



MERRY
Christmas



Weekend & Weekday Masses

Saturday-Suspended
Sunday 9:00 am
Wednesday 9:00 am

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

Every Wednesday after 9:00 am
Mass until Noon

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

After mass on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month or by appointment.

Clergy

Pastor:

Fr. Shane Stoppel-Wasinger
Deacon: Kevin Downie

Assisting Priest:

Fr. Chuck Brambilla
Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald

Office Hours:

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday
8:00 am. - 12:00 pm.

Parish Staff Contacts

Admin Asst: Marsha Marcussen
Bookkeeper/ Music: Steve Yurick
320-358-4370

Faith Formation: Claire Kind
Confirmation: Joan Hetherington
651-674-7382

Welcome to
The Church of the Sacred Heart
The Mother Church of East Central Minnesota

Parish Office / Mailing Address:

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12-19 Fourth Sunday of Advent &
12-26 The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Christmas 2021

One night a few weeks ago, I woke up and took a peek out the window to see if was snowing. Sure enough, the ground was covered with the fresh coating of snow. The next morning, everything was white and seemingly peaceful. Whenever we have our first measurable snowfall, there is something fresh and magical about it.

As for myself, I see Christmas each year like the first snowfall of the season, that is, with freshness and new beginnings. Our Saviour was born in Bethlehem many centuries ago. We celebrate the Incarnation of God becoming human to save us from our sins and death. This is the greatest gift that we humans have ever received from our Heavenly Father. How do we express with our actions and words that we appreciate this gift given to each of us? I believe that there is a way we can express our appreciation to God and others by our gratitude, which ultimately leads to joy.

“And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in the one body. And be thankful” (Col 3:15).

When we realize that all of our blessings that we have are from God, we are then motivated to share those gifts. When we give generously of ourselves to others, it shows God and our brothers and sisters, that we are thankful. As we share our blessings with others, we also demonstrate we are humble and rely on our loving God.

There are numerous ways that we can *show* our gratitude. First, of course, we donate monies to the church and others who are less fortunate than ourselves. I am continually amazed at how our parishes are completely dependent on the kindness of our parishioners. Another way to show our thankfulness is giving others one of the most precious gifts of all...our time. We long for friendships and relationships that give meaning to our lives. I have a friend who this year wrote a poem for their relatives, asking not for material things, but instead, the gift of spending time together. What a great idea!!! Material possessions don't last a lifetime, but memories sure will! If you are still looking for a present to give to someone, wrap a package with a note inside, stating you would like to spend time together, time without any distractions, and make a memory together.

This showing of gratitude and giving of ourselves, will in turn bring joy into our lives, something we commonly long for. When we give freely of ourselves, either through treasures or our precious time, we do so out of love for God and others. By our true generosity and love, we are led to joy. When we give to others, or a well-worthy cause, we can't help but feel joyful!

Many times we forget to show our gratitude to God and our brothers and sisters. Our lives will then have less joy. The birth of Christ this week is a reminder that we can start fresh by generously giving of ourselves. What joy that is!

Have a very Merry and Blessed Christmas, Father Shane

Stewardship Ties

There is a lot of imagery around Christmas that has to do with adoption — or, more specifically, with a child being loved by another as if they belonged to that person and loved in such a profound way that in time, they do come to belong to that person.

We see this with Joseph and the infant Jesus. Joseph is not Jesus' biological father. But through a series of actions, and through his faithfulness in small, everyday matters, Joseph becomes the foster father of Jesus.

Perhaps we are parents who have adopted children, or we ourselves were adopted. We have also seen how, through a series of actions of love and sacrifice, someone can become the parent of a person who is not their “blood.” A lot of times these families celebrate the day of the adoption. I've heard it called a “gotcha day,” and it's marked joyously, like a birthday.

Most of us are not descended from the Israelites, God's Chosen People. But through a series of extraordinary actions of love and sacrifice, God has made Himself our parent, too. And through our own actions, and through faithfulness in small and everyday matters, we are His children.



But in this family, instead of blood ties, we have stewardship ties. It's not about who we look like, it's about how we treat one another. How we take care of one another.

So this Christmas, let's think about how we will celebrate our adoption. As much as it is Jesus' birthday, it's also our “gotcha day”

— the day we received the gift of eternal family.

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

Besides the Wise Men, what is significant about the Epiphany?

Epiphany means “manifestation,” or public display. The feast is usually celebrated January 6. In the US, it is celebrated on the Sunday nearest to January 6. It originates from a story unique to Matthew (2:1-12). Magi from the East come to offer homage to the newborn King, presenting him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

This part of Matthew's infancy narrative differs from Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. In Luke there are no Magi, star, nor gifts. Luke has Jesus being born in a stable after Mary and Joseph's long travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Matthew seems to have the family living in a house in Bethlehem, where the Magi find them.

Why these differences? They stem from the needs and concerns of the audience the authors were addressing, as well as the theological stance of each author. Knowing the original intention helps get at the correct interpretation of the text.

Since Matthew was writing primarily to a Jewish community, his concern was to show that Jesus did not come just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well. From his very birth, Jesus not only manifests himself to Jews, but also to Gentiles, who are prominently included in the manifestation, symbolized by the Magi and their journey. This is the most significant aspect of the feast of Epiphany. How do you manifest Jesus to all with whom you come into contact?



Parish News

Catholic Charities Food Distribution

The next food distribution of frozen meals for seniors 60 and older will be on December 16th from 10:00am-11:30 am. Meals are available in quantities of 10 and up to 30 per calendar month.

DOC & KIC CLASSES All Faith Formation classes have been canceled until the beginning of the year due to a COVID outbreak among St. Gregory's staff. If you have questions, please leave a message at 651.674.4056 ext. 112 or an email at info@stgregorynb.org KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS!

December 24-25 & 26 Celebrants

Fr. Chuck (Xmas Eve)	Sacred Heart	5:00 p.m.
Fr. Shane (Xmas Eve)	St. Gregory	10:00 p.m.
Fr. Shane (Xmas Day)	Sacred Heart	9:00 a.m.
Fr. Fitzgerald/Dea. Kevin	St. Gregory (25th)	9:30 a.m.
Fr. Fitzgerald/Dea. Kevin	Sacred Heart (26th)	9:00 a.m.
Fr. Shane	St. Gregory(26th)	9:30 a.m.

January 1 & 2 Celebrants

Fr. Chuck (NYD)	Sacred Heart	9:00 a.m.
Fr. Shane (NYD)	St. Gregory	10:00 a.m.
	Sacred Heart	9:00 a.m.
Fr. Shane (2nd)	St. Gregory	9:30 a.m.

Father God, we pray for all those who are facing sickness in their bodies. We ask that you would restore their health, soothe their pain, and ease their worry. Give them your peace and comfort as they wait.

In Jesus' name, AMEN!

Continued prayers for:

Sue Roth, Gerald Mollberg, Jim Thorn, Judy Strandmark, Grace Schwaab, Cecilia Shinler, Ron Schleicher, Janet Yurick, Maxim Hurwicz, Al Petschl, Jim Mitchell, Marian Schmitz, Laura Saumer, Ariel Saumer



Mass Intentions

Wednesday, December 22

9:00 a.m. † Open

Sunday, December 26

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

9:00 a.m. † Parishioners

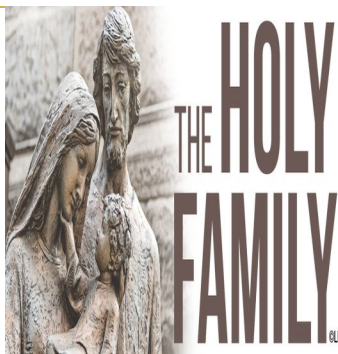
Wednesday, December 29

9:00 a.m. † Open

Sunday, January 2

Epiphany of the Lord

9:00 a.m. † Open



Annual Sock drive!

It is that time of year again where the temperatures drop and staying indoors for the homeless is not always an option. Please consider donating new socks from infant to adult this season! Drop off in-

Christmas Schedule

The Nativity of the Lord

Friday, December 24

Vigil Mass at 5:00 pm (at Sacred Heart)

Vigil Mass at 10:00 pm (at St. Gregory)

Saturday, December 25

Christmas Day Mass at 9:00 am (at Sacred Heart)

Christmas Day Mass at 9:30 am (St. Gregory)

Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God

Friday, December 31

Vigil Mass at 4:00 pm (at St. Gregory)

Saturday, January 1

At 9:00 am (at Sacred Heart)

Please fill out a Christmas flower offering envelop if you would like to make a donation in memory or honor of someone.



The Story of Christmas at Greccio

What better way to prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child than to take a brief journey to Greccio, the spot in central



Italy where Saint Francis of Assisi created the first Christmas crib in the year 1223.

Francis, recalling a visit he had made years before to Bethlehem, resolved to create the manger he had seen there.

The ideal spot was a cave in nearby Greccio. He would find a baby—we're not sure if it was a live infant or the carved image of a baby—hay upon which to lay him, an ox and an ass to stand beside the manger. Word went out to the people of the town. At the appointed time, they arrived carrying torches and candles.

One of the friars began celebrating Mass. Francis himself gave the sermon. His biographer, Thomas of Celano, recalls that Francis "stood before the manger...overcome with love and filled with a wonderful happiness..."

For Francis, the simple celebration was meant to recall the hardships Jesus suffered even as an infant, a savior who chose to become poor for our sake, a truly human Jesus.

Tonight, as we pray around the Christmas cribs in our homes, we welcome into our hearts that same Savior.

Reflection

God's choice to give human beings free will was from the beginning a decision to be helpless in human hands. With the birth of Jesus, God made the divine helplessness very clear to us, for a human infant is totally dependent on the loving response of other people. Our natural response to a baby is to open our arms as Francis did—to the infant of Bethlehem, and to the God who made us all.

Merry Christmas