



The Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist

The Mother Church of Stamford
279 Atlantic Street · Stamford, Connecticut 06901

December 24, 2017 The Fourth Sunday of Advent



Pastor

Rev. Msgr. Stephen M. DiGiovanni

Parochial Vicar

Rev. Andrew A. Vill

Resident Priest

Rev. Albert D. Audette, Jr.

Director of Religious Education

Rev. Andrew A. Vill

religioused@stjohnsstamford.com

Basilica Choir Master & Organist

David Indyk

Chairman, Parish Financial Council

John Regan (203) 324-1553 x 117

Lay Members of the Parish Corporation

John DeSoye

Annie Schreck

Photo by John Glover

Rectory, Parish Office and Religious Education

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Pastor's Corner: At Christmas, our minds turn to the birth of Our Lord in Bethlehem. During the first thousand



years of the Church's life, much emphasis was placed on understanding who Jesus is: is He God OR is He a man OR is He a man who became God? None of these is correct, nor does any answer the question, *Who is Jesus?* Our Lord asked His Apostles that question [Matt 16: 16-17]: "Who do you say that I am?" And Saint Peter, enlightened by the Eternal Father, correctly answered: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." In other words, there, standing in front of Peter and the other Apostles, was the invisible, unknowable God who existed forever, the Creator of the Universe, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, *in the flesh*. While the truth of the two natures of Our Lord—Divine and Human—was believed by all during the early years of the Church, the stronger emphasis was upon His divinity, which made Him seem too distant a redeemer for us mere mortals, who was unable to understand the weaknesses or difficulties of our daily lives. Even though the Christmas sermons by the Church Fathers such as Pope Saint Leo the Great, Saint Augustine or Saint Jerome were popular in tone, the official art and literature of the first thousand years of the Church's life emphasized the Divinity of Christ, in answer to the various heresies of the times. Sculpted or painted images of Jesus' birth existed, but only in cathedrals and large churches in big cities. Local parish churches were too poor for great art.

Saint Francis of Assisi began to change this by his preaching that by the Incarnation--because God became a man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, born in Bethlehem, God actually **does** understand us. Why? Because God loved us so much that He became exactly like us, except without sin, in order to make us more like God. It was Saint Francis of Assisi who gave the Church the first Nativity scene or *Crèche*. Placed in the local parish church, it was designed for poor people of small villages, with simple statues of the Blessed Mother, Saint Joseph, the shepherds with their flocks and the three kings around the Infant Savior. Here is a God who understood human hardship and suffering from the moment of His birth as a human child in a cold stable. Saint Francis also introduced the Stations of the Cross, as a devotional aid for those people who could not afford a visit to the Jerusalem sites of Our Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection. In their own parish church, people could visualize the real human sufferings Jesus endured to give us eternal life.

At the heart of these devotions concerning both the Birth of Jesus as well as His Death and Resurrection, is the historical fact that at a specific time and place —1st century Bethlehem—God the Creator of the Universe, became man. No myth or pretty story! He took on our Human Nature with its weaknesses and strengths, free will, rationality, ability to love, and mortality, and intimately joined it to His Divine Nature, with its omnipotence, divine omniscience, and immortality, in the visible person we call Jesus of Nazareth. Saint John, our patron, wrote that the historical fact that God became Man—the Incarnation—is so essential a reality, that anyone who denies that historic event and fact is the anti-Christ [I John 2:22-23].

The three stained glass windows above the High Altar in the Basilica sanctuary outline exactly why God became man in Bethlehem, as seen in the left window, that He could ransom humanity from sin and death by dying on the Cross [in the center window], and, on Easter Sunday, give humanity eternal life in the flesh by Rising from the Dead in His human body He had received in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary [in the right hand window]. God became man so in His human death all humanity could die to sin; and in His human Resurrection from the dead, all humanity could rise to eternal life in the flesh. And this was in fulfillment of His promise He had made to Adam and Eve immediately after their sin of disobedience. There, God the Creator promised to take on human flesh in the womb of a child of Eve [The Virgin Mary], in order to destroy the power of Satan. Speaking to Satan and to Eve, God said, "I put enmity between you and the woman, and between her seed and your seed: she shall crush your head, and you shall snap at her heel" [Gen. 3:15]. While Satan would snap at our heel by temptation, it would be the daughter of Eve—Mary—who would crush Satan's head by giving birth to God in the flesh, Jesus. As Adam's downfall came through the fruit of the Tree of Life in Paradise, now by a new Tree of Life, the Cross, the Second Adam, Jesus, would bring eternal life for the Sons and Daughters of Adam, who would become Sons and Daughters of God through Baptism and the Sacraments of the Church—the new fruit for a new Paradise, Heaven.

Because God became one of us, we can have a statue or a picture of Him: the Invisible God became visible in Jesus, in Bethlehem in the beginning of the first century. So, too, since God became one of us in Bethlehem, we can, through Christ, become life God, sharing in His everlasting life. So, during the next few weeks, visit our *Creche* on the Saint Joseph side altar, and let your heart be moved by this invention of Saint Francis, and thank God that the Eternal Son became a man so that we could become like God, through His Incarnation—God becoming man.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

—Monsignor DiGiovanni

Please pray for the sick: Michael Scully, Roger Borrelli, Nyal Colies, Dorothy Keyes, Joanne Santarsiero, Joevil Basulgan Delacruz, Mary Duffy, Louise Morello, Joanne Santarsiero, Pat Farenga, Kenyon Jimmy Valcour, Maria Izurieta, Jennifer Marciano, John Mellace, Ann Borkowski, Timothy Lyons, Gene Gavin, Richard Ridge, June Roberts, Marie Cassis, Patricia Morgan, Vittorio Faugno, Robert Strada, Dionysia Oliveira, Salvatore Piria, Mary Ellen Callahan, Louise Wiles, Frank Wruk, Isaac Lopez, Ron Frasca, Lisa Giugno, Michele Giugno, Helga Pecaric, Maria Trivino, Maria Gabriela Mossa, Diane DiNapoli, Gayle Moore, Paula Bennett, Mildred Beirne, Karen Hsu, Silvana Smith, Harriet Lockhart, Joseph Kung.

Please pray for those who have recently died: Kathryn Anne Marciano, Marilyn VanAuken, Joyce Patten, Katherine Kimberly, Mary Louise Wakin, David Kochosky, Jonathan Shearman, Debbie Schemmel, Ralph Dante Puzzuoli, Sr., James Tarzia, Sr., Antonietta Cerone, Mary A. Gaine, Grace Steele, Benita Rebula, Sylvia Iannazzi, Anne Hieronymus, Julia Fabrizio, Msgr. Joseph Kohut, Steven Bates, Catherine Dolan, Cesidro Piselli, John & Joan Kronk.

Christmas Day Collection . . . The second collection on Christmas will be the for the parish. Your generosity is appreciated.

Banns of Marriage: III Banns: Scott Oberst and Kristina Byrne

Police: Policemen and women are under attack throughout the country, we ask that you *Please* remember the members of our Stamford Police Department in your prayers. Likewise, remember in your prayers Stamford's EMS and Fire Department and our military women and men who protect our nation.

FORMED: Donated by a parishioner, this is a revolutionary online platform provides access to the best Catholic audio talks, movies, e-books, and video-based studies from trusted providers like the Augustine Institute, Ignatius Press, Catholic Answers, Sophia Institute Press, and St. Paul Center— **right at your fingertips, without cost.** Learn more at app.formed.org/ Access Code WWT2NF.

Children's Choir: Ages 8-18 who are interested. Please speak with our choir master, David Indyk or leave your contact information in the parish office, 203-324-1553, ext 21.

Men's Choir: Men who can even just hum a tune are welcome: contact David Indyk in person, or leave your contact information at the parish office, 203-324-1553, ext 21.

Sacraments for students in Catholic School: If you have students in Catholic school in Second Grade hoping to receive First Confession and First Communion this Spring, please contact Fr. Vill at religioused@stjohnsstamford.com.

Not Married in the Catholic Church? Please call the parish 203) 324-1553, and speak with either Msgr. DiGiovanni (ext. 11) or Fr. Vill at (ext. 130) to make an appointment, to discuss the Church's teaching on marriage and the possibility of getting married in the Church. This also applies to those who want to learn more about seeking an annulment.

Preaching to Baby Jesus: A pious practice begun by Saint Francis of Assisi is that children of the parish enter the pulpit and tell Baby Jesus their thoughts and hopes. The children of our religious education program will do this each Sunday at 9 am until early February. All are welcome to attend.

DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY: Interested in reading Dante? We'll begin during Lent [March 8th] with the *Inferno*, which is not a torture tour, but a meditation on God's plan for human happiness by loving Him, and humankind's search for happiness that too often leads away from God to through real life folly that ends invariably to unhappiness, pain and suffering in this life and in the next. NO Charge: just purchase the book. Interested? Call Msgr. DiGiovanni, 203-324-1553, ext 11.

Baptism/Confirmation Sponsorship Certificate: When asked to be a sponsor, a certificate is needed from your home parish. If the priest does not know you personally, or by sight, the only other way of knowing you as a practicing Catholic is by tracking your contributions by check or envelope.

Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form: Is offered every Friday at 2pm on the Saint Joseph Altar.

Weekly Sunday collection:

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Sunday | December 17, 2017 | \$ 14,971.37 |
| Sunday | December 18, 2016 | <u>\$ 13,162.71</u> |

Please increase your Sunday offering by \$5.00 each weekend. "I ask you one thing: do not tire of giving to God, but do not give your leftovers."---Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta

December 31st Sunday Readings: SIR 3:2-6, 12-14; COL 3:12-21; LK 2:22-40

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

DECEMBER 25TH, CHRISTMAS: is a Monday this year and people have asked about weekend and Christmas Mass attendance. Since Mass is essential to the Christian life, all are obliged to attend two Masses: **one Mass for the 4th Sunday of Advent** [on either the evening of Saturday, December 23rd or on Sunday, December 24th] **AND one Mass for Christmas** [on either the evening of Sunday, December 24th or on Monday, December 25th]. Here is the schedule for the Masses on December 23, 24 & 25:

Saturday, December 23: 4pm Vigil for Sunday Mass;

Sunday, December 24: 7:30am, 10am, 12noon for Sunday Masses; 5pm Christmas Eve Vigil Mass;

Monday, December 25: 12 MIDNIGHT, 7:30am, 10am, 12noon for Christmas Mass.

DECEMBER 27TH, at 7:30pm: Chanted Evening Prayer of Saint John: This is our parish patronal feast, followed by traditional mulled wine and pastries in the parish hall. Everyone is welcome.

Saints' Relics: During the Christmas season, two gilded relic towers will be displayed on the high altar:
Left Relic Tower: contains the relics of Saint Constantine, a early fourth century bishop and martyr from the area around Naples, Italy;

Right Relic Tower: contains the relics of Saints Joachim and Anne, the parent of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Saint Stephen, the first martyr to die in witness to Christ soon after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Christmas Gift: By the generosity of the Bound and Parker families, the parish is offering a free gift of Rediscovering Jesus by Matthew Kelly this Christmas! Please feel free to take a copy home with you after the Christmas masses.

Walking with Purpose: Reaches out to women who desire to grow in their faith using a Scripture based program that is fresh, relevant, and focused on conversion of heart. We meet Tuesday mornings in Msgr. Nagle Hall from 9:30am-11:30am. Childcare is available. **Register at: tinyurl.com/WWPTBSJ2017. For more information, contact Rosa Federici at: wwptbsj@gmail.com or 203-536-5480.**

Birthright: seeks volunteers: Support women to bring their babies to term, providing pregnancy tests, connecting women with medical, financial, legal and other resources. Flexible schedules; training provided. Call 203-348-4355 or www.birthright.org

Project Rachel Ministry: Offers free and confidential help to those seeking healing after abortion. Come back to God's love and mercy. Call 203-416-1619 or projectrachel@diobpt.org

End Legalized Abortion: Abortions take place daily at Stamford's Planned Parenthood, 35 Sixth Street. Help us stop this by joining parishioners in front of the facility on Wednesday or Friday mornings, 8am-10:30am, or even just for 30 minutes. We pray and silently bear witness to the sanctity of human life. Our presence has even helped convince expectant mothers to spare their children. To join us, or for specialized training as a Sidewalk Counselor, call Noelle at 857-345-0808.

Volunteers: *FUTURE 5* is a non-profit organization to help motivated low income high school students in Stamford to improve themselves and their future. We need volunteers to do one-on-one student work, such as college coaches, job prep coaches, and teachers. We also need tutors. We currently have a new student who needs a tutor in Japanese. For more information or to volunteer and/or tutor, please contact Fanny Moran: fmoran@futurefive.org

Natural Family Planning & Fertility Care: Natural Family Planning / Fertility Care – Are you seeking a family planning method that is natural, effective, and morally sound? The Creighton Model System is based upon a couple's knowledge and understanding of their naturally-occurring phases of fertility and infertility. Engaged couples preparing for marriage, as well as married couples, and couples who are experiencing infertility issues, can all benefit from using this system. The teachers of the Creighton Model System are trained allied health professionals, and specifically-trained physicians have been educated to incorporate the Creighton Model System into their medical practice. For a FREE introductory session, please contact Angela Marchetti at anglamarchettifcp@gmail.com

Homeplace Wisdom: Is a Catholic women's organization promoting friendship and vocational development with monthly speakers and gatherings, play dates, and a daily email list for sharing ideas, prayer requests, parenting or home-place questions, and reading material. To join: lisakotasek@gmail.com

SilverSource: SilverSource is available to St. John's parishioners both as a place to volunteer or an important resource to help parishioners as we age. SilverSource is looking for volunteers to help older adults live as independently as possible by reaching out to say "hello", reading and visiting a senior, or running to the market. St. John's parishioners who are seniors and require some help can receive financial assistance for housing stability, for eye glasses and hearing aids, or for transportation to and from doctor's appointments. Call Michael Feighan: 203-324-6584, or website: www.silversource.org.

Catholic Young Adults of Stamford: We are Catholic young adults in our 20s and 30s, We regularly meet for social events and community service projects. Join us for our monthly Sunday dinner following 5pm Mass. Connect with us on Facebook or Meetup, or email us at catholicystamford@gmail.com

Employment: Malta House in Norwalk is a transitional residence to promote the dignity of God-given life by providing a nurturing home environment, support services and independent living skills for pregnant and parenting mothers of all faiths and their children. Looking for a **House Manager**, anyone may apply for this position by forwarding a cover letter/resume to: John Hinshaw: John_Hinshaw@goodcounselhomes.org We are located at: 5 Prowitt Street, Norwalk, CT. 06855.

Job Seekers: Led by Melanie Szlucha whose company, Red Inc., is a leader in helping find jobs. Jobseeker's Group will not be meeting during November and December, but please call or email Melanie Szlucha for a free 30 minute consultation. Meetings will resume in January in the Monsignor Nagle Hall the 4th Wednesday of every month from 7:30 to 9PM. Topics include Job Interviewing, Resumes, Networking and Job Search Strategies. Next meeting: Wednesday, January 24th. THERE IS NO CHARGE, this is free job coaching. Call Melanie Szlucha at 203-866-1606, or melanie@redinllc.com

Electronic Giving - Offertory Donations Made Easy... Consider using your credit card to make your weekly or monthly donation to St. John's. Easier for you, and less costly for the parish than the printing and mailing of weekly envelopes, credit card giving automatically sends your weekly offering to the Basilica of St. John's. Call the parish secretary to set this up(324-1553, ext. 21).

JOIN THE CONVERSATION: "The Eaglet," the parish blog on our Basilica website, www.stjohnsstamford.com, is up and running, featuring a variety of thought-provoking articles on the Catholic Faith and Church. Feedback is welcome and discussion is encouraged, via a comments form at the end of each article. Please bookmark the page, visit often, and share the link with your family and friends.

Mass Intentions

+ Denotes Deceased

Saturday, December 23, 2017

4:00 +Vito and Josephine Melfi req. Joseph Melfi

Sunday, Christmas Eve, December 24, 2017

7:30 Special Intentions Rev. Andrew Vill req. Ferry G.

10:00 +Feroze Aslam req. Abdul and Sarah Aslam

12:00 Marion Morris req. Agnes Kung

5:00 +Fr. Rufin Kuveikis, OFM, Cap.

MIDNIGHT MASS: People of the Parish

Monday, Christmas, December 25, 2017

7:30 People of the Parish

10:00 People of the Parish

12:00 +Mary Audette req. her son

Tuesday, December 26, 2017

8:00 +Nang Nguyen req. Thang Nguyen

12:10 Thomas Cycon req. Jef and Mary Spetland

Wednesday, December 27, 2017

8:00 Priests of the Parish req. Ferry G.

12:10 Maria Trivino req. Lilian and Alvina Ramos

Thursday, December 28, 2017

8:00 +Randolph Samedi req. Anne Marie Samedi

12:10 +Sean Sullivan req. Gail Steward

Friday, December 29, 2017

8:00 Deceased members of the Churley and Kronk Families

12:10 +Carmine V. Longo Sr. req. Lucille Longo and Family

Saturday, December 30, 2017

8:00 +Wladek and Willemina Falek req. daughter

12:10 Special intentions of Andrew Mbabaali req. Ferry G.

Baptisms: Are celebrated every day of the week, according to the schedule of the parish priests and the families. Baptisms at St. John's are one-family only ceremonies: never groups. For more information, please call Keri, ([203-324-1553](tel:203-324-1553), ext 21). Baptisms are offered for parishioners only. Baptisms are offered in English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.

Weddings: Couples must contact and begin meeting with one of the parish priests for at least 6 months before a hoped for wedding date at Saint John's. Please call the parish secretary, Keri, or one of the priests for an initial discussion. Weddings are offered for parishioners only.

Holy Name Society: For men of the parish, **meets Fridays in the Rectory, 7-7:50 a.m.** for coffee, Eucharistic Adoration & Benediction. All men are welcome. We finish in time for the 8a.m. Mass.

The Legion of Mary: Wednesday Evenings: 7:30 pm 'till 9:00 pm in the Msgr. Nagle Hall.

St. Monica Latin Patristic Reading Group: The St Monica Latin Reading Group meets on Tuesdays. Please call St John's Rectory, 203 324 1553, ext. 21, for more information.

ST. JOHN'S IN THE ADVOCATE: 155 YEARS AGO, OR SO:

Dec. 27, 1861: **Christmas in the Churches.** "Roman Catholic—Early Mass was celebrated, and at 10 o'clock, there were the usual Christmas services, and an appropriate sermon by the Rev. Father O'Neil. The church is handsomely decorated."

100 YEARS AGO, OR SO:

Dec. 24, 1917: **CHRISTMAS DAY IN OUR CHURCHES.** "At. St. John's R. C. Church, Solemn High Mass, with special music will be celebrated at 5 a.m. There will be a Low Mass at 7:30, a Low Mass for the Italian people of the parish at 8:15, a Low Mass at 9, a Mass for the children of the parish at 9:30 and a Solemn High Mass, with special music, including an orchestra, at 10:30 a.m."

75 YEARS AGO, OR SO:

Dec. 23, 1942: **Birth Of Savior To Be Celebrated In Local Churches.** "There will be special music for Christmas at the Masses tomorrow in the Catholic churches. St. John's Catholic Church will have Masses at 7, 8, 9, 10, 10:15 and 11 a.m. tomorrow, with the 11 o'clock a Solemn High Mass. Music will be sung by a boys' choir and a male choir, direction of Howard Fagan. The processional will be "Laetentur Coeli" of Carlo Car-turan, sung by the boys' choir, which will also sing the Offertorium, "Tollite Hostias," by C. Sant-Saens. The two choirs will join in singing the Communion, Manzetti's "Adeste Fideles" and the recessional, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." The "Mass in F Major," by William Arm-strong, will be sung by William Armstrong. Confessions at St. John's will be heard this afternoon from 3:30 to 6 and this evening from 7 to 9 p.m."

65 YEARS AGO, OR SO:

Dec. 24, 1951: **City's Churches To Offer Special Christmas Music.** "The traditional music of the Christmas season will be heard in Stamford churches on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Special services have been arranged by many of Stamford's churches. Services which have been announced include the following: St. John's Catholic: The Children's Choir of St. John's Catholic Church will sing Christmas hymns at the 9 o'clock Mass on Christmas Day. Included are *Magnificat* by E. Verschneider; *O Holy Night* by Adolphe Adam; *Adeste Fideles* by Philip G. Kreckel; *Silent Night* will be sung A Cappella, composed by Franz Gruber; *The Birth-day of a King* by Neidlinger."

30 YEARS AGO, OR SO:

Dec. 24, 1986: **New Creche boosts yule holi-day spirit.** "With just two days to go before Christmas, Rev. William A. Nagle said yesterday that a new creche arrived just in time to renew the holiday spirit. "There is a new feeling of Christmas joy now," said Rev. Nagle. The creche completes the holiday festivities."

Daily & Weekend Mass Schedule:

Monday through Saturday: 8:00a.m. & 12:10p.m.

Saturday (Sunday Vigil): 4:00p.m. (Hymns)

Sunday: 7:30 a.m. (No Music)
10:00 a.m. Family Mass
12noon Solemn Mass (Gregorian Chant)
5:00 p.m. (No Music)

Holy Days of Obligation:

- Vigil Mass (evening before): 5:15p.m.
- Holy Day: 8:00a.m., 12:10p.m. & 5:15p.m.

Confessions:

(English, Francais, Espanol, Italiano, Portuguese, Deutsch).

Mon-Fri: 11:30-11:50 a.m.

Saturday: 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 7:00-7:25, 9:30-9:55, 11:30-11:55 a.m.

Anytime by appointment in the Rectory.

Baptism

Parents must be parishioners of St. John's. Please call the parish office: 324-1553, ext. 21.

First Communion and Confirmation

For information on Religious Education, please e-mail religious@stjohnsstamford.com, attention Fr. Vill. Confirmation is a two-year program.

Sacramental Records call the parish secretary, Mon-Fri: 9am - 4pm.in the rectory, 324-1553, ext. 21.

Marriage

Engaged couples [**bride or groom must be a St. John's parishioner and attending Sunday Mass regularly**] should contact one of the St. John's parish priests at least 6 months in advance of the wedding. Marriages are not performed on Sundays at St. John's.

Sick Calls, First Friday Communion Calls, and the Anointing of the Sick:

Our priests would be happy to bring Communion, hear Confession and administer the Sacrament of the Sick to anyone seriously ill, homebound or in the hospital. Please call the rectory: 324-1553, ext. 21.

Devotions

- Miraculous Medal Novena: Monday, following the 8:00 a.m. Mass.
- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Friday, following the 8:00 a.m. Mass until 12:00 p.m.
- Daily Rosary following the 12:10 Mass: Mon-Sat.

The Basilica of St. John Bookstore Hours

Sunday: 10:45a.m. - 12 Noon.

Thursday: 11:30a.m. - 1:00p.m. (Closed during Mass)

Friday: 11:30a.m. - 1:00p.m. (Closed during Mass)