

St. Mark Roman Catholic Parish

55 Driftwood Drive, Kitchener, Ontario N2N 3A2
519-571-9200 | www.stmarkcatholicparish.org

Solemnity of Christmas

✧ **The Nativity of the Lord** ✧



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Mass Intentions for the Week

Dec. 25 – 31, 2017

* Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

Sunday, Dec. 24th (Christmas Eve)

6:00 PM + Robert Brydon – *Arnie & Elaine Vandenhoff*
11:00 PM + James Hansen – *Bernard & the Burkholder family*

Monday, Dec. 25th (Christmas Day)

10:00 am + All those in whose memory donations were made toward Christmas Flowers

Tuesday (FEAST – ST. STEPHEN)

* 9:00 am – Int. of the Catholic Women's League

Wednesday * NO MASS (FEAST – ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE)

Thursday * NO MASS (FEAST – THE HOLY INNOCENTS)

Friday (5th DAY OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY)

* 7:00 PM + Kathleen Donovan – *John*

Saturday (6th DAY OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY)

9:00 am – Int. of Brian & Mary Jo Flood

* FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY & JOSEPH

(Dec. 30/31) *Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Col. 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40*

Sat. 5:00 PM + Gerald McGovern – *Sheilagh McGovern*

Sun. 10:00 am – Int. of the Parishioners of St. Mark's

* SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

Sunday, Dec. 31st (New Year's Eve)

7:00 PM + Virginia & Jack Smith – *Glenn & Kathy Smith*

Monday, Jan. 1st (New Year's Day)

10:00 am + John Barnes – *Brian & Marie Lynch*

* Next weekend includes 2 Holy Days of Obligation...

Please remember that the Feast of the Holy Family and the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (which, this year, happen to fall on the same weekend) are separate holy days of obligation, meaning that one cannot fulfill both obligations simultaneously at one Mass: *"When consecutive obligations occur on Saturday-Sunday or Sunday-Monday, the faithful must attend Mass twice to fulfill two separate obligations ... It would be hoped, of course, that Catholics foster a love for the sacred liturgy and hold a desire to celebrate the holy days as fully as is reasonably possible."* (U.S. Conf. of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship)

(St.) Stephen's name means "crown," and he was the first disciple of Jesus to receive the martyr's crown. Stephen was a deacon in the early Christian Church. God worked many miracles through St. Stephen and he spoke with such wisdom and grace that many of his hearers became followers of Jesus. He was eventually stoned to death and he became the first Christian martyr.

St. John was called while mending his nets to follow Jesus and he became the beloved disciple of Jesus. He wrote the fourth Gospel, three Epistles and the Apocalypse. His passages on the pre-existence of the Word, who by His Incarnation became the light of the world and the life of our souls, are among the finest of the New Testament. He is the evangelist of the divinity of Christ and His fraternal love.

Holy Innocents Perceiving Jesus as a threat, Herod "ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under." The horror of the massacre and the devastation of the mothers and fathers led Matthew to quote Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children..." (Matthew 2:18). The Holy Innocents are few, in comparison to the genocide and abortion of our day. But even if there had been only one, we recognize the greatest treasure God put on the earth — a human person, destined for eternity and graced by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Meetings & Events This Week:

DATE	TIME	ROOM	EVENT
Mon. Dec. 25	7:00 pm	(H)	Alcoholics Anonymous
Thur. Dec. 28	6:15 pm	(M)	Legion of Mary
Fri. Dec. 29	6:00 am	(L)	Men's Group

Meeting Rooms: B = Basement CH = Church H = Hall * = Offsite
J = St. John Room L = St. Luke Room M = St. Matthew Room



Thank you to everyone who donated toward flowers for the church, and to the many people who helped to decorate and prepare the church for Christmas.

This Sunday we read the story of the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary about the birth of Jesus. This story is found only in Luke's Gospel. On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the liturgy shifts our attention from John the Baptist to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both John and Mary serve as important figures for our reflection during the season of Advent; they both played instrumental roles in preparing the way for Jesus. Last week we reflected on John the Baptist's announcement that the Savior was among us, although not yet recognized. This week we reflect upon Mary's example of faith and obedience to God, traits which permitted her to receive the angel's message that God's Son would be born as a human person, as one of us.

We are familiar with the story of the Annunciation, and it is fitting that we recall how God announced the birth of Jesus as we make our final preparations for our celebration of the Incarnation. The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Mary greeted the angel's news with awe and wonder and asked how it could be possible that she could give birth to a child. In his reply, the angel Gabriel announced the seemingly impossible reality: the child to be born would be conceived by the to the angel, which is called her fiat, is an example of complete faith and obedience to God.

The story of the Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give birth to his Son so that all humanity would know God's salvation. Mary, already full of God's grace, was able to cooperate in this great plan for our salvation. Thus Jesus was born as one of us, fully human and also fully divine. This is the mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and are able respond with obedience.



"... So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God, the Father." (PHILIPPIANS 2:10)



Wishing everyone a Merry and Blessed Christmas.
May the Blessing of the Lord be with you and your loved ones as you celebrate the birth of Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

– Fr. Steve and Nicholas



All Liturgical Ministers are reminded to sign-up for Dec. 30/31 as well as New Year's Masses in the binder on the table in the narthex.

There are four Masses that are celebrated for the feast of Christmas, and each is given its own set of readings to help us contemplate Christ's birth. **The Gospel for the Vigil Mass** on Christmas Eve is taken from the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, the genealogy of Jesus and the angel's announcement of the birth to Joseph. **The Mass at midnight** proclaims the birth of Jesus through the angels' announcement to the shepherds in the Gospel of Luke. Luke 2:15-20 is the reading for **the Mass at dawn** on Christmas morning. It continues the story of the birth of Jesus as found in Luke's Gospel with the shepherds' visit to the infant Jesus. Finally, **the Gospel for Christmas Mass during the day** is taken from the beginning of John's Gospel. It is not an Infancy Narrative like those found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Instead, John's Gospel starts at the very beginning of time and presents Creation as the framework for announcing the Incarnation. John's opening words echo the first verse in the Book of Genesis, "In the beginning was the Word."

The story of Jesus' birth, which begins with a reference to Caesar Augustus, concludes with the shepherds, people looked down on by most of society, visiting the infant. As the angels return to heaven, the shepherds decide to go see "this thing" that has happened in Bethlehem. Their visit confirms everything the angels had told them about the birth of the Savior and Messiah. They then spoke publicly about all they had seen, to the great astonishment of all who heard. Mary ponders all this in her heart, and the shepherds return to their fields praising God. What had been told to them really happened. This account does not tell us very much about the infant Jesus because Luke's concern is that God's action of sending a savior be publicly proclaimed. As Paul says before King Agrippa in the Acts of the Apostles 26:26, "None of this was done in a corner." The picture is simple, two parents and an infant in a stable. But the reality is great, God's salvation offered to all.

Wanted: Adult Funeral Servers

St. Mark's would like to form a team of adult altar servers who are usually free during the day (e.g. those who are retired or working only part-time) who could be called upon with a day or two's notice to serve for funerals in the church. Training will be provided. If you are interested, please leave your name and phone number at the parish office, 519-571-9200 or stmark@rogers.com



Religious Vocations – We celebrate the birth of our Lord into our world; however, many have not received the birth of our Lord into their hearts. If Christ lives in your heart and you would like to help others discover the Lord, you may be called to be a priest, religious, or permanent deacon. If God is calling you, contact Fr. Michael King, Vocation Director at the Diocese of Hamilton, at 905-528-7988 ext. 2246 or vocations@hamiltondiocese.com. www.HamiltonVocations.com.

2018 *Living With Christ* Sunday Missals ~ \$5 in the narthex

C.W.L. News

"Keep Christ in Christmas" CAR MAGNETS

Available in the narthex after Mass – \$5 each.

We look forward to seeing you in the New Year at the **C.W.L. Potluck on January 18th at 7:00 p.m.**

Join us during our **weekly Chapel Hour** on Sundays from 4-5 p.m.



*** Submission Deadline for Jan. 7th Bulletin**

The New Year's bulletin has already gone to print. If you wish to include something in the January 7th bulletin, copy must be emailed to Pam no later than Tuesday, January 2nd. Thanks!

2017 Income Tax Receipts for Church Offerings

CORRECTION: Any offerings that you wish to have included on your 2017 tax receipt must be received by the parish no later than the 10:00 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Dec. 31st. Any donations received after that time must be put toward your 2018 tax receipt.



A special thank you to **Benjamin Tree Farm** for the donation of a freshly cut Christmas tree, coordinated by the kindergarten class at St. Mark's School. We are grateful for the extra embellishment to our newly located Nativity scene outside by the main entrance to the church.

*Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
how sturdy God hath made thee!*

Christmas Tree Blessing

This prayer may be used to bless your Christmas Tree at home:

God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Savior was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise up our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. R. Amen.

The Month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. All honor to you, Mary! From you arose the Sun of Justice, Christ our God.

The Holy Father's Intentions for the Month of Dec. 2017: That the elderly, sustained by families and Christian communities, may apply their wisdom and experience to spreading the faith and forming the new generations.



PARISH OFFICE – HOLIDAY HOURS	
Mon. Dec. 25:	<u>CLOSED</u> for Christmas
Tue. Dec. 26:	<u>CLOSED</u> for Boxing Day
Dec. 27, 28, 29:	Open until 12 noon
Mon. Jan. 1:	<u>CLOSED</u> for New Year's
Jan. 2, 3, 4, 5:	Open until 12 noon



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