

Sacred Heart

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Corner of E. First Avenue
& Hamlet Street

Church Mailing Address:
168 E. Lincoln Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Parish Office
(614) 294-5319

Msgr. Frank Lane, Administrator
(Territorial Parish ~ Est. 1875)

MASSES:

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.; **Sunday:** 11:00 a.m.

WEEKDAYS & HOLY DAYS:

See Mass Schedule inside the Bulletin.

PARISH OFFICE/STAFF:

Administration is done through the office of Saint John the Baptist, 168 Lincoln Street. Requests for copies of sacramental records, scheduling of Masses and other sacramental celebrations, and non-emergency needs should be made during regular office hours or email info@sjbitaliana.org.

Please notify the Parish Office of any changes such as address or telephone number, etc., by calling during regular office Hours.

MUSIC MINISTRY:

Gina M. Bishop, Music Director
John C. Huffman, Organist

PARISH MEMBERSHIP:

We welcome you into our Parish Families.
Membership in the parish consists of two parts:

Registration: Please complete the parish registration and return to Parish Office.

OFFICE STAFF

Aggie Howard, Executive Assistant, ahoward@sjbitaliana.org
Victoria Scruggs, Secretary & Bulletin Editor, vgammell@sjbitaliana.org
Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

RECONCILIATION:

Saturday: 3:30 p.m.; **Sunday:** 10:30 a.m.

BAPTISM:

Preparation is required for the reception of the sacrament.
Parents are encouraged to call the office
and set up an appointment before the birth of their child.

MATRIMONY:

Arrangements should be made at least six or more months in advance.
A marriage preparation program is required.

SACRAMENT OF THE SICK:

In cases of emergencies, please call anytime.
Please notify the Parish Office for Communion calls to the sick, shut-ins.

Due to privacy laws, if parishioners wish to be visited in the hospital,
they should contact the Parish Office directly
and give the information regarding the hospitalization.

If you are scheduled for surgeries or other medical procedures,
please contact the Parish Office in advance so that a priest can administer
Anointing of the Sick prior to the procedure.

BULLETIN DEADLINE:

Announcements must be submitted in writing by Tuesday at noon.

www.sacredheartchurchcolumbus.org

SACRED HEART

Dear Friends in Christ,
We are approaching the end of the year. If you find it advantageous to increase your charitable giving for tax purposes, please remember **Sacred Heart Parish**. You can follow in the bulletin the struggle with finances and anything you can do to help the parish reach financial stability would be greatly appreciated.

Some good news: Last **September**, I applied for a grant from the **Catholic Foundation** to preserve our stained-glass windows. The windows are unique and very valuable. Their replacement value is about **\$1,400,000.00**. They were manufactured by a **German Company** with a local art facility in **Chicago** at the time of the building of the church – **100 years** ago. The style of the windows is modelled after the windows of the famous cathedral of **Chartres in France**. In the **hundred years** since their installation, they have been serviced only once and that was over **sixty** years ago. You can see the bulging of the windows and the deterioration of the frames and protective covering. Eventually, the bulging will begin to snap the glass pieces. **The Catholic Foundation** has granted us **\$40,000.00** this year and each year for **three** more consecutive years toward preserving the windows. We have some options with this money.

1. Completely restore two of the windows in the main body of the church – The **“hundred-year solution.”** This entails taking the windows apart and re-leading, new frames, cleaning, new protective coverings, and new exterior frames. We could repeat this for **three more years** for a total of **eight** windows.
2. Repair the chapel windows and secure **two** of the windows in the main church to make sure that they do not break. This means fixing the bulging, new protective coverings and fixing the frames. They call this the **“25-year solution.”** We could repeat this each year for **three** more years.

To completely restore all the windows would cost around **\$400,000.00**. The cost to repair is about half what it would cost to restore. Both of these options are out of our reach, but with the grants from **The Catholic Foundation** we can go a long way in preserving the windows for now and into the future.

It is my thought that we should work toward repairing and choose the **“25-year” solution**. Once we have done that, the parish would have **25 years** to begin the systematic restoration of each window, one by one. We have an art treasure in the parish and in the **Diocese** that is well worth preserving.

Many Blessings for the week!
Fr. Lane

Confession Time for Saturdays
will be from 3:00-3:45 p.m.

If you are interested in becoming Catholic, receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, or Baptism, please contact the Sacred Heart Office at 614-294-5319 for more information.

For Weddings and Funerals, please contact Aggie Howard at ahoward@sjbitaliana.org or call the office at 614-294-5319.

DONATION QR CODE AND WEBSITE INFORMATION



Please help Sacred Heart maintain this beautiful 100-year-old building with a donation by using the QR code. Thank you!



Mass Time Change: Mass times at Sacred Heart are Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. and St. John the Baptist are Mondays Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m., and Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m., followed by RCIA at 7:00 p.m. at St. John the Baptist Parish Library on the second floor.

MASSES AT SACRED HEART

Saturday 12/9	4:00 p.m.	+ Robert Stefanov by Joe & Debbie Stefanov
Sunday 12/10	11:00 a.m.	+ Romeo & Gloria Sinang by Jim & Gloria Merckling
Thursday 12/14	6:30 p.m.	+ Dennis Siebold by Teresa Thurn
Saturday 12/16	4:00 p.m.	+ John Joseph Spetrino by Linda Spohn & family
Sunday 12/17	11:00 a.m.	+ Jim L.
Thursday 12/21	6:30 p.m.	+ Richard Dirksen by Carla Guggenbiller

WEEKLY STEWARDSHIP AT SACRED HEART
December 3, 2023

Number of Envelopes used Sunday – 21

In Envelopes:	\$ 771.00
Loose:	\$ 984.75
Nov. EFT:	\$ 2,140.00
Total	\$ 3,895.75
Less Diocesan 8% Assessment	\$ -(311.66)
	\$ 3,584.09
Votives	\$ 239.00
Capital Repair	\$ 200.00
Christmas Flowers	\$ 110.00
Total	\$ 549.00

? \$? \$? HOW IS SACRED HEART DOING? ? \$? \$?
Budgeted Offertory for Fiscal Year (7/1/23-6/30/24)

	Budgeted	Actual	Difference (\$)
This Wk.:	\$ 2,800.00	\$ 3,895.75	\$ 1,095.75
FYTD:	\$ 57,400.00	\$ 45,137.00	(\$ 12,263.00)

Income and Expenses – September 1-30, 2023

Income:	\$ 15,440.20
Expense:	\$ 25,023.45
Difference:	-\$ 9,583.25

SH Collection Counters for Monday, December 11, 2023

David and Gilda Cottrill

SH Collection Counters for Monday, December 18, 2023

Rita Ward and Donna Bowers

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S MASS SCHEDULE 2023

	Church	Mass Time
Christmas Vigil December 24	Sacred Heart St. John	9:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.
Christmas Day December 25	Sacred Heart St. John	10:30 a.m. No Mass
New Year's Eve December 31	Sacred Heart St. John	11:00 am & 5:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.
New Year's Day January 1	Sacred Heart St. John	No Mass 11:00 a.m.



Office Hours: Parish Office hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Our Office will be closed for Christmas, Monday, December 25, and Tuesday December 26, and will resume on Wednesday, December 27.

RCIA classes are now being offered for both **Sacred Heart** and **St. John the Baptist** parishes on **Wednesday evenings**, right after the **6:00 p.m. Mass** at **St. John's**. **RCIA class** starts at **7:00 p.m.** in the Parish Library, located on the **second floor**. This class is required for anyone who wants to enter the **Catholic Church**, for those baptized **Catholic**, but did not complete the Initiation **Sacraments**, as well as those who simply desire to deepen their understanding of **Catholicism**. **Questions? Contact Sharon Curtin 614-563-8405, or SCurtin@sjbitaliana.org.**

Christmas Flowers: Christmas poinsettias are available again this year. Flowers may be requested in memory of a loved one and will be placed on the altar throughout the **Christmas Season**. An envelope for **Christmas** poinsettias is included in the **December** offertory envelopes. You also may put your donation and memorial request in a regular envelope and place it in the collection basket. There is a suggested donation of **\$10.00 per poinsettia**. The **Christmas** flowers add such beauty to **Sacred Heart** during this special time of year. Thank you.

Bishop Watterson High School Choirs will hold their **Christmas Concert** on **Tuesday, December 12** at **Sacred Heart Church** at **7:00 p.m.** All are invited.

AROUND US

You are invited to pray for the Holy Father's Intentions for the Month of December 2023: *We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.*

Liturgical Calendar: The first two days of **December** fall during the liturgical season known as **Ordinary Time** and is represented by the liturgical color green. The next **22** days fall during the liturgical season of **Advent** and are represented by the liturgical color purple. The remaining days of **December** mark the beginning of the **Christmas** season. The liturgical color changes to white or gold – a symbol of joy, purity, and innocence. The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

You can help: “Religious are blessed to serve,” says **Dominican Father Bertrand Ebben**, age **90**. Please donate to the **Retirement Fund for Religious** next week. Your gift will provide essential care for nearly **25,000** senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who have dedicated their lives to serving others. Let us show our gratitude to these selfless individuals by giving generously.

Nominations now open for the 2024 Catholic Man of the Year: The **Catholic Men's Luncheon Club** is accepting nominations for the **Diocese of Columbus 2024 Catholic Man of the Year**. The annual award will be presented by **Bishop Earl Fernandes** on **Friday, February 2, 2024**, at the **Men's Luncheon** held at **St. Patrick Church** in downtown **Columbus**. The **Catholic Man of the Year** is awarded to one layman who, through his daily actions, words, and prayers, exemplifies the “good and faithful servant.” The recipient will have the opportunity to share his personal testimony during the ceremony. Nominations will be accepted through **Sunday December 31, 2023**. For details, nomination instructions and the required online nomination form, go to <https://www.catholicmensministry.com/catholicmanoftheyear>.

Submit your nomination and let us know why your parishioner, husband, father, son, uncle, brother, or friend is the **Catholic Man of the Year!**

December 12 – Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mary, who was “intimately united with the birth of the Church in America, became the radiant Star illuminating the proclamation of Christ the Savior to the sons of these nations.” –John Paul II



Second Sunday of Advent: After a chaotic year, there is comfort to be found when we pause to read, pray, and reflect over the course of the **Advent** season...a time when believers eagerly anticipate the celebration of **Christ's** birth. The **Second Sunday of Advent** gives us the opportunity to prepare our hearts in faithful waiting, celebrate the birth of **Jesus**, and ready ourselves for his **Second Coming**. It's a beautiful chance to reflect on the ways prophecy has been fulfilled and to ponder what the future (promised to us through prophecies) will bring. **Psalm 46:10-11** says: *Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Today's Gospel is from the **Gospel of Mark 1:1-8**: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” In twelve words, **St. Mark** sums up the initiation of the greatest event that ever occurred in our human history, an event whose culmination would be not on earth, but in heaven. **God** fulfilled the plan He had for us when creation began. He raised us up to the dignity of divine sonship by the **Incarnation**. The eternal **Son of God** “humbled himself” and joined our human nature to His divinity, thus making us His brothers and capable of sharing with Him the eternal kingdom of his **Father**. **Mark's** story was, in fact, the greatest “**good news**” that man had ever received on earth. It is still the greatest, most astounding and, at the same time, most consoling news for us today. Let each one of us ask himself today: am I for **Christ** or against Him? Am I on the road to heaven or am I facing in the opposite direction?

– Excerpted from *The Sunday Readings* by Fr. Kevin O'Sullivan, O.F.M.



Prayer: *Almighty and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet Your Son, but may our learning of heaven wisdom gain us admittance to His company. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen*

Lectio Divina

SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

“What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?” ~Saint Benedict, from the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (73:3)

The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

“If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself. Order your soul; reduce your wants; live in charity; associate in Christian community; obey the laws; trust in Providence.” +SAINT AUGUSTINE

**Monday, December 11 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent
Saint Damasus I, Pope**

Holy Gospel: Luke 5:17-26 One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set him in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “As for you, your sins are forgiven.” Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?” Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, “What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” – he said to the one who was paralyzed, “I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.” He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, “We have seen incredible things today.”

Meditation: Jesus' treatment of sinners upset the religious teachers of the day. When the paralyzed man was brought to Jesus because of the faith of his friends, Jesus did the unthinkable. He first forgave the man his sins. The scribes regarded this as blasphemy because they understood that only God had authority to forgive sins and to unbind a man or woman from their burden of guilt. Jesus claimed an authority which only God could rightfully give. Jesus not only proved that his authority came from God, he showed the great power of God's redeeming love and mercy by healing the cripple of his physical ailment. This man had been crippled not only physically, but spiritually as well. Jesus freed him from his burden of guilt and restored his body as well. The Lord is ever ready to bring us healing of body, mind, and soul. His grace brings us freedom from the power of sin and from bondage to harmful desires and addictions. Do you allow anything to keep you from Jesus' healing power?

Prayer: Grant, we pray, O Lord, that we may constantly exalt the merits of your Martyrs, whom Pope Saint Damasus so venerated and loved. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Is there anything in your life that keeps you from receiving the blessings of God's kingdom? The prophets foretold that when the Messiah came to usher in God's kingdom the blind would see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk (Isaiah 35:5-6). Jesus not only brought physical healing, but healing of mind, heart, and soul as well. Jesus came to bring us the abundant life of God's kingdom (John 10:10). But that new life and transformation can be stifled by unbelief, indifference, and sinful pride. Sin cripples us far more than any physical ailment can. Sin is the work of the kingdom of darkness and it holds us in eternal bondage. There is only one solution and that is the healing, cleansing power of Jesus' forgiveness. In this Season of Advent, as we prepare our hearts and minds, let us humble ourselves, let us be honest with ourselves, and let us conform ourselves to Christ, who was sent by God to redeem us.

About Saint Damasus: Saint Damasus was Supreme Pontiff from 366 to 384. He was a very learned man, well versed in the Scriptures. He commissioned Saint Jerome to complete the translation of the Bible into the Latin language. Shortly after his reign the 72 books of the Bible, hitherto scattered in different parts of the Orient, were collected into one volume. He defended the rights of the Holy See, and beautified

the Roman resting places of the Christian dead and of the saints. He also confirmed the practice of singing the Psalms day and night in the churches and adding a "Glory Be" at the end of each Psalm.

Tuesday, December 12 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas

Holy Gospel: Luke 1:26-38 The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "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. 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; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Meditation: How does Mary respond to the word of God delivered by the angel Gabriel? She knows she is hearing something beyond human capability. It will surely take a miracle which surpasses all that God has done previously. Her question, "how shall this be, since I have no husband" is not prompted by doubt or skepticism, but by wonderment! She is a true hearer of the Word and she immediately responds with faith and trust. Mary's prompt response of "yes" to the divine message is a model of faith for all believers. Mary believed God's promises even when they seemed impossible. She was full of grace because she trusted that what God said was true and would be fulfilled. She was willing and eager to do God's will, even if it seemed difficult or costly. Mary is the "mother of God" because God becomes incarnate when he takes on flesh in her womb. When we pray the Nicene Creed we state our confession of faith in this great mystery: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man". God gives us grace and he expects us to respond with the same willingness, obedience, and heart-felt trust as Mary did. When God commands he also gives the help, strength, and means to respond. We can either yield to his grace or resist and go our own way. Do you believe in God's promises and do you yield to his grace?

Prayer: O God, Father of mercies, who placed your people under the singular protection of your Son's most holy Mother, grant that all who invoke the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe, may seek with ever more lively faith the progress of peoples in the ways of justice and of peace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Do you know the favor of the Lord? God lavishes his grace upon all who believe in him. He shows his favor to the lowly, to those who are humble and receptive to his word. We see the unfolding of God's plan of redemption in the events leading up to the Incarnation, the birth of the Messiah. The new era of salvation begins with the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary. This child to be born is conceived by the gracious action of the Holy Spirit upon Mary, who finds favor with God. As Eve was the mother of all humanity doomed to sin, now Mary becomes the mother of the new Adam who will father a new humanity by his grace (Romans 5:12-21). This child to be conceived in her womb is the fulfillment of all God's promises. He will be "great" and "Son of the Most High" and "King" (Luke 1:32-33), and his name shall be called "Jesus", which means "the Lord saves." "He will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The promise of an everlasting kingdom to the house of David (Isaiah 9:6-7) is fulfilled in the King to be born in Mary's womb. Let us prepare ourselves in these weeks of Advent to come and adore him.

Web site of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in LaCrosse, Wisconsin including prayer intentions and Mass intentions: <http://www.guadalupe Shrine.org/>

Wednesday, December 13 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said to the crowds: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Meditation: The Jewish people used the image of a yoke to express submission to God. They spoke of the yoke of the law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the kingdom, the yoke of God. Jesus says his yoke is "easy." The Greek word for "easy" can also mean "well-fitting." Yokes were tailor-made to fit the oxen well. We are commanded to put on the "sweet yoke of Jesus" and to live the "heavenly way of life and happiness." Oxen were yoked two by two. Jesus invites us to be yoked with him, to unite our lives with him, our wills with his will, our heart with his heart. Jesus also says his "burden is light." There's a story of a man who once met a boy carrying a smaller crippled lad on his back. "That's a heavy load you are carrying there," exclaimed the man. "He ain't heavy; he's my brother!" responded the boy. No burden is too heavy when it's given in love and carried in love. When we yoke our lives with Jesus, he also carries our burdens with us and gives us his strength to follow in his way of love. Do you know the joy of resting in Jesus' presence and walking daily with him along the path he has for you?

Prayer: May the glorious intercession of the Virgin and Martyr Saint Lucy give us new heart, we pray, O Lord, so that we may celebrate her heavenly birthday in this present age and so behold things eternal. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: In the Season of Advent we celebrate the coming of the Messianic King who ushers in the reign of God. The prophets foretold that the Messiah would establish God's kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. Those who put their trust in God and in the coming of his kingdom receive the blessings of that kingdom - peace with God and strength for living his way of love and holiness (ref. Isaiah 40). Jesus fulfills all the Messianic hopes and promises of God's kingdom. That is why he taught his disciples to pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (ref. Matthew 6:10). In his kingdom sins are not only forgiven but removed, and eternal life is poured out for all its citizens. This is not a political kingdom, but a spiritual one. The yoke of Christ's kingdom, his kingly rule and way of life, liberates us from the burden of guilt and from the oppression of sin and hurtful desires. Only Jesus can lift the burden of sin and the weight of hopelessness from us. Jesus used the analogy of a yoke to explain how we can exchange the burden of sin and despair for a burden of glory and yoke of freedom from the grip of sin. The yoke which Jesus invites us to embrace is his way of grace and freedom from the power of sin. Do you trust in God's love and submit to his will for your life? If not, why not?

Thursday, December 14 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:11-15 Jesus said to the crowds: "Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Meditation: John the Baptist is the last and greatest of the prophets of the old covenant. He fulfilled the essential task of all the prophets: to be fingers pointing to Christ, God's Anointed Son and Messiah. John proclaimed Jesus' mission at the Jordan River when he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (ref. John 1:29). John saw from a distance what Jesus would accomplish through his death on the cross — our redemption from bondage to sin and death and our adoption as sons and daughters of God and citizens of the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist bridges the Old and New Testaments. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets who point the way to the Messiah. He is the first of the New Testament witnesses and martyrs. He is the herald who prepares the way for Jesus the Messiah. Jesus confirms that John has fulfilled the promise that Elijah would return to herald the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). Jesus declares that John is nothing less than the great herald whose privilege it was to announce the coming of the Messiah. Jesus equates the coming of his kingdom with violence. John himself suffered violence for announcing that the kingdom of God was near. He was thrown into prison and then beheaded. Since John's martyrdom to the present times the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and persecution at the hands of violent men. The blood of the martyrs throughout the ages bear witness to this fact. The martyrs witness to the truth — the truth and love of Jesus Christ who shed his blood to redeem us from slavery to sin and Satan and the fear of death. The Lord Jesus gives us the power of his Holy Spirit to overcome fear with faith, despair with hope, and every form of hatred, violence, jealousy, and prejudice with love and charity towards all — even those who seek to destroy and kill.

Prayer: O God, who gave the Priest Saint John of the Cross an outstanding dedication to perfect self-denial and love of the Cross, grant that, by imitating him closely at all times, we may come to

contemplate eternally your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

A Prayer of Saint John of the Cross: O blessed Jesus, give me stillness of soul in You. Let Your mighty calmness reign in me. Rule me, O King of gentleness, King of peace.

Contemplation: God may call some of us to be martyrs for our faith in Christ. But for most of us our call is to be dry martyrs who bear testimony to the joy and truths of the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ in the midst of daily challenges, contradictions, temptations and adversities which come our way as we faithfully follow the Lord Jesus. What attracts others to those who follow the truth of God and his son, Jesus Christ? When they see Christians loving their enemies, being joyful in suffering, patient in adversity, pardoning injuries, and showing comfort and compassion to the hopeless and the helpless. Jesus tells us that we do not need to fear our adversaries. He will give us sufficient grace, strength, and wisdom to face any trial and to answer any challenge to our faith. Are you eager to witness to the joy and freedom of the gospel?

Friday, December 15 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:16-19 Jesus said to the crowds: "To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another, 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

Meditation: The prophets remind us that God's kingdom is open to those who are teachable and receptive to the word of God. Jesus' parable challenges us to examine whether we are selective to only hear what we want to hear. The children in Jesus' parable react with dismay because they cannot get anyone to join in their musical medley. They complain that if they play their music at weddings, no one will dance or sing; and if they play at funerals, it is the same. This refrain echoes the words of Ecclesiastes 3:4 - "there is a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance." Are you in tune with the message of the kingdom or reign of God? Jesus' message of the kingdom of God is good news and it produces true joy and spiritual freedom for those who will listen; but it is also a warning for those who refuse to listen.

Prayer: Grant that your people, we pray, almighty God, may be ever watchful for the coming of your Only Begotten Son, that, as the author of our salvation himself has taught us, we may hasten, alert and with lighted lamps, to meet him when he comes. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Why did the message of John the Baptist and the message of Jesus meet with deaf ears and with stiff resistance? It was out of jealousy and spiritual blindness that the scribes and Pharisees attributed John the Baptist's austerities to the devil and they attributed Jesus' table fellowship as evidence for messianic pretense. They succeeded in frustrating God's plan for their lives because they had closed their hearts to the message of John the Baptist and now to Jesus' message. What can make us spiritually dull and slow to hear God's voice? Like the generation of Jesus time, our age is marked by indifference and contempt, especially in regards to the things of heaven. Indifference dulls our ears to God's voice and to the good news of the gospel. Only the humble of heart can find joy and favor in God's grace. Have you come to experience the joy of the Advent season? Do you know the joy of the Gospel? Is your life in tune with Jesus' message of hope, salvation and redemption through him? 'Tis the season to get in tune with what Christ brings to each of us!

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Daily meditations and contemplations adapted from the Irish Jesuits' *Sacred Space* web page and *Biblical Medications for Ordinary Time* by Rev. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P.; prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011; information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.

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