

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God
January 1, 2023



Oration on Simeon and Anna

While the old man [Simeon] was thus exultant, and rejoicing with exceeding great and holy joy, that which had before been spoken of in a figure by the prophet Isaiah, the holy Mother of God now manifestly fulfilled

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

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

Holy day Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

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

4:00pm +John & Lois Sheeran

Sunday, January 1 *Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God - Octave Day of Christmas*

7:30am Names of the faithful departed enrolled in OLP Purgatorial Society 2022

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

Monday, January 2 *Saint Basil the Great & Saint Gregory Nazianzen, bishops & doctors*²

12:00nn For the health of Cleta Roy

Tuesday, January 3 *The Most Holy Name of Jesus*²

12:00nn +Stephen L'Esperance

Wednesday, January 4 *Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious (USA)*¹

12:00nn For the health of Cleta Roy

Thursday, January 5 *Saint John Neumann, bishop (USA)*¹

12:00nn For the health of Cleta Roy

Friday, January 6 *Saint André Bessette, religious*² - *First Friday: Devotion to the Sacred Heart*

12:00nn +Allen Cutty

Saturday, January 7 *Vigil of the Epiphany of the Lord*

4:00pm For good health and God's blessings upon the Aluede family

Sunday, January 8 *Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord*

7:30am For the particular intentions of an SVH employee

4:00pm Seeking God's assistance for various members of a particular 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 This Week's Gospel

This annual observance, honoring Mary for her Divine Motherhood, accords to her the English title *Holy Mother of God*. Those words are a literal translation of the Latin title *Mater Dei* which, in turn, is a rendering of the Greek title Θεοτόκος or Theotokos meaning *Bearer of God* which was dogmatically adopted by the First Council of Ephesus (431 AD) as an assertion of the divinity of Christ. As the octave or the eighth day after the feast of Christmas, the Gospel honoring Mary as the Holy Mother of God repeats what was heard in the Mass at Dawn on Christmas Day. Yet, this one further verse is added, "When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Lk 2:21). Earlier, in the Annunciation, the archangel Gabriel had told Mary that she was to name her Child Jesus (Lk 1:31). The circumcision of Jesus, according to the dictates found in the Book of Leviticus, was considered a preamble to Mary's maternal purification, which had to occur thirty-three days after the birth of a male offspring (Lev 12:3-4). Such a seemingly side-comment reveals Mary's obedience, not only to all that the angel had told her, but also she willingly submitted to the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, as well. Though other biblical figures also had the same name Jesus or Joshua, Flavius Josephus—the Jewish priest, scholar and historian—who wrote in Koine Greek, the same language as that of the New Testament, refers to at least twenty different people with the name Jesus (Gk. Ἰησοῦς). After Mary abided with the angel's demand, by naming her Son Jesus, the name Jesus has become the most revered of all names, but it also identifies who this newborn Son really is and what lies ahead for Him or the mission that He would eventually undertake. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two disciples to cast out demons and to work miracles, they were to do those wondrous deeds in His name. Some others, though, exorcised demons, using the name of Jesus, yet the Lord told His overly-concerned disciples not to prevent them (Mk 9:38-40). Later on, the exorcists of Ephesus "tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those with evil spirits... The person with the evil spirit sprang at them and subdued them all" (Acts 19:13, 16). To invoke the name of Jesus constitutes an appeal to the Lord that requires faith in the fact of the salvation that Christ offers to those who trust in Him and who believe that He is the Savior. Like every mother, the Virgin Mary had to wonder what her Son would become; however, because He was the Son of the Most High, she knew He would be great,

Saint Justin Martyr – Dialogue with Trypho

He is the Son of God, and since we call Him by that same title, we have understood that this is really He and that He proceeded before all creatures from the Father by His power and will (for in prophetic writings He is called Wisdom, the Day, the East, Sword, Stone, Rod, Jacob and Israel, always in a different way); and that He is born of the Virgin, in order that the disobedience caused by the serpent might be destroyed in the same manner in which it had originated. For Eve, an undefiled virgin, conceived the word of the serpent, and brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary, filled with faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced to her the good tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her, and therefore the Holy One to be born of her would be the Son of God, answered: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." And, indeed, she gave birth to Him, concerning whom we have shown so many passages of Scripture were written, and by whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who have become like the serpent, but frees from death those who repent of their sins and believe in Christ.

Jesus would sit on the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob, forever (Lk 1:32-22). Though she had not asked the angel Gabriel about what her miraculously conceived Child would become, Mary's fiat or her yes was all that the angel needed to hear, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." By agreeing to God's mysterious plan for her and her Child, Mary became the Mother of God. As the Holy Child grew into manhood, the evangelists record nothing that she said, though Mary "kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." When Mary went to visit her kinswoman, Elizabeth's declaration upon her arrival sums up Mary's unique divine Motherhood, "Most blessed (Gk. *Εὐλογημένη*) are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk 1:42). Elizabeth's exclamation is made our own when we pray, "Hail Mary, full of grace." To be declared blessed designates who or what has been labeled as such to be formally set aside or consecrated for God's purposes. Being blessed is an action of God that lends to the item or person who is blessed being given divine sanction and, so, becoming an instrument in the heavenly way to happiness and fulfillment. Those who are blessed, having received God's favor, within whom divine grace inhabits, this blessed man or woman is also just or righteous, since they directly share in the justice and sanctity of God. Honoring Mary as the Holy Mother of God, doing so on the first day of a new year, calls to mind not only that she is the humble servant of God, but that she has been raised, by the grace of God, to the fairest of our race because she brought into the world its Savior.

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

Ave verum corpus - Hail, true body.

The opening verse of the Eucharistic chant *Ave verum corpus, natum de Maria Virgine* (Eng. Hail, true body, born of the Virgin Mary) originated in the 13th century and has been set to music multiple times most famously by Mozart in the last year of his life. In the hymn, you hear the first link of Mary with the Eucharist as remembrance. The Mother of God has provided flesh for her Son, who is the Bread of Life for us. "The bread that I will give," Jesus would say, "is my flesh for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51). The Virgin Mary's consent to the Incarnation of the Word in her womb is the condition, which makes Communion possible. According to Saint John Paul II, the Old Testament prophets, Hosea in particular, are affirmations of covenanted love, but they must be viewed as only a courtship or betrothal in light of the mystery of the Incarnation. For it is at the Annunciation that God and man become two in one flesh. On this point, St. Thomas, again summarizing the tradition, wrote: ". . . there is a certain spiritual marriage between the Son of God and human nature. And therefore through the Annunciation there was awaited the consent of the Virgin acting in the place of all of human nature" (ST, III, q. 30, a.1c). *O Jesus, son of Mary, have pity on me.*

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

The Virgin Mary's divine motherhood broadens the Christmas spotlight. Mary has a crucial role to play in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Mary's role as Mother of God places her in a unique position in God's redemptive plan. She is the Mother of God in the sense that she carried in her womb a divine person—Jesus Christ, God "in the flesh" (2 Jn 7, cf. Jn 1:14)—and in the sense that she contributed the genetic matter to the human form God took in Jesus Christ.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria – First Letter to Nestorius

"This expression, however, 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1:14), can mean nothing else but that he partook of flesh and blood like to us; he made our body his own, and came forth man from a woman, not casting off his existence as God, or his generation of God the Father, but even in taking to himself flesh remaining what he was. This the declaration of the correct faith proclaims everywhere. This was the sentiment of the holy Fathers; therefore they ventured to call the holy Virgin 'the Mother of God,' not as if the nature of the Word or his divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word, being personally united, is said to be born according to the flesh."

EPIPHANY OR THEOPHANY OF THE LORD

Any liturgical celebration, like the Lord's Epiphany, refers to facts situated in time and which, as such, are never repeatable. Yet, due to the fact that they are events in the history of the world's salvation, God holds the initiative and, though, invisible, He is the principal protagonist or agent. These events, though happening once for all, transcend the time in which they belong in a salvific way. It is because they constitute divine revelation and witness to His plan of salvation that these saving events actually accomplish, they bear spiritual fruit that does not perish. The liturgy re-presents them, which is to say that it makes the past event present and active today. Not in their material components, but in the grace of salvation that they sacramentally embody. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "...Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations. Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning toward the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament. The Epiphany shows that 'the full number of the nations' now takes its 'place in the family of the patriarchs,' and acquires *Israelitica dignitas* (are made 'worthy of the heritage of Israel')" [CCC, n. 528]. Among the four evangelists, Saint Matthew is the only gospel writer who recounts the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem. Those Wise Men had come "from the East," looking for "the newborn king of the Jews" because they had "seen his star at its rising." The passage is carefully constructed and edited in order to tell the mystery of the Messiah's birth. Following the genealogy of Jesus which serves as an introduction, the first two chapters of Saint Matthew's Gospel recount Christ's infancy in five episodes which allude to five prophecies found in the Old Testament: (1) the Savior's virginal conception is linked with the prophecy of Isaiah (Is 7:14 - "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel"); (2) the adoration of the Child by the Magi is amplified by a reference to the prophecy of Micah (Mic 5:1-3 - "But you Bethlehem-Ephrathah least among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is a ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth is borne, then the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel. He shall take his place as shepherd by the strength of the Lord, by the majestic name of the Lord, his God; and they shall dwell securely, for now his greatness reaches to the ends of the earth"); (3) the Holy Family's flight into Egypt is seen as the fulfillment of a prophecy by Hosea (Hos 11:1 - "When Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son"); (4) the slaughter of the Innocents finds its occurrence prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 31:15 - "In Ramah is heard the sound of sobbing, bitter weeping! Rachel mourns for her children, she refuses to be consoled for her children—they are no more!"); and (5) the Holy Family's

return to Nazareth as an evocation of the prophecy that "He shall be called a Nazorean." Saint Matthew affirms the fact that the Savior was born in Bethlehem because the Scriptures had indicated that salvation would begin there and Micah's prophecy serves as its verification. Yet, despite the town being small in size and relatively obscure, those minimal elements are in stark contrast with the enormity of what occurred there on the first Christmas. Matthew edits Micah's prophecy by identifying the place as Bethlehem of Judea (not Ephrathah) and, then, deepens the reference to the "ruler in Israel" into a shepherd-king which connotes the Davidic heritage (cf. 2 Sam 5:2). There are centuries-old commentaries on the sacred Hebrew text that are known as *midrash* and *targum*. *Midrash* is the rabbinic commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures, which usually takes the form of an edifying paraphrase of the text, enriched with elements of legend or folklore. *Targum* is a translation-interpretation of the Hebrew text that enjoyed an extended period of oral transmission. Saint Matthew, as seen in his infancy account often invokes the fulfillment of prophecies. These mysterious visitors from the east are not identified, neither as to national origin or even their number. Tradition has it that the Magi (Gk. μάγοι) were kings - a conclusion influenced by the psalmist, "May the kings of Tarshish and the islands bring tribute, the kings of Arabia and Seba offer gifts" (Ps 72:10). The first part of that verse implies kingdoms from the far west of Israel, beyond the Jordan, and the second part is a reference to kingdoms from the far south. These Wise Men are depicted with a Phrygian cap and dressed in the garments of Persian nobility. During the sixth century before Christ, in the land of the Medes, there was a sixth tribe of the Medians known as the Magi. They were a priestly caste of a religion identified as Zoroastrianism. As sages, they examined the stars and the heavens, as well as believed in the coming of a universal king or Messiah. The names of these kings are first attested to by an early 6th document in Greek that was later translated into Latin in a work known as *Excerpta Latina Barbari*: "At that time in the reign of Augustus, on 1st January the Magi brought him gifts and worshipped him. The names of the Magi were Bithisarea, Melchior and Gathaspa" (*ELB*, 51B). Melchior was king of Persia. Caspar was seen as king of India. Balthazar was thought to be king of Arabia. Some interpretations link the three kings with the three races: Semite, Black, and Indo-Germanic. The Magi bring three gifts: gold (Gk. χρυσόν), frankincense (Gk. λιβάνον) and myrrh (Gk. σμύρναν). These gifts have been given a spiritual significance - gold is a symbol of earthly kingship, frankincense constitutes a symbol of divine origins, and myrrh was an embalming oil that symbolized death. Recall, that Saint Matthew is using Old Testament prophecies that were being fulfilled in Bethlehem. Thus, in the time of King Solomon, "The queen of Sheba...arrived in Jerusalem...with camels bearing spices, a large amount of gold, and precious stones" (1 Kg 10:1-2). Then, the prophet Isaiah had foretold that a day was coming when, "...the wealth of nations shall come to you. Caravans of camels shall cover you, dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come, bearing gold and frankincense..." (Is 60:5b-6). While first arriving in Jerusalem, gaining information from the chief priests and scribes, the Magi expressed their homage to the newborn King of the Jews. Yet, despite King Herod telling them to return and inform him about the new king, in a dream, they were warned to take another route back to their country of origin, which they did.