

Lancaster St Bernadette and Bremen St Mary Parishes



the Annunciation

And the angel said to her,
“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”

December 24, 2017: the 4th Sunday of Advent
and

December 25: Christmas, the Nativity of the Lord

St Bernadette Parish.

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

stbernadetteparish.net

cover picture: **The Annunciation**

our parishes

Father Thomas Kessler (614) 634 • 0499 wmthomaskessler@icloud.com
pastor

at St Bernadette Parish

Jeff Carpenter (740) 681 • 9918 carpenter.277@osu.edu
deacon

Mark Scarpitti (740) 438 • 3970 dcn.mark@frontier.com
deacon

Ann Essman (740) 653 • 9347 aessman001@att.net
pastoral minister

Steve Huber (740) 654 • 3137 shuber57@yahoo.com
facilities coordinator

Angie & Kent Kerns (740) 654 • 2588 kwkerns@gmail.com
religious education

Liz Latorre (740) 243 • 1872 lizlatorre@gmail.com
liturgical music

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center,
across the back parking lot from the school.

Hours are: 9 AM-1 PM, MWThF; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu.
1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701

(740) 654 • 1893

<http://stbernadetteparish.net>

at Bremen St Mary Parish

Ben Factor b_factor@lanaster.k12.oh.us
liturgical music

Sarah Borah sborah920@gmail.com

The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.

Hours are 9-11 AM, Tuesdays.
602 Marietta St, Bremen, OH 43107 (740) 569 • 7738

at both parishes

Stephen Karnes (740) 654 • 1893 stbernbook@gmail.com
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Saint Bernadette School

Pam Eltringham (740) 654 • 3137 peltring@cdeducation.org
principal

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secretary

Saint Bernadette School is located at

1325 Wheeling Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701
stbernlan@cdeducation.org

www.stbernadetteschool.com

Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society www.svdplancasteroh.com

Bremen St Vincent de Paul (740) 569-7738

Diocese of Columbus www.columbuscatholic.org

Angels Nurture & Disciple (AND) www.angelsAND.org

St Mary Parish.

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7738
BREMEN, OH 43107

Painted (1430-1432) in tempera on wood by Fra Angelico (ca 1400-1455)
in the Museo del Prado, Madrid

sacramental life

Baptism

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnst will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. Try to attend before the child is born. Next session will be in January. If you are expecting or have a new born or somehow haven't gotten around to having an older child baptized, call Kathy to make plans now.

Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; those parents are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. Both godparents need to be practicing Catholics. If you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly (a major component of being a practicing Catholic!), there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass.

Penance

The priest is available for Penance

- at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
- at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

Every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are Penance opportunities for parochial school children four times during the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession. The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year.

Anointing and Care of the Sick

We receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick when dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age. We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body."

We bring Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long since the sacraments were last available.

Holy Matrimony

Couples wishing to marry should contact the parish office six months before they wish to celebrate the sacrament. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation.** And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. Remember, Catholics who marry outside the Church have left the sacramental life and need to change that situation before receiving the other sacraments.

The Church wishes to support couples **through the years** of their married life. That's why our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn about these programs, watch the weekly bulletin.

At Mass this Sunday the Church Prays

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

At Christmas the Church Prays

O God, who gladden us year by year as we wait in hope for our redemption grant that, just as we joyfully welcome your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer, we may also merit to face him confidently when he comes again as our Judge. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

In December the Pope Asks Us to Pray

That the elderly, sustained by families and Christian communities, may apply their wisdom and experience to spreading the faith and forming the new generations.

Listen to God's Word and Honor His Saints

Sunday, Dec 24, 4 th Sunday of Advent	2 Samuel 7:1-16 Romans 16:25-27	Psalm 89 Luke 1:26-38
Christmas		
Vigil	Isaiah 62:1-5 Acts 13:16-25	Psalm 89 Matthew 1:1-25
Night	Isaiah 9:1-6 Titus 2:11-14	Psalm 96 Luke 2:1-14
Dawn	Isaiah 62:11-12 Titus 3:4-7	Psalm 97 Luke 2:15-20
Day	Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-6	Psalm 98 John 1:1-18
Tues, Dec 26	Acts 6:8-7:59 <i>Saint Stephen, deacon & the first martyr</i>	Ps 31 Matthew 10:17-22
Weds, Dec 27	1 John 1:1-4 <i>Saint John, apostle & evangelist</i>	Ps 97 John 20:1-8
Thurs, Dec 28	1 John 1:5-2:2 <i>The Holy Innocents, martyrs</i>	Ps 124 Matt 2:13-18
Fri, Dec 29	1 John 2:3-11 <i>Saint Thomas Becket, bishop & martyr</i>	Ps 96 Luke 2:22-35
Sat, Dec 30	1 John 2:12-17 <i>Saint Thomas Becket, bishop & martyr</i>	Ps 96 Luke 2:36-40
Sunday, Dec 31, Holy Family	Sirach 3:2-14 Colossians 3:12-21	Psalm 128 Luke 2:22-40

Mass Intentions This Week

Monday, Dec 25	for the people	at both parishes
Tuesday, Dec 26 8:20 AM	Caroline Wascisin	at Bremen St Mary
Wednesday, Dec 27 8:20 AM	Lillian Grabowski	at St Bernadette

at Both Parishes

Catholic Foundation News

Giving becomes convenient and personal with a **Donor Advised Fund**, which offers a **hands-on approach to philanthropy**. This fund invests your charitable gift to grow tax-free for future giving. It lets you make contributions to multiple Catholic or public organizations from one account, and it can be set up with as little as \$5,000. It is convenient and flexible, with these key benefits:

- Immediate tax deduction with the option of deferred charitable distribution
- Consolidates your charitable giving, providing administrative convenience

- Flexibility to choose multiple grant recipients
 - Ability to add to the fund at any time
 - Make donations anonymously, if desired
 - Wish to create a family legacy of faith – name your children, grandchildren or other loved ones as successor advisors to the fund
- Generosity and acts of charity are family traits. You are encouraged to engage all generations of your family in your giving. For information contact Scott Hartman at The Catholic Foundation at (614) 443-8893 or shartman@catholic-foundation.org.

Mass Schedule for Christmas

At St Mary in Bremen:

Christmas Eve, Sunday, Dec 24, at 9 PM
Christmas Day, Monday, Dec 25, at 9 AM

At St Bernadette:

Christmas Eve, Sunday, Dec 24, at 6 PM
Midnight Mass at Midnight
with carols at 11:30 PM
Christmas Day, Monday, Dec 25, at 11 AM

Mass Schedule for New Year's Day

The Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God

At St Mary in Bremen:

Monday, January 1, at 8:30 AM

At St Bernadette:

Monday, January 1, at 11 AM

Remember: although usually a holy day of obligation, the obligation is dispensed this year because it occurs on a Monday. But can you think of a good reason not to begin a new year with Mass?

Representatives

The pastor is **still** requested to appoint

- two parishioners from each parish to represent their parish on the Fairfield / Hocking / Pickaway County **deanery pastoral council** (DPC)
The DPC meets **bi-monthly** on a Monday evening for about an hour at a different parish each meeting. Parishioners with some experience on parish pastoral council make especially good representatives because they can share and work together on concerns common to all of the parish communities.

He is on the lookout for St Bernadette parishioners to serve on the

- Lancaster St Mary School Advisory Board and
- Fisher Catholic High School Advisory Board.

The school boards each meet **monthly** in the evening during the school year. They serve to keep communications happening between their own parish and the Catholic schools.

Each rep is a volunteer appointed by the pastor for a fixed term. A school advisory board member need not be a parent or an alum of the school concerned. They help keep the pastor and the corresponding councils in our own **parishes in the loop**. Several of the positions are already staffed, but we always need a "strong bench" of people to help. Let Fr Kessler of your interest.



Seasonal Giving and Seasonal Getting

Packets of offering **envelopes for 2018** are available on the table in the parish hall. If you do not find a packet with your name, take one of the packets without a name on it but with the lowest serial number. Write your name and the number of the packet on the paper for new envelopes. Just after Christmas we will mail out the remaining packets at a cost of over \$3-4 apiece. Please save your parish that expense by picking up your packet today.

When you have taken your envelopes, please also take a **2018 Catholic calendar**, given to our parishes courtesy of **Morgan Funeral Home** in Bremen and **Sheridan Funeral Home** in Lancaster and **Frank E. Smith Funeral Home** in Lancaster. It wouldn't hurt to thank these businesses for their generosity.

You could also pick up a copy of the book *Joy to the World: How Christ's Coming Changed Everything (and Still Does)* by Scott Hahn. This book is a **Christmas gift for parishioners**. We have 100 copies which will be **available at the main Church doors at Christmas** on a first come, first served basis.

So Says the IRS

Remember: Donations must be received by the parish on or before Dec 31 for them to be credited to 2017. So says the IRS.

Christmas Flowers for your Parish Church

Donations to help defray the cost of Christmas flowers can be **given to the Lord in memory of a loved one**. Just put your gift in an envelope with the name of the loved one on the front and drop it in the collection basket in either parish.

A Better Way to Ring in the New Year

You could shout "Happy New Year" from your front porch. You could go to a party or to a bar. You could sit at home and watch television. You could be with family or friends. You could be alone and maudlin. Or you could just go to church and, **in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament**, begin the New Year in the happiness of prayer. A few parishioners are going to gather **at St Bernadette for an hour of prayer, from 11:30 PM on Dec 31 until 12:30 AM on Jan 1**. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed on the main altar. There will be no refreshments, no bells rung, or fireworks exploded. We will not watch our clocks or interrupt prayer to greet each other at the turn of the year. It will just be a quiet hour or so of adoration of the Eucharistic Lord, of atonement for our sins of the preceding year, and of fervent request for peace, prosperity, and renewal of our respect for the holy gift of life in the new year. Church doors will be open shortly before 11:30, and close up again soon after 12:30.

at Bremen St Mary Parish

Celebrate the Merriness of the Season

Please join us for the Bremen **St Mary Epiphany Gathering** on Saturday, Jan 6, at 6 PM in the Parish Hall. This is an event for all the adults and children who worship at our parish—especially the new ones! Dinner will be served, but we will only know how many to prepare for when you sign up on the bulletin board in the vestibule telling how many will attend. Call Jodie Schmelzer with any questions at (740) 569-9343.

St Vincent de Paul

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Bremen takes up a **collection on the first Sunday** of each month. St Vincent always needs members. Call Angi Skinner at (740) 438-0027 if you can help.

Ministry at Mass at St Mary

<i>December 24- January 1</i>	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Sunday, Dec 24, at 8:30 AM 4 th Sunday of Advent	Barb Van-Fossen Cook	Spencer Conrad, Alex Schmelzer	Neil Boch, Angi Skinner, Barb Van-Fossen Cook	James Noll Jr family	Jim Schmelzer
Sunday, Dec 24, at 9 PM Christmas Vigil	Paul Kunkler	Reagan & Spencer Conrad	Wyatt Borah, Irene Kunkler, Pam Redding	Paul Kunkler family	Chris Redding
Christmas Day Monday, Dec 25, at 9 AM	Jeanne Schmelzer	Alex Schmelzer Abby Skinner	Neil Boch, Leo Kunkler Sr, Dismas Schmelzer	James Noll Jr family	Jim Schmelzer
Tuesday, 8:20 AM	Linda Qualls				Jim Schmelzer
Holy Family Sunday, Dec 31 at 8:30 AM	Karen Wolfe	Caden & Cody Fyffe	Irene Kunkler, Dismas Schmelzer, Karen Wolfe	Nick Schmelzer family	Joe Young
Mother of God Monday, Jan 1 at 8:30 AM	Jeanne Schmelzer	Isaac Schmelzer	Irene Kunkler, Joe & Cathy Young	Maurice Schmelzer family	Joe Young

at St Bernadette Parish

Ministry at Mass at St Bernadette

<i>December 24-31</i>	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion
Saturday, Dec 23, at 4 PM 4 th Sunday of Advent Vigil Mass	Teresa Scarpitti	Brianna Hilyard, Samantha Kerns, Joey Mannella	Susan Garrett Marguerite Grimm Jim & Becky Kuhn Sandy Landefeld Craig Shaw
Sunday, Dec 24, at 11 AM 4 th Sunday of Advent	John Hartig	Anna Hartig, Gunner Robertson, Jack Tencza	Teresa Carpenter Teresa Hartig Jean Robertson Larry Sanford Anna Seigny David Shonk
Sunday, Dec 24, at 6 PM Christmas Vigil	Patrick Gins	Addy Myers, Brooke & Bryson Vogel	Rosalie DeFillippo Lee Guinan Ben Peters Teresa Scarpitti Craig Shaw Becky Wickham
Christmas Midnight Mass (carols begin at 11:30 PM)	Marguerite Grimm	Dominic & Emeline Neighbor, Brennan Quaintance	John & Teresa Hartig Angie Kerns
Christmas Day Monday, Dec 25, at 11 AM	David Shonk	Eve Darfus, Avee & Drew Solt	Jim & Rita Merk Anna Seigny
Wednesday, 8:20 AM	Bob Christy	Silus Hopkins, Hyde O'Rielly	Angie Christy Mary Jane Vajen
Thursday, 6 PM Friday, 8:20 AM	There will not be Mass on Thursday or Friday this week (December 28 and 29)		
Saturday, Dec 30, at 4 PM Feast of the Holy Family Vigil	Sandy Landefeld	Mallory, Mason & Mitchell Ortiz	Lee Guinan Kathy Kehmast Jim & Becky Kuhn Denise McGuire Kathy Wagner
Sunday, Dec 31, at 11 AM Feast of the Holy Family	Dennis Forquer	Abby, Mary & Sam Frazier	Terry Carpenter Pat Dreyer John Hartig Jean Robertson Larry Sanford David Shonk

St Bernadette Midnight Mass

Midnight Mass is a beautiful tradition of **welcoming our Lord's birth in the "wee hours" of the morning**. St Bernadette is a parish that maintains the tradition of a Mass at Midnight. The Choir, joined by a brass ensemble, will begin with a vigil at 11:30 featuring a variety of Christmas carols. Consider starting a **new tradition in your family** by welcoming Jesus with us at Midnight Mass.

Advent Drive for St Vincent de Paul

The Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society tells us that **their biggest need these days** is for non-perishable foods, paper products (kleenex, paper towels, toilet paper), personal hygiene products (deodorant, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes), and laundry products including detergent. So that's what they ask us to provide. Don't worry about too much of any of these items. **There won't be too much**, for the Society will share surplus items with the St Francis Center in McArthur. This drive will last through the four Sundays of Advent. Our drop off point will be in the vestibule between the school entrance and the church. The Society has a new website; you can learn about the many activities of the Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society at www.svdplancasteroh.com.

Because of all the activities at this time of year, the members of the Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Conference have decided **not to have a 5th Sunday collection** on Dec 30 & 31. Their next 5th Sunday collection will be on Apr 28 & 29. They thank us for our support and generosity this year. They could not continue their mission without it.

Sandwich Saturday

School has started and the students are serving our community by participating in the "Sandwich Saturday" program. This is a service project for students to live their discipleship by making **sandwiches for Foundation Dinners**, usually on the **last Thursday of each month**. The kids begin this service from an early age. Monetary donations, and donations of bread, lunch meat and wrapped cheese slices are always welcome and can be made through the school or parish office. Contact the school office for information at (740) 654-3137.

Here and There

EWTN Advent & Christmas Programming

EWTN brings you live Christmas Eve and Christmas Day **Masses from Rome and the Basilica of the National Shrine in Washington, DC**. They will air inspiring musical performances, specials for children and teens, and new holiday presentations for all the family. Watch or listen to EWTN TV & Radio on your local channel, online, or on your smartphone. For information, go to ewtn.com.

Angels Nurture & Disciple (AND)

Angels Nurture & Disciple (AND) reaches out to single mothers to provide emotional support and spiritual guidance in the form of a **Guardian Angel** (a mentor) at the most critical time in the life of women who have chosen life for their unborn babies. Have you ever been in such a woman's shoes? Or known someone you cared about who was? Perhaps you can help a single mother in need. A young lady, who recently gave birth to twins and moved into her first apartment, needs these gently used or new home items:

bathroom towels	drinking glasses	a toddler bed frame
a vacuum cleaner	a television	end tables
curtains	a coffee table.	

If you could assist with any of these items or donate a gift card to purchase home goods, contact Kristin Garrabrant at Kristin@angelsAND.org or at (740) 475-9145.

Holy Land Pilgrimage

Have you considered adding a new dimension of understanding regarding your Christian history and the life of Jesus? Father Nic Ventura invites you to join him on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Israel. Travelers will experience the places where Jesus walked, lived, taught, and performed miracles. Mass will be celebrated daily at various holy sites. The dates for this spiritual journey are Feb 21-Mar 2. The cost is \$3179 per person with breakfast, dinner, fees, and tips included. For information, contact Aimee Walton frnicpilgrimage@gmail.com or (740) 225-6136.

Pilgrimage to Washington DC

Join **Bishop Monforton and the Franciscan TOR Sisters of the Diocese of Steubenville** on a pilgrimage to Washington DC on Oct 24-26. Visit the shrine of St John Paul II, the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land, Arlington Cemetery and the historic monuments of the nation's capital. The cost, which includes roundtrip motorcoach transportation, all tours and sightseeing, two nights hotel accommodation, daily Mass, and several meals is \$525. Space is limited, so book by Feb 1 by calling Sandy at (734) 565-8888 x 122 or book online at www.tscentral.net, trip code: 12596, group code: 7311.

In the Diocese of Columbus

Respect Life !

All over our country people are gathering on January 22 to remember the anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court decision permitting abortion. All over our country, the Church **observes a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children**. In Columbus, Bishop Campbell will celebrate the annual Respect Life Mass on Monday, Jan 22, at 10:30 AM at St Joseph Cathedral.

Following that Mass, from noon to 1 PM, Greater Columbus Right to Life invites you to the State Capital Building for a **Roe Remembrance in the Statehouse Atrium**. Allow extra time for new Statehouse security measures; stickers, signs, and weapons are not permitted inside. For information, visit www.gertl.org/roe.html. www.usccb.org/prolife or contact Social Concerns at (614) 241-2540.

Building a Culture of Life : A Conference on Respect for Life, Bioethics, Leadership

The Diocesan Office for Social Concerns, Marriage & Family Life Office, and Greater Columbus Right to Life will hold a two-day event featuring prominent **pro-life speakers** and offering **resources to build a culture of life**, at St Peter Church, 6899 Smoky Row Rd, Columbus, on Jan 26 & 27. One-day or two-day passes are available. For a list of speakers and to register, visit www.gertl.org/lifeconference or call (614) 241-2540.

Men's Conference and Women's Conference

There are big events coming on Saturdays in February you won't want to miss. At each of these, Bishop Campbell will

celebrate Mass and priests of the diocese will provide opportunities for Penance. There will be entertainment, interesting displays, and lots of fellowship with a thousand or two of the most interesting people in central Ohio. Put these days on your calendar now.

- Women of our diocese will gather on Feb 17. Their theme: “*Ask Jesus What He Wants from You and Be Brave.*”
Speakers are Uju Ekeocha, Lisa Hendey, the Labodas, and Fr Mazanowski.
- Men will meet on Feb 24. And their theme: “*Cast Your Nets... Become Fishers of Men*”
Speakers are Jeff Cavins, Dr Scott Hahn, and Chris Stefanick.

Both events will take place at the Ohio Expo Center at the Ohio fairgrounds in Columbus.

Priest, Prophet, King

St Mary Parish in Lancaster will present the adult education DVD series “**Priest, Prophet, King**” by Bishop Robert Barron on Tuesday evenings from 7-8:30 PM from January through April. It will take a deep Biblical look at Jesus Christ as the ultimate priest, prophet, and king. You will better understand Jesus through Sacred Scripture, and realize your own priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission in Him. Registration is available at stmarylanaster.org. Workbook cost is \$27. Registrations and payment are due to the St Mary Rectory by Tuesday, Jan 2. For information, contact Brian McCauley at (740) 653-5054.

Catholic Record Society

The Catholic Record Society was founded in 1974 to preserve the history of the Church in central Ohio and to bring into better light **the heroism of those who laid the foundation of the diocese** of Columbus. The society supports the diocesan archives, maintaining a wide variety of materials and records. They respond to individuals seeking **genealogical information or historical information** on the diocese’s parishes, institutions, religious orders, and clergy. Meetings are held quarterly; members receive a calendar year subscription to the monthly bulletin, *Barquilla de la Santa Maria*, which contains records, accounts and illuminations of the people and events in the diocese. Membership is \$12 with digital bulletin, \$25 with paper bulletin; an institutional subscription is \$35. Send check or money order before Dec 31 to the Catholic Record Society, 197 E Gay Street, Columbus, OH, 43215. For information contact Mike Finn at fcoolavin@aol.com, (614) 268-4166, or visit <http://www.columbuscatholic.org/catholic-record-society>.

www.columbuscatholic.org/catholic-record-society.

Catholic Man of the Year

The Catholic Men’s Luncheon Club is accepting nominations for the Diocese of Columbus 2018 Catholic Man of the Year. This annual award—to be presented by Bishop Campbell on Friday, Feb 2—recognizes one lay man who, through his daily actions, words, and prayers, exemplifies the “**good and faithful servant**”. The recipient will share his personal testimony during the ceremony. Nominations will be accepted through Dec 29. For details, nomination instructions, and the required nomination form, go to www.catholicmensministry.com. Email the completed nomination form and up to five supporting testimonials to catholicmanoftheyear@gmail.com.

Natural Family Planning

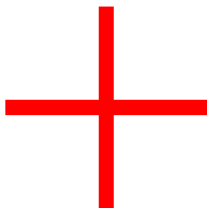
Whether God is calling you to try **to achieve or to postpone pregnancy**, Natural Family Planning (NFP) can help a married couple live God’s plan for love and life, while strengthening the marriage relationship. Engaged and married couples can learn NFP. Go to www.columbuscatholic.org/natural-family-planning or contact the Marriage and Family Life Office at (614) 241-2560.

Christmas Catholic Charities Collection

The annual Catholic Charities Christmas Collection **allows our diocese to meet a variety of basic needs** directly and through diocesan agencies and organizations including JOIN (Joint Organization for Inner-City Needs), St Stephen’s Community House, Catholic Social Services, St Francis Center, St Lawrence Haven, St Vincent Family Center, and the Society of St Vincent de Paul. You can help share in this important work by generously supporting the Catholic Charities collection today. It will make Christmas celebrations in many central Ohio homes merrier.

Marriage Encounter Weekend

Come to a Marriage Encounter weekend and learn ways to use your marriage’s ups and downs to deepen your love for each other and for God. Why not **try a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend**? The next weekend in central Ohio is Feb 16-18. For information or to register, contact Paul or Marilou Clouse at (614) 834-6880 or visit www.wmecolumbus.org.



Weekly Confessions & Weekday Mass							
But these times sometimes change, so be sure to call ahead!							
parish	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	penance
<i>Bremen St Mary</i>	8:20						8 Sun
<i>Lancaster St Bernadette</i>	8:20		8:20	6	8:20	9 on 1 st Sat	5:30 Thu, 3 Sat, 8:30 on 1 st Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mary</i>	7	9	7	9			4 Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mark</i>	8	8	6	8	8		5:30 Sat
<i>Sugar Grove St Joseph</i>	VARIABLES	NOON	7	NOON	NOON		½ hour before Mass
<i>Circleville St Joseph</i>	9	7	9		9		4 Sat
<i>Logan St John</i>	8	8	9		8	9	4 Sat
<i>Fisher Catholic HS</i>						2:40 on Fri	2 on 1 st Fri

The Festival of Jesus

The festival of Christmas is a birthday without any very important link to the actual date in the year of the birth of Jesus. But that doesn't matter. Because a birthday is seldom really a day to commemorate a person's birth.

I am old enough that I don't know of anyone who has a memory of my being born. When you get to be my age you have a certificate but that's it. Otherwise people have to take your word for it. When a small child has a birthday, her parents often recall the circumstances surrounding that birth. Perhaps the grandparents, some of the aunts and uncles and somewhat older brothers and sisters might share their memories. But no one else is likely to remember the day and the events surrounding it. My Mom and Dad have been dead for a number of years. My older brother was just three when I was born. No grandparents and only a very few other older relatives are left.

So what is there to celebrate in a person's birth-day? It is not any memory of the birth but the person who is being celebrated. That's the way it is for the births of other historic persons. On Washington's or Lincoln's or King's birthday we don't give any thought to the birth of the baby George or Abraham or Martin. We think of—and rejoice in—the accomplishments of the person. Or just the joy of knowing the person, accomplished or not.

So you might think of Christmas as a sort of "Jesus day." He, more than any human person, is surrounded by the telling of the story of his birth, its prediction, his mother's activity during her pregnancy, the impoverished but glorious circumstance of his birth, the remarkable visits of angels, shepherds, and Magi, the presentation of him in the Temple, Herod's attempt to destroy him, the exile, the finding in the Temple after Jesus had run away from home, or we might better say, had gone home to his Father's house.

But, in another sense, our celebration of Jesus on this Jesus day that is Christmas, is a day to reflect on him. Some people want to focus on his teaching about how we all ought to conduct ourselves. But that isn't the primary focus of the Gospels or of the teaching of Christianity. Our Faith isn't so much about "Here's what you must do"—although there is certainly a moral imperative about being a Christian. The primary focus, all the way through the Gospels, the rest of New Testament, and the teaching of the Church is on who is giving that new commandment and by what authority he gives it and what he has come to accomplish for us.

Christmas is **the day to celebrate Jesus**. He is **the word of God became flesh**. That becoming flesh actually occurred at the moment of his conception. The day to commemorate that is March 25th, the day 9 months earlier when Jesus himself was conceived. The as yet unborn John knew that the Incarnation, the becoming flesh of the Word, had already take place before Jesus was even born. That's why he was jumping for joy.

The miracle of his becoming flesh is not the limit of our Christmas joy but its announcement to the world of what has happened and what he is getting ready for, and how great is that love that brings him to us.

What has happened is the seemingly impossible: the Word of God through whom all things were made, the only begotten Son of God, God himself, the second of the three persons of the Holy Trinity that God is, has become one of us. Actually has become flesh. **Pure spirit, without losing his purity of spirit, has humbled himself to share our humanity.**

But this is not the recreation of God who has decided to go slumming in the human condition. That is all the better the pagan imagination could do with the stories of gods visiting the humans. We have something else going on here. He has humbled himself to share in our humanity so that we could come to share in his divinity. I won't become "a god." That is logically impossible. It would be preposterous. But that **I—and you—can share in the divine life, can be adopted into sonship, can become God's own children and not simply his creatures**, well ... that boggles our minds. Of course it is beyond our imagining. But God says that it is not beyond God's imagining. It is what he has in mind for us.

That sharing in divine life is what we celebrate when we celebrate Jesus.

The part of the Letter to the Hebrews which we read on Christmas morning says it beautifully:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets;
in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son,
whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,
who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word.

So does the letter of Paul to the Philippians:

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance, he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.
Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

— Father Kessler

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