



MONTHLY BULLETIN

January 2025

At Home with the Lord

Shepherds told of the invitation they received from heaven to meet the newborn Savior. Scripture for the January 1 Holy Day celebrating Mary, the Mother of God, describes her in quiet contemplation of the wondrous message. Returning to the fields, the shepherds praised God.

Meanwhile, magi from the East observed the Star of Bethlehem at its rising and set out on a long journey. Guided to the newborn King, they presented fine gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh in homage.

In our own styles and with our varied gifts, we give homage to the Lord. Along the way, we discover that our Savior came as King but also as our Good Shepherd.

Locals in the countryside of northern England say that shepherds living fifteen

Carpenter's Pencil

centuries after Jesus made a discovery of their own. Unscientifically speaking, they found some dark grey, greasy clumps sticking to the roots of a fallen tree. We call it graphite.



Fr. Tony Scannell
Chaplain

Celebrating the Christmas season into a new year gives us hope. Even though we sometimes feel at the verge of having our faith uprooted and gunked up, we know that Jesus remains with us in every season. By His words and example, He taught us to stick with love at the

root of every choice we make.

Shepherds of yore used graphite they found to mark the fleece of sheep that belonged to their flocks. When the liturgical season of Christmas concludes with the Baptism of the Lord, we hear about Jesus joining others at the Jordan River. Baptism in the Spirit would mark the sheep of His flock.

We use graphite whenever we write in pencil. Different amounts of clay mixed with the graphite determine hardness of the "lead," an important development for carpenters writing on rough construction surfaces.

In the New Testament, the Word of God lets us meet our Lord. He knows us and our rough spots. Born into the world and raised as a carpenter's son, Jesus came to write His love upon our hearts.

Mary, the Holy Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation) – January 1

Visit www.HeartoftheNation.org for Holy Day Mass anytime during the day.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – January 18-25

Discover how the approach used by the Synod on Synodality applies to seeking unity in families, communities, and churches. (See page 4.)

Day of Prayer for the Protection of Unborn Children – January 22

Please pray for unborn children, tiny and vulnerable, whose human lives from the moment of conception make them precious in God's eyes.

“All the priests are so in tune with helping us understand the Gospel messages.”

— Ann



“I watch Mass each Sunday and Holy Day, and thank you so much. I am now 88 years young and not always able to go to church.”

— Patricia



“I just found your Sunday morning Mass on TV. I am a stroke survivor who is homebound. I called to be added to your mailing list.”

— Brendon

A Very Fine Year

In His humanity, Jesus came of age from infant to adult, like wine that ferments and ages for a time. Jesus waited until a wedding in Cana to work His first public miracle, about 30 years after His birth. He changed water into wine.



When Mary, the most Blessed Mother, mentioned to Jesus that wine at the wedding had run short, the Lord seemed to shrug off the comment. He said that His hour had not come.

But wait! To Mary, the hour seemed close enough, and she faithfully instructed the waiters to do whatever Jesus told them.

Lesson one of the event: Jesus shares our concerns, whether or not it seems that way. He wants us to have persistent faith, especially when we face setbacks.

Surely, empty vessels remained from wine already served at the Biblical wedding. Instead of using those, Jesus said to fill six stone jars meant to hold 20 or 30 gallons

of water for religious ceremonial washing. His choice of vessels presaged a spiritual event about to happen.

Obedying to the fullest, waiters added water to the brim of the stone jars. One taste revealed that the water had become fine wine.

Lesson two of the wedding miracle: Our Lord invites us to pour out our cares to Him in prayer, trusting that He wants His love to fill us to the brim. Drawing on that love gives us much to celebrate and share.

In the ancient Holy Land, grapes picked in a vineyard got squashed in vats. Allowing the juice to naturally ferment, saving it in pottery jars called amphorae, and sealing the vessels at the top produced wine.

Lesson three: Life experiences sometimes stomp on our hopes. Still, we remain vessels formed by God to receive His saving grace.

Ingenuously designed ancient amphorae came to a point at the bottom. Sediments settled at the tip, and sticking that end into a sandy floor or shipping base held the vessel upright. In a comeback of the ancient ways, some artisan winemakers today use earthenware.

Lesson four: In Biblical times and our time, obedience to the Lord's Word requires serving as upstanding people on Earth's ground. Here, bread and wine miraculously become the Eucharist for us as we await the day when Jesus will come back.



All Things Good

At the home of a Gentile named Cornelius, Saint Peter described Jesus as the “Lord of all,” who “went about doing good.” When you donate to Heart of the Nation, your generosity will reach homebound Catholics and people discovering the Catholic faith through TV Mass. By helping to provide Holy Mass and faith-filled publications, you will participate in the mission that Jesus and the Apostles began—good work!

Prayer for Peace

Father, almighty and all-loving:
For people in power, I pray
that they will have wisdom
to seek peace.

Lord Jesus, who shared life with
us here:

For the vulnerable, I pray
that being loved will give
them peace.

Holy Spirit, dwelling within me:
For those crushed in spirit,
I pray
that they will receive
hope, grace, and peace.

Amen.

January 1: World Day of Peace

Window of Opportunity

With its pointed-arch windows, a castle-like tower, spired turrets, and a vaulted ceiling above the altar, the overall architecture of Notre-Dame of Dives-sur-Mer church contrasts with its “lepers’ hole.” Labeled by a plaque beneath it, the small opening provides a keyhole view from the French landscape outside into the worship space.

Two weekday Gospel readings this month, from Luke 5 and Mark 1, describe a leper using his window of opportunity to meet Jesus and say to Him, “If You wish, You can make me clean.” Our Lord worked the miracle.

Architects and archeologists debate the original purpose of lepers’ windows. Perhaps the openings allowed lepers to see and hear Holy Mass, although church doors remained closed to them. Possibly, inserting poles into the holes supported scaffolding during construction or renovation. In Dives-sur-Mer, major projects transformed a small chapel into the predominantly Gothic church still standing today.

As if looking through a lepers’ window, people cannot see the totality of God’s plan. Regarding the small opening as a scaffolding brace has meaning, too, if seen in light of the Lord’s desire to support the faithful in building the Church.



Epiphany Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You came as newborn Savior
to share life with us on Earth;
in Your love, may I find favor,
hope, joy, and blessing
through Your birth.

Like the magi who once saw
the rising of a new star,
may Your Light lead me
to rejoice,
following in wonder and awe.

Continuing life’s journey,
as did wise men from afar,
in Your love, O Lord most holy,
may I seek You
with all my heart. Amen.

Surrounded by Paradise

On January 23, Catholics celebrate the life of Saint Marianne Cope, a Franciscan sister and progressive hospital administrator in the post-Civil War era. She believed in providing patient care irrespective of race or religion, and she insisted on hospital cleanliness. Her work in New York hospitals led to recruitment to minister in the leper colony of Kalaupapa, on the Island of Moloka’i. She had anticipated finding her “greatest delight” in working with lepers. Greatest *delight*?! In response to the request, she humbly wrote that she and two other sisters would cheerfully go to Kalaupapa. Yes, *cheerfully*!

As part of her holistic approach to caring for lepers and their healthy children, Saint Marianne encouraged productive activities, such as landscaping and needlework to bring color to the surroundings. She lived to age 80 and never contracted the disease. When leprosy became curable, giving residents of Kalaupapa freedom to leave, some chose to stay.

Did You Know?

With an immediate splash and ripples through the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations, Pope Francis approved the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality. Unlike prior synods (meetings of Catholic bishops to advise the Pope), the Synod on Synodality included laypeople and representatives of non-Catholic denominations. Guidance provided by the Final Document pertains to future work on ecumenism/communion, participation, and mission.



Gifts of the Holy Spirit have purpose and come with the responsibility to use them for the Kingdom of God.

– Final Document, no. 25



Synodality invokes the idea of helping one another to recognize and respond to promptings of the Holy Spirit. In families, married couples model wider commitment and recognition of the wisdom children offer. In consecrated or religious life, community members discern and work together. Ordained and lay ministries complement each other, and the Synod recommended expansion of opportunities for laypeople.

As Church, believers have a place to belong. Thanks to modern technology, the Synod pointed out, “place” now goes beyond buildings or other boundaries.

Different religious denominations have worthwhile ideas to offer each other. Apostles of the Lord preached to Jews and Gentiles. Catholics, as individuals and as Church, share in a mission described by the Synod as announcing the Lord’s banquet of grace and mercy already set out for all people.

Thank You!

Through monthly donations, Circle of the Heart members share spiritual comfort and hope with loving constancy. Heart of the Nation gratefully includes Circle of the Heart donors in perpetual prayers placed before the altar for every Sunday TV Mass. To join, please mark the box on your donation reply card, and indicate the amount of your pledge.



Prayer & Worship Guide

Seven issues per year provide the text for Sunday Mass, weekly reflections, seasonal prayers, and the locations of daily readings in the Bible. To order a free subscription, please send the recipient’s name and address to Heart of the Nation (address at right).



MASS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 1, 2025
Mary, Holy Mother of God
Holy Day Mass online
all day at
www.HeartoftheNation.org

Sunday, January 5, 2025
The Epiphany of the Lord

Sunday, January 12, 2025
The Baptism of the Lord

Sunday, January 19, 2025
Second Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Sunday, January 26, 2025
Third Sunday
in Ordinary Time
(Sunday of the Word of God)



Heart of the Nation.
CATHOLIC MASS

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