

Pastor's Corner

THE LORD IS NEAR. We are now in the very last days of Advent, the final time to prepare for Christmas. I know there's an awful lot going on in the next few days: last minute shopping, wrapping and mailing presents, travelling. And I know that on top of all that many of you are concerned about the heavy problems weighing on us at this unique time in history, e.g., COVID and its social and economic effects, problems in the Church, problems in the election, fears of a probable new anti-Christian quasi-socialist administration, etc..

But, please, don't let all that distract you from what's most important right now: we are preparing to celebrate the day awaited from almost the beginning of the creation of man, when God first promised that "the woman" would bring forth a son who would crush the serpent's head. The day when God the Son, Creator of the Universe, to whom all angels bowed in worship, having been conceived in the womb of His mother Mary, entered the world as a poor, defenseless, vulnerable baby, to save mankind from sin and to offer us a share in his eternal life and love.

The day of which the Gospel tells us: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth **peace to men of good will.**'"

Listen to the angels this week, and accept the grace of Jesus, and His "peace to men of good will." And rather than allowing all the busyness and troubles to distract you in the next few days, try to make real time to prepare yourself for this celebration. Avoid all sin. Try to show charity and compassion to your neighbor, especially your family members, at every moment—be helpful, not harmful, to family peace. And love God above everything and with everything you have.

Take time to pray, and in your prayer place yourself in the company and care of Mary and Joseph. Imagine them travelling on the rocky roads of Galilee and Judea, from Nazareth down to Bethlehem, walking all that way or, perhaps, aided by a donkey. Imagine the cold and even freezing weather over the several days' journey. Think of their struggle, but also their joy. For they were not traveling alone: their Savior was with them in Mary's womb.

Travel with them in prayer these next few days. Stop from time to time at work, and wonder, "where are you now, Mary and Joseph, and Baby Jesus?" Come to church for a quiet visit, and think, "perhaps you are stopping to rest now—let me rest with you." Accompany them on their journey—and do not get too distracted by the busyness of the season, but rest in the peace of Jesus.

CHRISTMAS SIGN-UP AND SCHEDULE. I hope all of you have **signed up (either online or by calling the office) for Christmas Eve/Day Mass.** Please take time today to revisit our schedule for this week—found below in this bulletin—especially the Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Sunday schedules. Remember, due to the Bishop's COVID capacity restrictions, if you're not signed up, you may not be able to get into the church. I don't want that to happen, so **please sign up!**

Personally, I will miss seeing the 1000s of folks at Masses on Christmas, as I usually do. **Christmas Midnight Mass** will be particularly hard for me, as every year we've seen attendance grow to almost fill the church. But not this year—only 225 or so can be there. As I've told you many times, Midnight Mass is very special to me, and to many folks.

Before Mass we usually sing Christmas carols starting at 11:30, but since this year **our choir is on hiatus** and congregational singing is discouraged due to COVID, **our schola of 4 or 5 our regular cantors** (all very talented professionals) will sing a selection of beautiful Christmas hymns. And then the ceremony begins with the chanting of the proclamation of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, taken from the *Roman Martyrology*, formally declaring the birth of Jesus Christ. It opens with creation and relates the birth of the Lord to the major events and personages of sacred and secular history. Then the priest and ministers proceed into the church, with a young child carrying the "Baby Jesus" behind them, and they place the "Babe" in the Manger, as we remember that Christ was born in the "Holy Night." The choir sings so beautifully, all the altar servers are so reverent and the congregation so devout. Obviously most of you won't be able to make it this year, but you can join us "virtually" as **we livestream the pre-Mass hymns and ceremonies and the Mass (at 12) starting at 11:30pm.**

GOVERNOR NORTHAM. I'm sure you are aware of the Governor's new COVID restrictions announced on December 10. But please remember, when it comes to activities in practicing our faith, we obey our Bishop, not the state. And although, once again, the Bishop has basically adopted the Governor's new rules, these new rules have almost no new effect on parish activities, including Mass—NOTE the midnight curfew does not apply to people going to and from religious services, e.g., Midnight Mass.

The most significant change that does affect the parish is the reduction of the attendance-limit for some gatherings from 25 persons to 10 persons. But this **will not apply to most of our events**, i.e., it will NOT apply to anything in the church or religious education, most youth group activities, prayer groups, etc.. Basically it will only apply to administrative and social meetings. Also, the Bishop asks that that persons wear face coverings outside when social distancing is not possible.

But while I'm at it, our Governor has once again shown his lack of concern for our basic rights. First of all, he has no business (in my humble opinion) in placing a non-science based curfew on law-abiding adults. But more importantly at the press conference announcing the new changes he stated:

"Now, I'd like to take a moment to talk about our faith communities. This is a holy time for multiple faith traditions. ... But this year we need to think about what is truly the most important thing, is it the worship or the building? For me, God is wherever you are. You don't have to sit in the church pew for God to hear your prayers.... worship online is still worship."

Right.... But not all worship is the same. **Catholics believe that Jesus wants us at Mass, to actually receive His Body, and that we don't fully participate at Mass unless we are physically present!** Jesus didn't come down to earth virtually, but in a *physical body to be really present to us.* Moreover, Northam may worship in a mere "building", but **our "building" is the House of God, where Jesus really is Present in the Tabernacle.** How dare he tell us how to worship? *Prima facie* evidence of his complete disregard for our basic human right of freedom to practice OUR religion the way WE deem fit, and complete dismissal of the First Amendment.

Oremus pro invicem. Fr. De Celles

MASS INTENTIONS**Monday, Dec. 21st**

8:30 am Barbara De Celles +

Tuesday, Dec. 22nd8:30 am Edson Visaya &
Jovita Sablan +**Wednesday, Dec. 23rd**

8:30 am Patty Mahlon

Thursday, Dec. 24th8:30 am
Fr Michael Dobbins+**Christmas Vigil Masses**

4:00 pm Celebrant's Intention

6:00 pm Celebrant's Intention

8:00 pm Celebrant's Intention

Midnight Celebrant's Intention

Friday, Dec. 25th**Christmas**

7:00 am Celebrant's Intention

9:00 am Celebrant's Intention

11:00 am Celebrant's Intention

1:00 pm Celebrant's Intention

3:00 pm Celebrant's Intention

Masses to be said Privately

Dec. 21 Mary Kozich +

Dec. 22 Susan Sundberg +

Dec. 23 Poor Souls in

Purgatory +

Dec. 23 Bernie Crum +

Dec. 27 Bayani Jamias +

Saturday, Dec. 26th

9:00 am Fr. Paul Scalia

Vigil Mass

5:00 pm Fr. De Celles

Barbara Lucas +

Sunday, Dec. 27th

7:00 am Fr. Rippy

Margaret Montoro +

9:00 am Fr. De Celles

Parishioners

11:00 am Fr. Daly

Robert & Beverly Ward

1:00 pm Fr. De Celles

Mary-Anne Dinh

Please pray for our parishioners serving in Combat Zones and their families. If you have a relative serving in harm's way and would like to have his/her name included in our prayer list, please contact the parish office. **Also, please be sure to let us know when they return home.**

Anthony Nsekela

Brandon Skiba

Please pray for the sick of our parish

Glenn Bliss

Tom Dietz

Michael O'Neill

Cindy Laird

Patricia Lewis

Barbara McGinn

Mai Pham

Joan Opiela

Donald Zacherl

Leonora Ramos

Jason Saenz

Phyllis Zitnik

Mary K. Randazzo

Patricia Del Buono

Michael

Malachowski

Juanita Boarman

Angela Colom

John Florio

Debra Henkel

Daniel Moore

Maria Daugherty

Lauren Hornsby

Gaudencio Dizon

Antoinette Baptist

Margaret O'Neill

Ada Prabhavat

Julia Oaks

Christine Gloninger

Joan Snaveley

We have Confessions every Weeknight 6:00 to 7:00 pm During Advent!

The Advent & Christmas Schedule is available on our Website or in the Narthex of the Church. Please pick up one to put on your refrigerator or some other convenient place to check.

Parish Offices will be closed December 24th & December 25th.

All parishioners are invited to join the Knights of Columbus for Family Caroling at the Creche in front of the Church immediately following the 5pm Mass on Saturday December 26th.

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve: 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 8:00 pm & Midnight

Christmas Day: 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 11:00 am, 1:00 pm, & 3:00 pm

ALL Masses for Christmas REQUIRE you to Sign up to Attend! The 6:00 pm & 1:00 pm are "Masks Mandatory" Midnight Mass & 11:00 am will be Livestreamed.

View livestreaming of the Holy Mass at St. Raymond's!

<https://straymonds.org/view-mass-online/>

Monday through Friday Daily Mass at 8:30 am

Saturday at 9:00 am

SUNDAY MASS at 11:00 am

Confessions in the Church

(in the flower room)

Additional Confessions for Advent

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Fridays: 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Wednesdays: 6:00 pm - 6:55 pm

Saturday: 8:15 am - 8:45 am, 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Please see the front of the bulletin for our current Mass, Confession, and Adoration schedules.

Face masks are expected at all Masses unless you are exempt.

The 1:00 pm Sunday Mass is "Masks Mandatory".

Sign ups are required for 9 am and 11 am Sunday Masses.

Contact the parish office.

Watch for our Constant Contact Updates! If you are not receiving emails from the parish, please contact the parish office at 703-440-0535 or office@straymonds.org to verify your email address.

Eviction Assistance: (This was submitted by a parishioner) During this time of economic distress and uncertainty, I hope this message finds someone who can benefit from this assistance. Cornerstones has \$670k for eviction assistance they need to use by December 31, 2020. The funds must be used by the end of the year or they will lose the money. If you know anybody facing eviction in Fairfax County, please ask them to call the Fairfax County Help Line at 703-222-0880 asap. Let them know the wait time on the phone will be long, but stay on the line. <https://www.cornerstonesva.org/https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/coordinated-services-planning>

"Be it done unto me according to your word." Obedience to the Lord's will is the fruit of humble prayer. If you think God is inviting you to a deeper consecration as a priest, deacon, brother or sister, contact Fr. Michael Isenberg, michael.isenberg@arlingtondiocese.org or (703) 841-2514.

Wishing you all a Happy, Holy & Safe Christmas!

GOSPEL LK 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the house of David,
and the virgin's name was Mary.
And coming to her, he said,
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God."
"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his
father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end."
But Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be,
since I have no relations with a man?"
And the angel said to her in reply,
"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.
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,
has also conceived a son in her old age,
and this is the sixth month for her who was called
barren;
for nothing will be impossible for God."
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."
Then the angel departed from her.



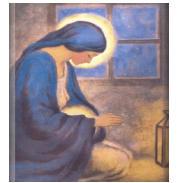
Knights of Columbus Soccer Challengers Winners: Knights of Columbus Council 12846 is pleased to announce that Soccer Challenge competitors from our parish have received awards for State and Regional competitions. **William Carlson** is the State Champion for 9-year-old boys, **Michael Hildebrand** is the State Champion for 11-year-old boys, **Riley O'Mara** is the State Champion for 13-year-old boys, and **Cody O'Mara** is the Regional Champion for 12-year-old boys. Our Council had four of the nine Champions fielded by Knights of Columbus District 14!

Luminaries of Holy Mary: Come join us on Jan. 2nd to honor the Blessed Mother's request for making the 5 First Saturdays: Mass at 9am, then meet in the Parish Hall for Rosary, meditation and Gospel reflection. All are welcome.

SAINT RAYMOND'S RESPECTS LIFE

*Learn the TRUTH. Live the TRUTH.
Spread the TRUTH... in LOVE*

**"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which means, "God with us."
Matthew 1:23**



Thank you for your continued support of the MaRiH Pregnancy Care Center. Your generosity - accompanied by your prayers - is so very much appreciated. **Our next support weekend will be on January 9-10.** God bless you!

Mark your calendar! The 48th Annual March for Life is scheduled for Friday, January 29th. Stay tuned for details.

Save the date! The 3RD annual Virginia March for Life is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, April 7th in Richmond. Stay tuned for details.

Tepeyac Pro Life OB/GYN: Transforming Hearts Through Healthcare. tepeyacobgyn.com 703-273-9440. Thank you for your referrals and your support.

Natural Family Planning. A gift to your marriage. For more info visit: ccli.org

Special thanks to those who have been making such beautiful blankets!! Our Wrapped In Love program is up and stitching. Pray for the mothers and babies who will be wrapped in love by your efforts as you create baby blankets for distribution at Pregnancy Care Centers or for use by sidewalk counselors – wherever we find a need. God bless you for your efforts. Blankets may be delivered to the parish office or MaRiH collection box in the narthex.

Has the sorrow of miscarriage or still birth touched your life? Or perhaps you know someone in this situation? **A Mom's Peace**, a Lay Apostolate for Mothers of Miscarried and Stillborn Souls offers discreet support to families with bereavement, burial and remembrance assistance. For more information visit amomspeace.org.

To those who have suffered an abortion: Project Rachel can help someone who is carrying the grief and sorrow of a past abortion. (888)456-HOPE. Confidentiality always respected. www.helpafterabortion.org.

Give a Gift for Life! Gabriel Project helps pregnant moms welcome their babies. Please consider donating at www.arlingtondiocese.org/giftforlife. For more info, contact them at 1-866-444-3553 or GabrielProject@arlingtondiocese.org

St. Raymond's Youth Apostolate



High School VOLUNTEERS: Decorate the Church!

10am-2pm Monday, December 21st

High school volunteers are needed to help decorate the Church for Christmas! If you can help, please sign up online at <https://bit.ly/3n92z2d> ASAP. Make sure forms (below) are on file.

Junior High (7-8th Grade) Youth Group

Next Mtg. 5-6:30pm Sunday, January 3rd

Enjoy Christmas week with your families! See you next year!

High School Youth Group

Next Mtg: 8-9pm Sunday, January 3rd (Parish Hall)

Enjoy Christmas week with your families! See you next year!

Youth Apostolate Participation 2 REQUIRED Forms

2020-2021 YA Info. Sheet is to be completed annually for every child *prior* participating in any Youth Apostolate function.

Youth Ministry Participant Waiver, a one-time form is to be signed and turned in for every youth *prior* to participating in any St. Raymond's Youth Ministry activity/event on or off site.

Forms can be found online at <http://bit.ly/YAforms> and should be emailed to Jeanne at youth@straymonds.org or turned in to the main office.

Dear St. Raymond's Parishioners,

Thank you. Those words seem so little in comparison to the gratitude in my heart for each and every one of you. Last October I underwent a pretty significant set of surgeries with my jaw, including a total TMJ replacement on both sides. As most of you know, I ended up with a very rare infection as a result of the surgery. I was very lucky that my doctor caught it when he did and was able to do the debridement surgery in December of last year. I am now one year past that surgery. The fact that my surgeon was able to go back in to clear the infection and save my prostheses was a true miracle in and of itself. If by this time next year the infection still does not return, I will officially be "in the clear" and my surgeon will write about my case as a first in medical history! I know my surgeon is an incredibly skilled doctor, but I truly believe the ultimate reason for this miracle is the grace of God in response to the army of so many of you covering me in prayer! And boy have I felt it!! A year ago I never would have imagined just how different my life would be today...able to breathe, speak and swallow without trouble. Not a day goes by that I do not recognize how blessed I am by our parishioners and your prayers that got me through this past year. Thank You! Have a blessed & Merry Christmas!



Jeanne Sause

Director of the Youth Apostolate (Grades 7-12)
youth@straymonds.org Call/Text: 571-334-9890
<http://bit.ly/youthapostolate>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



**"And the Word became flesh and dwelt
among us..." Jn 1:14**

**Warm wishes for a holy and blessed
Christmas Season and New Year!**

Men's Prayer Group: On the first and third Saturdays of each month a group of men meet in the parish hall to pray and read the scriptures. They are neither theologians, philosophers, nor great scholars. Just some guys, coming together to pray, read, and share a simple breakfast. Everyone is welcome. Please join us at 7:30 am Saturday, Dec. 19th. For more information, call Dave Wilson, 703-966-5327.

Interested in a great, Catholic education for your child's high school years? Saint John Paul the Great Catholic High School invites you to sign your child up for the High School Placement Test, required for all 8th graders applying to a Diocese of Arlington high school. The HSPT will be offered on Saturday, January 9. While your child tests, stay and discover what John Paul has to offer! Visit jpthegreat.org for test registration details and more information.

Catholic Book Club: The next Parish Book Club meeting is on Friday, Jan. 8th in the Maurer Room at 10:00 am. There is limited space but virtual attendance is possible. The book for discussion is: *Takedown: From Communists to Progressives, How the Left Has Sabotaged Family and Marriage* by Paul Kengor (256 pgs.) Newcomers welcome. If you have any questions or to register, please contact Jim Mault at bookclub@straymonds.org

St. Martin de Porres Committee - collects food on an ongoing basis for the Springfield Resource Center which services over 250 families in the Springfield area. A collection box is in the Narthex and donations are collected and distributed weekly. Suggested food items are listed, but any non-perishable food donations are welcome. For equitable distribution, smaller packaging is requested (i.e. 1 lb bags of rice vs. 5 lb. bags, 1 qt. oil vs. 1 gal oil). During this crisis the need for food is greater than ever. Please be generous. The St. Martin de Porres committee thanks all of the parishioners for your food donations. Your generosity really makes a difference in helping the needy, especially during the pandemic.

Church Persecuted

(This column is being written early due to early Christmas deadlines. Any updated information would be found at <https://straymonds.org/religious-liberty-blog>.)

As Father DeCelles wrote in a recent column (<https://straymonds.org/first-sunday-of-advent-5/>), on November 25th the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) temporarily blocked New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's order that "In his judgment laundry and liquor, travel and tools, are all 'essential' while traditional religious exercises are not." This allowed churches to reopen with restrictions similar to those in Virginia. One would think that would end the "Battle to free the Mass" (see the previous two columns) around the country.

As a result of the November 25th ruling, SCOTUS returned the case to the lower courts which immediately ruled in favor of Harvest Rock Church and Harvest Rock International Ministries, a network of Christian churches throughout California. The Church had filed suit against Governor Gavin Newsom to open the churches. Even with the SCOTUS ruling, Newsom appealed and has now created stalling tactics by asking for more time to plead California's case. Harvest Rock returned to SCOTUS on December 9th asking for an immediate injunction. These stalling tactics impact the Archdiocese of San Francisco and Archbishop Cordileone and his "Battle to free the Mass". By the way, on a completely unrelated (or perhaps related) issue, the current California Attorney General, Xavier Becarra, whose staff is arguing this case in the courts, is being tapped to be the new Secretary of Health and Human Services in a Biden cabinet.

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Guadalupe: The Miracle and the Message – The most important event in the evangelization of the New World occurred in December, 1531. Over the course of four days, the Virgin Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, appeared to an indigenous convert named Juan Diego. As a result of this encounter, and the image miraculously imprinted on Juan Diego's tilma (cloak), nine million Native Americans embraced the Catholic faith, and the Americas began its transformation into the Catholic hemisphere. Our Lady of Guadalupe's message of love had replaced the institutionalized violence of the Aztec culture and built a bridge between two worlds.

Watch now at www.straymonds.formed.org

The best Catholic content in one place - movies, programs, talks, dramas, & ebooks—just one click away!

Questions? Need help? Email us at:

formed@straymonds.org



Angelus Academy

Pre K—8th

Offering a liberal arts education in the classical tradition.

We are thrilled to be offering in-person instruction, 5 days a week!

Looking for a gentle introduction to school for your 3-5 year old? Our Little Messengers program (MWF mornings) includes Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (Atrium).

Thank you for your prayers and support. With God, nothing will be impossible!

www.AngelusAcademy.org

7644 Dynatech Ct., Springfield, VA 22153

703-924-3996

Family of Jesus Prayer Group: Though our weekly meetings are currently canceled - we are still praying! If you have any prayer requests, please let us know by emailing Elaine Perricone at jpebtp@verizon.net or by calling the parish office at 703-440-0535.

Home School Group: for more information visit our website www.homeschool-life.com/va/straymondhsg/. Contact: Katherine Bogacki or Malia Cameron at straymondhsg@gmail.com.

FAITH DIRECT: Although public Masses are limited and many parish events have been canceled, **our parish is still in need of your donations.** We have operating costs (utility, maintenance, service contracts, supplies and staff payroll and benefits) that must continue. Now more than ever we have requests for FAMILY ASSISTANCE to support those members of our parish who are in need of help. Please visit our website www.straymonds.org to join online or call directly at 866-507-8757.

Please remember that our parish's expenses continue during this crisis! Your donations may be mailed, dropped off at the parish office, or given online through Faith Direct.

SUNDAY, DEC. 6TH COLLECTION

Sunday Offertory	\$16,628.00
Family Assistance	\$ 2,777.00
Maintenance Fund	\$ 2,632.00

LAST WEEK'S COLLECTION

Due to an early Bulletin Deadline, Last Week's Collection will be in Next week's Bulletin.

The Second Collection on Christmas will be for our Long Term Maintenance Fund.