



***"May the God of Love and Peace Set Your Heart At Rest"***  
***St. Raymond***



Rev. John C. De Celles, Pastor  
Rev. Joseph D. Bergida, Parochial Vicar  
Rev. Edward R. Horkan, In Residence  
Elisabeth Turco, Director of Liturgical Music  
Jeanne Sause, Director of Youth Apostolate  
Virginia Osella, Director of Religious Education  
Mary Hansen, Religious Education Secretary  
Michael Thompson, Plant Manager  
Maerose Naduvilekunnel, Business Manager  
Mary Butler, Parish Secretary  
Dominique Murray, Office Assistant

#### PARISH OFFICE

Telephone Numbers:

Rectory: 703-440-0535  
Rel. Education: 703-440-0537  
Fax: 703-440-0538

#### Office Hours

Monday-Friday 9:30 am - 4:30 pm

#### Email

Church: [Office@straymonds.org](mailto:Office@straymonds.org)  
Pastor: [fdc@straymonds.org](mailto:fdc@straymonds.org)  
Rel. Ed.: [ReligiousEducation@straymonds.org](mailto:ReligiousEducation@straymonds.org)

**TUITION ASSISTANCE:** Please inquire with our office about the availability of partial scholarships for the upcoming school year.

**Angelus Academy**  
**7644 Dynatech Ct, Springfield, VA 22153**  
**703-924-3996**

Angelus Academy is a fully-accredited pre-K through 8th grade Catholic School affiliated with the Diocese of Arlington. Although it has no official connection with St. Raymond's, the parish has a longstanding close relationship with Angelus Academy. Many of our parish children already happily attend school there.

**Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.**  
Matthew 3:3

© Diocesan

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

**Welcome to  
St. Raymond of  
Peñafort Roman  
Catholic Church**

**8750 Pohick Road  
Springfield, VA 22153**

**WEEKEND MASSES:**

Saturday Vigil: 5:00 pm  
Sunday: 7:00 am, 9:00 am (Latin-English), 11:00 am and 1:00 pm

**WEEKDAY MASSES:**

Monday - Friday:  
6:30 am & 8:30 am  
7:00 pm on Wednesdays  
Saturday: 9:00 am

**Website:** [www.straymonds.org](http://www.straymonds.org)

**SACRAMENT OF PENANCE  
(Reconciliation/Confession)**

**Wednesday Evening**

6:15 - 7:00 pm (during Exposition)

**First Fridays**

3:00-4:00 pm and 6:00-7:00 pm

**Saturday Morning**

8:00 - 9:00 am

**Saturday Afternoon**

3:30 - 5:00 pm

**Sunday Morning**

8:30-9:00 am and 10:30-11:00 am

**EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

Wednesday from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm

Friday from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

First Fridays 9:00 am Friday - 9:00 Saturday (Overnight)

**MARRIAGE:** Couples wishing to marry must contact a parish priest at least 6 months prior to the desired wedding date. Couples who are living together will be expected to live separately at least during the 3 months prior to the wedding.

**OCIA:** The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults is the process by which adults (and children who have reached the age of reason) are instructed in the Doctrine of the Church and are prepared to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist. If you or someone you know, would like to inquire about becoming a Catholic, please call the Parish Office.

**BAPTISM:** Parents are requested to make arrangements with the Parish Office ONE MONTH in advance. Parents must participate in a one-session pre-Baptismal program and are encouraged to do so before the birth of their child. You must be REGISTERED in the Parish 3 MONTHS prior to the Baptism.

**BULLETIN DEADLINE:** Please submit announcements to [bulletin@straymonds.org](mailto:bulletin@straymonds.org) 10 days prior to publication date.

## Pastor's Corner

**Immaculate Conception.** Tomorrow, **Monday**, December 8, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Remember, this is a **Holy Day of Obligation**. This great feast day celebrates the conception of Mary, free from original sin, in her mother's womb. In Advent, it reminds us of Mary's perfect preparation to receive Christ into her life. In addition to the regularly scheduled 6:30am and 8:30am daily Masses we will also offer Masses at noon, **5pm** and 7pm. (Note there is no Vigil Mass tonight, Sunday).

**Lessons and Carols.** Remember to join the lectors, the choir and me for "Lessons & Carols" tonight, **Sunday, December 7th** at 7pm in the church. This is one of my favorite Advent traditions in the parish, as the choir provides a beautiful program of inspiring Advent music ("Carols") and the lectors and I read the Scripture readings about the birth of the Messiah (aka, "Lessons"). By weaving together prophetic readings from the Old Testament and pre-nativity readings from the Gospels, the Lessons lay out God's breathtaking plan for the birth of His Divine Son. The choir adds to the atmosphere of joyful expectation by leading us in popular hymns and spreading their vocal wings in leading us in carols and a few more complicated choral pieces. And afterwards there will be an opportunity for joyful fellowship at a short reception in the parish hall.

Hundreds of folks from all over the area make this a "must attend" event every year. Please join us! You'll be very happy you did.

### Advent Weekday Evenings.

**Masses.** Please don't miss the opportunity to go to 7pm Mass every weekday but Thursday during Advent. There is no better way to keep Advent than frequent Mass.

**Advent Series.** On Thursdays there is no evening Mass, as I hope instead you will attend Fr. Bergida's "Advent Series" entitled "**The Angelic Doctor on the Bread of Angels**" every Thursday at 7pm. Last week Father's topic was, "What's the "Matter" with the Eucharist?" and **this week His topic will be "Jesus' Body - Both in Heaven and in the Sacrament?"**

**Confessions.** Don't Forget: go to confession during Advent—we have **confessions every single day of Advent**.

**Family Rosary.** Think about joining in the **Family Rosary** we say in the church every weekday at 6:30pm and on the weekend after the 9am Mass. (Maybe you can sign your family up to lead? (It's very easy to lead, just pray out loud! Go to the parish website and click the link on the drop-down menu).

**Other Advent Events this Week.** Don't forget to stop by the "**Giving Tree**" in the narthex today, and help to make Christmas a little merrier for some folks who are having a rough time this year—families of our parish and Our Lady of the Blue Ridge parish in Madison. The last day to turn in the gifts is next Sunday, December 14th, but the sooner the better or our hardworking staff and volunteers.

**The Christmas Tree.** This time of year is filled with all sorts of traditions. Unfortunately, many of us have lost sight of the Catholic origins of many of the traditions that dominate the secular celebration of Christmas and Advent.

Consider the Christmas Tree. There are many different efforts to explain the origins of the Christmas tree,

including many that try to separate it completely from Christianity. For example, some try to say that since many different ancient non-Christian cultures used evergreens as a sign of life or health that therefore evergreen "Christmas" trees are not "Christian," or that Christians "stole" the symbol from the pagans. But there is no conflict or stealing here. Since Christianity converted many ancient pagan cultures it was natural for those new Christians to keep the symbols that had meaningfully expressed their long held spiritual desires that were ultimately answered only in Christianity. So, if an evergreen tree expressed a pagan culture's desires for eternal life, it was natural for them to carry that symbol into to Christianity, which is fine with the Church.

The specific Christianization and "Christmas-ization" of the evergreen tree can be traced at least to the early 8<sup>th</sup> century in Germany. It seems one Christmas Eve the great missionary St. Boniface and his companions came upon a group of pagans gathered at around their sacred tree, the "Oak of Geismar" ("Donar's Oak") to worship their god, Thor, and to sacrifice a little child to please him. Horrified by what he had found, Boniface struck the Oak, which the people believed to be indestructible, and suddenly a great wind came and blew the tree over, tearing it out of the ground by its roots and into four pieces. When the tree fell it revealed a small evergreen tree that had grown behind it. St. Boniface then told the people: "This little tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace, for your houses are built of the fir. It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ-child; gather about it, not in the wild wood, but in your own homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness." The people then took the tree to the great hall of their village and decorated it with candles, as Boniface told the story of the Baby Jesus. The whole village, including the pagan priest, were converted that Christmas Eve. (For a beautiful retelling of this tale see *The First Christmas Tree*, by Henry van Dyke).

**Donation to the Parish.** I want to inform you that our Scholarship Fund has received a generous \$100,000 donation from parishioners who are moving out of the area and wanted to show their appreciation for all they've received during their time as St. Raymond's. I don't want to give out their names for various reasons, but they know who they are, and I ask you to join in thanking them with prayers for their move. And let us all thank God for the many blessings he has bestowed on us in our wonderful parish.

**Youth Apostolate.** I just want to say a few words to thank Jeanne Sause for the remarkable work she does with our Youth Apostolate. It was 12 years ago this week that I hired her and gave her the mandate to provide a truly Catholic program that would bring our kids close to Christ and His Church. And she has done just that, providing hundreds of our kids with great opportunities for learning, praying, and playing. It's always great to see our teens together having fun, and having truly Catholic fellowship. And it moves my heart to see how so many of them have grown so much spiritually.

And Jeanne has done all this in spite of enduring serious health issues. But all that just causes us all, especially me and the kids, to love and appreciate her all the more. She is one of those "many blessings" I wrote about above. Let's pray for her and thank God for her.

*Oremus pro invicem. Fr. De Celles*

<u>MASS INTENTIONS</u>	
<b>Monday, December 8th</b>	<b>Saturday, December 13th</b>
6:30 am Daniel Clark +	9:00 am Philip Hansen
8:30 am Jeanne P. Gedney+	
Noon Dorothy Gatlin +	
7:00 pm John Ledesma +	
<b>Tuesday, December 9th</b>	<b>Vigil Mass</b>
6:30 am Joan Opiela +	5:00 pm <b>Fr. De Celles</b>
8:30 am Phil Walko +	Bob Ferguson +
<b>Wednesday, December 10th</b>	<b>Sunday, December 14th</b>
6:30 am Daniel Pearce +	7:00 am <b>Fr. Horkan</b>
8:30 am Judy Kelley	Franklin Rother +
7:00 pm Celebrant's Intentions	
<b>Thursday, December 11th</b>	<b>9:00 am Fr. Bergida</b>
6:30 am Jean Anezin +	Parishioners
8:30 am Joseph Perricone +	
<b>Friday, December 12th</b>	<b>11:00 am Msgr. Rippy</b>
6:30 am Anne Avvenire +	Drs. Stephen & Jennifer
8:30 am Ashley Akers	Christensen
	<b>1:00 pm Fr. De Celles</b>
	Family of Jesus Prayer
	Group

**View livestreaming of the Holy Mass  
at St. Raymond's  
[www.straymonds.org](http://www.straymonds.org)**

**Monday - Friday Daily Mass at 8:30 am  
Saturday at 9:00 am**

**Sunday Mass at 9:00 am & 11:00 am  
(See the website for Holy Days)**

**DURING ADVENT: Masses every evening 7pm  
except for Thursdays-Advent Series 7pm in the  
Parish Hall.**

**Daily Family Rosary leaders needed!** St. Raymond's has a Daily Family Rosary in the church: Mon-Fri at 6:30pm and Saturday and Sunday after the 9am Mass. Please visit our website to sign up to lead during November! All are invited to attend.

**Advent Lessons and Carols.** Please join us on **Sunday, December 7, 2025 at 7:00 pm** for a program of beautiful Advent music and Scripture readings, called "**Lessons and Carols**." Weaving together prophetic readings from the Old Testament and pre-nativity readings from the Gospels, the readers lay out God's breathtaking plan for the birth of Our Savior. The choir adds to the atmosphere of joyful expectation by leading us in popular hymns and singing a few special choral pieces. Afterwards, everyone gathers downstairs for some seasonal refreshments and Christian fellowship.

**Calling all 8th graders - John Paul's Priority Application Deadline is December 15th!** If you are interested in applying to Saint John Paul the Great Catholic High School, we encourage you to submit your application by our priority deadline - Monday, December 15th. [Click here to start your application today!](#) If you are interested in our tuition assistance opportunities (all tuition assistance applications due January 12th), please click on the following links: 1) [Click here for Scholarship opportunities](#) and 2) [Click here for our Financial Aid application](#). Let us know if you have questions at 703-445-0246 or [admissions@jpthegreat.org](mailto:admissions@jpthegreat.org).

**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.

**Kathleen McGovern**

**Peter Lawton**

**Please pray for the sick of our parish**

Glenn Bliss	Paul Haynes	Annette Haynes
Michael O'Neill	Nena Brennan	Beth Fitzgibbons
Cindy Laird	Serrin Foster	Jean Keegan
Patricia Lewis	Donald Trayer	Florence Miller
Mai Pham	Ellen Trayer	Robert Petitti
Jason Saenz	Arlene Pietraszko	Joann Alba
Phyllis Zitnik	Virginia Cummings	Alicia Tocconi
John Florio	Mary M. Dixon	Jay & Linda Cabacar
Carolina Baker	Edward J. Susank	Rita Felkel
Debra Henkel	Helen Estabrooks	
Gaudencio Dizon		

**Upcoming Events at St. Raymond Church**

11/21-12/14	<b>Giving Trees up in the Narthex</b>
11/28-12/21	<b>K of C Christmas Tree Sales</b>
12/7	<b>Lessons and Carols 7pm-Reception following in parish hall</b>
12/7	<b>NO RE Classes</b>
12/8	<b>The Immaculate Conception of the BVM-Holy Day of Obligation-Parish Offices Closed</b> <b>Masses: 6:30 am, 8:30 am, Noon, 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm</b>
12/8	<b>NO RE Classes</b>
12/8	<b>NO Bible Study</b>
12/8	<b>Family of Jesus prayer group</b>
12/9	<b>NO Bible Study evening class</b>
12/9	<b>Junior Legion of Mary 4:15-6:15pm Maurer Rm.</b>
12/9	<b>Legion of Mary 6:30pm—Library</b>
12/10	<b>Adoration 9am-7pm</b>
12/11	<b>Bridge Club</b>
12/11	<b>Second Advent Series on the Eucharist 7pm Parish Hall</b>
12/12	<b>Adoration 9am-3pm</b>

**A special election is scheduled for December 9** to fill an opening for the Braddock District representative to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. (Early voting is also available.) This is an important election because only one member of the ten-member Board of Supervisors is Republican. An imbalance like this isn't in anyone's interest, Democrats or Republicans. Public policy in best served when governing bodies include diverse voices that represent the entire community. This election provides an opportunity to make a dent in the imbalance. Voting is restricted to residents of the Braddock District. Special elections like this receive little attention. Turnout is the key. If you live in the Braddock District, please vote. And if you have friends who are Braddock citizens, please encourage them to do so. Look at this op-ed from Mark Spooner about the candidates in today's *Fairfax Times*. [https://www.fairfaxtimes.com/articles/socialism-may-be-the-rage-in-nyc-but-not-in-fairfax-county/article\\_af12e222-e6c0-4d44-a9d0-becfcf3a2237.html](https://www.fairfaxtimes.com/articles/socialism-may-be-the-rage-in-nyc-but-not-in-fairfax-county/article_af12e222-e6c0-4d44-a9d0-becfcf3a2237.html)

**Book Club News:** Our next meeting will be on Thursday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM in the Parish Hall. **This will be our annual Advent Brunch.** Please bring a food item to share. We will be discussing **1917: Red Banners, White Mantle** by Warren Carroll. The schedule for the full year can be found on the parish website: <https://straymonds.org/ministries-and-groups/book-club/>. New members are welcome. If you have questions or plan to join us for the first time in December, please contact Jim Mault at [bookclub@straymonds.org](mailto:bookclub@straymonds.org).



**THE FULLNESS OF KNIGHTHOOD:** Join the Knights! Your very own St. John Bosco Council #12846 has just been awarded **STAR COUNCIL** and received the **STATE DEPUTY AWARD** as one of the most outstanding councils in the Commonwealth

of Virginia. These noteworthy awards are only earned by strong Catholic men tirelessly working together to serve their parish, community and their nation. Why not become part of the most impactful Catholic fraternity in the world, grow in your faith, and discover mutual support from a true brotherhood built on shared Catholic values? Now is the **perfect time** to take your place with us. Just go to <https://www.kofc.org/joinus> or use the QR code below to experience the Knights free for one year. Enter our council #12846 for local information when you register. Knights of Columbus informational materials are in the Narthex, please have a look. Please contact our Deputy Grand Knight, Dave Hayes, at cell (703) 380-4550 if you have any questions or want to learn more about the many benefits of being a Knight! Get in the game, answer the call, **LIVE FULLY; BECOME A KNIGHT!**



### Upcoming Events:

#### DECEMBER

- 1-21 Christmas Tree Sales (Church Parking Lot)
- 8 Monthly Council Meeting (7pm Library—Rosary, 7:30 pm Parish Hall)
- 13 Wreaths Across America (Arlington National Cemetery, 4th Degree starts at 6am)
- 20 Men's Prayer Breakfast (7:30 am, Parish Hall)
- 26 Caroling with St. Nicholas, a la Creche (7pm, Friday)

**"Keep Christ in Christmas" Christmas Cards** – From Oct 25-26 to Dec. 6-7, the Knights of Columbus will be selling religious Christmas cards in the Narthex after all the Masses.

**2025-26 Adult Bible Study:** St. Raymond's will study the topic of "Hearing the Voice of the Lord in the Major Prophets" on Monday mornings from 9:30 to 11:00 A.M. and again on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 P.M. (except for holidays) in the Parish Hall, from Monday, September 15, 2025 through May, 2026 with a break from Dec. 8th–Feb. 2nd, 2026.

**Junior Legion of Mary.** Children between the ages of 7 – 12+ at St. Raymond's who have received their First Holy Communion and parents seeking an extracurricular activity that enriches a young person's spiritual life and engages them in age-appropriate spiritual works of mercy under the spiritual direction of Father Bergida, please consider joining the Junior Legion of Mary. Meetings will be every Tuesday, 4:15-5:15pm, in the rectory Maurer Room. Two adult members of the Legion (Virtus certified) lead the meetings. Parents are welcome to attend / participate. Please email Patty Miller, [pamiller35@gmail.com](mailto:pamiller35@gmail.com), or call / text her at: C - 703-663-0480.

**CHRIST HOUSE-WE NEED A CO-LEADER IN 2026!** Please consider co-leading this most important ministry, so many are in need of a good meal and fellowship. For more information, call the Parish office at 703-440-0535.

**Legion of Mary invitation** Do you want to develop a closer relationship with our Mother Mary and her Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ? The Legion of Mary meets weekly on Tuesday evenings at 6:30pm in the Library. All auxiliary members and anyone interested in joining the Legion of Mary are welcome! Point of Contact: Judy Mayer, [jmayer9014@aol.com](mailto:jmayer9014@aol.com), or 703-627-7320.

**The Knights of Columbus are selling Christmas Trees & Wreaths** in the church's south parking lot this week; sales will continue through Sunday Dec. 21 (or until sold out). Please support the Knights who use the contributions to support St. Raymond and other various local charities throughout the year. Points of contact are: Jim Hildebrand—571-585-5475; Phil Betty—703-868-9411; and John Crennan—339-223-0887.



### ST. RAYMOND'S RESPECTS LIFE



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. Blankets may be delivered to the parish office or

MaRH collection box in the narthex.

**MaRH Pregnancy Care Center...** is very grateful for our continued support! Donations welcome in the narthex collection box near the elevator. Greatest needs: **winter coats up to 2T, diapers, formula, wipes, winter clothes up to 2T. Please do not leave bouncy seats, walkers, gates or jogging strollers.** Thank you for understanding.

Do you need counsel for a real life (not theoretical) beginning or end of life ethical issue? Contact the **National Catholic Bioethics Center** for a free consultation. [www.ncbcenter.org/ask-a-question](http://www.ncbcenter.org/ask-a-question)

**Do you know someone who works in the abortion industry and wants to get out?** *And Then There Were None* can help. Visit [Abortionworker.com](http://Abortionworker.com). Call or text 888-570-5501

Has the sorrow of miscarriage or still birth touched your life? **A Mom's Peace**, offers discreet support to families with bereavement, burial and remembrance assistance. Visit [amomspeace.org](http://amomspeace.org).

**Angel Wall:** Have you suffered the loss of a child or grandchild? If you would like to honor the memory of your deceased child, please contact the Parish Office to have your child's name added to the Angel Wall in the narthex.

#### To those who have suffered an abortion:

"Do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. **The Father of Mercies** is ready to give you His Forgiveness and His Peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation." **Project Rachel** helps women and men who are carrying the grief and sorrow of a past abortion. (888)456-HOPE. Men: (703) 841-3833. Confidentiality always respected. [www.helpafterabortion.org](http://www.helpafterabortion.org).

**THE ABORTION PILL** now accounts for 65% of all abortions. Women often regret the desperate isolated decision to take the abortion pill. Call the abortion reversal helpline **855-209-4848**. It may not be too late. [abortionpillreversal.com](http://abortionpillreversal.com).

**THE POWER OF PRAYER.** Abortionists and those who work in the abortion industry trespass against us. Yet how much more they offend Almighty God! Every abortion deforms the abortionist and desensitizes him or her to the humanity of both the mother and child violated through abortion. **Pray fervently for the conversion of abortionists.** Somehow, they have been led astray by greed, ignorance, a misguided sense of compassion or perhaps evil itself.



Save the date! Join us for the National March for Life. Friday 23 January. St Raymond's will send three buses. Watch for sign-ups in the narthex – after Christmas! **SAINT RAYMOND'S RESPECT LIFE!**

## St. Raymond's Youth Apostolate

**Pie Sale Fundraiser raised a total of \$4,570!!** Thank you to all who supported our youth through our 4th Annual Pie Sale! **With the help of over 100 teens & adults (!!),** we made over 190 pies in just three nights! Thanks again to youth apostolate volunteer, Alex Kayser ,whose homemade pies inspired this fundraiser. Thank you Alex for once directing this entire effort as well as donating all of the ingredients and supplies yet again! Thank you for patiently and joyfully teaching us how to make such delicious pies, and huge thanks to your wife Camille for taking over baby duties and allowing you to put in countless hours towards making this such a great success. Thank you to everyone who participated, baked, assembled, bought, ate and/or gifted our pies to family and friends, and to all who gave monetary donations. We appreciate you!

### Sun. 12/7: Lessons & Carols (7-8pm in the Church)

**NO Youth group** All families are encouraged to attend our parish Lessons and Carols, a peaceful evening of scripture readings and music meant to prepare our hearts for Christmas. Everyone is invited downstairs for refreshments afterwards. Note, **this event is a parish/family event**, NOT a Youth Apostolate event.

### Friday, December 12 & 19th : 6:30am Mass & Breakfast

**Calling all 7-12th Graders:** Add Mass before class as a part of your Friday sacrifice, then come downstairs for breakfast with Fr. Bergida & Fr. Horkan before school! Please RSVP if you can, at <https://bit.ly/FRIDAYRSVPs>

### Tuesday 12/9: Last Talitha Koum: HS Girls' Group for 2025

**7-8:30pm (Maurer Room)** **ALL High School Ladies** are invited to be part of our authentic sisterhood in Christ, deepening our faith, sharing life & growing in holiness & friendship together.

### Saturday 12/13: High School Swing Dance (6:45-9pm)

Make sure you bring a [YA Info Sheet](#) if you do not have one on file yet this year. Please arrive by 7pm. Doors will lock at 7:15pm.



### MOUNT 2000 Eucharistic Retreat (Feb. 6-8)

Open to all high school students! Mount 2000 is a weekend Eucharistic retreat that includes Mass, Adoration, Confession, exciting speakers and musicians, and breakout sessions led by seminarians. The total cost for the retreat is \$130. \*We will leave after school, at 4pm on Friday & return 3pm Sunday. Go to <https://bit.ly/MOUNT2000> for details and/or to register, **Registration DUE December 10th!!**

### Sunday 12/21: Decorate Church for Christmas 6:30-10pm

High School, College Age & Compliant Adult Volunteers Needed  
Sign up at <https://bit.ly/DECORATE25>

### Steubenville Youth Conference : July 17-19, 2026

Current 8-12th graders are invited to join us for a weekend away with a few thousand Catholic teens to encounter God and experience His love through the power of the Sacraments, dynamic Catholic speakers, uplifting music and new friends More info. coming soon!

**Jeanne Sause**

Director of the Youth Apostolate (Grades 7-12)  
[youth@straymonds.org](mailto:youth@straymonds.org) Call/Text: 571-334-9890

Email Jeanne to be added to the weekly email list for the most updated info on Youth Apostolate news & upcoming events!

A new **YA Info. Sheet** is REQUIRED to be turned in once **each school year** for every child *prior to* participating in any Youth Apostolate event on or off site. <http://bit.ly/YAforms>

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

See you at Lessons and Carols on Sunday night at 7! (No classes at 5pm)

Please see the recent email for more information. Please note that Monday students will also attend the special event on Sunday; no class on Mon. 12/8 due to the Immaculate Conception Holy Day of Obligation.

**There WILL be CCD classes 12/14 and 12/15; There will be NO CCD classes 12/21 - 12/29.**

**Parents of students in preparation for First Holy Communion 2026:** the First Holy Communion Registry Form with Certificate of Baptism and Birth Certificate attached is **due Dec. 15th**.

**Parents of students preparing for Confirmation in May 2026:** Service Hours form and Experience forms are due in the Religious Education Office by **January 8, 2026**.

Praying that your family has a blessed Advent! All students in Religious Education grades 3-12 are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities for Confession during this penitential season of Advent. There are opportunities every day of the week - check the bulletin for the schedule.

**Advent Book Group for Women ages 22-40.** Are you looking to go deeper this Advent? Come join us for a women's Advent devotional book group, journeying with *In Time: A Catholic Advent Devotional for Women about Time and Waiting* by Claire Dwyer. (available for purchase at <https://blessedisshe.net/>). Meet in the Maurer Room by the parish office on Friday Dec. 12th, and 19th, 6:30-8:30pm. Optional fourth meeting TBD on Dec. 22 or 23. Contact Elise Hamilton to sign up or with any questions: [EliseHamilton@gmail.com](mailto:EliseHamilton@gmail.com), (703) 300-4131.

**Advent Series 2025-** "The Angelic Doctor on the Bread of Angels" presented by Fr. Joseph Bergida. We continue the series on Thursday evenings at 7pm in the parish hall. The December 11<sup>th</sup> topic is "Jesus' Body- Both in Heaven and in the Sacrament", the December 18<sup>th</sup> topic is: "Of Evil Men and Holy Things"

**New and Improved Giving Tree** "Some give

freely, yet grow all the richer" Prov. 11:24 Once again, we are sponsoring over 26 families from both our parish community and Our Lady of the Blue Ridge in Madison, VA. This year there will be tangible gifts on the trees as well as gift cards to choose from, plus additional gifts on the parish website's Sign-Up Genius. A working QR code will help you access that list. Instructions can be found on signs near the trees in the narthex or on the Giving Tree page on the parish website. Contact the parish office with any questions. All gifts are due on or before December 14. Please share Christ's love this Christmas season by helping a family in need; both receiver and giver will be blessed!



### **Our Lady of Ransom Scholarships to Catholic Schools are Available.**

Please send requests for 2025-26 tuition assistance to Fr. De Celles or contact the parish office for more information. We can also help cover homeschooling expenses.

## CHURCH PERSECUTED

- Hundreds of children abducted Nigerian Catholic school, days after similar crime (11/22/25)
- Nigeria rights groups seek release of 850 Christians held in jihadist village (10/1/25)
- 2 killed in church attack in Nigeria... (11/19/25)

These are recent random headlines from news sources concerning Nigeria. Pew Research Center says that as of 2020, Nigeria's population was 56.1% Muslim and 43.4% Catholic. In most cases, the study says, these two religions shape many of the strong Muslim and Christian beliefs. Nigeria has the sixth-largest Christian population in the world and the fifth-largest Muslim population in the world. Most of the conflict between these two entities occurs in the middle of the country between the Muslim north and the Christian south.

President Trump said that he would designate Nigeria as a "country of concern" as he did during his first term, but President Biden removed the designation in 2021. While it brings awareness to the country, it does little more since any type of economic sanctions would only further hurt the country. The Nigerian military and the local police have been able to do little to disarm the marauders.

Fifteen million people have been displaced, forced to abandon their ...ancestral homes and churches. Since 2015, 146 priests have been kidnapped, 11 murdered, and four remain missing. Often the kidnappings are accompanied by a ransom request since many of the religious belong to orders outside of Africa and may have the resources to pay the ransom.

Recall that our patron, St. Raymond of Peñafort, was commissioned to assist in the founding of the Order of Mercedarians to rescue Christian slaves captured by the Moors nearly 800 years ago, and so, the war against Christianity continues.

# FORMED®

Get In-Formed!

See the Formed bulletin board by the central doors of the vestibule for additional suggestions.

Watch: *Come, Lord Jesus: Meditations on the Art of Waiting* by Mary Francis

These Advent reflections by the abbess of a Poor Clare monastery, an accomplished spiritual writer, focus our attention on the coming of Jesus into our lives. There is a double movement to this coming: both our active preparation to be ready for him and our patient waiting for the Lord to arrive in his own good time. There is also an art to this simultaneous preparation and waiting, and no one knows better than the beloved Mother Mary Francis how to encourage us in our attempts to master this art.

Kids Watch: *St. Josephine Bakhita: A Story of God's Rescue*

Join Sister Imelda as she shares amazing stories of brave girls and women who said yes to God's call and went on to change the world even when things got tough. In this episode, she tells the inspiring story of St. Josephine Bakhita, who, after being taken captive and made a slave, finds freedom by giving her life to God.

e-book kids: *Crossbows and Crucifixes* by Henry Garnett

England, 1585: Queen Elizabeth's spies lurk everywhere, searching out Catholics who refuse to attend the non-Catholic services of the State religion. Officers of the law hunt down and kill Catholic priests, and imprison those who shelter them. In this adventure for all ages, author Henry Garnett brings to life the drama of a nation where unjust laws forced good men and women to choose between their country and their Faith, and young people heard early and well the call to heroism that Christians must be ever ready to heed.



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**Chesterton Academy of Christ the King**, a small co-ed classical high school that is part of the international Chesterton Schools Network, will be opening at St. Lawrence Catholic Church next fall. Chesterton Academies are known for their strong Catholic identity anchored in daily school Mass, rigorous classical curriculum, screen-free socratic seminar format, and affordable tuition. Visit [Chesterton-ChristTheKing.org](http://Chesterton-ChristTheKing.org) to learn more, to join our mailing list, or to apply. The priority application deadline for rising freshmen is Friday, December 19, 2025.

**PARISHSOFT- FORMERLY FAITH DIRECT:** Faith Direct has now changed to ParishSoft. The New login URL is ParishSOFT Giving-Login. To donate or sign up, please visit our website: <https://straymonds.org> and choose the Faith Direct button on the upper right of the front page of the website. eGiving helps you provide regular support to St. Raymond's, even when you are out of town. You can sign up from your computer, smartphone or tablet and set up a recurring donation or make a one-time gift. Thank you for your continued support of our parish family. God bless you.

**The Second Collection NEXT weekend is for Catholic Charities Christmas Collection**

### Sunday Offertory

11/23/25      11/30/25      Online Giving Nov.

Offertory	\$ 16,748.00	\$ 11,248.00	\$ 61,953.00
Fam. Assistance	\$ 765.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 2,654.00
Maintenance Fund	\$ 1,302.00	\$ 1,410.00	\$ 6,186.00
OLOR	\$ 4,813.00	\$ 765.00	\$ 3,603.00
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