



Mass Intentions

Sat., December 3

Is 30:19-21, 23-26; Ps 147:1-6; Mt 9:35 — 10:1, 5a, 6-8

4 pm ... ☩Leo & ☩Doris Moreau by Elaine Plourde

Sun., December 4 **Second Sunday of Advent**

Is 11:1-10; Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Rom 15:4-9; Mt 3:1-12

7:30 am ... ☩Agnes Smet (40th Anniv.) by Cynthia Hobbs

9:30 am ... ☩Luke Dambach (7th Anniv.) by Christine & Jack Dambach

5 pm ... Our Parish Family

Mon., December 5

Is 35:1-10; Ps 85:9ab, 10-14; Lk 5:17-26

12 pm ... ☩Violet Beryl Halpert by P. Jerome

Tue., December 6 **Saint Nicholas**

Is 40:1-11; Ps 96:1-3, 10ac, 11-13; Mt 18:12-14

12 pm ... ☩Irene Narkey by Teresa Greene

Wed., December 7 **Saint Ambrose**

Is 40:25-31; Ps 103:1-4, 8, 10; Mt 11:28-30

12 pm ... ☩Mary Marszal by Faye Kelly

6:30 pm ... ☩Thomas M. Welch (4th Anniv.) by Mary Ann Ericson

Thur., December 8

Gn 3:9-15, 20; Ps 98:1-4; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38

8:30 am ... The Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.

Fri., December 9 **Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatzoatzin**

Is 48:17-19; Ps 1:1-4, 6; Mt 11:16-19

6 pm ... ☩Richard L. DeMayo (1st Anniv.) by P. Jerome

Sat., December 10

Sir 48:1-4, 9-11; Ps 80:2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19; Mt 17:9a, 10-13

4 pm ... ☩Fr. Bob Couto (2nd Anniv.) by Kerri Stanley

Sun., December 11 **Third Sunday of Advent**

Is 35:1-6a, 10; Ps 146:6-10; Jas 5:7-10; Mt 11:2-11

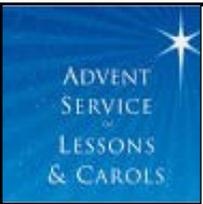
7:30 am ... Our Parish Family

9:30 am ... ☩Lucille M. Kelley by the Kelley family

5 pm ... ☩Barbara L. Parkhurst by Virginia Kelly

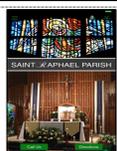


Sanctuary candle The sanctuary candle burns this week for ☩Fred & ☩Mary Raymond by Lucille Baldoumas.



Saint Raphael Parish will celebrate its annual candlelight **Advent Concert of Music and Reflection on Sunday, Dec. 11 at 2pm.** We will have a variety of musical selections from various groups and individuals, interspersed with reflective readings related to the Advent season. Parishioners and members of the wider community are invited to attend. Come and **bring your friends** to this beautiful tradition of Saint Raphael. All welcome!

We have an App! Download our free app for info and updates. Enter "Saint Raphael Parish" to find us in the app store.



Weekly Collection

Weekend of November 27, 2016

Regular Offertory \$7,586.00
Make-Up Offertory 126.00
Loose Offertory 727.60
Online Parish Giving 295.00
Total

\$8,734.60
Poor Boxes \$
277.93



Saint Raphael Food Pantry On Monday, Nov. 28, the food pantry served 23 families and gave out

39 bags of groceries. We need fruit, peanut butter, and cereal. We can always use brown paper bags and plastic bags, too. Thank you!



Holy Communion Distribution Notice

We all know that the flu and cold season raises all sorts

of questions with regard to the transmission of germs when the faithful receive the Precious Blood from the chalice. **Beginning with the First Sunday of Advent until Holy Thursday of next year, Holy Communion will be distributed only under the form of the Consecrated Host**, per the direction of the Bishop of the diocese of Manchester, NH. For individuals with gluten or other allergy limitations, we do offer gluten-free hosts. Please inform the sacristan at the Mass you attend if you require a gluten-free host. Prior to Holy Thursday, a renewed catechesis on the practice of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds will be made available under the direction of the Office of Worship and Father Jason Jalbert.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sat., December 3

9 am—4 pm ... Christmas Fair—Parish Hall

Sun., December 4

9:15 am ... Religious Education—Parish Hall

10:45 am ... St. Nicholas visit—Parish Hall

Mon., December 5

6:30—8 pm ... Youth Ministry

7—8 pm ... Food Pantry

Tue., December 6

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

Wed., December 7

7:30 pm ... Knit & Crochet—Church Conf. Room

Thur., December 8

9:30 am ... Bible Discussion—Church Conf. Room

Sun., December 11

9:15 am ... Religious Education—Parish Hall

2 pm ... Advent Lessons & Carols



Poinsettias in memory of loved ones

Donations for poinsettias will be accepted in the names of deceased loved ones and friends. A \$20 donation per poinsettia is recommended. Please write the names to be

included along with the donation and send your offering to the parish office or drop it in the collection basket. Those who receive offertory envelopes will find floral donation envelopes in your recent package as well. Special thanks to those who donate flowers, as we ask you to maintain your generous Christmas giving to maintain parish services during the winter months.



Nursing Home and Homebound greetings

Please remember our

SRP parishioners and friends in nursing homes or homebound by sending them a holiday greeting card. Green pamphlets with names and addresses are in the Information Nook at the main entrance. Thank you for your thoughtfulness.



Book Discussion Group Please join the book discussion group as it completes its examination of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We'll be reading *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines. We'll meet on **Thursday, Dec. 15**, upstairs in the church conference room. Books will be available at the parish office for \$9.00. Please join us! \$15. Please come early to enjoy some refreshments!

Prayer, even for our enemies, should always be ready in our pocket

When I was a kid, I remember that one of the mysteries of the **Sisters of Saint Joseph**, who taught in our school, was their **pockets**. No one I knew then, or have met since, had such capacious pockets! Their pockets were so deep that it seemed they went all the way to the hem of their dress and **could contain virtually anything** we might need or could imagine. Need a safety pin? Sister has it. Need an aspirin tablet. Sister's got it. Deserve a holy card for the right answer or good deportment? Sister has that too – along with assorted tools, candy bars, Band-Aids, tissues and other necessary items for a grade school teacher with 40 students or so.

What contemporary school districts do with **entire student service departments**, with highly trained counselors, mentors and others, the sisters seemed to do with, well, **their pockets and a good heart**. And for most of us, most of the time, it worked really well. Times are different now, and maybe our young people need a lot of these services – but one thing the sisters' method included was **a big dose of mercy and love inside those pockets**. Over the years, those pockets in the black habit of the SSJs have become, at least in my mind, a symbol of God's abundant mercy. For the guy or gal who needed something, the pocket of mercy had it. Whenever somebody went to the sisters, the pocket was ready to open. It cost nothing. They gave us **time and attention** beyond anything we deserved. Routinely, we'd see one of the sisters sitting with a student on the back steps of the convent. Even sandwiches and candy bars came out of those pockets – and usually sister wasn't the one unwrapping them. Those steps were the staging areas for operations of **mercy, inspiration, consolation and, yes, occasionally reprimand and reform**. And the pockets always had something to do with it.

Here's another story about mercy. It's one of those apocryphal tales we hear, then tell, change and re-tell. Apparently, God decided to give the people in hell one more chance before the end of the world. He had a couple of angels toss into the fiery pit **a special golden-threaded rope** that would neither burn nor become heated. All anyone had to do was to **grab hold** of the rope and the angels would lift them up to heaven. This last act of mercy was a test, of course, and required the people who got to the rope first to allow the others to hang off them – from their belt, their legs and arms – since there was insufficient room on the rope for each of the damned to get a secure grip. At first it worked well enough, and the rope with its human cargo started to **lift them up, up and up**. Before long, however, some of the rescued grew angry at the people hanging on them. They would be lifted up faster with fewer people, so they started to **wiggle, squirm and kick** to gain release. Of course, those they were kicking didn't want to plunge back down, so they in turn kicked the people beneath them – so much that some of the angels later said the golden rope looked like **a writhing serpent**. With all the violent energy,



Fidel Castro (left), perhaps no match for the pockets of a Catholic sister like Sister Patricia Thomas, S.S.J.I



the angels lost their balance and let slip the entire golden rope with everyone on it. Down it **plunged back to, well, hell**. Our own disordered, misguided and evil acts create sin and loss. We have no one to blame but ourselves. If we are to succeed, we need to accept God's grace, and then cooperate with and care for our brothers and sisters sometimes even when they hurt or anger us.

Now here's a story drawn directly from the annals of Saint Raphael. Someone questioned me last week as to why **we prayed for "God's mercy on the soul of Fidel Castro."** I don't recall the exact words, but the questioner referenced Castro's violent past and oppressive policies. The implication was that someone who had harmed his own people, fomented revolution and bloodshed in Latin America and Africa, who helped bring the world to the brink of nuclear destruction in October of 1962 and who **denied free expression, elections and religious practice** forfeited a claim to our prayers.

I have to apologize to the gentleman, because I was a bit too quick and perhaps even a touch glib in my response. His was, after all, **a legitimate question**. I can easily understand why many Americans, and particularly Cuban émigrés and their families would resent Castro and any concession to him or his communist regime. In grade school, one of my great friends was Mike, or more properly Miguel, who came with his family to the U.S. and made their way to our city. They were ordinary middle class people; his mother was a teacher and his father was an engineer, but they didn't like the Marxist-Leninist path Castro was mapping out for Cuba, so they fled. Mike's parents lacked the English fluency needed here, so they never were able to achieve what their energy and intellect should have provided them. They lost loved ones and property. The course of their lives was dramatically changed. They were deeply grateful to America for offering them a home – but they never forgot their beloved island. So, yes, **I know a little bit of what Castro did to his own people**. Mike has become an architect in the Washington, D.C., area – and Anna-Maria, his sister, was ahead of us in school. I used to sigh over her Latin loveliness. But that's another story.

Despite our grievances, we are called to **love all our brothers and sisters – even our enemies**. Yes, we have a right to defend ourselves when necessary, but that does not

change Christ's command that we "love one another." Love includes hoping and praying that each and every man, woman and child in our world **enjoys eternal salvation and happiness with God in heaven**. For that to happen, major spiritual, behavioral and attitudinal changes may be necessary in the one who enjoys our good will. He or she may need to seek **God's forgiveness**, make amends and endure

purification. But all of that is between God and his errant son or daughter. Our responsibility is to pray that everyone comes to know Christ and accept his offer of salvation – especially those who have rejected Christ and his Church, as did Fidel Castro. Saint Paul, writes in 1 Tim. 2:4-6, "This is good and pleasing to God our savior [prayers for the emperor and all in authority, some of whom were already persecuting Christians], **who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth**. For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself a man, who gave himself as ransom for all." **We can hope that all will be saved, but we have no business presuming it**. Likewise, we can hope that faithful Catholics receive the **grace of final perseverance** and remain united to Christ and his Church until the end, or, in the case of those who have rejected the Lord, we can pray that **they repent and desire divine mercy**. May someone do that for us!

Maybe we should have nuanced our petition to include **Castro's need for repentance**. But I felt the petition made it clear that his record has not been good. The petition read, "As Cuba faces a new moment in her history with the death of Fidel Castro, we pray that God may have mercy on his soul and that the Cuban people may come to a new awareness of freedom, justice, opportunity and democracy. We pray too that the Church may experience new growth and freedom, we pray to the Lord." **Our world is full of enemies of the Church and of the U.S.** We need to pray for such people. Let us defend ourselves when we must, but fight our enemies at every turn in the road with the expression of the truth, respect for human rights and a steadfast effort to seek justice. And let us remember **the greatest weapon, a weapon of love and mercy, is called prayer**.

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