

SAINT WENCESLAUS PARISH  
The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God  
January 1, 2017

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Father Victor Feltes, Pastor  
P.O. Box 109, Eastman, WI. 54626  
Rectory ☎ (608) 874 – 4151  
victorfeltes@gmail.com

Saturday Evening Mass 4PM - Sunday Mass 10AM  
Confession Available Before Every Mass

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Contributions from December 24-25:

Adult Envelopes	\$2,898.00
Collection Plate	\$622.67
Christmas Flower Donations	\$60.00

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Mass Schedule:

Mon, Jan. 2 – 8am (St. Basil & St. Gregory) for:  
**Lyle & Rita Lester by their Family**

Tue, Jan. 3 – 8am (Christmas Weekday) for:  
**Larry Pelock by Janette DuCharme**

Wed, Jan. 4 – 8am (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton) for:  
**Joe Jamnik by the Jamnik Family**

Thr, Jan. 5 – 8am (St. John Neumann) for:  
**Jack & Norma Slama**

Fri, Jan. 6 – 8am (Christmas Weekday) for:  
**Dale Duha by Maurice & Joan Henkes**

Sat, Jan. 7 – 4pm (Epiphany of the Lord) for:  
**Merrill McMillin by Robert McMillin**

Sun, Jan. 8 – 10am (Epiphany of the Lord) for:  
**Raymond & Lucille Krachey by the Family**

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Upcoming Liturgical Roles:

**Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup> : 4pm**

**Lector:** Gloria Wall  
**Ushers:** Loyde Beers & Mike Beers  
**Servers:** Any Available Servers

**Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup> : 10am**

**Lector:** Donnie Fisher  
**Ushers:** Bob Fisher & Justin Fisher  
**Servers:** Group B: Zach, Nate, & Jacob  
Martin, Tegan DuCharme

**Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup> Rosary Leaders:**  
*The Don & Toni Lenzendorf Family*

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January Hospitality Activities:

Church & Hall Cleaning	Group #4
Soup & Sandwich Supper (Jan. 7 <sup>th</sup> )	Groups #1&2
Christmas Potluck (Jan. 8 <sup>th</sup> )	All Groups
Coffee & Rolls (Jan. 15 <sup>th</sup> )	Group #5

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Parish Announcements:

Soup & Sandwich Supper

Join us next Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup> after Mass in Msgr. Baer Hall for good company and the best affordable meal in town.

Christmas Season Potluck

Come next Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup> after Mass for our rescheduled Christmas Potluck in Msgr. Baer Hall. Our CCD children will then present their Lessons and Carols. Christmas gift basket making will follow.

Christmas Flower Donations

If you would like to dedicate a gift to fund this year's beautiful array of poinsettias, please drop a clearly marked envelope into the collection basket or at the rectory. The list of dedicated gifts will appear later this January.

Father Away in Two Weeks

From January 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, Father will be away for his last week of spiritual direction training in Illinois. There will be not weekday Masses that week. Talk to Father if interested in learning more about or scheduling regular spiritual direction.

PCCW Meeting

Our Parish Council of Catholic Women will meet Tuesday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in Msgr. Baer Hall. All ladies of the parish are kindly welcome.

Sacred Heart Soup Supper

On Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup> the Mass at Sacred Heart in Wauzeka will be at 10am Mass, followed by their soup supper at 11am in their parish hall. The proceeds of this annual fundraiser support their CCD program. (Msgr. Robert Hundt will come to celebrate St. Wenceslaus' 10am Mass that day.)

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**Pope Francis' Monthly Prayer Intentions**

Beginning in 2017, our Holy Father has prepared one prayer intention for every month. He plans, however, to announce an additional prayer intention every month related to current events or urgent needs, such as disaster relief. Join Pope Francis and lay faithful all around the world by including these prayer intentions in your devotions.

For January: Christian Unity

*That all Christians may be faithful to the Lord's teaching by striving with prayer and fraternal charity to restore ecclesial communion and by collaborating to meet the challenges facing humanity.*

February:	Comfort for the Afflicted
March:	Support for Persecuted Christians
April:	Young People
May:	Christians in Africa
June:	National Leaders
July:	Lapsed Christians
August:	Artists
September:	Parishes
October:	Workers and the Unemployed
November:	Christians in Asia
December:	The Elderly

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## Reflections on Martyrdom

I have not seen and cannot recommend the recently-released Martin Scorsese film *Silence* but reviewers describe it as haunting and unsettling for believers and non-believers alike. It is set in Japan during the fierce persecution of Roman Catholics in the mid-1600's. In one scene, a Jesuit missionary is forced to watch arrested Japanese Christians be cruelly tortured before him. The young priest is told that these men and women's brutal tortures will cease if he would only step on an image of Christ and renounce his faith. What does Jesus want his followers to do if faced with such a choice?

A person might think there is little harm in trampling the crude likeness of someone, or in insincerely mouthing a few words, but Jesus told his disciples, *"Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."* (Matthew 10:32) Dramatic as it is, it seems that Jesus himself was confronted with the temptation to deny God so that human suffering would end.

After his baptism by John, *Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread."* (Matthew 4) But Jesus firmly refused.

But what was so wicked about the devil's request? What could be wrong with alleviating hunger? Imagine if Jesus had relented, waving his hand over a nearby brown stone and then biting into its soft crust. Then the devil might ask, "So, you have provided food for yourself—how can you now refuse to wield your power and feed the whole world!?" Satan also encouraged Jesus to insist that the Father spare him from death: *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down [from this great height]..."* But Jesus again refused. The tempter wanted Jesus to be a messiah who would provide an abundance of material wealth and safety while leaving humanity in their sins, separated from God.

*Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'"* Jesus chose to be a king who would suffer alongside humanity on the cross, rather than be a king who denied God and bowed to Satan. Jesus Christ understood that he would be Isaiah's "Suffering Servant," "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" as John the Baptist called him. As his desert tempter invited him to end all hardship on earth, Jesus foresaw in some sense the many suffering martyrs who would follow after him in his way. Yet, Jesus refused to capitulate to evil for fleeting, lesser goods in this world, for it was not the will of God, his Father.

These reflections came to mind last week on the December 28<sup>th</sup> Feast of the Holy Innocents, those little ones who died in place of Jesus Christ. *When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance*



A memorial to "The Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan," a group of Roman Catholics executed by crucifixion on February 5, 1597 at Nagasaki. Their feast day (i.e., St. Paul Miki and companions) is February 6<sup>th</sup>.

*with the time he had ascertained from the magi.* (Matthew 2:16) Modern biblical scholars estimate Bethlehem's population was around 1,000 at the time, which means that up to about twenty infants were slain.

These babies and toddlers have been venerated in the Church since the first century. Early Church Fathers, including St. Irenaeus of Lyon and St. Augustine, and the liturgical tradition of the Church have celebrated them as saints and martyrs. This pair of titles is remarkable for those *"who, though still unable to profess [Jesus] in speech, were crowned with heavenly grace on account of his birth."* (Opening Prayer for December 28<sup>th</sup> Mass) None of these young Jewish boys were baptized or made a conscious decision to die for Christ, yet they were all saved through him.

Jesus spoke of the importance of baptism for salvation, for instance saying, *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."* (Mark 16:16) Yet he also said, *"Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."* (Matthew 19:14) The Church, lacking an explicit teaching from Christ regarding the death of unbaptized children, "can only entrust them to the [great] mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them." (CCC 1261) Perhaps the Lord, knowing his own provisions for their salvation, has kept us in our uncertainty lest we employ the twisted logic of Pharaoh, Herod, or Pilate to rationalize the intentional killing of the innocent. In any case, it has been the firm conviction and long tradition of Christ's Catholic Church that the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem now dwell with him in Heaven.

Jesus Christ and his martyrs, from Bethlehem to Japan, reveal and witness to strengthening truths. That this life, however long or short, is not all that there is. That God can bring salvation out of evil, even from disasters that break our hearts and surpass our understandings. And the martyrs affirm that, as Charles Spurgeon said, "Suffering is better than sinning. There is more evil in a drop of sin than in an ocean of affliction. Better [to] burn for Christ, than [to] turn from Christ." Whatever terrible crosses may afflict us or those we love, we can remember that our crucified King has suffered likewise and is always with us. Jesus tells us, *"In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."* (John 16:33)

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