Saint Cecilia

P A R I S H



Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord 24 December 2022

Arrival at the Inn in Bethlehem

Joseph von Führich



THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD 24 DECEMBER 2022

PRELUDES | Noël X sur le Grand jeu et en Duo

Louis-Claude Daquin

(1694-1772)

Der Tag der ist so freudenrich, BuxWV 182

Dietrich Buxtehude

(1637-1707)

Chorale Prelude on "Silent Night"

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

O Sacred Rose from "Eleven Chorale Preludes, Op. 122"

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897

Canonic Variations on "Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her," BWV 769

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Thomas Mellan, organ

CALL TO WORSHIP | Puer Natus Est Nobis

Plainchant

Puer natus est nobis et filius datus est nobis: cuius imperium super humerium eius: et vocabitur nomen eius magni consilii Angelus. Cantate Domino canticum novum quia mirabilia fecit. A child is born to us and a Song is given to us: Whose government is upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called, the Angel of Great Counsel Sing ye to the Lord a new song for he has done wonderful things.



CALL TO WORSHIP

- ▼ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
 All: Amen.
- ★ The Lord be with you.All: And with your spirit.

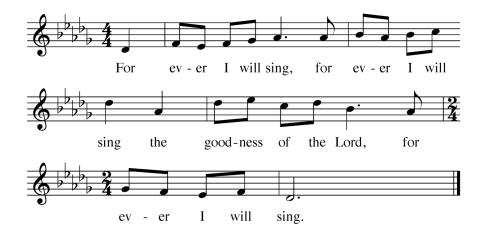


LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING | Isaiah 62: 1-5

RESPONSORIAL PSALM | Isaiah 89: Forever I Will Sing

Tony Alonso

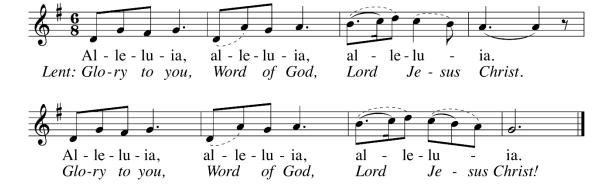


- 1. "With my chosen one I have made a covenant; I have said to David my servant: I will establish your descendants forever and set up your throne through all ages."
- 2. How blessed the people who know your praise, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face, who find their joy every day in your name, who make your justice their joyful acclaim.
- 3. "He will call out to me, 'You are my father, my God, my God, the rock of my salvation.' I will keep my faithful love for him always; with him my covenant shall last."

SECOND READING | Acts 13:16-17, 22-25

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION | Jubilation Mass

James J. Chepponis



GOSPEL | Matthew 1:1-25

HOMILY

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,

and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day

in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead

and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE PARISH!

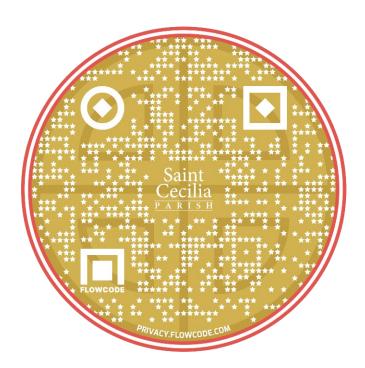
We are grateful for your ongoing support of Saint Cecilia. The easiest way to make a financial contribution to our parish is to use the parish Flowcode below.

Using the Flowcode with the camera on your smartphone is as easy as Aim & Tap. Aim your camera at the Flowcode image and tap the notification banner when it appears on your phone's screen. You may need to zoom in a bit to focus on the code.

If the Flowcode doesn't work for you, please visit www.flowcode.com/page/stceciliaboston.

You can also mail a check to:

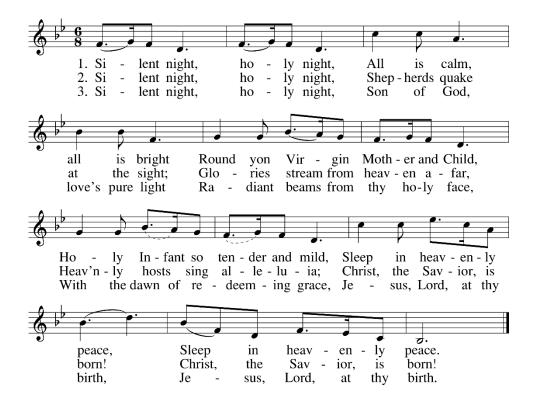
Saint Cecilia Parish 18 Belvidere Street Boston, MA 02115



LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

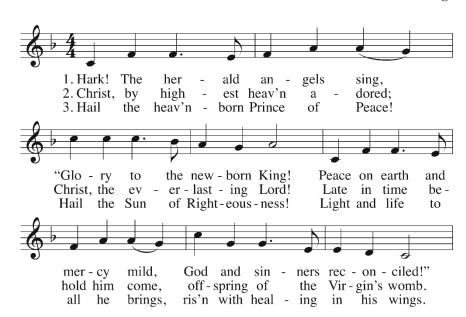
PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS | Silent Night

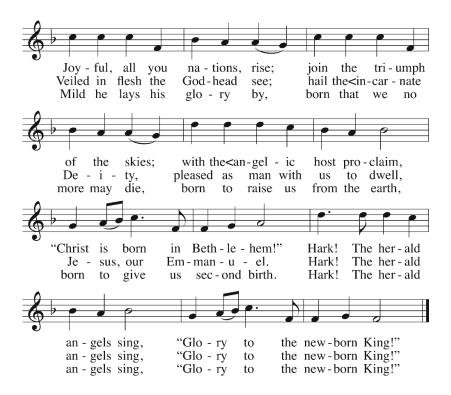
Franz Gruber (1787-1863)



Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) Arranged by Richard Webster



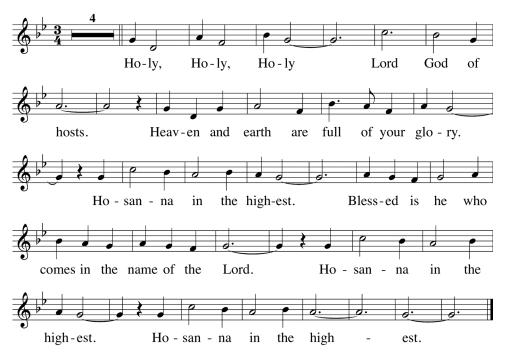


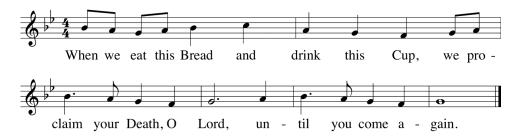
EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

- ♣ The Lord be with you.All: And with your spirit.
- Lift up your hearts.All: We lift them up to the Lord.
- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. All: It is right and just.

SANCTUS | Mass of Creation

Marty Haugen





AMEN | Mass of Creation

Marty Haugen



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

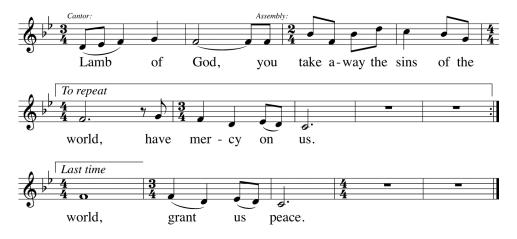
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

THE EXCHANGE OF PEACE

♣ The peace of the Lord be with you always.All: And with your spirit.

AGNUS DEI | Mass of Creation

Marty Haugen



SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

It is a long-held Catholic belief that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an "Act of Spiritual Communion." During this time when we are not able to celebrate the Eucharist together in person, Pope Francis invites Catholics to say this prayer as a source of grace. We can be assured that when we express our desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, God will be with us spiritually in a special way. Here is an Act of Spiritual Communion that we encourage you to pray as you participate in our live-streamed liturgies:

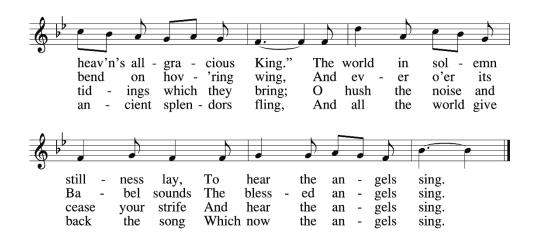
ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Loving Jesus,
I believe that you
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.
I love you above all things,
and I desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there
and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.

COMMUNION | It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

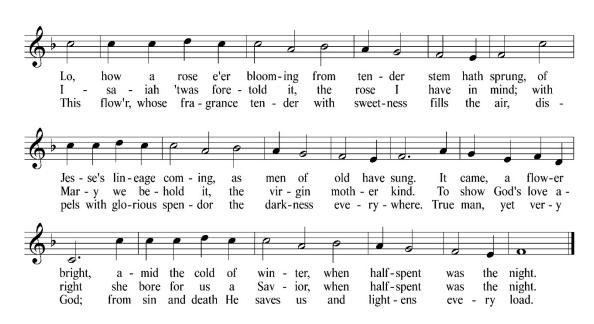
Edmund Sears (1810-1876)





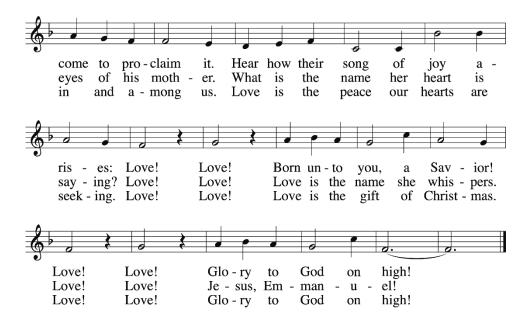
Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

ES IST EIN ROSE ENTSPRUNGEN Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)



Love Has Come UN FLAMBEAU





Long Ago (In the Bleak Midwinter)

Gustav Holst arranged by Jake Naverud (b. 1986)

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone; snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain; heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign. In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there, cherubim and seraphim thronged the air; but his mother only, in her maiden bliss, worshiped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

COMMUNION MEDITATION | O Holy Night

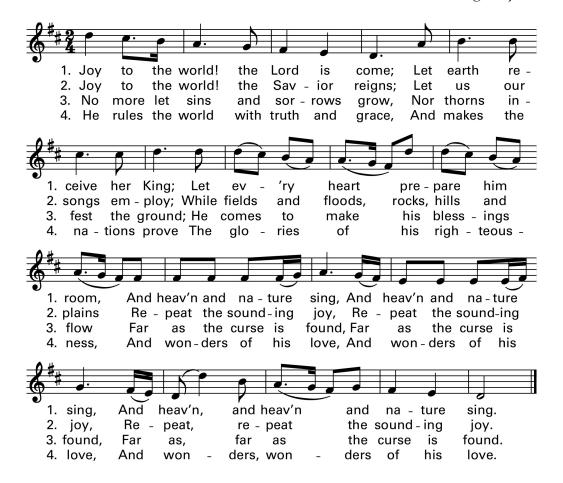
Adolphe Adam (1803-1856)

CONCLUDING RITES

- ♣ The Lord be with you.All: And with your spirit.
- May almighty God bless you, the Father, (+) and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

 All: Amen.
- Go forth, the Mass is ended. All: Thanks be to God.

Arranged by Richard Webster



POSTLUDE | Wachet Auf, BWV 645

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

For information on becoming involved or supporting the music program at Saint Cecilia, please contact Dr. Robert Duff at 617-536-4548 or email: RDuff@stceciliaboston.org.





SUPPORT OUR PRIESTS THIS CHRISTMAS

Your support helps Clergy Trust care for our priests in good standing so they can continue building stronger communities for all.

Learn more and give today at

clergytrust.org

SCAN HERE to give via Venmo, Google/Apple Pay, or PayPal



LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

I am finding it so hard to sit down and write this annual Christmas letter. Usually, it's filled with hope and joy and all things "Word Made Flesh" and "Merry Christmas," all accompanied by a warm welcome to Saint Cecilia Boston! This year, however, I feel like I'm reaching into the interior depths to write a Christmas message of hope and joy...but it just doesn't feel easy. There are so many things for all of us to think about, remember, and reflect upon this past year. Take a moment now to think back, to feel back: "What has happened in our lives and families since last Christmas? Have you had the experience of something unexpected impact you? Has something truly gutwrenching affected you or your family? Has there been an unexpected loss, a "curve ball of life" thrown, or a sudden and untimely absence created?



This has been my family's (and my own) recent experience with the sudden and unexpected death of my brother Joe eight weeks ago. It feels like it has been eight months, eight years, and eight seconds...all at the same time. If you have ever had a similar experience or loss, whether at holidays or around a birthday, or even in the middle of August or July, it is one of those life events that, whenever it happens, just stops us in our tracks and invites (forces) us to reflect on life, what's important, where we are, where we're going, what we need to let go of, and what we might need to change or embrace. It is a time that makes us think about things eternal, spiritual, existential, and temporal. It is a time that can propel us together or steer us to be by ourselves. Times of loss like this invite us in our grieving to contemplate more deeply and maturely what it is we truly believe. Is there a heaven? Is there something after the last breath? Is there a God? Is this God loving and forgiving...a Jesus who is preparing a place for us? Will we see our loved ones? What's it going to be like?

Do you ever think of these things, eternal things? What goes on in your (and my) religious and spiritual imagination? All I know is that in the absence, in the loss of a loved one there is an emptiness, a missing that is filled with memories and laughs, of sadness and grief, of "what-ifs," and of good times. There are smiles and tears...and silence. And there is a deep abundance of love and gratitude. But there is only one way to grieve and to heal...and that is to go through all this...not skirt around it, not avoid it, not get busier, not get substance dependent or numb-er, or become cynical or depressed. There is only to feel deeply the sadness, honestly acknowledge the emptiness and be gentle with self and others in the process. As the Gospel of John says in the readings at Mass on Christmas morning, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." The darkness cannot overcome our losses and unresolved grief. Jesus can. This is a more evolved understanding of what Christmas is. This Jesus we celebrate every year is the light and the hope, the strength and the promise we need in our times of loss and sadness. Calling on him, bringing him into the messy stables of our heart-broken lives, while hearing the words of the angel to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid...for a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord," gives me hope, comfort, and peace. I hope it does for you too. I am sad but not hopeless. Our departed loved ones are okay. They are back with the Lord...they have just moved through this earthly experience sooner than we expected. But the sadness of their passing is still deep and palpable for us.

So may this Christmas be a time for each of us to mature and grow and deepen our faith and spirituality; to go beyond what Richard Rohr calls the "sentimental waiting for the baby Jesus," to a place of belief that brings us through our sadness to a place of eventual healing and peace.

May this Christmas be a year of evolving belief that comes precisely from our losses and helps us to heal through our grief (recent or long-lasting). Thank you for all the support you have given my family and me over these past couple of months. It goes beyond anything we could ever adequately express to you. My heart is overflowing with gratitude this Christmas for your love and support and the many cards and letters, texts and calls, visits, mass cards, meals, and desserts! God bless all of you in this beautiful "far-flung" and "in-person" faith community of Saint Cecilia Boston! As the angel says, "Be not afraid."

Love and Merry Christmas,

Fr. John



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Welcome to Saint Cecilia Parish, a Roman Catholic community that gathers day by day, week by week, to know and make known the grace of God. By means of this abundant grace, we enjoy a diverse and close-knit parish family—young, old, rich, poor, of various ethnic origins and differing backgrounds. From our extraordinary music program to a growing children's faith formation program; from the various liturgical ministries to the many opportunities for social outreach that the parish provides, Saint Cecilia is a vibrant community of faith, centered on prayer and worship that tries to keep the Gospel close to heart and to live by Jesus' teachings.

Saint Cecilia Parish was established in 1888. At that time the Back Bay section of Boston along Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street was the residential section of the Yankee aristocracy. The maids ("Irish working out girls") and coachmen who served these residents had long requested a church of their own. When Archbishop Williams granted their request and carved the parish from the territory of the Cathedral, they built a magnificent church out of their meager earnings. Our church building resides on the ancestral homeland of the Pawtucket and Massachusett tribal nations.

The church was dedicated on April 22, 1894. Its architecture is Romanesque, XII Century Norman. The main altar, notable for its massive simplicity, was carved from a single block of white Carrara marble. The painting in the center reredos is a reproduction of da Vinci's The Last Supper, and the dome above is an array of 24K gold rosettes.

For the sixtieth anniversary celebration in 1954, a massive renovation project was undertaken. During this renovation, a statue of Pope Saint Pius X (canonized that same year) was imported from Italy and placed on the right side of the sanctuary. Above the statue are paintings from Pius' life. On the left side is a statue of Saint Patrick, principal patron of the Archdiocese of Boston, and above it are three scenes from his life. Fourteen circular and sixteen square panels adorn the nave and arches of the church. The square panels are decorated with the symbols of Our Lady taken from the Litany of Loreto and the circular ones with symbols taken from the lives of the apostles. The great window of the Assumption—framed by the two oak cases of the organ—was installed in 1954 (the Marian Year) in spaces originally designed for windows but not until then used.

The original organ of 24 stops was built in 1902 by the Hutchings-Votey Organ Company, Opus 1465, and was rebuilt in 1954 with 32 stops. In 1998, Timothy Smith and Theodore Gilbert began a massive reconstruction of the organ. The current Smith & Gilbert Organ of 4 manuals, 54 ranks, and 3,084 pipes was dedicated on the Feast of Saint Cecilia, November 22, 1999.

Today we are experiencing something of an awakening within these old walls. Our numbers are increasing by 350 new households each year, and we continue to grow in our commitment to issues of peace, justice, and service to our neighbors, both near and far.

We've been right here on Belvidere Street, in the same building for over 125 years, but that does not mean that life here is stale, stagnant, or even predictable. We are proud to be entrusted with the legacy of Saint Cecilia Parish, where everything is the same, yet always changing; where we honor tradition while embracing the future; where God's love makes all things new.





MINISTERS OF THE LITURGY

Saturday, December 24 | 4:00 p.m.

Rev. John J. Unni, celebrant Gabriella Turco, Julie DesAutels, and Louisa Essmann, lectors

Saturday, December 24 | 6:30 p.m.

Rev. John J. Unni, celebrant Tanya Rybarczyk, Greg Rybarczyk, and Letitia Howland, lectors

Sunday, December 25 | 9:30 a.m.

Rev. John J. Unni, celebrant Karen McMenamy and Rosaria Salerno, lectors

CHRISTMAS EVE READINGS

Isaiah 9:1-6 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14

CHRISTMAS DAY READINGS

Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-16 John 1:1-18



SPECIAL INTENTIONS

Sunday, December 25 | 9:30 a.m.

Paul DeSabato, *Memorial*Nicholas Christopher Powers, *Memorial*Ellie McCarthy, *Memorial*

Wednesday, December 28 | 8:00 a.m.

Margaret Murray, Memorial

Thursday, December 29 | 8:00 a.m.

Chuck Gamble, Memorial

Saint Cecilia

P A R I S H

CHRISTMAS LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Masses that are also livestreamed are marked with an asterisk (*) and can be viewed at www.stceciliaboston.org

Christmas Eve | Saturday, December 24

Mass | 4:00* and 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Day | Sunday, December 25

Mass | 9:30 a.m.*

Please note that this is the ONLY Mass on Christmas Day

Monday, December 26-Friday, December 30

Parish offices closed

Wednesday, December 28 | Thursday, December 29 | Friday, December 30

Weekday Mass | 8:00 a.m.

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God | Sunday, January 1

Mass | Saturday, 5:00 p.m. Mass | Sunday, 8:00, 9:30*, and 11:30 a.m.

Mass | Sunday, 8:00, 9:30*, and 11:30 a.m. Please note that there will be no 6:00 p.m. liturgy

The Epiphany of the Lord | Sunday, January 8

Mass | Saturday, 5:00 p.m.

Mass | Sunday, 8:00, 9:30*, 11:30 a.m., and 6:00 p.m.

Please note that there will be no 6:00 p.m. liturgy on December 18, 25, or January 1.

PRAYERS & OCCASIONS

Our Sick

Please pray for all our sick and for those who are in need of our prayer, especially Charlie Naughton, Mary Walters, Marc Pelletier, Ray Cronin, Rick Gaillardetz, Michele Maniscalco, Nick Hungerford, and Fred Tufts.

Welcome to Our Visitors

If you are not a regular parishioner at Saint Cecilia, we hope that you find a warm welcome and a vibrancy in worship here. If you are looking for a faith community to call home, please give us a try. For more information on programming and ministries at Saint Cecilia, please visit our website at www.stceciliaboston.org. There you will find the full range of our offerings and contacts for more information. We invite you to come and be a part of our life as we journey in God and toward God. You are always welcome here.

Parking

Discounted parking will be available on a "first come, first served" basis for all the Masses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day at The Hynes Auditorium Garage (located at 50 Dalton Street next to Bukowski's Tavern). The fee is \$13.

A Note on Space

As you may have noticed, our numbers have grown quite a bit over the past couple of months. We're thrilled that so many have found a home in our community, and we would like to remind you to please be thoughtful of those around you. If you see someone in the need of a seat, in particular an elderly person, a pregnant woman, or a child, please make space for them as you would on the T! Thank you!

Advent Giving Trees

Thank you so much to everyone who participated in our annual Advent Giving Trees! We are certain these gifts will warm the hearts of those who receive them.

Coffee Hospitality Pause

There will be no coffee hospitality on Christmas Day and New Year's Day so that we can give our hardworking coffee hospitality team a well-deserved break!

Christmas Prayers

In your prayer, please remember those who are alone and will spend Christmas without family or friends. Consider ways that you can be a welcoming presence to those who are lonely. Pray also for those who will spend Christmas on the street or in a shelter.

For Ongoing Incarnation

Pray for the grace to bring God into our world—that we may allow the Word to dwell in our hearts, become enfleshed through our lives, and revealed in our words and deeds.

For Parents Celebrating Christmas With a New Child

Pray for our parishioners who are celebrating this Christmas with a new child—that they may recognize the gift of God that they hold and faithfully nurture the gifts and talents that God has given their child.

For Peace

Pray for peace and justice in all troubled parts of the world—that God will give insight and new vision to all who are striving to turn swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

Liturgy of the Hours

Please join us for Christmas Eve Lauds on Saturday, December 24 at 9:00 a.m., streamed live on the Saint Cecilia Facebook page and on Zoom. For details, email sc.hoursandtaize@gmail.com.

For Our Priests

At all of our Christmas Masses this week, our offertory collections will be to support the retirement, medical, and financial needs of priests of the Archdiocese of Boston. On behalf of all of our priests, thank you in advance for your generosity. Please make a donation directly to Clergy Trust, at clergytrust.org.



ADULT FAITH FORMATION EVENTS

BOSTON COLLEGE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY ONLINE COURSES

History of the Church I: Beginnings Through the Medieval Period

January 4 - February 7, 2023 | 5-Week Online Course | Registration Required | \$60.00

To learn more or register, please visit the STM Online: Crossroads website: https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/ stm/sites/crossroads.html

SAINT SUSANNA PARISH — DEDHAM

Praying with Women in Scripture

Presenter: Dr. Jaime Waters, Associate Professor of Old Testament at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

Monday, January 9, 2023 | 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Zoom Presentation

For more on this presentation, please check the website: https://saintsusanna.org/adult_faith_formation.html

JOIN THE REMOTE FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY'S JANUARY CALL

Sunday, January 8, 2023 | 4:00 p.m. ET | Zoom

The Remote Fellowship Community is pleased to announce that the next online coffee hour will be held on January 8, with guests Mark Donohoe, Scott MacDonald, and Christine Burns. Mark is a pastoral associate; Scott is the director of faith formation and parish visibility; and Christine is the digital media coordinator. Mark, Scott, and Christine will respond to questions and share some of what goes on behind-the-scenes at Saint Cecilia.

All are welcome to join the "Far Flung Flock" for what promises to be an engaging and informative online coffee hour. We will begin at 4:00 p.m. If you have registered or attended any of our online coffee hours in the past, you will automatically receive an email including the Zoom link. If you have not ever attended an online coffee hour or if you are not certain that you are on our list, please email Mary Ann Gallagher at gallaghercomms@gmail.com. You will be sent the Zoom link a few days in advance of our meeting.

DONATIONS FOR CATHOLIC CHARITIES' FOOD PANTRY

We hope that you will consider participating in this important ministry during the holiday and winter months when the budgets of those living in poverty are very stretched. The local economy might have improved for some of us, but the working poor and unemployed continue to face enormous economic challenges—especially in light of rising food prices.

Saint Cecilia has committed to providing these items to the Catholic Charities' food pantry: Cheerios or cornflakes, peanut butter, white flour pasta and spaghetti, macaroni and cheese, canned tuna fish, canned chicken breast, cooking oil, and tomato sauce. While any canned or shelf-stable items are appreciated, it is particularly helpful when parishioners can help with the staples listed above. Because food is delivered only twice a month to the Catholic Charities' food pantry, we cannot accept donations of baked items or produce in the narthex.

If you would like to send food donations directly to Catholic Charities through a service like Amazon, please have them delivered to: *Beth Chambers, Catholic Charities,* 185 Columbia Road, Boston, MA 02121



JOIN THE HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS MAILING LIST

Saint Cecilia's Hunger and Homelessness Ministry has remained active throughout the pandemic. From facilitating the collection of food and supply donations for our partners to offering safe, limited, COVID-adapted opportunities for volunteering, there are plenty of ways to pitch in for our neighbors in need.

To get involved, or learn more about the work of this important ministry, please contact Mark Lippolt at Mark.Lippolt@gmail.com to join the mailing list.



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Jesus Christ is the firstborn of the dead; to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen. (Rev. 1:5-6)

Joan Abruzzi
The Abruzzi Family
John Aiken
Andrew Harry Almquist
Elsie & Tony Andrade
Mary Dennehy Anzivino
Sharon Appelman
Cora Arnold
Catherine Aylward
Maria Barbosa
Mr. & Mrs. Vasco Barbosa
Romania Barclay
Mary Baumgartner

Edmund Baumgartner
Ettore Bergamaschi
Gertrude Bienkowski

Julius & Eleanore Bienkowski

Margaret B. Boland

A Greer Bond

Chuck & Betty Botosh

Nancy Boutin

Mary Bradley

John Brait

Jack Brent

Pat Brooks & Family

Domenic & Agatha Bruno

Francisco Bucasus

The Bufalini Family

Josephine Caliguire

Paul Caliguire

Glenn Calmus

Marjorie & Howard Camden Maria Cristina Campo de Paez

Linda Cantlin

Emmett Cantlin

John Cargill

William & Catherine Carroll

Bill & Marilyn Carroll

John Alan Cates

Catherine Charland

Earl Charland

Borys & Olga Chermak

John Coghlan

Margaret Colbert-Dempsey

Ann Coleman

Charlene Colgan

Margaret & James Collins

Stephen Conciatori

Maria Cone

Patricia Connelly

Fr. Chuck Connolly, S.J.

Mickey & Joe Contilli

Denis & Pauline Cote

Francis & Madeline Cotton

Maria Cullen

Mark Czestochowa

Eleanor Byrne Mooney Dahar

Mr.& Mrs. Saheed W. Dahar

John E. & Betty L. Davis

Frederic W. Davis

Evelyn L. Davis

Clifton H. Davis

Norma De Robinson

The DeMers Family

John Zekas Dennehy

Mr. & Mrs. Philip F. Dennehy Jr.

Robert DeSantis

Marc DeSousa

Kathy Devin

Kathleen Dewitt

Jack DiGiovanna

Philip & Anne Dinkel

The DiSanto Family

Cecelia Dodson

Walter Doherty

Alida Dommermuth

Mary Lou Donadio

Gerry Doyle

Paul Dragon

Adam Dragon

John Manning Driscoll Jr., MD

Arthur Dunnett

R. Margaret Dunnett

Stephen Ellis

Tony, Ann, and John Farinelli

Mary Fazio

Katherine D. W. Findlan

Mike Fischer

Bernie Flaherty

Paul Flaherty

Walter Fletcher

wanter Fletche

Delia & Michael Flynn

Judy & Tom Flynn

Rolande Fournier Houle Nora Frank Thomas & Helen Gallagher Chuck Gamble Maria Carmina Garcia Joseph Garcia Bill Gardner James Michael Garvey Joan & Bill Geary William & Anne Giles Margaret R. Gilman Ellen & Eddie Gorham Peter & Viola Griffin James J. Griffin Lucy Griffin Lucy Ann Griffin Michell Griffin Mary Ann Griffin Patty Griffith Mortimer Griffith Eileen Griffith Rev. Msgr. Michael F. Groden Janet Guevara Victor Guevara Mr. & Mrs. Granderson Hall **Brian Hare** Rev. Brendan Harnett Rose Hart Cynthia Jones Hawkins Nicole Bairos Heck The Hickey Family Fr. Jerry Hogan Ellen Hogan Elizabeth Holst-Diamantini Paul Horan Edmond & Agnes Horsley

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Annette Perna Ed Pert Julia Powell Mary Louise Powell Sadie & Jim Price Milton & Marjorie Putnam Helen Ragan Priscilla Reber John & Elaine Reilly The Rocchio Family Giuseppina & Carmelo Roccuzzo Aurelio Rollo Grace Romasanta Edgar & Josephine Roy Jack Russell Elizabeth Rose Russo Dorothy Ryan Mary & Raif Saati Patrick Sanders Joan Mullin Scheib Donald P. Schnorr Susan Shaughnessy Laura Ann Shea Siobhan Shea Kathryn Shirley-Davidson Paul & Mary Siebert Robert E. Simmons Gary Smith General James & Marie Sniffen Ellen Solomita **Edith Sorrentino** The Stanton Family Dorothy Starzyk William Starzyk Jr

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Mary & Frank States



Bumper stickers and internet memes tend to spring up this time of year, beckoning onlookers to "remember the reason for the season" or exhort readers to "keep Christ in Christmas." While undoubtedly well-meaning in their origin, these slogans have also been coopted by conservative commentators in recent years as a kind of political *cri de coeur* that signals a made-up "war on Christmas."

Even though there is no such thing as a "war on Christmas," at least not in the United States, I do find the rallying cry "remember the reason for the season" very interesting, especially because of its inadvertently theological invitation.

The question "Why did God become human?" has been the focus of theological reflection for as long as the earliest Christian community began proclaiming that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). The most famous consideration of this question comes in the form of a treatise by St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo?* (literally: "Why the God-Man?").

The question is one of the divine *ratio* — that is "reason," "motivation" or "logic" — for the coming of Christ into the world. Anselm begins his exploration with the presumption that human sinfulness is the biggest issue at play. Subsequently, we need to be reconciled to God, something we cannot accomplish on our own. It can only, ultimately, be achieved by one who is both divine and human; hence the Incarnation.

For Anselm, sin is the reason for the season. He believes that if humanity had not sinned, if we had continued to enjoy the rectitude and right relationship Adam and Eve are said to have enjoyed with God before the Fall, the eternal *Logos* would never have needed to become human. The Incarnation is, for Anselm, a sign of God's benevolence, but it is also entirely predicated on our disobedience, pride, sin and need for reconciliation.

This has come to be known in theological circles as the "majority opinion" about the divine reason for the Incarnation. Indeed, if you were to poll a selection of average Christians leaving church this Sunday and ask them: "Why did God become human?" the most common answer is likely to be "to save us from our sins."

Yet even as most Christians believe that the reason God became human is sin, this is hardly a theme in Christmas cards. And most secular and religious Christmas songs tend to be lovely, cheerful, and often upbeat. With a few exceptions, like the classic "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," there is hardly acknowledgement that the popular understanding of the "reason for the season" is human sinfulness.

I'm not suggesting we need more Lenten or Good Fridaythemed Christmas songs. Rather, I think we have the whole focus on sin wrong in the first place. And I'm far from alone in that view.

The "majority opinion" about the divine *ratio* for the Incarnation is not the only view. There is a longstanding theological and spiritual tradition dating back to the New Testament itself that holds that even if we had not sinned, God would still have become human!

The technical language for this admittedly "minority opinion" (minority only because it is lesser known, not at all less true) is known as supralapsarianism. That's just a fancy word for "not occasioned by or dependent on 'the Fall' " (from *supra* meaning "above" or "apart from" and *lapsus* meaning "the Fall"). The "majority opinion" is known as infralapsarian (from *infra* meaning "dependent on").

This longstanding, perfectly orthodox, entirely sound theological view argues that the Incarnation was always part of God's plan for creation and that the Word becoming flesh

was never primarily motivated by human sin or anything else outside of God's absolute freedom.

The issue here is the unfortunate conflation that many people have made over the centuries between the need for reconciliation and the need for salvation. As the second century theologian St. Irenaeus of Lyons explained in his classic treatise *Adversus Haereses*, God's plan for creation always included God's plan for salvation, which he understood (following St. Paul) as the recapitulation of the whole of creation back to God's self.

When God created, God also willed to bring all of creation to glory through a finite share in the divine life, which is accomplished by the Incarnate Word and Holy Spirit.

Our Eastern Christian siblings have maintained this tradition much better than most of us Western Christians have. But many Western Christian theologians and saints have advanced the sound doctrine that the divine reason for the Incarnation is primarily about God's love, freedom and plan for creation and salvation long ahead of any chance humanity had to sin or exercise disobedience.

Take, for example, the contemporary of Anselm, a fellow Benedictine monk named Rupert of Deutz, who wrote several treatises in which he presented a supralapsarian argument for the Incarnation in response to the classic counterfactual question: "What if humanity had not sinned?" His answer is that there is plenty of reason to believe with confidence that God would still have become human, a position he defends with scripture and the theological tradition.

Or consider some of the greatest theologians at the nascent universities of Paris and Oxford in the early 13th century, such as the Franciscan Alexander of Hales, Dominican St. Albert the Great or the secular master Robert Grosseteste, who served as the chancellor of Oxford before becoming Bishop of Lincoln. Like Rupert before them, they each offered their own contributions to the supralapsarian position on the Incarnation.

Perhaps the most famous medieval contributor to this theological tradition is the Franciscan Blessed John Duns Scotus, the scholar who also developed the philosophical argument that would eventually become the Catholic framework for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

Many modern theologians and spiritual writers, both Catholic and Protestant, have also contributed to this tradition, including Jesuit Fr. Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Trappist Fr. Thomas Merton, St.

Joseph Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, among others.

None of these historical or contemporary figures deny the reality of sin or the need we have to be reconciled to God, which is indeed accomplished by Jesus Christ through his life, death and resurrection. The issue centers on not putting the proverbial cart before the horse, confusing one of the effects of the Incarnation for the primary or exclusive reason for it.

Just because Christ accomplishes our reconciliation with God, a need originating from our sinfulness, does not mean that is the only reason or even the primary reason God became human.

Love. Love is the reason God wanted to enter the world as one of us, to draw near to us in the most intimate way possible: taking on our very materiality (sarx), our very vulnerability (Philippians 2:6-11), our shared experience of human relationship in this world. If we humans had exercised our free will in obedience and never sinned, we wouldn't have needed redemption or reconciliation for sin, but God would still have entered the world as one of us out of love and the desire to bring us and all of creation to share in God's life in salvation.

I think the way Merton summarizes this in his book *New Seeds of Contemplation* says it best:

The Lord would not only love His creation as Father, but He would enter into His creation, emptying Himself, hiding Himself, as if He were not God but a creature. Why should he do this? Because He loved His creatures, and because He could not bear that His creatures should merely adore him as distant, remote, transcendent, and all powerful.

Again, it is divine love that is the primary motive. Not only can we give thanks that Christ has reconciled us to God because of our sin, but also, and more fundamentally, we can praise God at Christmas for the divine love and absolute freedom reflected in God's desire to draw close to us as one of us from all eternity.

Now that is a reason for the season worthy of Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus or "O Holy Night" or even a bumper sticker.

~ Franciscan friar Daniel P. Horan, OFM is the director of the Center for Spirituality and professor of philosophy, religious studies and theology at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. His most recent books are A White Catholic's Guide to Racism and Privilege and The Way of the Franciscans: A Prayer Journey Through Lent.

PARISH RESOURCES

Parish Office & Mailing Address

18 Belvidere Street, Boston, MA 02115

Hours | Monday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. & by Appointment

Phone | 617 536 4548; Fax | 617 536 1781

E-mail | info@stceciliaboston.org Website | www.stceciliaboston.org

Parish Staff

Rev. John J. Unni, Pastor

Rev. James Shaughnessy, SJ, Pastoral Support

Keith Brinkley, Mike Currier, Rudy Flores, Parker Olson,

Corey Ortiz, Reception

reception@stceciliaboston.org

Christine Burns, Digital Media Coordinator

cburns@stceciliaboston.org

Tyler Cesario, Assistant Director of Music

tcesario@stceciliaboston.org

Mark Donohoe, Pastoral Associate

mdonohoe@stceciliaboston.org

Robert Duff, Director of Music

rduff@stceciliaboston.org

Giovanna Franchi. Pastoral Minister

gfranchi@stceciliaboston.org

Olivia Hastie, Coordinator of Children's Faith Formation

ohastie@stceciliaboston.org

Scott MacDonald, Director of Faith Formation and Parish Visibility

smacdonald@stceciliaboston.org Colleen Melaugh, Director of Finance and Development

cmelaugh@stceciliaboston.org

Thomas Mellan, Organist

tmellan@stceciliaboston.org

Lisa Pickering, Director of Facilities and Events

lpickering@stceciliaboston.org

Assisting Clergy

Rev. Terrence Devino, SJ Rev. Peter Grover, OMV

Rev. Peter Gyves, SJ

Schedule for Liturgy

Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday | 8:00 a.m.

Lord's Day | Sat 5:00 p.m.; Sun 8:00, 9:30*, 11:30 a.m, & 6:00 p.m. Holy Days | 8:00 a.m.

* Please note that the 9:30 Mass is both in person and livestreamed.

Infant baptism is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. For more information, please contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office.

Faith Formation for Children

To register your child for our Faith Formation Program, please contact our Children's Faith Formation Coordinator, Olivia Hastie, at ohastie@ stceciliaboston.org.

Couples who wish to prepare for marriage should contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office at least six months in advance.

Order of Christian Funerals

The parish is prepared to celebrate the Vigil (wake) in the church. Please contact the Parish Office for more information.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the communal process through which non-baptized men and women become members of the Catholic Church. It is also suitable for those baptized in different faith traditions who are interested in becoming Catholic, or, for those who were baptized Catholic, but have yet to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation.

Care of the Sick

To arrange for the Sacrament of the Sick, for Holy Communion to be brought to those unable to attend the Sunday celebration, or for Viaticum for the Dying (Holy Communion for those in danger of death), please contact the Parish Office. It is always possible to anoint the sick during regularly scheduled liturgies.

Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Team

The CAP Team is responsible for training all parish staff and volunteers in mandated reporting laws and the Protecting God's Children program (VIRTUS). They also provide consultation and support to anyone in the parish who has concerns about reporting child abuse and neglect. Please contact Lois Flaherty (loisflaherty@gmail.com), Maria Roche (maria. roche15@gmail.com), Letitia Howland (l_howland@hotmail.com), or Erin Young (erin.t.young@gmail.com) if you have any questions or concerns.

The Archdiocese of Boston has in place a vigorous program to protect children from harm and to educate its ministers and faithful about the nature of abuse, with a goal of increasing knowledge, creating a safe environment for children, and recognizing and reporting potentially dangerous situations. The full text of the policy is also available in the narthex and Parish Office, as well as on our website.

For Those with Celiac Disease

If you have celiac disease, please let us know. We have a supply of lowgluten altar bread available for those who cannot tolerate gluten.

Hearing Assistance in Church

The church is equipped with an assistive listening system. If you would like to use one of the small receivers, please ask one of our greeters.

Building Accessibility

Both the church and Parish Hall Center are accessible by elevator.

Parking

There is discounted parking at The Hynes Auditorium Garage (located at 50 Dalton Street next to Bukowski's Tavern), for \$13, available on Sundays until 3:00 p.m., and \$13 after 4:00 every day of the week. To take advantage of this discount, ask one of our greeters for a chaser ticket at Mass or ask a staff person during the week. Chaser tickets must be used at the machine at the exit gate. To obtain the discount, first place the ticket you received upon entering the garage into the machine, then follow it with the chaser ticket.

Joining Our Community

We're happy that you're with us! Our community offers a warm, spiritual home for a diverse group of Catholics. We come from many neighborhoods in and around Boston, but also have long distance parishioners from around the country and arround the world. If you are local, please introduce yourself to a staff member or drop in for coffee on Sunday. We invite both local and long distance individuals and families to fill out a new parishioner form on our website. No matter what your background or location, please know that you are always welcome at Saint Cecilia.