

# St Sebastian Catholic Church

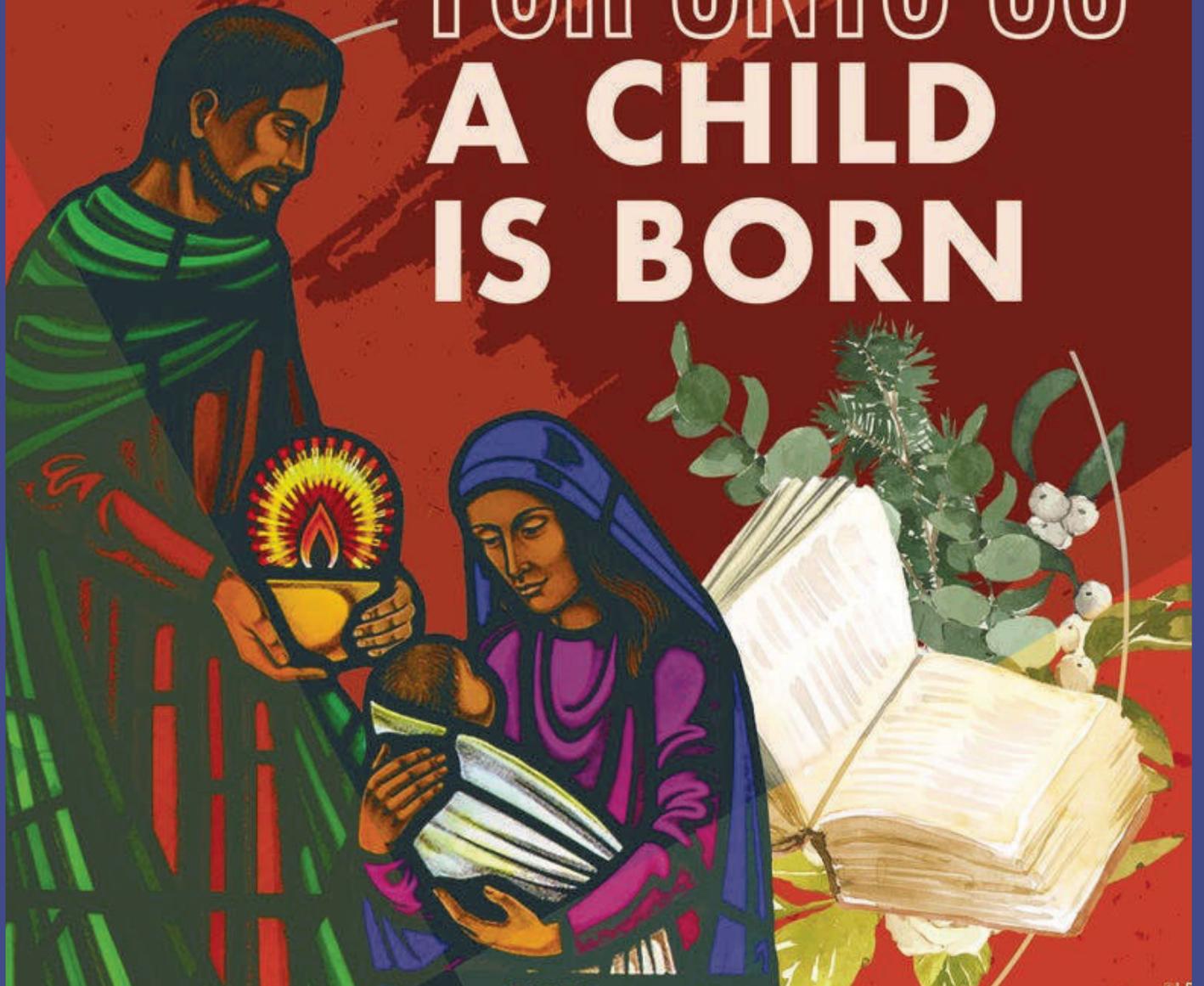


A Pennsylvania Charitable Trust  
A Parish of the Diocese of Greensburg

801 Broad Avenue · Belle Vernon, PA 15012

December 25, 2022

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD  
**FOR UNTO US  
A CHILD  
IS BORN**



## *From the Pastor—What a Gift we have been given...*

What greater joy is there for us to celebrate than God sending to us the Christ Child? All the while that we marvel over that gift, we are constantly reminded that human living is full of struggle and pain. Isaiah speaks to us in a very poetic way about God delivering the people of Israel to peace and light. What we fail to hear from these readings is that Isaiah is speaking of a political victory; a victory that is a bloody, political conquest that would ultimately lead to the enthronement of a powerful king whose reign is commissioned as divine right. Not a pretty picture for Christmas day! The image that Isaiah paints reminds us in a real human way that salvation is bound up with the whole of human life: its struggles, its joy, and its promises. Christianity applies to Jesus the one who is to reign without all of the political trappings of Isaiah. It is the child Jesus who is born a child with no real power in the world. This child, born poor and in a manger who will be the hope of humanity: this is real cause for joy this day.



The fact that God so loved the world that we were given God's only Son to be our Savior is what we need to focus on. This becomes difficult because of all the competition that the season brings. We deal with all of the commercialism, the advertising and noise that the season brings; all of these things prove to be a real distraction to what we are meant to focus on. Christmas brings the best and the worst out in people. Our hearts are turned to love and family but sometimes in the wrong way. The harsh reality of our society is that Christmas is anything but merry for all too many people. For some poverty keeps them from providing for their loved ones in the way they would like; for others, alienation and loneliness divide and separate what this season is meant to unite; for still others selfishness and greed and self-centeredness keep family or friends at bay and result in emptiness and isolation. This is a time for more than merriment. It is a time to be aware of how blessed we are by God's saving presence. If we only look for merriment at Christmas we really miss the deeper meaning of this festival. The birth of this poor child gives us an indwelling of God among and within humanity. Never before has God been so close to us.

Christmas, indeed, is filled with seeming contradictions. Descended from the royal house of David, He is born in a manger. Acclaimed by choirs of angels, He is visited by shepherds in the dark. Contrary to expectation, it is not in luxury and comfort but in the night, in poverty, on the fringes of a city that a Savior has been born to us. We have much to be thankful for this Christmas. Life will always appear to be unfair. There will always be those who have and those who have not. There will always be people who cannot see beyond their own needs and wants and make others suffer because of it. This does not mean that we can allow these thoughts and feelings to cloud over what we are about and what we are really supposed to celebrate. The event of Jesus' birth is beyond any human experience, for our God dwells among us and within us.

Sharing in the divine life of Christ is more than simply a pretty package under the tree of life which we might open with glee. We are reminded that the birth of Christ means accepting Him and believing in His name. All year long we are to show our acceptance and belief by giving out of the fullness we have already received.



### **Feast of the Holy Family**

This Friday we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family, and the day focuses on the "Holiness of all of our families." Holiness is not a misty-eyed, otherworldly mode of living. Rather it is a realistic engagement in the difficulties, struggles, and tensions of human life and relating. Our own modern families are like the Holy Family in that, as they did, we too all face challenges in responding to God faithfully and obediently. The holiness of a family is not dependent upon perfection or an easy road. As Mary and Joseph showed us, holiness is dependent on faithfulness and obedience to God's message. What makes Jesus, Mary, and Joseph a holy family is their faithful, obedient response to God's message. Our families (and the family of the church) are also holy in our responding faithfully to God's will for us.

Today it is difficult to define what a family should be; in fact I believe that family life today is beyond defining. None of us can be completely free from assumptions about families and a "well intended" list of family values that we should follow. Sometimes these values are sincere but sometime they are cynical. When we look at the holy family we do not look at them for the sociological model that they provide, rather they become a model of faith for us. So, the issue on this day is not that we should try to read into this feast a proposal for how to live as a family, but how each of us should remain open and obedient to the word of God.

Family life in our society has gone through so many drastic changes that none of us fit very well into a defined role, and I don't think that is such a bad thing. If we are honest with each other, we all live with some sort of dysfunction in life, there is simply no such thing as a perfect family. On this feast day we are reminded that we ought to be grateful for the people we have in life and most especially our families. Whether we are a traditional family or a single parent family, whether we have biological or adopted or foster children or no children, whether we live in an expensive home or a subsidized rental unit makes no difference for living as a holy.

## *A Message of Christmas Peace!*

*As a parish family we celebrate the Birth of Jesus, and we have a much to be grateful for. As we look back over the past year, there have been many blessings of God's love that we have been given. This Christmas Season I am grateful to all of you for the many ways that you have given of yourselves to one another and to your church. We have shared the joy of our blessings with many people around the world and for that we should be grateful. As a community of God's people we have prayed together which brings God's presence to each one of us.*



*As you celebrate this Christmas with those who are in your life, be aware of the gifts that count the most for they are worth more than any material possession or wealth. When we are able to open our hearts to one another and share who we are from within, we share what the joy of Christmas is all about. If you are able, even for a little minute, try to escape all of the trappings that this season puts upon us and open yourself to the silence of what the real gift is all about. As we become more aware of what Christ can be for us, we are better prepared to be that presence to those in our world. As individuals as well as a parish family, we ought to look and appreciate who God made us to be and what our God has blessed us with. Only then can the joy of this season bring the real message of Peace on Earth and Good Will to all. My prayer for you is that this Season may touch your hearts with the gentle presence of Christ's love, and that you may find the reserve to do the same to others.*

*A Blessed Christmas to you all!*

**Rev. Michael J. Crookston, Pastor**



## *Liturgies of the Week*

### **December 24—Vigil**

4:00 pm Intention of the Celebrant

10:00 pm Intention of the Celebrant

### **December 25—Solemnity of the Birth of Jesus**

10:00 am Intention of the Celebrant

### **Monday, December 26—St. Stephen**

No Mass Today

### **Tuesday, December 27—St. John**

8:00 am (Date of Birth) Joseph Semancik—Niece, Frances & Jack Koschalk

### **Wednesday, December 28—The Holy Innocents**

No Mass Today

### **Thursday, December 29—St. Thomas Becket**

No Mass Today

### **Friday, December 30—Feast of the Holy Family**

8:00 am (Death Anniv) Frank Delia—Jason Brizzi

### **Saturday, December 31—Vigil**

4:30 pm Felix J. Lisovich—Donald Bergamasco

### **January 1—Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**

9:00 am For All the People of Saint Sebastian Parish

11:00 am George Petrisin—Ted Harhai

**THE ROSARY IS PRAYED SUNDAYS AT 8:30 AM, PRIOR TO THE 9:00 AM MASS. PLEASE JOIN US!**

### **MINISTRY SCHEDULE—Dec. 31/Jan. 1**

	<b>Lector</b>	<b>Lit. Coord</b>	<b>EM</b>	<b>Server</b>
4:30 pm	S. Wawro	C. Farrier	C. Farrier	R. Buretz
9:00 am	E. Bagay	R. Smereczniak	R. Smereczniak	N. Jodon
11:00 am	M. Patterson	R. Messick	R. Messick	B. Henderson



**In observance of the celebration of the Birth of Our Lord, the Parish Office will be closed December 26th and December 27th. The office will reopen on Wednesday, December 28th.**

**Due to the early transmission of this bulletin, the financial report for December 11 & 18, 2022, will be in next Sunday's bulletin.**



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