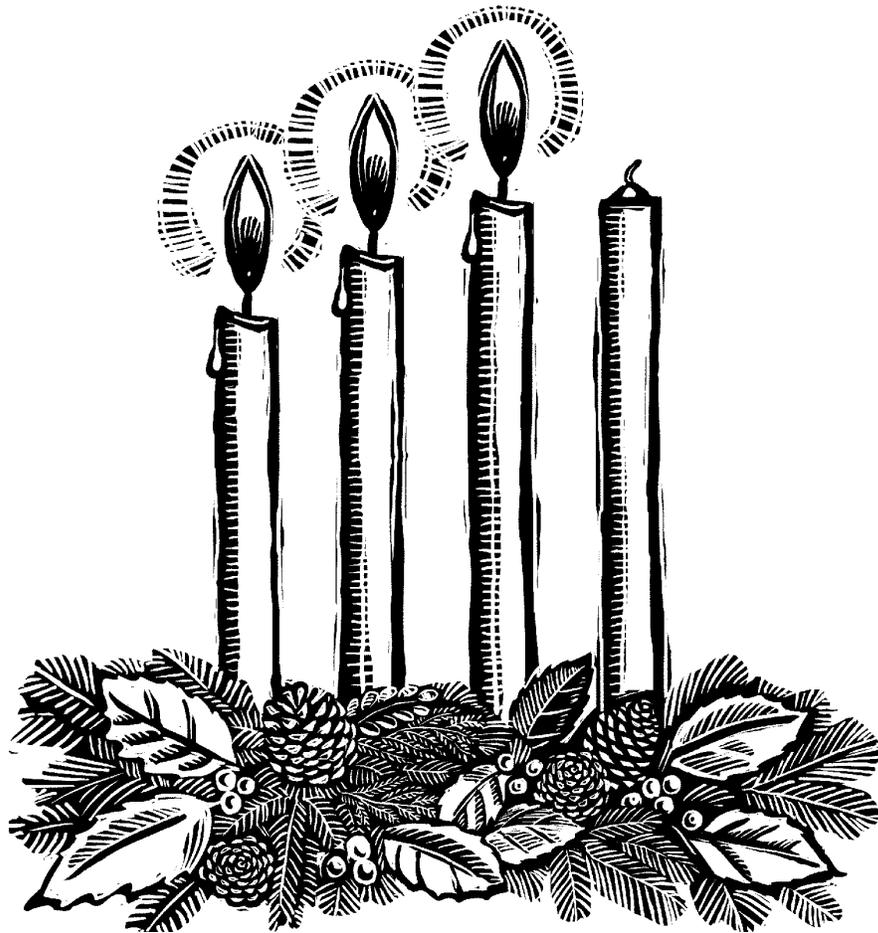


**Our Lady of Lourdes • December 14, 2008**

***“I am the voice of one  
crying out in the desert,  
‘make straight the way  
of the Lord.’”***

**John 1:23**



**Third Sunday in Advent**



## *Pastoral Team*

**Rev. Michael A. Vetrano**

Pastor

**Rev. Robert Scheckenback**

Associate Pastor



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### **Parish Office**

661-3224

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - 7:30 PM

Saturday: 9 AM - 3 PM

Sunday: 9 AM - 2 PM

email: [ParishOffice@ollchurch.org](mailto:ParishOffice@ollchurch.org)

fax: 661-7143

website: [www.ollchurch.org](http://www.ollchurch.org)

### **Our Lady of Lourdes School**

587-7200

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - 3 PM

email: [lkrol@ollschool.org](mailto:lkrol@ollschool.org)

### **Religious Education Office**

661-5440

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - Noon

1 PM - 5 PM

7 PM - 9 PM

email: [ReligiousEd@ollchurch.org](mailto:ReligiousEd@ollchurch.org)

### **Parish Outreach Office**

661-9262

Monday -Friday: 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

### **S.A.G.E.**

661-3224

(Senior Advocates for Growth  
and Enrichment)

email: [Sage@ollchurch.org](mailto:Sage@ollchurch.org)

### **Rev. John Asomugha**

In Residence

### **Rev. Ambrose Cabildo**

In Residence

### **Deacon John DeGuardi**

### **Deacon Tom Lucie**

### **Deacon Jack Meehan**

Coordinator of Stewardship

### **Deacon John Teufel**

### **Sr. Margaret Bickar**

Senior Ministry-SAGE

### **Sr. Nancy Campkin**

Director of Religious Education

### **Jennifer Gallagher**

Childrens' Choir/Women's Chorale

Summer Program Director

### **Carol M. Goetz**

Parish Music Director

### **Louise Jane Krol**

School Principal

### **Sr. Diane Liona**

Director of Religious Education

### **Mary McMahan**

Director of Parish Social Ministry

### **Vita Scorgia**

Ministry Spiritual Director

### **John Sureau**

Coordinator of Worship

### **Sr. Betty Toohig**

Senior Ministry-SAGE

### **Anthony Trombino**

Business Manager

## *Pastoral Council*

Stacie Baltrusitis

Lisa Cantalino

Sonia DaSilva

Nilo DeLeon

Jane Desthers

Jerry Esposito

Deacon Jack Meehan

John Muldoon

Bob Natale

Eileen Rega

Vita Scorgia

Mary Steck

Fr. Mike Vetrano

Christine Volk

## *Parish Staff*

### **Barbara Catuosco**

Religious Education Office

### **Mary Anne Lettieri**

Parish Office

### **Debbie Meyer**

Bulletin/Parish Office

### **Rosemary Multer**

School Office

### **Rex Muro**

Organist

### **Rita Spera**

Religious Education Office

### **Lori Walsh**

Parish Office

## *Mission Statement*

*As stewards of all that God has given us, the Parish Family of Our Lady of Lourdes serves and ministers to all who come to this place. Regardless of a person's history, ethnicity, gender, orientation, age or race, we commit ourselves to open wide the doors of our Parish to provide a place of welcome and hospitality.*

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*Welcome to our Parish Family! New Parishioners are cordially invited to register as members of our parish family. Please call or visit our Parish Office.*

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## *Vision...*

*so that all may know that they are a vital part of the Body of Christ, we further recommit and challenge ourselves to:*

***Live** out our Baptismal call passionately by caring for all of God's people with justice.*

***Grow** in an understanding of God's role in each of our lives.*

***Respond** to the Gospel in a radical way, inviting and inspiring all to form the Kingdom of God in every moment of life.*

***Acknowledge** we are not complete without the willingness to grow, discern and discover the Spirit who moves and guides us.*

*Our Lady  
of Lourdes*

455 Hunter Avenue  
West Islip, New York 11795



# ADVENT

The Church gives us the beautiful season of Advent beginning on Sunday, November 30. This also marks the beginning of the new Liturgical Cycle. Get ready for a season of prayer, reflection and activity for you and your entire family!

## “The Six” – Bringing LIGHT to the WORLD!

-Each week at “The Six,” we’ll look at the ways we can bring the Light of Christ to the world. Our liturgies will begin in darkness as we are reminded of the struggles of the world we live in and the light will grow as our prayers do throughout the Mass.

-This Advent and Christmas seasons our Six Committee is bringing Christ’s Light to the military by collecting supplies for a military base in Calverton, NY that will be sending care packages to a base in Iraq. One of the newly confirmed from the RCIA has been serving in Iraq and his wife is helping us to organize this effort. Beginning November 30 through the end of the Christmas season, we will be collecting any of the following items at “The Six” and at all of our Masses....

*Prepaid Phone Cards + Body Wipes + Feminine Products + Chap Stick + Deodorant + Moisturizer + Foot Powder and Cream + Shampoo + Conditioner + Soap + Toothpaste + Q Tips + Nail Clippers + Gum + Beef Jerky + Oatmeal Packets + Instant Coffee + Healthy Snack Bars + Spray Water Bottles + Sports Equipment (soccer balls, etc.) + Instant Cameras + Socks + Air Mattresses + Pillows + Bed Linens*

These items will be collected throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons....so please remember our military service women and men as you carry out your Christmas shopping.

-Come and be a part of “The Six,” Sunday 6 PM Mass. All 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders and their families are invited to join “The Six.”

**3rd Sunday of Advent... Dec. 14... Grade 6**

**4th Sunday of Advent... Dec. 21... Grade 5**

Advent is a great time to get our “spiritual” lives in order – consider making an effort to go to Mass each week. Even better, bring someone back to Church with you!



*Our Lady of Lourdes Seventh Annual  
Family Christmas Pageant*

*Monday, December 22*

*7 PM in the Church*

*What better way to prepare for Christmas  
than to share the Christmas story with our children!*

*We invite our entire parish family to come and  
share this special evening with us.*

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We'd like to involve many members of our parish community, especially all parish children!  
It's easy...there are only two short practices and a dress rehearsal.

*There's something for all ages:*

**Children**

Pre-K through Grade 3

Grades 4 through 6

Grades 7 through 12

Angels and Shepherds

Three Kings and the Royal Servants; and Dancers

We need lots of help—musicians, singers, organizers and  
assistant directors!

If you can help with our pageant, please call Jennifer Gallagher at 661.3224 or email  
[jengallagher@ollchurch.org](mailto:jengallagher@ollchurch.org) .

**Adults**

We need help with costumes and supervision of the “angels and shepherds.” If you can  
help with any of these areas, please call Jennifer at 661.3224, or email

[JenGallagher@ollchurch.org](mailto:JenGallagher@ollchurch.org).

**Pageant Practices for All**

**Saturday, December 20** Dress Rehearsal 1 PM until 2:30 PM in the Church

## **A Philippine Christmas Tradition- Simbang Gabi**



Good Samaritan Prayer Group of Long Island in coordination with Our Lady of Lourdes Church presents **Simbang Gabi (a Philippine Christmas Tradition)** on **Friday, December 19 at 8 PM in the Church.** All are welcome!

An evening full of Christmas Spirit! Mass will be followed by Christmas serenade and a fellowship-serving our finest Philippine delicacies. Please bring your “parol” (lantern) for parade and contest. For more details, please contact Pete and Carlita DeRoxas at 661.0232 or email to [goodsamofli@gmail.com](mailto:goodsamofli@gmail.com).

## **Mass for Bereaved Parents Saturday, December 20 OLL Church – 10:00 AM**



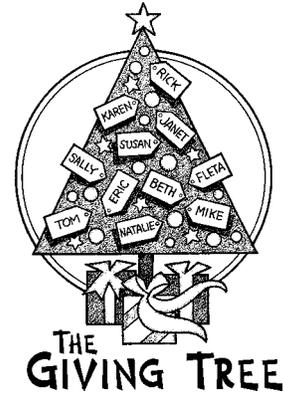
The holidays are often times of great celebration. But, for many, particularly those who have lost a child, the holidays are painfully hard. They are a reminder of our losses and a reminder of how our lives are perhaps a little less full. Whether you have lost a child in childhood or adulthood, to stillbirth or miscarriage, this Mass will be celebrated to bring you God’s peace and consolation.

We invite all who have lost a child to come and gather together for this special Mass on **Saturday, December 20 at 10 AM.** Mass will be followed by refreshments. Please feel free to invite family or friends. For more information, or to let us know you will be able to attend, please call the Parish Office at 661.3224.

Let’s pray that through prayer and coming together, the challenges of the holidays can become a little lighter and that we may be strengthened by God’s love and presence. If you’re interested in helping with this celebration, please contact John Sureau at 661.3224, x. 135 or e-mail to [jsureau@ollchurch.org](mailto:jsureau@ollchurch.org).

## The Giving Tree

Each ornament on our Parish Giving Tree is a gift tag that represents something needed by a family in our parish. Help us to meet these needs by taking a tag from our tree and returning a gift. Your gift will help you to think about the real meaning of Christmas and will help a needy family in a very concrete way. You may also make a financial gift to Parish Outreach and they will use it to purchase a gift or to help a family who needs financial support. Please remember to attach the tag on the unwrapped gift. The last day for gift collection is Sunday, December 21. Gift distribution will be on Monday, December 22.



## Men's Night of Reflection

Come join us on **Wednesday, December 17 at 7:30 PM in the Parish Center.**

**Theme:**

The Cross in the Crib: What Christmas can teach us about the true meaning of sacrifice.

**Speaker:**

Jim Philipps, Theology Teacher at Holy Trinity High School, Adjunct Professor at Molloy College and author of several books exploring various themes in scripture. Light refreshments will be served. Please call Jack Fitzgerald at 587.5548 for further information.

*Save the date....*

## Advent Reconciliation

**Saturday, December 20      3 PM - 5 PM**

**Tuesday, December 23      5 PM – 8 PM**

Our parish priests will be available to hear individual confessions. The Advent season brings us promises of transformation and renewal. This beautiful sacrament is one way this can happen. Be open to the healing forgiveness of Reconciliation!

## **Daily Mass**

8 AM

## **Weekend Masses**

**Saturday:** 5 PM

**Sunday:** 8 AM, 9:30 AM,  
11 AM, 12:30 PM and 6 PM

## **Reconciliation**

**Saturday:** 4 PM - 4:45 PM

## **Support Groups**

### **Alcoholics Anonymous:**

Monday and Tuesday at  
8 PM and Saturday at 2 PM  
and 7 PM in Lourdes Hall-  
convent lower level.

### **ALANON:**

Each Wednesday at  
10 AM in Lourdes Hall-  
convent lower level.  
(Babysitters available)

## **Rosary/Novena**

### **Rosary**

Daily after 8 AM Mass

### **Miraculous Medal Novena**

Monday after 8 AM Mass

### **Anointing of the Sick**

Throughout the liturgical year.

If needed sooner, please call the Parish Office.

### **Baptism**

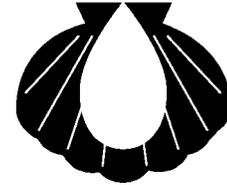
Please contact the Parish Office to schedule an appointment.

### **Marriage**

Arranged at least six months in advance, please call the Parish Office.

### **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults(RCIA)**

A process to be embraced by the Catholic Church. For non-Catholics and for Catholics who have never received formal religious education. If interested, please call the Parish Office.



## ***Baptisms***

*Keira Marie Johnson*

James and Laurin

*Jillian Isla Ferrari*

Christophehr and Alicia

# Remembering . . .

## Monday, December 15

8:00 AM Barbara McGarrity

## Tuesday, December 16

8:00 AM David York

## Wednesday, December 17

8:00 AM Frank Petrone

## Thursday, December 18

8:00 AM Muriel Veronica Olsen

## Friday, December 19

8:00 AM Peter Reehil

## Saturday, December 20

8:00 AM Angelito Cruz & Family (*living*), Alexander Longo,  
Loreto Longo, Mary Daly, Giuseppe Ingoglia,  
Vincent Trotta, Thomas Ryan, Mary Dobson, Stephen Perez

5:00 PM Carmello Parasole

*Fr. Mike Vetrano*

## Sunday, December 21

8:00 AM Adam Ippolito

*Fr. Bob Scheckenback*

9:30 AM Cecilia & Joseph Fiore

*Fr. Mike Vetrano*

11:00 AM Theresa Reardon

*Fr. Ambrose Cabildo*

12:30 PM Joseph Tuohy

*Fr. Bob Scheckenback*

6:00 PM People of the Parish, Kim Ecker, Dominic J. Scotto,  
William Kuhlwillm, James Marchese, Louise Forte,  
Ruth M. Catanzano, Diane Lloyd, Maria Acquaviva,  
Robert W. Forrester

*Fr. John Asomugha*



## Rest In Peace

*Anna D'Elio* died on December 2 and celebration of the Mass of Christian Burial was December 6. We extend our prayers to her children and entire family.



## **St. Benedict**

*Fourth in our series on the saints*

**Tuesday, January 6**

**7:30 - 9:30 PM**

**Parish Center**

**Presenter: S. Diane Liona, CSJ**

### ***“Listen with the ear of your heart...”***

When I first heard this core message of Benedict’s Rule, I knew I had found a home. I discovered a way to balance an active ministry with a rhythm of prayer which would provide a balance in my life which was essential.

Through the years, I have come to marvel at this saint whose spirituality is infused with Scripture, sanity and a deep appreciation of the nature of work.

This evening of reflection will not only introduce us to the wisdom of St. Benedict, but will give us some practical ways to incorporate the Psalms into our everyday prayer, leading us to mindfulness and reverence for the gift of each moment.



## **Consider Joining our Choir for Christmas**

Come and sing with us at Christmas.

Join the OLL Choir for rehearsal on 12/17, 12/18 and sing with us at the 11 PM Mass on Christmas Eve and/or 11 AM Mass on Christmas Day.

Our Contemporary Group is inviting middle school, high school students and young adults to sing on Christmas Eve with our group. We sing at the 4 PM Christmas Eve Mass. Our Contemporary Group rehearses on Sundays from 4:30-6 PM and then sings at the 6 PM Mass throughout the year.

This is the year to be part of our Holiday singers! Give yourself and your church the gift of your time and talent for the holiday season.

For further information, please contact Carol Goetz at 661.3224 or send an e-mail to [music@ollchurch.org](mailto:music@ollchurch.org).



## Pastoral Council Appointed

*Dear friends,*

Just a few weeks ago, I wrote in the bulletin about the need for Pastoral Council members. I was gratified to receive more than twenty-five nominated for the eight open positions.

About half of these nominees were able to express their willingness to serve and our nominating committee made recommendations to me for a Council that would reflect the diversity of ages, genders, cultures, and service to our parish.

I am happy to report to you that the following members have accepted appointments to serve on our pastoral council.

**Current members:**

*Deacon Jack Meehan, Vita Scorcia, Stacie Baltrusitis, Jane Desthers, Mary Steck*

**New Members joining the council:**

*Lisa Cantalino, Sonia DaSilva, Nilo DeLeon, Jerry Esposito, John Muldoon, Bob Natale, Eileen Rega, Christine Volk*

Our new council will have its first meeting early in January. One of the most important tasks for this council will be to conduct a pastoral needs assessment of our parish community to help discover the most important directions for our community.

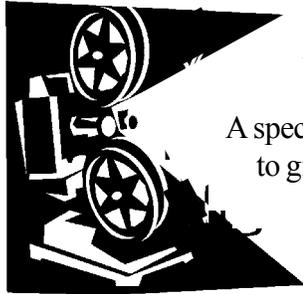
*Fr. Mike*

## OLL Family Christmas Movie Afternoon

**Sunday, December 21**

**3:30 PM – 5:30 PM** (in time for “The Six!”)

**Parish Center**



Take a break from the holiday rush – especially in this last week – for a leisurely afternoon with family.

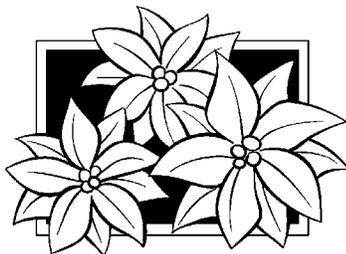
A special movie, snacks, giveaways and some fun Christmas Carols all promise to give you the break you need!

Families from one to one hundred are welcome – there is something for all ages!

Do you have a great idea for a good Christmas movie?  
If yes, e-mail John Sureau at [jsureau@ollchurch.org](mailto:jsureau@ollchurch.org)

## New “Liturgical” Year Resolution

How about committing to coming to Mass better prepared. We are happy to provide a special resource, “At Home with the Word” that provides the readings for every Sunday along with some important suggestions and ideas for how to live the Word out for the week ahead. If you’re interested, e-mail John Sureau ([jsureau@ollchurch.org](mailto:jsureau@ollchurch.org)) or stop by the Parish Office. The suggested offering for the book is \$10.



## Christmas Flower Offerings

Christmas Flower offerings received by **Sunday, December 7** will be published in the Christmas bulletin. Offerings received after that date, will be published in subsequent bulletins.

## Parish Outreach

**Office telephone:**

661-9262, option 4

**Office hours:**

Monday - Friday: 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

## Pantry Needs

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detergent  
kleenex  
paper towels  
personal feminine products  
shampoo  
soap  
toilet tissue  
toothbrush  
toothpaste

## Outreach Memorial Donations

*Parish Outreach has received the following donations in memoriam:*

- Outreach has received a donation from Marge Cassiano in memory of *Anna Cagliari*.
- A donation to Outreach has been made in memory of *Mary Elder*.
- The Sage Group has made a donation to Outreach in memory of *Anna Cagliari*.
- The Amabile Family has made a donation to Outreach in memory of *Pasquale Amabile, and Angela & Joseph Bono*.
- In honor of the memory of *William Heim*, his grandchildren have made a donation to Outreach in lieu of Christmas gifts.

If you would like to make a donation in memory of a loved one, please call Mary McMahon, Director of Parish Social Ministry at 661.3224, option 4.

## Did you notice The Giving PODS?

Our thanks goes to Terry Lachner , area manager for PODS on Long Island, for donating the use of a POD to our Outreach Office for the Christmas Season.

The POD will be used to store your generous gifts and contributions until they can be distributed at Christmas.

Terry has also offered a discount on a POD rental for any OLL parishioner! Contact the Outreach Office for details.





## 3rd Sunday of Advent

Many of us struggle with the concept of being outwardly faithful and helping others to understand the warmth of the light of life and fire of the Holy Spirit that fills us. Often, we are fearful of what others will think of us; we don't like to be embarrassed or ridiculed for our beliefs. But what is the worst that could happen? Those who laugh or point fingers in disgust are the very ones we need to reach. We may not immediately see that we've reached them, but at some point that light we enjoy may also shine on them. Truly, it would be worse if we were able to show that light, and yet did nothing.

Today's Gospel reading from John is the story of the questioning of St. John the Baptist by the priests and Levites of Jerusalem. They mocked him, asking if he was the prophet Elijah, or any other prophet for that matter. After all, what right did he have to claim to know something about the coming of the long-awaited Messiah? He was just a man who spent his days among sinners, baptizing them in the waters of the Jordan. Who was he? "I am 'the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'" as Isaiah the prophet said." That's who he was.

John was not afraid to profess who he was or in whose name he gave great glory. We are taught in the Catechism, "The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it" (CCC 1816). John might have simply lived his life knowing his belief in God and Jesus Christ would be enough for his salvation, yet he went further. In this season of Advent, challenge yourself to not only live your faith, but to share in its great joy with others.

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### Readings for the Week of December 14, 2008

<b>Sunday:</b>	Is 61:1-2a, 10-11/1 Thes 5:16-24/Jn 1:6-8, 19-28
<b>Monday:</b>	Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a/Mt 21:23-27
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Zep 3:1-2, 9-13/Mt 21:28-32
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Gn 49:2, 8-10/Mt 1:1-17
<b>Thursday:</b>	Jer 23:5-8/Mt 1:18-25
<b>Friday:</b>	Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a/Lk 1:5-25
<b>Saturday:</b>	Is 7:10-14/Lk 1:26-38
<b>Next Sunday:</b>	2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16/Rom 16:25-27/Lk 1:26-38

## **Altar Society**

Altar linens this week will be cared for by *Pat Wissing*.  
If you would like to help care for our altar needs,  
please call the Parish Office at 661.3224.

## **Senior Circle**

The Senior Circle usually meets on the last Monday of each month. The next meeting will be held on **Monday, December 15**, at **12:30 PM in the Parish Center**.

## **SAGE**

The SAGE Group (Senior Advocates for Growth and Enrichment) will meet on **Tuesday, December 16**, in the **Parish Center at 9 AM**.

## **Good Samaritan Prayer Group of L.I.**

The Good Samaritan Prayer Group of Long Island holds their **meetings every Friday** (*except the first Friday of the month*) at **OLL School in Room 16 from 8 PM until 10 PM**. All are welcome to experience singing, praying and fellowship each evening.

## **Jesus, King of All Nations Prayer Group**

The Jesus, King of All Nations Prayer Group meets each **Thursday afternoon** in the **Church**. The meeting is from **3 PM until 4 PM in front of the Blessed Sacrament**.

**“When you give food to the poor, they call you a saint.  
When you ask why the poor have no food, they call you a communist.”  
– Dom Helder Camara, Brazilian Archbishop**

## ***Seniors Going Hungry***

**MICAH\*:** An Interfaith Campaign to End Poverty on Long Island  
(\*Mobilized Interfaith Coalition Against Hunger)

**“Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.” *Micah, 6:8***

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With food and energy prices soaring, more seniors- especially those on fixed incomes or among the working poor- find themselves struggling. They are dipping into meager savings, asking relatives for help, lining up at food banks or soup kitchens for the first time in their lives, or simply going to bed hungry.

Those who had no wiggle room before are facing tough decisions on what to pay for. People are afraid to miss a payment on the rent or the mortgage for fear of eviction or foreclosure and they are paying more every time they go to the grocery store or fill the gas tank. What do you cut back on? Medicine? Food? For many, those are the only alternatives. In a recent CNN poll, 30 percent of the people surveyed nationwide said that they were already cutting back on food and medicine- a choice that almost certainly compromises their health and well-being.

It is now commonplace to hear of people having to choose between buying medicine or groceries. Mostly, it is reported, that folks are going without their prescription medicine. Being sick is one thing, but eating, is a matter of survival. One gauge of desperation is the surging number of elderly turning to food banks, soup kitchens and other emergency food assistance programs. A few years ago, the Long Island Council of Churches' food pantry in Riverhead fed only 2 or 3 seniors a month. This past October, that number rose to 143 seniors.

Today the federal government counts 10 percent of Americans 65 and older at or below the poverty line, but we know the percentage is actually higher than this. According to a recent AARP survey, 60 percent of Americans 65 and older are having a tougher time paying for food, gas and medicine. ( Source: Peter Jaret, AARP Bulletin)

Ask your town sanitation departments to implement a policy that prevents usable food from being wasted in dumpsters and landfills and allows the food to go to soup kitchens and food pantries that help feed our most vulnerable neighbors.

To learn more about the MICAH campaign, contact Rev. Thomas Goodhue at the LI Council of Churches ([licchemp@aol.com](mailto:licchemp@aol.com)) or LICC Advocacy Director Neelofer Chaudry ([licmicah@aol.com](mailto:licmicah@aol.com))

## Pastoral Care of Our Sick

Please call the Parish Office at 661.3224 to leave the names of parishioners who:

- are homebound and would like to receive the Eucharist
- are in Good Samaritan Hospital and would like to be visited by a member of our Pastoral Care Ministry.
- would like to receive the Sacrament of the Sick.



## Pray for Our Sick

Please remember to keep in your thoughts and prayers ...

*Connie Altadonna, Lucas Anderson, Susan Aviza, Deacon Dick Barry, Deacon Steve Behar, Claire Beierle, Nicholas Buscemi, Jr., Howard Campkin, Regina Cranor, Karen DellaVecchia, Josephine DiBenedetto, Janet Eifler, James, Jr. & Julia Florio (infants), Susan Gigante, Brian Hinkelman, Lili Hinkelman, Kathleen Kerrigan, Evelyn Lang, Nancy Letsch, Kara Lobasso, Baby Josephine Mahan, Vicky Massaro, Michele McCann, Peter McCann, Sr., David McCarthy, Eleanor McGee, Dorothy Meloni, Brenden Muldoon, Frances Parine, Arthur Petrino, Joanne Popper, Joe Radosti, James Reilly, Patricia Salimbene, Dorothy Shiavone, Joe Shields, Gloria Shukal, Derek Stahl, Diana Marie Taveras, Charlie Tibbetts, Baby John Tramazzo, Jean Virgilio, Pat Wallace*

## Members in the Military

We ask that you pray especially for those in our parish that are on active duty in the Middle East conflict.

They are:



**Bryan R. Dempsey-US Marines**  
**Danielle DiLapi-US Army**  
**James J. Ferrara-US Marines**  
**Thomas W. Ferrara -US Air Force**  
**John Finn-US Army**  
**Christopher Florca-US Marines**  
**Donnie Frank-US Marines**  
**Armand J. LeComte-US Marines**  
**Michael Mallimo- US Army**  
**Anthony Mannino-US Marines**  
**Trent Narra-US Marines**  
**Peter Provenzano-US Army**

...and remember those of our parish family that are in the armed services, listed in our Parish Book of Intentions.

## An Invitation Inside of Christmas

by Ron Rolheiser, OMI

We fight too much about Christmas, arguing about its meaning.

For some, Christmas is for the children, a feast where we let their delight and freshness challenge our cynicism, where the very sentiments we often disdain as adults are meant to soften our hearts, Scrooge converted by the innocence of children.

For others, it's the opposite: We insist rather that Christmas is an adult feast, something kids don't ultimately understand, something that celebrates the greatest intellectual mystery of all time, God taking on flesh to bring justice to the earth.

And so some of us send Christmas greetings urging delight, celebration, gifts, lights, and joyous song, while some of us send more stark greetings that say: "May the peace of Christ disturb you!" What is Christmas? Hardened shepherds and power-prone kings finally bending knees and hearts before a helpless baby or a harsh, non-negotiable challenge to clean up our pampered self-centered lives and build some justice in this world?

Christmas is about all of these things, and more. Like a diamond turning in the sun, it gives off many sparkles. Christmas is about the monumental challenge to reform our lives, our adult lives, and become women and men of justice; but it is also about a baby being born, innocent and powerless in the straw, whose vulnerability is God's invitation and judgement. It is too, as Karl Rahner once said, God giving us permission to be happy. Thus, Christmas is a both something to be delighted in and a peace that should disturb us, something for children and for adults.

What Christmas invites us all to, children and adults alike, is have our hearts softened and tempered by the crib, to let the vulnerability manifested in the way Jesus was born bring us back to a time before hardness of heart, to a place beyond pseudo-sophistication, cynicism, bitterness, wound, selfishness, and greed. Christmas is meant not just to renew our faith and hope, but also to renew our innocence.

The American educator, Allan Bloom, writing from a purely secular perspective, casts light on this in a little story he shares in his famed book, *The Closing of the American Mind*. He tells how, as a young man taking his first university classes, a professor introduced his course in this way. Looking at his young, 19-20 year-old students, the professor said: "You come here from your small-town, parochial backgrounds and I am going to bathe you in great truth - and set you free." Bloom,

even at 19, wasn't impressed. He writes that this professor reminded him of a little boy who had solemnly informed him when he was seven years old that there was no Santa Claus or Easter Bunny. But, Bloom adds, "he wasn't bathing me in any great truth, he was showing off."

Bloom comments that what he learned from that professor was to forever teach in the opposite way. He, Bloom, would start his classes with words to this effect: "You come here having experienced so many things. You've seen so much of life that I'm going to try to teach you how to believe in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny again - and then maybe you will have a chance again to be happy!"

This, properly nuanced, captures one of the invitations inside of Christmas. The Christmas crib invites us back to our innocence, though not to the pre-sophisticated naiveté of a child, but to the post-sophisticated and post-cynical joy and innocence of a truly mature adult, to a second-naiveté, a post-liberal, post-bitter, post-wounded, and post-hard-hearted place.

One of my professors in Louvain used to flag this little slogan: If you ask a naive child if she believes in Santa and the Easter Bunny, she will say yes. If you ask a bright child if she believes in Santa and the Easter Bunny, she will say no. But if you ask even a brighter child if she believes in Santa and the Easter Bunny, she will smile slyly and then say yes.

Christmas is about much deeper things than Santa and the birth of Jesus is not just some delightful fairy tale meant to warm the heart. We measure time by this event. Christmas is about God being born physically and historically into this world and, among many other things, we have some stunning lessons to learn from the manner in which this happened.

As virtually all of our iconography around Christmas makes clear, God is born, not as some superstar whose earthly power, beauty, and muscle dwarf us. No. God is born as helpless, vulnerable, thoroughly under-whelming baby who looks out at us quietly even as we look back at him and he judges us in that way that vulnerability forever judges false strength, transparency judges lies, generosity judges selfishness, innocence judges over-sophistication, and a baby, gently and helplessly and disarmingly, calls forth what's best in us.

Christmas is meant to bring us back to the crib so that our hearts can feel that freshness that wants to make us start living over again.

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*Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Father Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author and is currently the President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website-[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com).*

## Financial Summary

### December 7, 2008

Weekly Collection	\$ 18,032.00
Weekly Budget	-\$ 19,000.00
+/- for the week	\$ (968.00)

*The estimated weekly collection needed to maintain and operate our parish buildings, ministries, programs and salaries is \$19,000.*

Did you notice our new budget amount- \$19,000 vs. \$21,000 (*last year*)? This reflects the difficult economic times and our attempt to adjust our budget to meet that.

## Mass Attendance

Beginning with this new liturgical cycle, we will publish Mass attendance figures for each of our Sunday liturgies. In the same way that we pay attention to the amount of money donated to the support of our parish, let's now pay closer attention to the amount of people praying with us each week. May this be a good awareness raiser for our parish community and for each one of us!

### December 7, 2008

5 PM	427
8 AM	203
9:30 AM	419
11 AM	404
12:30 PM	305
"The Six"	296
Total	2054

## Holiday Bus Trip to Calverton

This is a free trip sponsored by the local Dignity Memorial Funeral Homes. The trip will be on **Tuesday, December 16** and you will be picked up (and dropped off) at our area funeral homes. Pick-up will be at 9:15 AM at Boyd-Spencer Funeral Home, Babylon, at 9:30 AM at Lang-Tobia-DiPalma Funeral Home, Deer Park and at 9:45 AM at Boyd-Caratozzolo Funeral Home, Deer Park. Seating is limited. Please plan to arrive at the funeral home at least 15 minutes prior to departure. Coffee, cookies and cold drinks will be served, along with pizza lunch on return trip. The bus has a lavatory. For further information, please call Boyd-Spencer Funeral Home at 669.2400.

## Live Nativity

This year, don't just read the Christmas story, come and see it! Actors and actresses, along with live animals, will bring the Nativity to life. Music will be provided by various singing groups. The presentation will be at St. Patrick's Church, Smithtown on **Saturday, December 20 from 5:30 PM until 10 PM.**

## Harvest Houses

Harvest Houses, Residences for Well-Elders are affordable, gracious living alternatives offering seniors both privacy and companionship, security and quality of life.

Every Harvest House is home for eight independent elders who want the fullness of living in a family atmosphere, the continuity of "a home away from home."

An opening is now available in the Syosset and Floral Park residences. If you are interested in finding out more information or visiting one of our Harvest Houses please contact Sister Jeanne A. Brendel, O.P., CSW, Executive Director at 516.496.9796.

## Religion & Rock

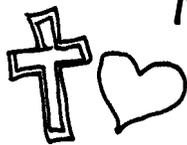
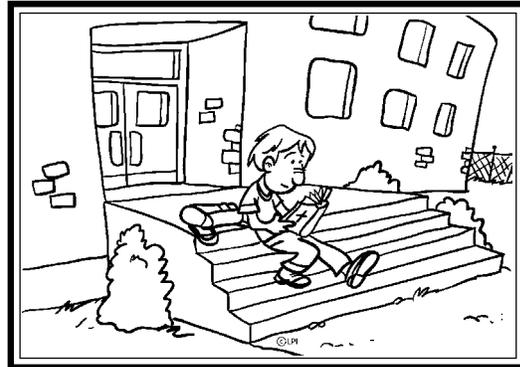
Tune into "Religion & Rock" with Msgr. Jim Vlaun on Sunday from 7 AM to 8 AM on WBAB 102.3 FM or 95.3 on the East End of Long Island. The show is also available on Sirius Radio, Channel 159 at 11 PM on Saturday.

Next Sunday's theme is "**Consumerism/Shopping**," Don't miss it!

To listen online or receive more information regarding "Religion & Rock" go to [www.religionandrock.com](http://www.religionandrock.com). Don't forget to tune into TELE CARE, Cablevision 29 or Verizon FIOS 271 for the Best in Catholic Television!

# Sharing the Gospel

People noticed John the Baptist. He loved God, and he used words honestly. He really wanted to help people change and grow closer to God. He stood out as someone really different and special. People came from all around to hear him and learn about him. When people asked him questions, he pointed them to Jesus.



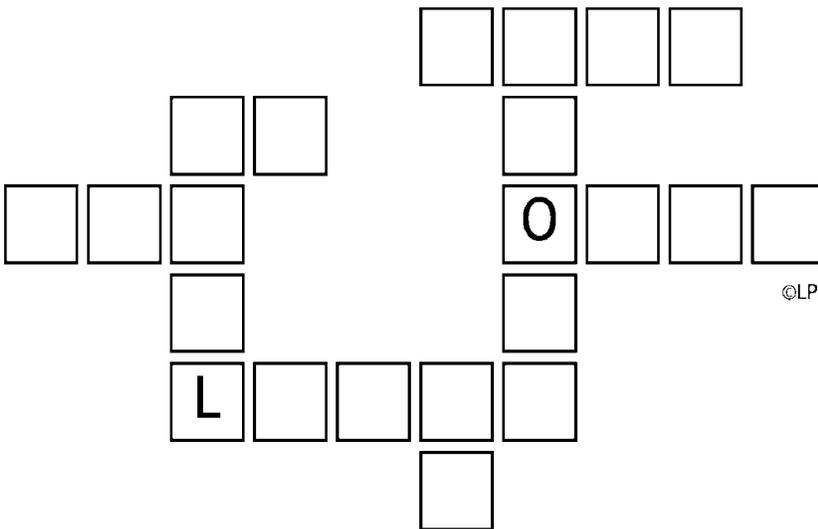
## Mission for the Week

Ask a friend if he or she is ready to meet Jesus.



Fit this Gospel message into the empty squares:

**He came only to tell about the light.**



## Prayer



Jesus,  
help me to be  
different because  
I love you.

## Something to Draw



Draw a picture  
of yourself being  
honest and kind with  
your family.