



AND THE

Word

BECAME FLESH AND
MADE HIS DWELLING
AMONG US, AND
WE SAW
HIS GLORY,

JOHN 1:14

Christmas 2023



St. Gertrude

6543 Miami Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45243

513-561-5954 www.stgertrude.org

MASSES AND CONFESSION

Monday, December 25, The Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas) (S)

- 12 a.m. Intention of the Celebrant
- 8 a.m. Christmas Novena
- 10 a.m. Intention of the Celebrant
- 12 p.m. Intention of the Celebrant

Tuesday, December 26, St. Stephen (F)

- 7 a.m. Christmas Novena
- 8 a.m. † Marianne Klekamp by Donald Klekamp
- 11:30 a.m. † Maxine Daniel by James Daniel

Wednesday, December 27, St. John the Apostle & Evangelist (F)

- 7 a.m. Father John Mark Solitario, O.P., by The Henderson Family
- 8 a.m. Christmas Novena
- 11:30 a.m. † Edith Merle by Frank & Debbie Merle

Thursday, December 28, Holy Innocents (F)

- 7 a.m. † Holy Souls in Purgatory in Honor of St. Michael
by Elaine & Jeff Parker
- 8 a.m. † Denise Lukingbeal by Patrick & Holly Oakes
- 11:30 a.m. Christmas Novena

Friday, December 29,

Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

- 7 a.m. Christmas Novena
- 8 a.m. † Pat Shannon by Bill & Tish Shefcik
- 11:30 a.m. † Mary Bartel by Tom & Kim Hahn

Saturday, December 30,

Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

- 8 a.m. Christmas Novena
- 9 a.m. (Mass in Hebrew) Peace in the Holy Land
- 11:30 a.m. Pat & Don Schoo by The Family
- 4:30 p.m. † Karen Hassman by John & Joy Belperio

Sunday, December 31,

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (F)

- 8 a.m. † Joshua George Egan by N. David Noe
- 10 a.m. People of St. Gertrude
- 12 p.m. † John Spilker by Lisa & James Bertke
- 6 p.m. Christmas Novena

Confessions will be heard in the church Tuesday-Friday at 4 p.m. and Saturday at 3:30 p.m. There will be no confessions on Christmas Day and no Holy Hour or confessions at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 27.

Parish Information

6543 Miami Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45243
(513) 561-5954 | stgertrude.org
parishoffice@stgertrude.org

Parish Office Hours
Monday-Friday: 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
School Office Hours
Monday-Friday: 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Church Hours
Every day: 7 a.m.-9 p.m.

Interested in Joining St. Gertrude Parish?



Visit stgertrude.org/register or scan the QR code to complete the new parishioner registration form. There are also paper forms in the church and in the parish office.



We look forward to meeting you!

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Monday, January 1, 2024

Since this feast day falls on a Monday this year, it is not a holy day of obligation. We will have our regular daily Mass schedule (7 a.m., 8 a.m., and 11:30 a.m.) and invite you to join us to honor our Blessed Mother.





CHRISTMAS GREETINGS AND PRAYERS

On behalf of all the Dominican friars and the entire staff of St. Gertrude Parish, I would like to extend my heartfelt wishes to you and your loved ones for a very merry and blessed Christmas. We are so happy that you are able to

join us for the celebration of this most holy feast. And indeed, there is so much to celebrate as we gather this Christmas. For “a child is born for us, a son is given us” (Isaiah 9:5), and this child is the hope of all the world. This is the day when we are called to hear anew the words the angels spoke to the shepherds in the field that first Christmas night: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12).

By our presence here, all of us have heard the call to come to the manger to encounter the infant lying there. This baby changed the history of the world by his birth; he changed the course of eternity by his death and resurrection. And just as he came to a manger in the city of Bethlehem two thousand years ago, he comes to us this day to again bring to our hearts and lives tidings of great joy. For in the midst of a world that can be, at times, full of sorrows and suffering, Jesus enters in by the power of his love. His presence is with us always, especially in those moments when life is especially challenging. Christmas is a beautiful reminder to us that he is always wanting to draw closer to us; all he needs is an openness on our part. We are called to open wide the doors of our hearts to Christ, rather than have our hearts be like the inns in Bethlehem where the doors were closed and there was no room for Joseph, Mary, and the Christ child she carried.

It is my deepest prayer that this day and throughout the upcoming year your heart may be filled with all of the joy and peace, the truth and grace, the mercy and love that Christ came to the earth to bring. These last years have been difficult ones for many reasons, and in the midst of these challenges, so many have struggled to keep as close to the Lord and their faith as maybe they had before. If perhaps that applies to you, then know that we at St. Gertrude would love to help you draw closer to the Lord during this upcoming year. We have a parish community filled with amazing, wonderful, beautiful people and so many different opportunities to grow deeper in faith. It is my hope that all our parishioners, indeed everyone who attends Christmas Mass with us, might grow in their faith, hope, and love during the upcoming year. If you are uncertain the best way to do that, please feel free to reach out and we will do everything we can to help.

Finally, we have one last surprise for everyone as we conclude this year where we celebrated our 100th anniversary of the founding of our parish. At the end of each Christmas Mass, each family will receive a special Christmas tree ornament that commemorates our parish centennial. It is our hope that this will be a family memento

you will treasure for years ahead. May it be a reminder of the many graces that God has poured out on our parish and upon all of our parish families over these past hundred years, and a sign of hope of continued blessings upon all of us during the years ahead.

With the angels, let us all sing out this day, “Glory to God in the highest!”

Kneeling with you at the manger,

Merry Christmas,

Rev. John Paul Walker, O.P.

Father John Paul Walker, O.P.

FROM THE DIARY OF ST. MARIA FAUSTINA KOWALSKA



“Christmas Eve. Today I was closely united with the Mother of God. I relived her interior sentiments... During the Midnight Mass, I saw the Child Jesus in the Host, and my spirit was immersed in Him. Although He was a tiny Child, His majesty penetrated my soul. I was permeated to the depths of my being by this mystery, this great abasement on the part of God, this inconceivable emptying of Himself. These sentiments remained vividly alive in my soul all through the festive season. Oh, we shall never comprehend this great self-abasement on the part of God.” (*Diary, #182*)

LET US PRAY

PLEASE PRAY FOR . . .

THE SICK:

Tina Bascom, Linda Burke, Vicki Calonge, Carol Conners, Maureen S. Currens, Dan DeBow, Triset Defonseka, Pamela K. Dwyer, Lisa Ely, Lynn Fedele, Octavio Flores-Resendiz, Dick Gelhaus, Bob Gerwin, Goad Family, Elsa Hall, Hummel Family, Andrea Kattel, Aiko Kimura, Diane Kosobud, Ed and Karen Larkin, Kevin Lewis, Gertrude Maxwell, Kim McClung, Elaine O’Connell, Sue Paas, Gerry Patterson, Gert Patterson, Pegge Schuermann, Richard Seifert, Judy Sullivan, Jim Tappel, Naoma Thomas, Debbie Van Hise, Brigitte Vielhauer, Kerry Walden, and Viktor & Mary Wilhelmy

THOSE IN THE ARMED FORCES:

Patrick Burke, Gabe Dorsey, Jacob Dorsey, Curtis Flores, Luis Flores, Jr., Cole Foster, Kyle Foster, Dominic Geraci, Daniel Holian, Mike Huber, Aaron Jacobson, Jacob Kramb, John Kramb, Kelly Leugers, Dominic Lloyd, Seth McGann, John Murdock, Jr., John Oscar, Sarah Ries, Dan Roseman, Andrew Shannon, Ian Tester, and Gus Voto

THE RECENTLY DECEASED:

† All Our Beloved Dead



The faculty, staff, students, and families of St. Gertrude School wish to express their profound gratitude for the support and love of this parish community over the course of 2023. May God grant to you and your families a blessed and joyous Christmas and happy New Year.

CHRIST IS BORN FOR US. COME LET US ADORE HIM!

Help Make an SGS Education More Affordable

While reducing your Ohio income tax liability!



How It Works

Ohio taxpayers who donate to a Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) are able to claim a dollar-for-dollar, non-refundable tax credit on their state income tax return for up to \$750 per donor (up to \$1,500 for joint filers).

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati Catholic Education Foundation (CEF) is a certified SGO, and St. Gertrude School is a participating school. That means that when you donate to the CEF and select St. Gertrude School as your school, your gift will directly benefit current and future SGS families in need.



Scan the QR code to visit the CEF website.



Enter your gift amount.



Select "St. Gertrude School" from the dropdown menu.

Contact Don Regan at businessmanager@stgertrude.org with questions.



OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, January 28, 2024
9 a.m.-12 p.m.



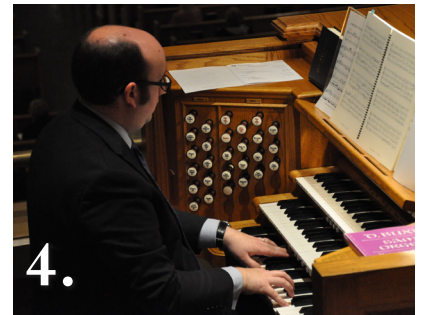
All parishioners are invited to come over to St. Gertrude School after Mass to meet our principal and students, view demonstration classes, and learn more about our terrific parish school!



Scan to RSVP
stgertrudesch.org

This past November, St. Gertrude Parish celebrated its 100th birthday! We spent an entire year preparing for this notable milestone by holding special events, ending our centennial year with our St. Gertrude the Great feast day Mass, procession, and parish party. Here is a snapshot of some of the exciting and unique events that took place over the past year.

1. Kickoff Mass with Archbishop Chris Cardone, O.P. (Sunday, October 30, 2022)
2. Witness to the Truth: Vigil of the Saints (Monday, October 31, 2022)
3. The Power of Goodness: A Refugee Family from Ukraine Tells Their Story (Saturday, November 5, 2022)
4. A Night of Beauty: Visions of Eternity (Friday, November 11, 2022)
5. Lenten True Presence Night with The Vigil Project (Wednesday, March 8, 2023)
6. Viewing of *The Chosen* with Special Guest Jonathan Roumie (Friday, March 24, 2023)
7. Understanding This Catholic Moment with George Wiegel (Tuesday, June 6, 2023)
8. Corpus Christi Mass and Procession (Sunday, June 11, 2023)
9. Parish Centennial Picnic (Saturday, August 19, 2023)
10. #Unbreakable: A Father/Son Event (Saturday, September 23, 2023)
11. Centennial Fundraiser Gala (Friday, November 3, 2023)
12. St. Gertrude the Great Feast Day Mass & Procession (Thursday, November 16, 2023)
13. St. Gertrude the Great Feast Day and Parish Centennial Celebration (Saturday, November 18, 2023)





JOURNEYING TOGETHER TOWARD CHRIST

NATHAN SMITH, PARISHIONER

For anyone who chooses to enter deeper into the reality of God's grace present within the Church, whether coming from another Christian community or even those Catholics who choose later in life to make their own personal commitments to

Christ, their journeys are unique and their motivations varied. The same can be said for our own family. Both my wife, Emmy, and I come from faithful Christian homes where a love for Christ runs deep.

For nearly a decade, I pastored various Evangelical churches and attended seminary, and we sought to order our own family life

To enter the Church is more like entering into a story that is already being told and finding your place within it.

around the will of Christ. A curiosity about the Catholic Church did not open through some theological argument, though it does for some, or from some complete disillusionment with the tradition in which we were raised. Instead, it came from a longing for the beauty of Christ, the transcendence of God, which came first aesthetically and then more particularly in a longing for the Eucharist. For myself, the only description I can provide is the feeling that I was not drinking enough water. This longing drew us to seek out a more Eucharistically centered community, liturgy and, though we wouldn't have been able to voice it at the time, a kind of sacramental imagination where Christ isn't simply an idea or even just personal, but present in every respect, connecting heaven and earth.

Our entering into the Church through St. Gertrude Parish was a model of spiritual accompaniment as the then director of evangelization, Lawain McNeil, met with Emmy and me to answer our unique questions, to raise questions for us, provide content and conversations that perhaps we had overlooked about Catholicism, and to befriend us in a spiritual relationship that continues to this day. As I said, everyone's experience is unique and, due to our own background, the questions, concerns, joys, and unfamiliarity with the Catholic Church creates the need for this journeying together into full communion. It is common for others to speak of the need to evangelize as well as to catechize, which is the experiencing of Christ as well as the knowing the truths of the Gospel through the Church. Lawain and the Become Catholic approach helped to bring these together in a unique way that allowed us to experience Christ in our learning and to more fully articulate the faith by our living. Lawain also assured us that the Catholic Church is "very big" and that the knowing, both on paper and experientially, comes over many years. In this way, to enter the Church is more like entering into a story that is already being told and finding your place within it.

Since becoming Catholic, we have been given the great joy to become like Christ more and more through the sacraments. The way we understand the world—and God's working of grace within it—has grown, morphed, and provided an enduring hope. Christ has not left us orphans, and we are reminded of this through his sacraments, including the Church, which is "like a sacrament." Though in many ways we still feel like we are learning what it means to live out the Catholic faith, which I suppose is the same for everyone, we have been encouraged by

the many people we have met here at St. Gertrude Parish who are models of this and whose examples only build on the foundation of a faith in Christ that our own families gave to us so many years before.



Have you ever wondered what your purpose is or what is the best way to live?

Our Become Catholic program may be for you.

Become Catholic is for men and women who would like to join the Catholic Church for the first time or become fully initiated members of the Church.

For more information, visit stgertrude.org/become-catholic or scan the QR code.





GOD IS FULL OF SURPRISES

JODI BONJOUR, PARISHIONER

In the summer of 2022, my husband (Andy), myself, and our seven children moved to Cincinnati. As you can imagine, this was a huge change for all of us after 17 years of calling Steubenville, Ohio, home, but we knew this was where God was leading us. Knowing

I wasn't sure that the Bible study would be anything special, but if it got me out of the house and talking with other women, I was game.

no one in this city, we joined St. Gertrude Parish, as we had already enrolled our elementary-aged children in the highly-recommended school. We made a conscious effort as a family to try to participate in many activities (music ministry, L'alto: High School, and doughnut Sunday) to forge new connections and nurture friendships in our new parish home. I signed up for the Walking with Purpose Bible study that fall. To be honest, I wasn't sure that the Bible study would be anything special, but if it got me out of the house and talking with other women, I was game.

For our weekly Walking with Purpose meetings, I was placed in a regular "small group" of women of all different life stages and backgrounds—married, single, cradle Catholics, converts, mothers of infants, and mothers of adult children. We discussed the study topics and safely shared our struggles and triumphs. We prayed for one another and gave advice when asked. How good was it to be growing such deep connections with women with such breadth of experiences in this new parish community?

These friendships, and the grace God gave me through my new prayer life, carried me through a remarkably difficult time of transition into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

Not only did I deeply enjoy our weekly meetings, attending Sunday Mass with my family started feeling different. I went from

feeling alone in a sea of unfamiliar faces, to being greeted by smiles of recognition from women whose names and stories I knew. St. Gertrude started becoming home.

But even more than that, God surprised me with the great work he did in my heart during that first year—and that he continues to do through the Walking with Purpose studies. I am a cradle Catholic, who

had a profound deepening of faith in my high school years, but I've always struggled with having a consistent and personal prayer life. My faith was important to me, but it came from a sense of duty, not one of love. Slowly, as I worked my way through the lessons and reflections of the Bible study, I found my morning prayer time to be a critical part of my day and a source of strength in my vocation as wife and mother. I memorized verses that helped me keep God's loving truth in the forefront and started sharing that truth with others. I was called to greater holiness by the deep Jesus-centered friendships I made with the women in my small group. These friendships, and the grace God gave me through my new prayer life, carried me through a remarkably difficult time of transition into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

I came to Walking with Purpose out of a desperate longing for a friend or two, and instead discovered a welcoming and loving community, and a growing intimacy with Jesus Christ. Isn't that just like our Father to give us more than we can imagine?

Learn more about Walking with Purpose at stgertrude.org/walkingwithpurpose.



MOMS & LITTLES HOLY HOUR

Are you a parent, grandparent, or babysitter of young children? Bring your little ones to a special hour of adoration just for you and your kids. Silence isn't expected, so don't worry if your youngsters cry, won't sit still, or talk.

Tuesdays | 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Resumes January 9, 2024

St. Gertrude Church

6543 Miami Ave. Cincinnati



Scan the QR code to join the GroupMe group, receive reminders, and chat with other parents!





HOW A TEEN OPENED HIS HEART TO GOD

NOAH REGALA, PARISHIONER AND FORMER L'ALTO: HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANT

It was as if the room was empty, the hundreds of voices gone, and it was just Jesus, there on the altar. As you read this, I encourage you to think about the last time you made time to be alone with our Lord,

without technology and the business of life—just you and him. As a high schooler, this can be hard to do, amidst the homework, sports, friends, and family life you may have to balance. This was definitely the case for me as I prepared to go into my senior year. As I came off of junior year, the busiest year of school I'd ever had, I was ready to take a break. I brought that mindset into Catholic Youth Summer Camp that year.

Every year, St. Gertrude Parish sends high school students up to a camp called Catholic Youth Summer Camp (CYSC). It's a place where kids from all across the country come together for a week of fun and fellowship, not only deepening their friendship with each other but also with Christ. Coming into that week, life was busy, training for soccer in the fall and working a summer job as well, plus all of the work I had put into junior year beforehand. I was looking forward to a week away from the world but could never have guessed what the Lord was going to do that week. Each day was full of great adventure activities like rock climbing, ziplines, giant inflatables, and more. And each night we had time just to be silent with the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration. As the week progressed, the adoration nights got steadily longer and more impactful, and on Wednesday, God's presence hit me. Hard.

After being still slightly pent up, busy, and distracted from my daily life up to that point, I finally let my guard down and opened my heart to him. In that moment, everything disappeared, and it was as if it was just God and me. That is when a change happened in me—I

felt free, confident, and ready to live for the glory of God. Everything that I was holding on to and trying to be in control of, I let go. It felt like a total detachment of my real life from worldly concerns, all the things that weighed me down. (As a side note, for you who read this, a big part of that moment was that we left technology behind that week. No phone, no laptop, no worries about what was happening somewhere else allowed me to fully enter into the moment without distractions.)

Because I opened my heart in that time of adoration, something radically different happened in me that year. Something that provided a spark in me to strive for greatness, causing me to long for greatness far beyond my own. Something that was only reinforced by the fact that I was not alone. I had my high school small group there with me, experiencing similar things, opening their own hearts to God in

new ways. Coming back home, I was able to have help from some pretty great friends, and still to this day I rely on them to help me get better, to seek that greatness that touched my heart

Think about the last time you made time to be alone with our Lord, without technology and the business of life—just you and him.

That summer with the group from St. Gertrude Parish helped me get to where I am now.

that day. Although I may not be perfect in achieving greatness, that summer with the group from St. Gertrude Parish helped me get to where I am now: surrounded by a great community of men who are also seeking the Lord in college, leading in our parish Confirmation prep ministry, and seeking more and more time with the Lord in

adoration, my rosary time, and personal prayer. So I encourage each one of you who reads this—regardless if you are in high school, college, out of college, or married

and have a family—to make time for God, give him even just five minutes in prayer every day, without distractions, with your phone on silent . . . and give him your heart. And, find that group of men or women who are going to help you live a saintly life. With family and friends coming together to celebrate Christ's birth, what more perfect time to reflect on the joys (or sorrows) of life and bring those to him?

Learn more about L'alto: High School and all of our youth ministry and faith formation programs at stgertrude.org/childrenandyouth.

Merry Christmas

FROM THE

ST. GERTRUDE PARISH STAFF!





**ST. GERTRUDE PARISH—
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE
OF A NEW PARISHIONER**
THERESA JOHNSON, PARISHIONER

When searching for a new parish, I ponder several words: welcome, parishioner, family, and community. Welcome means a kind greeting designed to introduce a person to a new place or situation and to make them feel at ease.

Parishioner means an inhabitant of a parish, especially one who belongs to and/or attends. Community is a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. *Familia*, in its Latin form, means “household.”

When searching for a new parish, I look at the parishes’ websites to see what they are all about. St. Gertrude Parish’s mission was the shortest out of all, and its mission states, “Encounter Jesus Christ. This is our ‘one thing.’ It’s simple. And, it’s what we’re all about.” So, few words are needed when your mission is focused on Jesus Christ. Looking for a parish, we wanted the words I pondered and the church’s mission to be lived out throughout the people who attended. We were searching for a place that fulfills a greater need for our family, not in words but in action.

*St. Gertrude exemplifies
“welcome, parishioner, family,
community, and Christ.”*

At this time of year, Christmas is a word I think of daily. Christmas can mean the annual festival celebrating Christ’s birth. Christmas can be an opportunity to pause and give thanks for the love, hope, and joy we have found in Jesus. Christmas is a time when we prepare to encounter and welcome Jesus Christ as a human, as a baby, as a new individual, as part of a family. Christmas is a celebration you would love to have all year. Well, at St. Gertrude, through the daily events offered to each family as well as individual, Christmas is here every day. Come as you are, for the parish literally welcomes you home with love and a festive party. The vast programs offered provide support as you journey through new experiences, spiritual growth, healing, hardship, and life changes starting in utero to past your death. They see every person as a gift and honor those gifts so each person can become a servant for Christ. They are the shining light guiding you to your ultimate home, heaven, through the daily opportunities to prepare and receive daily sacraments. St. Gertrude Parish is living Advent each day to prepare for you to be reborn daily in the celebration of Jesus Christ! Christmas is the everyday atmosphere you experience when coming to St. Gertrude.

For us, St. Gertrude was like finding that stable in Bethlehem— it was not the final stop, but the beginning of our journey. It was the light we needed to see our gifts. It provided the hope that Christ still wanted us to encounter him. St. Gertrude exemplifies “welcome,

parishioner, family, community, and Christ.” St. Gertrude truly helped us “Encounter Jesus Christ” in a whole new and deeper way. We encounter Christ in the people, the families, the children, the individuals that gather here every day. It is a parish that celebrates the gift of Christ that is living out within you and encourages you to proclaim him through your actions. St. Gertrude creates an atmosphere to see the love, hope, and peace when you “Encounter Jesus Christ.”

**ALL YOU CAN EAT
Pancake Breakfast**

Join us for a delicious breakfast of pancakes, eggs, and sausage—and fellowship with your parish family! (Gluten-free pancakes and dairy-free scrambled eggs available.)

Children grades K-8*	\$5
Adult	\$9
Family	\$30

*Children 5 and under are free.

Credit cards accepted. All proceeds go toward Knights of Columbus Archbishop Elder Council’s charitable programs.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2024
Serving 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
St. Gertrude Parish Gym

Sponsored by **Knights of Columbus**



SUPPORT FOR MISCARRIAGE

Have you experienced a miscarriage? You are not alone. Heaven’s Gain Ministries is here to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of families experiencing pregnancy loss. Call Heaven’s Gain at (513) 607-6083 for support, or visit HeavensGain.org for more information.



THE PEACE THAT ONLY CHRIST GIVES

CAROLINE ISAACS, PARISHIONER

I have been a practicing Catholic for much of my life, but at times more exteriorly. As the oldest daughter of church-going parents, I attended weekly Mass, went to confession several times a year, and did what I felt most Catholics do. After I graduated college in 2000, I married my college sweetheart and embarked on a successful career in the corporate world while my husband pursued his degree in medicine. My 20s and 30s were marked by working hard in the workplace. For a while, I felt my faith was compartmentalized to a Sunday activity. Prayer life wasn't happening much outside of Mass. I remember praying very fervently in 2006 when our oldest son was diagnosed with hip dysplasia when he was just two days old, but I went back to life as usual when I returned to work full-time and his hip dysplasia resolved within two months.

I thought, wow, this is exactly the Peace (with a capital P) as we hear it at Mass.

I had been a lifelong New Yorker until 2010 when we moved as a family of four, with two young children, to Cincinnati. In 2017, I gave birth to our sixth child, adding another boy to our brood of five boys. Life was really good, but it was nevertheless really full and busy. I really needed confession one night and decided to attend confession during a Holy Hour at St. Gertrude in the evening after I put the kids to sleep. St. Gertrude was still a newer parish for me, as we had just moved in 2015 to have more room for our rapidly growing family. (We had four boys in just a little over five years.)

After confession that night, I knelt down as usual to do my penance and, unexpectedly, I felt a powerful peace descending on me that was a little different than any other time before. Immediately, I thought this was exactly the peace that I needed. Yes, most people would say a busy mom of six boys needs her quiet and peace, but a distinct peace was present in that moment. I thought, wow, this is exactly the Peace (with a capital P) as we hear it at Mass. The Peace that only Christ can give us, and not the peace we give to one another. It is a more staying type of peace. In the world, we have many things that give us ephemeral peace but absolutely nothing is like the Peace we experience in Eucharistic Adoration.

As I knelt in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I read a prayer from a book I randomly purchased. In it was St. Alphonsus Liguori's Spiritual Communion prayer and the line, "Since I cannot receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart." Oh, how those words resounded so loudly. In that moment I thought, yes, it is such a gift to receive the Blessed Sacrament, so shouldn't I want to do this as much as possible? Quietly and without telling anyone, I decided I would try a weekday Mass—and the rest is history. I went

quickly from one weekday to seven days a week. It was in the stillness of Eucharistic Adoration that I had a powerful reversion.

Since 2017, one of the marked changes in my life has been my reading material. I have always loved reading, but my spiritual book collection grew rapidly. I couldn't read fast enough; I wanted to absorb as much as I could. I quickly realized how much I was missing, and I guess I was making up for lost time. I looked forward to each Wednesday Holy Hour. I would call it my "date night with Jesus." Thanks to these Holy Hours, my confessions also became frequent so that I could also recall and confess my actual sins without the usual vagueness that I had learned to just accept.

Why do I think this all happened? Faith is a gift from God, but it is a gift that is to be shared. The Eucharist is the gift to be shared. The minute we become parents, we have an automatic apostolate, and the most important apostolate you could ever be entrusted with. Being a parent is so daunting—we must pray without ceasing, and praying for our children around the clock is necessary. We can do everything in the world, yet it won't always go as planned. I have faith that God will take care of all. I bring him my worries, my anxieties, my weariness, my trials, and even my tribulations to share with him who knows me best. I treasure my weekly hour in adoration. The prayer from Fatima rings true for me: "Most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God I love Thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Amen."

JESUS IS WAITING FOR YOU

DISCOVER THE PEACE OF HIS PRESENCE

**ST. GERTRUDE PARISH
MOTHER OF MERCY ADORATION CHAPEL**
Open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Learn more at stgertrude.org/adoration.



A LIVING FAITH CREATES NEW STORIES EVERY DAY

DONNA MARCELLO, PARISHIONER

When asked to share my story, I thought, “What can I say?” I didn’t know where to begin or what to say. But as I sat down to write this article, I realized

I believe God called me long before I heard him, let alone responded to him. I know he’s been there for me even when I didn’t realize it.

that reflecting on what to say became a wonderful way to see and share how God loves and cares for his own.

My journey toward Christ has been a continual process. Although I grew up in a Southern Baptist household, we didn’t attend church as a family. Even so, I was blessed to have a couple who lived near me take me to church when I was very young. They were Catholic—something very rare in my hometown in the deep South. My family moved when I was in the fifth grade, and we lost contact.

For more years than I care to admit, my faith was strictly a matter of hope—I clung to it when nothing else was okay. A turning point for me was moving from hope to belief. I was living and working in the D.C. area at the time and had been through a very emotional event in my life, which left me feeling that I would never be able to trust anyone ever again. So, I began to “hope” again—turning to God because life was difficult. I went to Mass a few times. Not regularly because it took a lot of courage to enter a church where I knew no one and didn’t understand how the Mass was celebrated. I didn’t know when to stand, when to kneel, or what to say. When the time came to offer the sign of peace, my heart almost stopped. I didn’t want to shake hands with anyone. I mean, really! Why couldn’t I keep to myself?

Then, I met a man who would later become my husband. I soon learned that he was Catholic. Was it Divine intervention? Perhaps. I had already started to look for something more in my life. I was curious about the Catholic faith and was hungry to learn what God and his truth could mean in my life. He became my sponsor when I eventually decided to convert. I have been a member of the Catholic Church for over 20 years and a parishioner at St. Gertrude since 2011.

I love being a member of the St. Gertrude Parish family. The reverence with which the Lord’s Supper is celebrated makes me feel like a participant in the liturgy rather than just an audience member.

In reflecting on my faith journey, I believe God called me long before I heard him, let alone responded to him. I know he’s been there for me even when I didn’t realize it. Scripture encourages us to spend time with other believers, read and study our Bibles, pray, and

minister in his name. At St. Gertrude, I have been blessed to serve the Lord by participating in all these activities.

My prayers and actions in my early spiritual journey were personal and private. Today, I strive to live out my faith as we are called to do in James 2:14-26, which tells us that faith without works is dead. Instrumental in my growth is serving with the members of the Ladies of Charity. These women are passionate about helping those less fortunate and participate as their time and talent allow. From weekend collections

for local charities to organizing annual events, these ladies help feed and clothe vulnerable and marginalized people in our community and beyond. It is an absolute joy to serve with these women. Through them I have also met many of their husbands and children. If you’re looking for a way to grow your faith, serve the community, and meet other parishioners, please join us!

As my faith has grown and matured, I’ve learned that we all need each other. While faith is a personal journey, we all share some common transition points that help us easily relate to another’s experience. These points are important because by sharing our stories, perhaps we can help others see God’s fingerprints in their lives. And so, in closing, my prayer is that we all share our stories of faith with others and that we all create new stories each day.

Learn more about the Ladies of Charity at stgertrude.org/ladiesofcharity.

**St. Gertrude Parish & Knights of Columbus
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BLOOD DRIVE

**Wednesday, December 27
9-11 a.m. | 12:15-3 p.m.**

**St. Gertrude Parish Gym
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SETTING AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR CHILDREN

DOUG AND LIZ PEARSON,
PARISHIONERS AND ST. GERTRUDE
SCHOOL FAMILY

In the fall of 2021, we dropped our kids off at St. Gertrude School for their first day. They were full of nervousness and excitement and, if we're being honest, we were, too. We had spent the

previous year homeschooling our children during the pandemic and a high risk pregnancy with our fourth child. Although we cherished our time with the kids all at home, the year was filled with anxieties over our unborn child, Liz's health, countless doctors appointments, and navigating the ever-changing protocols of COVID-19.

We left Sister Maria Christi's talk feeling inspired to set a better example of Christian hope for our children.

A few weeks into school, we attended a Back to School assembly for all the school parents. We were gathered in the gym for what we assumed would be a routine "school logistics" night. Instead, we were greeted by the principal at the time, Sister Maria Christi, O.P., who began to inspire us and many of the parents gathered by her words. She began by reminding us all that because we are Catholic we ought to behave differently in the face of pandemics, plagues, trials, and sufferings. Despite the fact that these evils are all around us and affecting us, our response should be different than the secular response because we know the end of the story.

We don't have to give in to fear, discouragement, and panic. We know the hope and victory of Jesus Christ who is



Our Redeemer. That is what

we should model for our children. When we are faced with trials, our children should see our example of turning to Christ as our source of hope, joy, and nourishment. She went on to discuss her plan to continually entrust the school and all the children to Jesus through Our Blessed Mother.

We left Sister Maria Christi's talk feeling inspired to set a better example of Christian

hope for our children. We started making an effort to attend the 8 a.m. daily Mass after school drop-off. The gift of being able to start our day with the Eucharist has been transforming in our lives and in our family. Before the Lord in the Eucharist, we can lay down work stresses, family plans, our children's struggles, everything! This daily practice of trust and surrender is a work in progress, and it's certainly

not easy. Many times our morning Mass experience tends to be a little less "Silent Night" and a little

more "Trans Siberian Orchestra" with our two-year-old and seven-month-old but, little by little, attending daily Mass as a couple has strengthened our faith in God's plan for our marriage and family.

During many morning commutes to school, our children have even asked us to offer up our Mass intention for their upcoming tests, teachers, classmates, or any other special intentions they might have that day. They are learning, alongside us, that God who made us cares

deeply about us and loves us immensely. We can entrust everything to him.

He loves us enough to be born as a tiny baby, to become like us, and show us the way out of our sin and suffering. It's not that he necessarily takes away our sufferings and trials in this life, but that he embraces us in the midst of the suffering, draws close to us, and gives us hope and joy even in the midst of our difficulties. When we are faced with pandemics and high-risk pregnancies and whatever else this world can throw at us, we know that the tiny baby born in Bethlehem was not destined only for the cross but ultimately for the empty tomb! And he makes himself available to us every day in the Holy Eucharist.

Christ wants to give us his peace and joy this season and every season. He desires to be our hope when things seem hopeless. A Scripture verse we often cling to in moments of difficulty summarizes this all so beautifully: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69).

O come, let us adore him!





ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT THE MOTHERHOUSE

SISTER JACINTA MAN, O.P.,
ST. GERTRUDE SCHOOL TEACHER

A couple weeks ago, someone asked if I knew what the number one Christmas hit song was. After three incorrect guesses, he crooned, *I'm dreaming of a white Christmas...* This song always brings back

memories of my first Christmas at the Motherhouse in Nashville. It was shortly before Christmas Midnight Mass (my first Midnight Mass which was actually at midnight), and while my postulant sisters and I were caroling in the cloister courtyard, white flakes began to fall from the sky! It was *actually* snowing on Christmas in Tennessee! Needless to say, we were all giddy with excitement and went into the Motherhouse chapel with hearts brimming with joy and gratitude. It was the best Christmas surprise from Jesus.

Advent and Christmas at the Motherhouse are full of surprises for a postulant. Perhaps for the first time in her life, she experiences Advent as a penitential season and chooses something to give up, like in Lent. Also, there are small changes in the chapel. For example, we chant using only one set of psalm tones in the Divine Office and do not decorate the sanctuary with flowers like we usually do.

The postulants also learn there is, however, still some of the typical holiday hustle and bustle! The novices spend several days baking Christmas goodies for our many benefactors, and the post office is very busy delivering all the sisters' Christmas cards. Since letter writing is our primary way of communicating with family and friends, we keep the USPS in business with the number of Christmas stamps we buy!

Close to the end of Advent, as the "mission" sisters come streaming home to the Motherhouse from around the world, fresh Christmas trees are donated and delivered, filling every common space with the fragrance of evergreen. Sometimes, a tree even ends up on the roof! But decorating at the Motherhouse strictly does not begin until Christmas Eve, which is a very busy day indeed. Every sister dons her apron and gets to work, helping chop 70 onions, unboxing hundreds of ornaments, or setting up the crèche in the chapel with a sea of red and white poinsettias. Christmas music drifts through the halls as the musicians

practice, giving a small taste of the Christmas joy about to come. The anticipation builds!

When the convent bell finally rings to begin Midnight Mass, the youngest postulant walks with Mother Anna Grace down the center aisle of the chapel, cradling the baby Jesus. Mother Anna Grace then places



baby Jesus in the manger scene as the community sings "O Holy Night." Finally, the moment we all have been preparing

Needless to say, we were all giddy with excitement and went into the Motherhouse chapel with hearts brimming with joy and gratitude.

for is here—the holy sacrifice of the Mass when we celebrate the Nativity of our Savior and Bridegroom.

For a consecrated religious, Advent and Christmas are seasons of joy and gratitude. We have the joy of communal life and long-standing traditions that remind us we are a family. And our joy naturally leads to a profound gratitude for God's generosity and our vocations. On Christmas, we remember how God broke into our misery to bring us to his mercy. The Incarnation is infinitely more than anything we

could dream of, much grander than a white Christmas in Tennessee. At Christmas, we celebrate that God has become man, elevating human nature and calling each of us to share in his Divinity. "Hail and Blessed be the

hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold" (Christmas Novena).

Finally, the moment we all have been preparing for is here—the holy sacrifice of the Mass when we celebrate the Nativity of our Savior and Bridegroom.



To help you enter into the season of Advent and prepare for Christmas, we have been running a four-part series on the infancy narratives. This is part four in the series. Please visit stgertrude.org/bulletin to read the first three parts in the December 3, 10, and 17 bulletins respectively.



TO BE SAVED BY A CHILD

FATHER JOSEPH ALOBAIDI, O.P.

Heroes are everywhere. They populate our imagination and our historical books. They are the saviors of their families, tribes, nations, and for some, they are the savior of humanity. The Bible mentions all these categories. Let us examine a few of them in

order to reach the summit of heroism: salvation by a child.

National Heroes

Let us limit our short investigation to the Bible. Here are a few characteristics of heroic biblical figures:

- **They usually are men.** David, among the rulers of the Old Testament, should receive a special mention for his courage and his love for God. However, a few women are heroic in their efforts to save Israel. Deborah (Judges 4 and 5) is a prominent figure amongst them. Biblical heroes are adulated, literature glorifies them, and songs highly ring their praises. Their mistakes, even crimes, are omitted whenever their exploits are narrated. These men are beautiful and endowed with virtues of all kinds.
- **Their stories involve violence.** When the national hero liberates his people, it is generally marked by violence. Biblical heroes are powerful. Their enemies are defeated through military means; they are subdued, even punished.
- **Their victory is never universal.** A national hero is the savior of his nation, and his effort is detrimental to other nations. At the end of his endeavor there are winners and losers.

God's Hero

The hero that we celebrate at Christmas is a child, a human completely dependent on others. He doesn't think for, feed, or protect himself. Resting the salvation of the world on a child is God's way of saying that his salvation is not founded on human power. Here are a few characteristics of the Child-Hero, Jesus:

- **He is worshiped.** Because Jesus has no human power, God bestowed on him his own godly power. And because God is worshiped, the Child-Hero will also be worshiped. That is what the magi do, according to Matthew's Gospel. That is what the shepherds and the angels do, according to Luke's Gospel.
- **He has no enemies.** Do you remember the famous Lord's injunction: Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27)? Because Jesus, the Child-Hero, has the power of God, he behaves like God, who is the creator of all—enemies included. Israel always has difficulties with those who aren't Israelites. It is not by chance that the first worshipers of the Child-Savior are magi (foreigners) and shepherds (people who hold one of the lowest places in society). Have you noticed that a centurion (a Roman military officer), is the first one who declared the crucified Jesus was innocent (Luke 23:47)? Or that the Apostles, after the Resurrection, gave their discourse in many languages (Acts 2:7-12)? A child with divine power became our Savior. With him, there will be no losers. With him, there will only be winners.
- **His salvation covers all of creation.** Because Jesus has the power of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, his salvation covers all the creation. Do you think that it is by chance that the magi were guided by a star, or that the angels from heaven were singing when the shepherds paid homage to baby Jesus, or that the sun was darkened at the crucifixion? Do you think that it is by chance that, at the end of the liturgical year, we celebrate Jesus Christ the King of the Universe—and not the king of the human race alone?

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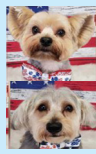
St. Gertrude Parish Weekly Collection and Budget Report Collection for December 17

Collection	\$	51,443
Weekly Budget	\$	37,000
Weekly Surplus	\$	14,443
Second Collection - St. Gertrude School: \$3,447		
Fiscal Year-To-Date (for year ending June 30, 2024)		
Fiscal YTD Actual	\$	931,199
Fiscal YTD Budget	\$	925,000
Fiscal YTD Surplus	\$	6,199

Monday, December 25	Tuesday, December 26	Wednesday, December 27	Thursday, December 28	Friday, December 29	Saturday, December 30	Sunday, December 31
Adoration Chapel Closed	Adoration Chapel Closed	Adoration Chapel Closed	Adoration Chapel Closed	Adoration Chapel Closed	Adoration Chapel Closed	Adoration Chapel Closed
St. Gertrude School No School	St. Gertrude School No School	St. Gertrude School No School	St. Gertrude School No School	St. Gertrude School No School		Baptisms 1:15 p.m. Church
Parish Office Closed	Parish Office Closed	KofC Blood Drive 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Gym	Parish Office Open 12:30-5 p.m.	Altar Server Christmas party 12 p.m. Parish Center		
		Parish Office Open 12:30-5 p.m.		Parish Office Open 12:30-5 p.m.		



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