

**Saint Bernadette Parish**

**Saint Mary Parish**

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893  
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7929  
BREMEN, OH 43107

[stbernadetteparish . net](http://stbernadetteparish.net)



### **John the Baptist Preaching**

Painted (1486-1490) by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494)

in the Cappella Tornabuoni, Santa Maria Novella, Florence

**the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent**

*DECEMBER 4, 2016*

## our parishes

### at both parishes

<b>Fr Thomas Kessler</b>	pastor	(614) 634-0499	<i>wmthomaskessler@icloud.com</i>
<b>Kathy Kehnast</b>	pastoral coordinator	(740) 654-1893	<i>stbernaparish@yahoo.com</i>
<b>Angie &amp; Kent Kerns</b>	religious education	(740) 654-2588	<i>kwkerns@gmail.com</i>
<b>Julie &amp; Chase Stalford</b>	youth ministry	(740) 808-7294	<i>maristellaspirit@gmail.com</i>
<b>Nikki Schmelzer</b>	bookkeeper	(740) 654-1893	<i>businessmstbparish@yahoo.com</i>

### at bremen st mary parish

<b>Ben Factor</b>	liturgical music		<i>b_factor@lancaster.k12.oh.us</i>
<b>Jim Schmelzer</b>	maintenance chair	(740) 215-3894	
<b>Tyna Fox-Schmelzer</b>	religious education	(614) 371-7702	<i>schmelifox@earthlink.net</i>
<b>Bremen St Vincent de Paul</b>		(740) 569-3710	
The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.			
Hours are 9-11 AM, Tu	602 Marietta St, Bremen, OH 43107	(740) 569-7929	

### at st bernadette parish

<b>Deacon Mark Scarpitti</b>		(740) 438-3970	<i>dcn.mark@frontier.com</i>
<b>Deacon Jeff Carpenter</b>		(740) 681-9918	<i>carpenter227@osu.edu</i>
<b>Ann Essman</b>	pastoral minister	(740) 653-9347	<i>aessman001@att.net</i>
<b>Steve Huber</b>	facilities coordinator	(740) 654-3137	<i>shuber57@yahoo.com</i>
<b>Liz Latorre</b>	liturgical music	(740) 243-1872	<i>lizlatorre@gmail.com</i>

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center, across the back parking lot from the school.  
Hours are: 9 AM-1 PM, M W Th F; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu 1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130

### at st bernadette school

<b>Pam Eltringham</b>	principal	(740) 654-3137	<i>peltring@cducation.org</i>
<b>Barb Huber</b>	secretary	(740) 654-3137	<i>bhuber@cducation.org</i>

Saint Bernadette School is at 1325 Wheeling Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701 *stbernan@cducation.org* [www.stbernetteschool.com](http://www.stbernetteschool.com)

## the sacramental life

### baptism

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnast will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. The next session will be Wednesday, Feb 22. Take the class before your child is born. If you are expecting, call Kathy to register for the class.

Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; they are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. **Both godparents need to be practicing Christians, at least one a practicing Catholic.** If you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly, there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass. If you can't come (health, severe weather, employment requirements, etc.), speak to your confessor. He will help you.

### penance

The priest is available for Penance

1. at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
2. at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

In addition to Advent and Lenten Penance Services, every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are Penance opportunities for parochial school children **four times during the year so that they will**

**learn the** beauty of frequent confession. The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year.

### anointing of the sick

The Sick receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick **when dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age.**

We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body."

And, we are happy to bring Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the homes or hospitals of the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to **call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long** since the sacraments were last available.

### holy matrimony

Couples wishing to marry sacramentally should contact the parish office six months before they wish to celebrate the sacrament. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation.** And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. She tries to support couples through the years of their married life. For this reason, our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn how, watch the weekly bulletin.

## let us pray together

### with the church this week

Almighty and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

### with the holy father during december

His universal intention is the **End to Child-Soldiers:**

That the scandal of child-soldiers may be eliminated the world over.

His evangelization intention is **Europe:**

That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel which gives joy and hope to life.

## Mass times and intentions

at St Bernadette		at St Mary
4 PM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	Saturday, Dec 3	
	Sunday, Dec 4	8:30 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>
11 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	Sunday, Dec 4	
8:20 AM <i>Fred &amp; Virginia Guenther</i>	Monday, Dec 5	
	Tuesday, Dec 6	8:20 AM <i>Sam Van Atta</i>
8:20 AM <i>Lawrence &amp; Gertrude Berens</i>	Wednesday, Dec 7	
8:20 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	Thursday, Dec 8	
	Thursday, Dec 8	NOON <i>for the people of the parish</i>
6 PM <i>Lillian Grabowski</i>	Thursday, Dec 8	
8:20 AM <i>James Mahon IV</i>	Friday, Dec 9	
4 PM <i>Poor Souls in Purgatory</i>	Saturday, Dec 10	
	Sunday, Dec 11	8:30 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>
11 AM <i>for the people of the parish</i>	Sunday, Dec 11	

## in our parishes

### advent rite of acceptance

The Rite of Acceptance into the **Order of Catechumens** is the first of the “threshold rites” of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), and the first public ritual. In the Rite of Acceptance, **a change of identity** takes place: those previously known as **inquirers become catechumens**. They are **officially welcomed** by the Church as disciples, members (albeit not yet full members) of the household of faith. The text calls this rite “the first consecration by Christ as God’s own.” Today at both of our parishes, we celebrate the Rite of Acceptance as our inquirers stand among our parish communities and state their desire to become baptized members of the Catholic Church, **Ralph Mohler** and his son **Bryant** at Mass at what is becoming their parish, Bremen St Mary, and **Jennifer Palmer** at Mass at her new parish, St Bernadette. They are presented by their sponsors and affirmed by our parish assemblies as they become catechumens. They receive the sign of the cross and are assured of our prayers as they proceed in the RCIA to “learn to know [Christ] and follow him” and to prepare for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist

### youth choir

The **Saint Cecilia Society** (St Bernadette’s parish youth choir) meets on Sundays at 6 PM in the church. All parish students in grades 2-8 (public, parochial, or home school) are invited. SCS members in grades 4-8 are also invited to be members of the Handbell Ensemble, which meets on Sunday evenings at 7 PM, right after the full SCS gathering. **Mrs Latorre can answer questions** and provide registration materials after Mass, or you may call or text her at (740) 243-1872.

### adult choir

St Augustine once said, “**He who sings, prays twice.**” The St Bernadette adult choir has resumed practicing on Wednesdays at 7

PM in the church. Our adult choir is both a vocal ensemble devoted to **making beautiful music for the Lord** and a small faith family within our parish. We love to welcome new members into this family. Membership in the choir is an opportunity to be involved in the parish and grow in your faith. Contact Liz Latorre at (740) 243-1872 if you have questions.

### psr (aka parish school of religion)

PSR has begun but it is not too late to enroll students. Remember: Catholic parents have a **solemn moral duty** to see that their children are **properly and completely instructed in the Catholic Faith**. And they have a duty to see that their children attend every week (barring health or weather deterrents). And children will find **getting to know Jesus and his Church is an irreplaceable and joy-filled part of their upbringing**.

### christmas baskets at bremen

The Bremen Community Food Pantry needs **turkeys and cookies for Christmas** baskets for families. Drop off ...

- **cookies** on Thursday, Dec 15, between noon and 6 PM and
- **turkeys** on Saturday, Dec 17, at 8 AM at the Calvary United Methodist Church.
- Bring **monetary donations** or **nonperishable food** items to Bremen St Mary Church.
- To make **other arrangements**, or if you can donate a turkey for the baskets, call Mary Shumaker at (740) 569-4796.

Baskets will be distributed on Saturday, Dec 17.

### giving tree at bremen

The branches of the tree in the parish hall hold cards listing gifts for less fortunate children. Take a card and bring your unwrapped gift to church by Sunday, Dec 11. Thank you for your generosity.

### st bernadette offertory for the last two weeks

Two weeks ago, on Nov 20, we gave \$5,596 to support our parish and \$270 to the Campaign for Human Development. Last Sunday we gave \$5,369 to the parish and \$56 to the parish educational support fund.

### for the long term support of st bernadette

Support the legacy of St Bernadette Parish by making a year-end gift to the St Bernadette Parish Endowment Fund. Your tax deductible gift will benefit our parish for years to come. For information, contact James A Anzelmo, VP development, The Catholic Foundation, at (614) 443-8893 or janzelmo@catholic-foundation.org.

### st mary offertory for the last two weeks

Two weeks ago, on Nov 20, we gave \$781 to support our parish and \$135 to the Campaign for Human Development. Last Sunday we gave \$1,337 to the parish and \$125 to St Vincent dePaul.

### advent drive for st vincent de paul

The Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society tells us that their biggest need these days is for non-perishable foods, paper products (kleenex, paper towels, toilet paper), personal hygiene products (deodorant, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes), and laundry products including detergent. So, that's what they ask us to provide. Don't worry about too much of any of these items. There won't be too much, for the Society will share surplus items with the St Francis Center in McArthur. This drive will last **through the four Sundays of Advent**. Our drop off point will be in the vestibule between the school entrance and the church.

### friends forever

The next Friends Forever gathering happens on Thursday, Dec 15, at noon at St Bernadette. The Advent Pot Luck features speaker Jane Acri from the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging. All seniors from both parishes are welcome to attend. Call Ann Essman at (740) 654-1893 for details.

## in the diocese of columbus

### catholic youth summer camp

Catholic Youth Summer Camp is Ohio's one week-long, residential high adventure camp for students entering grades 6-12. Activities typically include jet skis, water tubing, paintball, blobbing, high ropes, archery tag, zip lining, rock climbing, giant swing, and mountain boarding. CYSC offers a **truly Catholic and safe environment with daily catechesis that awakens faith and builds missionary disciples**. A week at camp includes daily Mass, adoration, reconciliation, small group conversations, worship, service and authentic community. This is especially valuable for young people who are not now receiving other catechesis as well as to reinforce catechesis for those who are. Go to [www.cysc.com](http://www.cysc.com) for information and to register for 2017 dates: high school sessions run the weeks of June 11, 18, 25, and July 2; middle school sessions run the weeks of July 9, 16, 23, and 30. Registration is open now.

### happily ever after ... despite the rough spots

Come to a Marriage Encounter weekend and learn ways to use your marriage's ups and downs to deepen your love for each other and for God. Why not **try a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend**? The next weekend in central Ohio is Feb 17-19. For information or to register, contact Paul or Marilou Clouse at (614) 834-6880 or visit [www.wmecolumbus.org](http://www.wmecolumbus.org).

### advent morning of reflection

Do you want to keep the hustle and bustle at a distance during the holidays? Take some time to reflect, pray and share during the season of Advent with an Advent Morning of Reflections hosted

by the Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center on Saturday, Dec 10, from 9 AM-noon. Led by Sr Louis Mary Passeri, the theme is **"Here I Am"**: God is always near us waiting to be found. We are called to deepen our awareness of God's presence and desire to share our lives more intimately. The day will consist of prayer, presentations, silence and opportunity to share reflections. The cost is \$20 per person and includes continental breakfast. Reservations are made by emailing [info@stspeterandpaulretreatcenter.org](mailto:info@stspeterandpaulretreatcenter.org) or by calling (740) 928-4246.

### the gift of a retreat

Are you looking for a gift that is one size fits all? Why not give the gift of a stay at the Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center? Their gift certificates are perfect for holiday gifts, thank you presents, anniversary presents or employee appreciation. Choose either a flat dollar amount or pick specific rooms, meals, and number of nights for a gift as tailored as you like. Gift certificates available by email at [info@stspeterandpaulretreatcenter.org](mailto:info@stspeterandpaulretreatcenter.org) or by calling (740) 928-4246.

### sts peter & paul retreat center needs help

Have you or a member of your family ever participated in a group or personal retreat at the Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center? If you have, the experience was spiritually uplifting and rejuvenating for your soul. They ask for our prayerful consideration and our continued support of the Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center. They need assistance through our tax deductible donations that will help **update and improve their facility**. They will continue to operate the Retreat Center in a frugal manner so that more retreatants will be able to enjoy the peace, tranquility and spirituality that Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center offers. The needed updates and required improvements to enhance current and future retreatant experiences include:

- energy efficient boiler system (replacing the unit from 1955)
- wifi accessibility
- refrigerated storage unit (compressors and condensers)
- air conditioning the chapel and north hall.

Mail your tax deductible donation to: Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center, 2734 Seminary Road, Newark, OH 43056.

### vehicle donations to the josephinum

The Pontifical College Josephinum is a Catholic Seminary in Columbus. Seminarians there are studying for the priesthood and need transportation from time to time for a variety of local needs. The Josephinum has a fleet of vehicles but could use additional vans. If you have a **used van that you could donate** to the Josephinum and obtain an income tax deduction for 2016, contact their business office at (614) 985-2230 so delivery arrangements can be made before Dec 31. The Josephinum is a non-profit charitable organization and will provide you with the appropriate documentation for the donation of a vehicle.

### catholic record society

The Catholic Record Society will have a Fall quarterly meeting at 2 PM on Sunday, Dec 4, at St Andrew Church in Upper Arlington. The speaker will be author, historian and longtime Catholic Record Society member, Ann N Hansen. Her topic will be **A Long Road to the Church**, highlighting her travels in 63 countries, with emphasis on certain religious structures and their architecture, including the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk, England. Following the presentation there will be a reception and a business meeting of the Catholic Record Society, featuring a silent auction of surplus Society materials. **All are welcome**. For information contact Chairman Mike Finn at [foolavin@aol.com](mailto:foolavin@aol.com) or (614) 268-4166.

## in the deanery

### advent and penance

It is the season to . . . what? Shop? Decorate? Send cards? Give gifts? Go to parties? Do we do these things in honor of Jesus? Well, actually it is **the season to prepare the way of the Lord**. Those other activities may help us prepare the way of the Lord. Or they may not. They are not the main preparation. Turning our hearts to him is. Going to Confession is **how Catholics do that**.

We have Confession every Thursday at 5:30 at St Bernadette and every Saturday at 3 at St Bernadette and at 8 AM on Sunday at St Mary. That's all year round because it is an all-year-round sacrament. To teach this lesson, we are trying to increase the frequency of Penance Services at St Bernadette School.

And during Advent, we will have **communal Penance services** with individual confessions (and extra priests to help make that work!) at each of the parishes and schools in our deanery.

The Sacrament of Penance is very much a part of Catholic life. But it is the easiest part to drift away from. The Church reminds us that we need to confess our sins, at the very least, once a year. We need it, even if we haven't any very serious sins. Saint John reminds us bluntly that

“If we say, ‘**We are without sin,**’ we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.” *1 John 1:8-9*

If you have been away for a while, it is time to come back.

Decide which service or which Confession time you will attend this Advent. So, you can prepare the way of the Lord!

### in the parishes

Sugar Grove St. Joseph	Monday	Dec 5	7 PM
<b>St. Bernadette</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Dec 11</b>	<b>3 PM</b>
Logan St. John	Monday	Dec 12	7 PM
St. Mark	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Dec 13</b>	7 PM
Lancaster St. Mary	Thursday	Dec 15	7 PM
<b>Bremen St. Mary</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Dec 18</b>	<b>3 PM</b>

### in the schools

Logan St John School	Tuesday	Dec 6	10:30 AM
<b>St. Bernadette School</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Dec 15</b>	8:30 AM

### cookie walk and concert

Come and enjoy the St John Cookie Walk on Saturday, Dec 10, from 9 AM until noon at St John School Hall in Logan. All proceeds benefit St John Tuition Assistance Program. Also, the Hocking County Children's Chorus annual Christmas Concert will be held at St John Church on Sunday, Dec 11, at 3 PM.

### christmas cantata

The annual St Mark Christmas Cantata happens on Sunday, Dec 11, at 7 PM. Admission is free and all are welcome.

### christmas in the vatican

Enrich your faith this **Advent and Christmas with special programming throughout the season** on EWTN. Attend Mass in Vatican City with Pope Francis, enjoy concerts from Europe and travel to the sacred sites of the Holy Land. Find EWTN in your area by visiting [www.ewtn.com/channelfinder](http://www.ewtn.com/channelfinder).

### when the news wasn't so bad after all

**Last Saturday** the Ohio State University football team defeated their traditional rival, the University of Michigan, in double overtime. Perhaps you already knew that. Just about everyone else in central Ohio did. For a little while worshipers at St Bernadette did not know. They had been informed by their pastor at the beginning of Mass that Michigan had won. **Was he ever wrong!** What was he thinking?

I am an OSU alumnus, a Buckeye fan, if not a very passionate one. I had listened to much of the first three quarters, until I had entered the confessional for three o'clock confessions. When I went to the sacristy for the final preparations for Mass, people were abuzz with word about the cliffhanger in the horseshoe. Afraid that worshipers would be tempted to take furtive peeks at their mobile phones to consult about what was happening in the game, I thought about **asking people to turn off phones during Mass**. But in the last minute before Mass was to begin, a parishioner entering church, a reliable and trust-worthy parishioner, said the game was over and Michigan had won. At least that is what he was heard to say. What went wrong in the communication? Had the parishioner misunderstood the news? or garbled the message? Had my defective hearing missed something or distorted something?

In any case, when I came to the altar, in order to conclude the cliffhanger distraction, I announced the presumed upshot of the game and invited the congregation to begin the infinitely more important activity of worshipping the heavenly Father, through his Son and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. It was only a few minutes after Mass that a member of the congregation told me that I had been mistaken about who the winner was. **I thanked that parishioner for the correction, thanked God, and blushed.**

On Monday morning, a wonderful child serving Mass asked me what had been my **“strategy”** in conveying the misinformation. I had to laugh. But I also had to assure her that I had had no strategy. **I really thought I was telling the truth.** I certainly would not lie from the sanctuary. And I would always try to be accurate in any information I would give out. But I know that it is possible to be misinformed, even innocently so.

I felt a little like those pollsters and pundits who knew for sure who was going to win the recent presidential elections. They may or may not have had a hidden agenda. Or perhaps wishful thinking might have distorted some of their judgments. They certainly didn't provide us accurate information. I too have egg on my face. It is a smaller dose and the seriousness of the consequences is less . . . although it might not be prudent to say as much to some Buckeye fans!

I do regret my unintentional error and the annoyance or even grief I may have caused any hearers. My sportscasting days have ended.

—Father Kessler

### ministers at Mass at st bernadette

			lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion		
Saturday,	Dec 3	4 PM	Teresa Scarpitti	Mallory, Mason & McKenzie Ortiz	Rosalie DeFillippo Brad Rider	Craig Shaw Jim & Becky Kuhn	Mickey Steyaert
Sunday,	Dec 4	11 AM	Scott Wood	Brooke, Bryson & Zachary Vogel	Terry Carpenter Ben Peters	Jean Robertson John & Teresa Hartig	Amy Woo
Monday,	Dec 5	8:20 AM	Mary Jane Vajen	Jack Gentile, Joey Mannella	Pat Dreyer	Kathy Kehnast	
Wednesday	Dec 7	8:20 AM	Bob Christy	Becca Fuller, Brianna Hilyard	Mary Guinan	Mary Jane Vajen	
Thursday,	Dec 8	8:20 AM	Robin Sanders	Gunner Robertson, Sarah Woo	Denise McGuire	Mickey Steyaert	
Thursday,	Dec 8	6 PM	Kathy Kehnast	Avee & Drew Solt	Rosalie DeFillippo	Marguerite Grimm	
Friday,	Dec 9	8:20 AM	Jim Merk	Carley Matson, Lexi Utz	Jim & Rita Merk		
Saturday,	Dec 10	4 PM	Sandy Landefeld	Clara & Susan Craaybeek, Eve Darfus	Tara Craaybeek Marguerite Grimm	Lee Guinan Bob & Angie Christy	Kathy Kehnast
Sunday,	Dec 11	11 AM	Amy Woo	Logan & Tori Loy, Diana Woo	Nancy Griffith Larry Sanford	Anna Seigny Jim & Rita Merk	David Shonk

### ministers at Mass at bremen st mary

			lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Sunday,	Dec 4	8:30 AM	Barb Van Fossen-Cook	Caden Fyffe Cody Fyffe	Neil Boch, Wyatt Borah, Barb VanFossen-Cook	Nick Schmelzer family	Jim Schmelzer
Tuesday,	Dec 6	8:20 AM	Jim Schmelzer				Jim Schmelzer
Thursday,	Dec 8	NOON	Jeanne Schmelzer				Maurice Schmelzer
Sunday,	Dec 11	8:30 AM	Karen Wolfe	Sydnee Rogers Isaac Schmelzer	Leo Kunkler Sr, Pam Redding, Karen Wolfe	John Schoenlaub family	Damian Schmelzer

### the Church's plan for reading God's word this week

Sat	Dec 3	Second Sunday of Advent	Isaiah	11:1-10	Romans	15:4-9	Psalm	72	Matt	3:1-12
Sun	Dec 4									
Mon	Dec 5	Advent Weekday	Isaiah	35:1-10			Psalm	85	Luke	5:17-26
Tues	Dec 6	St Nicholas	Isaiah	40:1-11			Psalm	96	Matt	18:12-14
Weds	Dec 7	St Ambrose	Isaiah	40:25-31			Psalm	103	Matt	11:28-30
Thurs	Dec 8	Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (patronal feast of the USA)	Genesis	3:9-20	Ephesians	1:3-12	Psalm	98	Luke	1:26-38
Fri	Dec 9	St Juan Diego	Isaiah	48:17-19			Psalm	1	Matt	11:16-19
Sat	Dec 10	Advent Weekday	Sirach	48:1-11			Psalm	80	Matt	17:9-13
Sun	Dec 11	Third Sunday of Advent	Isaiah	35:1-10	James	5:7-10	Psalm	146	Matt	11:2-11

### confessions & weekday Mass nearby

These times sometimes change, though, so be sure to call ahead!

		8 AM Sunday	8:20 AM					
<i>Bremen</i>	<i>St Mary</i>							
<i>Lancaster</i>	<i>St Bernadette</i>	5:30 PM Thurs, 3 PM Sat; 8:30 AM on 1st Sat	8:20 AM		8:20 AM	6 PM	8:20 AM	1st Sat @ 9 AM
parish	confessions	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<i>Lancaster</i>	<i>St Mary</i>	4 PM Saturday	7 AM	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM		
<i>Lancaster</i>	<i>St Mark</i>	5:30 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	6 PM	8 AM	8 AM	
<i>Sugar Grove</i>	<i>St Joseph</i>	½ hour before Mass	8 AM	NOON	8 AM	NOON	8 AM	
<i>Circleville</i>	<i>St Joseph</i>	4 PM Saturday	9 AM	7 PM	9 AM		9 AM	10 AM
<i>Logan</i>	<i>St John</i>	4 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM		8 AM	9 AM



# Rediscovering the Lost Sacrament

“Penance”, the “Sacrament of Reconciliation”, “Confession” ... the different names for it bring out its different aspects. But whatever we call it, this sacrament is not easy.

Call it **penance** and we have put the emphasis on the punishment that we voluntarily take on because we have repented. We have thought about things we have done, we have faced up to what was wrong with them, and we have said we are sorry.

If it is **confession**, it is a telling of our sins: admitting that I did this thing, acknowledging that I shouldn't have, saying out loud to another person, that I didn't have to do it and that it was my fault. That other person is listening not to make anyone squirm or feel bad, but because Jesus told his apostles “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (John 20:23). He loves us too much to shrug his shoulders; he respects us too much not to take our contrition seriously.

When we use the Church's newfangled (= since the Second Vatican Council) expression, calling it the **sacrament of reconciliation** we say that this sacrament is mainly an action of God and not mainly our doing at all: God brings us—himself and me, but also you and me—back together after I have wandered away. That's the way sin works; there is nothing I could do that would patch things up. But God can do it. And he does it in the sacrament.

Mind you, God's hands aren't tied by the sacraments; He can save someone even when that person can't be baptized; He can be in communion with someone even when that person can't get to Holy Communion; **He can certainly forgive** someone who is sorry for sins committed, regardless of the availability of the sacrament.

But God knows how he made us: **corporal and social**. God chose a sacramental way of communicating his life to us because he knew that he invented us as sacramental beings, not simply as spirits and not simply as individuals. We use symbols and we use conversations: We say things out loud. There is a prayer of blessing over the water in the rite of Baptism that says simply and clearly what is going on in each of the sacraments:

Father, you give us grace through **sacramental signs**, which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power.

That is the ordinary way God has for giving us his gifts. It involves other people and it involves actual communication with them. He designed confession as the sacrament by which he gives his grace through **a special conversation between two persons**, a priest and a penitent.

We **don't go to confession** (or Penance or Reconciliation) much anymore. And it is too bad. In our country, many of us have gradually abandoned a necessary means of grace. Why have we done that? We know God commands it. We know that it is good for us, even from a psychological standpoint. We know that we need the chance to say out loud (but not too loud and not publicly!) what is eating at us. We know we need to hear the words of absolution:

God the Father of mercy has reconciled the word to himself  
and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of our sins.  
Through the ministry of the Church may he give you pardon and peace.  
**I absolve you** of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

To say that he tailored his grace to the shape of human personality is not to say that he made all of the sacraments easy. Especially in the case of this reconciling, he didn't fit us up with any easy comfort in admitting that we are sinners. It is the sacrament that **can be uncomfortable** to go to. And we live in an era and in a culture that has taught us to say: “If it is not enjoyable, I don't think I'll be bothered.”

So, what can we do about it? We can come back to the sacrament. Not make a big deal about it, not fret about whether it is absolutely necessary, whether our sins are all that bad, whether they are sins at all, whether God wants us to say we're sorry if a little corner of our souls is not yet completely sorry, whether we like the priest we have to go to confession to. Not all that ... **just come back to the sacrament**. Advent is a great season for coming home. Come back now, during the season of the coming of the Lord.

Remember, this is one of the main reasons for our being Catholics and having a Catholic parish. The great English Catholic convert of a century or so ago, G.K. Chesterton, was once asked why he had become a Catholic, even though the local Anglican parish had a nicer church and a more gentlemanly rector. He replied very bluntly: “**To have my sins forgiven.**”

— *Father Kessler*



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