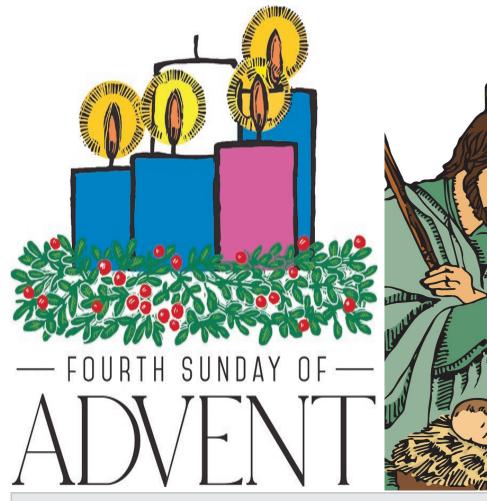


Catholic Church Community of

St. Thomas More

115 Kings Highway, Hauppauge, NY 11788-4221

December 22, 2019 Fourth Sunday of Advent December 25, 2019
The Nativity of the Lord





Parish Mission Statement:

St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church is a parish community striving to share the Spirit of Love through Prayer, Worship, the Sacraments, the Teachings of the Church, and our concern for others through Christian Stewardship.

Contact Numbers

Rectory 234-5551 FAX 234-6412

Religious Ed 234-0397 FAX 234-1199 Outreach 234-3149 FAX 234-1199

Masses for this coming week

December 22, 2019 Fourth Sunday of Advent Isaiah 7: 10-14 Psalm 24: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1: 18-24

Saturday, December 21

(Anticipated Mass for Sunday)

5pm Cynthia Calloway by Joann Keely,

Constance Giordano by Chris Duignan &

Natalie Navarro, Jean Noschese by

Michael & Vivian Jacobs

Sunday, December 22—Fourth Sunday of Advent

8:00am Casano Antonio & Dr. Darius Anton

Holmes M.D. by Dr. Bertram A. Holmes

9:15am Peter Marrone by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Buynak

10:45am Robert Mohlenbrok by the Mohlenbrok family

12:15pm Josephine Caggiano by John & Vivian Nicastro

Monday, December 23—St. John of Kanty

9am Gloria Kreider by James Kreider

Tuesday, December 24

9am People of the Parish

3:30pm Christmas Mass Remembrance & Flower Donors

5:30pm Christmas Mass Remembrance & Flower Donors

8pm Christmas Mass Remembrance & Flower Donors

10:30pm Christmas Mass Remembrance & Flower Donors

Wednesday, December 25—The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

9am Christmas Mass Remembrance & Flower Donors 10:45am Christmas Mass Remembrance & Flower Donors

12:15pm Christmas Mass Remembrance & Flower Donors

Thursday, December 26—St. Stephen

9am John Cusentino by Chris & Andrew Paino

Friday, December 27—St. John, Apostle

9am Msgr. Francis Midura by Barbara Mickelson

Saturday, December 28—The Holy Innocents

9am Renato & Antoinette Bonami *by BettyAnn*

& Joe Codispoti

(Anticipated Mass for Sunday)

5pm Elizabeth "Betty" Baker by Jim & Judy Moran

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

8:00am Henry DiFranco by the Fenwick & Daly families,

John Mingione, & Maria & Carmello Auditore by

Angela Mingione

9:15am Judith Ellen Lentino by her parents

10:45am Patricia Dorchak by the Mazzotta & Bianco

families

12:15pm Betty Baker by St. Thomas More Young at Heart

Growing through the Sunday Scriptures

December 29, 2019
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14
Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5
Colossians 3:12-21
Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew:

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,

"Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you.

Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him."

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled,

Out of Egypt I called my son.

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee.

He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazorean*.

Focus Questions:

- 1. Mary and Joseph became refugees because they feared for the life of their child. Pope Francis has encouraged Catholics to help refugees today. What are you doing to help?
- 2. Describe a time when you welcomed a more non-traditional family
- 3. Describe a time when you had to take drastic actions to help a family member.

Family and children's question:

Who are the role models for your family?

FR. ANTONY'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

The spiritual master said to the man who came to him in search of truth. "If what you seek is Truth there are requirements to be fulfilled and duties to be discharged."

"What are they?" asked the man.

"You will have to draw water, chop wood and do the housecleaning and cooking" replied the master.

"I am in search of Truth, not employment," said the man as he walked away.

If truth is not found in one's own normal daily regular activities and in persons around, one would waste one's whole life searching for it everywhere else.

The fourth Sunday of Advent which is just two days away from Christmas proclaims the birth of Jesus in the story of Joseph. Joseph actually tried to walk away quietly from the birth of Jesus, thinking of silently divorcing Mary, his betrothed. But God bids him do what a betrothed would-be-husband would do. The message is that God is present more in our regular, normal daily life than in extraordinary events.

Christmas is the celebration of God in our midst in every event of our life. God's name is Emmanuel which means God-with-us. God comes to dwell with us as one of us. God becomes no different than any of us so that God can be found and experienced in every event of our life. No event is unworthy of revealing God to us. No activity of ours is incapable of communicating God to others. We are the manger where God can be born and from where God can shine forth to all. Let our Christmas celebration be a God experience to us and to others through us. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

We celebrate seven masses for Christmas. Every mass will be crowded and the parking lot will be overflowing. At Christmas mass, if you happen to be displaced from your usual seats in the Church please feel like Mary and Joseph who had to end up in the manger because there was no room for them in the inn. Please treat yourselves like the holy family. Your new seat is the manger and the birth of Jesus will definitely take place wherever you sit. Let us welcome all. Let us celebrate with all.

With love and prayers, Fr. Antony

PASTORAL STAFF

Rev. Antony Asir, Pastor Deacon Robert D. Weisz Deacon Edward R. Vigneaux Deacon Matthew T.J. Surico Religious Education Mary Ellen Carroll, Director Parish Outreach Staffed by volunteers Music Ministry Emilia Savarese, Facilitator Youth Ministry Dan Haggerty, Youth Minister

OUR PARISH SACRAMENTAL LIFE

EUCHARIST

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 5pm Sunday: 8am, 9:15am, 10:45am, 12:15pm Weekday Mass: 9am, Monday through Saturday.

BAPTISM- As soon as your child is born, please call the Parish Office to make Baptism arrangements. Preparation session and welcoming Mass attendance are required. **MARRIAGE**- As soon as a couple decides to marry, and BEFORE making any other arrangements, call the Church Office to

schedule an appointment with the Parish

Office or one of the deacons.

RECONCILIATION- Celebrated in Church every Saturday from 4pm to 4:45pm, or by previous appointment with Parish Office. **SACRAMENT OF THE SICK**- Call the Church Office to request visitation of the sick.

CONFIRMATION- Those who have not been confirmed should call the Parish Office to receive further information. **HOLY ORDERS-** Contact the Parish Office for more information about the priesthood

for more information about the priesthood or diaconate.

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SUPPORT COLLECTION

Collection of December 15, 2019 Amount not available when bulletin went to print.

Envelope users: Please enter the amount of your donation in the space provided on the envelope. This will greatly help us when counting the collection and for recording your contribution.

CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL 2019

as of December 10, 2019

Our Parish Goal \$70,100.00 Pledges to date \$41,099.25 Percentage of Goal 58.6%

CALENDAR CLUB 2020

I/We would like to join St. Thomas More's Calendar Club for 2020.

NAME(S)
ADDRESS:
PHONE:()
EMAIL: () One Number for \$25 OR
() FIVE Numbers for \$100
() I would like to give Calendar Club numbers as Gifts. I am attaching a separate page indicating the names and addresses of individuals who will receive gifts.

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$

Collection Basket).

(Please return form to Rectory Office or place in

Fourth Sunday of Advent—December 22, 2019 The Nativity of the Lord—December 25, 2019

OUR PRIEST CELEBRANTS

(Subject to last minute changes)

	This Weekend Dec. (21/22)	Next Weekend (Dec. 29/30)
Saturday 5 pm Sunday	Msgr. Boccafola	Fr. Antony
8 am 9:15am 10:45am 12:15pm	Fr. Antony Fr. Antony Fr. Fred Fr. Antony	Fr. Antony Fr. Antony Msgr. Boccafola Fr. Fred



MINISTRY MATTERS AT ST. THOMAS MORE

RCIA TEAM

Our Purpose and Responsibilities
To share our faith with those who express a desire to become a Catholic Christian and to lead them to the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

THE RCIA NEEDS EVERYONE

Just as it take an entire village to raise a child, it takes all the gifts and talents of a loving and prayerful community to make a committed Catholic Christian.

THEREFORE...

We invite ALL Members of St. Thomas More to join us in praying for those seeking to join us in our Faith Community and welcoming those who are now on their journey to the Easter Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation

THE RCIA NEEDS EVERYONE!



PRAY FOR THE SICK

Angie, Arlene, ASB, Carmela Beltrani, Louise Beltrani, Bernadette, Lena Brennan, Pamela Brosnan, Barbara Cappisillo, Kathy Capuano, Dona Caragol, David Cartwright, Paul Connors, Marlene DiChristina, Walter Drechsler, Walt Drechsler Jr., Rosemarie Flore, Marilyn Gast, Jodi Casares George, Jerry Georgis, John Gilligan, Gina, John H, Olive Harrison, Tom H, Rita Hines, Laurie Holmes, Paula Izzo, Joseph Jacklets, Chris Kenney, Kevin Kenney, Shaun Kenney, Jean Marsala Kieffner, Nicolas Lorusso, Lauren Lossani, Frances Madera, MaryLee Manfre, Maria, Rob McGurrin, Sharon Mills, Rosie Miranda, Kieran Mock, Ellen Murphy, Joan Nachtman, Pat O'Connell, Beatrice Okorn, Barbara P, Brienne P, Joe P, Rainey Pappas, Richard Peymann, Maura Reddy, Rosalie Rocchio, Sue Rukchael, Teresa Shannon, Carlene, Robert & Kim Shenowitz, Charles & Peggy Stepanek, Robert Strommer, MaryAnn Tinger, Richard Tulipan, Chase Turano, Andrew J. Valentine, Andrew M. Valentine, Rosalind Warmuth, Diane Weisz, Janet Weil, Don Wieman., Pat Yezek, Ashley Zabelsky

This listing will expire on March 31, 2020.

CALENDAR CLUB WINNERS

Congratulations!

Here are the winners from December 15 –21, 2019

12/15/19`	\$50	523 Bob Aberle
12/16/19	\$25	939 Mary Anne Como
12/17/19	\$25	590 M/M Spina
12/18/19	\$25	515 Marti & John White
12/19/19	\$25	587 Mary & Jay Rosenwald
12/20/19	\$25	602 Dom & Joan Mancuso
12/21/19	\$25	156 M/M R. Sauchelli

PRAY FOR THE DECEASED

Henry P. DiFranco, Barbara Cestaro, our deceased loved ones and our deceased service men and women.

USING FAITH DIRECT? - It's quick and easy!
Consider having automatic deductions from either your checking or savings or use a credit card to support
St. Thomas More each week. With Faith Direct, there is no fee to you! Please visit the Faith Direct website at www.FaithDirect.net to sign up: our church code is NY227. You may also use the form located where you obtain the bulletin or text the word ENROLL to 631-250-8141. We thank you for your support.

UPDATING CREDIT CARD INFORMATION—If you get a new card or a renewal card, make sure that this information is communicated to Faith Direct.

CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES—If you do not receive weekly envelopes and would like them mailed to you, please use the cut out that is in the bulletin and indicate that you wish to receive them on a regular basis. Usually it takes about two weeks for your request to be completed.

MAINTENANCE COLLECTION

We thank you for your support of our parish project to maintain our parish facilities. If you would like to help, please use a maintenance envelope where you obtain the bulletin.

CEREAL BOX TOP COUPONS—Drop them off in the Church lobby drop-off box and we will use them to buy things for the students in our regional school.

USED CELL PHONES—We thank everyone for giving us their old cell phones. We forward them to a convent that recycles them and uses the proceeds for the poor.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS—You can check online for any updates at http://calendar.yahoo.com/stmreled.

HOLY FAMILY REGIONAL SCHOOL, Commack, New York—Grades Nursery through 8th Grade. You may contact the school at parents@holyfamilyregional.com to schedule a tour of the parish's regional school, or visit the school website at www.holyfamilyregional.com

PRAY FOR OUR MILITARY

Ethan Bernstein Jessie Bernstein Joseph Blaugrund Anthony Broncatello John Burk Collin Busto David Chester John Chester Nicholas Chester Theresa Chester Collin J. Crean Eddie Cullum Eric Cullum Adam Cussen David Cussen Capt. Sean Michael Dolan P. J. Erskin Timothy Fallon

Nicholas W. Flanary J.T. Foltz Mike Foltz Michael Gioia William Gregory Carl F. Greiner Philip Gudone John Michael Haffner Sean Hendrikson Tylor J. Hickey Kevin Ilyichenko

Michael Fantauzzi

John Karies Michael Knipper Dylan Kowalski Thomas LaFemina Alex Lombardi Andrew Lombardi Lt. Clint Lorance Scott Lovelock Andrew Lvnch Troy A. Maida, William Maley Thomas Migliara Tim Morris Ryan Murphy John Nachtman Kaitlyn Nachtman Thomas Nichols Adam Papaizai Michael Poist Michael Polanski Kyle Rathie Antonia Marie Rivera

Ann Karen Sanchez

Justin Schneider

Ryan Smith

Michael White

Christopher Sidor

Christopher Singer

Christmas Mass Remembrance and Christmas Flowers Lists

There was a delay in mailing the Christmas packages by our envelope company because of a glitch in their computer program. As a result we did not receive the Christmas Mass Remembrance and the Christmas Flower envelopes in time to meet our Christmas bulletin deadline. However, we will give parishioners enough time to send us the above envelopes. As in the past, we will publish the above lists in the bulletin during the Christmas season. Please be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones at all the Masses on Christmas eve and on Christmas Day.



THIS WEEK AT ST. THOMAS MORE

(Not totally inclusive)

Tuesday—December 24—Christmas Eve

3:30pm—Vigil Mass—Church 5:30pm—Vigil Mass—Church 8pm—Vigil Mass—Church 10:30pm—Vigil Mass—Church

Wednesday—December 25—Christmas Day

9am—Christmas Day Mass.—Church 12:15pm—Christmas Day Mass.—Church



As you know Christmas is almost here, so we would like to invite our young children grades 3 through high school to join the Christmas Choir. There are only three rehearsals to get ready for the "Big" day—December 7, 14 and 21 from 1 to 2 pm.

We will be singing at the 3:30 pm Christmas eve Mass and at 9:15 am during the Christmas season.

What a beautiful way to celebrate Jesus' birthday as <u>**He**</u> is the reason for the season! Come share your time and talents as a gift to Jesus and to the STM community. As you know it is in giving that we receive.

For info or to join call Emilia at 631-724-8820.





Focus on Religious Freedom www.cffor.org







We pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet every Wednesday at 3:00 pm in the Church



CIRCLE OF WOMEN

It is the mission of the Circle of Women Book Group to focus on the spiritual influence of contemporary writing that facilitates our own reflections of God's action in our daily lives.

Our next meeting will be on January 13, 2020.at 2:30 pm. The book for discussion will be **The Reckoning** by John Grisham—

Facilitator: Joan Shea

We meet on the second Monday of the month at 2:30 pm in the Meeting Room. For further and/or to register, call Marilyn at 631-234-5805 or Joan at 631-234-1739.

SOCIAL MEDIA & EMAIL

Websites

www.stmli.org

https://stmyouth.wixsite.com/stmyouthhauppauge

Facebook

https://ww.facebook.comStThomasMoreHauppauge/

Instagram

STTHOMASMORECHURCH

stmreligioused

• stm_yg

Email

Rectory: rectory@stmli.org
Mary Ellen Carroll: mecarroll@optonline.net
Outreach: outreach@stmli.org
Dan Haggerty: youthminister@stmli.org
Altar Servers Ministry: altarservers@stmli.org
Personal Prayer SpiritualOrientations.com
To contact a member of the Pastoral Council use the following: Barbara & Joe Fratamico at

BJFRAT@optonline.net

PARISH OUTREACH



"Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

Our thanks to out to all our parishioners at St. Thomas More who so generously donated food and turkeys so our clients at Outreach could have a special Thanksgiving dinner! A special thank you to the following:

Tora Law Firm for your generous donation of pies
New Beginnings Preschool for your food donation
STM Knights of Columbus
Tim Fallon
Ms. Melazzo and Ms. Miller's 8th grade class for the flowers
Ms. Schroeder's 7th grade class
All those who made anonymous donations!

We have just entered the season of Advent and we are preparing for Christmas. Our Giving Tree can be found in the Narthex and is loaded with tags, gift cards and other gifts. In addition, Outreach is collecting hams for our Christmas dinners. They can be dropped off at the Outreach Office Monday through Thursday from 10am until 2pm. Thank you again for your generosity!

Outreach is open Monday to Thursday 10 AM to 2PM Phone: 631-234-3149

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

In today's Gospel, we hear that Jesus will be named Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." The mystery of the birth of Jesus is supremely a mystery of love. May each Christmas find us more and more like him: more humble, more holy, more happy and more full of God.

Your gifts to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul helped those who are poor and suffering to find Emmanuel and they also came to know that "God is with us."

COURTESY ANNOUNCEMENTS

(First Notice)

St. Lawrence the Martyr Church, Sayville (corner of Main Street & Handsome Ave) will conduct a series called *Catholics Returning Home* on six consecutive Monday evenings at 7:30 pm in the Church beginning January 6th. These sessions are for Catholics who have left the active practice of their faith and who are seeking answers to questions about returning to the Church. There will be informal sharing and an update of the Catholic faith. For more details, call Maria Davidson at 631-589-3160. *(Second Notice)*



The Alpha Program at St. Thomas More

Alpha wrapped up on Tuesday, December 10th with a Reunion dinner. Over 70 people met each week to share a meal, watch a video and engage in conversation. Parishioners who may have known each other by sight when they began Alpha in September developed friendships by the end.

We thank Joe Fratamico, Mike and Ann Marino, Pat and Joan Shea, Jim McGuire, Flo Janovsky, Patti Surico, Keith Christiansen, Annette Vianelli for preparing delicious meals each week of Alpha. And for Lois Christiansen who always made sure there were delicious desserts to enjoy. Thank you to John White for leading us each week.

Alpha is a program that deepens faith in Jesus Christ and builds community.

The next Alpha will start in September 2020. If you are interested in learning more about Alpha you can watch a (under) 3 minute video on You Tube- "Alpha Film Series//Promo". You can send questions or comments to Alpha@stmli.org.

PRAYING FOR THE SICK — Adding a name Request — PLEASE ADD THE FOLLOWING TO THE PARISH LISTING OF THOSE WHO ARE ILL:

Name of person (s) who is (are) ill:

Relationship to the person who is ill: Person making the Request: TODAY'S DATE: (Please place in collection basket or drop off at Church Office) **CHURCH MINISTRIES** THINKING ABOUT BECOMING A LITURGICAL MINISTER OR WANT TO **SHARE YOUR TALENTS?** Please complete the following form: I would like to volunteer in the following parish ministry: () Hospitality () Altar Server () Usher () Greeter () RCIA () Lector () Liturgy with Children () Eucharistic Minister () Consolation Minister () Landscaping/ Planting () Rosary Altar Society () Pre-Cana () Caring for Altar Plants () FOCCUS ()Adult Lending Library () Banner Committee Name:: Address: Phone: Please return to the Rectory for processing.

CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL 2019

I/we would like to support the Catholic Ministries Appeal for 2019.

PHONE:	
Amount of the pledge: \$	
() Check for entire amount is enclosed.	
() Installment enclosed. I/We would like to pay the rest in installments.	e
Please return to the Rectory for further processing.	
	_
REGISTRATION and/or ENVELOPE REQUEST	
NAME(s):	
ADDRESS:	
ADDRESS: PHONE:	
PHONE:	
PHONE: E-MAIL:	ve

(Please return in collection or return to Church

Office)

St. Thomas More Employment Services

*Are you presently unemployed and looking for a part-time or full-time job? * Do you have or know of any job openings? If so, call our Employment Services Office, 234.4629 and leave a message for Mae Devine or call Mae on Monday mornings. Calls are kept in strict confidence.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

<u>Cablevision</u> - Account executives sales for potential customers—canvassing assigned territory—Excellent benefits. Understand state of the Art Digital Video - PC skills - outstanding benefits. Residential Account Executive—4 days,

12-9, Sat. 9-6 —canvassing assigned territory for potential customers, follow up leads from customer contacts.

Catholic Charities—many positions both full time & part time available—check Employment Bulletin Board outside Walden Hall for complete list.

Per Diem Driver—Chemical Dependence Services—Commack

Catholic Health Services of LI 1) Openings-Client Services-Patient Financial Systems & several others. Competitive Benefits.

2) Superintendent Helper Male Central Islip Condo-Windbrooke Homes drivers lic., \$13.00 per hr.—15 hrs.

<u>Geico Insurance</u>—Sales reps, mgt. trainees, claim services reps. —750 Woodbury Rd, Woodbury, NY. 9am –3pm, M-F, Open House, but apply on line first. Valid Photo ID required.

Healthcare Opportunities -

- 1. Good Samaritan Hospital, 631.969.8200
- 2. Mather Hospital, 631.476.2774
- 3. Brookhaven Hospital, 631.447.3708
- 4. Maryhaven, 631.474.4120, X212 Contact Maryhaven directly

New Beginnings Pre School in Hauppauge—needs an Infant and a Toddler Teacher—631-360-0039

Newsday Media Group--Account executives for sales. Excellent benefits including matching 401K

Newspaper Delivery—Excellent 2nd income—early AM hours—car & valid NYS license.

Panera -- Now hiring FT/PT Associates, Bakers and Shift Supervisors.

School Bus Drivers—Flexible hours—Bus Drivers. & Van Drivers. Excellent Benefits-Call now for training. Retirees welcome.

7-Eleven-Owner is a member of St. Thomas More-Multiple positions - PT- minimum age 17. Students welcome.

ShopRite Supermarket--Various positions open; apply on-line or go to ShopRite in Hauppauge.

Suffolk Bus Drivers--Suffolk Co. Bus Company hiring drivers. Contact Suffolk Bus Company.

St. Catherine of Siena—

- 1. <u>Nursing Home</u>—Nurse Practitioners, RN supervisors, Recreation Therapists, FT/PT nights, P/T days and weekends, Rehab PT/FT—dietary;
- 2. <u>Hospital</u>—Lab Technologist & Medical Lab assistant. Physical Therapists
- 3. Physical Therapy Aides—PT/ Sport Services, Hauppauge. Mon. thru Fri., days and evenings.
- 4. Nurse Manager—MRI techs, CT techs, Lab techs.

The Garage—Drivers & Delivery—To deliver orders PT.

See "Civil Service Notice" posted on the bulletin board for future Civil Service Exams. For more information about any of the listed positions please call 234-4629. Note - All babysitting, infant child care, nanny, home care aides, etc. positions are in the child's home. References are required for all of these positions including nursing aides, home health care aides, etc. It is the responsibility of the employer to check all references prior to hiring.

****We have a list of names of those willing to baby-sit in their homes.

****We have a list of certified tutors for all Grades.



Christmas 2019

To the People of God of the Diocese of Rockville Centre:

In his December 1, 2019 Apostolic Letter Admirabile Signum: On the Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene, Our Holy Father Pope Francis writes:

"The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture...I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares.

Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be discovered and revived."

The Holy Father captures so poignantly how we creatively share our Catholic faith generation to generation through the Nativity sets and creches that bring Christ's light and love into our homes, our parishes and our public squares.

He also captures how the poor, the outcast, the ignored, the forgotten and the vulnerable have a privileged place in every Nativity scene: "The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, 'gentle and humble in heart' (Mt 11:29), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod's palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized."

As we celebrate the joy of Christmas and the power and presence of the Prince of Peace in our families, in the Church and in the World, we realize at the same time that the Christmas Crib can never be separated from the agony of Calvary's Cross.

Even as we rejoice this Christmas of 2019, we remember and stand with the poor, the hungry, the addicted, the mentally ill, the global refugees and non-documented immigrants, and survivors of sexual abuse.

As we pray before the Christmas manger and see the beauty, the hope, the possibility in the birth of Jesus, we are compelled to remember that far too many children do not receive the welcome and joy they deserve for the miracle of their existence.

We cannot forget this Christmas season the great sadness that New York State, through the passage of the horrific Reproductive Health Act¹, has enshrined into law the killing of innocent human beings through abortion up until the moment of actual birth and beyond, as this radical law permits the killing of those children who survive abortion.

Together, we invoke the power of the Prince of Peace and His compassionate Word found in the Beatitudes and in His call to serve the poor and the most vulnerable among us in Matthew 25. Our Lord gives us the courage and the voice as the Catholic Church in New York State and around the world to speak of the beauty, the sanctity and the dignity of every human life.

We will continue to be "a sign of contradiction" by witnessing relentlessly and courageously to the Gospel of Human Life. As is said in the first words of the *Didache*, the earliest known non-Scriptural Christian writing: "There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death..." We will always stand with our earliest ancestors in the Christian faith in favor of the Way of Life and opposed to the Way of Death.

We will continue to seek the intercession of St. Thomas More, patron of statesmen, politicians and lawyers for the conversion of the public servants who have supported this tragic legislation.

The Cistercian biblical scholar Father Simeon writes: "The Child, while present only in Bethlehem by his poverty and weakness, is already present in the pattern of the constellations by his splendor and his glory."²

May our praise and glory of the Prince of Peace fill our hearts and homes and give us the courage and prayerful determination to bring the Joy of the Gospel and the Splendor of Truth to every public square in New York State and throughout the world.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre

1 https://www.drvc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ReproductiveHealthCareAct.pdf

² Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Fr. Simeon), Fire of Mercy Heart of the World: Meditations on the Gospel according to St. Matthew Volume 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 76.