

Week of January 1, 2017

MONDAY

1 Jn 2:22-28 * Ps 98:1-4 * Jn 1:19-28

TUESDAY 8:00am Word & Communion

1 Jn 2:29 - 3:6 * Ps 98:1,3-6 * Jn 1:29-34

WEDNESDAY 8:00am Mass

1 Jn 3:7-10 * Ps 98:1,7-9 * Jn 1:35-42

THURSDAY 8:00am Mass

1 Jn 3:11-21 * Ps 100:1-5 * Jn 1:43-51

FRIDAY

1 Jn 5:5-13 * Ps 147:12-15,19-20 * Mk 1:7-11

SATURDAY 4:30pm Mass

1 Jn 5:14-21 * Ps 149:1-6,9 * Jn 2:1-11

SUNDAY 9:30am Mass

Nursery & Children's Liturgy of the Word

Is 60:1-6 * Ps 72:1-2,7-8,10-13 * Eph 3:2-3,5-6 * Mt 2:1-12

*All events take place at St. Gabriel East Campus unless otherwise noted.

Parish Activities

In observance of New Year's, the parish office will be closed Mon., January 2.

FOUND: A bag with a woman's blouse was left in the paint donations box. If you meant to donate paint and are now missing a new blouse, please call the parish office at 662-6861.

Cantor Practice scheduling will be Jan. 9 at 6pm at East Campus. Scheduling will be from January 14 through February 26. If you are unable to attend, please email Shelley or Sue by Jan. 8 with the dates that you are unavailable.

Stewardship

Weekly Target: \$11,538.47 * Offering: \$17,657.44
Christmas Flowers: \$22.00 * Religious Ret.: \$435.00
Additional Christmas Flower Offerings:

Delores Mrozinski in Memory/Honor of the Youngs & Mrozinski families
Virginia LeVasseur in Memory/Honor of Norman & all deceased members of the LeVasseur Family & Pearl Smith

Education/Formation

FAMILY TALK TIME Celebrating Sunday for Catholic Families, Sara McGinnis Lee

► **Reflecting on the Word:** The Gospel reflects Mary as a mother who stores memories and Joseph as learning what the angels had announced to the shepherds. We learn of Jesus' circumcision according to the Jewish law, and his naming, which was foretold to Mary at the Annunciation. Although the focus of the Scriptures is Mary, other themes emerge. There is a perception of peace and of Mary's faith. Added to this were the tender shepherds whose visit alerted Mary and Joseph to the truth of the eventual kingship of this newborn.

► **Living the Word:** Remember that the Christmas season isn't over yet. Bring branches inside and force some colorful growth, adding an unexpected burst of color that outlasts the poinsettias. Help the children to create a simple "magi crèche," homemade from scrapes of fabric, gift wrap, and old jewelry, to emphasize the continuation of the season. The blessing of the home this week, the playing of carols, and perhaps clouds of incense drifting outdoors are activities that remind us still of Christmas.

Blessing for the Entrance of Your Home: Begin by making a sign of the cross † at the entrance of your home. Then pray: O God, protect our going out and our coming in; Let us share the hospitality of

this home with all who visit us, that those who enter here may know your love and peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen. †

Auburn Area Catholic School

► **What's happening at AACS:** School Box Top Competition will begin when school resumes. You can drop off box tops to the school office or give them to an AACS student to turn in. The Competition runs through January 13.

► **The school office is closed** through January 2. School will reopen on Tuesday, January 3, 2017!!

Thank You...

...Communion for the Homebound community would like to give a heart-felt thanks for all the Christmas gifts they received from our Giving Tree. Also special thanks to AACS and Youth Ministry for their continued cards and craft projects. These gifts, cards and crafts let them know we truly care about them and they are important to us. What love, joy and hope you give to each of them. God Bless all who make this possible.

...Parishioners, Thank you so much for your generosity to our House. The gift cards will provide many needed items for the House. The stamps keep us connected with everyone who does so much.

Your friends at the Toni & Trish House

Our Prayer

Sr. Margaret Michaud, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN

At Bethlehem Mary may not have known about the final scene at Calvary, but her discipleship eventually led there. John's gospel tells us that she was there at the foot of the cross. Her steadfast faith as a dedicated disciple was unwavering. She now becomes the mother of the church, too, as her dying son tells her, "Behold, your Son" and he tells the beloved disciple, "Behold, your Mother."

On this feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, we are invited to follow her example and "reflect on these things in our hearts." We may think about what it means for us to be "blessed." Like Mary, our lives also have hard days of suffering and loss. At these times we pray for Mary's courage to keep our faith alive in spite of the pain and sorrow. And, so often, the first words that come to mind are that first prayer we learned – the Hail Mary.



By the Calendar: We were fortunate to have four full weeks of Advent. The downside is that because Christmas fell on a Sunday we miss the Feast of the Holy Family and we will miss the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It's two less times in church and for two pretty significant liturgies. Whether happy or sad about that, know that it is because of the way Christmas fell.

Fr. Tom

Plumbing Issue: We had a serious issue before the holidays as one of the coils in the air handler sprung a leak. It had to be removed and taken to a shop to be repaired. It was in all day job, costing \$1,091.00. Thankfully, it was able to be repaired before the Christmas Masses. It would have been very cold otherwise.

From Father Tom's Desk Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Sr. Mary McGlone, [Celebration](#)

Today we celebrate the "Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God." That title would have surely overwhelmed the simple woman of Nazareth. But she didn't have to concern herself with theology, dogma, titles and solemnities. Instead, she had a new baby, a confused but faithful husband and unexpected visitors coming to witness the scene where her family was trying to make do in spite of the inhospitable circumstances in which they found themselves.

When the shepherds appeared on the scene they knew far more than Mary could have expected. Delighted to discover her son in the manger, they started spreading the word as if they understood exactly what was going on. Like many of us, those shepherds were quick to make proclamations about what they thought God was up to in their midst. Like Jesus' own disciples, these first witnesses may well have had the right vocabulary, but it's highly unlikely that they fully comprehended what they had encountered. The shepherds talked, others were "amazed," and we don't hear a single word from Mary.

Luke tells us that "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." Her name would be remembered in the scriptures of Christianity and Islam. Generations to come would call her blessed, and the Fathers of the Church would defend her title as "Mother of God." But, from the day of Jesus' birth until his death, the little we hear from her amounts to no more than one question, a subtle request on behalf of others and a reflection of her own discipleship: "Son, why have you done this to us?" "They have no wine," and "Do whatever he tells you."

When Luke tells us that Mary kept things in her heart, the word he uses indicates a long process of mulling, a life of discernment, trying to put together disparate pieces of a mystery. While the process didn't lead to quick conclusions, it doesn't mean she gave up on it. Luke's statement about her ongoing reflection is one of the reasons some conclude that Mary herself gave Luke the Nativity story.

Whether or not the narrative originated with Mary, Luke portrays her as the contemplative in action. Mary had more to ponder than anyone else in this story. She had to question her experience and her response. She had to make sense of all that she had encountered while balancing it with the traditions of her people. She must have accepted living with more questions than answers and far more hope than certainties. In addition to all of that, she had to change the diapers and fix dinner.

Mary, Mother of the God who came in the flesh of a needy infant, learned to remain open to God's shalom, to allow her faith to exceed her uncertainties and her hope to give her resolve beyond her power to imagine. She sought to do God's will as she baked their daily bread. We look to the Mother of God to teach us how to live simply as contemplatives in action.

Old Joke

Deacon Dick Folger, [Celebration](#)

There is a story about a woman, pregnant with twins, who went into labor. Her husband was away on a business trip, so she had to drive herself to the hospital. On the way she got into a bad accident. The twins were safely delivered in the emergency room but the mother lapsed into a coma. To avoid a mix-up the hospital staff insisted that the twins be named immediately. When the mother's "loose cannon" brother showed up as next of available kin, he was asked to name the babies. The next day when the mother awoke from her coma, she was worried that her brother would have named the twins something absurd or stupid. He explained: "The first one was a girl. I named her Denise!" The mom breathed a tentative sigh of relief. "What about the second one?" she asked. Her brother replied: "The second one was a boy, so I named him De-nephew."

In today's Gospel we are reminded that there were no problems with selecting the name of Jesus. He was named by God, through an angel, as foretold in Joseph's dream.

"Holy Mary, pray for us sinners."

New Year's Blessing

[Celebration](#)

The Hebrew Scriptures word for blessing, *berek*, covers a breadth of meaning. In some instances a blessing seems almost magical, as was the case of Jacob who irrevocably stole his brother's blessing in Genesis 27. Some linguists believe that the word *berek* is connected to kneeling down, conveying an awareness that blessing comes only from God. When the word *berek* is translated into Latin and its derivative languages (*benedicir* in Spanish), it means to speak well of someone, and, by extension, to pray that God look on them with favor.

The blessing formula from the Book of Numbers which we repeat in both liturgy and common prayer has three doublets: asking that God shower one with goodness and mercy (bless and keep), asking for God's active presence and mercy (face shine upon you, be gracious to you), and finally asking that God be pleased and grant the other with fullness of life and inner harmony (peace).

In the Book of Numbers, this blessing comes at the end of a section concerned about how a frail people could be worthy to live in the presence of God. The solution was a series of cultic rules to help humans adapt to God's holiness. Paul called that endeavor hopelessly flawed; no amount of human effort can make us worthy. God's love is a free gift that transforms us into a redeemed people, if we are willing. Therefore, it is particularly apt that the rules for holiness should end with this plea for God's grace.

We can look to this blessing for at least two sources for our new year prayer. First, it is a reminder that all that is truly good comes to us as a free gift from God. Secondly, as it encourages us to call upon God's name, it reminds us of everything that the names of God connote. Beginning with the name of Jesus, we realize that every name we have for God points to God's desire to share blessedness with us.

Model Disciple

Ted Wolgamot, [Celebration](#)

In the "Hail Mary" prayer, we use the words "full of grace" to describe Mary. But the Greek work used in Luke's original writing actually means "favored to the greatest possible degree" – the strongest of all conceivable words to show how much God loved Mary and treasured her openness and her willingness to trust.

Abiding in such trust, Mary became the ultimate disciple, the epit-ome of what it meant to follow Jesus. She is the one who surrender-ed her ego, who quieted her fears, who made the decision to trust – even though she had little knowledge of what was going on. In her wildest dreams, this poor, humble woman could never have imagined how significant her "yes" would be in human history.

In the language of new year's celebrations, Mary made a resolution – the resolution to open her heart to the amazing, enlivening fullness of grace; the resolution to voice a wholehearted "yes."

In today's Gospel, Luke challenges us to do the same. On this first day of the new year, let us resolve to make the heart of Mary our own. Let us promise ourselves that we will clean out a room in our hearts so there will always be space for God to be wrapped in the swaddling clothes of our love and our trust – a space within us in which the child Jesus can be re-born.

The Parish in the Community

► **Basketball Challenge:** Monsignor Forbes Council 3590, Auburn will be holding the Annual Basketball Challenge on Jan. 8 at the St. Gabriel West Gym. All children between 9 and 14 are welcome to attend. A parent must sign the registration form. Registration is at 12:30 and shooting begins at 1pm. Call Ed Piotrowski at 859-8504 for more information or preregistration.

► **Bay County Alzheimer's/Dementia Caregiver Support Group** meets at Golden Horizons on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm. Join other caregivers to share experiences, get new ideas, increase your understanding and get support. Next meeting is Tues, Jan. 10, 6:30-8:30pm Contact Stacy McIntyre at 892-6644 for more information.