



St. Mary's Catholic Church

512 W. Thomas Ave.
Shenandoah, IA 51601



December 25, 2023 - The Nativity of the Lord

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715-410-7465

Sue Hanna - Secretary

Laurie Johnson

Visitation Ministry, 712-246-9812

Kim Leininger, Director of Religious Education

712-215-1505

Raymond & Gigi DeSa

Youth Ministry

712-313-1181

Pete Wenstrand

Finance Council - Chair

Tiffany Doyle

Parish Council - Chair

Susan Dinville & Tom Hanna

Trustees

Sue Hanna - Music Coordinator and

Choir Director

Mary Beth Gowing - Organist

Carl Jardon

Knights of Columbus - Grand Knight

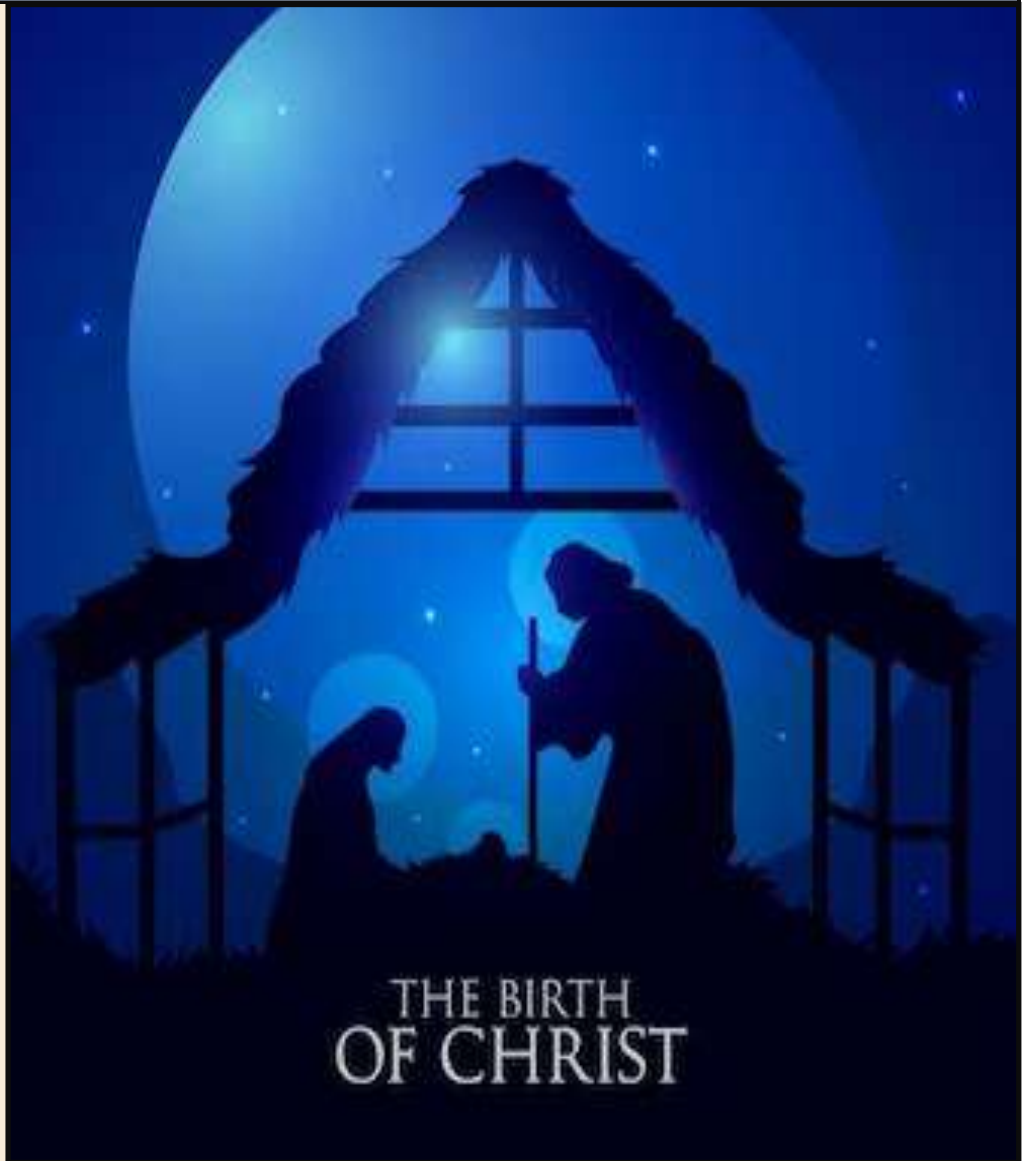
Terry Koets

Ladies Guild - President

Maria Mather

Hispanic Visitation

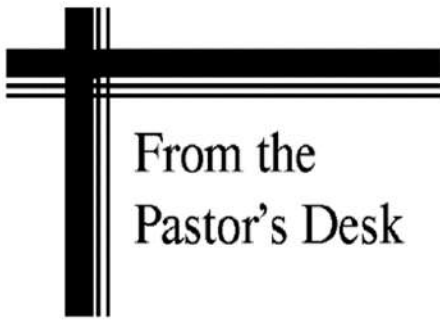
712-215-3574



THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD



"For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you
who is Christ and Lord." - Lk 2:11



**Pastoral
Musings:
Merry
Christmas
to all!**



Beloved Friends,

Wishing you the boundless joy of Christmas! As we approach the celebration of my third Christmas with all of you, I am overwhelmed with a profound sense of excitement, hope, and gratitude. This journey has been an incredible honor and delight, allowing me to share in the festive spirit and hold Jesus close to my heart as the Savior and Prince of Peace alongside each one of you. The collective experience of the 33 days of Total Consecration to Mary has been a transformative game-changer for my spiritual life, resonating with many parishioners who embraced this commitment. In the embrace of Mother Mary during the Advent Season, she became the emotional fulcrum of my life, guiding me to detach from the allure of the worldly spirit and its addictive tendencies. Through this consecration, a profound shift occurred, leading me towards a deeper connection with Jesus, the Emmanuel, God with us. He emerged as the spiritual nucleus of my life, allowing me to navigate with renewed focus and grace, transcending reliance on sheer willpower or self-effort.

A pivotal moment in this spiritual journey was the profound experience of a general confession with Fr. Bob Duford, my spiritual director. This cathartic process allowed me to cleanse myself and profoundly encounter the mercy of God through the sacrament of reconciliation. Motivated by this newfound grace, I joyfully made myself available for all-day confessions. Witnessing people earnestly seeking God's loving mercy was a rewarding yet exhausting experience, akin to the weariness of a good parent at the end of the day. However, the sanctifying grace flowing from the heart of Christ into their hearts affirmed the transformative power of sincere confessions. The revelation from a priest about addictions being rooted in secrecy struck a chord, emphasizing the importance of honesty in our relationship with God. Embracing radical sobriety and dispelling the darkness of complacency and laziness, we open ourselves to the light of Christ, ultimately receiving freedom, joy, and love as His ultimate gifts this Christmas.

As I reflect on turning 60 this year and completing 30 years of ministry in the vineyard of the Lord, I am profoundly grateful to God, my loving parents, and my church family. The last 30 months of life and ministry with you have been a journey filled with gratitude for the Lord and each one of you. Your unwavering support and love have been the bedrock of our shared joys, sorrows, bereavements, and moments of grace and success. Even amidst a brief flu attack and respiratory challenges this year, I am deeply appreciative of the gift of voice, especially the voices of each one of you. Thank you for being part of this incredible journey. Together, we have walked through the trials of life, avoiding "poison ivy attacks" and being spared from "getting stuck in the mud," metaphorical challenges that could have disrupted our path. As we collectively offer praise and thanksgiving to God as one spiritual family, let our voices echo with gratitude for His goodness and benefits throughout this year of 2023. Christmas offers us the invaluable gifts of Faith, Hope, and Love in a world marred by conflict, especially Ukraine and the Holy Land. This season invites us to embrace a deeper faith over fear, hope over despair, and love over hate, deriving overwhelming joy from the humble circumstances of Bethlehem and conflict-ridden Palestine where our Lord and Savior was born. May the transformative power of Christ create a new earth and a new heaven for our world.

As we approach this festive season, I am deeply moved by your prayers, support, and care for me and our community in Hamburg and Shenandoah. Your sacrificial giving last year has not gone unnoticed, and I pray that God blesses each of you abundantly for your continued love, dedication, and generous contributions to St. Mary's Parish communities. I eagerly anticipate celebrating my third Christmas with you, looking forward to accomplishing great things together for God and receiving His rich blessings in the New Year 2024. Merry Christmas!

With Love and Blessings, Fr. Tom



Saturday 3:30 pm 4:30 pm	December 23rd—4th Sunday of Advent Reconciliations Ken DeBaere+
Sunday 6:30 am 10:30 am 4:30 pm	December 24th—4th Sunday of Advent No Mass Jennifer Odegard+ December 24th—Christmas Eve Mass Phyllis Wilkins+
Monday 10:30 am	December 25th—Christmas Day Dan Nebel+
Tuesday 12:10 pm	December 26th Those living with disabilities
Wed. 12:10 pm	December 27th Roy Barbosa+
Thursday 12:10 pm	December 28th Souls in Purgatory+
Friday 12:10 pm	December 29th Michael Nguyen+
Saturday 3:30 pm 4:30 pm	December 30th—The Holy Family Reconciliations Mary Ann Berning+
Sunday 6:30 am 10:30 am	December 31st—The Holy Family Parishioners Wally Teten+

What's Happening

Knights of Columbus Council 1479 meets the second Tuesday of each month. Meal @ 6:00 pm followed by meeting in St. Mary's Parish Hall in Shenandoah.

Legion of Mary group meets @ 10:30 am on Wednesdays in the Parish Hall. Contact Joan Bloom for more information @ 712-534-2645.

St. Mary's Ladies Guild The Guild's annual Christmas party will be held at the Depot on January 16th after daily Mass. Lunch will be on your own. Please join us!

Bible Study meets every Monday morning at 10:30 am in the Parish Hall. Bible study resumes Jan. 8th.

Adoration will be the first Friday of every month from 12:45 to 5:45 pm. Sign up sheet at the back of church.

Schedule	Sat. Dec. 30th, 4:30 pm	Sun. Dec. 31st, 6:30 am	Sun. Dec. 31st, 10:30 am
Lectors	Linda Andersen	Dana Wenstrand	Gigi DeSa
Cantors	Jason Stanbrough		Nancy Larson
Altar Servers			Khallon O. & Aidan T.

Our Knights of Columbus will again be participating in the "Coats for Kids" Campaign. We are asking for good, clean coats of all sizes for children and adults. Coats can be dropped off in the box located in the church entrance.

St. Mary's Church Support—Tithes and Offerings

Holy Day, Dec. 8th	\$203.60
Dec. 10th Tithes	\$2,059.00
Retirement Fund for Religious	\$596.00

Thank you for your generosity and gifts!

Church Directory

We currently have 56 pictures for our new directory. Since we have approximately 160 families registered in our parish, we have many more photographs to collect! Please be sure to submit a photo of your family by the end of the month.

Joe Laughlin has graciously agreed to take a photo of you or your family if you need a current one. Please contact him at 402-672-8811 to schedule a date and time. We want to thank Joe for his dedication to this very worthwhile project. A directory is a key factor in getting to know your parish members!



Keep them in your prayers

Bill Hayes	Phyllis Ketcham
Helen Lewis	Agnes Lonowski
Helen Castle	Coleen Norton
Leesa Teten	Patty Woerth
Pam Gilmore	Joani McGinnis
Harold Hansen	



THIS WEEK'S READINGS
December 24, 2023

Readings for the week of December 24, 2023

Sunday: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16/Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29/Rom 16:25-27/Lk 1:26-38
Monday: Vigil: Is 62:1-5/Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29/Acts 13:16-17, 22-25/
Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25 Night: Is 9:1-6/Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13/Ti 2:11-14/
Lk 2:1-14 Dawn: Is 62:11-12/Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12/Ti 3:4-7/Lk 2:15-20
Day: Is 52:7-10/Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6/Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
Tuesday: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Ps 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17/Mt 10:17-22
Wednesday: 1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12/Jn 20:1a, 2-8
Thursday: 1 Jn 1:5—2:2/Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8/Mt 2:13-18
Friday: 1 Jn 2:3-11/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6/Lk 2:22-35
Saturday: 1 Jn 2:12-17/Ps 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10/Lk 2:36-40
Next Sunday: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3/Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 or
Ps 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9/Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 or Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19/
Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

Whenever January 1st, the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, falls on a Sunday or Monday, it is not a Holy Day of Obligation. So there will not be a Mass said on Monday, January 1st, as this will be fulfilled while attending Mass the weekend of December 30th and 31st.



The Legion of Mary prayer group is providing 2024 Catholic calendars for St. Mary's parishioners. Please pick one up on the shelf at the back of

4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Mass Schedule

Dec. 23, Sat, 4:30 pm, 4th Sun. of Advent
Dec. 24, Sun, No 6:30 am Mass
Dec. 24, Sun, 10:30 am, 4th Sun. of Advent
Dec. 24, Sun, 4:30 pm, Christmas Eve Mass
Dec. 25, Mon, No 6:30 am Mass
Dec. 25, Mon, 10:30 am, Christmas Day Mass

Year-End Giving

We would like to remind you about the year-end contributions that can provide tax benefits to you. These contributions help support various ministries at your parish. The tax year ends at midnight on December 31st. For donations to be considered a tax-deductible charitable donation this year, the gift must be received and/or postmarked before midnight on December 31st. However, the gift must be received in the church office no later than Thursday, Dec. 28th to allow for posting. The most convenient, secure and expedient way to ensure that a year-end gift is received on time is to do it online before midnight on Dec. 31st. Click the "giving" tab on our parish website for online giving information.

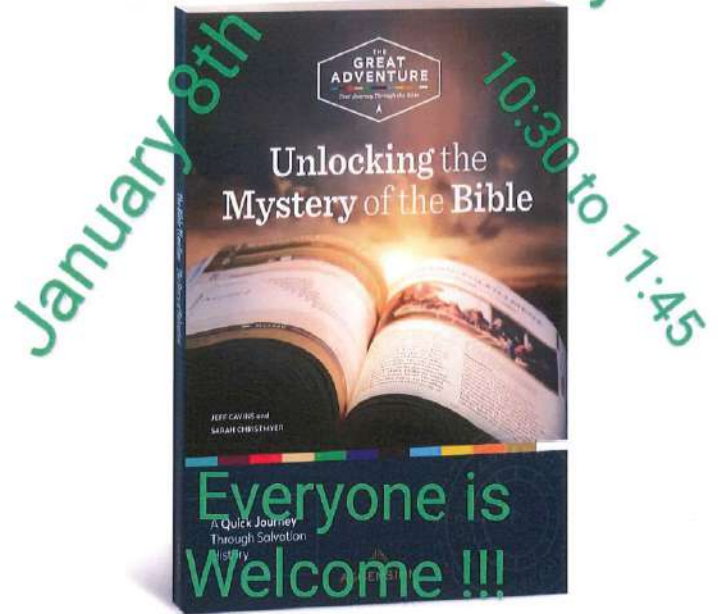


Nancy McComb	December 21
Joanna Sperfslage	December 21
Parker Mather	December 21
Bryce & Carter Fuxa	December 21
Diana Wiederholt	December 24
Brenna Godfread	December 27
Helen Castle	December 28
Phyllis Ketcham	December 30

Norb & Katy Martin December 27



New Bible study



Many Catholics want to read the Bible because they know it is God's Word, but they give up because it seems so complicated. Author Jeff Cavins shows you how to read the Bible so that you can actually understand it. Aided by the unique color-coded *Bible Timeline*® Chart, which arranges the key people, places, and events of Scripture in chronological order, *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible* will help you discover the story of salvation history and understand how you fit into God's plan.

The program begins Monday, January 8th from 10:30 to 11:45 am in the Parish Hall. Cristina Hansen and Denise Jardon help facilitate the study. All are welcome to attend!

Our adoration schedule is now being held on the first Friday of the month. Seeking adorers and prayer leaders. The sign up sheet is on the stand at the back of the church. Next adoration is scheduled for Friday, January 5th.

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| 12:10 pm | Mass |
| 12:45 pm | Exposition |
| 2:00 pm | Holy Rosary |
| 3:00 pm | Chaplet of Divine Mercy |
| 4:00 pm | Holy Rosary |
| 5:45 pm | Benediction |



Come enjoy some time with the Lord in quiet reflection or community prayer.