

Breath of Life

THE PASTORAL CARE NEWSLETTER
OF MATULAITIS HOME

Volume 9, Issue 4
Winter, 2023



**Hold on just a second!
It isn't Christmas yet!**

I know every store and radio station would seem to disagree, but there's a whole season – a beautiful season! – that comes before Christmas. And Christmas can only be fully enjoyed and appreciated if we first enter into the Advent season and prepare.

In the midst of holiday preparations, when we may find ourselves feeling rushed from one thing to the next, Advent reminds us to pause, take time to reflect on what it is that we're preparing to celebrate, and recall the blessings we have experienced throughout the year as we look forward with hope to the year to come.

This season invites us to take a moment to look into our hearts as together we await the *advent* – the coming – of Jesus: remembered as He came to us as the Christ Child born in Bethlehem; welcomed to come into our hearts and lives through faith, grace, and the Sacraments; hoped for in the Second Coming at the end of time.



How do you feel as you anticipate the holidays? What are you carrying in your heart this season – gratitude? fear? grief? joy? Have you invited God to come into those parts of your life? What are signs of hope for you, reminders that God is with you as God promises to be? Have there been moments, maybe here at Matulaitis Home, that you can point to and say “*There, that was God?*”

The Bible tells the story of our God who longs to be in relationship with His creation, Who so loves us that He sent His Son to restore His relationship with all humanity (John 3:16). As we enter this season, you are invited, and I pray that you will, take time for that relationship, to open your heart to God's healing presence, and draw near to God who longs to bless you and make you a blessing to others.

ADVENT

The word 'Advent' is from the Latin *adventus* for "coming" and is associated with the four weeks of preparation for Christmas.

Advent begins on the Sunday after the Solemnity of Christ the King and continues for four weeks until Christmas Vigil Mass.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Daily: Holy Mass, 10:30am in the Chapel. Memorial Masses are offered for all residents who have died here; dates are posted at the reception counter, Family Council bulletin board, and Center Court.

Weekly: Hymns & Prayers Group is offered on Mon & Thurs at 2:30pm in the Chapel; after Dec. 13th at the Center Court Christmas Tree.

- 12.1.23 First Friday**
Adoration & Benediction
Chapel 3pm
- 12.8.23 Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary *Holy Day of Obligation***
Rosary, Chapel 1:30pm
- 12.12.23 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe**
Movie "Lady of Guadalupe: A Love Story of Hope & Faith"
3pm A-Lounge
- 12.13.23 13th of the Month Rosary Club**
1:30pm Chapel
Christmas Tree decorating w/
Hymns & Carols
Center Court 2pm
- 12.21.23 Communal Preparation for Reconciliation Service w/ priest available for Confession**
Chapel 2:30pm
- 12.24.23 Christmas Eve**
- 12.25.23 Christmas Day**
Holy Mass, Chapel 10:30am
Christmas Holy Hour &
Benediction, Chapel 2:30pm
- 12.31.23 Solemnity of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph**
- 1.1.24 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**
- 1.7.24 Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord**

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Immaculate Conception refers to conception of Jesus' mother Mary free from original sin. The Catholic Church teaches that God acted upon Mary in the moment of her conception, preserving her innocence and purity, keeping her "immaculate" so that she would be "full of grace" and become the mother of our Savior. Mary identified herself by this title to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, France in 1858: "I am the Immaculate Conception."

The Immaculate Conception is often confused with the virgin birth of Jesus, but these are not the same thing. Mary's conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit is instead celebrated on March 25th, the Feast of the Annunciation – when the Angel Gabriel announced his message to Mary.



The religious Sisters who founded Matulaitis Home are the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Their congregation was founded in Lithuania by Blessed George Matulaitis in 1918. They look to Mary, the Immaculate Conception, as their patron and example of faithful discipleship, guiding them to live well their vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, as they seek to unite their prayer life with apostolic activity and help others in every possible way on their journey to God. May we, too, follow Mary's example and say "yes" to God, responding to God's call throughout our lives saying with Mary, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).



The Advent Wreath

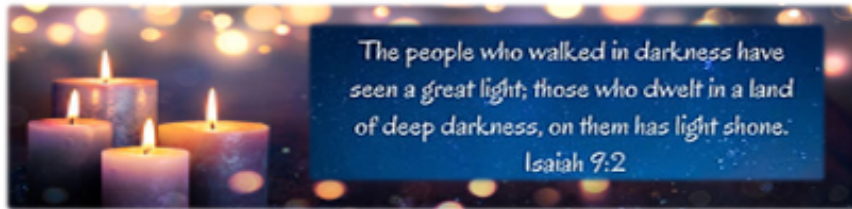
The Advent wreath is a tradition rich in symbolism, serving as a reminder of the meaning and purpose of this holy season and the One for Whom we are waiting: Jesus, the Light of the World. The use of

the wreath and candles during Advent are a longstanding Catholic tradition that was originally adopted by Christians in the Middle Ages as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas.

The wreath is made of evergreens, signifying continuous life. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life we find in Christ.

The candles each have their own special significance: The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple because the color violet is a liturgical color that signifies a time of prayer, penance, and sacrifice.

The first candle, which is purple, symbolizes hope. It is sometimes called the "Prophecy Candle" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.



The second candle, also purple, represents faith. It is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

The third candle is pink and symbolizes joy. It is called the "Shepherd's Candle," and is pink because rose is a liturgical color for joy. The third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday (*Latin for joy*) and is meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy that the faithful have reached the midpoint of Advent.

On the fourth week of Advent, the final purple candle is lit to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait to celebrate the birth of our Savior and our hope for His coming at the end of time. This final candle, the "Angel's Candle," symbolizes peace. It reminds us of the message of the angels: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."

In modern adaptations, it has become popular to include a fifth white candle. The white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit on Christmas Eve. This candle is called the "Christ Candle" and represents the life of Christ. The color white is for purity—because Christ is our sinless, pure Savior.

Adapted from: <https://www.mercyhome.org/blog/sunday-mass/advent-wreath/>



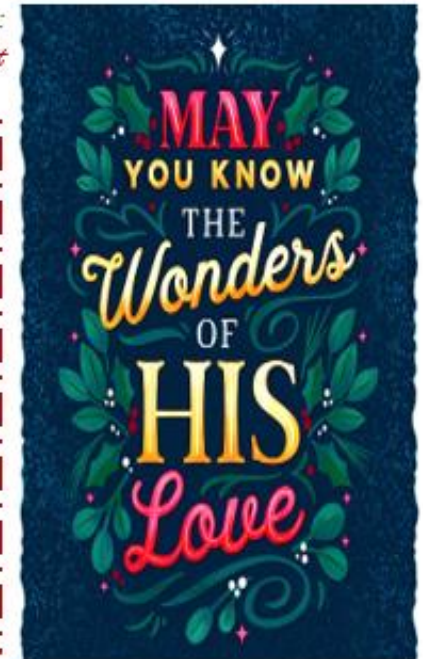
"In switching on the light of the Nativity scene, we wish for the light of Christ to be in us. A Christmas without light is not Christmas. Let there be light in the soul, in the heart; let there be forgiveness to others; let there be no hostilities, which are dark. Let there be the beautiful light of Jesus. This is my wish for all of you, when you turn on the light of the crib....If you have something dark in your soul, ask the Lord for forgiveness. Christmas is a great opportunity to cleanse the soul. Do not fear, the priest is merciful, forgiving all in the name of God, because God forgives everything." – Pope Francis, Dec. 8, 2014

May you have the Gift of Faith, the Blessing of Hope, and the Peace of His Love this Christmas and always!

*With Love and Prayers from the Spiritual Care Team:
Olivia Chalifoux, Sister Bernadette, & Sister Margaret*

Did you know...?

Our Christmas Tree is decorated with handmade traditional Lithuanian straw ornaments, reminding us that Jesus was placed on a bed of straw in the manger.



Check out our website:
www.matulaitisnh.org



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