



The Monthly Visitor Catholic Community Of Lawrence County



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A Message from Deacon Dave



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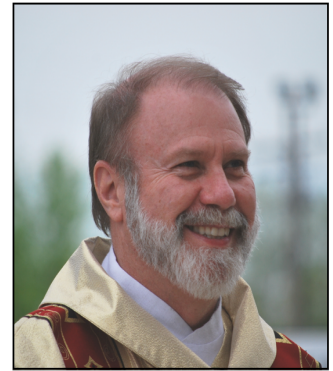
If you know someone who has recently become infirmed or homebound please contact our parish secretary at 275-6539 so that we can add them to our visitation list.

Greetings in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Here we are, already in the season of Advent. Where has this year gone? It seems as though time flies faster and faster with each passing year. If you're like me, though, you love Advent and Christmas. Advent and Christmas are obviously all about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Different things in different years make the message of Christ's coming more present to me, and I am sure you can relate to that as well. The last couple of years, since Kathy has been struggling with her health, our Christmas tree has been one of the things bringing Christ's presence and peace to both Kathy and myself. In fact, we bought another Christmas tree, so we

have two trees now. One in our living room and one in our TV room. We put them up around Thanksgiving. Last year we took them down about mid-April. After the trees were down, we then took a string of colored lights from one of them and draped the lights on the hearth of our fireplace. As we do in the presence of the Christmas tree, we say our daily rosary and our night prayers together, with all the other lights off in the house except for the colored Christmas lights on the hearth. Because of the importance of the Christmas tree to us now, we've decided to bless the Christmas tree this year, hopefully starting an annual tradition. We are hoping that by blessing our Christmas tree it will bring a deeper meaning to our



Deacon Dave Reising

gatherings and prayers around the tree. As Catholics we can be sanctified by the blessing of things in our lives as the blessed objects help draw our minds and hearts to God.

In fact, the Catholic Church has an official blessing for many things, including Christmas trees in the Book of Blessings. The blessing of a Christmas tree has a longer form and a shorter form. I am planning on using the longer form because I want to invite my daughters and their

Anointing of the Sick

The catechism says,

“The anointing of the sick is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death.

Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived”

Prayer Ministry

The question is “What do you want to ask God for today?” Most of us don’t need much time to consider that question because we all have needs and/or wants. Scripture tells us that our prayers are very powerful! If you are interested in having someone from our Parish Prayer Ministry to pray for you or with you, just give Deacon Dave a call at 812-278-1795, and he will set up a time to meet with you.

families to join us when we bless the tree. We will have a little celebration afterwards and make it a special evening.

The blessing can be done by a priest, deacon, or a lay person. If a layperson is going to lead the blessing, the person just needs to follow the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister. The following is the shorter Rite of Blessing of the Christmas tree from the Shorter Book of Blessings:

[All make the sign of the cross]

Leader: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All respond: Now and forever.

Leader: Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of Sacred Scriptures:

[Read one of the following Scriptures]

Genesis 2:4-9, or Titus 3:4-7, or Isaiah 9:1-6, or Ezekiel 17:22-24.

[A layperson says the following prayer with their hands joined]

Leader: Lord our God, we praise You for the light of creation: the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night. We praise You for the light of Israel: the law, the prophets, and the wisdom of Scriptures. We praise You for Jesus Christ, Your Son: He is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace, who fills us with the wonder of Your love.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All respond: Amen.

[At this time the lights on the tree should be illuminated.]

Feel free to use the above to bless your own tree and if you are interested in the longer version, let me know and I can get you a copy of it. Also, if you would like a priest or deacon to lead your family in this or any blessing, they would all be more than happy to be involved.

Have a Merry and Blessed Christmas,

Deacon Dave

First Sunday of Advent

Scripture Readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16, 1Thesalonians 3:12-4:2, Luke 21:25-36

Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future. —Robert H. Schuller

Advent has spawned many traditions over the centuries since the birth of Christ. These include setting up and decorating a Christmas tree, an exchange of gifts, putting together a nativity scene, serious baking of regional or cultural sweets, the singing of carols, keeping an Advent calendar and more.

One ritual that has a long history is the lighting of Advent candles. But the arrangement of the candles into a wreath is relatively recent. According to one source, Johann Wichern created the first Advent wreath in 1839. He took a decrepit cartwheel and fastened 20 red and four white candles on it. With 24 days leading up to Christmas Day, Wichern lit a new red candle on each weekday of December and a new white candle on each Sunday service, finally lighting the last white candle on Christmas Eve.

Thus started the tradition of the Advent wreath now observed by many churches today. The wreath today has four candles, usually purple (except for the third candle which is pink) and they stand for HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE. In the center of the wreath is a larger, white candle which is known as the CHRIST candle and it is lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Today is the First Sunday of Advent, and the purple candle stands for HOPE. It is also known as the “prophecy candle” because it reminds us of the hope that God will fulfill the prophecies declared in the Old Testament about Jesus. It reminds us that in a world often clouded by uncertainty and darkness, this tiny flame serves as a beacon of light, illuminating our path and filling our hearts with anticipation.

Hope is not merely wishful thinking or blind optimism. It is a powerful force that sustains us in times of despair and guides us through the darkest of nights. It is the assurance that better days are ahead, even when the present seems bleak.

The first candle of Advent symbolizes this hope — a hope rooted in the promise of a Savior who brings light into the world. Just as this candle dispels the shadows around us, so, too, does Christ dispel the darkness of sin and despair, offering us a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

As we journey through this season of Advent, let us hold fast to the hope that Christ offers us. For in him, we find the promise of redemption, restoration and everlasting joy. Amen.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: O God, thank you for the hope that we have in Christ Jesus, the Savior of the world!
Amen.*

Activity Page

Week of December 1, 2024

Daily Gospel Reading

Monday: Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday: Mark 16:15-20

Wednesday: Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday: Matthew 7:21-27

Friday: Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday: John 10:11-16



MAY I HAVE A VOWEL PLEASE?

The answers to these clues all contain the vowel A and only A. There are no other vowels in the answers except A. Use the clues to fill in the blanks.

1. This man was Jacob's grandfather, but the father of Ishmael (Genesis 18:1). _____
2. By the way, his wife sometimes laughed inappropriately (Genesis 18:12). _____
3. This little bird is both a color and species. Did it come from the Islands? _____
4. This word might signify a hat, canal, country or an isthmus. _____
5. A popular song a few years ago advised us: "Don't worry, be (this)." _____
6. This is the country with the largest area in the Western Hemisphere. _____
7. Look in a dictionary under A. This animal is likely to be the first animal mentioned. _____
8. Mom said, "Go to the basement and get one of jelly, but don't leave the door in this condition." _____
9. A tree with compound leaves whose pliable but strong wood makes good canoe paddles, or basket splints. If you burn it up you will still have it. _____
10. To get results, a magician might say this. _____
11. The mountain where Noah's Ark rested, according to Genesis 8:4. _____
12. This man in Numbers 22 had a talking donkey. _____
13. If you own one of these, you might own a motorcycle or a piano. _____
14. A U.S. state with eight letters. _____

Answers:

1. Abraham,
2. Sarah,
3. canary,
4. Panama,
5. happy,
6. Canada,
7. aardvark,
8. a jar, ajar,
9. ash,
10. abracadabra,
11. Ararat,
12. Balaam,
13. Yamaha,
14. Arkansas.



December 8, 2024

Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture Readings: Baruch 5:1-9, Philippians 1:4-11, Luke 3:1-6

Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that. —Martin Luther King Jr.

Today, we light the candle of PEACE. The second candle of Advent reminds us that “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5).

Have you ever experienced a blackout? You may have been caught unprepared. You couldn’t find your flashlight, or, if you did, the batteries were dead!

What could you do? Perhaps, you thought, I can find a candle and light it. So, you searched and searched. Do you know what you were doing as you searched?

You were resisting the darkness! This is what Christians are called to do. Advent, in a real sense, is a time of resistance. We don’t sit in the darkness and wring our hands, complaining about the darkness, bemoaning whatever happened to cause the darkness. No, we get up and light a light!

Today, people sit in darkness. This simple candle is a reminder that we care about our neighbors who suffer and that we stand in solidarity with them, resisting the dark forces of this world, and praying that “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

After lighting this candle, you might recite the prayer attributed to Saint Francis:

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, harmony; Where there is error, truth;
Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console; To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born into eternal life.*

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord, may I be an instrument of your peace. Amen.

Activity Page

Week of December 8, 2024

Daily Gospel Reading

Monday: Luke 1:26-38

Tuesday: Matthew 18:12-14

Wednesday: Matthew 11:28-30

Thursday: Luke 1:39-47

Friday: Matthew 25:1-13

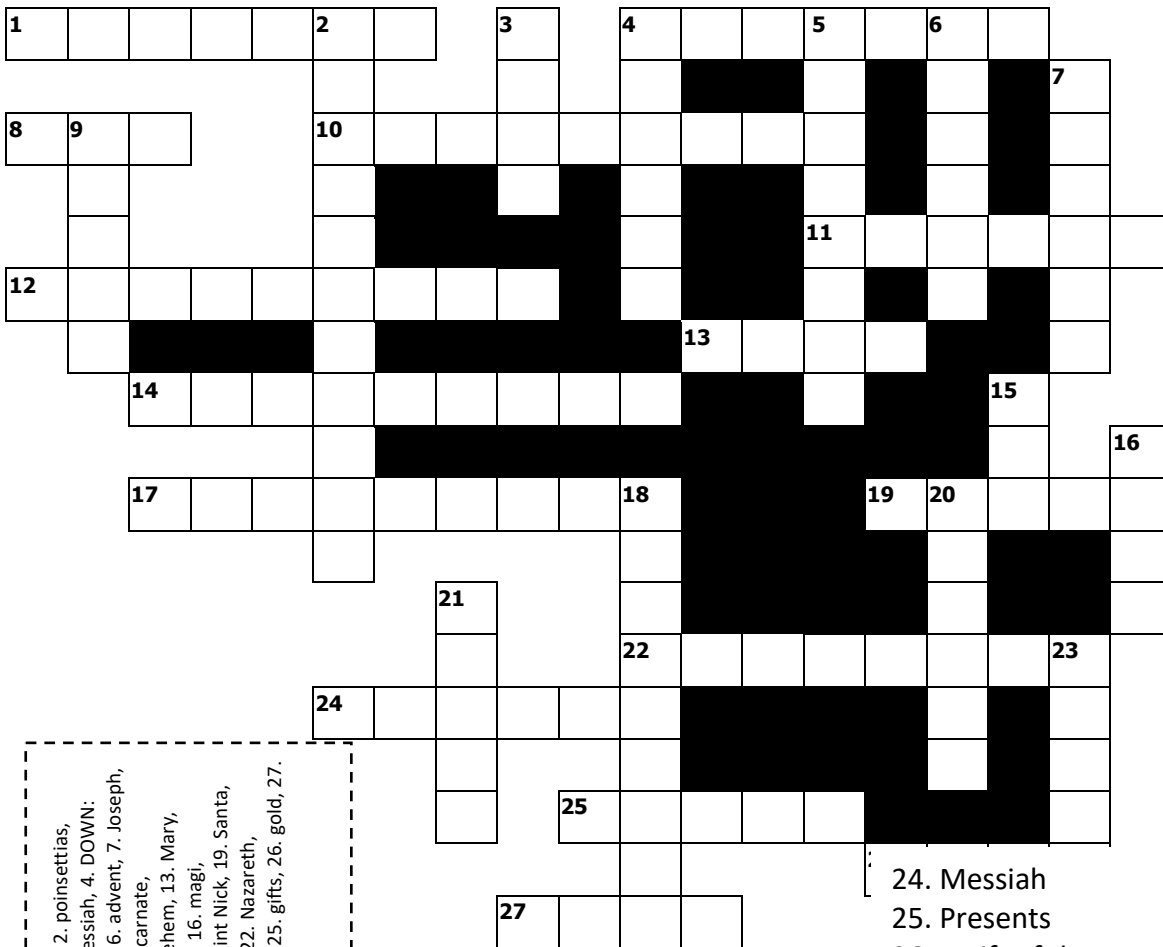
Saturday: Luke 14:25-33

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD



CLUES

1. Has a red nose
2. Red plants
3. A nova
4. A savior
- 4 DOWN: Crib
5. Keeper of sheep
6. Coming
7. He was a carpenter
8. 12th month
Abbr.)
9. Little helpers at North Pole
10. Enfleshed
11. *Messiah* composer
12. Of Ephrathah
13. Gabriel visited her
14. A form of holly
15. B & B
16. Wise men
17. Tree decorations
18. Patron saint of children
19. Red-suited man
20. Heavenly singers
21. Song
22. Home for Mary
23. He ordered the Slaughter of the Innocents



Answers: 1. Rudolph, 2. poinsettias, 3. star, 4. ACROSS: Messiah, 4. DOWN: manger, 5. shepherd, 6. advent, 7. Joseph, 8. Dec, 9. elves, 10. incarnate, 11. Handel, 12. Bethlehem, 13. Mary, 14. mistletoe, 15. inn, 16. magi, 17. ornaments, 18. Saint Nick, 19. Santa, 20. angels, 21. carol, 22. Nazareth, 23. Herod, 24. Christ, 25. gifts, 26. gold, 27. Luke.

24. Messiah
25. Presents
26. A gift of the wise men
27. Author of the most famous account of the birth of Jesus



Third Sunday of Advent

Scripture Readings: Zephaniah 3:14-18, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:10-18

*Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow;
it only saps today of its joy. — Leo Buscaglia*

It is surprising how often the Bible reminds us that *real joy is not possible without real suffering*.

In today's reading, we are told to "rejoice in the Lord always." Then, we are reminded to take our concerns to God in prayer and that the peace of God will "guard" our hearts. The apostle James tells us: "Consider it pure joy, ... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, NIV).

In our journey of faith, we often encounter seasons of suffering and trials that test our resolve and challenge our faith. We get bad news from the doctor. We get bad news from our children about our grandchildren. We get bad news that a close friend has died. We have financial concerns that often depress us. And, of course, the political news is usually upsetting. As my German grandmother used to mutter, *Ach du Lieber* or *Gott im Himmel!*

These troubling moments of hardship and uncertainty can be overwhelming, causing us to question God's goodness and our own purpose in life. Yet, it is precisely in the midst of suffering that we have the opportunity to experience true joy — a joy that transcends our circumstances and is rooted in our relationship with God.

James 1:2-4 reminds us that we are called to consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds. This may seem counterintuitive — how can we possibly find joy in the midst of suffering?

True joy is not dependent on whether the ball bounced our way, or whether the sun is shining today. It is rather found in the unshakable hope and confidence that we have in God's promises. It comes from knowing that God is *with us* — Immanuel — in our suffering, working all things together for our good and his glory.

As we light the third candle of the Advent wreath, the candle of JOY, may we hold fast to the promise of God's faithfulness. May we find joy in the midst of our trials, knowing that our suffering is not in vain but is producing in us a resilience that will ultimately lead to maturity and completeness in Christ.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the joy of your presence. Amen.

Activity Page

Week of December 15, 2024

Daily Gospel Reading

Monday: Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday: Matthew 1:1-17

Wednesday: Matthew 1:18-25

Thursday: Luke 1:5-25

Friday: Luke 1:26-38

Saturday: Luke 1:39-45

CHANGE ONE LETTER AND FIND THE CITY!

Directions: For each of the three words below, change one letter to an **O** and then rearrange the letters to spell a major city of the world.

P U L S E

--	--	--	--	--

V I C A R

--	--	--	--	--

C H A I N

--	--	--	--	--

HIDDEN WORDS

Here are 10 words that can be rearranged to form another word. We've done the first one for you.

1. DECAL (laced)

2. WRONG

3. LIVED

4. LEMON

5. BURNT

6. THORN

7. LANCE

8. WASTE

9. MARCH

10. LEAST

 DECEMBER

Answers to Hidden Words (spelled backward): 2. nworg, 3. lived, 4. nolem, 5. tnurb, 6. htron, 7. naelc, 8. taews, 9. mrahc, 10. laets. **Answers to Change One Letter and Find the City!:** Seoul, Cairo, Hanoi.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture Readings: Micah 5:1-4, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45

Don't obey God to get things; obey God to get God. —Tim Keller

Today, we light the fourth candle of Advent, the candle of LOVE. How does one go about loving God? It's difficult. Maybe, we think, God has put some sensitive souls on earth who become mystics, pastors, theologians, monks, nuns — and they can do all the spiritual heavy lifting for the rest of us.

These dear people don't seem to have any difficulty at all living in an emotional aura of love for God. That's okay, we say, "but it's not my cup of bliss."

Clearly, to love God is not to do any one specific thing for God. God really doesn't need anything done for him, thank you very much. The words of Jesus indicate that loving God is a state of being that encompasses the whole of our existence. We love God with our souls and hearts, that is, the intuitive persons we are, and with our mind and strength, that is, the rational, volitional creatures we are. Still,

- Some say they love God by going to church every Sunday.
- Some say they love God by not breaking the Ten Commandments.
- Some say they love God by reading the Bible every day.
- Some say they love God by praying to God at least once a week.
- Some say they love God by doing a good deed.
- Some say they love God by not swearing.

I don't see it this way. For me, *loving God is not work, but a walk.*

The prophet Micah provides the paradigm here. What does God ask of us? God asks us to walk with God (Micah 6:8).

There it is.

Jesus says we should love (read: walk with) God with our intuitive and rational selves. What happens on a pleasant walk with a friend? Sharing (intuitive) and good conversation (rational). A walk is an intimate experience. To walk with someone is to express solidarity and understanding. It is a mark of friendship and camaraderie. It is a sign of intimacy.

To love God is to walk with God.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O God, may my love increase as I walk with you. Amen.

Activity Page

Week of December 22, 2024

Daily Gospel Reading

Monday: Luke 1:57-66

Tuesday: Matthew 1:1-25

Wednesday: John 1:1-18

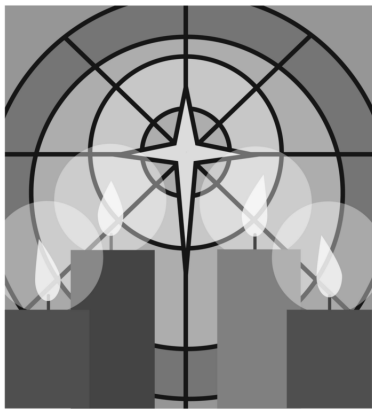
Thursday: Matthew 10:17-22

Friday: John 20:1-8

Saturday: Matthew 2:13-18

ZIG ZAG

Without lifting your pencil from the paper, move from square to square, vertically, horizontally or diagonally, to discover the longest possible name of a country from these letters.



FOURTH SUNDAY
OF
Advent

Z	E	D	N
W	T	R	A
I	S	L	P

PROGRESSIVE WORDS

Can you get from the first word to the last by changing just one letter in each step?

PANTS

RUSTY

JOKER

ROWED

ANSWERS: Zig Zag—Switzerland; Progressive Words—rants, runts, rusts; poker, power, mower, mowed

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Scripture Readings: Sirach 3:2-14, Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 2:41-52

No matter how bad things are, you can always make things worse.

—*Randy Pausch, The Last Lecture*

Are you a “Tripper”? I am. Trippers are those people who can stumble over a fleck of dust. It doesn’t matter how minute the protrusion. If it’s there, I’ll trip over it.

God understands that we are “trippers.” It’s what we do. Maybe that’s why we’re called the “sheep” of God’s pasture. Sheep are not known for their agility or athletic ability. They’re rather clumsy animals. In fact, former Assistant Interior Secretary George Frampton, told a Senate subcommittee that “ovine ineptitude” kills 1,000 times more sheep in Montana than wolves. He describes the curious malady as “sheep who just fall over and can’t get up.”

The late President Ford was a famous Tripper. Arguably the fittest president in the history of our great country, he tripped over everything and anything. He fell off Air Force One, off the first tee at the Arlington Golf Course, down the stairs, up the stairs. He was the best.

Politicians seem to trip a lot. President Clinton’s leg and knee spent several weeks in a cast in 1997 as the result of a trip; Bob Dole, the late senator from Kansas, tripped off a platform and into the crowd on the campaign trail in 1996.

Actually, tripping happens to everyone. We trip over the merest rise in the pavement, objects in the bedroom, an uplifted corner of the rug, or a root in the ground.

Usually, we can recover when these mishaps occur. The arms go out for balance, we step quickly with the other foot and we land safely. We then take a quick, annoyed glance backward at what we tripped over, amazed that such an insignificant object could cause such a violent adjustment in our stride.

Trippers are those who seem to have inordinate difficulty in staying on their feet when confronted with even the slightest difficulty. Every obstacle, interruption or unforeseen event — however slight — becomes a major crisis. And if it is not a major crisis, the Tripper finds a way to turn it into one.

We will trip, however. What can we do when that happens? React immediately. Remove the obstacle. Move on. Let it go. Laugh. Don’t over-dramatize the experience. These are good suggestions to safeguard both our physical health as well as our spiritual health.

—Timothy Merrill, adapted from *Learning to Fall: a Guide for the Spiritually Clumsy*. Lulu.com, 2016, 61. Used by permission.

Prayer: O God, thank you for all the blessings I have enjoyed in 2024. Thank you for raising me up when I have tripped and stumbled. Lead me to safe paths in 2025. Amen.

Activity Page

Week of December 29, 2024



MAKE A WORD

Directions: Using four of the letters in the "pile" to the left, fill in the boxes below to make a seven-letter word that connects the grid.

B E G P O
R S W U

C B

□ □ A N □ L □

T O U

W E

Good resolutions are ones that are measurable and realistic. What changes do you want to make starting this week?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Daily Gospel Reading

Monday: Luke 2:36-40

Tuesday: John 1:1-18

Wednesday: Luke 2:16-21

Thursday: John 1:19-28

Friday: John 1:29-34

Saturday: Luke 10:38-42

Answer:
(spelled
backwards)
ELUNARG or
ELGNAPS