



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 19, 2021

Fourth Sunday of 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
No choirs at the Masses at the present time; a cantor will be available for the 5 pm and the 9:30 and 11:30 am Masses.

DAILY MASS SCHEDULE

Monday-Saturday, 8 am
During Lent, Monday and Friday, 12:10 pm
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

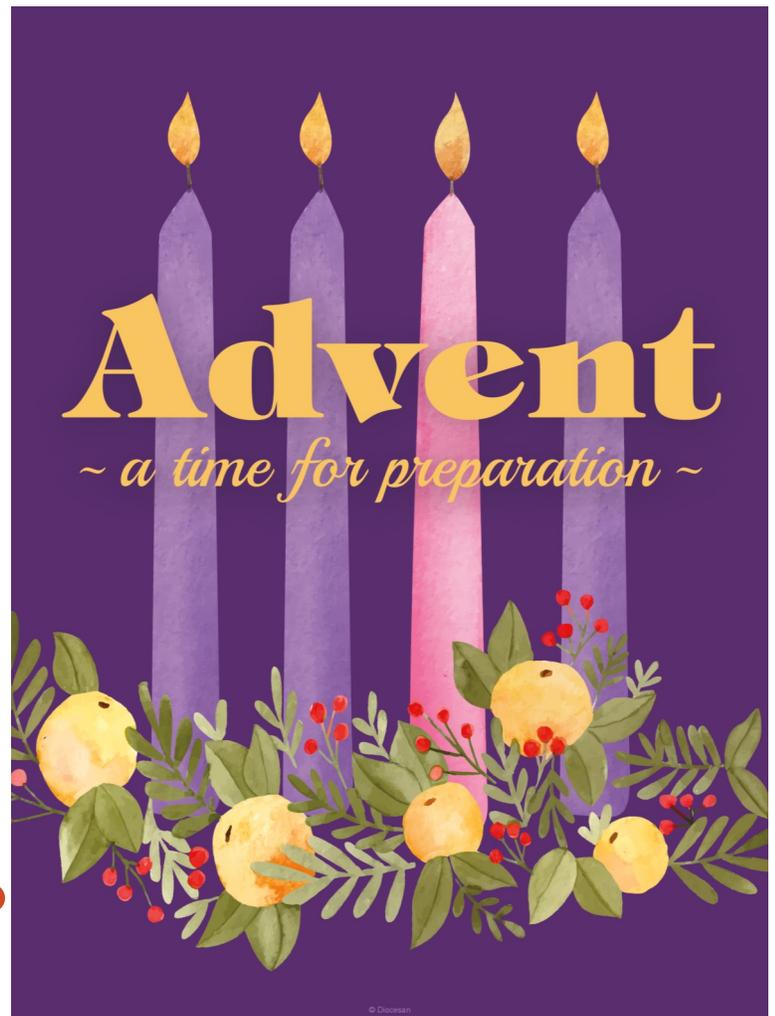
Sunday, 8:30, 11 am
Sunday, 1 pm, Spanish

DAILY MASS SCHEDULE

Thursday, 6 pm, Spanish

CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Saturday, 9:30 am
Thursday, 6:30 pm



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.

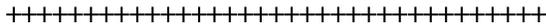
Anointing of the Sick. For the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, which is administered by a Priest, a person or an immediate family member must make the request. Late night requests may not be able to be answered until the next day.

ADVENT RECONCILIATION SERVICE

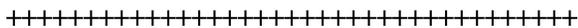
MONDAY, DECEMBER 20

7 PM HOLY CROSS CHURCH

VISITING PRIESTS WILL ALSO BE PRESENT TO HEAR CONFESSIONS.



IF YOU PLAN TO MAKE A YEAR-END DONATION TO HOLY CROSS OR TO IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, PLEASE BE SURE IT REACHES OUR OFFICES BY NOON ON DECEMBER 30, 2021.



PARISH OFFICES WILL CLOSED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23 AND REOPEN ON DECEMBER 28..

THE DAYS OF DEC. 28-30TH, WE WILL BE OPEN IN THE MORNINGS ONLY. WE WILL BE CLOSED DECEMBER 31 THROUGH JANUARY 3..

WEEKLY OFFERING (HC)

December 5, 2021

OFFERTORY TYPE	RECEIVED	BUDGETED/ NEEDED	DIFFERENCE
Offertory	\$32,549	\$26,725	\$5,824
YTD	\$590,559	\$596,025	(\$5,466)
Needs	\$1,664	\$1,480	\$184

WEEKLY OFFERING (IC)

Ending December 5, 2021

OFFERTORY TYPE	RECEIVED
Offertory	\$5,589
2nd	\$90

For Holy Cross, you can also Sign up for Faith Direct or call the office to leave your name and phone number if you wish to make your contribution by a credit card.

We appreciate your generosity to the church.

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 each year around this time some TV channel or some magazine runs an article on this topic – and I want to put in play the Christian, or more specifically Catholic voice on the topic of this question. So here it goes – here’s the article I put together on why we observe Christmas on December 25:

Pop Rock, Pepsi and Paul McCartney. By 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 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 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: there was a Roman Empire, it deigned there to be a god called Saturn, and had a festival called Saturnalia 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 Chris-

tianized 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 sow seeds of doubt, amidst our fields of the faith.

Puritan Made. The first considerations 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-in. 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, 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 Birthday 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 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 whim, not 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.

(continued on page 10)

HC & ICC CLERGY

Vy. Rev. James S. Lentini , V. F.	Pastor
Msgr. Daniel McGlynn	Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Mano Salla	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/Susan Cutrona	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

ADVENT RECONCILIATION

Holy Cross will be having its Advent Reconciliation Service on Monday, December 20, at 7 pm in the church. We will have several priests available that evening to hear confession.

MARRIAGE MOMENTS

Warm the longer nights with candlelight. For some couples, however, dark nights bring depression. If you are among those who are currently struggling in your marriage, turn to the power of prayer as one resource.

PARENTING POINTERS

In the midst of your family's excitement about what Christmas will bring, pause for 5 minutes tonight to be quiet together. Look at each other. Ponder the miracle of the human beings in front of you.

SVDP MEETING (IC)

St. Vincent de Paul meeting will meet from now on in the office building every month on the 2nd Monday of the month at 5 pm.

PRAYER SHAWL GROUP (IC)

We meet the 3rd Thursday of the month at 11 AM in the ICC Parish Hall. Knitters & crocheters Welcome. Questions call Karen Cairns 302-382-9316

READINGS FOR DECEMBER 26 HOLY FAMILY

FIRST READING: 1 SAMUEL 1:20-22, 24-28

Samuel's mother gives Samuel to God, not to lose her son but to find him.

SECOND READING: 1 JOHN 3:12, 21-24

The commandments are life, because they are given to us that we might live the life of God.

GOSPEL: LUKE 2:41-52

The hidden life of Christ was not hidden from everyone. Christ needed other people to grow, just as we do. Otherwise he would not be fully human.

SAMARITAN GIVING TREE

This year, we will continue with our Giving Tree for the Samaritans. We would still like to collect monetary donations in order to help those in need. We have our Samaritan Tree in the Gathering Space with envelopes on it. All funds received will go into the Samaritan account so we can then help those in need who contact us and are cleared that they truly need help. Please consider making a donation to the Samaritans through this Giving Tree so we will have funds available to help those in need throughout the year. Take an envelope from the tree and return it to the Parish Office or put it in the collection basket in the envelope. All funds go into the Samaritan account. Do not leave checks or money at the tree.

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.

CATHOLIC FORUM

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Catholic Forum. Catholic Forum returns from the holiday break on January 8th when Mr. Rusty Gilles from St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Hockessin, Delaware will discuss the history of the parish as they begin their 250th anniversary year. Catholic Forum airs on Saturday afternoons at 1:30 on Relevant Radio 640. You can listen online anytime at cdow.org/CatholicForum, or by searching "Catholic Forum" on Apple, Spotify, iHeartRadio, or Amazon Music podcasts.

RETRouvaille: REDISCOVER THE LOVE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Tens of thousands of couples have healed their marriages through Retrouvaille (pronounced Ret-ro-vy). If you know anyone who could benefit from this program, please pass this on. Couples learn to build communication skills. It provides help for marriage problems, difficulties or crises. The next program begins the weekend of February 11-13, 2022 at the Family Life Center in Malvern, PA. For more information, or to register, visit www.HelpOurMarriage.org or call 215-766-3944 or 800-470-2230. All inquiries are strictly confidential.

MASS INTENTIONS

DECEMBER

20 MONDAY	
HC 8:00 am	Cecilia Stanislaw
21 TUESDAY	
HC 8:00 am	William & Angie McNamee
22 WEDNESDAY	
HC 8:00 am	Pauline Crescenzo
23 THURSDAY	
HC 8:00 am	Regina Neitzey
ICC 6:30 pm	For the People
24 FRIDAY	
HC 8:00 am	Douglas & Gwen Westover (LI)
HC 4:00 pm	For the People
ICC 5:00 pm	For the People
HC 6:30 pm	For the People
ICC 7:00 pm	For the People
HC 9:00 pm	For the People
Midnight	For the People
25 SATURDAY	
HC 8 am	For the People
ICC 9 am	For the People
HC 10 am	For the People
26 SUNDAY	
HC 7:30 am	Hans Crews
ICC 8:30 am	Marge Messner
HC 9:30 am	John M. Sclesky
ICC 11 am	Rosemary Vasquez
HC 11:30 am	Judy DeBone
ICC 1 pm	For the People

(LI = LIVING INTENTION
DM—DECEASED MEMBERS)

VOCATIONS

The loving environment of a family draws forth an individual's greatest talents and gifts. We've come to realize that creating an atmosphere in which children can hear the Lord's call is one of the most significant responsibilities resting on our shoulders as parents. Our own lives must reflect the presence of God, His Word, and the love He offers His people..

Parents, do you encourage your children to develop their talents and gifts? Do you encourage your children to think of Church ministry as a possible life choice?

The Serra for priestly and religious vocations

HOLY CROSS CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve – Friday, December 24

4:00 pm Mass , 6:30 pm Mass
9:00 pm Spanish Mass , Midnight Mass

Christmas Day – Saturday, December 25

8:00 am Mass and 10:00 am Mass
No 5 pm Mass in Anticipation of Sunday

Holy Family of Jesus – Sunday, December 26

7:30 and 9:30 am Mass; 11:30 am Spanish Mass

Monday, December 27, 2021

8:00 am Morning Prayer

Tuesday, December 28 – Friday, December 31

8 am Mass

New Year's Eve – Friday, December 31

Solemnity of Mary
5:00 pm Mass
7:00 pm Spanish Mass

New Year's Day – Saturday, January 1, 2022

Solemnity of Mary
8:00 am Mass and 10:00 am Mass
No 5 pm Mass in Anticipation of Sunday

Epiphany - Sunday, January 2, 2022

7:30 and 9:30 am Mass; 11:30 am Spanish Mass

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve – Friday, December 24

5:00 pm English Mass (overflow in Parish Hall)
7:00 pm Spanish Mass (overflow in Parish Hall)

Christmas Day – Saturday, December 25

9:00 am English Mass

Holy Family of Jesus – Sunday, December 26

8:30 am Mass, 11:00 am Mass
1:00 pm Spanish Mass

New Year's Eve – Friday, December 31

Solemnity of Mary
5:30 pm English Mass; 9:00 pm Spanish Mass

New Year's Day – Wednesday, January 1, 2022

Solemnity of Mary
9:00 am English Mass

Epiphany – Sunday, January 2, 2022

8:30 am Mass, 11:00 am Mass
1:00 pm Spanish Mass

WANTED—PICKUP TRUCK (HC)

Looking for a place to donate your good condition used pick up truck. Holy Cross Parish is in need of a used pick up truck for our maintenance department. Our current pick up has died and is beyond repair. If you have, or know of someone who would like to donate a used pickup that is in good condition to the parish, please contact the Parish Office, extension 113. Thank you for your consideration.

ADORATION CHAPEL (HC)

The Adoration Chapel is open again each day from 5 am to 9 pm. If you would like to take a permanent time slot, it's not too late. We still have many openings on various days. See the openings listed below. Call Joann Pate today at 674-4496 to reserve a time for you.

SUNDAY 7 am, 10 am, 12 pm, 4 pm, 5 pm

THURSDAY 2 pm

FRIDAY 8 am, 7 pm

SATURDAY 5 am, 6 am, 8 am, 10 am, 12 pm, 1 pm, 2 pm, 7 pm

SAMARITAN DONATIONS

We will continue to collection donations for our upcoming Christmas baskets. Again, any canned goods, juices, etc can be placed on the tables. We are in need of small creamers, sugars, and coffee.

The freezers are available to place any frozen meat items. We can use hams and turkeys please.

WELCOME NEW PARISHIONERS

We extend a warm welcome to:

- Karen Mae Hall
- Dennis and Lucille Raab
- Jose Antonio Avalos Lopez
- David, Jennifer, Alaina and Carter Tracy

RECENTLY DECEASED

Our condolences and prayers to the families of:

- Tommy Ramos Torres
 - Jose Mayen
 - Walter James Byron
- May they rest in peace. Amen.

NEWLY BAPTIZED

Congratulations to our newly baptized members:

- Mathew Edward Heal III
- Roger Daniel Jones
- Felicity Hope Plimpton
- Chisom Isaiah Alaeto
- Mateo Isaias Aguilar

NUESTRA FAMILIA HISPANA

- Nuestro más sincero agradecimiento a todos los que de una forma u otra contribuyeron con la celebración de la fiesta en honor a nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.
- **La Navidad:** La Navidad es un momento para reflexionar y recordar que su verdadero significado es el amor demostrado a través de diversas acciones y valores como la solidaridad, la generosidad, la unión familiar, la alegría, la esperanza, la paz, la caridad, entre otros valores humanos y religiosos. Dios dio a su único Hijo para redimir en él todos los pecados del hombre, por eso estamos libres de ser condenados, en especial cuando aceptamos el amor de Dios. Por ello, el principal significado de la Navidad es el amor que se da de manera incondicional y sin pedir nada a cambio. Elementos navideños
- **El Árbol de Navidad:** El árbol de Navidad se basa en el mito del árbol de la vida de la mitología nórdica. Este mito fue aprovechado por San Bonifacio en el siglo VIII, evangelizador de Alemania, para introducir entre los pueblos del norte de Europa el culto cristiano. Inicialmente consistió en un pino que simbolizaba el amor eterno de Dios, adornado con manzanas, que recordaban el pecado original, y velas, representación de la luz que Cristo trajo al mundo. Hoy en día, las manzanas han sido reemplazadas por bolitas y otros adornos y las luces. La tradición indica que debe ponerse durante el Adviento.
- **El Nacimiento:** El nacimiento, también llamado belén, pesebre o portal, es la representación del nacimiento de Jesús. Las primeras representaciones datan del siglo V, aunque se considera que el promotor para su popularización fue San Francisco de Asís. El objetivo del nacimiento es recordar a las personas las circunstancias humildes en que nació Jesús en Belén. Lo tradicional es poner un nacimiento en casa con José y María en el centro de la escena presenciando la llegada de Cristo.
- **Las Posadas:** Las posadas son fiestas populares que se inician nueve días antes de la Navidad. Consisten en una representación

del camino de San José y la Virgen María buscando donde hospedarse antes del nacimiento del Niño Jesús. Las posadas son procesiones donde se cantan villancicos y se encienden velas, y acaban en la casa de uno de los participantes. La celebración puede ser tanto familiar, o incluir a los vecinos y el resto de la comunidad. Los villancicos son canciones de tema navideño. Los primeros fueron compuestos por los evangelizadores del siglo V para, a través de la música, contar a los campesinos y pastores que no sabían leer sobre el nacimiento de Jesucristo. Se dice que escucharlos en Adviento ayuda a preparar nuestro corazón para el acontecimiento de la Navidad.

- **Las Piñatas:** La piñata más usada era la de siete picos, que representaban los siete pecados capitales. Para romperla, era necesario usar la virtud y la fuerza, únicas armas para derrotar las tentaciones y así obtener las recompensas (los dones de Dios), que eran los dulces que estaban en su interior.
- **La Misa de Nochebuena es el 24 de diciembre.** Holy Cross 9:00 de la noche. La Inmaculada Concepción, Marydel a las 7:00 de la noche. En nombre de nuestros Sacerdotes, diáconos y el personal que labora en la parroquia, queremos desearles ¡Feliz Navidad Y Bendiciones para el 2022!
- **El 31 de diciembre, la Solemnidad de Santa María, Madre de Dios.** Es día de obligación asistir a la Santa Misa. 7:00 de la noche en Holy Cross y 9:00 de la noche en La Inmaculada Concepción la Solemnidad de Santa María, Madre de Dios. Es día de obligación asistir a la Santa Misa.

ICC- EDUCACIÓN RELIGIOSA

No habrá clases el 26 de diciembre ni el 2 de enero 2022. Se reanudarán el día 9 de enero 2022.

Primera Reconciliación el próximo 8 de enero en el salón de 6:30-7:30PM

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (HC)

Regular Class – December 19 at 3:30 pm

Next Class: January 9, 2022

- Children are to be dropped off at the double doors next to the Elementary office.
- 7th and 8th graders are in the Holy Cross Junior High building.
- No one except students and volunteers are allowed to enter either building.
- MASKS ARE MANDATORY.
- Hall monitors will assist getting children to their classes.

Dismissal from the ramp side will be as follows:

- Grades 5, 6, 7, 8 and Sacramental Prep – 5:15pm
- Grades K-1 -5:20pm
- Grades 2- 5:25pm
- Grades 3-4 5:30pm

If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact Tammy Korosec at either tkorosec@holycrossdover.org or call (302)674-5787 X 122.

Interested in enrolling a student in Religious Education? Please contact Tammy Korosec at either tkorosec@holycrossdover.org or call (302) 674-5787 X 122

LAFF (Living as a Family of Faith Catechesis)

Next class January 9 at 10:30am-12:30pm in the Matthew/Mark Room;

Interested in enrolling a student in LAFF, please contact Tammy Korosec at either tkorosec@holycrossdover.org or call (302) 674-5787 X 122

YOUTH AT HOLY CROSS

Makeup Classes for Confirmation:

Will take place on Sunday, December 19 in the Matthew/Mark room.

Please check your letter regarding time for the class(es) you have missed.

Next Class for Confirmation:

Sunday, January 9 at 1 and 4 pm and Wednesday, January 12 at 6 pm.

Confirmation Retreats:

Reminder to please email your choice of

dates for retreat to ldarling@holycrossdover.org

Youth Choir—If you are interested in assisting with music at the 5 pm Saturday Mass on the third Saturday of the month, please contact the Parish Office. We are in need of singers, percussion, piano and guitars. Rehearsal is each Tuesday evening at 6:30 in the choir room.

SRE (IC)

SRE next Classes: Sunday, December 12 and 19th 9:40-10:50am.

There will be no SRE on Sunday, December 26 or January 2, due to the Christmas Holiday.

Classes will resume on Sunday, January 9th.

Sacraments:

Youth confirmation prep- Next session will be Sunday, January 16, 2022 at 2:30-5pm in the hall

1st Reconciliation Prep- next session is the Retreat on Saturday, January 8th, 2022 in hall at 9am-12noon

Symbolon: will finish up on January 3rd.

Part 2: Living the Faith, will begin soon after, with schedule to be posted. You are welcome to join, no need to have participated in Part 1: Knowing the Faith, you can catch up later. You just need to register, so we can order your book.



“Do I need to find daycare for my daughter for the next two weeks?” As I stood at the top of the office steps greeting parents as they entered the elementary building to pick up their children, that was the question asked of me by Mrs. Brown. Apparently, a decision had been made to close schools for two weeks back in March of 2019. At that point in the day, I was not aware of that decision. I haven’t greeted Mrs. Brown or any other parent at the top of the office steps since then. Having heard from other parents that came before Mrs. Brown, I was slightly incredulous, not one to put a lot of stock in rumors. The whole idea had been bounced around for a little while, but never in my wildest dreams did I ever believe it would become reality. I told Mrs. Brown that to be prepared, and until I heard from a credible source the facts, whys and wherefores, I would err on the safe side and line up a daycare provider. She shook her head as she went to get her daughter.

Life, as we had come to know and love it at Holy Cross ceased to exist, seemingly in one fell swoop. We did what we had to do from that day in March until June, 2019. In the fall of 2019, blessed by God and all the saints in heaven we once again opened our doors. With great delight, we welcomed our children back to school every day. Were things the same? No. Have things returned to what they once were? No. Have we sacrificed the quality of our education? No. Have we been able to reinstate all of the extra-curricular activities our children once enjoyed? No. Has our sports program been able to return to its glory days? No. Have we been able to go on field trips? No. Have we gathered to enjoy an evening of Christmas music in the past year and a half? No. Am I happy about the answer being “No” to so many of the questions regarding student life at Holy Cross? No.

I am very disappointed in our inability to restore all the aspects of what once was. But I will never apologize for taking every precaution to keep our students healthy. Decisions made here have not always been the most popular. I have found myself defending quarantine decisions, lack of building access to no one besides school personnel and students, mask wearing, virtual learning, and school closure, just to name a few.

I, along with others look forward to the spring when we are so very hopeful for a turnaround in some of the restrictions.

When we opened our doors for the 2020-2021 SY, we did so with some resolve to restore a couple of the extra-curricular offerings from the past. Those that only involved in-house membership, such as Odyssey of the Mind, and Science Explorers. Both of these programs have proven seriously popular among our students in all the years they’ve been offered. There was an outpouring in response to the announcement that the programs would once again be offered, with all the restrictions of the classroom imposed. Children have a natural curiosity in why things work the way they do, why they are built and designed the way they are, they have a natural inclination for solving the mystery, or for finding the reason for their why. These two programs offer that chance for delving into finding and correctly placing all the pieces of the puzzle that lies therein.

Miss S. was in my office one day after school last week. We were discussing the Camden Christmas Parade from the weekend previous and how happy she was with the our Marching Band and Drum Line, and the upcoming mini-Christmas parade on our school parking lot (led by none other than St. Nicholas), before we turned our attention to the candy cane grams and the recording of the JH Christmas Concert. I looked at Miss S., we both heard spirited sounds in the hallway. It was long since dismissal, and I was a little confused as to the source of the sounds from the other side of the office door. I then remembered that Science Explorers were meeting that afternoon, but I couldn’t figure out why they were in the hallway. Miss S. went to find the source. I was right! Science Explorers were at the top of the stairwell testing out their parachutes. The topic for the week was the science of gravity, mass and the working of a parachute. There is a lot I value in being able to provide this learning opportunity for the elementary children. First of all, I love the enthusiasm for the weekly meeting. I also love the depth of the program, the introduction of real science vocabulary; I have always said that learning the language of math and science enriches their experience. Is it just a number?? No! It’s a denominator, or a numerator, or a coefficient, or an exponent, it’s a factor, a quotient, sum, or an integer. The possibilities are infinite---it’s never just a number. Is there a difference between mass and weight? This past week the SE’s (science explorers) learned about acceleration, gravity, surface area and mass. Everyone knows what a parachute is, but the secret behind the way it functions was the focus. To construct the better parachute, that was the goal. The best part was the spirit and enthusiasm. I am grateful to Mrs. Knox and Mrs. Borden for succeeding Mrs. Dottellis as moderator and for keeping the spirit alive. Because as any Science Explorer will tell you....and you have to scream this **reeeeally loud**; SCIENCE ROCKS!!

In any event, both Saturnalia and Sol Invicta proved to be fad-fests which passed as quickly into obscurity, as mood rings, click-clacks and the Macarena.

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. But, 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 text called *De solstitia*, it is asserted that this priestly ceremonial duty Zechariah performed was performing 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 3rd 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 could be wrong; nonetheless, this explanation shows that the early Christians and our early Church arrived at the date of Christmas based on Holy Scripture, not on 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!

Yours in Christ,
Fr. James Lentini
Pastor