

PASTOR'S NOTES

Christmas - *the gift that defines all giving!!*

Christmas is always a special day, especially for children as they tear into their Christmas gifts and their spirits leap for joy when they get something they really wanted. Gift-giving is a treasured way of showing our love for other people.

Of all the gifts ever shared in all of human history **Christians believe the Christmas gift of the Christ Child defines all measures of selfless love-giving.**

Christmas celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation when God assumed our human nature or as the Prologue of John's Gospel declares — *"In the beginning was the Word, the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God ... the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."* Every time we pray the Creed we say, *"... he came down from heaven and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man."* Of this the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) says: "Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith." [CCC 463]

All of this leads to a very logical question – **Why did God assume our human nature?** St. Peter Chrysologus [406-450] gives the over-arching answer when he says the human race takes its origin from two men – Adam the first man and Christ the second man. The first man (Adam) was made by the second man (Christ). Christ had stamped his image and likeness on the first Adam when he created him. Adam's sin has deprived us of God's likeness. This is why Christ took on himself the role and name of the first Adam – **in order that he might not lose what he had made in his image.** That is why Scripture says of Christ, "I am the first and the last." In essence the Father's gift of Christ (the second man) restores the goodness lost by Adam (the first man).

In paragraphs 456-460 the Catechism of the Catholic Church says the Word became flesh for four (4) reasons:

- (1) The Word became flesh for us in order **to save us** by reconciling us with God. St. Gregory of Nyssa [ca. 330 - ca. 395] says it this way, *"Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; ... We had lost possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us to the light; captives, we awaited a Savior; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Did they (meaning the human race) not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state?"*;
- (2) The Word became flesh so that thus we might **know God's love.** As John's Gospel says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* [Jn. 3:16]
- (3) The Word became flesh to be our **model of holiness.** As John's Gospel has Christ saying, *"I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me."* [Jn. 14:6]
- (4) The Word became flesh to make us **partakers of the divine nature.** St. Athanasius [296-373] puts it this way, *"For the Son of God became man so that we might become God."* St. Thomas Aquinas [1226-1274] says it this way, *"The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."*

Such is the gift of Christmas, and why Christmas is the gift that defines all giving. It is in this spirit that we say **'Merry Christmas'!!!**



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347-4609

St. Thomas Catholic Church
401 Third St. North
PO Box 22
Buffalo ND
633-5150



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 24, 2023



Weekend Mass Schedule for St. Leo's and St. Thomas

1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays: 8:30 am St. Thomas, 10:30 am St. Leo's

2nd & 4th Sundays: 8:30 am St. Leo's, 10:30 am St. Thomas

Every Saturday: 5:00 pm at St. Leo's

Mass Intentions for the week of Dec 24:

Mon - Dec 25 - Christmas Day – 10:00 am – +Fr. Al Bitz

Tues - Dec 26 – St. Thomas– 9:00 am – +Souls in purgatory

NO MASS at St. Leo's

Wed – Dec 27 – 11:00 am – **Funeral Mass for Stephan Haglund**

NO 9 am Mass at St. Leo's

Thurs – Dec 28 – 9:00 am – +**Shirley Marek** by Jon & Toni Watt

Fri – Dec 29 – 9:00 am – +**Souls in purgatory**

Sat - Dec 30 – 5:00 pm - +Deceased relatives and friends by Mary Kempel

Sun - Dec 31 – St. Thomas - 8:30 am - For the people of our parishes

St. Leo's - 10:30 am - +Janice Muscha by Floy Carpenter Lamb

Sun - Dec 31 - Holy Day/Mary, Mother of God - 5:00 pm - St. Thomas

Mon - Jan 1 - Holy Day/Mary, Mother of God - 10:00 am - St. Leo's - +Fr. Armand Brooks

Parish Staff:

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St. Leo's Directors: Dave Glennon & Micah Bartholomay

St. Thomas Directors: Gary Milbrandt & Flint Kasowski

Sacrament of Reconciliation

at St. Leo's

4:00 - 4:45 pm Saturday

at St. Thomas

8:00 - 8:15 am

before all 8:30 am Masses

~ Anytime by appointment

~ Communal Services during

Advent and Lent

New Members: If you are new to the area, we would love to have you as a registered member. To register as a new member of the parish, please visit with Fr. Ermer after Mass.

Please join in praying the Rosary
25 minutes before the Saturday evening
and Sunday morning Mass times.

PARISH EVENTS/MEETINGS


Sun., Dec 24 - 5:00 pm - Christmas Eve- Mass at St. Thomas in Buffalo
9:30 pm - Christmas Eve- Mass at St. Leo's, Carols begin at 9:00 pm
Mon., Dec 25 - 10:00 am - Christmas Day- Mass at St. Leo's
 Sun., Dec 31 - 5:00 pm - Mary, Mother of God Holy Day- Vigil Mass at St. Thomas
 Mon., Jan 1 - 10:00 am - Mary, Mother of God Holy Day- Mass at St. Leo's
 Tues., Jan 9 - 7:00 pm - Social Concerns committee meeting at the rectory
 Wed., Jan 10 - Religious Education classes resume



GIFTS for THE CHILD: At the main entry of the church is a crib that is accepting all sorts of baby supplies, e.g. diapers, wipes, blankets, and toiletries. These items will be brought up in procession at our 9:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass and then be donated to some of the agencies that work with expectant parents/single moms. Monetary donations can also be turned in to the parish office.

Humanitarian assistance for the Holy Land Special Collection: Envelopes for this collection are located on the tables behind the back pews of the church. Funds raised will be sent to the Latin Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Please make checks payable to St. Leo's and return either in the collection or to the parish office. Thank you.

Upcoming Ministry Schedule

	Saturday Dec 30 5:00 pm <i>St. Leo's</i>	Sunday Dec 31 10:30 am <i>St. Leo's</i>	Sunday Dec 31 8:30 am <i>St. Thomas</i>
			
<i>Lector</i>			Judy Von Bank
<i>Eucharistic Ministers</i>	Please see Sign-Up Sheets in the Church entry.		Jurgen Suhr Penny Zaun
<i>Altar Servers</i>			Rudi Wendel Gavin Besette
<i>Offertory Collectors</i>	<i>Volunteers needed</i>	<i>Volunteers needed</i>	Travis & Darcie Besette
<i>Gift Bearers</i>	<i>Volunteers needed</i>	<i>Volunteers needed</i>	Arnie & Barb Buhr
<i>Lead Rosary</i>	Richard Muscha	Alexia Kieffer	

NEWS AND NOTES

Celebrate Baptism - We give thanks to God for the Baptism of Henry William Hermann, son of Douglas and Brandi.
We pray that the Spirit of Christ may guide him to live as a child of God.



Council 9477

St. Leo's Knight of the Month:
 The Knight for the month of **December** is **Fr. Ermer**. Thank you Fr. Ermer for all you do for the KC's. Your dedication is greatly appreciated.

Thank You to the families who made Tie Blankets for our area veterans: Den Bolda Family, Mike & Acacia Faught family, Mary Jendro, Grey Kempel family, Jake Lako family, Kris Poulson family, Paul Radermacher family, Alex Richard family, Tony Roth family, and Steve Scherweit family. We appreciate your help with this project.

Holy Family Sunday: On Sunday, December 31st (Holy Family Sunday) at the 10:30 am Mass Fr. Ermer will be doing a blessing over your household religious objects, such as: rosaries, crucifixes, bibles, medals, statues, etc. Please bring your items to be blessed and place them on the table at the front of the church.

Thank you to West Funeral Home for providing the *Feasts & Saints* calendars for 2024. The calendars are located on a table in the church entry. Please take only one per household. Thank you.

2023 Contributors: We ask that you please try and have your 2023 contributions in before December 31st. IRS regulations say that if a donor wants to claim a contribution as a charitable deduction for 2023 for income tax purposes, it must be received or postmarked by December 31st. Checks dated for December 31st will be credited to your 2023 offertory statement and checks dated January 1st will be credited to your 2024 statements. Thank you.

St. Leo's Ministry Schedule for December 23rd/24th and December 30th/31st: Because the 4th and 5th weekends of December are holiday weekends (*and people usually travel*) there will be sign-up sheets in the church entry to help fill the schedule for those weekends. **If one of those weekends** is your normally scheduled weekend and you are going to be here we ask that you **please sign up for your regular time slot**. This will greatly help us in the planning process. Thank you for your help.

This week's Stewardship moment:

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" ~ Luke 1:28

After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward. Her entire life was lived in obedience to God's call. Mary teaches us to live with joy for all we have been given. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, Mary reflects the light of Christ. Like Mary, we are called to reflect Christ's light to the world through our gratitude and generosity.