

# *Cathedral* OF THE *Immaculate Conception*

DECEMBER 31, 2023 | FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH



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CATHEDRAL PARISH OFFICE: 217-522-3342  
[WWW.SPICATHEDRAL.ORG](http://WWW.SPICATHEDRAL.ORG)

FOUNDED IN 1839 | DEDICATED IN 1928 | BUILT ON FAITH, RENEWED IN HOPE IN 2009

# Cathedral Weekly

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 53

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## Sunday Masses

Saturday - 4:00pm

Sunday - 7:00am, 10:00am, & 5:00pm

## Weekday Masses

Monday through Friday - 7:00am & 5:15pm

Saturday - 8:00am

## Reconciliation

Monday through Friday - 4:15pm-5:00pm

Saturday - 9:00am-10:00am & 2:30pm-3:30pm

Sunday - 4:00pm-4:45pm

## Adoration

Tuesday & Thursday - 4:00pm to 5:00pm

## Welcome to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception!

On behalf of our bishop, the Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, our parishioners, deacons, and priests, we welcome you to the mother church of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

The seat of the diocese was moved to Springfield from Alton in 1923. In the same year, "Old St. Mary's" church of Immaculate Conception Parish was named as the pro-cathedral of the new diocese until this cathedral church was built and dedicated in 1928. Currently, our diocese comprises twenty-eight counties in central Illinois, serving over 140,000 members of the Catholic faithful.

We hope that your visit to our Cathedral is one of grace and beauty and that you feel at home in the mother church. We also hope that you will find this edition of the Cathedral Weekly to be both informative and spiritually enriching. May God bless you and yours!



## This is My Body

As we continue our celebration of the Birth of Jesus at Christmas, we continue to rejoice in the close connection between His being born in time in Bethlehem and His coming to us on the altar each time Mass is celebrated. Perhaps you have heard this before (and I believe that I have written about it in the past), but the name of the town where Jesus was born has a significant Eucharistic connection. In Hebrew, the word Bethlehem translates into "house of bread." The significance of this connection, though known by God at the time, does not become clear to us until the Last Supper, when Jesus gathers with His Apostles to institute the Holy Eucharist. Here is the account as recorded by St. Luke:

*Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.*

*(Lk 22:19-20)*

Faithful to the Lord's command to "do this in memory of me", the Church celebrates the Eucharistic sacrifice daily and each church becomes a Bethlehem, a house of bread. This bread is no ordinary bread, of course, it is the Bread of Life, the Word who has become flesh and has made His dwelling among us. Although each Mass is more directly connected to the Lord's Passion, there is a very real sense in which there is a connection to His birth in Bethlehem, for it is the same flesh born in the manger that we receive in the Eucharist, though now hidden behind the forms of bread and wine.

In each Eucharistic Prayer, we hear this above-mentioned Institution Narrative recounted, and when the priest says those words: "This is my body...this is my blood", it is Christ Himself saying those words. At this point, the priest is united with Christ in a unique way as He speaks and acts in the person of Christ Himself, just as he does when he absolves sins in the confessional saying: "I absolve you from your sins."

Personally, for me as a priest, this is the moment of the Mass that is the most powerful. It is so humbling to know that when I say those words, the Lord obeys and the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ! Despite my weaknesses, the Lord still acts. This is one of the very consoling and beautiful truths of our faith, that despite the unworthiness of the minister, the Lord still acts as He provides for His people.

It is not uncommon to hear people comment about their experience with different priests at Mass. I have heard people say: "I really like Father X's masses." Or, "I don't get much out of Mass when Father X celebrates." We all have our preferences, whether it is how well the priest preaches, or how reverent they are when praying the prayers of the Mass. All of those things can contribute to our being more or less open to the graces available to us as Mass, but when it comes down to it, the grace that is available to us in the Eucharist at any and every Mass is the same, regardless of the celebrant. That might be surprising to hear that, but it is the teaching of the Church, and it is something that I find to be absolutely remarkable about our Catholic faith. In the end, the Eucharist is not about what the priests do first and foremost, but what God Himself does.

Please pray for the priests of the Church that we might be good preachers and reverent in our celebration of the sacred mysteries so that the faithful may be more predisposed to receiving the fullness of God's grace available at each Mass. And even if your experience with a particular priest (his homily or his style of celebrating Mass) is not especially edifying, rejoice in the consoling truth that Jesus still comes in the Eucharist in just the same way had it been the great St. John Vianney celebrating the Mass!

*Father Alford is the Rector of the Cathedral and serves in the diocesan curia as the Vicar for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations.*

## Mass Intentions

### Monday, January 1

7am - Raymond Edward Ohi  
(Angela Ohi-Marsters)  
5:15pm - NO MASS

### Tuesday, January 2

7am - NO MASS  
5:15pm - NO MASS

### Wednesday, January 3

7am - NO MASS  
5:15pm - NO MASS

### Thursday, January 4

7am - NO MASS  
5:15pm - NO MASS

### Friday, January 5

7am - NO MASS  
5:15pm - Raymundo Figueroa  
(Bev & Larry Smith)

### Saturday, January 6

8am - Lynn Ray  
(Nicole Orzech)  
4pm - Judith Hubbell  
(Robert Hubbell)

### Sunday, January 7

7am - Jon Quinn  
(Bill Midden)  
10am - For the People  
5pm - Richard Canfield  
(Vicki Compton)





## St. Melania the Younger

**Feast Day: December 31st**

How would you go about building the Kingdom of God in the heart of ancient Rome? As in, if Jesus entrusted to you the task of bringing the Gospel to a place where most still rejected it, what would be your strategy? Would you start by preaching in the synagogue, as did St. Paul? Would you concentrate on works of charity, protecting those who were vulnerable, unwanted, and discarded by that society, with St. Lawrence as your exemplar? Would you seek to convert the Emperor and work from the top down, as did Constantine's mother St. Helena? How about engaging in apologetic debates with the leaders and philosophers of the day, as did St. Justin Martyr? Obviously, the evangelists of the early

church did all of these things (and more!) to proclaim a different "Son of God" and different "Good News" to the Eternal City which had plenty of emperors already claiming that title, and the definitive accomplishment of world peace.

One saintly woman took a different tack. The Caelian Hill, though the smallest of Rome's 7 Hills, and not the center of government or commerce or empire (much of that took place on and between the Palatine and Capitoline Hills), for many centuries was the coveted place for people of power and wealth to build ever more opulent villas. One of the richest of these families, the Valerii Publicolae, traced their ancestry back to Publius Valerius Poplicola, the legendary character who helped overturn the Etruscan kings and turn Rome into a Republic. Consuls, generals, orators, and wealthy patrons continue down the line from 500 BC to 500 AD ... oh, and their house took up most of the Eastern slope of the "Caelius Mons"!

As this family was at the zenith of their wealth, popularity, and power, around 100 BC, at the bottom of 'their hill', between the Caelian and Palatine Hills, connecting the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter to the densely populated Subura district, and intersecting the main thoroughfare stretching between the Forum and the Colosseum, was built the famous "Clivus Scauri" road. Painstakingly, impossibly, unnecessarily, paved with perfectly fitted blocks of tufa stone – "opus quadratum" as the architects called it – it gently curved up their hill with drainage and decoration and beautiful arches all along the way. On this road Julius Caesar triumphantly returned after defeating Pompey. Along it the vestral virgins would have processed. Beside it, countless throngs would have watched as the ashes of the newly deified Augustus were carried to his immense mausoleum. From it, throngs could see the gladiatorial games in the Colosseum. Upon it, thousands would have tried to flee the Great Fire. This was Abbey Road, Broadway, Wall Street, the Champs-Elysees, and the Las Vegas Strip all in one, and Meliana grew up on it, actually, basically, she would inherit it.

How would you bring the Gospel there, onto that hill, along that road? A hundred years before St. Felix would build a church on top of it, and two hundred years before Trasilla and Emiliana grew up along it, this was the task given to St. Melania (called "the Younger" because her grandmother, also Melania, is also a saint!) Newly married to Valerius Pinianus (just as important as his name sounds, one of the richest men in Rome), Melania was more and more distraught at the opulence and luxury of her life in her family's palace on the Caelian Hill. Their two children died young, strengthening Melania's argument that they needed to leave behind the worldly expectations their honorable name entitled (and enslaved) them to, and instead embrace Christian asceticism. I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for this couple to discern what the Lord was calling them to! But eventually they agreed, choosing charity and poverty over than comfort and fame. Melania gave away her splendid garments to decorate churches, her country estates to house poor families, slaves, and pilgrims, and they began to travel the Christian world lavishly giving away their wealth, building Churches and monasteries around Africa including for St. Augustine, ransoming the inhabitants of Lipari from pirates, and establishing a convent near the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

But this was only a fraction of their wealth. At Melania's insistence, the Emperor Honorius enlisted the Provincial Governors across the empire to be responsible for the sale of the couple's vast properties because their enormous value meant the possibility of catastrophic fraud, embezzlement, and intrigue. And that palace on the Caelian? Some, thinking the couple insane, tried to confiscate it through nefarious means (though revolts in the city stymied those conspiracies). But Melania and Pinianus couldn't even find someone with the financial means to purchase it, and after the Goth invasion of 408 AD, they simply gave it away. And, on it, like on so many other parcels of land throughout the empire, they funded a monastery. Thus, in place of the elegance and opulence of the residences on the Caelian Hill, monks lived lives of fasting and prayer. And, instead of the barbarity of a vivarium holding wild animals before their release into the colosseum, now pilgrims made their way up the Clivus Scauri to pagan shrines turned into Christian churches.

*Fr. Dominic Rankin spent five years climbing the Caelian Hill to the Basilica of Ss. John and Paul, and never knew how this was one epicenter of the Christian transformation of that ancient city. All made possible by a lot of earthly riches entrusted to the purposes of God.*

## Stewardship of Treasure

### December 16th & 17th

Envelopes:	\$5,469.00
Loose:	\$3,866.00
Maintenance:	\$134.00
Total:	\$9,469.00

### November EFT

\$18,748.80

### November Debt Reduction

\$1,760.00

### November Second Collections

Campaign for Justice & Hope  
\$3,050.00

Online Giving: If you would like to extend a special gift to the Cathedral, please visit our website. Our parish is grateful for your continued support.  
Thank you!

## WEEK OF JANUARY 1

<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>
Rosary 4:45 PM Church	Grief Share 1:00 PM School Library	Men's Bible Study 6:00 AM School Library  Rosary 4:45 PM Church  Cathedral Bible Study 6:00 PM Parish Library  Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM School Classroom	Women's Bible Study 6:00 PM School Hall	Rosary 4:45 PM Church	Helping Hands Meeting 9:00 AM School Hall  Parish Epiphany Party 5:30 PM Atrium	Family Lectio 6:00 PM Atrium

## What's Going on Around the Cathedral?

### Parish Epiphany Party

Join us for our Parish party on Epiphany, Jan 6. from 5:30pm-8:30pm! All adults are welcome for drinks and snacks and good conversation with good people!



## SEEDS OF THE WORD FILM SERIES

### GRAN TORINO

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 19  
7:00 PM  
CATHEDRAL ATRIUM**

### Seeds of the Word Film Series – Gran Torino

Our January film is Gran Torino, a 2008 drama with themes of sin and redemption and with clear and unmistakable Christological symbolism. This film is for adults only (strong language!) so you may bring a bottle of wine, or other beverage of your choice, and we'll provide the popcorn!

**Friday, January 19, 7:00pm, Cathedral Atrium**

# SUNDAY ANNOUNCEMENTS



## Religious Awards for Scouts

Scouts of all ages can earn religious patches, emblems and recognitions through the Catholic Committee on Scouting. Activities include the Rosary, the lives of saints, Mary, the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and more. Emblems and Recognition awards are available for members of Girl Scouts USA Boy Scouts of America. See [dio.org/scouts](http://dio.org/scouts) for details. Or call Kyle Holtgrave at the Catholic Pastoral Center, (217) 698-8500, ext. 154.

## Pastoral Care for Cathedral's Sick & Elderly

If you, or someone you know from the Cathedral parish are homebound, hospitalized, or in a nursing care facility, please let the Cathedral Office know (217-522-3342). You may request to be put on the Cathedral Prayer Line or request a Pastoral Visit from Sr. Francella and her Cathedral volunteers.

## Helping Hands Volunteer Meeting

Volunteer to be part of a team that provides a meal on the 4th & 5th Saturdays of each month to men & women at the Helping Hands Homeless Shelter. Those who do not cook can help in other ways. If you are interested in participating in the 19th year of this ministry to "feed the hungry", please join us for a 9:00 am breakfast meeting on Saturday, January 6th 2024 in the Cathedral School Hall. Teams are formed and menus are developed for the entire year at this planning breakfast. RSVP required by January 4th by calling or texting 217-494-4241.

## St. Monica Ministry

Are you heartbroken because your loved ones have left the Church? You are invited to the Springfield-area St. Monica Ministry monthly gathering. This ministry is a dedicated prayer network offering hope and support to families and friends of Catholics who have walked away from the practice of the Faith. Please join us for prayer, conversation and solidarity. Animated by hope and grounded in faith, we rest secure in the knowledge that, in the words of St. Monica, "Nothing is far from God."

Wednesday, January 10 @ 7:00pm, Christ the King Parish Center

## Culture of Life Essay Contest

National Right to Life is having an essay contest for middle and high school students. For essay prompts and information to submit essays go to: <https://www.nrlc.org/wp-content/uploads/nrlc-essay-contest-2024-updated.pdf>. Essays are being accepted from December 20, 2023 to January 21, 2024. Essays must be postmarked by January 21, 2024.

## Lectio: Mary - Thursday Evening Women's Bible Study

Start your New Year off with professor Dr. Brant Pitre as he traces the Biblical roots of Mary in this 8-part video based series from Formed. Thursday evenings @ 6:00 in the Cathedral School Library, beginning January 4. \$10 for the Study Guide. To reserve your spot, contact the parish office at 217/522-3342 or email [vcompton@cathedral.dio.org](mailto:vcompton@cathedral.dio.org).

Our parish subscription to Formed was funded in part through a grant from the Harvest of Thanks, Springtime of Hope Capital Campaign.

## The Sword and the Family

In the first few weeks of parenthood, the tears flowed fast and freely, and with very little provocation.

Sometimes I wept because it was getting dark out, and sometimes because the sun was coming up. Sometimes I wept because the days were so unbearably long. Sometimes I wept because they were so cruelly short and slipped past so quickly, bearing away with them forever these inaugural moments of my daughter's life — moments I knew I would long for on my deathbed.

So, the inclusion of the Presentation of Christ in the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary has always struck me. The Blessed Mother, just a few weeks after giving birth, standing at the holy temple: Is she tired? Is she emotional? Is she frightened? Is she happy? We cannot know for sure, but if she is anything like most of the postpartum women I know, she is all four. But she stands there dutifully, offering her baby to the Lord, and this is what she is told, "A sword shall pierce your heart."

Joyful? I would have snatched the baby back, called the police and sobbed for a week.

But Mary knows that Simeon speaks the truth, and she cannot receive God's will with anything less than joy, even if it means a pierced heart.

Family means love, but love means — what, exactly? Pleasure, fulfillment, contentment? Yes, but so much more, too. Love means you have much to lose.

How full is family life with these beautiful moments which, on the surface, look and feel painful — but hold within them the opportunity to be like Mary, to bow our heads and once again say "Yes, Lord."

*"Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another..." — Colossians 3:12*

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman  
©LPi

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## Around the Diocese

- **Pray to Protect Human Life**, 9 Days for Life annual novena, January 16-24, 2024; the novena is for the protection of human life; each day's intention is accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life; sign up at: [www.respectlife.org/9-days-signup](http://www.respectlife.org/9-days-signup)
- **Gospel Mass and Soul Food Luncheon SAVE THE DATE**, Sunday, Feb. 25, 10 a.m., Church of the Little Flower, Springfield; in recognition of Black History Month, all are invited to a Gospel Mass and Soul Food Luncheon, hosted by the Black Catholic Commission