



# CHURCH *of the* HOLY CROSS

631 South State Street  
Dover, Delaware

302 674 5787  
holycrossdover.org

522 Main Street  
Marydel, Maryland

410 482 7687  
iccmarydel.org



## IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday Advent

holycross

### PARISH OFFICE HOURS

School Year, Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-3:30 pm  
Summer, Monday-Thursday, 9 am-1 pm

### SCHOOLS OFFICE HOURS

School Year, Monday-Friday, 8 am-3:30 pm  
Summer, Monday-Thursday, 9 am-1 pm

### SUNDAY MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday, Vigil, 5 pm  
Sunday, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 am Spanish

### DAILY MASS SCHEDULE

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 8 am  
Wednesday – 8:15 am  
Federal Holidays, 9 am only (Presidents Day, MLK Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day)

### CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Saturday, 8:30 am – 10:00 am,  
Fridays in Lent, 5:30 pm

### ADORATION CHAPEL HOURS

Daily, 5 am – 9 pm

icc

### PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, 9 am-5 pm  
Closed Wednesday and Friday

### SUNDAY MASS SCHEDULE

Sunday, 8:30, 11 am  
Sunday, 1 pm, Spanish

### DAILY MASS SCHEDULE

Thursday, 6 pm, Spanish



### HOLY DAY SCHEDULE (HC AND ICC)

Mary, Mother of God, January 1  
Assumption, August 15  
All Saints' Day, November 1  
Immaculate Conception, December 8  
Christmas, December 25

*Mass schedules for Holy Days of Obligation and other special days will be printed in the bulletin as each one draws near*

## RECEIVING THE SACRAMENTS

*The seven Sacraments of the Church were instituted by Christ to confer grace.*

**Sacrament of Baptism.** Call the office to register for Parent Pre-Baptismal Instruction. For adults seeking to enter the Church and be Baptized, contact our Religious Education Office.

**Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession).** Children in our religious education program and school are prepared for Confession at age seven as part of First Communion preparation.

**Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.** Children in our religious education program and school are prepared for First Communion at age seven. Adults seeking First Communion should contact our Religious Education Office. To request a visitation for Holy Communion to the Sick, contact our parish office.

**Sacrament of Confirmation.** Young people in our

parish are prepared for reception of Confirmation in the ninth grade (age 14). Adults seeking Confirmation should contact our Religious Education Office.

**Sacrament of Marriage.** Couples planning for Marriage are to contact a parish priest or deacon one year in advance to set the wedding date and plan for pre-Cana instruction.

**Sacrament of Holy Orders.** If you believe you have, or someone you know has, a vocation to the Priesthood or Diaconate, please contact one of our parish priests.

**Anointing of the Sick.** For the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, which is administered by a Priest, a person or an immediate family member must make the request. Late night requests may not be able to be answered until the next day.

### Christmas Schedule at Holy Cross

**December 24**

4:00 pm

6:30 pm

9:00 pm (Hispanic)

Midnight

**December 25**

8:00 am

10:00 am

### Christmas Schedule at ICC

**December 24**

5:00 pm

7:00 pm (Hispanic)

Midnight

**December 25**

9:00 am

**\*\*Remember on Dec. 23/24 we also have our Masses for the Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Holy Cross:**

Dec 23: 5:00 pm, 7:00 pm (Hispanic)

Dec. 24: 7:30 and 9:30 am

**Immaculate Conception:**

Dec. 23: 5:00 pm (Hispanic)

Dec. 24: 8:30 am and 11:00 am

### WEEKLY OFFERING (HC)

Ending December 3, 2023

OFFERTORY TYPE	RECEIVED	BUDGETED/ NEEDED	DIFFERENCE
Regular	\$25,391	\$27,440	(\$2,049)
YTD	\$592,057	%617,540	(\$25,483)
Needs	\$1,693	\$1,712	(\$19)

### WEEKLY OFFERING (IC)

Ending December 3, 2023

OFFERTORY TYPE	RECEIVED
Regular	\$4,744
Second Collection	\$830

**Thank you to all our advertisers in our bulletin.**

**We appreciate your support!**

**If you know of someone who would like to advertise in the bulletin, please contact Diocesan Publications at 800-233-8200.**

Dear Parishioners,

From time to time, during my tenure as Pastor, I have run a column during Advent on the topic of “*Why is Christmas on December 25.*” I run this column because often around this time, some TV commentator brings up this topic, or some magazine runs an article on it.

**The Born Identity.** And so, it has come to pass once again! Last week, I was watching a new commentary program and the commentator trotted out the old chestnut of “Christ definitely wasn’t born on December 25.” He said it with seeming metaphysical certitude of a level that the viewer would believe that Jesus was born on any other day of the year other than December 25.

**Cons and Context.** The underlying context, of course, is “Christians believe this, so it must be wrong.” That is to say, it is a way of deriding Christianity – a way of scoffing at it, a way of saying that we are conning people. When I hear these things said, my initial reaction to the commentator speaking on the topic is, “Why does it bother you so much that Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25?” But I digress. That initial reaction isn’t helpful or explanatory; it’s really just giving the raspberry to the commentator.

**A Catholic View.** In any event, several years back, I wrote an article on this matter to put into play the Christian – or, more specifically, the Catholic – voice on the topic of this question of when Christ was born. So here it goes – here’s a reprinting of the article I put together on why we observe Christmas on December 25. To wit:

**Pop Rock, Pepsi, and Paul McCartney.** By the promulgation of an urban legend, many people in the 1980s believed that “Mikey” – the little kid from the Life cereal commercials – died from eating and mixing Pop-Rocks candy with a Pepsi, causing his stomach to explode. Many people, even today, believe that Elvis Presley is still alive and that Paul McCartney is really dead (replaced by a look-alike). None of these claims are true (except maybe the Elvis one). And just like these nagging urban legends, there is a tale told about the origin of Christmas being on December 25, which is repeated so often that it has come to be taken as, dare I say, the Gospel truth. But it isn’t.

**A Specious Tale.** The tale, as told, is this: The reason that Christmas is on December 25 has nothing to do with the birth of Christ; rather, it has to do with early Christianity’s desire to snuff out Pagan religion by supplanting one of their “sacred days” with ours. Thus, in the days of the Roman Empire there was a festival named after the god Saturn called *Saturnalia*. It ran from December 17-23, featuring a

party-hardy atmosphere. The tale goes on to say that Christians chose December 25 as the date for Christmas to steal the thunder from *Saturnalia*, and ultimately, it replaced it. Thus, the oft-told tale goes: the only reason that Christmas is on December 25 is because the Christians supplanted a Pagan feast day.

**Balderdash!** To this, I say: “balderdash” (and I don’t mean the Mattel board game)! I write this column to set the record straight as to why December 25 is celebrated as the date of the birth of Christ.

**Roman Holiday.** Now, let me start with the best-case scenario for the probity of this tale of Christmas being built on Pagandom. At best, this is a conjecture. What I can say, with certainty, is this: there was a Roman Empire; the pagan religion of that Empire deemed there to be a god called Saturn; it had a festival in that god’s honor known as *Saturnalia*, and that festival was held in late December. But that’s where the veracity of the aforementioned tale ends. So, why, then, is there this assertion that the early Church Christianized a pagan feast and called it Christmas? Because those who like to take shots at Christianity want to be able to say that Christmas’ foundations are Pagan and that we have no idea when Jesus Christ was born. It is an attempt to sow seeds of doubt amidst our fields of faith.

**Puritan Made.** The first questioning or consideration that something was amiss with December 25 as the date of Christ’s birth began with the Puritans of the 17th century. The Puritans, following their reified belief that if it isn’t in Scripture, it isn’t so, put forth the idea that since the Bible doesn’t indicate when Christ was born, it can, therefore, be concluded that December 25th must be a date made up by the Catholic Church. This got the ball rolling, and others bought into this idea. Later on, some scholars began the assertion, without any basis but conjecture, that the reason the Church took this date of December 25th (since it wasn’t scriptural) was because, back in the third century, it wanted to stomp down the ancient Roman festival of *Saturnalia* – and perhaps, dare I say, run rings around Saturn – and replace it with Christmas.

**23 Skidoo.** The problem with that theory is that *Saturnalia* always ended on December 23. So, here’s a good question: why would Christians have put Christmas on December 25 – two days after *Saturnalia* – if they wanted to wipe it out? My goodness! That would be like wanting to stamp out Independence Day by adding a holiday on July 6th. Or saying that Lincoln’s Birth-

(continued on page 10)

## HC & ICC CLERGY

Vy. Rev. James S. Lentini , V. F.	Pastor
Msgr. Daniel McGlynn	Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Brennan Ferris	Parochial Vicar

## HC CLERGY

Mr. Philip Belt	Deacon
Mr. John Harvey	Deacon
Mr. Richard Kosior	Deacon
Mr. Robert McMullen	Deacon
Mr. Vincent Pisano	Deacon

## ICC CLERGY

Mr. Sherman Mitchell	Deacon
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## HC STAFF

Parish Office	302 674 5787
Jane Green	Receptionist, ext. 110
Diane Belt	Assistant to the Pastor, ext. 113
Kenneth Trojan	Business Manager, ext. 119
Michele Dornberger	Records/Asst. Bus. Mgr., ext. 116
Arline Dosman	Dir. of Hispanic Ministry, ext. 118
Tammy Korosec	CRE Religious Ed, ext 122
Linda Darling	Youth Ministry, ext. 123
Justin Wurzel	Maintenance Director
Len Dornberger	Cemetery Administrator, ext. 135
Michael Perza	Dir. of Music Ministry, 302 698 9302

## MAILING ADDRESS

*Church of the Holy Cross*  
631 S. State St.  
Dover, DE 19901

## ICC STAFF

Parish Office	410 482 7687
Marilyn Dixon	Office Manager
Alicia Poppiti	DRE Religious Ed.
Susan Venezia	Bookkeeper
Arline Dosman	Dir. of Hispanic Ministry

## MAILING ADDRESS

*Immaculate Conception Church*  
P. O. Box 399  
Marydel, MD 21649-0399

## HOLY CROSS SCHOOL

Catholic Education Pre-K3 to Grade 8  
302 674 5787  
holycrossdover.org/school

Linda Pollitt	Principal, ext. 111
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## MAILING ADDRESS

*Holy Cross School*  
631 S. State St.  
Dover, DE 19901

## RECENTLY DECEASED

Our condolences to the families of those who recently passed:

- Howard John Bilanger

May their soul and souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace. Amen.

## NEW PARISHIONERS

Welcome to our newly registered members:

- Donald Francis Fox II
- Ninoliro, Aireen, and Soffia Dumadag

## HOLY CROSS CEMETERY

Christmas decorations (such as wreaths, poinsettias, blankets, etc.) are permitted from December 1st until March 1st. As always, thank you for your understanding and cooperation in maintaining our sacred grounds. For more information, contact Len Dornberger at 674-5787 x135.

## KNIGHT OF COLUMBUS

The Knights of Columbus is having a membership drive. Men of both ICC and Holy Cross are welcome and invited to join the K of C. Contact people are: Francesco "Chris" Cristiano for ICC at 302-653-9004 and Dr. Wayne Thomas for Holy Cross at 302-697-1152

## 4TH SUNDAY ADVENT (DEC 24)

**FIRST READING: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-5, 8-12, 14-16**

Although Samuel is a "big man" in his day, he's also sensitive enough to see that it isn't right for him to be swelling in a spacious house while God dwells "in a tent", and he is determined to do something about it.

**SECOND READING: ROMANS 16:25-27**

Paul rejoices in Jesus, whose strength enables us to live out the Good News so that, reaching to the ends of the earth, it draws all people to become Jesus' disciples. Glory is to be given to the Father through Jesus Christ for ever.

**GOSPEL: LUKE 1:26-38**

Luke retells the glorious story of the incarnation. Through Mary's unconditional acceptance of the angel's message, Jesus has come into our world as one of us and is like us in all things, apart from sin.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY MASS

Bishop William E. Koenig invites all couples celebrating their 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th, 30th, 35th, 40th, 45th, 50th, wedding anniversary, or any anniversary beyond 50th, to the annual Wedding Anniversary Mass being held on World Marriage Sunday, February 11, 2024, at 1:00PM at St. Margaret of Scotland Church in Newark, DE. Reservations are required by February 2, 2024.

Bishop Koenig will be available for photos with interested couples beginning at 12:00 pm and again after the Mass. If you would like to have a photo taken with Bishop Koenig, please arrive at 12:00 pm or plan to stay after Mass. Questions may be referred to the Office for Marriage and Family Life at 302-295-0657 or by email-[ingOMFL@cdow.org](mailto:ingOMFL@cdow.org). Registration can be completed by using the following link – <https://cdowcym.wufoo.com/forms/k1uxe9k20m649mn/>

## RETRouvaille:

Rediscover the love in your marriage. Tens of thousands of couples have healed their marriages through Retrouvaille (pronounced Retro-vy). If you know anyone who could benefit from this program, please pass this on. Couples learn to build communication skills and to increase intimacy. It provides help for marriage problems, difficulties, or crises. The next program will be held February 16 - 18, 2024 at the Family Life Center in Malvern, PA. For more information, or to register, visit [www.HelpOurMarriage.org](http://www.HelpOurMarriage.org) or call 215-766-3944 or 800-470-2230. All inquiries are strictly confidential.

## MARRIAGE MOMENTS

As we get closer to Christmas it may be hard to continue to wait. OR, you may be feeling that there's just not enough time to do all the shopping, cooking, decorating, etc. Let go of the non-essentials and focus on unconditionally loving each other. If necessary, forgive.

## PARENT POINTERS

Christmas is almost here. If your child is old enough to remember past Christmases, talk

## MASS INTENTIONS DECEMBER

### 18 MONDAY

HC 8:00 am Brendan Ryan

### 19 TUESDAY

HC 8:00 am DM Caputo Family

### 20 WEDNESDAY

HC 8:15 am Margaret "Peg" Ward

### 21 THURSDAY

HC 8:00 am DM McLane Family  
ICC 6:00 pm For the People

### 22 FRIDAY

HC 8:00 am Bernadette Mieriello

### 23 SATURDAY

HC 8:00 am LI McNamee Family  
HC 5:00 pm Kurt Paul Richter  
ICC 5:00 pm For the People  
HC 7:00 pm For the People

### 24 SUNDAY

HC 7:30 am Eugene and Elizabeth Belt  
ICC 8:30 am Andrea Nagyiski  
HC 9:30 am Betty and Warren Meachem  
ICC 11:00 am Teresa Crenshaw

HC Christmas Eve Masses (4 pm, 6:30 pm, 9 pm Spanish, Midnight – All for the People

ICC Christmas Eve Masses (5 pm, 7 pm Spanish, Midnight – All for the People)

*THE SANCTUARY LAMP IN THE CHAPEL FOR 12/17-12/23 IS FOR LI MSGR. DAN MCGLYNN.*

*THE SANCTUARY LAMP IN THE CHURCH FOR 12/17-12/23 IS FOR KENNETH H. SMITH*

about favorite customs and perhaps even a snafu that might have happened. Remember and laugh together.

## CATHOLIC FORUM

Listen to Catholic Forum each week. Next Saturday, December 23rd, tune-in to hear the annual Christmas program featuring Bishop Koenig's Christmas message to the people of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore and some beautiful holiday hymns. Catholic Forum airs on Saturday afternoons at 1:30 on Relevant Radio 640. You can listen online anytime at [cdow.org/CatholicForum](http://cdow.org/CatholicForum), or by searching "Catholic Forum" on Apple, Spotify, iHeartRadio, or Amazon Music podcasts.

DEC. 23/24, 2023

EMHC

SERVERS

5:00 PM

D. Kaltenbaugh M. MacLeish L. Curley  
D. MacLeish P. Sheldon S. Murawski

LECTORS

J. Davis  
D. Kilby

7:30 AM

J. Davis J.Salamone T. Catipay  
R. Pritchett W. Thomas S. Shevock

LECTORS

C. Cuffee

9:30 AM

D. Martiniez C. Jones F. Madukwe  
F. Hanlin K. Kelly A. Wilk  
C. Wilk

LECTORS

S. Crossen  
M. Sherlock

11:30 AM

T. Hernandez M. Richard TBD  
E. Patoriza

LECTORS

TBD

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

TBD

8:30 AM

LECTORS

D. Smith

TBF

11:00 AM

LECTORS

S. Tucker

1:00 PM

TBD

If you or someone from your family is going to be in one of our local rehabilitation facilities or nursing homes, our Extra-Ordinary ministers of Holy Communion serve all of these facilities. If you are going to be in one of these facilities, even for a short time, please be sure to register yourself as a Catholic so that you will be on their list for our ministers to bring you the Eucharist on the weekend. All the facilities are very cooperative and will gladly add the name to the list for our ministers each week.

If you are in the hospital make sure you are on their Catholic list so we can have our ministers bring you communion daily. You must inform the hospital to put you on the Catholic list otherwise we do not know you are there.

ADORATION CHAPEL (HC)

Can you spare an hour to spend with Jesus? Our Adoration Chapel is open from 5 am to 9 pm Monday through Sunday. We have openings. Call John Murphy at 302-233-1779 or email him at jkm2015@verizon.net to schedule.



SUNDAY 7 am, 4 pm, 5pm

MONDAY 5 pm

WEDNESDAY 7 am, 4 pm, 5 pm

THURSDAY 4 pm

FRIDAY 6 am

SATURDAY 5 am, 9 am, 10 am, 12 pm, 1 pm, 2 pm

This is the year of the Eucharistic Revival. What better time is there to select an open hour in our Adoration Chapel and spend some time with Jesus weekly. Please consider taking some time each week out of your busy schedule to sit in silence and prayer before Our Lord. Call today to reserve your hour. You will be so blessed and glad you did.

SAMARITANS

The Samaritan Pantry is now accepting Hams or Turkeys and the accompanying Christmas Dinner foods. They can be dropped off in the building behind the Rectory in the door with the new green donations sign.

KNITTING GROUP

If you enjoy knitting or crocheting and fellowship, join the Prayer Shawl Ministry. We meet on Tuesday mornings from 10 am to Noon in the St.



Luke Room of the Early Learning Center Building. Please come join us to see what we are all about.

FROM THE DIALOG...

The Dec. 15 edition of The Dialog will be the final edition of 2023. We will have no print edition of The Dialog on Dec. 30. We return to print Jan. 12 with our first edition

- Agradecemos a todos que ayudaron en una forma u otra con los preparativos en honor a nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. En especial a las Juntas directiva de ambas parroquias.
- La Navidad está cerca: Hoy celebramos el Tercera domingo de Adviento / Domingo de la ALEGRÍA (Vela del Pastor)- Llamado «Domingo de Gaudete», que significa alé-grate, una vela rosa en la corona de Adviento representa este domingo. En la misa, también verás a sacerdotes y diáconos con vestiduras rosas, que nos llevan a esperar con alegría el nacimiento de Jesús. Cuarta vela / Domingo: AMOR (Vela del Ángel). Vivamos el Adviento.
- **La Misa del Cuarto Domingo de Adviento** de 11:30 AM del día 24 de diciembre de 2023 se transfiere al sábado, 23 de diciembre a las 7:00PM. MISA DE NOCHEBUENA domingo 24 de diciembre a las 9:00 PM. La Misa Dominical del 31 sera el horario normal de las 11:30 de la mañana y a las 7 de la noche tendremos la misa de vigila de Maria Madre de Dios es una Solemnidad por tanto hay que asistir a Misa.
- **Todos es los viernes de 6-8 Foro Cristiano con el padre Brennan Ferris:** Todos los viernes, de 6:00PM hasta las 8:00PM. El tema es: El Misterio Eucarístico” donde todo el año las clases se centrará en la EUCARISTIA y la PRESENCIA REAL en la Eucaristía Venga y fórmese para poder defender su Fe Católica, esto será un curso de formación que termina el día 2 de junio 2024
- **POSADAS:** Ya está tomadas todas las Posadas 2023. Puede unirse a la que le quede más cerca o a la Posada que desea.
  - Domingo 17, 7:00PM. Dirección 2411 White Oak Rd. Dover, DE 19901
  - Lunes 18, 7:00PM. Dirección 139 Carnation Dr. Magnolia, DE 19962
  - Martes 19, 7:00PM. Dirección 42 S. Edgehill Ave. Dover, DE
  - Miércoles 20, 7:00PM: Dirección 389 Mannering Dr. Dover, DE 19901
  - Jueves 21, 7:00 PM Dirección 35 Hickory Dale Dr. Dover, DE 19901
  - Viernes 22, 1635 Nathaniel Mitchell Rd. Dover, DE 19904
  - Sábado, 23 Dirección: 8:30PM 66 Roberts Dr. Dover DE 19901
  - Domingo 24, de Diciembre: 8:45 PM Misa de Nochebuena La Iglesia

## ICC

**Formación de Adultos.** Lunes 6:30 – 8:30PM Los lunes, en el salón de reuniones de la oficina parroquial.

**Preparación Sacramental para la Primera Reconciliación** Sesión #4 el martes, 19 de diciembre a las 6:30 – 7:30 pm en el salón.

**Para la preparación Sacramental de la Confirmación** Sesión # 3 el domingo 17, de diciembre de 3:00 – 5:30 en el salón.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (HC)**

**Next Class:** December 17th 3:00pm-5:00pm

**Save the Date!**

**February 28th at 7pm** in the Parish Hall  
 “Mark’s Gospel” presented by the Reverend Joseph Morris from the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

“The one-person performance is not a “reading” or a “talk” but the entire Gospel of St. Mark memorized and performed as storytelling. It’s fast paced, energetic, up close and personal.”

All are welcome!

The families of all Holy Cross students LAFF, and Religious Education Students are encouraged to attend.

**LAFF (LIVING AS A FAMILY OF FAITH CATECHESIS)**

**Next LAFF class** is January 14 at 10:30 am.. Come out and join us; families gathering for prayer, communion with one another, sharing our Faith Life experiences. See above for a special Lent formation opportunity.

**Is your family interested in joining the Living as a Family of Faith Catechesis with Deacon Vince?** Contact Tammy Korosec at either tkorosec@holycrossdover.org or call (302) 674-5787 X 122

**ADULT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY (HC)**

Mark your Calendars for these upcoming formation opportunities!

Tuesday offerings:

**January 9th-February 6th Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession**

“Forgiven explores the grace and healing offered in Confession and shows how this sacrament of mercy reveals the depth and bout of God’s love.

**February 13th-March 19th No Greater Love:** A Biblical Walk Through Christ’s Passion. “Filmed on location in the Holy Land, No Greater Love is a biblical pilgrimage that reveals Christ’s amazing love for us. Best selling author Edward Sri guides you through the last hours of Christ’s life.”

Special Lent offering:

**February 28th at 7pm** in the Parish Hall  
 “Mark’s Gospel” presented by the Reverend Joseph Morris from the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

“The one-person performance is not a “reading” or a “talk” but the entire Gospel of St. Mark memorized and performed as storytelling. It’s fast paced, energetic, up close and personal.”

For more information, please contact tkorosec@holycrossdover.org or call Tammy Korosec at (302) 674-5787 X 122.

**YOUTH PROGRAMS AT HOLY CROSS**

**Confirmation Classes:**

Resume January 7 at 3 pm and January 10 at 6 pm.

**MOUNT 2000:**

We have a couple spots open for retreat at Mt. St. Mary's University on February 2-4, 2024. Cost is \$100 which covers everything for the weekend.

This is a Eucharistic Retreat for high school teens. Please let Mrs. Darling know if you are interested.

**Purse Bingo:**

**Mark your calendars!** Our annual purse bingo to raise money to assist our teens attending Catholic Heart Work Camp this summer will take place on Saturday, **March 9**. Tickets will go on sale after Christmas - \$35 per ticket. Please plan on joining us for a fun evening.

**SRE AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

Coffee and donuts next week during Religious Education classes

**Sacramental Preparation Classes:**

**Confirmation session #3:** Today, Sunday, December 17th @ 3pm-5:30pm in hall.

**First Reconciliation session #6:** Tuesday, December 19th at 6:30pm- 7:30pm in Hall

**Reconciliation retreat:** Saturday, January 13, 9am-12noon in the hall

There will be NO SRE Sunday, December 24th or 31st due to the holidays. Classes will resume on Sunday, January 7th.



P	S	A	N	D	A	L	S	H	A	Y	N	O	R	D	N	Y	R	U	T	D	L	H	A	Z
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S	F	H	A	J	O	Y	N	E	W	I	O	C	O	D	A	T	I	N	B	U	U	L	N	N
S	R	B	Z	A	P	T	H	B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M	N	R	E	R	O	H	H	L
E	H	U	R	E	A	Y	E	L	Y	A	O	E	T	E	D	U	A	G	R	E	E	R	O	O
J	S	T	H	G	R	E	T	E	O	N	L	Y	S	S	Z	M	A	O	T	H	H	I	J	O
A	J	Y	R	P	I	Y	T	E	W	V	N	O	R	T	H	S	T	A	R	I	N	T	H	E

## Find these Advent Words:

ADVENT  
WREATH  
BAPTISM  
NAZARETH  
PINK  
NOVEMBER  
EVERGREEN  
RIVER JORDAN

ELIZABETH  
CANDLE  
JESUS  
CRECHE  
FAITHFUL  
DECEMBER  
STABLE  
SANDALS

ZACHARIAH  
JOHN THE BAPTIST  
NATIVITY  
GAUDETE  
SALVATION  
INN  
MOTHER MARY  
NORTH STAR

PURPLE  
DESERT  
BETHLEHEM  
BLESSED MOTHER  
JESSE TREE  
JOY  
SACKCLOTH

day on February 16th was done to steal the thunder from Washington's Birthday on February 12th. The simple answer is this: *Saturnalia* is not the "reason for the (date of the) season;" Christmas' proximity to *Saturnalia* is coincidental, not purposeful.

**Feast of the Sun.** Similarly, a claim is also made that Christmas steals from the Roman pagan celebration of *Sol Invicta* (the Feast of the Unconquered Sun). This feast was created, whole cloth, by Emperor Aurelius in 274 A.D in an attempt to bolster the sick-unto-death pagan religion of the Roman Empire by honoring the sun god. This feast, which occurred around the same time as *Saturnalia*, was certainly not steeped in Roman tradition. It was created on a whim, not a historical basis. And, far from Christmas trying to obscure or override this feast, scholar Thomas Talley, in his work, "The Origins of the Liturgical Year," observes that *Sol Invicta* was, in fact, a Roman response to the practice of upstart Christianity's celebration of Christmas in late December.

**Mood Rings and Macarena.** In any event, both *Saturnalia* and *Sol Invicta* proved to be fad-fests that passed as quickly into obscurity as mood rings, click-clacks, and the Macarena. These feasts are no more than footnotes in the history of pagandom, and Roman imperial history. Hence, the reason that today, Hallmark doesn't carry cards for *Saturnalia* and *Sol Invicta*.

**Feast of the Son.** December 25th as Christmas – celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ – can be found universally on the Church's calendar as far back as 354 A.D. Yes, I know, that date is many years after the establishment of *Saturnalia* and *Sol Invicta*, leading some to make the assertion that Christmas, being on December 25, was a response to those Roman feasts. However, we must remember that until 313 A.D., Christianity was not legal in the Roman Empire, and the celebration of Christmas was often done in secret. However, there is evidence of celebrations of Christmas (in the form of writings and hymns), which pre-date the formal celebration of the pagan Roman feasts that were mentioned.

**Mystery Date?** So, if the Pagan religion theory is out of the running, then where did we get the date for Christmas? Well, to the chagrin of those who put forth that Christmas's date cannot be found in scripture, the date of December 25 as Christmas is, in fact, built upon Scripture. From whence in Scripture might this assertion be drawn? To answer this, we have to put Jesus aside for a moment and turn to St. John the Baptist and his father Zechariah.

**Stop, Luke, and Listen.** In Luke's Gospel, 1:8-9, we are told, "*Once when he [Zechariah] was serving as priest in his division's turn before God, according to the practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense.*" It goes on to say that the Angel Gabriel appeared to him announcing (in Luke 1:13): "*Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John.*" In an early tradition from a text called *De Solstitia*, it is asserted that this priestly ceremonial duty Zechariah performed was part of the festival of Tabernacles (at the Autumnal Equinox). This then places the conception of St. John the Baptist at the Autumnal Equinox, which the Romans observed on September 25.

**Hear the Angel Voices.** In Luke 1:36, when the Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she is called by God to bear the Son of the Most High, he drops in this tidbit: "*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.*" Six months from the time of John's conception in the womb of Elizabeth, would mark March 25 as the date of Jesus' conception by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. This understanding is likewise asserted by the early third-century Roman and Christian historian Sextus Julius Africanus, who also dates Jesus' conception to March 25. From all of this, we, and the early Christian Church, binding its faith in the Holy Scripture, would date the birth of John the Baptist to the summer solstice and the nativity of the Lord to the winter solstice, as understood in Roman times, on December 25 (nine months after his conception).

**It's a Date!** And that is why the date of Christmas is December 25; that is the reason for the date of the season! While from an empirical standpoint, I have to admit that, yes, it is possible that this date (December 25) could be wrong; nonetheless, this explanation shows that the early Christians and our early Church arrived at the date of Christmas based on the Holy Scripture, and not from pagan Roman practices. And so, as Advent winds down, keep your eyes focused ahead on the joy of Christmas -- December 25: the birth of Jesus Christ, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. James Lentini  
Pastor