

St. Stephen Catholic Church

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Third Sunday

OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 16, 2018

*Whoever has two cloaks should
 share with the person who has none.
 And whoever has food should do likewise.*

Luke 3:11

Week At A Glance	Schedule of Masses																						
<p>Saturday, 12/15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministers to the Sick Mtg, Rm 6 (after mass) <p>Sunday, 12/16 Third Sunday of Advent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministers to the Sick Mtg, Rm 6 (after mass) <p>Monday, 12/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Office Open, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm Lector's Practice, Chapel 7 pm <p>Tuesday, 12/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Office Open, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm Card & Game Party, Hall 12:00 pm <p>Wednesday, 12/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Office Open, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm <p>Thursday, 12/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Office Open, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm Enrichment, Room 5 9:30 am Children's Play Rehearsal, 6 pm Choir Rehearsal, 7 pm <p>Saturday, 12/22</p> <p>Sunday, 12/23 Fourth Sunday of Advent</p>	<p>Mon - Fri: 7:30 am Saturday: 5 pm <i>Chapel, Room 1</i> Sunday: 9:30 am Confessions: Saturday, 4:30 pm</p>																						
	<p style="text-align: center;">Upcoming Mass Intentions</p>																						
	<p>Sat 12/15 5 pm - Audrey Ostberg † Sun 12/16 9:30 am - Mary Hogan † Mon 12/17 7:30 am - Edward Pippo † Wed 12/19 7:30 am - Poirier, Anniversary Blessings Sat 12/22 5 pm - Angelo Rusca †</p>																						
	<p style="text-align: center;">Ministers Schedule Dec. 22-23</p>																						
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The readings for this Third Sunday of Advent emphasize the **joyous** anticipation of the Lord's coming. That is why this Sunday is known as "Gaudete Sunday," that is "Rejoice Sunday" or "Sunday of Joy." You can't miss the message as the words joy, rejoice, gladness, and exultation appear at least 15 times in today's liturgy. The message is further reflected in the rose-colored vestments of the priest and the rose-colored third candle on our Advent wreath.



For many of us, the theme of joy is much needed in these days. There are so many disasters, so much suffering, so much discouragement, so much that seems wrong with our world. In the face of all this, how can we be joyful? Our Little Blue Advent Book answers that question this way:

We have two options. One is to see all these problems as fatal. The world is doomed to be forever unjust and tragic, so I should simply do my best to get the most I can for myself out of the situation. The other option is to see all creation as the recipient of the overwhelming power of God's compassion and transforming love. When I look at the world this way, I believe that every struggle for peace and justice, however small, ultimately has an effect, and whatever energy I spend to relieve suffering is worth the effort.

Taking that second option is to live our lives in this world with hope and with joy in these "in-between times," the time in between Jesus's birth and the Second Coming of Christ.

In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis, in reference to the many invitations to us in the Gospels to rejoice, asks: *Why should we not also enter into this great stream of joy? . . . I realize of course that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.*

It is for this infinite, unconditional love and abiding presence of God in our lives that we should be always and forever joyful . . . and grateful. From this joy and gratitude flows generosity, compassion, and a desire to help those in need. And from this generosity comes a wisdom that recognizes helping others results in helping ourselves as well.

Archbishop Tutu of South Africa during a visit with the Dalai Lama offered this prayer which seems so appropriate for this "Sunday of Joy": *Dear Child of God, you are loved with a love that nothing can shake, a love that loved you long before you were created, a love that will be there long after everything has disappeared. . . And God wants you to be like God. Filled with life and goodness and laughter—and joy. . . So, please, my child, help me. Help me to spread love and laughter and joy and compassion. And you know what, my child? As you do this—hey, presto—you discover joy. Joy, which you had not sought, comes as the gift, as almost the reward for this non-self-regarding caring for others.* How true this is. May we rejoice in the Lord always!

Jim Briggs

Third Sunday of Advent December 16, 2018

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18

The days of the prophet Zephaniah were bad times for Israel because of their idolatry and unfaithfulness to the law. Zephaniah preached impending judgment, a day of doom. But he ends by telling them of a day when they will sing for joy, and the Lord will sing joyfully over them.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Of all the communities Paul founded, the one at Philippi was his favorite. Toward the end of his letter to them, he advises them how to live as they await Christ's return in glory.



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Christmas Mass Schedule:

Christmas Eve: 4:30 pm Carols & Prayers; 5:00 pm Mass
Christmas Day: 9:30 am Mass



There will be a **meeting after both Saturday and Sunday Masses this weekend for Eucharistic Ministers to the Sick** and those interested in becoming one. Join us in Room 6. Refreshments will be served. For more details contact Mary Nuxoll, 933-7587.

Mark your calendars and join us for the **Feast of Saint Stephen** on Wednesday, Dec. 26 at 5:30 pm in the parish hall. The evening will start with a prayer service followed by a potluck dinner and caroling. Use this as an opportunity to share your Christmas leftovers.

This **Christmas season**, St. Stephen is collaborating with Hillcrest Congregational Church to collect **donations for the homeless** here in our area. We will be accepting donations of socks, knit caps and scarves, gloves and new or gently used men's jackets. A donation box is located in the back of the church.

"Peace in the Womb Christmas Caroling" on Friday December 21, 10-11 am, at Planned Parenthood, 1357 Oakland Blvd. Walnut Creek. In the Christmas story, hope enters the world through the birth of a child, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Join us as we celebrate the sanctity of life while singing carols and sharing this Christmas hope. For more info call 944-5351.

This weekends **second collection benefits Wildfire Relief**. Thank you for your support.

Reminder - Lectors are required to attend Monday evening practice (7 pm in the Chapel, Rm 1) in order to lector at Masses the following week-end. Because of the holidays, lector practice for all lectors proclaiming at Masses Dec. 22 – Jan 1 will occur on Monday, Dec. 17.

Remember to pick up your 2019 envelope boxes from the back of the Church. If you cannot find your box or would like to start using envelopes, please talk to Chris Lang.

Our **Children's Christmas Play** is scheduled for December 24 at the Christmas Vigil Mass at 5:00pm. The final rehearsal is Thursday evening, December 20 at 6:00pm. For more information, contact Annette Roux.

Because of the holidays, the **early deadline for our December 30 bulletin** is December 20. Please send any bulletin updates to Chris Lang before that date.

On Thursday, Dec. 20 at 9:30 am, **Enrichment** will be having a special **Christmas Program** in Room 5.

GAMES PARTY – CHRISTMAS POTLUCK. Please come and join us for our annual Christmas potluck and games (bridge, dominoes, etc.) with your fellow parishioners in St. Stephen's Hall this Tuesday, December 18th at noon. All are welcome to this "Holy Spirit" potluck. Call Walter Lang at 939-2430 if you have any questions.

Parish Stewardship Dec. 8/9

Regular collection	\$3087.00
Maintenance	\$ 146.00
Christmas Flowers	\$ 60.00
Christmas Offering	\$ 95.00
Religious Retirement	\$1028.00

Thank you!

It has been said that we are born with a "God-shaped" hole in our hearts. It is a space reserved for God alone, although sometimes we are not aware of this. Until we recognize what that hole is, we try to fill it up by stuffing earthly things into it – possessions, activities, and self-importance. It's like trying to force the wrong piece of a jigsaw puzzle into a space not meant for it. It doesn't work. Nothing but God will fit into the "God-shaped" hole. Advent is the time to invite God into that empty space in our hearts. As we decorate our homes and trees with strings of sparkling lights that transform the common and the ordinary into the magical, we are reminded that although alone we are but one small light, united in the community of Christ, we become the shining and significant sign of the presence of God. As we prepare a great feast for friends and family, we ask God to grant us a true hunger for love that is patient, never rude and never broods over injuries. Let us decorate our hearts with deeds of compassion for the poor, with acts of love and service to one another and with kindness to all. The preparation and decoration of our hearts should rival the joyous beauty in our homes and cities. A lighted candle in the window is an age-old sign that a traveler is welcome to stop and rest. We are called to open our hearts and offer a candle of compassion for those who seek comfort. As we wrap gifts in beautiful packages, let us not forget the gifts of patience, kindness, sincerity and humor. When we heed the call of God during this Advent season and open our hearts to Him, we will find that "God-shaped" hole in our hearts will be filled. The mystic, Meister Eckhart said, "Unless Christ is born in each and every heart, he is not born at all." Together, may we answer the call to re-form and re-shape our hearts and allow the Christ Child to be born within us.

Annette Roux,
Pastoral Associate, Ret.



Mission Statement: To Live and to Love in Christ