

Lil' Winner is Sharon A minus 35

YES! The person with the HIGHEST score is the WINNER!



OLL Games will celebrate Christmas on December 18th.

Join the fun: wear an ugly or beautiful sweater or top,
or maybe a Santa hat or reindeer antlers!

Looking forward to fun, fellowship and some great Christmas Treats!

OLL Games will be on vacation Dec 25th & Jan 1st,
celebrating with the Church and Family and Friends!

Games will resume on Thursday, January 8th.



THE LORD'S TABLE IS SET...

& YOU'RE INVITED

This guide lays out monthly themes & practical suggestions for families to build lasting habits within their family & anchor their lives by placing God at the center.

DECEMBER

ADVENT WREATH

Advent begins 11/30 - Make / Display an Advent Wreath in your home

ATTEND MASS AS A FAMILY

Attend Mass every Sunday & Holy days this month

ATTEND RECONCILIATION

As a family - attend an area Reconciliation service during Advent

See Page 11 for Additional Advent Reconciliation Times

Sunday, December 14 - 3:00pm
Our Lady of the Lake - Branson
(Form "B") Penance Service

SAVE THE DATE: Diocesan Eucharistic Congress 2026



SCAN HERE to learn more!



DIocese of SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU

Visit WWW.DIOSCG.ORG/DIOCESAN-EUCHARISTIC-CONGRESS or scan the QR CODE for more resources, including suggestions for the Year of Spiritual Preparation, updates to the Congress and to help promote the Congress!

What is Manna?

Manna is the official app of the National Eucharistic Congress— a growing hub of Eucharistic formation, prayer, and mission.

The National Eucharistic Congress invites you into our work of Eucharistic revival: it's the perfect time to go deeper — in prayer, in formation, in mission.

Whether you're looking to renew your prayer life, grow in understanding of the Eucharist, lead others, or simply stay connected to the Congress movement — Manna is built for you.

It's not just a video library. It's a spiritual ecosystem — right at your fingertips.



Those who eat my flesh & drink my blood remain in me & I in them. - Jn 6:56

Memorial Bricks

Looking for a gift for that hard to buy for person!

Paver bricks are available to remember loved ones, signify special celebrations and commemorate the celebration of life!

Interested in a Memorial Brick for the next installation?

SCAN TO ORDER



or

GO ONLINE

ollbranson.com/memorial-bricks

or

CALL the parish office
417-334-2928



Meditation Garden



Memorial Flag Pole



Advent Penance Services

St. Francis of Assisi - Nixa

Friday, Dec. 12 - 7pm

Mary Mother of God - Harrison, AR

Saturday, Dec. 13 - 9am-Noon

Our Lady of the Lake - Branson

Sunday, Dec. 14 - 3:00pm

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton - Springfield

Monday, Dec. 15 - 7:00pm

St. Joseph the Worker - Ozark

Tuesday, Dec. 16 - 7:00pm

Sacred Heart - Springfield

Wednesday, Dec. 17 - 7:00pm

Holy Trinity - Springfield

Thursday, Dec. 18 - 7:00pm

"May our hearts be prepared to receive Him at His coming this Christmas. May we see the face of Jesus in the poor and homeless, caring for them through our works of mercy."

Bishop Edward M. Rice



December
PRAYER INTENTION



Hallow

#1 App for Christian & Catholic Prayer, Meditation, Bible + Sleep | Hallow

Find Peace

Let God bring you His peace with the Calm Praylist, Daily Meditation, Rosary, and Sleep Bible Stories.

Transform Your Prayer Life

Choose from 10,000+ sessions, guides, and music options to lead you into relationship with Christ.

Build a Habit

Build a real habit of prayer every day by setting a routine that works for your schedule.



The full text of the bishops' Special Pastoral Message follows:

As pastors, we the bishops of the United States are bound to our people by ties of communion and compassion in Our Lord Jesus Christ. We are disturbed when we see among our people a climate of fear and anxiety around questions of profiling and immigration enforcement. We are saddened by the state of contemporary debate and the vilification of immigrants. We are concerned about the conditions in detention centers and the lack of access to pastoral care. We lament that some immigrants in the United States have arbitrarily lost their legal status. We are troubled by threats against the sanctity of houses of worship and the special nature of hospitals and schools. We are grieved when we meet parents who fear being detained when taking their children to school and when we try to console family members who have already been separated from their loved ones.

Despite obstacles and prejudices, generations of immigrants have made enormous contributions to the well-being of our nation. We as Catholic bishops love our country and pray for its peace and prosperity. For this very reason, we feel compelled now in this environment to raise our voices in defense of God-given human dignity.

Catholic teaching exhorts nations to recognize the fundamental dignity of all persons, including immigrants. We bishops advocate for a meaningful reform of our nation's immigration laws and procedures. Human dignity and national security are not in conflict. Both are possible if people of good will work together.

We recognize that nations have a responsibility to regulate their borders and establish a just and orderly immigration system for the sake of the common good. Without such processes, immigrants face the risk of trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Safe and legal pathways serve as an antidote to such risks.

The Church's teaching rests on the foundational concern for the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). As pastors, we look to Sacred Scripture and the example of the Lord Himself, where we find the wisdom of God's compassion. The priority of the Lord, as the Prophets remind us, is for those who are most vulnerable: the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the stranger (Zechariah 7:10). In the Lord Jesus, we see the One who became poor for our sake (2 Corinthians 8:9), we see the Good Samaritan who lifts us from the dust (Luke 10:30–37), and we see the One who is found in the least of these (Matthew 25). The Church's concern for neighbor and our concern here for immigrants is a response to the Lord's command to love as He has loved us (John 13:34).

To our immigrant brothers and sisters, we stand with you in your suffering, since, when one member suffers, all suffer (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:26). You are not alone!

We note with gratitude that so many of our clergy, consecrated religious, and lay faithful already accompany and assist immigrants in meeting their basic human needs. We urge all people of good will to continue and expand such efforts.

We oppose the indiscriminate mass deportation of people. We pray for an end to dehumanizing rhetoric and violence, whether directed at immigrants or at law enforcement. We pray that the Lord may guide the leaders of our nation, and we are grateful for past and present opportunities to dialogue with public and elected officials. In this dialogue, we will continue to advocate for meaningful immigration reform.

As disciples of the Lord, we remain men and women of hope, and hope does not disappoint! (cf. Romans 5:5)

May the mantle of Our Lady of Guadalupe enfold us all in her maternal and loving care and draw us ever closer to the heart of Christ.



Join Father J.
on a
Pilgrimage to
Fatima & Lourdes with Barcelona

September 20 - 30, 2026

[Click here for more information or to sign up.](#)

OCIA Notes

OCIA Christmas Party

Tuesday, Dec. 16th

6:30pm - 8:00pm

**It's also our last session until the
New Year January 6, 2026!**

*Name cards of our Catechumen and Candidates are
still available at the Help Desk in the Gathering Space.
Please take one or more, to Pray for our Seekers
throughout this year.*

**Thank you! Your OCIA Team,
Steve Harter, Mario Lombardi, Stephanie Miller,
Wendie Lapham and Lorry Davis**

Merry
Christmas

DECEMBER PSR CALENDAR



Wednesday PSR K-12th

Dec. 17 - 5:30-7:00pm

Mass
Food/Class

Dec 24th
Christmas Eve
No Class

Dec 31st
New Year's Eve
No Class



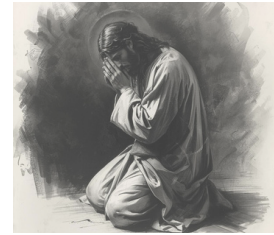
SAINT OF THE MONTH



SAINT JUAN DIEGO
was born in 1474
as Cuauhtlatotzin,
a native to Mexico.
He became the first Roman
Catholic indigenous saint from
the Americas.

SPECIAL EVENT

Communal
Penance Service
Sunday, Dec. 14th - 3pm



SERVICE PROJECT

Christmas Cards
for the Homebound



MENU

12/17 - Waffles and Ice Cream





JANUARY PSR CALENDAR



Wednesday PSR K-12th

Jan. 7th
No Class

Jan. 14 - 5:30-7:00pm
Mass
Food/Class

Jan. 21 - 5:30-7:00pm
Mass
Food/Class

Jan. 28 - 5:30 - 7:00pm
Mass
Food/Class



SERVICE PROJECT

Decorate
lunch bags
for Elevate
Branson



SAINT OF THE MONTH



Saint John Bosco

ALSO KNOWN AS
DON BOSCO,
WAS BORN IN BECCHI, ITALY,
ON AUGUST 16, 1815

His feast day
is on
January 31

SAINT JOHN BOSCO IS THE
PATRON SAINT OF APPRENTICES,
EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS,
SCHOOLCHILDREN, MAGICIANS,
AND JUVENILE DELINQUENTS.

SPECIAL EVENT

The Epiphany
Tuesday, Jan 6th



MENU

1/14 - English Muffin Breakfast

1/21 - Chicken Nachos

1/28 - Pasta



Rejoice in the Lord always.
 I shall say it again: rejoice!
 Philippians 4:4



**CATHOLIC TRIVIA
 JUST FOR FUN**

Question: According to tradition, what are the names of Mary's parents?

Answer: St. Anne and St. Joachim.
 ©LPI

"What is St. Joan of Arc's favorite Christmas carol?"



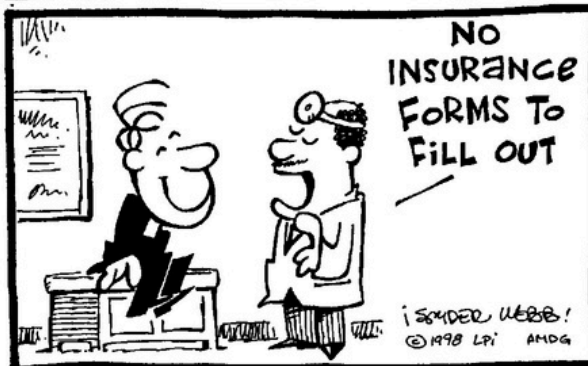
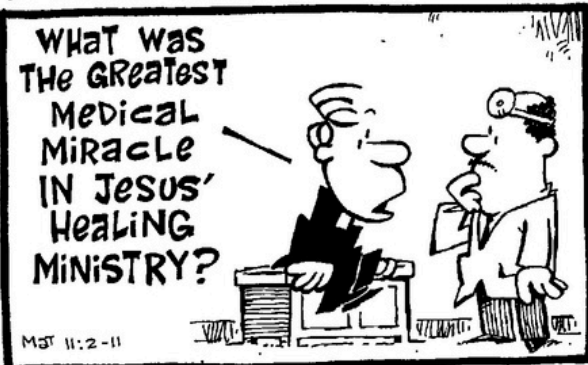
"O, Holy Knight!"



St. Joan of Arc led the French to victory in 1429, a valiant soldier for Jesus. (Being French, she probably preferred French carols, though).

©LPI

3RD SUNDAY IN ADVENT



3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Weekly Prayer

Sunday's Readings

First Reading:

Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return
and enter Zion singing,
crowned with everlasting joy;
they will meet with joy and gladness,
sorrow and mourning will flee. (Isa 35:10)

Psalm:

Lord, come and save us. (Ps 146)
OR
Alleluia.

Second Reading:

Be patient, brothers and sisters,
until the coming of the Lord. (Jas 5:7)

Gospel:

Jesus said to them in reply,
"Go and tell John what you hear and see:
the blind regain their sight,
the lame walk,
lepers are cleansed,
the deaf hear,
the dead are raised,
and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."
(Mt 11:4-5)

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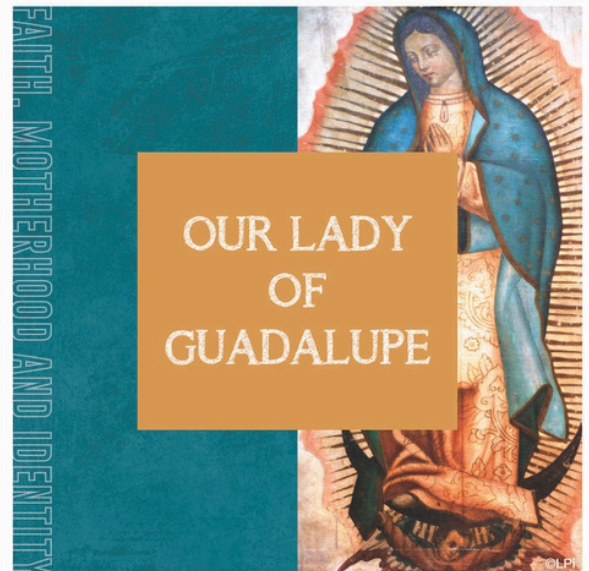
Live The Liturgy Inspiration of the Week

"Go and tell what you have seen and heard,"
Jesus says. When it comes to proving who he
is, he always lets his actions do the talking. We
have heard. We have seen. We must go and
tell. Let's let our actions do the talking. Who
do we think Jesus is?

Observances for the week of December 14, 2025

Sunday: 3rd Sunday of Advent

Next Sunday: 4th Sunday of Advent



Devotions, *Explained!*

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego in Mexico City in 1531. The Patroness of the Americas, Our Lady of Guadalupe is a beloved symbol of faith, motherhood and identity. Her feast day is Dec. 12.

Prayer for Advent - New Growth

Dear God,
Bring new life! Your love creates
and cultivates.
Bring Your power into the places I
think of as "deserts"
and your grace to the prayers I
fear may be "deserted."
You can redeem and restore,
bring a new song to my heart.
Amen.

Readings for the week of December 14, 2025

Sunday:

Is 35:1-6a, 10/Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10
(see Is 35:4)/Jas 5:7-10/Mt 11:2-11

Monday:

Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a/Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and
7bc, 8-9/Mt 21:23-27

Tuesday:

Zep 3:1-2, 9-13/Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18,
19 and 23/Mt 21:28-32

Wednesday:

Gn 49:2, 8-10/Ps 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17/
Mt 1:1-17

Thursday:

Jer 23:5-8/Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19/
Mt 1:18-25

Friday:

Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a/Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-
17/Lk 1:5-25

Saturday:

Is 7:10-14/Ps 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6/
Lk 1:26-38

Next Sunday:

Is 7:10-14/Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (7c, 10b)/
Rom 1:1-7/Mt 1:18-24



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Gospel Meditation

Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

When I was 11, I was riding my bike on a Friday night in Scottsdale, Arizona. I saw giant spotlights swirling in the sky. Something amazing had to be happening. I pedaled after them with excitement. Sweaty and tired, I arrived, only to find a used car lot. Bright lights, flapping banners, inflatable balloon men swaying wildly in the wind. I stood there, heart sinking. All that spectacle, and all my effort ... for this?

As life proceeds, we learn what it is like to pursue promising but fruitless searches. This week we hear Jesus ask the crowds regarding John the Baptist: **“What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?” (Matthew 11:7)**. He’s not just describing the crowd’s mis-aimed pursuit. He’s naming our tendency to chase after what’s flashy but flimsy.

What are our swaying reeds? For me, it is endless video reels on my phone, worldly pleasures, entertainment in sports, and the good opinion of others. Inflated distractions that bend whichever way the wind blows. But they can’t satisfy my soul. What are your flimsy reeds?

John the Baptist wasn’t a swaying reed. He was rooted, grounded, unafraid to speak the solid truth. The people went to see him because, deep down, they were starving for something real.

This Advent, the Church asks us to reassess: What are we really looking for? Are we chasing the dazzling but hollow? Or are we seeking what is solid and lasting — that which points to Christ?

— *Father John Muir*

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC

Mini Reflection: We go to Mass. We go to Confession. We pray. We read Scripture. In doing all these things, again and again, we go out to the desert. Why? What are we expecting to see?

What We See in the Desert

I've always wanted to see a real desert.

I know all about frigid, snowy winters and warm, wet summers. I grew up on rich soil that yields lush vegetation and bountiful harvests. But I've never experienced a desert, not in my own country or abroad, and I'm curious.

I know there must be something magical about the desert for it to feature so heavily in Scripture, for it to provide a backdrop to so many crucial moments of salvation history. The Israelites following the cloud, the temptation of Christ, the voice crying out: "Prepare the way for the Lord."

Why do these moments have to happen in a desert? Why do they make so much less sense in a tropical rainforest or a verdant forest?

I think it's because the desert doesn't have anything to offer us, at first glance. No one longs for the physical sensation of a dry heat and a beating sun. But the vast emptiness and the almost mystical harshness — even if we don't desire and delight in it, this is a setting that we understand, somehow, intrinsically. We know it deep within our soul. God is there.

We go to Mass. We go to Confession. We pray. We read Scripture. In doing all these things, again and again, we go out to the desert.

Why? What are we expecting to see?

If we expect to be entertained, we will be disappointed. If we expect reassurance, we will be disappointed. If we expect to feel pleasant and safe and sheltered, we will be disappointed.

The desert is there to challenge us. The desert is there to show us who we are, and who we can be.

So go.

— Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Why do we do that? Catholic Life Explained

Question:

Our prayer group has been reading the lives of some saints, and we were struck by how some of them thought they were such sinners. Why would someone so holy think they had such serious sin?

Answer:

As Professional athletes practice the fundamentals of their sport over and over again, reaching for better form, consistency, and performance. They focus on the basics, review past performances, and visualize greater success. Practice makes better, if not perfect!

Spiritual masters such as the saints also looked for perfection. They practiced their faith in the search for holiness, grace, and virtue. Through sacraments, prayer, study, good works, and penance, they raised their level of awareness and their sensitivity to the presence of God, the demands of the Gospel, and the workings of the Holy Spirit. They examined their consciences daily, reviewing the day for moments of failure and times that they could have been more virtuous in one way or another. They resolved to do better, be more attentive, and alert!

Therefore, anything that would distract them or interfere with their relationship with God would be like a small black spot on a bright white wall — you can't miss it! The great saints were aware of sin and the presence of evil because they were so tuned into the struggle between good and evil that was fought in their own lives, hearts, and souls.

Dear Padre,

Does the Bible say that Mary was in her sixth month of pregnancy at the Annunciation?

The announcement of Jesus' birth in Luke begins, "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph...and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-27). This Scripture passage taken out of context could possibly give the impression that "in the sixth month" refers to Mary. However, it refers to Mary's cousin Elizabeth, who was in the sixth month of her pregnancy with John the Baptist. The proper context is a few verses before this one that reads, "Elizabeth conceived, and she went into seclusion for five months" (Luke 1:24).

Regarding Mary's pregnancy, at the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel tells her, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:31, 35). Gabriel also informs Mary, "And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren" (Luke 1:36).

In general, women already in their sixth month of pregnancy would likely be aware of their condition, and it would not be easy to conceal from others. ●



Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
December 15	December 16	December 17	December 18	December 19	December 20	December 21
<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i>
Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a Mt 21:23-27	Zep 3:1-2, 9-13 Mt 21:28-32	Gn 49:2, 8-10 Mt 1:1-17	Jer 23:5-8 Mt 1:18-25	Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a Lk 1:5-25	Is 7:10-14 Lk 1:26-38	Is 7:10-14 Rom 1:1-7 Mt 1:18-24



A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

There are many settings in which the Christian faith is considered absurd.... Yet, precisely for this reason, they are the places where our missionary outreach is desperately needed. A lack of faith is often tragically accompanied by the loss of meaning in life, the neglect of mercy, appalling violations of human dignity, the crisis of the family, and so many other wounds that afflict our society.

HOMILY, ROME, MAY 9, 2025



Say to the fearful of heart:
Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God,
he comes with vindication;
With divine recompense
he comes to save you.

ISAIAH 35:4



The Gift of Questions

FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSsR

We sometimes imagine that a sign of a strong faith is firm conviction and freedom from doubt. However, despite our imaginings, the authentic experiences of saints and ordinary people alike seem to point in another direction. The question of John the Baptist today—“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3)—suggests that John is filled with questions, and these are important questions because they are asked from the depths of King Herod’s prison, which is not exactly the place of idle musings or concerns.

If John, who is a great saint and a man who encountered Jesus and witnessed the powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit at his baptism, can have a question, doesn’t it suggest that questions are acceptable—perhaps even needed? Perhaps questioning is an indication of faithfulness, not a lack of faith. Questions do not suggest that something is missing; rather, they confirm that something is growing and developing. The Baptist could just have easily said, “Jesus, you are doing and saying more than I ever imagined possible. Please help me to understand,” or, to quote an unnamed saint, “I do believe, help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

God will not shatter, and faith will not collapse, because you have questions or doubts.

Experience suggests that questions and doubts strengthen our belief and our commitment to a life of faith. ●



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MASS SCHEDULE

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Saturday 5:00 pm & 7:00 pm (Spanish)
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WEEKDAY

Monday, Tuesday, & Thursday 9:00 am
Wednesday 5:30 pm
1st Friday 10:00 am

Holy Day of Obligation

Noon and 7pm (Bilingual)

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or by Appointment (417-334-2928)

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Tuesday 9:30 am - 3:00 pm

1st Wednesday of the month. After Mass -

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Thursday 9:30 am - 7:00 pm

- We will not have the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for the week before, the week of, and the week after a holiday.
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