



ALL SAINTS

AREA FAITH COMMUNITY



ST. ANDREW'S 
FAIRFAX, MN

ST. WILLIBRORD'S 
GIBBON, MN

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES 
WINTHROP, MN

SACRED HEART
FRANKLIN, MN

Father Bruno OSB
Parochial Administrator
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Residence: 834-6461

Kellie Sloot
Area Religious Ed Coordinator
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320-583-6755
yesterdayskitchen@gmail.com

Deacon Roger Osborne
Residence: 647-5894
Diocese Website:
www.dnu.org

Danette Polzin
Secretary– 426-7739
E mail - ffgw@centurytel.net

AFC Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
AFC Website: www.allsaintsafc.org

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATORS

Sacred Heart – Amy Koupal 507-276-9222
St. Andrew - Karen Guggisberg 507-426-7348

St. Willibrord - Genny Neyers 507-834-6659
St. Francis - Kellie Sloot 320-583-6755

National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453

MARRIAGE PREPARATION:

Please contact Fr. Bruno at least six months ahead of time to plan and prepare for your wedding. No wedding date is final until approved by Fr. Bruno.

BAPTISMS: Please make arrangements for attending a baptism session with Sister Mary Ann anywhere from one to two months prior to the date of the baptism of a child.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of New Ulm:
1-866-670-5163.
(Confidential Counseling Services and Referral Information)

LITURGY SCHEDULE: In case of a funeral a regular scheduled morning Mass will be canceled that day.

Monday, December 10	NO MASS		
Tuesday, December 11	NO MASS		
Wednesday, December 12	8:30 AM	Gibbon	+Bill Eckert
		<i>Eucharist Adoration following Mass</i>	
Thursday, December 13	8:30 AM	Fairfax	+Deceased Dauer Family
		<i>Eucharist Adoration following Mass</i>	
	10:15AM	Franklin Nursing Home	+Verna Ludewig
Friday, December 14	9:30 AM	Winthrop Nursing Home	+Ken Hay
Saturday, December 15	3:00 PM	<i>Wedding of Mollie Sloot & Steven Shoyer-Winthrop</i>	
	3:30 PM	<i>Reconciliation prior to Mass</i>	
	4:00 PM	Franklin	+Frank, Mary & Rich Allen
	5:45 PM	Gibbon	+James Moldan
Sunday, December 16	8:30 AM	Winthrop	People of the All Saints Area Faith Community
	10:15 AM	Fairfax	+Dianne Kienlen

Reflection Questions for the Second Sunday of Advent

Can I properly discern what is of value and then act according to those values?



Readings for the Week of December 9, 2018

Sunday: Bar 5:1-9/Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6 [3]/Phil 1:4-6, 8-11/Lk 3:1-6
Monday: Is 35:1-10/Ps 85:9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14 [Is 35:4f]/Lk 5:17-26
Tuesday: Is 40:1-11/Ps 96:1-2, 3 and 10ac, 11-12, 13 [Is 40:10ab]/Mt 18:12-14
Wednesday: Zec 2:14-17 or Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab/Jdt 13:18bcde, 19 [15:9d]/Lk 1:26-38 or Lk 1:39-47
Thursday: Is 41:13-20/Ps 145:1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab [8]/Mt 11:11-15
Friday: Is 48:17-19/Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6 [Jn 8:12]/Mt 11:16-19
Saturday: Sir 48:1-4, 9-11/Ps 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19 [4]/Mt 17:9a, 10-13
Next Sunday: Zep 3:14-18a/Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6 [6]/Phil 4:4-7/Lk 3:10-18

Luke outlines some historical facts at the time of John the Baptist's preaching. It is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. John prepares the way for the Lord.

What are you doing for Christmas this year? Is the family gathering at your house? Are you traveling somewhere for the feast? Did you already put up decorations inside and out? Are you giving gifts, and if so, have you already made or bought them? All the preparations that we have done (or are planning to do) for our Christmas celebration are good. But they are not as important as Isaiah's call to prepare the way for the Lord. As you do all that which you need to do before Christmas, keep Christ in your thoughts, and consider how your activities can prepare the way for him.

"Lord Jesus, open my eyes to see you!"

Sacrament of Reconciliation - In the Catholic tradition, after making an examination of conscience that often involves review of the Ten Commandments and/or the Seven Deadly Sins and /or the Beatitudes, the penitent confesses his/her sins to receive the fullness of God's grace. The intent of this sacrament is to provide healing for the soul as well as to restore one's relationship to God, lost by sin.

Annai Children's Home Appeal As we are preparing to celebrate our Lord's birthday, I bring an appeal to your kind attention to consider the needs of the children at Annai Home in India and help them in their life. Please see the posters on the bulletin boards in each parish.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS for these All Saints Area Faith Community Penance Services

Sunday, Dec. 16 at 2:00 p.m. - St. Andrew

Tuesday, Dec. 18 at 6:30 p.m. – St. Willibrord

Fr. Bruno OSB

AREA PARISH

AREA CALENDAR

AREA PARISH BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 10

Dec 11 Erica Bock, MaryAlene Poss

Dec 12 Lupita Herrera, Stacy Jutz

Dec 13 Karen Borth, Keegan Lorang, Greg Olson, Megan Howe, Lucille Stelzer

Dec 14 Donn Fahey, Maurice Bleess, Kalley Koupal, Jan Forst, Phil Dummer, Sherry Koep

Dec 15 Mark Bregel, Delores Kokesch, Joe & Sharon Wersal Anniv.

Dec 16 Kevin Roiger, Sydney Kerkhoff, Stephanie Sievert

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE: Our AFC has an opportunity to celebrate the feast of our Lady of Guadalupe this Sunday, Dec. 9, with a 5:00 pm Mass at St. Andrew's Church in Fairfax, followed by a potluck meal. All are invited to participate in this joyous occasion. you!

VISITING: If anyone still wants to be included for a visit please let S. Mary Ann know ASAP. Thank you very much!

SANTA'S HELPERS/SANTA'S CLOSET: Thanks to all who contributed in any way to gift families with Christmas gifts. What a wonderful way to be Christ's presence for others.

ADVENT PENANCE SERVICES: Two communal penance services took place this past week. Please note the remaining times, dates and places:

Sunday, December 16, 2:00 p.m., St. Andrew, Fairfax (Note time)

Tuesday, December 18, 6:30 p.m., St. Willibrord, Gibbon

LECTORS: For those who are lectors for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, please note the readings which will be used: Christmas Eve – Nativity of the Lord – night – pg. 25 in Lector workbook

Christmas Day – Nativity of the Lord – day – pg. 32 in Lector workbook

All lectors, also be alert to the responses we use during these weeks for the intercessions!

DECORATING FOR CHRISTMAS: After the Masses next weekend (Dec. 15-16) some parishes may be asking for adults/youth to help gather the trees/wreaths/manger items/etc. so that it doesn't take so long for a few people to decorate our churches. Please plan on staying a few minutes to help out.

FAIRFAX KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS will be meeting December 20th in Fairfax at 7:00 pm.



Please Remember in Prayer

Mary Illg

St. Andrew's

Yvonne O'Brien

St. Francis de Sales

Mike Palmer

St. Andrew's

Leyla Ahlbrecht

St. Willibrord's

Ordell Grosam

St. Andrew's

Casey O'Brien

St. Francis de Sales

Francis Schweiss

St. Andrew's

Randy Zollner

St. Francis de Sales

Richard

Mathiowetz

St. Andrew's

Orren Rathke

St. Francis de Sales

Paula Wittgraf

St. Willibrord's

Edward Garrahy

St. Andrew's

Doris Prax

St. Andrew's

Adeline Roiger

St. Andrew's

HEALING SERVICE – Friday, December 14th at 7 p.m., at the Church of St. Catherine in Redwood Falls. Bishop Levoir, Fr. Tony Hesse, and Deacon Mike McKewn will be leading the service, which will be praying for healing of mind, body, and soul. All are welcome!

ELDERLY CATHOLIC SISTERS, BROTHERS, AND RELIGIOUS ORDER PRIESTS need your help. Years of serving for little or no pay have left a shortage of retirement funds. Your gift helps provide necessities such as medications and nursing care. Please give to the Retirement Fund for Religious collection at Mass this weekend.

WORDS CANNOT DESCRIBE HOW MUCH LOVE AND JOY WE FEEL. We are so thankful for the benefit and all that went into it. Brent is continually doctoring. A Caring Bridge page has been set up to stay up-to-date on Brent's health and healing. Thank you! God Bless. Thank you for the prayers. Love, Brent and Jody Sandmann

WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER "Yet, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you the potter; we are all the work of your hands." As we begin the waiting of advent, let us strive to become the work of his hands by attending a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend. The next Weekends are Feb 8-10, 2019 in Windom, MN and Apr 26-28, 2019 in HUTCHINSON, MN. For more information, call Miki Schultz at 507-227-8229 or visit them at southmnwwme.org.

WEEKLY OFFERING

	St. Andrew's	St. Francis's	St. Willibrord's	Sacred Heart
Adult	1,318.00	690.00	395.00	305.00
Student		2.00		2.00
Loose Plate	41.00	8.00		36.00
Christmas Flowers	265.00	20.00	60.00	
Fuel Collection	20.00			75.00
Christmas	240.00			
Campaign for Human Dev	20.00			
Catholic Education	2.00			
Building		160.00		
Immaculate Conception	5.00			
Votive Lights			8.00	
TOTAL	\$1,911.00	\$880.00	\$463.00	\$418.00

PRAY FOR OUR MILITARY:

Please continue to pray for the following military personnel who are members of our parish families and are serving full time or active duty in the military: SFC William R. Schmidt, SSG Jeff Ziegler, Kyler J. Rieke, Ryan E Lawrenz, SGT, Sgt. Chris Levinske, Amber Lindberg, Captain Martha Serbus, Sgt Kenneth Coleman, SFC Timothy R. Green, Spc Adam Nosbush, Major Steven Weber, Jackie Rieke and Pvt Jordan Lindmeyer.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2018: Class
Saturday, Dec. 15, 2018: Franklin Christmas Program
Sunday, Dec. 16, 2018: Fairfax Christmas Program & Winthrop Christmas Program
Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018: Class & Gibbon Christmas Program
Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018: No Class
Friday, Dec. 28, 2018: Live Life like Jesus Retreat 7th & 8th Grade

RETREAT IS "LIVE LIKE JESUS" Friday, December 28th, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at St. Andrews church basement. Light breakfast and lunch will be provided. This is opened to all four churches. Registrations will need to be turned in by December 19th to Kelli S or myself. There is no cost for this retreat.

SACRED HEART – FRANKLIN

Saturday, **December 15th**-4:00 PM

Lector: Sheila Robinson **Dist:** Sheila Robinson, Patti Scharfencamp, Deacon Roger **Servers:** Kate & Keagan Lorang **Cross:** Cara Robinson **Ushers:** Joe Sullivan, Gene Scharfencamp **Gifts:** Juan & Letitic Villegas

Saturday, **December 22nd**-4:00 PM

Lector: Tim Sullivan **Dist:** Deb Dummer, Robert Senkyr, Tom Lorang **Servers:** Lydia Sullivan, Maverick Weber **Cross:** Tommy Ochs **Ushers:** Dennis Hanlon, Richard Scharfencamp **Gifts:** Jered & Tina Weber

Monday, **December 24th**-5:30. PM (Christmas Mass)

Lector: April Sullivan (Grace) **Dist:** Jeff Distad, Julie & Larry Serbus **Servers:** Emma & Sam Sullivan **Cross:** Addison Sullivan **Ushers:** Larry & Julie Serbus **Gifts:** Jeff & Jane Distad

Saturday, **December 29th**-4:00 PM

Lector: Katie Madsen **Dist:** Katie Madsen, Robert Senkyr, Angela Sandgren **Servers:** Megan & Nathan Sandgren **Cross:** Zachary Sandgren **Ushers:** Robert & Mark Senkyr **Gifts:** Linda Drexler

This week's winner of \$100.00 is Frank and Desiree Ziegler of Fairfax.

CCW NEWS Thank you Linda R. for organizing Dan Crain's funeral. Also, to Sheila, Jen and Cecilia for working and, of course, for the cakes Tina, Sue, Sheila, Patti, Jolynn, and Cecilia. Thanks for the set-up crew and take down crew Gene, John and Allen. We are working on a potluck for after the Christmas program on December 15.

MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS EVE: Any youth and adults who are willing to help with music for Christmas Eve are invited to contact S. Mary Ann ASAP. Your help is needed to make the Christmas Eve liturgy joyful and meaningful.

SUNDAY SCHOOL DATES: Dec. 22, Jan. 6, 20, Feb 3, 17, March 2, 16, 30, April 13, 27 and none in May.

ST. WILLIBRORD'S – GIBBON

Saturday, **December 15th**-5:45 PM

Lector: Amy Weber **Commentator:** Brianna Roche **Dist:** Geneva Klover, Vickie Dreier, Connie Tautges **Servers:** Kylie Unger, Taylor Haas **Ushers:** Terry Forst, Lyle Forst, Greg Stadtherr **Gifts:** Joey & Patty Bastian

Saturday, **December 22nd**-5:45 PM

Lector: Gail Herschman **Commentator:** Jessica Willegal **Dist:** Mary Petersen, Jerome Petersen, Charlene Forst **Servers:** Jordan & Lexi Rettig **Ushers:** Terry Forst, Lyle Forst, Greg Stadtherr **Gifts:** Bruce Bastian, Lorraine Bastian

Monday, **December 24th**-5:30 PM (Christmas Mass)

Lector: Melvin Neyers **Commentator:** Daryl Kokesch **Dist:** Jeannine Grosam, Steve Grosam, Rose Forst **Servers:** Brooklyn & Lincoln Werner **Ushers:** Terry Forst, Lyle Forst, Greg Stadtherr **Gifts:** Ron & Barb Bastian

Saturday, **December 29th**-5:45 PM

Lector: Chuck Southworth **Commentator:** Ann Southworth **Dist:** Mavis Lindmeyer, Dawn Hoffmann, Genny Neyers **Servers:** Madison & Anden Hoffmann **Ushers:** Terry Forst, Lyle Forst, Greg Stadtherr **Gifts:** Brad & Kjersti Bastian

CCW GIFT to the Parish - The small folder of Prayers Before and After Communion in your envelope boxes are a gift from CCW. We hope you will be inspired by them and use them as prayers before Mass and after Communion, as we reflect on the Body and Precious Blood of Christ that we have received!

CCW ROSARY for Donna Forstner will be this Saturday, December 8th, beginning at 5:20 p.m., before Mass. CCW members are asked to participate in leading the rosary.

ADULT CHOIR will sing for the 5:45 p.m. Mass on Saturday, December 15th. We will also practice that evening for Christmas Eve, so please be there at 4:45 p.m. for practice for both. New members are very much needed and appreciated!!

The Adult Choir will sing for our 5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass, Monday, December 24th, meeting to practice that evening at 4:30. There will be a short Christmas Carol sing-a-long on Christmas Eve beginning at 5:20, before Mass.

NOTICE: I will start Ministree Cards again in January of 2019. I would like to thank those who take the time to volunteer in church or community and to please fill out a Ministree card. We receive \$4.00 from CUF for every card I send in and that money goes to Religious Education at St. Willibrord's. There are many opportunities to volunteer. Visit the sick at home or in nursing homes, take food to someone homebound, help with a funeral, church dinner or fall bazaar, give blood, help a neighbor with shoveling or raking leaves or anything the person wants done, take someone to the doctor It doesn't have to be a parish member and the list goes on. God's Blessing to All – Connie Tautges

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES – WINTHROP

Sunday, **December 16th**-8:30 AM

Lector: Wendy Lang **Dist:** Deacon Roger, Brent Lang, Mary Renner **Servers:** Will Lang, Jose Farias **Gifts:** Leon Lang, Ron Hillsheim **Ushers:** Gary & Vicki Neid, Bill & Che May

Sunday, **December 23rd**-8:30 AM

Lector: Yvonne O'Brien **Dist:** Dennis Dording, Pete & Marianne Machaiek **Servers:** Madyson Steele, Logan Steele **Cross:** Derek Steele **Gifts:** Joe & Sharon Wersal **Ushers:** Gary & Vicki Neid, Bill & Che May

Monday, **December 24th**-4:00 PM (Christmas Eve Mass)

Lector: Mary Nelson **Dist:** Deacon Roger, Dave & Lorie Schauer **Servers:** Miah Busse, Brynn Busse **Gifts:** Andrew & Megan Schmidt Family **Ushers:** Gary & Vicki Neid, Bill & Che May

Sunday, **December 30th**-8:30 AM

Lector: Bob/Laurie Kaukola **Dist:** Pam Osborne, Mary Renner, Kevin Lauwagie **Servers:** Kaylee Felska, Logan Felska **Gifts:** Harry & Kellie Sloom **Ushers:** Gary & Vicki Neid, Bill & Che May

WE WILL BE SETTING UP THE CHRISTMAS TREE at St. Francis on Sunday, Dec 9th, immediately following the 8:30 Mass. If anyone is willing and available to stay, your help would be appreciated! Thank you!

DEC 2ND AND DEC 9TH SOCIAL HOURS: A big set of Thanks You's to the hospitality groups who have been hosting the Social Hour after Mass at St. Francis in Winthrop! The fellowship has been awesome and the treats have been creative and delicious! During Advent, the tradition will continue. If you would like to host, contact Barb D. 507-228-9802 (h). There will be a special gathering following the **Children's Christmas Program Sunday, December 16, 2018** following the 8:30 am Mass. We are looking for extra goodies for that day! Would you be able to provide some? Thank you in advance!
Call Barb D. or Mary N. 320-583-0538

ST. ANDREW'S – FAIRFAX

Sunday, **December 16th**-10:15 AM

Lector: Mike Beranek **Commentator:** Jody Busch **Dist:** Manuel & Maria Munoz, Maria Davila **Servers:** Ashley & Isabelle Vos, Annika Nosbush **Ushers:** Dennis Weinzetl, Jason Weinzetl, Pat Schreiner, Brenda Frank **Gifts:** Jesus & Daisy Munoz **Visit the Sick:** Agnes Wendinger

Sunday, **December 23rd**-10:15 AM

Lector: Cindy Rieke **Commentator:** Jan Simonsen **Dist:** Leroy Schweiss, Jolene Palmer, Richard Frank **Servers:** Allen & Julia Schweiss, Bernardo Davila **Ushers:** George Wendinger, Dan Turbes, Jim Prax, Tom Nachreiner **Gifts:** Joe & Mary Nachreiner **Visit the Sick:** Chuck Marlowe

Monday, **December 24th**-4:00 PM

Lector: Agnes Kiecker **Commentator:** Pat Buboltz **Dist:** Brian Wertz, Mary Ann Dummer, Agnes Wendinger **Servers:** Justin & Matt Grosam, Keyden Buboltz **Ushers:** Francis Schweiss, Gene Nachreiner, Dave Borth, Randy Boehm **Gifts:** LeAnder & Mary Nachreiner

Sunday, **December 30th**-10:15 AM

Lector: Mike Beranek **Commentator:** Jody Busch **Dist:** Karen Bastian, Kristi Marquardt, Myron Schweiss **Servers:** Luke & William Bastian, Nico Nosbush **Ushers:** Richard Hellendrung, David Runck, Richard Frank, Roman Huiras **Gifts:** Gene & Joni Nachreiner **Visit the Sick:** Sandy Hellendrung

Monday, **December 31st**-5:30 PM

Lector: Agnes Kiecker **Commentator:** Pat Buboltz **Dist:** Eloina & Rodrigo Carillo, Lidia Gonzalez **Servers:** Maddy & Lydia Nachreiner, Jaedan Nachreiner **Ushers:** Gilbert Borth, Ron Marlowe, Tom Palmer, Paul Simonsen **Gifts:** Brian & Kristin Palmer

CUF CHRISTMAS PARTY on December 11th@ 5:00 pm. St. Andrews's social hall. All members are welcome! Please RSVP to Peggy Lehar by December 8th. 426-8190.

DORIS MARQUARDT WILL BE RESIGNING as Historian at St. Andrew's. If someone is interested in this position, please call the office at (507) 426-7399.

ST. ANN'S FUNERAL GROUP 5: Maribeth Vait, Sandy Hellendrung



Christmas Flower Donation Form

If you wish to make a donation for Christmas flowers, you may use this form. Fill out the form, place in an envelope and drop in the collection basket or Parish office by Wednesday, December 19th. Names will be printed in the December 22/23 bulletin. Thanks!

Donor Name: _____

Parish: _____

In Memory Of: _____

Dear Parishioners and Pastoral Leaders,

In 1988, the Catholic bishops of the United States launched the Retirement Fund for Religious to address the significant lack of retirement funding for Catholic sisters, brothers and priests in religious orders. This annual, parish-based appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and benefits 31,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious-order priests whose communities lack adequate retirement funding. Religious communities apply annually for financial support from the national collection, and distributions are sent to each eligible community's central house. Traditionally, Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests served for little or no pay. Today, hundreds of orders lack sufficient retirement savings. The national appeal raised just over 28 million in 2017. As a result, funds were distributed to 360 religious communities across the country. Communities utilize these funds to bolster retirement savings and subsidize expenses, such as prescription medications and nursing care. Roughly 94 percent of donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious directly aid senior religious; the remaining funds are used for promotional and administrative expenses.

Last year, the Diocese of New Ulm contributed \$26,791.90 to the Retirement Fund for Religious. I am grateful for the generous support that the people of the Diocese of New Ulm have given to help our retired religious. These men and women have given their lives to God and to the Church, and many of us were educated by them in Catholic schools and religious education programs. We have the opportunity to say "thank you" for their witness and service by making sure their needs are provided for.

We will be taking up a collection in the Diocese of New Ulm for the Retirement Fund for Religious today, December 8-9, 2018. Please join me in praying for all of our retired religious as well as for new vocations to the religious life.

In Christ,
The Most Reverend John M. LeVoir
Bishop of New Ulm



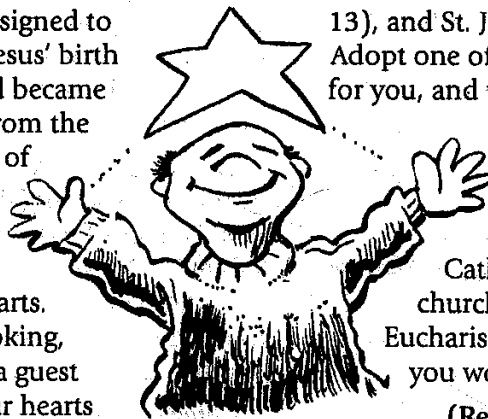
Discovering **hope** and **joy** in the Catholic faith.

Advent 2018

Make the most of Advent

The season of Advent is designed to help us prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas. Think of it: God became man, died for our sins, rose from the dead, and now reigns as King of all creation.

Every Christmas is a chance to welcome Jesus as an honored guest into our hearts. Think of all the planning, cooking, and cleaning needed to have a guest over. In Advent we prepare our hearts to welcome the Savior. Below are some suggestions to make the most of your Advent:



13), and St. John of the Cross (December 14). Adopt one of them to be your patron to pray for you, and to protect and encourage you.

Visit the Blessed Sacrament.

The Eucharist is Jesus Christ, present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1374). All Catholic churches have a tabernacle where the Eucharist is stored. Speak with our Lord as you would a close friend.

(Re)Discover the Mass.

At Mass, Heaven comes down to Earth. When we receive the Eucharist, Christ comes into our hearts and nourishes our souls. Aim to attend daily Mass once every week during the Christmas season.

Prioritize prayer.

Spend 15 minutes daily with God. The best way to prepare to welcome the Savior at Christmas is to spend time with him. Set aside 15 minutes in your day for God and protect it. Perhaps read a chapter of Scripture, pray a decade of the Rosary, or just be still in his presence.

Know the story. Read through the accounts of Jesus' birth in Matthew 1:18-2:12 and/or Luke 2:1-20. Place yourself in the scene. Internalizing the Christmas story will give you a better appreciation of the season.

Get to know the Advent saints. One way to know God is to know his friends. There are several saints' feasts that occur this Advent, including: St. Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra (December 6), St. Juan Diego (December 9), St. Lucy (December

Practice penance.

Form an "Advent habit." Advent is a great time to start a holy habit. Maybe it's replacing negative comments with positive ones, or getting up ten minutes earlier to pray. See if you can keep up your "Advent habits" through the Christmas season.

Electronic fasting. Create a space for God and the gifts he wants to give you. Consider limiting the amount of time spent on your electronic devices: no Facebook during the work day, no texting during dinner, or while someone is talking to you (unless it's an emergency), etc.

Make a nightly examination of conscience. This will help you spot any patterns of sin that

are preventing you from connecting with God. Remember to thank God for the good things about the day, too. Close prayer by choosing one sinful habit that you'd like to change and resolve to change it by the end of Advent.

Experience God's mercy. Just as we would clean and decorate the house for Christmas, we need to "clean and decorate" our souls by frequenting the sacrament of Confession. Make a heartfelt Confession to greet the Messiah this Christmas with a joyful heart.

Give alms.

Donate resources. Another way to prepare for the Savior is to help his people. Parishes often have food and clothing drives. Don't forget the basics, like socks, toiletries, and soap. Prayerfully consider donating to your parish whatever you are able, or to charities like Catholic Relief Services (<https://www.crs.org>).

Give your time. This can be anything from volunteering to work at a soup kitchen, to getting a group of friends together and caroling at a nursing home, to making handmade cards for soldiers overseas. Every little bit counts.

Welcome the lonely. To Mother Teresa, feeling unloved was a greater poverty than being hungry (though eating enough is important, too). The holidays are especially difficult for those who are alone. Extend invitations for your holiday gatherings to people who might otherwise be alone or forgotten.

Do acts of random kindness. A little kindness goes a long way. Hold the door for people and smile at them. Don't be afraid to offer a hand when you see someone in need. Jesus said, "*Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me*" (Matthew 25:40).

Practice patience. In this season of waiting, practicing this virtue is a work of mercy and way of giving alms. Practicing patience includes: being polite even when you have to wait, assuming the best about someone until they prove otherwise, being firm yet gentle when correcting someone, and seeing things from the other's point of view. If

all else fails, we can recall how patient God is with our failings and never tires of forgiving us.

Anticipate with joy

Light the Advent wreath at dinner to build anticipation for Jesus' birth. The wreath is an ancient sign of victory, in this case, Christ's victory over sin and death. The three purple candles stand for penance, sorrow, and hope. The rose candle stands for joy. One custom is to exchange the purple and rose candles for white candles during the Christmas season.

Listen to Advent music. Make a playlist of Advent music that helps you connect with the themes of the season: faith in God's promises, waiting with hope, and joyful expectation. Include hymns like, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel and traditional carols like, The Holly and the Ivy.

Set out the Nativity Scene—slowly. The custom of displaying the Nativity Scene was begun by St. Francis of Assisi to illustrate the simplicity of the Incarnation. On the first Sunday of Advent, set out the stable and the empty manger. As the weeks go by, add characters. Wait until Christmas morning to place Jesus in the manger.

Celebrate Advent feast days. Learn about how other cultures celebrate the Advent saints' feasts. Consider adopting a custom or do something special of your own. Remember, attendance at Mass is required for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Build your Christmas around the Mass. Finally, at Christmas Mass, after all that waiting and preparing, we are ready to receive the greatest Gift of all: Jesus Christ, truly present in the Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine. Sing joyfully in Mass and welcome the King of Kings into your hearts and homes!

And lastly, keep your Advent behaviors going after Christmas. The waiting is over, but don't lose the good habits you acquired over Advent. Cultivate the "Advent attitudes" of waiting and preparing joyfully for the Lord. Every Sunday is a mini "Christmas," when we greet the Messiah under the forms of bread and wine at Mass.