



Rejoice!



*Gaudete Sunday
is here!*

We rejoice in hope for we know the day we celebrate our Savior's birth is coming soon.

This weekend is the third Sunday of Advent – a Sunday dedicated to the joy of our faith.

It is the day we light the Advent wreath's traditional pink candle, which shifts our focus from repenting and penance to joy, knowing Christ is near.

Recall and celebrate the spirit of Christ is already within you since baptism, and you can find Him in others around us - at home, your community, and the world. As we rejoice, do not take for granted the Eucharist – where we receive his body, blood, soul, and divinity. It is there we again unite with Christ. Let us be strong and joyful to keep Him at the center of everything. It is then we see with eyes of faith – through rose-colored glasses so to speak.

Make time this week to reflect on how we are living the faith joyfully, and how we show the joy of our faith to others.

Let your mind, heart, and actions reflect the message preached many times by St. Paul and shared today in our second reading from his letter to the Philippians (4:4-7):

Rejoice in the Lord always.
I shall say it again: rejoice!
Your kindness should be known to all.
The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

In the Gospel, we hear of the day when John the Baptist announces the Savior is among us- greater than we can ever imagine, as he says, "Today I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize... whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie."

Rejoice for we are all united in his love – a love freely given even though we are unworthy to receive.

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

Many parishes will join together in song, singing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. The hymn was originally written in Latin more than 12 centuries old. It is based on a series of chants that were added to the Magnificat, a canticle sung during Vespers. Antiphons were added each day the week before Christmas as they eagerly awaited the celebration of Christ's birth.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud and majesty and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
From ev'ry foe deliver them
That trust thy mighty pow'r to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all humankind;
Bid thou our sad divisions cease,
And be thyself our Prince of Peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

Annual Catholic Charities of WV Appeal

Christmas Special Collection benefits CCWV Mission

Bishop Mark Brennan reminds the faithful and visitors coming for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses to prayerfully consider a gift to Catholic Charities of WV to support those in need.

In a letter to clergy he wrote, "In this season in which we joyfully recall God's fulfillment of His promise to send the world a Savior and in which we are moved to engage in good works in Christ's name... remember all the good works that Catholic Charities of West Virginia does in Christ's name and ours to help people in need."

Let us show our support for our statewide Catholic organization that "counsels addicts, helps families with emergency expenses, and

operates the Birth to Three program for little children at risk of delayed development without early intervention – among many other things that Catholic Charities does to extend Christ's love to those in distress.... Remember and honor the God who gave us His Son in our need (when considering your gift to this special collection."



EVANGELIZE BY YOUR ACTIONS

PRAY ALWAYS ALONG THE WAY



Bishop Mark Brennan's Advent Pastoral Letter reminds us that we best evangelize through our actions. It isn't always about our words and knowledge - theology we retain or Hebrew and Latin phrases we can recite or sing out. True evangelization is not overwhelming or intimidating, it is being humble and genuine in our actions. It is having the mindset to think and act like Christ.

Today we share sections two and three of his letter and action card that was to be presented at Masses

to all the faithful on the first Sunday of Advent in our local parishes.



PRAYER FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us in your son,
Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity
enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us,
Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread the joy and peace
of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

~ adapted from the Jubilee Prayer by Pope Francis



WITNESS OF LIFE AND EXPLICIT PROCLAMATION

If we are to evangelize effectively, it is essential that our way of life be in harmony with what we say to others about Christ and the Church. That testimony of life is our witness to the truth of the Gospel. St. Paul VI wrote: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and, if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" [EN 41].

A non-Catholic family had several Catholic neighbors, who sometimes talked about their involvement in their parish and their love for their faith. The non-Catholic family's home burnt down. Their Catholic neighbors gave them food, clothing and many other kinds of help as the family struggled with their loss. Touched by the faith-inspired witness of life of those Catholic families, the non-Catholic family wanted to know more about Catholicism. Eventually that family entered the Church. As St. Paul VI said, "The Church is evangelized by constant conversion and renewal in order to evangelize the world with credibility" [EN 15]. Those neighbors brought a family to Christ because they were living their faith. Are you living yours? If you need to reform your life, pray hard, seek wise counsel from your priest or a trusted friend and never doubt that the Lord loves sinners and will always forgive those who repent.

...continued



PERSONAL EVANGELIZATION

How do you engage personally in evangelization? You need to prepare spiritually. Begin by praying daily for specific people to be open to the gift of faith or of a renewed faith. Make a list if you need to but don't just pray in general; pray by name for people you know. Then add weight to your prayer by fasting for them at least once a week. Friday is a traditional day for fasting. You can fast from a meal or from some form of entertainment or favorite activity. You deprive yourself of some temporal good for a brief time as a sacrifice to win God's grace for others for eternity. A third form of spiritual preparation for evangelization is to offer to God your good works and sufferings on behalf of those for whom you are praying. God loves all absent Catholics and religiously unaffiliated people more than we do but He wants to see how much we love them. Following these steps shows Him our love.

Yet we cannot stop there. As St. Paul VI says, "The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed. [EN 22]. We have to seek opportunities to speak of Jesus Christ and why we follow him as members of his Church. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to give witness to your faith in him. You know why you follow him. You do not need a theological degree to tell others your reasons. You are an expert on your life of faith.

If the person has questions you cannot answer, consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church or a reliable online website to understand the matter and be able to respond.

If the person needs help beyond what you can offer – he or she is divorced and remarried or is gay or lives in a household that is hostile to the faith or poses a question you have not found the way to answer – arrange for the person to speak to your priest or deacon or call the appropriate office at the diocesan Chancery for help. Obstacles must be recognized but obstacles can be overcome. Pick up one of the glossy cards at your parish to keep these principles of personal evangelization in mind.

People will often give you opportunities to engage them in that conversation: moments of great joy, such as the birth of a child, a wedding or a new home; moments of sadness and tragedy, such as the death of a loved one, the breakup of a marriage, the loss of a job or some other serious disappointment. These are openings to speak of how Christ has been your strength and joy when you have dealt with times both sad and happy.

A woman raised by virulently atheistic parents met and married a practicing Catholic. Seeing his joy, experiencing his kindness, watching how he dealt patiently with their children, knowing that he prayed every day, she wanted what he had and, after much interior struggle (she went through the RCIA three times), she finally became a Catholic. The husband gave an excellent witness of life to balance his gentle encouragement of her desire to be Catholic and the RCIA team provided clear knowledge of the faith.

If your *faith* matters to you,
do your part.

Bishop Mark E. Brennan

As his action card states, "You **CAN** do your part to lead others to Jesus Christ!"

Are you trying?

Commit to the spiritual preparation Bishop Mark outlined:

1. Pray Daily for persons you know to respond to Christ's gift of faith.
2. Fast Weekly from a meal, the internet, or other activity to emphasize your commitment.
3. Offer God your good works and sufferings on behalf of those for whom you are praying.

Find Joy in Giving



This third week of Advent is a time to focus on the joy we receive as we seek greatness in Christ. It is also a time to be more mindful of how we can be Christ for others.

So, as we refocus our minds and intentions on how we can be and do more for the Son of the Father who was born to save each one of us, we need to thank God for placing people in our lives who bring us joy.

Moreover, sing the praises of those who bring hope to the hopeless - those who for whatever their circumstance must rely on the goodness of others to get by.

Father Thien Nguyen of Risen Lord Mission and St. Thomas Parish in Braxton and Clay counties recently honored his team of more than 40 local volunteers that keep his food pantries open and stocked to feed hundreds of families in need.

Also in attendance by invitation was Charles Town's Deacon Dave Galvin, who Fr. Thien surprised and presented with his "Matthew 25 Award" - an award that exemplifies "it is better to give than to receive."

Matthew chapter 25 focuses on the importance of performing good deeds. God created each one of us with skills and abilities. Therefore, it is critical to without hesitation use those to help one another when we see an opportunity. The Gospel of Matthew reminds us we will be held accountable.

According to Fr. Thien, Deacon Dave and the Outreach Ministry of Saint James the Greater Catholic Church in Charles Town, although 300 miles away from his food pantries, have "given countless hours and many ways in which they live the Gospel by bringing comfort, food, and care to our brothers and sisters in need in West Virginia, particularly in Clay and Braxton counties for the past eight years.

"Many times, during the year, they bring clothes, diapers, furniture, and food."

Each year the St. James Outreach Ministry has delivered between 3,000 to 6,000 pounds of vegetables between June-December to help feed the 250-300 families that depend on the food pantries run by Thien's faithful.

Deacon Dave's group also installed a fence around the food pantries' gardens and on the day of the recognition dinner they brought 20 living chickens for people to raise. In all 50 chickens have been brought to those families.

Father Thien said taking time to honor those who choose to do good on earth to bring a bit of joy to others is an important moment, "an opportunity (to thank them for letting their) 'light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven' (Mt 5:16)."



PRAYER DOES WORK MIRACLES

RETREAT TO BRING HOPE THROUGH RWANDAN HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S STORY

Prayer works miracles! The life of Immaculée Ilbagiza is a testimony to that mantra.

Today, we highlight her for two reasons: the first, as we approach Pope Francis and the Church's Year of Hope for 2025, Ilbagiza is a beautiful example of how faith and hope can pull you through - excuse the blunt, honest description here - a living hell; and the second reason, faithful in the diocese and surrounding areas have an opportunity to meet her and be inspired by her story in July at a retreat at St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town (this event coupled with her book - *Left to Tell, Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* could be a great Christmas gift to someone or yourself).

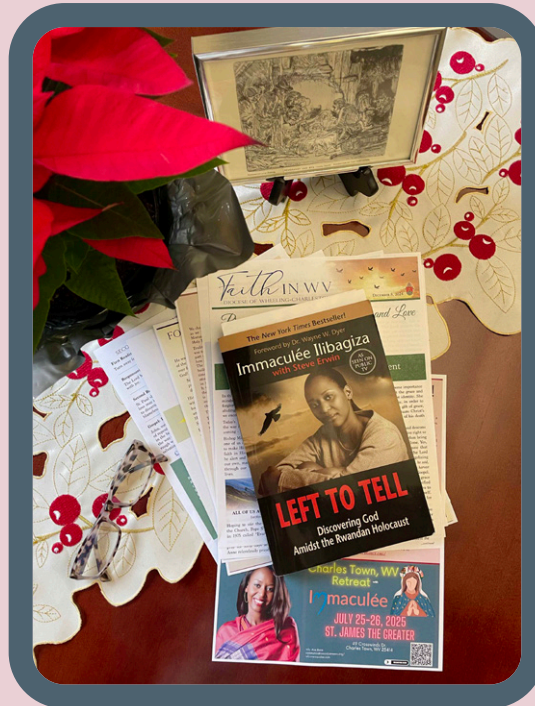
Immaculée Ilbagiza was born and raised Catholic along with her three brothers in a rural village in Rwanda, Africa. She was a bright child and was studying to be an engineer in college.

In April of 1994, home for Easter break, what would be the worst civil war in her country began to rage. Her survival is one thing, but what bloomed into a devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Rosary is another awe-inspiring story.

To protect his precious daughter from unthinkable assaults and murder, Immaculée's father gave her his Rosary and had her run to the local pastor's home for protection. It was there she and seven other women were hidden by the pastor in a 3-foot by 4-foot bathroom for 91 days. Not knowing their fate sorrow set in, then anger, and then a turning point - prayer. It was her Rosary and prayer that lifted her above the hatred and saved her and her companions. When it was safe to come out of hiding, and weighing less than 70 pounds she learned her entire family except for one brother who did not make it home from his university outside the country, were dead. They were among the more than 1 million men, women, and children brutally murdered.

In her book, *Left to Tell*, she not only illustrates the senseless horrors of our world, but moreover, she shines light and hope found in our all-powerful God alone.

Her book, which includes photos from her childhood and images taken after the genocide, is available online at her website (WWW.IMMACULEE.COM) and your favorite bookstores.



The retreat with the Rwandan American author and survivor of the Rwandan genocide will be July 25-26, 2025, at St. James the Greater Parish, 49 Crosswinds Dr. Charles Town.

The two-day event will be filled with her messages of love, hope, & forgiveness above all. Come learn how prayer works miracles through Our Lady as Ilbagiza shares her love and knowledge of apparitions around the globe including Our Lady of Kibeho in her home country. No one will leave this retreat the same as when they came. Tickets are \$57 per person (group rates are as low as \$35).

For general information and to

register [CLICK HERE](#).

(WWW.IMMACULEE.COM/COLLECTIONS/RETREATS/PRODUCTS/CHARLES-TOWN-WV-RETREAT-JULY-26-27-2025-WITH-IMMACULEE)

For information from St. James the Greater and overnight accommodation recommendations contact Ana Bone at COMMUNICATIONS@STJAMESWV.ORG

Charles Town, WV
Retreat
with
Immaculée

JULY 25-26, 2025
ST. JAMES THE GREATER

49 Crosswinds Dr.
Charles Town, WV 25414

1 Attendee \$57.00

Info: Angelle angelle@immaculee.com
Deacon Dave deacondave@stjameswv.org

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Shout for joy! The Lord will rejoice over you with gladness and renew you with His love.

Responsorial: Isaiah 12:2-6

Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Second Reading: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. Have no anxiety. In everything give thanks and have God's peace beyond understanding.

Gospel: LUKE 3:10-18

John the Baptist declares, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT](#)

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, Bishop Mark, and all the clergy as they prepare the flock for the coming of the Savior, heading the word of John the Baptist: speaking truthfully, acting virtuously, and sharing with those in need, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For peace in the Holy Land, and that all peoples may live free from violence, from fear, and from injustice, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For migrants, who flee their homes in desperate hope of finding a safer and more promising place to live, that they may find refuge and opportunity when they arrive, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For each of us, that we may realize the joy of giving, both to our loved ones and to those in need, especially realizing the greatest gift we can give - our faith, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

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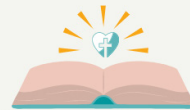
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Liturgy of the Hours

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour!

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Scan the QR code or visit the link below to view a PDF version of the Liturgy of the Hours.



MASS ONLINE

Saturday 6pm Masses will continue to be livestreamed from the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and will be available on our website each Sunday at DWC.ORG.