

# Parish News...

**Starting this Saturday, anyone attending any Mass regardless of vaccination status will be required to wear a face mask in the Church.**

There will be no Polish Masses on Sunday December 12<sup>th</sup> and Sunday December 19<sup>th</sup>, Masses have been rescheduled

Per my conversation with Fr. Arthur, the Christmas Mass at 4pm on December 24<sup>th</sup> will not include the children. This was a difficult discussion to make, but given the current mandates and status of COVID in the county it was felt best to cancel the children's participation in the Gospel. All families are still welcome to attend this Mass or any other Mass in the Parish to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus.

This week we celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent. Christmas is just around the corner. Let us not forget the true meaning of Christmas. Christmas is a time of spiritual reflection on the important foundations of our Catholic faith. It's also a celebration. It's when Christians celebrate God's love for the world through the birth of the Christ child: Jesus.

The Parish has Oplatek Christmas Wafers (Angel Bread) available again this Christmas. They are available in the front of the Church for \$3.00. For those who are not aware of this Polish tradition, it is a beloved family tradition of breaking of the oplatek on Christmas Eve. The oplatki is meant to remind families of the Eucharistic bread at Mass and makes a further connection between Christmas and the gift of the Eucharist, the presence of God among us. Oplatek (plural – oplatki ) is a thin wafer made from flour and water similar in taste and consistency to the hosts that are used for communion during Mass. Oplatki are often stamped with an elaborate Christmas scene.

Adult Catechism: Please come and learn about your beautiful church and how it brings blessing to yourself and others in deepening your faith. It is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month @10am in the Cow Palace.



## *Faith Formation*

With the winter weather upon us, I need to inform families of the winter school protocol for the school. Should it be necessary to cancel classes due to the weather, I will have it announced on the local weather channels as well as send out a mass email advising that classes are canceled no later than 8am. Should a family feel the weather is too bad for the family to come to faith formation, I leave up to the family's decision to decide if they should come. Safety for your family should always be first.

Parents, please remember that all people entering the building are required to wear a face mask. NO exceptions. There will be extra if needed for the children if required

This Sunday the children will be signing around the Christmas tree on the 2nd floor. Parents are welcome to join the children as well. If you wish to join the children in choring, please return to the school by 10:30. Masks are required.

Classes will resume again on January 16th, 2022. I will be on vacation January 16th & January 23rd. In my absence Mrs. Doggett and Mr. Wolkowicz will be there to monitor the program for me.

## **Mass Schedule**

**Saturday 4pm**

**Sunday 7:30 AM, 8:30AM, 10AM Polish Mass and 11am**

Let's remember that as Catholics, it is important to attend Sunday Mass. At Mass we are able to stand mystically at the foot of the cross and witness for ourselves the same self-sacrifice of Jesus, in an unbloody manner. Mass is a celebration of this sacrifice. It is the active participation of all that come together in the place of worship. While Faith Formation before the 11AM Mass, all families are welcome to this Mass. If unable to attend this Mass, please attend the Church Masses. Faith Formation Classes alone do not teach your children about their faith. It is important they see their faith in the Mass.



## **SCHEDULE OF MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS AND JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup>**

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve - 4pm & Midnight Mass 11pm**

**Saturday Dec 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day -10am**

**(There will be no 4pm vigil mass)**

**Saturday January 1<sup>st</sup> Vigil of the Epiphany**

**Mass 4pm**

**Sunday January 2<sup>nd</sup> Epiphany**

**Usual Mass schedule 7:30, 8:30, 10:00 and 11:00**



**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**First Reading: MI 5:1-4a**

**Responsorial Psalm: PS: 80:2-3, 15-16-18-19**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Heb: 10:5-10**

**Gospel: Luke 1:39-45**



**While I have found these wonderful reflections on the Sunday Gospel, it is not meant to take the place of the Sunday Mass. Remember to attend Mass to hear Fr. Arthur or Deacon Kirk's a much better spiritual teaching of the Gospel reading**

**This week's Gospel is Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth.**

Though the power of Mary's song (the Magnificat) always cries for justice and hope and this year particularly drew us to what we learn about the way of God in the support that Elizabeth offers to Mary. After Mary gives her big "YES" to God's plan for the salvation of the world, past, present and future, Elizabeth speaks of her blessedness.

It is Elizabeth's words and actions that are center focus in this section of the text. In the first verse (39), Mary is active in going to Elizabeth, but we don't even hear her speak her greeting—immediately the text shifts our point of view from looking and watching Mary to taking the point of view *of* Mary, looking at and listening to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth and in-utero-baby-John have a positive visceral physical reaction to the sound of Mary's voice. We've all seen the videos of surprise homecomings of family members: our bodies feel and respond to what we deeply love and long for, sometimes "betraying" us in public spaces; like Elizabeth we might uncontrollably respond by crying out in tears and yells and hugs, or even shocking stillness.

But adding another layer to the incident, we are told that Elizabeth's response is an expression of the presence of the Holy Spirit, who fills her. Elizabeth and baby John receive knowledge from the Lord about what is true, but not yet able to be seen or proven, what will only be able to be held onto by faith: the Messiah is here in their home and the Messiah is in young Mary's womb.

Part of the Holy Spirit's filling of Elizabeth (verse 41) are the words she speaks. Notice that she isn't offering a blessing to Mary, she is recognizing Mary's state as "blessed." Mary has already been blessed as part of the process of saying yes to God (what she went through with the angel Gabriel), and Jesus is blessed as God's Son. Here in verse 42, Elizabeth is not offering her own words, but the words and opinion of the divine Holy Spirit on behalf of the whole Trinity, who has filled her with himself and given her these words. Like the Father and the Spirit do at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3.21-22), what Elizabeth says as an agent of God is a statement of what is already true.

Here in verse 42, Elizabeth repeats the verbal form of blessed twice, and each time it is in the perfect passive participle. Without getting too bogged down in grammar rules about these things, we can note that each aspect, the perfect tense (a completed event that continues to have impact into the present), the passive mood (where action is done *to* the subject rather than *by* the subject), and the use of the participle form (it's a periphrastic participle which emphasizes the continuous force of the verb) highlights the nature of the blessedness as coming from God—with lasting power and effect—upon Mary.

If Mary came to Elizabeth with any doubts or fears about what she has just said yes to, hopefully these words from God through Elizabeth, along with seeing that what Gabriel said God did for Elizabeth is true (Elizabeth being visibly pregnant in her old age) quelled them.

In verse 43, Elizabeth offers her personal response: *Why me?!?! How wonderful and amazing that it would be for me to meet the Saviour of the world!* The late Thomas Gillespie called this the question of awe-filled incredulity. Elizabeth is in awe that the blessing of God continues to be showered upon her. For Elizabeth, becoming pregnant with John was already the best blessing she thought she could receive (Luke 1.24-25) and now she's realizing that there are even greater things to come from God's hand for her and for the whole world. If this were playing out today, Elizabeth might have simply said, "How did I get so lucky?"

Then, there's the beautiful statement of faith that Elizabeth adds to the word of the Holy Spirit (verse 45). Taking in the whole scene, the filling and word of the Lord, the leaping child in her womb, the awe-filled response to getting to be part of the coming of the Kingdom of God, Elizabeth says, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." This time, "blessed" is the noun form *makarios* (the same word used in the Beatitudes). *Blessed* is the one who believes—words that Jesus will speak to Thomas over thirty years later...

Who is Elizabeth referring to? Who is the singular "she"? Is she still reflecting about herself, or is she thinking of Mary, who stands in front of her? It is likely that she is speaking of Mary, since she has just referenced how hearing Mary speak caused baby John to leap with joy in her own womb. But it seems to me that even if she is speaking about Mary, she is speaking out of her own personal experience of being blessed, of believing the impossible is possible with God, choosing to live by faith despite the circumstances, of being unable to prove that a miracle is just that: the work of God.

For Elizabeth's words are not just true for Mary; they are true for herself. They are true for anyone who chooses to stand firm, with faith, on the promises of our God and turn their eyes to heaven to anxiously await their fulfillment.

Mary truly has come to the right place to be encouraged to walk in the obedience she has just submitted to, because Mary has sought out a fellow sojourner, one who also submits to the presence of God and is living with awe-filled eyes turned to the promise-giver to be the promise-keeper. May it be so for us. May we join in saying yes to the being part of God's actions to bring his Kingdom on earth, and may we submit to the filling of the Holy Spirit to be agents of God's good news, and may we encourage one another on the journey of faithfulness.



A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:39-41

Today is the last Sunday before Christmas. Are you getting excited? I am! What are some of the things that you look forward to at Christmas — besides opening presents of course? What are some of the family traditions your family has? (Give the children time to share.) The thing I remember most about the Christmases of my childhood is our family get-together. We almost always went to my Grandmother's house and had a big family get-together. It was often the only time during the year when I got to see some of my aunts, uncles, and cousins. We had so much fun visiting, eating, and playing games. In my mind, one of the very best things about Christmas is celebrating the birth of Jesus with family.

Our Gospel reading today tells what happened after God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Mary that she was going to have a baby and that she would name him Jesus. Can you imagine how Mary, a teenager engaged to marry a young carpenter, must have felt to hear news like that? After she recovered from the shock, the Bible tells us that Mary hurried to the home of a relative, Elizabeth, to tell her the news. Elizabeth was also expecting a baby and the Bible tells us that when she heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

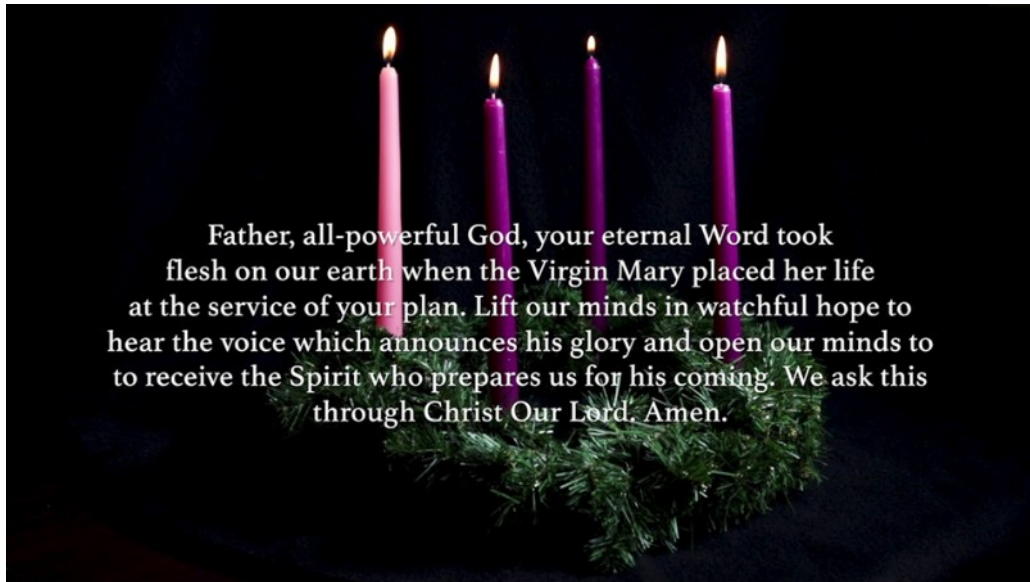
Elizabeth gave a glad cry and said to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed." That is amazing! Before Mary even said a word about having a child, Elizabeth knew it and she knew that the child was going to be a very special child! "Why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord would visit me?" Elizabeth said. "You are a blessed woman because you have believed that the Lord would do what he said."

So, at the very beginning of the Christmas story was an event that was shared with family and it is a time that has meaning to us as families today. As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, it is certainly appropriate that we celebrate it with our families just as Mary did with Elizabeth.

Heavenly Father, we are thankful for this time of joyful celebration of our Savior's birth. We pray that we will honor his birthday as a time of celebration with our families. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

## Weekly Prayer

**This week we start preparing our hearts and homes for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ on December 25. This week prayer is on the 4th week of Advent. Let us continue to prepare our families for the Birth of Our Lord Jesus.**





### **COVID Update:**

**New York State has instituted a mask mandate in all public places effective December 13 to January 15. It is being done as a safety precaution and out of the utmost concern for one's neighbor. Bishop Lucia expects that all parishes in the Diocese of Syracuse will cooperate with this important public health matter and comply with the mask mandate.**

Attached are fliers included from the Diocese for all included a Letter from Bishop Lucia and recipe for Christmas cookies

9) From the Care for our Common Home Committee:

### **CHRISTMAS SEASON REFLECTION FOR 2021**

Perhaps God said, hmmm, what else can I do to show how much I love my people? I have already given them a beautiful and bountiful home called the Earth, so many different types of life, and so many descendants from Adam and Abraham. Oh, I know! I will send them to my Son to save them and show them the way. He shall be the human form of love, mercy, healing, and joy without fear and without end. With Him, they shall more fully understand and feel my love, hope and everlasting life. How can they not help but become my arms and legs in this world showing my love, mercy, and healing to others and to my Earth.

Let's feel it and embody Hope, Joy, and Love for ourselves and for others this Christmas season and throughout 2022. What else matters?

The Lord blesses us during this Christmas season and indeed during all the days of our lives (from Psalm 128). Let heaven and nature sing !

## **From the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry:**

Registration is now open for the Syracuse Diocese Pilgrimage for Life youth trip to Washington, D.C.!

On this powerful 3-day experience, participants will travel to Washington D.C., attend Mass with Bishop Lucia, enjoy a guided walking tour of the monuments, see the Smithsonian Museums, join an evening [Youth Rally](#) with Sr. Josephine Garret, CSFN and music by Dave Moore, and of course, participate in the **National March for Life**. This is open to youth in grades 7-12. \$199 per person includes: travel, lodging, and most meals; tickets to Life Is Very Good Youth Rally; and a tour of the National Monuments.

Click [HERE](#) for more information and to register.

Office of Family/Respect Life

### **1. *March for Life - January 20-21, 2022***

Join this one-day pilgrimage to Washington, DC for adults and families! This trip includes Mass with Bishop Lucia at the National Basilica, participation in the March for Life with the diocesan group, transportation, meals and a diocesan scarf. The bus will pick up passengers in four locations, Utica, Syracuse, Cortland and Binghamton. Cost: Adults \$50. Young Adults (18-25) \$25. Maximum Family Rate: \$125. For more information, contact Jen Brown at 315-472-6754 Ext. 7 or email [familyrepsectlife@syrdio.org](mailto:familyrepsectlife@syrdio.org). To register online go to [march4lifesyracuse2022.eventbrite.com](http://march4lifesyracuse2022.eventbrite.com).

## ***World Marriage Day***

**The Diocese of Syracuse will celebrate *World Marriage Day* on Sunday, February 13, 2022** by hosting a special Mass with Bishop Lucia at the Cathedral at 2:00pm. Couples married 20, 25, and 50+ years in 2022 will be recognized by receiving a certificate during Mass. A mailing will arrive next week with flyers, posters and a letter with information from Bishop Lucia. See attached flier for posting