

Dear Padre,

A friend of mine took his life. He was a very staunch Catholic. His wife wanted to know if he could be buried or have a Mass in the Catholic Church.

Yes, your friend should most certainly receive a Catholic funeral and burial. "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives" (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2283).

A person who is suffering with a mental illness or disorder, certainly a prerequisite for suicide, may not have the necessary mental freedom to choose something that is understood as grave or mortal. In other words, he or she does not have the necessary requirements for full and free consent of the will.

Not that long ago, suicide was often misunderstood. Thankfully, today we understand the havoc and suffering of mental illness, and that a person can be a victim, even if it might look like he or she is not. The great suffering of those who take their own lives must not be dismissed or discarded. The family members and friends of a person who suffers suicide should also not be judged but should only receive compassion and understanding. They, too, are victims, in the fullest sense of the word and in the truest understanding of what it means to be a fragile human being. ●

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



AMY STOUT / CATHOLICA

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV



Young people of our time, like those of every age, are a volcano of life, energy, sentiments, and ideas. It can be seen from the wonderful things they are able to do, in so

many fields. However, they also need help in order for this great wealth to grow in harmony and to overcome what...can still hinder their healthy development.

ADDRESS, ROME, MAY 15, 2025

Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

Monday December 29 <i>Octave of Christmas</i> 1 Jn 2:3-11 Lk 2:22-35	Thursday January 1 <i>Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God</i> Nm 6:22-27 Gal 4:4-7 Lk 2:16-21	Saturday January 3 <i>Christmas Weekday</i> 1 Jn 2:29-3:6 Jn 1:29-34
Tuesday December 30 <i>Octave of Christmas</i> 1 Jn 2:12-17 Lk 2:36-40	Friday January 2 <i>Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church</i> 1 Jn 2:22-28 Jn 1:19-28	Sunday January 4 <i>The Epiphany of the Lord</i> Is 60:1-6 Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6 Mt 2:1-12
Wednesday December 31 <i>Octave of Christmas</i> 1 Jn 2:18-21 Jn 1:1-18		



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Embracing a Spirituality of Listening

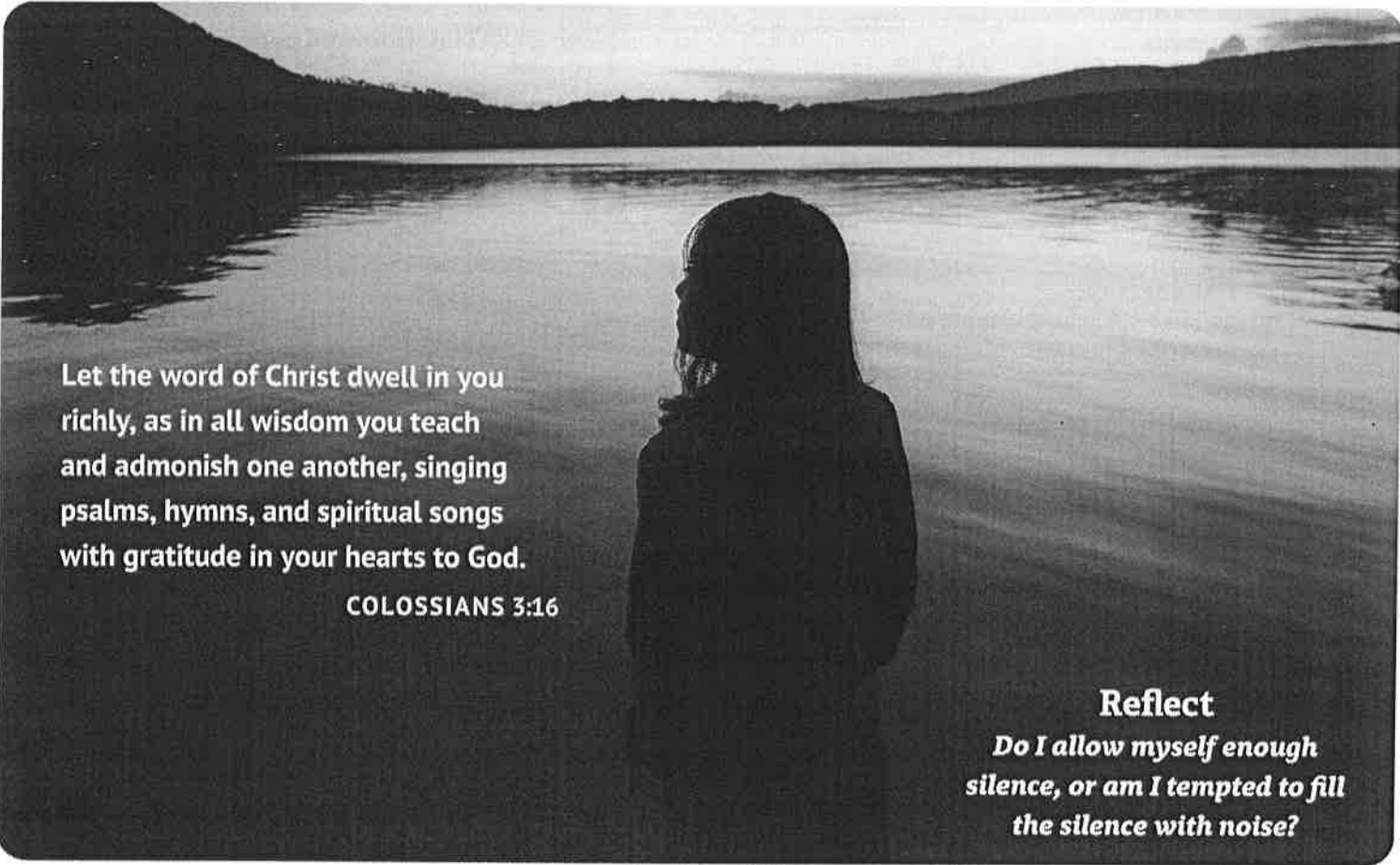
ANN M. GARRIDO

The most treasured prayer of Jesus' people has long been and remains the Shema: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is God. The Lord is One." Jewish spirituality is grounded not in seeing or touching or tasting, but in hearing. No one exemplifies fidelity to this way of being in the world more than Joseph, as evidenced in today's gospel. Joseph is one who listens to what God's messenger says to him and immediately acts on it. He responds to the call to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. Then, he responds to the call to return home with his family to Israel. As many have noted, Joseph never speaks in Scripture, but he certainly listens, and he certainly acts on what he hears.

Christmas is perhaps the noisiest season of the year. At gatherings of family and friends with festive music in the background, it often feels as if we are shouting over one another to be heard. It is a season when it can be hard to have deep conversations, even with God. Indeed, it can be such a busy season that sometimes our regular prayer practices fall by the wayside. But, if we do not make space in our daily lives to listen, might we miss messages that are important, even urgent, for us to hear, as in the case of today's gospel? Messages that require immediate response? What would it look like to carve out a bit of silence in this holiday season, to be like Joseph and reground yourself in a spirituality of listening? ●



SCAN TO LEARN ABOUT AUTHOR ANN M. GARRIDO



Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

Reflect
Do I allow myself enough silence, or am I tempted to fill the silence with noise?

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 12/21/25 = TBA Attendance = TBA

Amount needed per week - \$ 1,583.27

Mass Intentions

12/28/2025— Peeters Family by Mary Peeters

1/01/2026— For Peace on Earth

1/04/2026— Living & Deceased Family members of Frances & John
Short by Nancy Nolan

Mass Servers –

12/28/2025— Jared & Ava Peters

1/01/2026— Alex & Reagan Krings

1/04/2026— Jared Peters, Jamesen Boerst, & Nina Drossart

Ministers of the Word –

12/28/2025— Jerry Nowak

1/01/2026— Mary Peeters

1/04/2026— Jerry Nowak

Hospitality

12/28/2025— David Nowak, Pam Wetts

1/01/2026— Barb Erb, Charlie Herb

1/04/2026— Barb Erb, Charlie Herb, Pam Wetts

Christmas Season Schedule

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.

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

2026 Religious Calendars

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

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

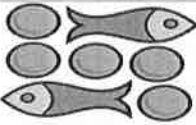
Wed. 01/14/26—Class resume At 6:30 PM

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, 10, 24, 25; June 7, 21, 28; July 5, 12, 26;
August 2, 23, 30; September 6, 20(Picnic), 27; October 4, 11, 18, 25;
November 8, 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 29 Harper Strayer; 31 Pat Weier, Stacey Scott
January 01 Keith 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
Banker, Keith Pennings

What Is a Qualified Charitable Distribution
(QCD)?

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a spe-
cial 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 your-
self 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 dis-
tribution (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.

Reflection on the Holy Family

Here is an excerpt from an article titled: “*The Feast of the Holy Family Year A, Sunday December 28, 2025*” found on the “Young Catholics”
website—*young-catholics.com*:

Honoring Family Despite Imperfections

The first reading for the Feast of The Holy Family Year A emphasizes honoring parents. To honor someone means to desire their good, even when
relationships are difficult. Family life is often complicated. It is possible to honor a parent or sibling without ignoring past hurts. Honoring does
not mean accepting harmful behavior. It means seeking what is best for them while maintaining healthy boundaries.

Respect within families is about recognizing each person’s dignity. This includes those who have hurt us. We can pray for them and wish them
well, even if we need to keep distance for our own well-being. Honoring them is about our own integrity, not necessarily about repairing broken
relationships. It allows us to choose love without denying the truth of our pain.

This wisdom is echoed in the Feast of The Holy Family Year A, where Joseph protects his family by obeying God’s call. His actions honor God
and his family. He shows that honoring does not always mean staying in one place or accepting everything as it is. Sometimes it requires courage
and change to protect those we love.

Families are not perfect. There are misunderstandings and conflicts. But by honoring each other, even in imperfect situations, we follow the
example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Their trust in God and commitment to each other show us how to live faithfully within the realities of family
life.

Building Harmony with Compassion

The second reading for the Feast of The Holy Family Year A calls for compassion, kindness, and patience. These virtues are essential for building
harmony within families. Compassion means being sensitive to each other’s struggles. It means listening and offering support without judgment.
Kindness is about choosing to be gentle in words and actions, even when conflicts arise.

Patience is crucial in family life. People make mistakes, and growth takes time. Patience allows us to accept each other’s limitations while
encouraging positive change. It prevents us from reacting harshly or giving up on each other. By practicing patience, we mirror Christ’s love and
mercy. In the Feast of The Holy Family Year A, Joseph shows great patience and understanding. He responds to God’s message without anger or
frustration. He accepts his role with humility, protecting Mary and Jesus even when the path is uncertain. His patience and kindness preserve
peace within his family.

These virtues are not always easy to practice, especially when emotions run high. But they are essential for healthy relationships. They help us
navigate challenges and forgive each other. In doing so, we reflect Christ’s love in our homes. By choosing compassion, kindness, and patience,
we contribute to harmony and unity in our families.

Trusting God’s Guidance

Both the first reading and the Gospel for the Feast of The Holy Family Year A highlight the importance of trusting God’s guidance. In Sirach, we
see the blessings that come from honoring parents and living according to God’s wisdom. This trust is rooted in faith, even when life is uncertain
or challenging.

In the Gospel, Joseph demonstrates deep trust in God. When warned in a dream, he immediately takes action to protect Mary and Jesus. He does
not hesitate or question God’s plan. He trusts that God’s guidance will lead his family to safety. This faith is the foundation of his role as a
husband and father. Trusting God’s guidance is not always easy. It often involves stepping into the unknown, just as Joseph did when he fled to
Egypt. It means letting go of our own plans and allowing God to lead. This requires courage and humility. It challenges us to believe that God’s
ways are better than our own.

The Feast of The Holy Family Year A reminds us that God is always present in our lives, even when we cannot see the full picture. Like Joseph,
we are called to listen and respond to God’s call with faith. This trust builds strong families rooted in God’s love and wisdom. By trusting God’s
guidance, we find peace in the midst of uncertainty. We learn to lean on God in times of trouble, knowing that He cares for us as His children.
This faith unites families and helps them navigate life’s challenges with hope and strength.

Reflection on Mary, the Mother of God

Here is an excerpt from an article titled: “*The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, January 1*” found on the “Young Catholics” website—
young-catholics.com:

Mary’s Role in God’s Plan

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, is a special day to honor Mary’s role in God’s plan of salvation...Mary’s acceptance of God’s plan
allowed the Word to become flesh. Jesus, both God and man, bridged the gap between us and God... We also learn that we are adopted as God’s
children...The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, invites us to live as true children of God. We are called to recognize our new identity and
live in the light of God’s love. As we honor Mary, we are encouraged to deepen our relationship with God and follow her example of faith and
obedience...

Mary as the Theotokos

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, celebrates Mary as the Theotokos, the Mother of God. This title honors her special role in salvation
history as the mother of Jesus, who is God made flesh. Mary’s willingness to accept God’s plan with faith and obedience makes her an essential
part of God’s plan to save humanity...Mary’s title, Theotokos, reminds us that Jesus is both God and man...Celebrating Mary as the Theotokos
encourages us to reflect on her role and its impact on our faith. Mary is not only the mother of Jesus but also a model of faith and trust for all
believers. By honoring her, we recognize the important part she played in our salvation and are inspired to follow her example.

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. Thank you so much, blessings to everyone.