

Monday, December 23, 2019

6PM Scott Lipshaw

Tuesday, December 24, 2019 Christmas Eve

4PM People of the Parish—both parishes

6PM People of the Parish

8PM People of the Parish

Wednesday, December 25, 2019 The Nativity of the Lord

9:00AM People of the Parish

Thursday, December 26, 2019 St. Stephen the Martyr

6PM at St. Stephen Church—People of the Parish

Friday, December 27, 2019

2:30PM Mass at Schuylkill Center

Saturday, December 28, 2019

4PM St. Clare Vigil Mass for Sunday—John Toner

St. Stephen Intention—Francis Lubinsky

Sunday, December 29, 2019 The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

8:30AM James Manion, Sr.

9:30AM at St. Stephen—Veronica McGovern

10:30AM Charles & Mary Schlottman

From the Pastor's Desk

St. Francis of Assisi & The Christmas Crib (excerpts from Fr. Jack Wintz OFM)

Christmas was 15 days away. Saint Francis of Assisi was staying at a hermitage at Fonte Columbo. He had just come from Rome—the last time, for he would die in three years—where the pope had approved his Rule. The brief future would be filled with pain, even the pain of the wounds of Christ.

How to celebrate Christmas? He remembered his visit to the Holy Land, to Bethlehem. Why not? A kind of replica of the manger there. There was a cave in Greccio...

He had a good friend, Giovanni (John) Vellita, whom he had met on one of his preaching tours. John was a military man, lord of Greccio, just two miles away. John had fallen under the spell of Francis, had renounced all worldly honors and was

trying to live a life imitating that of Francis as well as he could.

Francis, with the assurance of friendship, sent word: "If you want to celebrate the Feast of the Lord at Greccio, hurry and diligently prepare what I tell you. For I wish to recall to memory the little child who was born in Bethlehem. I want to set before our bodily eyes the hardships of his infant needs, how he lay in the manger, how with an ox and ass standing by he lay upon the hay."

John began immediately. People prepared torches and candles to light up the night. The manger was prepared in the cave, and the ox and ass brought in. When Francis came to the friars' hermitage, he was delighted.

The great evening arrived. People began to come in procession, carrying their torches and candles. The woods rang with their song. They were rediscovering the joy of childhood.

Today, in Greccio, one can still see the stone—perhaps three feet high and two feet wide—on which the hay was placed. It has a brownish gray top and bottom, with a band of gray in the center. The top has a rough, shallow, V-shaped indentation. Here the carved image of the baby was laid. There were no figures of Joseph and Mary, just the two animals.

As the villagers and friars crowded around, a priest began the Mass. Francis gave the sermon. His biographer, Thomas of Celano, Francis' contemporary, writes: "The saint of God stood before the manger, uttering sighs, overcome with love and filled with a wonderful happiness... He sang the Gospel in a sonorous voice, a clear and sonorous voice, inviting all to the highest rewards. Then he preached to the people standing about and spoke charming words concerning the birth of the poor King, and the little town of Bethlehem... When he spoke the name 'Child of Bethlehem' or 'Jesus,' his tongue licked his lips, relishing and savoring with pleased palate the sweetness of the words."

The accounts do not say whether the child was a living baby or a carved figure. It was probably the latter, for it is recorded that at least one of the observers "saw the infant come alive."

St. Francis' Christmas Eve Homily

“Look deeper than this pleasant scene. See your God become your food for eternity in a feeding place for animals. See the simple bands wound around the helpless baby, not the embroidered dress. See a man and woman wearing the clothes of the poor. See and smell the animals. Feel the cold and dirt of the cave, lighted only by a little fire. And adore your God, who took a human heart that could know the greatest love and the sharpest pain, arms that could embrace the sinners, the neurotics, the lepers, and hands that could touch cheeks running with tears, and be pierced with nails. Adore your poor and humble God.”



Sanctuary Candle Intentions

St. Clare—In Memory of Mark Widel requested by Terry Widel.

St. Stephen—In Memory of Charles Zimmerman requested by Family.

Second Collections

St. Clare of Assisi: This week will be for will be for Heat & Energy (Team 1). December 29 will be for the Building Fund (Team 2).

St. Stephen: This week's will be for Cemetery Upkeep. December 29 will be for Fuel & Heat.

From the Pastor's Desk

In three short days, we celebrate “the Word” becoming flesh! Christmas is the celebration of the life we share with all people – family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers. On behalf of our rectory staff and great volunteers, our prayer is for the protection of St. Joseph, the nursing of the Blessed Mother, and the light and hope that the Son

of God brings fill your life and bring you peace!
Merry Christmas! Glory to God in the highest!

St. Stephen News

There will be a Dine Out at The Crimson House on Sunday, December 22, from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM to benefit St. Stephen Parish. From 2:00-4:00, there will be a Christmas sing along featuring our own Mary Burns playing piano. Take a break from the pre-Christmas hustle and bustle and enjoy brunch and some holiday music.

The Friends of St Stephen is coordinating an event to visit and sing carols for homebound parishioners or any others who would like to be visited. The date is Saturday, December 28, beginning at noon. Any parish youth or adult wishing to carol is welcome to join in. Sign-up sheets will be available at both church entrances, or you can call or text Joe at 570-449-1960.

Schuylkill Community Action has programs to help low income individuals and families. The ACCESS card does not permit the purchase of personal hygiene and household products. Our parishioner, Megan Chaklos, is collecting these articles such as toothpaste, deodorant, toilet tissue, household cleaning products, etc., for these people in need. If you would like to help, there is a collection box at the main entrance of the church.

St. Stephen Celebrant Schedule

December 22 Father Bill

December 29 Father Bill

January 1 Father Bill

January 5 Father Connolly

January 12 Father Bill

The Feast of St. Stephen

We will celebrate the patronal feast of St. Stephen, the proto-martyr at 6PM Thursday evening December 26. We hope you join us!

Remembrance Service Sunday, January 5, 2020

On Sunday, January 5, at 5pm, we will have Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament along with prayers of gratitude, joy and sorrow over the 172 years of our parish's existence.

Christmas Week Schedule



Sunday, December 22
Confessions 6PM to 7PM



Monday, December 23

- Mass 6PM in main church
- Confessions 6:30PM to 7:30PM LAST OPPORTUNITY



Tuesday, December 24

- No Morning Mass
- Rectory Office Closed
- Christmas Eve Mass at St. Stephen – 4PM
- Christmas Eve Masses at St. Clare of Assisi
 - 4PM with soloist Ceri Fogarty
 - 6PM Children’s Mass featuring Carla Cappella on guitar
 - 8PM Full Choir featuring Jacob Challenger on trumpet



Wednesday, December 25

- Rectory Office Closed
- Christmas Day
 - St. Stephen – No Mass
 - St. Clare of Assisi at 9AM featuring piano



Thursday, December 26

- Feast of St. Stephen the Proto-Martyr, Mass 6PM at St. Stephen
- Rectory Office Closed



Friday, December 27

- Rectory Office Closed
- Mass at Schuylkill Center 2:30PM

New Year’s Holy Days & Holidays

To enable Fr. Bill and our staff to enjoy the holy days and holiday...

The rectory office will be closed for the New Year’s holiday and the Solemnity of Mary holy days December 31 at 12 noon through January 3. The office will reopen on Monday, January 6.

There will be Mass on Friday, January 3 and Saturday, January 4 for First Friday and First Saturday at 8AM in the main church to appreciate the Christmas decorations.

Prayer Before the Christmas Manger

O Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ, I prostrate before your crib, I believe You are the God of infinite Majesty, even though I do see You here as a helpless babe.

I humbly adore and thank You for having so humbled Yourself for my salvation as to will to be born in a stable. I thank You for all You did wish to suffer for me in Bethlehem, for Your poverty and humility, for Your nakedness, tears, cold and sufferings.

Would that I could show You that tenderness which Your Virgin Mother had toward You, and love You as she did.

Would that I could praise You with the joy of the angels, that I could kneel before You with the faith of St. Joseph, the simplicity of the shepherds.

Uniting myself with these first adorers at the crib, I offer You the homage of my heart, and I beg that You would be born spiritually in my soul.

Make me reflect in some degree the virtues of Your admirable nativity. Fill me with that spirit of renunciation, of poverty, of humility, which prompted You to assume the weakness of our nature, and to be born amid destitution and suffering.

Grant that from this day forward, I may in all things seek Your greater glory, and may enjoy that peace promised to men of good will.

Christmas Mass Assignments at St. Clare

Eve – Dec. 24	Servers	Lector	EMs
4pm	Wyatt, Laura, Riley, Sam	Michele Price	Lauren, Carol, Joe Moran, John H, Peg Hess
6pm	Connor, Neveah, Ariella, Braelynn	Chloe Zulick Caitlyn Corby	Dottie Frie Need 2
8pm	Alison, Patrick, Briar	Mike McCord Need 1	Cathy Farone Need 2
Day – Dec 25 9am	Need 2	Need 1	Anne Bridget, John Houseknecht, Jerry Hesse

Christmas Mass Assignments at St. Stephen

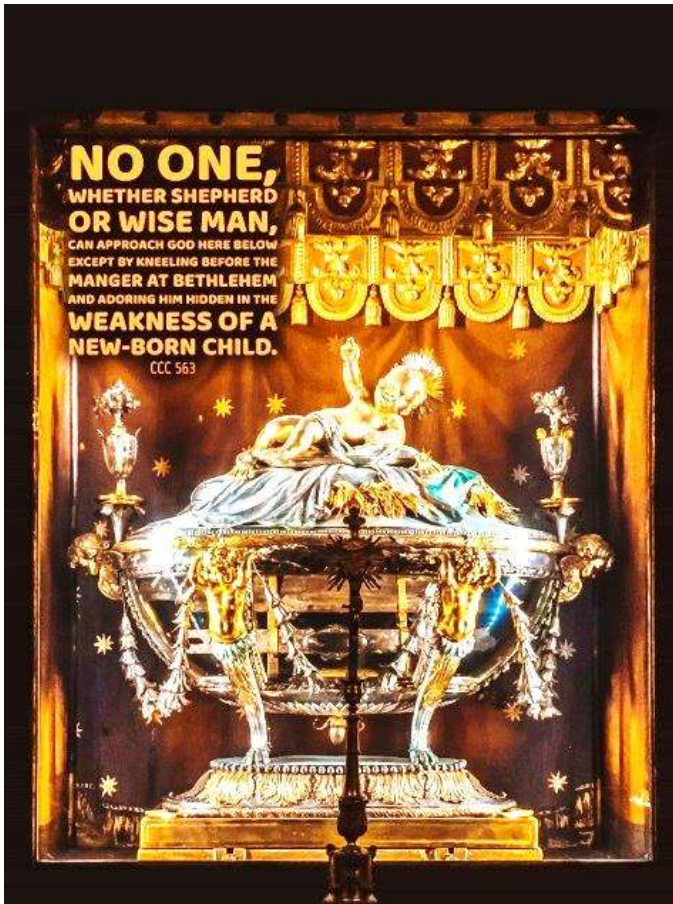
Eve – Dec 24 4PM	Servers	Lector	Ems
	Annabella Chaklos Jacob Challenger	Need 1	Need 2 or 3

Solemnity of Mary, January 1

Eve 12/31 St. Clare 6pm	Servers Need 2	Lector Need 1	EMs Cathy Farone Need 2
1/1 9:30am St. Stephen	Need 2	Need 1	MAL Need 1

Got Oplatki?

Christmas Wafers are available in the rear of the churches and at the St. Clare rectory during business hours for a donation of \$3.00 per pack of 4 wafers.



The image above is the reliquary containing pieces of Christ's manger bed retrieved from the Holy Land by St. Helena and can be venerated in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome.

Sunday Mass Attendance – Week of December 15, 2019

4PM: 168 people (39 from St. Stephen)
8:30AM 142 people
9:30AM 90 people
10:30AM 167 people

Upcoming Events

December 26 Mass for the Feast of St. Stephen 6PM at St. Stephen Church
January 5 Remembrance Service at St. Stephen
March 14 First Penance
March 22-24 Parish Lenten Mission "The 10 Commandments"
April 29 Confirmation at St. John the Baptist
May 17 First Communion at St. Clare

ST. CLARE OF ASSISI WEEKLY FINANCIAL REPORT	12/15/19
Contributions - Sunday Envelopes	\$ 5,040
Contributions - Other Sunday Giving (loose)	\$ 241
Total Plate	\$ 5,281
Needed to meet Church Budget	\$ 4,558
Total Contributions 7/1/19 to now	\$ 112,296
Total Over (Under) Budget	\$ 109,385
YTD Budget to now	\$ 2,911
Other Collections	
Candles	\$ 127
Heat & Energy	\$ 1,570
Immaculate Conception	\$ 115

ST. STEPHEN WEEKLY FINANCIAL REPORT	12/15/19
Contributions - Sunday Envelopes	\$ 1,869
Contributions - Other Sunday Giving (loose)	\$ 15
Total Plate	\$ 2,144
Needed to meet Church Budget	\$ 2,308
Total Contributions 7/1/19 to now	\$ 56,418
YTD Budget to now	\$ 57,694
Total Over (Under) Budget	\$ (1,276)
Other Collections	
Cemetery Upkeep	\$ 62
Retired Religious	\$ 331

St. Andrew Christmas Novena

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.
In that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee,
O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my
desires
through the merits of Our Savior
Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Mother.
Amen.