

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL

SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER

Christmas: The Nativity of the Lord

December 25, 2022



CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

Holyday Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holyday proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

Department Telephone: 508.363.6246

Chapel Website: www.ourladyofprovidence.net

MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 24 *Christmas Eve: Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord*

4:00pm +Edward Manahan —13th anniversary by his wife

Sunday, December 25 *Christmas Day: Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord*

7:30am +John & Mary Murray by their family

4:00pm +Stephen L'Esperance

Monday, December 26 *Saint Stephen, the first martyr*

12:00nn +Jan & Marianna Piascik

Tuesday, December 27 *Saint John, Apostle & Evangelist*

12:00nn +Stephen L'Esperance

Wednesday, December 28 *The Holy Innocents, martyrs*

12:00nn +Gary L. Somers

Thursday, December 29 *Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas—St. Thomas Becket*

12:00nn +Janet Howard by her cousin

Friday, December 30 *Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph*

12:00nn Asking God for good health for Pamela Deres

Saturday, December 31 *New Year's Eve: Vigil of the Solemnity of Holy Mary Mother of God*

4:00pm +John & Lois Sheeran

Sunday, January 1 *New Year's Day: Solemnity of Holy Mary Mother of God - Prayer for Peace*

7:30am +Names enrolled in the OLP Purgatorial Society 2022

4:00pm +John & Mary Murray by their family

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: **Sunday** is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. **Solemnities** honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. **Feasts** must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. **Memorials** are of two types: Either the observance is an **obligatory memorial**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding of One of the Three Gospels of Christmas—Mass at Night

As a Gospel writer, Saint Luke is not only focused on the words and deeds of Jesus, but also he is concerned with the larger context of the birth, public life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Old Testament. So, in the Christmas Gospel for Mass at Night, the evangelist carefully places the birth of the Child Jesus within the context of the census ordered by Quirinius who was governor of Syria. The census required that Joseph leave Nazareth and go to Galilee of Judea "to the city of David that is called Bethlehem." There is why Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. The conditions surrounding the Child's birth were punctuated by danger and poverty. Though not unique, those elements constitute a precarious situation, fraught with danger, which are Lucan characteristics. Despite the local governor, the census had been ordered by Caesar Augustus and the scope of that imperial order applied to the known Roman world. Nevertheless, such imperial glory paled in comparison when applied to the Infant lying in the manger. Whether in Nazareth or in Bethlehem, Joseph behaved in an exemplary fashion. Ever-obedient to God, he took Mary, though obviously with Child, into his home as his wife. He gave to Caesar what was civil authority's due and went to Nazareth. Then, revealed to him by an angel that the safety of Jesus was threatened by King Herod, being led by Joseph, the Holy Family fled into Egypt. Later on, when told by another angel that it was safe to return, they settled in Nazareth. On the holiest of nights, while Bethlehem was enveloped in silence and humility reigned, "shepherds in that region, living in the fields" saw "the glory of the Lord" in the heavens. The news of the Savior's birth is announced to certain shepherds by an "angel of the Lord" who are the appointed messengers of God's salvation. The glory comes from on high as was true during the Exodus and the consecration of the Temple when God's glory (or shekhinah) was dramatically manifested. Suddenly, one angel became "a multitude of the heavenly host" who sing God's praises and give glory to God – "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." The prophetic promises, dated from long ago, are now fulfilled on this night of nights. The shepherds receive a sign needed to discover and recognize the Savior, "an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Given the fact that they were shepherds, a manger was something they knew well and it is conceivable that given their familiarity with mangers, they may have thought that the Child might be one of their

Saint Augustine of Hippo - *Sermo 191*

When the Marker of time, the Word of the Father, was made flesh. He gave us His birthday in time, and he without whose divine bidding no day runs its course, in His Incarnation reserved one day for Himself. He Himself with the Father precedes all spans of time; but on this day, issuing from His mother, He stepped into the tide of the years. Man's Maker was made man, that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother's breasts; that the Bread might be hungry, the Fountain thirst, the Light sleep, the Way be tired from the journey; that the Truth might be accused by false witnesses, the Judge of the living and the dead be judged by a mortal judge, Justice be sentenced by the unjust, the Teacher be suspended on wood; that Strength might be made weak, that He who makes well might be wounded, that Life might die.

own. In Luke's Gospel, there are three canticles of praise (the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the Nunc dimittis) which circumscribe the infancy Gospel. Even the angelic announcement to the shepherds ends with words that constitute a hymn of praise. In the Old Testament, angels frequently have a liturgical role. Today, "we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the Heavenly army" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 8). Like the angels, all people are called to give God glory and worship; but unlike the angels who have received the light of glory, we cannot see the Most Holy Trinity who dwells in unapproachable light. Belonging to the heavenly realm, angels eternally sing the praises of the thrice-holy God. Though pure spirits, yet still creatures, angels have a role in regard to the created world. By their angelic assistance and through their ascending and descending, our earthly praise of God is given a cosmic dimension: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* – Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are filled with your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Worship rendered to the Father is the creaturely response to God's gift and doing what is right brings about the kind of peace that came to earth, long ago, in the birth of Jesus. Among the prophecies of Isaiah, there is a poetic description of the birth of a royal child which foretold future revelations. It incorporates prophetic names that were found in the book's earlier chapters (Is 7-9): "Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace" (Heb. *pele'*, *yo'etz*, *el*, *gibbor*, *avi' ad shalom*).

Eucharistic Revival - 19 June 2022 to the National Eucharistic Congress, Indianapolis 17-21 July 2024

Et incarnatus est - And Became Flesh

The high point of the Nicene Creed is the Latin expression *Et Incarnatus est* which refers to the Word made Flesh. One could never expect that God would descend to become man. However, the fact that the Word would come down to earth from heaven begins the highest and greatest moment in salvation history. No wonder we are asked to bow when reciting those words during the recitation of the Creed. Christmas is about how the eternal Logos enters into creation, by means of the Holy Spirit, and takes on flesh through the Incarnation. In doing so, humanity is transformed and human nature is recreated! Then the possibility of becoming God-like begins and, thus, salvation is made possible. The Eucharist is the same because the Mass is about how the Holy Spirit once again enters into creation and transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. God came into our world through Christ, just as Jesus now comes into our world through the Eucharist.

Understanding Why the Virgin Mary Is Rightfully Called the Holy Mother of God

The Greek word for this Marian title is *Theotokos*, which literally means "God-bearer" and its Latin expression *Deipara*. The title God-bearer is one of the oldest and most commonly used titles for Mary. It was dogmatically adopted by the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) as an assertion of the divinity of Christ. Another version of the title (Lat. *Sancta Dei genetrix*) also appears in one of the oldest known Christian prayers to Mary: *Beneath Your Protection* (Lat. *Sub tuum praesidium*), an early form of the Memorare dating from the third century. The first Christians called Mary the Mother of God without hesitation, due to Scriptural evidence and logic: Since Jesus was God, and Mary was His mother, then that made her the Mother of God. That sort of logic depends on a principle called the *communicatio idiomatum* (Eng. Communication of Idioms). According to that theological principle, in view of the unity of Christ's person, His human and divine attributes or experiences might properly be referred to His other nature; thus, whatever one says about either of Christ's natures can be truly said of Christ Himself. That's because His two natures, the divine and the human nature, were united in Him. Jesus is one divine person.

Mass Schedule: New Year's Eve & Day

Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God

Saturday, December 31

4:00pm Vigil Mass

Sunday, January 1, 2023

7:30am & 4:00pm - Holy Day Masses

Today is born a Savior—Christ the Lord!

The Latin term *admirabile commercium* or, in English, *marvelous exchange* is a long-standing, summary of salvation history by some of the early Church Fathers. This theological expression sums up Christ's act of redemption from the Incarnation to His Passion and Resurrection in terms of a marvelous *commercium* or *exchange*, which occurs between divinity and humanity. In a better-known expression, that same notion is stated by saying that God became man so that we might become divine. In the antiphon for Second Vespers, concluding the Octave of Christmas, you will find this, "O marvelous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of a virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." Then, not a decade ago, Pope Benedict XVI described Christmas in this way, "The theology and spirituality of Christmas use a phrase to describe this event, they speak of an *admirabile commercium*, that is, a wondrous exchange between divinity and humanity" (General Audience 4 January 2012, par. 7). One of the strongest advocates of this "great exchange" imagery in the early Church was St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430). On Christmas morning of 414, the bishop of Hippo declared that there could be "no greater grace than what has now shone upon us from God: the only Son of God has become the Son of Man, making sons and daughters of men, sons and daughters of God" (*Sermo* 185.3). Such a divine descent, from on high to the earth below, Augustine identified Christ assuming human nature as the *magna mutation* or the great transformation: "For your sakes the one who was the Son of God became the Son of man, in order that you who were the sons of men might be turned into sons and daughters of God.... You were sons of men and you have become sons and daughters of God. He has shared with us our ills, and he is going to give us his goods" (*Sermo* 121.5). In one of his tracts, Augustine said, "He descended for us; let us ascend to him" (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 12.8). The sole purpose of this exchange of natures is to elevate human persons "up" to the very life of the Trinity: "God is with us in order that we may be with him; he who came down to us in order to be with us is at work now to draw us up to himself" (*Ennarrationes in Psalmos* 145:1). The Church clearly understands that the full significance of the Nativity of the Messiah, once long ago in Bethlehem, would be incomplete without simultaneously acknowledging the new life for those who have now been born into eternity. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as a commentary on Antiphon 1 of Evening Prayer for January 1st, the Catechism says, "To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more

to become 'children of God' we must be 'born from above' or 'born of God'. Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this 'marvelous exchange'" (CCC, n. 526). Eastern Christian theology offers an aid to a better understanding of the fuller dimensions of the why of the Incarnation through its concept of *theosis* (Gk. θεώσις) or divinization: "God becomes man so that we might become like God" said Saint Athanasius, in order that we can live comfortably with God forever. Here, then, is the *admirabile commercium*: God "exchanges" his divinity for our humanity, thus enabling us to "exchange" our weakness for his divine glory" — the glory of which the angels sang to the shepherds of Bethlehem or the mystery of the infinite God become finite man. In truth, however, the challenge to our imaginations has less to do with the how of what the Divine Office calls this marvelous exchange than with the why. Posit an all-powerful and infinite God, and most of us wouldn't have too much trouble with the idea that such a God could do anything, including coming into the finite world He created. The real question is why God would want to do such a thing: to submit His divinity to the limits of our humanity? Gerard Manley Hopkins, in a poem to the Virgin Mary, wrote, "Of her who not only/Gave God's infinity/Dwindled into infancy...But mothers each new grace/That does now reach our race." Not only is the Cross a scandal, but so is the Incarnation. For the answer faith gives to the question of why the Word became flesh is salvific love: a love so great that it required, not an argument, but a demonstration. From the divine point of view, then, the Incarnation makes perfectly good sense for this reason: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, of his boundless love became what we are that he might make us what he himself is" (St. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* V). But there is a second reason: Not only must our human nature be elevated, but the sin and death that oppress the human race must be overcome. To be at home in the communion of the Blessed Trinity we need to be redeemed as well as divinized. What the Son is by nature we become by the twofold grace of adoption which fills us with joy and by redemption which dispels the sadness of sin. "There cannot rightly be any room for sorrow," insists St. Leo the Great in the first Christmas sermon of his pontificate, "in a place where life has been born. By dispelling fear of death, life fills us with joy about the promised eternity....[T]he Word of God, God the Son of God, who 'in the beginning was with God, through whom all things were made and without whom was made nothing,' to free human beings from eternal death was himself made human" (*Sermo* 21, 1 & 2).