



Mass Intentions for the Week

Saturday, 19 December

3:30 pm ... Confession & Reconciliation

4 pm ... Our Parish Family

Sunday, 20 December

Fourth Sunday of Advent

7:30 am ... †Eileen Audet by Kathleen Albert

9:30 am ... †Aline & †Aristide Turgeon by Sharon & Eric Houle

4:30 pm ... Confession & Reconciliation

5 pm ... †Deceased members of the Byrne & Walsh families by Eileen Byrne

Monday, 21 December

Saint Peter Canisus

12 pm ... †Shaun M. Keane by Jack & Colleen Byrne

Tuesday, 22 December

12 pm ... †Agnes Costello by P. Jerome

Wednesday, 23 December

Saint John of Kanty

11:30 am ... Confession & Reconciliation

12 pm ... †J. Marjorie Costello Day (30th Anniv.) by P. Jerome

Thursday, 24 December

~CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED~

4 pm ... Christmas Vigil Mass

Friday, 25 December

Nativity of the Lord

~CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED~

8 am ... †John & †Irene Narkey by Teresa Greene

10 am ... Our Parish Family

Saturday, 26 December

Saint Stephen, Protomartyr

3:30 pm ... Confession & Reconciliation

4 pm ... †Dot, †Ray, †Roger Larochelle by Lillian Larochelle

Sunday, 27 December

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

7:30 am ... †Rita DeCotis (16th Anniv.) by Dottie DeCotis

9:30 am ... †Laurent Cote by Jeannine Cote

4:30 pm ... Confession & Reconciliation

5 pm ... Our Parish Family



The Pastor's Reception

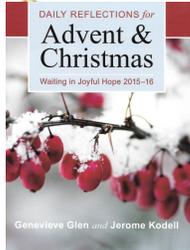
Our annual Christmastime event, The Pastor's Reception, will be Jan. 2, 2016, the Vigil of the Solemnity of the Epiphany — and it will be a special moment in the life of our parish. We will celebrate, as usual, the service and dedication of all its volunteers and all those engaged in parish ministries. But this year, our head sacristan and senior volunteer, **Anne Kenney**, will receive the **Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Award**, (For the Church and the Pontiff) to be presented in the name of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, by the Most Rev. Peter A. Libasci, D.D., bishop of Manchester. This award recognizes Catholic men and women who have rendered outstanding service to the Church and the Holy Father over the years. Bishop Libasci will celebrate Vespers and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, in the church at 7:30 pm, immediately following a **6 pm catered dinner**, which will be the parish hall. Anyone wishing to celebrate this event but not engaged in parish ministry is likewise invited to attend. We kindly request that these individuals, as well as spouses, family or friends of our volunteers, contribute \$20 towards the cost of the dinner. Complimentary beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages, will be served. A count is necessary to plan effectively for this reception, so we must require all those planning to attend to **R.S.V.P. by Saturday, Dec. 26, 2015. Please join us in sharing the joy of this beautiful Christmas season and in honoring Anne on receiving this prestigious award! Please call the rectory at 623.2604 or email Kerri at Secretary@saint-raphael-parish.com. Thank you!**



Poinsettias in memory of loved ones Special thanks to those who donate flowers in memory and in honor of loved ones. A list of memorials is included in this week's bulletin.



Sanctuary candle The sanctuary candle burns this week for †Rita DeCotis by Dottie DeCotis.



Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas
Booklets are available in the



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, 21 December

10:30 am ... Coffee & Doughnuts—Parish Hall

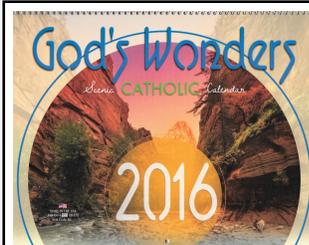
Monday, 22 December

6:30—8 pm ... Youth Ministry/Gr. 6-12—Parish Hall

7—8 pm ... Food Pantry

Tuesday, 23 December

12:30 pm ... Parish Nurse—Church Conf Room



Our thanks, once again, to **Kevin Marchand of Durning, Bykowski & Young Funeral Home, Manchester**, for providing our 2015 calendars. Please help yourself to a calendar from the box in the nook. Charlie would be proud of you!

Advent prepares us to welcome a savior who bestows his mercy

The hoopla surrounding the premiere of the latest installment in the “**Star Wars**” series by George Lucas has been tremendous. Chatty little robots, light sabers, and black helmets have been flying off the shelves. More than \$100 million worth of advance tickets sales have been recorded. Surely, that is something to Chewbacca on! The voice of the wookiee has been heard in our land!

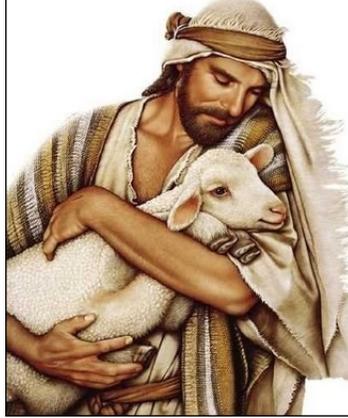


During this beautiful **Advent season**, as we Christians prepare for the foundational feast of the Nativity of the Lord Jesus at Christmas, it is always instructive to see what moves and motivates our society. I believe the title of this film is “**The Force Awakens**,” and those who have seen some of the Star Wars films, which first hit cinemas in 1977, know that “the Force” is coded language for some supernatural power that comes to the assistance of those who seek to be and do the good. Many moviegoers, film critics and academics have suggested that **the Force is, in fact, God**. This new movie will probably shed some light on the topic.

For us, however, it is worth remembering that **no one has need to “awaken” our God**. He is very much alive, active and present in our salvation. During this new Year of Mercy, the Church will examine carefully the many dimensions of God’s activity that bestows mercy upon us and draws us into his embrace. The entire story of salvation shows how God, **the Eternal and All-Loving One**, has revealed himself and opened up his plan for our salvation. For revealing his existence as a personal God who desires a relationship with us in Abraham to the revelation of his name and Law to Moses to the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt to the formation of Israel and the rise of the Temple, to the words of the prophets, God has been busy drawing mankind to himself.

In the birth of Christ Jesus, God’s presence in the world becomes irrevocably united with mankind’s history and destiny. **Jesus of Nazareth is the God-Man**, truly divine and unquestionably human, “born of a Virgin, born under the Law.” In Christ, God’s plan becomes narrowed to a single person, who happens to be the **Second Person of the Blessed Trinity**. And, in Christ, that same plan expands to include not simply Israel but the whole of humanity, Israel first, then all the nations of the Gentile world.

God provides many different ways for us to understand him: creator, ruler, king, lawgiver,



understanding of the divine becomes **much more nuanced and personal**. Jesus, who is God among us, becomes an infant, a youth and a man. He is teacher, healer, miracle-worker, forgiver, bridegroom, sacrificial victim and risen one.

Among the many beautiful titles of Jesus is the **Good Shepherd**, and during **this Year of Mercy**, that image of Jesus, more or less, has become the official symbol of the observance (*image below*). The **logo** actually shows Jesus in the posture of carrying the sheep, but, in fact, he is **carrying a brother in need** — for the sheep have always represented us! In some ways, the logo combines the Good Shepherd image with the Good Samaritan action. So many descriptions and titles of Jesus seem to fit the act of divine



mercy that it must have been quite a challenge to select the right one, whoever was in charge of selecting the symbol. The Sacred Heart, the Crucified Savior and Saint Faustina’s depiction of Divine Mercy would have been just a few. But the Good Shepherd is **one of the oldest such images of Christ** — and for good reason. It’s a description that Jesus uses about himself, and we can find it in the pages of the gospel, among them our passage from John 10 this evening. I remember seeing a 3rd century sculpture of Christ, the Good Shepherd, at the Vatican Pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World’s Fair when I was a kid (*image in first column*).

It is worth our time to see what happens in this passage. First, Jesus situates himself **among the sheep**. He is not lording it over them, he is not letting them wander aimlessly. He is **leading them**. Second, Jesus recognizes the sheep indeed can wander and become lost,

judge — and all of them are necessary, true and legitimate. In Christ, however, our

so he **calls each one by name**. He knows us and he calls to each of us in his Word — if we are willing to listen. Third, Jesus acknowledges that there are strangers, forces alien to the sheep, **thieves and wolves**, which desire the destruction of the sheep. In the same way, Satan, sin and death seek to turn us away from the path of life.

Fourth, Jesus reveals that “the good shepherd **lays down his life for the sheep**.” This is precisely what the Lord does atop Calvary at his Crucifixion. Fifth, Jesus tells us that the hired man is not fit to tend the sheep, for he will run away at the first sign of danger. In the same way, those of us who tend to any part of Christ’s flock, his Church, must be **united in mind, heart and spirit with him**. We must not see our vocation as a means to power, wealth or comfort. We must desire to serve.

Sixth, Jesus makes it clear that he has “other sheep,” that his flock is drawn both from Israel and from the Gentile nations. The Church must always be open, always expanding, **always proclaiming the gospel** of her Good Shepherd. Seventh, and finally, Jesus makes the point that **he is one with the Father**, whose will he always undertakes. Jesus is not simply a good man, a great teacher and preacher or even a powerful prophet. He is one with the Father. He is Emmanuel, God-with-us”!

We can find no more powerful expression of God’s love for us than in **Christ’s willingness to bear our sins**. He carried them to the Cross to destroy their permanent effects. He forgives our sins through his Church in the sacrament of Reconciliation. What mercy is that! It gives an opportunity to **cast off our guilt and grief. It enables to start anew!** It provides us with a vision of who we are meant to be in God’s eyes! And it gives us an encounter with God’s own life and grace!

During this Year of Mercy, let us open ourselves to God’s healing and forgiving grace. Let us grant mercy, even to those who hurt, harm or offend us. And let us ponder well the words of our Blessed Lord: “*I AM the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and destroy. I came that they may have life and have abundantly. I AM the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*”

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December 20, 2015

Readings for the week of December 20, 2015

Monday: Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a; Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Lk 1:39-45
Tuesday: 1 Sm 1:24-28; 1 Sm 2:1, 4-8abcd; Lk 1:46-56
Wednesday: Mal 3:1-4, 23-34; Ps 25:4-5ab, 8-10, 14; Lk 1:57-66
Thursday: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29; Lk 1:67-79
Friday: Vigil: Is 62:1-5; Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Mt 1:1-25 (18-25)
 Night: Is 9:1-6; Ps 96:1-3, 11-13; Ti 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14
 Dawn: Is 62:11-12; Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12; Ti 3:4-7; Lk 2:15-20
 Day: Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 (1-5, 9-14)
Saturday: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Ps 31:3cd-4, 6, 8ab, 16bc, 17; Mt 10:17-22
Sunday: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or 1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28; Ps 128:1-5 or Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10; Col 3:12-21 (12-17) or 1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24; Lk 2:41-52



CLOCK IS TICKING, PLEASE STEP FORWARD AGAIN

We had planned to terminate active participation in the campaign this past week, but, again, an **anonymous donor** emerged who promises to **MATCH** any additional contributions we receive through the end of the calendar year. To date, we have raised **\$18,786**, with an additional **\$1,300** which will be matched, raising our total to **\$21,336**. Please help us reach our \$30,000 goal and consider donating towards this cause. Your contribution now will be matched! Thank you to everyone who contributed to date!



Please note that the rectory will be closed on Wednesday, Dec. 24 through Friday, Dec. 26, and on Friday, January 1, 2016 in observance of the holidays.

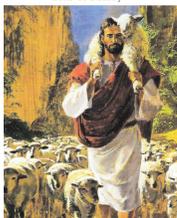


Please pray for **✠Ada Young Sirois**, who died Dec. 9, 2015, and whose funeral Mass was celebrated last week by P. Jerome.

In Sympathy



Thank you! We are grateful to everyone who donated to our Christmas Angel Tree appeal this year. Donations received went to **Angie's Place, Liberty House, and The Way Home**. Thank you to the NH Right to Life Committee members who prepared the labels, and to **Bob & Beth Sheehan and Molly Hayden** for their help in getting the gifts to their respective locations.



The Year of Mercy has begun.

Please help yourself to a **Year of Mercy prayer card**, located in the basket at the door of the church.

Jubilee
Year of Mercy
December 8, 2015-
November 20, 2016



Weekly Collection

December 13, 2015

Regular Offertory	\$ 3,495.00
Make-Up Offertory	831.00
Loose Offertory	567.75
Online Parish Giving	85.00
Total	\$ 4,978.75

Stewardship	\$ 1,969.00
Stewardship Loose	240.00
Stewardship Online	10.00
Total Stewardship	\$ 2,219.00

Immaculate Conception \$ 350.00

Food Pantry \$ 102.00

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinth 9:7



Saint Raphael Food Pantry

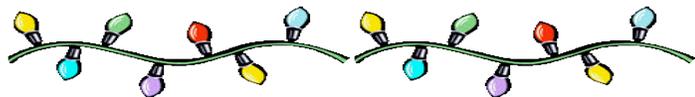
On Monday, December 14, the food pantry served **27** families and gave out **51** bags of groceries. Be sure to LIKE us on our new Facebook

Page—**Saint Raphael Food Pantry / Hope Chest** to get news and updates!



First-time visitor?

Welcome! Cards on the table at the entry invite you to fill out contact information should you want to register. We'd love to have you! Cards may be placed in the collection basket during Mass.



PRAY
FOR OUR MILITARY

Thank you to those serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Please keep them in your prayers, especially:

BYRON BOISVERT
KENNETH BREUDER
PHILIP BREUDER
CAPT. MIKE BUTLER

NICHOLAS DOHERTY
DANIELLE WELLS
JUSTIN WEBB

If you have a member serving and would like to add his or her name to our list, please let us know!

Christmas and New Year Mass Schedule



Christmas Eve Vigil Mass at 4 pm Thursday, Dec. 24
Christmas Day Masses at 8 am and 10 am Friday, Dec. 25
Mary Mother of God Vigil Mass at 6pm Thursday, Dec. 31
Mary Mother of God Mass at 10 am Friday, Jan. 1, 2016

SAINT *R*APHAEL THE ARCHANGEL PARISH

UT IN OMNIBUS GLORIFICETUR DEUS – THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

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ESTABLISHED IN 1888 - NEW ENGLAND'S FIRST BENEDICTINE FOUNDATION