

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## 24 DECEMBER 2017

**Readings for Sunday, December 24:** 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38.

David's posterity shall endure forever. His kingship finds its fulfillment in the son of Mary, Jesus the Christ. To him be glory and praise forever.

**Readings for Sunday, December 31:** Genesis 15-1-6, 21:1-3; Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Luke 2:22-40.

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**St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Parish Special Day of Prayer is Monday.**  
**Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament: Monday after 9:00 A.M. Mass to 4:00 PM in the Chapel.**

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### MASSES FOR THE WEEK

<u>Date</u>		<u>Intention</u>	<u>Requested By</u>
25 Dec.	MON. 9:00 AM	John & Helen O'Donnell	Catherine Miller
27 Dec.	WED. 9:00 AM	Timothy Patrick Reilly	Mom & Dad
28 Dec.	THU. 9:00 AM	Mildred Fry	Ron & Carol Fry
29 Dec.	FRI. 9:00 AM	Helen Pota	Tony & Theresa Vitacco
30 Dec.	SAT. 4:00 PM	Robert & Joan Sabo	Cliff & Barbara Keller
31 Dec.	SUN. 9:00 AM	People of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother Parish	



**ETERNAL REST** grant unto them, O Lord. May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

**PRAY FOR THE SICK AND SUFFERING** of the parish especially those in homes and hospitals.

**REMEMBER OUR TROOPS:** Pray that God will bless and protect our young men and women in the military.

**NO ADORATION OF BLESSED SACRAMENT** on Monday, December 25 and Monday, January 1. Adoration resumes on Monday, January 8.

**THE ROSARY PRAYER GROUP** leads the recitation of the Rosary every Sunday before the 9:00 AM Mass. They also pray the Rosary before the 9:00 AM weekday Masses. All are welcome to join in these special Marian devotions.

**THE PARISH OFFICE** will be closed on Monday, December 25; Wednesday, December 27; Thursday, December 28; Friday, December 29 and Monday, January 1. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family.

**ST. GABRIEL OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER PARISH MEMORIAL FUND DONATION** received in memory of: **ANGELINE TESTA** from Barbara and Michael Hipszer.

### **MINISTRY SCHEDULE - December 30/31:**

#### 4:00 PM Mass

Lector - Melanie Warzeski

Extraordinary Ministers - Frank Durante, Sherry Durante, George Siver, Shelly Stockmal

Altar Servers - Tony Vitacco

Greeters - Ginger Scheidt

#### 9:00 AM Mass

Lector - Jack Bucciaglia

Extraordinary Ministers - Tony Vitacco, Kathy Bernhard, Chris Gerasimowicz

Altar Server - Domenic Gerasimowicz

Greeter - Marie Hildebrand

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE DESK OF FR. GREGORY J. HICKEY

### *4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent*

Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve is this evening already. We are missing the full week of this last week in Advent this year. **Tonight at 5:00 p.m.** we will begin our celebration of the birth of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. The liturgy today invites us to set aside an hour from all our busyness to experience with Mary the wonder of God's coming to us.

The gospel of the Visitation is preceded by the story of the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel who asked Mary if she would be the mother of our Saviour also informed her that her aged cousin Elizabeth, after years of wanting a child, was finally going to have one. In haste Mary left Nazareth and made the trip of about 65 or 70 miles. This would have been at least a four day trip for her to visit the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah near Jerusalem. No doubt the youthful Mary was a big help to her cousin in the three months she stayed with her.

To any observer, here was a young girl coming to help out her relative who was six months pregnant. However, the Holy Spirit revealed to Elizabeth what was unable to be seen. Mary was carrying within herself the long awaited Saviour of God's people. God comes to us in simple, ordinary ways, ways our eyes cannot see but in ways that can be seen through faith and the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth wonders how she could be so honored with a visit from Mary and Jesus. We must ask the same question. How is it we should be so honored that Christ has come into our lives, that He speaks to us through the Scriptures, that He feeds us with His own flesh and blood in the Eucharist, that He hears us when we pray (even if He doesn't always do what we want), that He touches us through the kindness of other people?

Sometimes I hear the argument from those who support abortion that we don't know when the human soul comes into a fetus. Jesus could have been only a few days old, for the gospel tells us that Mary went to Elizabeth with haste after the Annunciation. John the Baptist, still unborn, and Elizabeth recognized Mary was carrying within herself something infinitely more than just a blob of tissue. They recognized the wonderful presence of the Son of God and they were filled with joy.

The entire passage is bursting with joy. Elizabeth was excited by Mary's visit. John the Baptist, three months from being born was jumping for joy. The Church has taught that at that moment John was set free from original sin and filled with God's grace. Christ came to him before he was born. He was as it were baptized or christened. Generally the Church celebrates the feast day of a saint only on the date of their death; because that's the day they are born into eternal life. There are only three people whose birthday the Church celebrates, Jesus, Mary, and John the Baptist, because they were already in God's grace when they were born. Jesus Christ came to John before his birth. Jesus Christ came to each of us on the day we were reborn through the sacrament of Baptism. That should cause all of us to jump for joy, knowing that Christ has come to us, that He has given us His grace, and has chosen us to be children of God.

Elizabeth said to Mary, "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." The Greek word here for "blessed" also means "happy." Mary was happy because she truly believed what the Lord had spoken to her. If you get out your bibles and read what follows today's gospel, you will see a beautiful hymn that Mary sung. It is a beautiful hymn of praise to God. The hymn is known as the Magnificat. Do we really want to be happy? This is the key. Do not doubt God. Do not doubt His love. Do not doubt His presence. Do not doubt His teachings. He does not always do things the way we think He should and we do not always know what He is thinking. That's why we just have to trust Him. Mary didn't always know what He was up to, but she trusted Him always and was always ready to say as her son would in His own life, "Behold, I come to do your will, O God."

In just a few hours, we will celebrate the birth of Mary's son. May we always feel the joy that His birth can give us, the assurance that in Jesus God is with us, and God loves us. As we gather as family and friends in our homes this week, we will gather around the Christmas tree and I hope that each of us has a manger under that tree for that is the real meaning of Christmas. As I gather with you, my family in faith, and with my own family, I promise that I will remember each of you and your intentions in the Masses I am privileged to say at Christmas and throughout the entire Christmas Season. The best gifts are not those wrapped in pretty paper but those who walk around on two feet. I thank God every day for the gift that I have been given in being named your Pastor and for letting me share in your lives. On behalf of Maria Boyer, Kathy Bernhard, Tony Vitacco and Steve Pasko, I wish each of you the best Christmas you have ever had and may Mary, Joseph, and Jesus watch over you and your loved ones throughout the coming year.

Merry Christmas!

Fr. Hickey

**CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE**

**No confessions on December 30**

**Christmas Mass Schedule**

Sunday, December 24 at 5:00 PM

Monday, December 25 at 9:00 AM

**Attending Mass on December 24 in the evening does not fulfill both your Sunday, December 24 and Christmas Day obligations.**

**Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass Schedule**

Monday, January 1 at 9:00 AM



*Parish Support*

WEEKLY BUDGET.....	\$5,000
DEPOSIT FOR DECEMBER 17, 2017.....	\$4,113
Regular Sunday Collection -	\$4,028
Parish Giving -	\$85
WEEKLY DEFICIT.....	(\$887)
Year to Date Budget.....	\$125,000
Year to Date Collections.....	\$101,789
Average per week Collections.....	\$4,072
Year to Date Deficit.....	(\$23,211)
Average per week Deficit.....	(\$928)

*DECEMBER 18, 2016*

Deposit.....	\$7,504
2016-2017 Deficit to Date.....	(\$21,748)
Difference from previous year.....	(\$1,463)



**PARISH LOTTERY RAFFLE TICKET** based on the PA Pick 3 Evening Number.

Winning ticket number must be the exact number drawn for the PA Pick 3 Evening Number. Tickets are \$5.00 each and are sold on a monthly basis. The prize for the winning ticket is \$50.00 on weekdays and \$100.00 on Sundays and one specially-designated weekday. Tickets are available after the Masses on weekends and at the parish office on weekdays. **This is our major fund raiser for the parish. We encourage each family to purchase at least one ticket each month. Your support is greatly appreciated.**

**LOTTERY CALENDAR RAFFLE TICKET WINNERS**

- December 11 - #159 - unsold
- December 12 - #690 - Rose Grenewald - \$50.00
- December 13 - #398 - unsold
- December 14 - #140 - unsold
- December 15 - #580 - unsold
- December 16 - #878 - unsold
- December 17 - #404 - Theresa Vitacco - \$100.00

**MASS ATTENDANCE for December 16/17:**

- 4:00 PM Mass - 214
- 9:00 AM Mass - 177
- Total Attendance - 391
- Mass Attendance for December 17/18, 2016 - 335

**“CONSIDER REMEMBERING YOUR PARISH IN YOUR WILL!” For further information, please call the parish office.**

**2018 MASS BOOK** - Requests for Masses to be offered on a specific day during 2018 can be made at the parish office during regular business hours. The Mass stipend of \$10.00 must be paid at the time you request the Mass Intention.



**OUR ADVENT-CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE** is

in the vestibule of church until Sunday, January 7. We are collecting items for Birthright of Pottstown for the babies and mothers in need in our area. Items most needed are: 3 month girls outfits, diapers up to size 3, baby wipes, socks up to size 18 month, receiving blankets, baby wash cloths, bibs, bottles, onesies size newborn and 0-3 month, maternity tops size L and XL and Leggings size XL for expectant mothers. Help us decorate our tree by placing an ornament on the tree for each gift you give. Ornaments are in a box next to the Giving Tree. Thank you for your generosity!