

Dear Padre,

I went to confession, and then, months later, my priest was removed for alcoholism and theft. Is my confession still worthy?

Your confession is not dependent on the worthiness or the unworthiness of the priest. Your confession is made to Jesus; the priest is a witness who pronounces the words of absolution that Jesus intended in the sacrament. "From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1128).

The question of the efficacy of the sacrament and the unworthiness of the minister who performs the sacrament in the name of the Church is not new. During the time of persecution, in the early centuries of the Church, some people, including priests and bishops, avoided martyrdom by offering the required oblation to Caesar. Later, they repented and returned to the Christian community, a community that included the surviving family and friends of the men and women who were martyred. The question was asked, and with some animated energy, "How could these ministers who sinned to save their own lives now represent the Church?" The answer, arrived at with patience and discernment, is that the minister is only the representative of the sacrament, not the source of the sacrament. Jesus is faithful, even when his ministers have been unfaithful. ●

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR / DearPadre.org

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV



I think it is important for all of us to learn how to listen more, to enter into dialogue. First and foremost, with the Lord: always listen to the word of God. Then also listen

to others, to know how to build bridges, to know how to listen without judging, not closing the doors [and] thinking that we have all the truth and no one else can tell us anything.

HOMILY, ROME, MAY 11, 2025



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Our Parish COMMUNITY

December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent (A)

Isaiah 7:10–14 / Romans 1:1–7 / Matthew 1:18–24



Close Enough!

MIGUEL DULICK

It is the fourth Sunday of Advent. When Christmas is this close, one takes that final leap. Isaiah is centuries from Christmas, but he cannot wait! He sees the "sign" as clear as day: "the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14). And how about that Son! None other than "Emmanuel" himself—God-With-Us! Paul, too, is bursting at the seams! Inspired by what he calls "the obedience of faith" (Romans 5), he is excited to see the gospel thriving even among the Gentiles. For him, the "Spirit of holiness" is a gift offered to all—Christmas every day, you might say.

Speaking of "obedience of faith," Joseph is the perfect example. The word "obey" comes from the same root as "to hear," and Joseph has almost supernatural ears! Matthew, the former tax collector, tells "how the birth of Jesus Christ came about" in today's gospel reading like a bookkeeper—the Holy Spirit in Column A, Joseph in Column B, with Mary in the middle. But when an angel whispers to Joseph at night, his dream comes true: "he took his wife into his home." Everything is set for Emmanuel!

So, the Bible is brimming with Christmas, that is, "God-With-Us," from end to end. And when a virgin can conceive, are any of us exempt from "birthing" Jesus in our midst? Even when a "happy holiday" seems impossible in the midst of war or violence or poverty, when our ears hear only silence, let's sing Christmas carols every day! ●



SCAN TO LEARN ABOUT AUTHOR MIGUEL DULICK

Reflect

How am I at listening? Can I find new insights in old stories that I think I know so well?



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Office hours are Wednesday & Thursday 7:30 am—5:30 pm.

If there is an Emergency you may call Corinne at 715-250-0567 or Father David at 920-228-1814. Thank-you.

St Mary's Mass schedule in Black Creek: Saturdays @ 4 PM, Sundays @ 8 AM, Tuesday—Friday @ 7:30 AM

Father David Greskowiak—Administrator

Saturday 12/14/25 = \$1,963.00 Attendance = 88

Retirement Collection = \$746.00

Amount needed per week - \$ 1,583.27

Mass Intentions

12/21/2025— Remembrance of James Krings by The Krings Family

12/24/2025— Remembrance of Lois & Leroy Hartlaben by Steve & Sheila Hartlaben

12/25/2025— Merry Christmas St Lawrence Parish

12/28/2025— Peeters Family by Mary Peeters

Mass Servers –

12/21/2025— Alex & Reagan Krings, Nina Drossart

12/24/2025— Malachi Gray & Beau Diemel

12/25/2025— Alex & Reagan Krings, Nina Drossart

12/28/2025— Jared & Ava Peters

Ministers of the Word –

12/21/2025— Kevin Peeters

12/24/2025— Anita Wegner

12/25/2025— Sam Krings

12/28/2025— Jerry Nowak

Hospitality

12/21/2025— Charlie Herb, Barb Erb, Karen VanLannen

12/24/2025— Anita Wegner, David Nowak, Keith Pennings

12/25/2025— Charlie Herb, Rene LaFond, Bernie Weier

12/28/2025— David Nowak, Pam Wetts

2026 Religious Calendars

Catholic Heritage 2026 calendars, compliments of Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home, are available at the entrances of the church.

Year-End Contributions—Please have any contributions for Tax Year 2025 into the office or in the collection by **Sunday 28 December**. Thank you.

(Contributions at the 4 P.M. Mass in Black Creek on 31 Dec will be credited to 2025.)

RE NEWS:

Wed. 12/24/25 — 01/01/26 Christmas Break

Wed. 01/07/26—Teacher's Meeting at 6:30 PM

Mon. 01/12/26—RE Committee Meeting at 6 PM

Wed. 01/14/26—Class resume At 6:30 PM

Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry

Wednesday, January 21 4—6 PM

Saturday, January 24 9—11 AM

Thank you for all the donations so far this year!!



Mass Intentions that are available for the year of 2026:

January 25; February 1, 18(Ash Wednesday); March 8, 22, 29; April 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 19, 26; May 3, 25; June 21, 28; July 12, 26; August 2, 23, 30; September 6, 20(Picnic), 27; October 4, 11, 18, 25; November 15, Deer Hunter's Mass, Thanksgiving, 29; December 13, 20, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, 27, and New Years. You may contact Corinne at the office to reserve your dates.

Happy Birthday!

December 21 Carter Guyette; 26 Jordan Fischer, Amy Guyette; 27 Zach Reif, Carol Short; 29 Harper Strayer; 31 Pat Weier, Stacey Scott January 01Keith Johnson; 03 Emma Inman, Bonnie Seefeldt; 06 Kaylajo Zuleger; 07 Ivy Martin; 10 Jerilyn Henn, Shyann Maroszek; Jeff Peters; 11 Ariel Hartleben; 12 Cole Diemel, Jeff Peters; 14 Sara Bohm, David Nowak; 15 Sharon Hasser, Gerald Nowak; 16 Amy Gray; 18 Norbert Short; 19 Charles Beschta; 21 Jamie Martin; 22 Joanne Heinemayer; 26 Jared Peters; 28 Eli Inman; 29 Landon Fischer, Ami Hanus, Sierra Peeters; 30 Jack Bunker, Keith Pennings

What Is a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)?

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a special way for individuals age 70½ or older to make tax-free gifts directly from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to a qualified charity, such as our church.

How Does It Work?

- You must be at least 70½ years old at the time of the distribution.
- The QCD must be made directly from your IRA to the charity. You cannot withdraw the funds yourself first.
- You can give up to \$105,000 per year (for 2025; this amount is indexed for inflation) as a QCD.

The QCD counts toward your required minimum distribution (RMD) if you are required to take one.

What Are the Tax Benefits?

- The amount of the QCD is excluded from your taxable income, which may lower your overall tax bill.
- You do not need to itemize deductions to benefit from a QCD.

Reducing your taxable income may also help lower the tax on your Social Security benefits and reduce Medicare premiums.

Important Details:

- QCDs can only be made from traditional IRAs (not from 401(k)s or other retirement plans, unless rolled into an IRA first).
- The distribution must go directly to the charity—ask your IRA custodian for their process.

You cannot also claim a charitable deduction for a QCD on your tax return.

Why Consider a QCD? A QCD is a tax-efficient way to support our church and fulfill your charitable goals, especially if you do not itemize deductions.

If you are interested in making a QCD, please consult your financial advisor or IRA custodian for guidance.

With gratitude, Thank you from the staff and residents of "The Pines Senior Care". "Christmas Is Love" that is what St Lawrence Parish showed us. Merry and Bright will be our celebration because of your generosity. Everyone is welcome to join the Christmas party on Tuesday December 23 @10:30 AM at the Pines in Embarrass. Your gifts along with the volunteer fire department dinner will make a magical Christmas for all.

We want to thank everyone who was involved in the Christmas Pageant sponsored by our Religious Education students, teachers and parents. It was a good, meaningful and prayerful experience. Thank you also to everyone who helped with the reception afterward.

Email: stlawrencenavarino@gmail.com

Website: stlawrencenavarino.org

Reflection on the 4th Sunday of Advent

Here is an excerpt from an article titled: "4th Sunday of Advent Year A, Sunday December 21, 2025" found on the "Young Catholics" website—young-catholics.com:

God's Promise is Fulfilled

The 4th Sunday of Advent Year A reminds us that God always keeps His promises. In the first reading, Isaiah tells Ahaz that God will give a sign. This sign is a child called Emmanuel, which means God is with us. Even when people doubt, God remains faithful. The Gospel shows how this promise is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the child who comes to bring hope to the world. God does not forget His people. He is with them, just as He said He would be. This reading encourages trust in God's plan. Even when things seem uncertain, God is present...He promises to be with us too.

Salvation is for Everyone

The 4th Sunday of Advent Year A reminds us that salvation is not just for a few. In the second reading, Paul tells the Romans that Jesus came for all people. No one is left out. God's plan is bigger than any one nation or group. Jesus is the Savior for everyone. No matter where someone comes from or what their past looks like, He welcomes them. Paul calls people to belong to Jesus and follow Him. This is an invitation for all. Advent is a time to remember that Jesus' coming is a gift. It is not something earned. It is freely given. As we prepare for Christmas, we can open our hearts to that gift and share it with others.

Trusting God Over Fear

The 4th Sunday of Advent Year A shows two very different responses to God. Ahaz, the ruler of Judah, is surrounded by enemies. He is afraid and does not trust God to protect his kingdom. Even when Isaiah tells him to ask for a sign, he refuses. He relies on his own strength instead. Joseph, on the other hand, listens to God. He might not understand everything, but when the angel speaks to him, he obeys. He chooses faith over fear. Because of his trust, he becomes part of God's great plan. These readings remind us that fear can hold us back from trusting God. Ahaz chose fear, while Joseph chose faith. Advent is a time to ask ourselves which path we are following.

Reflection on the Nativity of the Lord

Here is an excerpt from an article titled: "The Nativity of the Lord: Christmas, December 25" found on the "Young Catholics" website—young-catholics.com:

Embracing the Miracle

Christmas celebrates the amazing story of God becoming man. We often wonder why an all-powerful God would choose to live among us and share our experiences. This shows how much God loves us. In Jesus, God became one of us. This act shows we are not just creations but dearly loved children of God.

The birth of Jesus is not just a story from the past. It is something we live every day. Jesus' coming shows we are never alone. God is always with us. This should fill us with hope. In tough times, remember that God is with us. Jesus is a light that guides us through darkness. Knowing we are loved by God should give us strength. This Christmas, let's remember the miracle of Jesus' birth. Let's embrace this love and share it with others. Christmas is a time to feel God's closeness and to be thankful for His love.

Beloved Children

This Christmas season, remember we are not alone in life's journey. We are God's beloved children. God watches over us with great love. In happy times and tough times, God is with us. His love guides and strengthens us. Knowing this can change how we see ourselves and others. We should see everyone through the lens of God's love. This helps us to be kind and understanding. When we remember we are God's children, our actions reflect His love. Let's use this Christmas to spread love and kindness. See each person as God sees them. Build bridges of compassion and unity. As God's children, let's make the world a better place by sharing His love.

Divine Solidarity

As we celebrate Christmas, let's embrace the gift of God being with us. The Nativity is not just a story; it is a way of life. We should live out the love, humility, and compassion that Jesus showed us. By doing this, we make God's love real in the world. Christmas calls us to be like Jesus. Be His hands and feet on earth. Spread His message of hope and love in all parts of our lives. Christmas is more than a holiday; it is a call to live in God's love. Let's carry the spirit of Christmas with us always. Remember that Jesus' birth means God is always with us. Live with hope, knowing we are loved by God. Share this love with others. Merry Christmas, and may the peace of Christ fill your heart.

Christmas Season Schedule

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Tuesday, 23 December | Confessions—St. Mary's in Black Creek | 4:30—6:00 P.M. |
| Wednesday, 24 December | Christmas Vigil Mass at St. Mary's | 4:00 P.M. |
| | Christmas Vigil Mass at St. Lawrence | 6:30 P.M. |
| Thursday, 25 December | Christmas Mass (Dawn) at St. Mary's | 8:00 A.M. |
| | Christmas Mass (Day) at St. Lawrence | 10:00 A.M. |
| Wednesday, 31 December | Mary Mother of God Mass at St. Mary's | 4:00 P.M. |
| Thursday, 1 January 2026 | Mary Mother of God Mass at St. Mary's | 8:00 A.M. |
| | Mary Mother of God Mass at St. Lawrence | 10:00 A.M. |

Anyone who would like to help decorate the church for Christmas after the 10 A.M. Mass on Sunday, 21 December, will be most welcome.

Come to church early during the Christmas Season & enjoy the music. Pre-mass Christmas Eve & Christmas Day 20 minutes before mass and the other services 10 minutes before mass.

