

Mass Intentions ~ December 10-16, 2018

Monday @ 7:30 am — Kathleen Ziemanski (RIP)

Tuesday @ 7:30 am — Robert Phipps (RIP)

Wednesday @ 6:00 pm — Mike Moeller (RIP)

Thursday @ 7:30 am — HE & Roselyn Pickett (RIP)

Friday @ 7:30 am — US Armed Forces (Sp Int)

Saturday @ 5:30 pm — Marie Lodes (RIP)

Sunday @ 8:00 am — People of the Parish

Sunday @ 10:30 am — Mikey Medlock (RIP)

Adoration this week: Monday—Friday 8am-12noon

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Sat 4:30-5pm

*Blessed Mother Flowers this week are donated by Sofia & Sebastian Quino,
in honor of Mama Maryln & in memory of Conchita Gomez Uy*

New Prayer Requests

Special Intentions:

Cecily Gatlin, granddaughter of Tim & Margaret Corbitt

John Coulter Stewart, son of Lauren & Zach Stewart

Dennis Antici

Chris Nix

Liz LaFontaine

Repose of the Soul:

Michael Kurtz, cousin of Cindy Allmon

Leroy Salazar, nephew of Rosina Ready

Arnold Espinoza Jr, nephew of Rosina Ready

December 9, 2018
Second Sunday of Advent

HAPPY NEW RELATIONSHIP

Last week, I posed the following four questions for reflection as we each work on responding to Jesus' personal invitation to each of us to follow Him and be engaged in relationship with Him.

Who is God to me?

Who am I to Him?

Is He a personal God?

Do I believe I can have a personal relationship with Him?

It is important to be honest with ourselves when attempting to answer these questions. What a grace if I can realize that my answers aren't what I think they should be, or what I expected! There is no shame in acknowledging that my Faith requires more work and effort on my part. Remember the father of the boy possessed by a demon who said to Jesus, "I do believe, help my unbelief!" (Mk 9:24) That is a great place to be — that opens us to deepening our relationship with Him!

Hopefully, we are all taking time and space this Advent Season to seek our own responses to those questions. A couple of you dove right in and graciously decided to share. Thank you! If more of you are willing to share, please send me your reflection to by note or email.

— Fr. Gerry (pastor@saintpaulcatholicchurch.com)

Debbie Goodman wrote again this week: "It's me again! Last night I was contemplating the questions you asked in the bulletin. God really laid on my heart that I should tell people He is not angry with them! And they are so worthy because He says they are. I kept thinking how we say at Mass, "Lord I am not worthy" and how many people stop right there. I wrote down my thoughts this morning and decided to just hang on to them and maybe send them to you later in the Advent season. If you decided to put it in the bulletin, I didn't want it to be so soon after my published note last week. And then I went to Adoration this morning.

I picked up the Missal and read Monday's readings. Matthew 8:8 'Lord I am not worthy.' And then the communion antiphon, Matthew 10:27, 'What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops.'

God seems to be telling me not to keep this to myself. This is weird because God doesn't speak to me so clearly as this very often. I don't know what to do with it but I do know I'm not supposed to keep it to myself. So I'm sending it to you and I will let you decide what to do with it. Here goes."

(continued on next page)

— — — Date Announcements and Reminders — — —

December 9th — Second Collection for Retirement Fund for Religious — Please give to our senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who have given a lifetime in service to the Church.

— **Baptism Preparation Class @ 2:00 pm** in Room 109 of the Family Life Center. This is open to all expectant parents and any parents planning to have a child baptized within the next few months. We only hold four classes per year. Call the Church office to register. 601-992-9547.

December 16 — Women's Guild Christmas Party @ 2-4pm in the FLC. All ladies are welcome to join us with a guest. Please feel free to bring your favorite finger food or dessert, but it's not required. We guarantee good food, music, and fun for all! The Women's Guild would like to wish all a very Blessed and Joyous Christmas Season!

December 17 — Parish Advent Reconciliation Service @ 6:00 pm — We will have several priests hearing confessions. Please join us in this wonderful opportunity, as we anticipate the Christmas Season.

Christmas Mass Schedule — Monday, December 24th Christmas Vigil Mass @ 5:30 pm;
Midnight Mass (choral presentation begins @ 11:30 pm)
Tuesday, December 25th Christmas Day Mass @ 10:30 am

World Marriage Day 2019 will be held Sunday, February 24, 2019 at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle in Jackson. Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz at 3:00 pm, with a reception immediately following. **All married couples celebrating their 25th, 50th, and 60th anniversaries, or any significant anniversary are asked to call our church office so you can be included in this wonderful celebration.**

Special Notes

Offertory Envelopes are ready! Pick up your 2019 set on the way out today. If yours is not there, contact the Church office!

Altar Flower & Blessed Flower 2019 Sign up is now open on our website. Please call the office if you need assistance.

Missing a jacket? We found a few, including one for a child. Reclaim yours on our coat rack by the exit door.

Proposed Parish Renovation plans are available for viewing on our parish website.

Food Pantry Ministry — Thanks to your generosity we provide food to the Center for Violence Prevention shelters, Stewpot, and all who request food assistance from the Parish. We will make another delivery before Christmas. Please deposit non-perishable food, cash, & store cards into the Food Pantry bins at both entrances. Thank you.

Church website: www.saintpaulcatholicchurch.com
Office phone: 601-992-9547

I'd like to reflect on the first question — "Who God is to me?" In the past I believed God was an angry God and that He was angry with me. I sometimes felt I wasn't worthy of the forgiveness He so freely gives. As I have grown in my relationship with Him, I realize the only thing that can separate me from God is me! Yes sin separates me from Him, but that is just me giving into temptations and not turning to Him in times of weakness. I'm not sure where these notions came from — maybe family, teachers, or maybe even from the Church. Don't we even say during the Mass, "I am not worthy" ?

The Small Group I am a member of is currently studying Bishop Robert Barron's video series, "The Mass." What an eye opener! We Catholics sometimes forget what a privilege it is to participate in Mass and to receive the Eucharist. One thing that struck me was something the Bishop said early on in the Series — the Mass is "the call and response of Christ the Head and His Mystical Body." What a beautiful thought. When we go to Mass, God is talking to us and we are responding to Him. This led me to reflect more on different parts of the Mass.

Just before we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, our response is based on Scripture from Matthew 8:8. "Lord I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." How can we say we aren't worthy, yet still receive Him in the Eucharist immediately after saying that prayer? I think the answer is in what Bishop Barron refers to as the "call and response." We say we aren't worthy. God says oh yes, you are! You are so worthy, I sent my Son to die for your sins. That's how much I love you.

So don't you ever believe you aren't worthy. God loves you so much and He is not angry with you. Have a great Advent!
—Debbie Goodman

In his Gospel Reflection for the First Sunday of Advent, Bishop Barron wrote:

Friends, in today's Gospel Jesus tells His disciples to be vigilant. Today marks the beginning of Advent, the great liturgical season of vigilance, of waiting and watching.

What practically can we do during this season of vigil keeping? What are some practices that might incarnate for us the Advent spirituality?

I strongly recommend the classically Catholic discipline of Eucharistic adoration. To spend a half hour or an hour in the presence of the Lord is not to accomplish or achieve very much—it is not really "getting" anywhere—but it is a particularly rich form of spiritual waiting.

As you keep vigil before the Blessed Sacrament, bring to Christ some problem or dilemma that you have been fretting over, and then say: "Lord, I'm waiting for you to solve this, to show me the way out, the way forward. I've been running, planning, worrying, but now I'm going to let you work." Then, throughout Advent, watch attentively for signs.

Also, when you pray before the Eucharist, allow your desire for the things of God to intensify; allow your heart and soul to expand. Pray, "Lord, make me ready to receive the gifts you want to give," or even, "Lord Jesus, surprise me."

(subscribe to Daily Reflections from Bishop Barron at wordonfire.org)

Here is another response:

As I sat in Adoration reflecting on the four questions Fr. Gerry posed, and my own personal relationship with our Beloved Savior Jesus Christ, I took a deep look inward and asked myself, "Do I truly believe the Lord is present in that round wheat wafer?"

We, as a Catholic people, believe Jesus Christ is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament — the consecrated host which maintains the appearance of a round wheat wafer. If we truly believe that, why is the Chapel not crowded with adorers?

This got me to thinking about the natural difficulty to see Our Savior in this form.

I continued on this path and thought to myself, if He were in this Chapel standing in the form of the flesh-and-bone man, Jesus — surely they would come. If He were in this Chapel seated on a throne in the form of a Royal King surrounded by visible angels singing praises — surely they would come. If He were in this Chapel hovering over the altar in the form of a white dove surrounded by beautiful clouds glistening with gold — surely they would come.

If I truly believe He is in the Chapel in the form of a round wheat wafer, how could I not come here?

This is where I find true peace. Like the Psalmist writes in Psalm 131, "I have calmed and quieted my soul, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content."

Please don't misunderstand me. Eucharistic Adoration in the Chapel at St. Paul Catholic Church in Flowood, Mississippi is NOT a perfectly peace-filled experience! For my weekly Holy Hour I try to start on the right foot (my knees actually). I try to focus, center my heart, release my thoughts, relax my body, be with Him, give Him my everything. Then, my stomach growls the strangest sequence of squeaks, grumbles and coils I've ever heard. Next, I hear another's stomach growl as if in answer. Sometimes, I am drawn outside of the room by squeaking car brakes on the highway. Other times, I hear people visiting in the hallway or rehearsing music in the church. I even hear the occasional toilet flush — which really draws one out of a Holy space!

There are times when it's quiet, but I feel weak. Doubts creep into my mind — do I really believe?

On my own, I cannot comprehend this great mystery. I struggle with whether or not this is indeed the Truth. Thankfully, I am in good company. Even those great saints — the champions of contemplation who paved the way for me — had similar moments and thoughts. But, God is with me. He draws me to Him and grows me in Him.

One thing I know for certain is that I will NOT grow in belief and understanding by staying away, by staying too busy, by not at least trying. Even on my worst, totally distracted, hour of Adoration, I have been in the presence of my Savior who knows me, loves me & understands me.

A turning point in my life came during one such Holy Hour — the Holy Spirit gifted me with these two questions: "Is Jesus a part of my life? Or, am I a part of the life He created and is gifting me into each and every day?" My whole outlook changed!

Once upon a time, I would awaken nearly every morning stressed about what I failed yesterday, and all I faced this day. Now, I wake up and praise God for gifting me into another day. He is in me and He calls me to the day with Him. Now, rather than dwelling on my long list of prayer intentions at Adoration, I give Him my heart, my love, my life — recommitting all of me each week. He doesn't dwell on my shortcomings and my doubts, why should I?

Yes, I believe. Why not sit in His presence with your doubts and worries? You will believe, too!

— Monica Walton