

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT GAUDETE SUNDAY

DECEMBER 15, 2024



## THIS WEEKEND'S READINGS

**First Reading - Zephaniah 3:14-18a**

*A savior is promised to Israel.*

**Second Reading - Philippians 4:4-7**

*Rejoice always because the Lord is near.*

**Gospel Reading - Luke 3:10-18**

*John the Baptist teaches the path of repentance and announces Christ.*

**Focus: The Lord rejoices over us.**

According to the prophet Zephaniah, the Lord rejoices – yes *rejoices* – over us in gladness, and Saint Paul says to have no anxiety at all. If we trust in the unconditional love God has for us, our hearts and minds will know the true peace that only he can give.

### **Liturgy of the Word:**

In the first reading, Zephaniah foretells the restoration of Jerusalem when the King of Israel, the Lord, will be in their midst. Paul instructs the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord always, for the Lord is near. In the Gospel, John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus by baptizing and preaching the Good News.



## MASS INTENTIONS

**5 p.m.:** The Visco Family, Nancy Wood and Victoria Ferrera

**10 a.m.:** Rosalina & Domingo Rodriguez, Nancy and Jessica Lancellotti

## CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, December 24, Christmas Eve  
5 p.m.: Vigil Mass and Pageant  
8 p.m.: Vigil Mass

Wednesday, December 25, Christmas Day  
10 a.m.: Mass

Sign up sheets are on the bulletin board for Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors and Lead Ushers



## IN THE DECEMBER LOOP



All gifts, with the angel tags attached, are due by **Sunday, December 15**, so that they can be delivered well before Christmas.



The **Christmas Pageant cast and Youth Choir** will meet immediately after the 10 a.m. Mass on Sunday for practice. The dress rehearsal will take place after Mass next Sunday, December 22.



Reconciliation Monday is **this Monday, December 16**. There will be priests available at **Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church** in Middletown from 2-4 and 6-8 p.m. There will be **NO** confessions heard that day at St. Paul's. However, confessions will be heard here at 3:30 p.m. next **Saturday, December 21**, NOT the typical fourth Saturday of the month.



The next Game Night is this **Friday, December 20**, and open to everyone. Bring your snacks and a favorite game to share!



Volunteers are needed to help decorate the church for Christmas after Mass on **Sunday, December 22**. Many hands make light work.



The Adult Faith Formation Committee will meet after the 10 a.m. Mass on **Sunday, December 29**, to discuss ideas for 2025. Everyone is welcome to share suggestions about faith-enriching programs



**Oplatki**, or "Angel Bread" in Polish, have been used since early Christian times as part of the Christmas Eve celebration in Poland. These Christmas wafers shadow the Eucharistic meal shared at Mass. In the Polish ritual, typically the eldest member of the family will give a piece of the wafer to each family member with a blessing - thereby expressing unconditional love and forgiveness. There are still some packages of Oplatki available.



## **AN AFTERNOON RICH WITH TRADITION, SYMBOLISM**

The Advent wreath, woven with symbolism, has been used by Christians in their spiritual preparation for Christmas since the Middle Ages. That tradition isn't quite that old at St. Paul's; however, Morag Cuff took over those evergreen reins about 10 years ago because she didn't want to see this multigenerational event fall by the wayside.

More than 30 families – from families of one or two to extended families of parents, grandparents and children – gathered on December 1, the first day of Advent, to create their own Advent wreath to take home. There were also kid-friendly trivia questions to answer and a healthy sprinkling of Christmas spirit.

The candles were placed in a circle of greens. Some personalized their creation with holly cuttings supplied by Ann Bollman, Deacon John's sister,

straight from her garden.

Evergreens, including holly, depict continuous life. The shape of the wreath – a circle – also has no beginning or end. Thus, our immortal soul is symbolized, too.

The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. Purple candles remind us of prayer, penance and preparatory sacrifices, while the rose candle, lit on this, the third week and midpoint of Advent, reflects the joy that is a deep happiness rooted in faith and trust.

Morag's hope is that those at the hour-and-a-half session that afternoon have continued to use weekly the prayer pamphlet provided as the candles are lit at home. After all, home is where family traditions take root and then soar!

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Regular Sunday Collection

**November 25-December 1 – \$ 5,788.73**

Envelopes: \$ 2,945.00 – Online: \$ 2,843.73

**December 1-8 – \$ 7,824.13**

Envelopes: \$ 2,564.00 – Online: \$ 5,260.13

**THANK YOU!**

## **MASS ATTENDANCE**

November 30 – December 1

**5 p.m. – 90      10 a.m. – 180**

December 7-8

**5 p.m. – 74                      10 a.m. – 225**

*Don't forget to grab a 2025 Catholic calendar, courtesy of Rich Lalli of Gagan Funeral Home.*

