

# OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH

837 Bartlett Road • Harborcreek, PA 16421 • [www.ourladyofmercychurch.org](http://www.ourladyofmercychurch.org)



## December 20, 2020 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

### MASS SCHEDULE

Weekday and Weekend Mass has resumed with the following schedule and covid-19 protocols in place:

Saturday Vigil: 6:00 p.m.

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Weekday: 8:30 a.m.

### PARISH STAFF

Msgr. Gerald T. Ritchie, *Pastor*

Donna Clark, *Pastoral Minister*

Irene Lucas, *Director of Lifelong Faith Formation*

Brandon Vogt, *Director of Liturgy & Music*

Katie Stephenson, *Administrative Assistant*

Sarah Phipps, *Youth Minister*

Kirk Mientkiewicz, *Maintenance Coordinator*

Andrea Maille, *Lifelong Faith Formation Secretary*

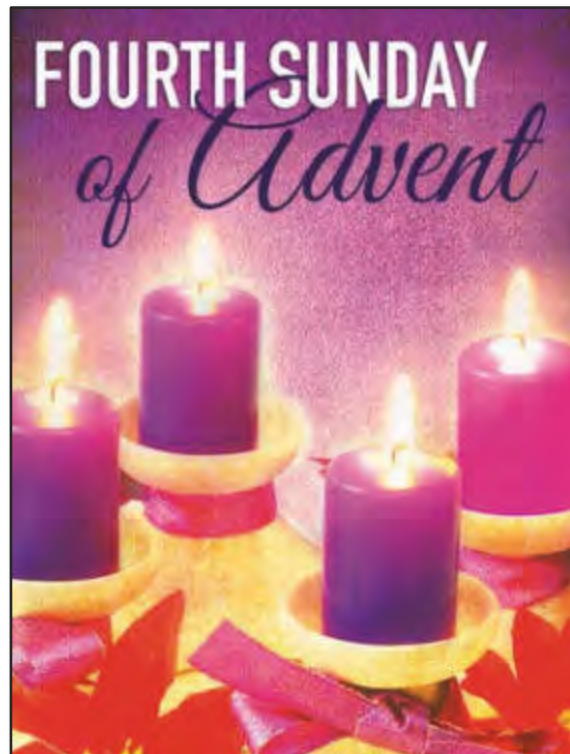
### CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Office: 814-899-5342

Office of Lifelong Faith Formation: 814-899-6132

Fax: 814-898-3306

Email: [info@ourladyofmercychurch.org](mailto:info@ourladyofmercychurch.org)



### MISSION STATEMENT

*We are a Eucharistic, Catholic Christian Community of Communities formed by the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live the values of Jesus Christ in a prayerful, welcoming and nurturing environment.*

## THE WEEK AHEAD

For a complete calendar of events, please visit [ourladyofmercychurch.org/calendar](http://ourladyofmercychurch.org/calendar)

Mon. 12/21	9:00 a.m.	Quilters
	9:30 a.m.	Steel Magnolias SCC
	7:00 p.m.	Grief Support Group
Tue. 12/22	2:00 p.m.	Prayer Shawl
Wed. 12/23	7:00 p.m.	Advent Evening Prayer - Virtual
Thur. 12/24	Christmas Eve - Parish Office Closed	
	6:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Mass
	10:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Mass
Fri. 12/25	Christmas Day - Parish Office Closed	
	10:00 a.m.	Christmas Day Mass
Sat. 12/26	4:30 p.m.	Sacrament of Penance
Sun. 12/27		

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Mon. 12/21	Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a	
		/ Lk 1:39-45
Tue. 12/22	1 Sm 1:24-28	/ Lk 1:46-56
Wed. 12/23	Mal 3:1-4, 23-24	/ Lk 1:57-66
Thur. 12/24	2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16	
		/ Lk 1:67-79
Fri. 12/25	Is 9:1-6 / Ti 2:11-14	/ Lk 2:1-14
Sat. 12/26	Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59	/ Mt 10:17-22
Sun. 12/27	Sir 3:2-6, 12-14	/ Col 3:12-17
		/ Lk 2:22-20

We Remember...

*The Loving Memory*

Scott Parmenter - uncle of Ashlee Skarzenski,  
Joyce Baum - sister of Loren Prichard,  
and Chris Erickson - son of Audrey Natcher;  
who passed away recently.

Please hold them and their families in prayer during this difficult time.

## MASS INTENTIONS

Mon. 12/21	8:30 a.m.	Special Intentions for Tom Duska (Dan Ott)
Tue. 12/22	8:30 a.m.	Don McCurdy (Margaret McCurdy & Family)
Wed. 12/23	8:30 a.m.	Joseph Marshall
Thur. 12/24	8:30 a.m.	Helen Bandur
	6:00 p.m.	For the People of OLM
	10:00 p.m.	For the People of OLM
Fri. 12/25	10:00 a.m.	For the People of OLM
Sat. 12/26	8:30 a.m.	<del>No Mass</del>
	6:00 p.m.	For the People of OLM
Sun. 12/27	8:30 a.m.	Joyce Olszweski (Family)
	11:00 a.m.	Doris Extein (The Extein Family)

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Offertory for the weekend of December 13, 2020

Envelopes sent:	392	
Envelopes returned:	48	\$4,504.50
Faith Direct Deposits:	133	\$3,432.70
Loose Change:		\$ 35.00
<b>TOTAL OFFERTORY:</b>		<b>\$7,972.20</b>

## PRAYER LINE

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Call Donna Smicker at 899-9108  
4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.  
Call Gerri Extein at 490-9681



## Holiday Office Hours

The Parish Office will be closed on Thursday, December 24th & Friday, December 25th for the Christmas holiday. Regular office hours of 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. will resume on Monday December 28th.



## Bulletin Deadlines

Please send bulletin content to Katie in the Parish Office at [Secretary@ourladyofmercychurch.org](mailto:Secretary@ourladyofmercychurch.org) at least 10 days before the Sunday it is to be distributed. We will then do our best to find room for your bulletin announcement.

## THIS SUNDAY'S REFLECTION



### LUKE 1:26-38

"...and of his kingdom there will be no end."

The great symbol of Advent is the expectant mother, Mary, pregnant with her child Jesus. Each Advent is a time of waiting, not bored, dull waiting, but rather joyful, expectant, active waiting. And yet we are not waiting at all. For just as Jesus was already alive, already a person in Mary's womb, so Jesus is already with us as well.

How similar this is to the concept of "the kingdom" found in the Gospels. The kingdom has already begun, is already present, and will have no end. And we see evidence of this kingdom - in our experience of grace, in the goodness and generosity of others, in miracles small and large, in acts of love.

And yet it is also clear that Jesus' kingdom is not completely present. Whether in our own hearts or in the world we observe, the reign of Jesus is still yet to come in its fullness. The kingdom then is something that we are called day after day to make ever more present. With our Lord, let us pray daily, "thy kingdom come," and do what we can to quicken its coming.

For Reflection: What am I doing to help realize the kingdom of God in our midst?

Gregory C. Wolfe

### Hope – Restoring the Heart

The next session is Sunday Dec 20 at 1:00pm by zoom and in person. If you would like to attend this meeting by Zoom please contact Donna Clark in the parish office or check the parish website. Many of us have had an emotionally difficult time as we struggle with the uncertainty of our current situations. We may be feeling stress, anxiety, or fear. Maybe our prayer is dry or non-existent. If you are looking for a spiritual boost please join us for an opportunity to share stories of hope and healing. We are encouraging people to stay safe. We are taking precautions and following the county health department guidelines. If you would like to talk with someone but don't feel comfortable coming out or are uncomfortable with zoom meetings, please call Donna in the parish office.



### Evening Grief Support Group

Monday, Dec. 21 at 7:00 p.m. is the next evening grief support group meeting. (zoom available) The holidays can pose a challenge to those in the grief process. In this session we will share different ways to get through the holidays. If you would like to attend the meeting by Zoom, please contact Donna Clark in the parish office for the meeting ID. We can also do one on one ministry on the phone as well.

### Newsletter Deadline

The deadline to submit items for the February issue of *For Mercy Sake* is Jan. 17. Send items to

[ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org](mailto:ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org).



### OLM Book Group

In January, we will discuss The Hummingbird's Daughter by Luis Alberto Urrea.

### Help for Heating – LIHEAP

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) was open to help alleviate heating bill stress on low income families. A family of four with a gross annual income of \$39,300, qualifies for a grant. To find out if you qualify based on your household size and income, how to apply and what you need to apply, see the bulletin boards in the Gathering Space.



### From the Knights of Columbus...

A reminder from the Our Lady of Mercy Knights of Columbus to "Keep Christ in Christmas".



## FORMED.ORG



If you are new to the parish subscription, you can enjoy formed.org for free by signing up as part of the parish subscription. All you need is your email, then select the option for an "institution or parish" subscription and search for Our Lady of Mercy Harborcreek.

*I taught 2nd grade Religious Ed for years. When I made the jump to 5th grade, I quickly realized that "Veggie Tales" for movie days weren't going to cut it. That's when I turned to Formed.org. I used different talks in the YDisciple program to teach my 5th grade class about the different sacraments. The talks were upbeat and motivational and really sparked a fire in my group of 5th graders. After watching a talk on Confirmation I heard one student say "I can't wait to be confirmed!" That makes teaching worth while.*  
Katie Stephenson

*(Please share your experience using formed.org with the parish. Send to [ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org](mailto:ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org))*

### Be Alert!

It has been brought to our attention that Parishioners have received emails and text messages from someone claiming to be Fr. Ritchie. This is just a reminder that Fr. Ritchie will never solicit through email or text. Please delete the message ASAP.

### Winter Study – Catholicism with Bishop Robert Barron

It may be a long, cold winter as we wait for the end of this pandemic. Stuck at home? This is an opportunity to grow more deeply in our Catholic faith. The AGIFT Adult Faith Formation Committee is sponsoring *Catholicism*, a 10 part series that celebrates the profound beauty of our faith. Each week will consist of an hour video followed by an opportunity for discussion over Zoom.

When: Monday, Jan.11-March 22 @ 7:00 p.m.

OR Tuesday, Jan. 12-March 23 @ 11:00 a.m.

To get the Zoom link, email

[ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org](mailto:ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org) by Thursday, Jan. 7. *Journey around the world and deep into the Faith. In breathtaking, high-definition cinematography, the beauty, goodness and truth of the Catholic Faith are illustrated in a rich, multimedia experience. Journey with acclaimed author, speaker and theologian Bishop Robert Barron to more than 50 locations throughout 15 countries. Be illuminated by the spiritual and artistic treasures of this global culture that claims more than one billion of the earth's people. From the sacred lands of Israel to the beating heart of Uganda... from the glorious shrines of Italy, France, and Spain, to the streets of Mexico, Kolkata, and New York City, the fullness of CATHOLICISM is revealed. Journey deep into the Faith as you watch each episode. Mike Leonard, a veteran NBC Today Show correspondent and acclaimed filmmaker, is the Executive Producer of this groundbreaking series.*



# Christmas Mass Schedule

## Thursday, December 24th

6:00 p.m.—Christmas Eve Mass  
10:00 p.m.—Christmas Night Mass

## Friday, December 25th

10:00 a.m.—Christmas Day Mass

All Masses will be offered in person and will also be livestreamed to our Facebook and YouTube Pages. To livestream our Mass, visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/ourladyofmercyharborcreek>

-Or-

<https://www.youtube.com/ourladyofmercyharborcreek>



## Social Justice

Really! Who actually likes wearing face masks? They fog up your glasses and make your face itch. It's hard to talk intelligibly through them and nearly impossible to pick up nonverbal facial expressions that add vital texture to conversation. And they make it impossible to forget the depressing reality that COVID-19 is still around.

Plus the mask has become such a divisive political symbol, the masked and the masked-nots assuming the worst about each other. It's a sad commentary on our national state of mind that it's come to this: politicizing masks.

We are faced with an avalanche of evolving information and no shortage of inconsistency and hypocrisy from our government leaders. We default to siding with whatever partisan camp to which we belong. For most of us, independent, nuanced appraisal of a litany



of complex issues is unrealistic for our already taxed brains.

For the members of Our Lady of Mercy Church, though, it's important to rise above the political partisanship and think through what our *faith* would call us to with regard to wearing or not wearing masks. What if our view on masks were shaped more by our Christian identity rather than our American political identity?

Christ calls us to care for the least of these among us — the sick, the elderly and the stranger included (Matt 25: 31-46.) We are challenged to sacrifice our own personal comfort, put on a mask and respect the lives of others. It is what all of us should do for the sake of our families, friends, neighbors, fellow parishioners, employees, customers and the community at large.

(The ideas above have been taken from the writings of Brett McCracken, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-reasons-wear-mask/> )



**Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser for the Religious Education Ministry**

**Sunday, January 31, 2021**

**Take-Out Only!**

**\$10 for Adults**

**\$5 for Children 10 and Under**

• Spaghetti & Meatballs

• Salad

• Italian Bread

**You will reserve your pick-up time when you purchase your ticket.**

**Tickets go on sale on January 2<sup>nd</sup>**



# Harborcreek @ Home Holiday Lights Contest

Sunday December 20th 6-8 p.m.



Gather the family in the car and tour the finest Christmas Light Displays throughout Harborcreek Township. 5 Holiday Warming Stations will be located along your route to serve you socially distanced Season's Greetings and maybe a Christmas cookie or two!

Grace Church/Eastside Y  
2420 Cumberland Road

Howard Hanna/Carol Dabrowski  
4905 Buffalo Road

Fairfield Fire Dept./Brevillier Village  
4896 East Lake Road

South Harbor United  
Methodist Church  
7929 McGill Road

Our Lady of Mercy Church  
/Ella Cochran Food Pantry  
837 Bartlett Road

## Staff member's reflection on the last 9 months of Covid ministry. By Donna Clark

Navigating the ups and downs on the journey of ministering through this Covid experience has led to a vast array of emotions but also insights about myself, my passions and my limitations. Personally I think I have encountered far more limitations and frailties than I expected. Like many I thought that the life changes we encountered in March would be short lived – especially since we started to open up again in June; we started public Masses and slowly, different small groups and ministries began to meet in person. But the three months of reworking the way I minister turned into five and seven and now nine. Needless to say I am experiencing the Covid fatigue like so many others.

I learned that what I would like to do in ministering to the parish and what is actually possible with limited energy are not the same. How easy I thought it would be to stay in touch with all our homebound or some of our elderly and vulnerable parishioners have not returned to Mass . . . but it wasn't. The outreach ministries I coordinate are all about encounter with the other; home, hospital and nursing home visits, support groups, spiritual direction, ladies' lunch etc. I would keep an eye out for people coming into church so I could chat with them, find out how they were doing but slowly the number of people coming to Mass started to fall again and those coming into the church for group meetings has dwindled to near zero. I am saddened to think of cancelling the grief support group or the

widows' gatherings and replacing them with online meetings because not everyone can do the online. I drew such joy and energy from visiting parishioners in their homes, bringing communion and news of the parish. My weekly visits to the hospitals and nursing homes have come to a grinding halt. It is rare that I am allowed to visit and when I do it takes even more energy than it used to.

Slowly all the actions and encounters that defined much of my ministry has been taken away. I am filled with disappointment. As a staff we experienced a giant learning curve with our livestream Mass and events, and online meetings. I am tired. I see everything I am not doing. I am discouraged. Some days there was an intense desire just to run away . . .

Then a line from a stewardship newsletter gave me a new perspective. "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." (Saint Teresa of Calcutta) and "Do not wait . . . do it alone, person to person." I observed that most days I did talk to at least one person. I could not have group meetings but I could organize zoom meetings or I could do one on one in an open space. I could not visit everyone in the nursing home but was allowed to see a few people in special circumstances. I also began to hear stories of how parishioners were helping each other. The Pastoral Council is also helping with a second round of phone calls to parishioners. People would check on those they would have chatted with at Mass. All is not lost. I know the future of the ministry at Our Lady of Mercy will look different; how I connect with people will not return completely to the in person gatherings. Have I and will I allow the Holy Spirit to inspire me in my care for the community? I have hope.



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