



LOOK TO MARY AS WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR CHRISTMAS

As we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Advent reflect on the heart and mind of Mary. Have faith, looking beyond your own understanding.

Can you imagine what Mary must have been feeling? So excited and anxious to hold her baby, the Son of God, in her arms. She had a heart completely filled with the love of God, who gave her Joseph to marry and forever protect her and the Prince of Peace.

Mary and Joseph placed total trust in God. Their example epitomizes faith over fear.

This week contemplate where our hearts are. Are we ready for the Lord? Will we find room for Him in our hearts not just at Christmas, but every day; or will we turn them away?

When Mary and Joseph said yes to God, they said yes so that all people could be saved by the Savior of the World.

Mediate on the readings today and the picture they paint for us about this most blessed season of joyful hope.

Devoted to the Jewish teachings, Mary and Joseph knew of the Prophet Isaiah's declaration in this Sunday's first reading, that a virgin will give birth to a son and his name will be Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." Their devotion to God proclaims the wonders of God that we to sing in our responsorial psalm.

In the second reading we hear St. Paul's letter to the Romans emphasizing Jesus is a descendent of David and the Son of the Most High God.

Finally in the Gospel, Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus Christ as spoken to sleeping Joseph by the Angel. The angel said Joseph, son of David, should have no doubts or fear to take Mary as his for it is God's great plan and his important role in it. The angel declares what was foretold by the prophet Isaiah - she will give birth to a son and his name will be Jesus and he will save God's people.

Let us ask Mary and St. Joseph to intercede for us to have the same unconditional love for God and all the blessings He has given us.

Editor's note: the art featured and setting the tone for this article is by Nichole Lanthier, of Lake Charles, Louisiana, who describes herself as a "Catholic wife and mother of five. Creative, Artist, Musician. Paying for Catholic school tuition, one art print at a time." Find this and other paintings at: WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/NICHOLELANTHIER





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WV CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CONTINUE TO OUTPERFORM COUNTERPARTS NATIONAL REPORT CARD NOTES PUBLIC SCHOOL DECLINE

WHEELING - As West Virginia Catholic school students continue to outperform their public-school counterparts on the state and national levels, Catholic school administrators are aiming to do even better.

This fall the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported public schools' standardized assessments are "appalling and unacceptable." While education experts attribute increasing rates in decline as a snowball effect to the COVID-19 pandemic, Catholic school administrators are able to tout steady increases in student achievement. During and since the pandemic Catholic schools in West Virginia have been able to continue to move forward instead of catching up.

NCES and The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a congressionally authorized project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, reported that math and reading results for the nation are down, and like many of the states, West Virginia's public school scores are lower than the national average. Meanwhile Catholic schools scores remain higher than the state and national averages according to the Nation's Report Card reported by NAEP.

"Private and Catholic schools are expected to outperform public schools, so that is not the grabbing headline, but what is important to highlight is that when we faced a crisis situation, we were ready from the top down to quickly work together to problem solve - turn a challenge into an opportunity, because we did that and continue to do so - our students have not fallen through the cracks," Superintendent of Catholic Schools in West Virginia Mary Ann Deschaine, Ed.S. said. "Our principals and teachers turned on a dime to provide lessons remotely, while reaching out to our students and families to monitor progress and their well-being. We responded without hesitation and then put our heads together on how to safely get back into the classroom as soon as possible."

It was that swift and decisive faith filled decision making to prioritize our students' academic progress, as well as mental and physical health that set them apart, she said.

"We are not perfect, nor do we pretend to be, but with a steadfast focus on our faith we trust God will continue to guide us to help our children reach their full potential," Deschaine said.

Backed by assessments that are given three times a year, the Catholic Schools of West Virginia can provide educators, families, and the students the opportunity to identify any learning gaps, as well as identify areas where the student can be challenged at a higher level.

The diocesan schools partner with the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) for their state-aligned, online Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments.

"Our MAP assessments truly serve as a roadmap for us for grade level aptitude, and college and career readiness," Associate Superintendent Jennifer Hornyak said.

"The NWEA tests are adaptive, meaning students are measured where they are across grade levels

instead of just at their grade level,” Hornyak said. “The online test adjusts during the assessment based on the student’s right or wrong answers. A right answer challenges the student to a harder question. A wrong answer bumps down a level to identify where the student’s ability is in the subject area, resulting in an identification marker of what the child’s needs may be to grow in this subject area. The teacher then can adapt their lesson plan to help the student attain individual goals, grade level goals, and cross grade level goals.”

Deschaine added assessing the focus of the Catholic school system is also key to the overall success of the students.

“Just as we expect our students to be better than yesterday in every way, we look at ourselves as a whole system to do the same,” she said, noting the system’s Intentional Growth Plan (IGP) – a four-year roadmap of accountability for stronger Catholic grade and high schools in the state.

“In collaboration with our principals, pastors, parishes, parents, alumni, and diocesan staff work to continually improve and grow in our Catholic Identity, leadership, academic excellence, and operational vitality. Hand in hand with our Cognia accreditation process we continue to evaluate our performance not only in the classroom, but also across the board and then aim higher.”

Enrollment retention is part of the IGP.

Prior to the pandemic Catholic schools across the nation were reporting a steady decline in enrollment. However, in the last year those numbers are changing. Catholic grade schools have seen a 5.8% increase, and the preschool level experienced a 33.5% enrollment increase from the Fall of 2020 to the Fall of 2021.

“In the 18 months, we have seen more enrollment retention and increases than we have seen in decades in our Catholic schools, as parents prioritized in-person learning, values, mental health, and social interaction in addition to academics,” Deschaine said. “We know the critical value of being together. Our schools provide an environment that is an extension of family. We are committed to providing a quality education and are unapologetically Catholic. Lessons in Catholic faith are integrated into all subject areas and activities.”

Reports following 2020 show that transfer students are doing well in the Catholic school setting. According to the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), 95% of parents said their child had positive academic experiences and 90% said the communication received from the school was excellent.

“What is also an elite finding of the NCEA report is that new families – Catholic and non-Catholic – said the best attribute of Catholic school ‘is the caring and effective faculty and staff,’” Deschaine said. “Parents may be choosing to enroll in our school because of a desire to have reliable in-person learning or higher test scores, but the bottom line is those things happen, because our teachers and staff truly care about the children sitting in our classrooms.”

More than 4,400 students are enrolled in one of 24 Catholic schools in 13 counties of the state and approximately 1,750 of those students are non-Catholic.

The Catholic school system will be accepting applications for enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year in February. To learn more about Catholic education in West Virginia go to: WVCATHOLICSCHOOLS.ORG.

Families who have applied for the state’s Hope Scholarship Program - an education savings account (ESA) – are welcome to apply. It is important to note that the Hope Scholarship program is run by the state of West Virginia not the diocese or the WV Catholic school system. For more information about the Hope Scholarship go to: WWW.HOPESCHOLARSHIPWV.COM.

PISHNER'S SONG OF HOPE, MERCY, AND PEACE WITH "A MESSAGE FROM HEAVEN IN A TINY CHILD"



All Saints Parish's Stephen Pishner presents a reflective song, "This Child" to create the vision and feeling of Emmanuel – God is with us – not only at Christmas but every day of our lives. He wrote the song in 2019.

From a very young age Pishner has believed music and song strengthen our faith. With this song he wanted to not only paint a picture, but to move hearts to keep focused on Christ in all we do.

"I wanted to write a song for Christmas that gave more of a sense of how God became flesh and dwells among us," said Pishner, a composer, song writer, recording artist, and director of music ministry for the Bridgeport parish. "The song speaks of the Christ-Child who is so near to us, that he holds our hearts, in whatever shape they are in, broken or not, and even our tears in his hands. The song later speaks of 'This Child' who walks with the sinner and rejected, the outcast and the poor and that he even bears a resemblance of all the lowly ones. This is how God comes to us and when I wrote this song, I wanted to offer this kind of musical text, that might move the listener to delve deeper into the reality of the presence of God, not just at Christmas, but always."

Pishner's parents and grandparents raised him and his two sisters to be active with their faith and church-life. His favorite bible verse, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be" (Matthew 6:21) reflects that nurtured faith.

"It reminds me to focus on what is really important and not be distracted with things that don't really matter or last," he said.

What was and is important to him is providing music to the Liturgy and prayer services to bring others closer to Christ, he said.

Pishner began playing for Mass when he was a sixth grader at St. Mary's Grade School and continued on as a high school student at Notre Dame High School, sometimes playing as many as five Masses on the weekend.

"My fondest memory was the experience of getting people to sing and the energy you could feel, when there was great participation," he said. "The sound of their singing and the sound of the organ or piano, when it would all come together, was always a powerful moment and still is."

Pishner's favorite saint, St. Francis of Assisi, is a strong influence in the song "This Child." Like St. Francis, Pishner's lyrics focus on Christ's call for us to be His hands and feet.

"He brings a message about being instruments of peace, care for the poor, and standing firm in faith," Pishner said, which mirrors the message of Emmanuel glorified through "This Child."

Listen to the song "This Child" at: [YOUTU.BE/OUyOP2MANHA](https://youtu.be/OUyOP2MANHA)

THIS CHILD

WORDS AND MUSIC BY STEPHEN PISHNER

In the face of this child lie a story and a song of a love without exception and a love that suffers long.

In the heart of this child lies a boundless gift to share of a dream and a vision of a peace beyond compare.

In the hands of this child lie broken hearts and pain, the tears of those in sorrow who long to smile again.

In the touch of this child is the soft and tender care of God who brings healing and whose Spirit fills the air.

Behold, God comes among us!

Behold, a new way of living!

A message from heaven in a tiny child:
"God is doing something new!"

ALL: O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

The feet of this child will walk forevermore with the sinner and rejected, the outcast and the poor. For this child bears resemblance of all the lowly ones. This child is God-Among-Us, Emmanuel, God's Son.

Behold, God comes among us!

Behold, a new way of living!

A message from heaven in a tiny child:
"God is doing something new!"

ALL: O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Behold, God comes among us! (Noel!
Christ is born!)

Behold, a new way of living! (Noel!
Christ is born!)

A message from heaven in a tiny child:
"God is doing something new!"

ALL: O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Noel! Christ is born! Noel! Christ is born!

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CLARKSBURG PARISH INVITES ALL TO CHRISTMAS CONCERT

DEC. 30 EVENT FEATURES CELLO AND PIANO



Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarksburg will host its annual Christmas Cello and Piano concert on at 6pm, Dec 30, in the church.

The free program on the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph will feature Ashley Driscoll on cello and Robin Bohn on piano. Driscoll has advanced degrees in cello performance, conducting, and education. She has played frequently for parishes throughout the county. She grew up in the Clarksburg/Bridgeport area and now lives in Virginia, teaching high school music, has a private cello studio for students, and conducts the Loudoun County Youth Orchestra. Bohn serves as the music director at Immaculate Conception and has taught music and choir at several schools in Harrison County.

The duo has shared their talents and performed together several times at Immaculate Conception as recently as this past summer.

For more information about the Christmas performance contact the parish at (304) 622-8243.



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14

The prophet Isaiah foretells the virgin will give birth to a son and his name will be Emmanuel – which means “God is with us.”

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24

“Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.”

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

St. Paul in his letter to the Romans emphasis Jesus is a descendent of David and the Son of the Most High God.

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus Christ as spoken to sleeping Joseph by the Angel. The angel said Joseph, son of David, should have no doubts or fear to take Mary as his for it is God’s great plan and his important role in it. The angel declares what was foretold by the prophet Isaiah – she will give birth to a son and his name will be Jesus and he will save God’s people.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT
BIBLE.USCCB.ORG/BIBLE/READINGS/121822.CFM](http://BIBLE.USCCB.ORG/BIBLE/READINGS/121822.CFM)

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, Pope Francis, Bishop Mark, our priests, religious, and ministers in our parishes that God’s will be clear in their minds, hearts, and words, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For the leaders of the world, that they put aside selfishness and greed in order to humble themselves to serve the least among them to spark hope and peace for all people, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For our Jewish brothers and sisters as Hanukkah – the Feast of the Dedication - begins, may this Festival of Light and the days ahead be filled with peace, love, hope, and health, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all the habitual and special intentions we hold dear in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

SPECIAL COLLECTION AT CHRISTMAS MASSES

A special collection for Catholic Charities West Virginia is set for all Christmas Masses in the diocese Dec. 24-25. Prayerfully consider a gift to Catholic Charities West Virginia. Your donation helps tens of thousands of our vulnerable brothers and sisters every year. It allows CCWV to provide hope, provide safety, provide food and provide care.

Give to Catholic Charities:

- Through the second collection at Christmas masses
- Online at WWW.CATHOLICCHARITIESWV.ORG
- By mail to 2000 Main Street, Wheeling, WV 26003

With your help, CCWV can continue providing caring and compassionate support to West Virginians in need. Thank you.



EXPERIENCED WITH CURSILLO?

HELP US RENEW THE MOVEMENT!

Have you ever experienced a Cursillo weekend?
Are you a cursillista?

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is trying to resurrect the Cursillo Movement in the diocese and is looking for people who have experience with the apostolic movement.

If you are experienced with Cursillo and would like to join the diocesan efforts in bringing it back to the diocese, please contact Daniel Maul, in the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, at 304-233-0880, ext. 376, or by email at DMAUL@DWC.ORG, or communicate with Joe Pangilinan, at JOEYPANG@AOL.COM

Christmas Mass²⁰²²

CELEBRATE MASS WITH US ON THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD
FROM THE
BASILICA OF THE CO-CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART

We hope you will join Bishop Mark Brennan as he celebrates
Mass for the Nativity of the Lord at the
Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston at
8 pm, Saturday, Dec. 24.

The Mass will be livestreamed on our website, DWC.ORG, and also
available on our diocesan Facebook page at
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DIOCESEOFWHEELINGCHARLESTON.

The faithful may also view the Mass on television. See below for a
list of channels broadcasting the celebration. May God bless you
and your family as you prepare for the coming of Christ.

**CHRISTMAS MASS WILL BE BROADCASTED
AT MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING CHANNELS**

WTRF-TV7

WHEELING

WBOY/NBC

CLARKSBURG/MORGANTOWN

WDVM

MARTINSBURG

WOWK

CHARLESTON/HUNTINGTON

WVNS

BECKLEY/BLUEFIELD

WAITING IN JOYFUL HOPE

Waiting is not an easy process for any of us. Through patience and great expectation, our waiting becomes more bearable. In our Gospel, John the Baptist cries out that we prepare the way for Christ to be born again among us.

As we walk alongside people we serve, we are often waiting with them. Lifting oneself or one's family out of poverty is not a fast or easy process. Through strong relationship building and companionship, we work with our clients to set goals and eliminate barriers – barriers like lack of child care, unreliable transportation, needing an ID, or funds to buy job training materials.

Through our case management program, we work with clients to understand the underlying cause of need, and we provide resources to help. Whether it is patients being discharged from hospitals, adult learners in recovery from substance use disorder, or the pregnant mom needing help; case management is a journey of hope and transformation.

As we continue our Advent journey, we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Lord.

To learn more about Catholic Charities West Virginia, visit www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org.

The Mission of Catholic Charities West Virginia: *Guided by God's love, Catholic Charities collaborates with community partners, parishes, and families to provide caring and compassionate services to people in need and work toward lasting and meaningful change.*



Catholic Charities case managers provide support for clients working to meet their goals

BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOU

Berkeley Springs - Hancock, MD	FM	96.3
Berkeley Springs	FM	107.9
Clarksburg-Bridgeport	FM	97.5
Dunbar - Charleston	AM	1450
Eastern Panhandle	AM	740
Eastern Panhandle	FM	106.5
Grafton - Clarksburg	AM	1190
Montgomery - Beckley	FM	89.7
Purgitsville	FM	98.7
St. Marys - Parkersburg	FM	105.3
Star City -Morgantown	FM	89.7
Summersville	FM	91.3
Wheeling - Martins Ferry, OH	FM	90.7
Weirton - Steubenville	FM	97.7

~Also Streaming in WV at www.rdo.to/WLQL~

ENROLL TODAY

WV Catholic Schools

Empowered
by knowledge.
Transformed
by faith.



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wvcatholicschools.org



Liturgy of the Hours

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour!

EBREVIARY.COM LITURGY OF THE HOURS

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.