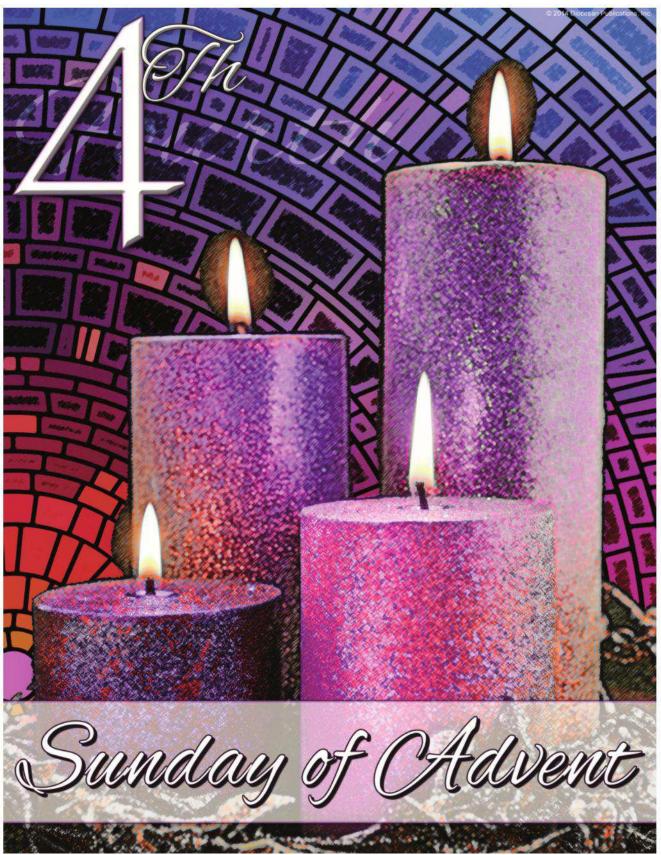


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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Reading I: 2 Samuel 7: 1-5,8b-12,14a,16

Reading II: Romans 16:25-27 Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

More good news today! "Nothing is impossible with God!" A young Jewish virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit, conceives the Son of the Most High God. A Jewish woman in her old age also conceives a son. Nothing is impossible with God. God intervenes in history, and nothing will ever be the same. Nothing is impossible with God. The long-awaited one is God-Man. Nothing is impossible with God.



Monday, December 22, 2014

7:00am Norma Mall

8:00am Dan Van Buskirk/Mary Ellen Van Buskirk 5:30pm Pete Vonachen/Greg & Susie Cicciarelli

Tuesday, December 23, 2014

7:00am Norma M Smith/Mary Stewart

8:00am Joseph & Genevieve Stickelmaier/Paul & Ann

Horst

5:30pm Special Intentions/Kathie Bartolo

Wednesday, December 24, 2014 Christmas Eve

7:00am Alice Eaton/Steve Alig

8:00am Gerald & Kathryn Moon/Family

5:00pm Dr Jay Alameda/Family

7:00pm Elizabeth Noel/Dale & Brenda Noel

Midnight For the People

Thursday, December 25, 2014 Christmas

6:30am Louise Ing/Red, Roger, Ellen, Angela & Tim

8:00am Dan Connolly/Joe, Cari & Family

9:30am Jan Van Tine/Family

11:00am Tom & Anita Kelly/Steve & Terri Baldi

Friday, December 26, 2014

7:00am Marilyn Pilat/Tom and Mary Kay Pilat

8:00am Marilyn Roedell/Paul Karl

Saturday, December 27, 2014

8:00am Suzanne Lynch/Gregory Falley

5:00pm Thomas F McGinn/Jack & Frances McGinn

Sunday, December 28, 2014

6:30am Janet Kimberlin/Karl & Ann Prudert

8:00am For the People

9:30am Holy Innocents/LAOH

11:00am Alan & Judy Campbell 50th Wedding Anniv

5:00pm Nancy Boehle/Art & Dee Kiesewetter



CENTERING PRAYER GROUP Monday, December 22 at 7:00 pm

ROSARY FOR PEACE Tuesday, December 23 at 10:00 am in the chapel.

NO BIBLE STUDY Tuesday, December 23 at 12:30 pm.

NO BIBLE STUDY Wednesday, December 24 at 8:45 am.



CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve

5:00 pm—Childrens Choir 7:00 pm— Sunday Night Choir 12:00—Midnight 9:30 am choir

Christmas Day

6:30 am

8:00 am

9:30 am

11:00 am

NO 5:00 pm Mass



ST. THOMAS FOOD PANTRY

Following is the suggested list of food items:

SpaghettiSpaghetti SauceRiceCanned FruitPancake MixSyrupDry BeansCerealTunaSoupCrackersJelly

Beef Stew Canned Vegetables

Peanut Butter Mac & Cheese Instant Potatoes

We greatly appreciate your generosity...



WEEKLY COLLECTION

12/7/14

Fiscal YTD

\$ 24,000	\$ 552,000
\$ 28,075	\$ 452,775
Electronic Collections \$ 3,632	
\$ 31,707	\$ 536,311
\$ (7,707)	\$ (15,689)
	\$ 28,075 ns \$ 3,632 \$ 31,707

We appreciate your generosity.

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Our Sympathy

PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED THIS

WEEK: Rosalie Schierer; Eugene Rakestraw, father of Mary Curry; Mary Ann Knell; Patricia Hendricksen, mother of Carl and Carol Hendricksen and grandmother of Maddie, Brad and Julie Hendricksen.; Gertrude Snyder

PARISH OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED

December 24th through January 4th

THANK YOU

To everyone who made the Parish Christmas Open House A SUCCESS!!

Thanks especially to Denise Tascher and her crew.



Sponsor of the Week

ADVENT

The theme of our Advent journey this year is STILLNESS. The Scriptures invite us to listen and wait—-be attentive to the movement of the Lord in our lives. We are *still* to ready ourselves that Jesus will be able to enter into our lives more fully. In an effort to do this, we are suggesting a few tips:

- * There will be a two minute silent period at the beginning of Mass—after it begins. To aid in the atmosphere of silence, we will keep the doors of the church proper closed and ask that you remain in the Gathering Space until the quiet period is completed. Our hope is that, during this season, you will be able to begin the Mass with everyone in the church.
- * You are invited to stop in the church during the week outside of Mass time for some time of quiet. Just stop for a few minutes. It is a marvelous opportunity to be STILL. Reflection material (if you have that need) will be available. The church is open from 6:30 am 9:00 pm.

The following meditation is provided to your use during the season of Advent. Each week there will be one to follow the Scripture readings from the Sundays of Advent. You will be able to use the meditation as you stop in for a short visit to the church or in your home.

ADVENT MEDITATION STARTERS — WEEK 4

"Be still and know that I am God." Ps. 46:10

Stillness...Today the need for stillness is even greater. So many demands right before Christmas. So many distractions. Let me put all that aside and bring myself into the quiet before God. Let me begin to breathe the freedom of comfort in God's presence.

Mary. Just saying her name brings calm to my soul. This is especially so when I reflect on how young, how vulnerable, how scared she must have been when an angel from God spoke to her the words that would change history.

Now I reflect prayerfully on those same words that came straight from her loving heart and made it possible for me to know the riches of God's love: "Let it be done to me according to your word." She said yes! She set the tone for all of us who follow her Son. His will. Not mine.

Mary is my model. She is the perfect disciple. He "yes" is what I want to bring to the stable as I reflect once again on the gift of the Christ Child.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come into my heart and make it into the manger that accepted you so long ago. Come and be born anew within my soul.

Reflection: How can I make my faith journey like Mary's How can I become more open to saying "yes"?



The season of **ADVENT** has traditionally been a wonderful time for family activities in the home. In these days when being at home as a family is a precious and sometimes rare experience, we encourage you to make the most of the season of **ADVENT**. Besides the Advent Wreath, we will offer other family activities next week to bring joy as well as teach children the importance of waiting for Jesus to arrive in your family again this Christmas by learning about our common stories of faith as well as experiencing the symbolism of this season.



ADVENT IN THE HOME

ADVENT WREATH

PRAYER: The birth of Jesus is upon us this week. Give us hearts open like Mary was to accept the great gift of Jesus in our lives. Give us, also, the grace to make Jesus' presence evident in the world where we live. We ask this in the name of Jesus.



The Giving Tree has become an important tradition at St. Thomas. We have special concerns these days for those in need. Your generosity in providing gifts under the Giving Tree—placed in the Gathering Space near the sacristy—has been incredibly helpful in the past. We will collect gifts for Catholic Charities and other needy in the parish and area. Take a tag from a basket as you come out of church. Purchase the suggestion on the slip of paper, wrap it, and put the tag on the gift so that we will know what is inside. We will need the gifts by December 16.







STRAW IN THE CRIB

This is a good activity for children. Place your empty crib somewhere for the children to see. Each day place a piece of straw or yarn in the crib for a good deed done that day. On Christmas Day, add the figure of Jesus to the filled crib.



ADVENT ANGELS

A great family favorite is the Advent Angel tradition. Put the names of each member of the family in a container and have each person draw a name. Don't tell anyone whose name you have. During Advent do something special for that person periodically (like make their bed or put candy on their pillow). Remember the person is not to find out who you are until Christmas when you have a special gift for him/her. It is fun to make a gift.

A Journey to Bethlehem

The journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem can be reenacted during the last week of Advent. The Mary and Joseph figures from the family nativity are taken to the room farthest away from the nativity set. The children bring the figures closer to the nativity each day while the nativity story is read. On Christmas Eve, baby Jesus is put into his crib.

Faith Amid Flowers

Finding grace and new growth at Christmas

I am the son of a florist, so I was reared to accept that there are no tin flowers. And even the least of them are like rainbows or sunsets: worthwhile natural deities. I worked side-by-side with my dad for 25 of the 50 years he spent in his tiny flower shop in a tiny Philadelphia neighborhood called Paradise. When my pop was in his shop taking care of his customers, he was truly in paradise. He taught me that flowers speak to the verities of the heart and soul: honor, truth, love, prayer. For my entire life I have embraced the power of flowers, and they have helped guide me through both good and challenging times.

One Christmastide I was delivering poinsettias in my pop's Ford panel truck when I noticed this girl waiting at a bus stop on Roosevelt Boulevard in the Northeast neighborhood of Philadelphia.

We had met as students on the campus of Temple University, had even gone out several times. She was a rare beauty, statuesque with long dark hair falling over her shoulders, and deep, dark brown eyes that lit up like polished pinewood. But we were polar opposites. She spent most of her time in the library studying French literature; I spent most of my time in the gym playing basketball. I was the starting point guard for Temple. We were as different as the Louvre and Madison Square Garden. I moved on.

I stopped the Ford panel, rolled down the passenger-side window and shouted, "Need a lift?"

After recognizing me, she said, "Sure," and hopped in. "Are you still playing basketball?" she asked, before noticing the cache of poinsettias in the back of the truck. "I love poinsettias," she said. "Do you have any extras? I'll buy one."

"Yes, I'm still playing basketball," I replied. "And no there aren't any extra poinsettias."

After dropping her off at her house, I returned to my pop's shop, picked out a rich, rose-pink poinsettia and hung a "sold" sign on it. On the card, I wrote a poem. The next day when I was again delivering poinsettias in the Northeast area, I stopped at her house. I knocked on the door, and she opened it. Awkwardly, I said, "These are for you. Maybe we can get together."

"Maybe we can," she said. "Call me."

I did, and several days after Christmas we got together. She suggested we go for a walk. We stopped at a playground near her house. "Let's shoot some hoops," she said. (The way to my heart wasn't through food but basketball.) And so we played a one-on-one game of basketball.

I won. I married her. And for the 43 years we have been married, I have given her a poinsettia and a poem every Christmas. Spirituality in Flowers

In difficult times, when I need a source of strength to fill whatever holes within me need filling, I can call on those attributes of flowers: renewal, inspiration, peace—and spirituality. "Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink." It is the same with flowers for me.

Four days before Christmas, in 1984, my pop the florist summoned me to the hospital where he was a patient. Looking me square in the eyes from his hospital bed, with that distinctly Irish Kennedyesque mug, a shell of a man from the once strapping football player he had been—muscular and sinewy, fast as a cheetah—he said, "Billy, make sure there are a lot of flowers at the viewing." He died the next day.

Why wouldn't he want plenty of flowers present at his passing? He was certain that flowers played a spiritual role in death, bringing a symbolic presence and meaning. Flowers bloom beyond tears, fears and no next years, symbolizing that death is not separation but transformation, not termination but transcendence. My pop forever preached that flowers help us to view death with the promise that life does not flicker out for good.

That is because he saw so often the comfort that his flowers brought to families and friends of loved ones who had died. Even science has now begun to take notice of the effects of flowers. A recent Rutgers University study revealed that in anxious, uncertain times, like death, flowers are a blissful and spiritual necessity. But then again, my pop didn't need some scientific study to tell him that. He experienced it for 50 years in that tiny flower shop in Paradise.

So many times I heard people say to him, "Thank you, the flowers meant so much to us. They were a source of strength, peace and, most of all, faith."

My father was buried on Christmas Eve. On the day of his viewing I made sure that the request he asked of me that night in the hospital was honored. There was a bounty of flowers circling his casket like a necklace. I arranged them. I am blessed with a usable past.

A huge spray of bulbous, white chrysanthemums spread the length of the casket; baskets of white gladioli, shooting out like spires, stood at the head and foot of the casket; a rosary made of red roses lay clutched in his hands, and 25 to 30 other baskets and sprays, one after another, framed the funeral parlor.

After everyone had gone, alone in the silence of the funeral parlor, I looked at my pop and all the flowers encircling him. They reminded me of that triumphant connection: Flowers were the other side of the silence, drawing life out of death.

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SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Baptism class is held for all parents before the baptism of their child. Please contact Sr. Rachel to schedule the class. Next Baptisms: December 28 at 11:00 am Mass.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Saturdays: 4:00-4:45 pm & 7:00-8:00 pm or by appointment with a priest Confessions are held in the confessionals in the daily Mass Chapel

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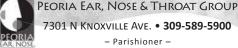
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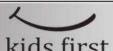
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