



Heart of Jesus Catholic Church

Maronite Rite

Pastor: Reverend Rabih Aoun, M.L.M.

WEEKEND MASSES	Saturday at 4:00 pm (English) Sunday at 11:00 am (English + Arabic)
WEEKDAY MASSES	Monday through Thursday at 12:00 noon
CONFESSIONS	Saturday 3:00 pm - 3:45 pm
OFFICE HOURS	Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm <i>Closed on: Holy Days of Obligation and Federal Holidays</i>

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WHO ARE THE MARONITES?

The Maronite Church is one of 22 Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church, under the authority of the Pope. It dates back to the early Christians of Antioch (Syria) where Jesus' followers "were called Christians for the first time" (Acts 11:26). The actual name "Maronite" is derived from the name of Saint Maron, who was a priest and hermit, and died around the year 410 AD.

As part of the Roman Catholic Church, the Maronites profess the same beliefs in the Dogmatic and Moral teachings of the Church and celebrate the same seven Sacraments. Their liturgical celebrations are more unique and reflect their early Apostolic beginnings. For example, in some prayers and hymns of the Mass, the Maronites still use Syriac, a dialect of the Aramaic language spoken by Jesus and his Apostles, and incense is regularly used.

During the civil and religious persecutions of the 7th century, the Maronites fled their churches and monasteries in the plains of Syria, and took refuge in the verdant mountains and caves of nearby Lebanon. Since then, Lebanon has been considered the homeland of the Maronite Church.

Millions of Maronites now live in various countries throughout the world, but their Mother Church remains in Lebanon. The current Maronite Patriarch, Bechara Peter Rai, was made a Cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI, in November of 2012. Cardinal Rai lives at the Maronite Patriarchal residence in Bkerke, Lebanon.

The United States is home to two Maronite Eparchies (Dioceses). The Most Reverend Gregory Mansour is our Bishop who resides in Brooklyn, New York. Bishop Mansour is a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), as is the Maronite Bishop of the Western Eparchy, the Most Reverend Elias Zaidan who resides in Los Angeles.

History of Heart of Jesus Church

2012-2025

By Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, JCD

With the ever-growing population of South Florida, in 2010 the Most Reverend Gregory Mansour, the Bishop of our Eparchy (Diocese) of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, began to consider the establishment of a church for the Maronite faithful of Broward County to compliment the Maronite Parish of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami, which had been established in 1973.

Having reviewed demographic studies, Bishop Gregory purchased the “Unity Church of Christ of Fort Lauderdale,” on June 27, 2011, hoping to establish a new spiritual home for the Maronites of Broward County. The purchase price of the waterfront property, which included a church and parish hall (but no rectory), was \$2,400,000.00. This purchase was made possible thanks to a grant from the Anthony R. Abraham Foundation, in the amount of \$1,000,000.00, and through a loan from the Knights of Columbus. Bishop Gregory named the new church in honor of the Sacred Heart using a more direct translation of the Arabic: *Qalb Yasoo’*, “Heart of Jesus.”

At the time of the closing, the Eparchy immediately took possession of the parish hall and slowly began to renovate the interior of the building which had previously been sub-divided into many small rooms. This included demolishing most of the make-shift interior walls to open the space to allow for a hall that could seat 150 people. Two offices, two classrooms, a kitchen, and restrooms were maintained. Porcelain tile floors were installed, new internet and phone services were established, the lighting and electricity were repaired (including a new electrical panel), and the entire space was freshly painted. The costliest part of the hall renovations was the installation of hurricane resistant exterior doors, which replaced all of the wooden doors which had been greatly damaged by termite infestation. In fact, pest control technicians were kept quite busy in the first few months eliminating termites and rodents. Finally, new tables and chairs were purchased for the hall as well as office furniture and equipment.

Also, at the time of closing, the Eparchy became responsible for the up-keep of the grounds. The spacious gardens were horribly overgrown and infested with Norwegian rats and large land crabs. The parking lot was quite deteriorated, many of the parking cement bumpers were crushed, and the striping had practically disappeared. It took many months and several thousand dollars to clear out the jungle and make the parking lot and landscaping a healthy and presentable environment.

In accordance with the purchase agreement, the church building continued to be used by the Unity Church of Christ for 6 months from the closing date. They vacated the church on December 27, 2011. By then, the hall and the grounds were in good shape. With a scheduled opening date of January 6, 2012, that left only 11 days, including New Year’s Day, to make the necessary changes to the interior of the church.

During those very few days, the sanctuary, which is the raised platform for the altar, the tabernacle, and the pulpits, was too narrow in depth for Catholic worship, so it had to be extended out about 6 feet, and steps needed to be added. That entire area was then covered in porcelain tile. The pews, which had been angled, were straightened out, mildewed carpeting was removed, the sound system

and lighting were updated, and the entire interior was painted. Thanks to donations from the Archdiocese of Miami¹, the Diocese of Fall River (Massachusetts)², and various churches³ and priests, all of the sanctuary furnishings and appointments were put into place. Through the Grace of God, all of the work had been completed by January 6th.

On November 1, 2011, the Feast of All Saints, Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, the Vicar General and Chancellor of the Eparchy, was assigned by Bishop Gregory as the founding pastor (administrator) of this new church (while maintaining his other assignments). Deacon John Jarvis was also assigned to assist Chorbishop Michael at the new church.

Chorbishop Michael had been supervising the work taking place since the purchase of the property, and now the time had come for him to begin preparing for the spiritual and pastoral needs for the formation of a new mission. (A church community is called a “mission” until it becomes very well established, then it becomes a “parish”). Thanks to the assistance of Father Elie Mikhael, the Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami, a mailing list of Maronite families in Broward County had been drawn up, as best as possible, and Bishop Gregory and Chorbishop Michael began reaching out to those Maronites by letter. Father Elie also made several announcements at the Miami parish. We were further blessed to have been given good exposure in the newspapers of the Archdiocese of Miami: The Florida Catholic, and of Fort Lauderdale’s *Sun Sentinel*. Thanks to word of mouth and again, the Grace of God, the news of the opening this new mission spread.

The inaugural Divine Liturgy took place on January 6, 2012, the Feast of the Epiphany. The church was packed as Chorbishop Michael celebrated the Mass, blessed the Epiphany Water, and used that water to bless the entire building. Exactly one year later, January 6, 2013, Bishop Gregory Consecrated the church and the altar in the presence of Archbishop John Clement Favalora (Emeritus of Miami), Bishop George Coleman (Fall River), Bishop Frank Caggiano (Bridgeport, CT), Chorbishop Michael, and several priests and deacons. The relic of Saint Sharbel (a piece of his bone) was then permanently placed in the altar.

Since the day of its inauguration, attendance at all religious services has been extraordinary. Parishioners and friends have been most supportive and have contributed toward the many renovations that have been made and continue to make the church a safer and more beautiful House of God. Over time, stained glass windows⁴ were designed and installed, a confessional and a baptistery were added, and the sacristy (the vesting room for the clergy) was redone. Eventually, thanks to a parish Capital Campaign, the roofs of the church and hall were replaced with original

¹ The Main Altar, the Pulpit, and the celebrant’s chair originally from the Saint Luke’s Church in Coconut Creek, which had been closed.

² The Tabernacle, the statue of the Sacred Heart, the Processional Cross, and the Monstrance from their archived church goods of closed churches. The statue of the Virgin Mary was later donated to compliment the one of the Sacred Heart.

³ The Baptismal Font was a gift from Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Cathedral in Brooklyn, NY; A large crucifix and some liturgical vessels from Saint Rafka Maronite Retreat Center in Shelbourne, VT, which had been closed.

⁴ The first window to be installed was the Rose Window of the Heart of Jesus in the choir loft, then the other windows were added little by little: St. Joseph, St. Jude, Our Lady of Lebanon, St. Rita, St. Maron, St. Sharbel, St. Therese, St. Anne, St. John Maron, St. Padre Pio, St. John the Baptist, and St. Michael. The large window behind the Tabernacle is the Crucifixion. The names of the donors of these windows and all of the church appointments are engraved on “Donors’ Plaques” in the vestibule of the church.

Florida white cement tiles, and all of the 7 air-conditioning/heating units were replaced. Hurricane resistant doors and protective glass were installed.

Immediately upon the opening of the church, religious education classes for children, as well as a choir, altar servers, and an MYO (youth organization) were established. The Pastor's Advisory Board was formed and held its first meeting on June 25, 2012, and a Ladies Guild met for the first time on September 17 of the same year. The first meeting of the Men's Club took place in 2015.

We are thankful that in 2013, some parishioners took the initiative to form 2 groups to sustain our parish in prayer: The Family of the Sacred Heart and the Saint Sharbel Prayer Group. Both of these have grown steadily in number and have been faithful to their charism. Also, for several years the parish has been involved in providing monthly food supplies for the local Saint Vincent de Paul Society. The parish also sponsored the international study program: *Women of Grace* in 2024-2025. Several ladies of the parish participated and found it to be a wonderful tool for the understanding and deepening of their faith.

In July of 2014, a rectory (priest's house) was purchased in Oakland Park. It was bought for \$145,000.00 in cash! Much of this amount was thanks to a generous gift from Deacon John and Faith Jarvis. In a short 9 months the rectory was extensively renovated and newly furnished, thanks to the hard work and contributions of parishioners and friends. Chorbishop Michael moved into this parish home in April of 2015. Since then, the roof has been replaced, and hurricane resistant windows and doors have been installed.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the opening of the church in 2022, all of the pews were reupholstered and refinished, a porcelain tile floor was installed in the entire church, and the interior and exterior of the church and hall were repainted. Also on this occasion, our "mission" church was officially established as a "parish" by Bishop Gegory Mansour.

Thanks to an additional grant from the Anthony Abraham Foundation, the kindness of Bishop Gregory, and to the hard work and generosity of our parishioners, the mortgage was paid in full in November of 2024!

In May of 2025, thanks to a grant received from the Koch Foundation, the parish hall was fitted with hurricane resistant windows, thus securing all of our parish buildings as best as possible.

On June 1, 2025, upon the retirement of the parish's founding pastor, Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, a new pastor (administrator) has been appointed to lead the parish, Reverend Father Rabih Aoun, MLM.

The Lord has greatly blessed this church with remarkable success thanks to his abundant graces and to the dedication and generosity of her parishioners, friends, and benefactors. May he continue to have us flourish and grow in the love of his Sacred Heart!



HEART OF JESUS CATHOLIC CHURCH
MARONITE RITE
1800 N.E. 6th Court
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33304

November 19, 2025

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

As we will soon celebrate a special day to give thanks to God for all the benefits he has given us, it also reminds us that the feast of Christmas is very soon to follow.

In honor of the Birth of Our Lord Jesus, I am happy to share some good news with you: Our parish has been offered a matching grant of up to \$8,000.00. In other words, whatever we can collect from our parishioners and friends by Christmas Day (not counting the Sunday and holy day collections taken at Mass), will be matched, up to \$8,000.00.


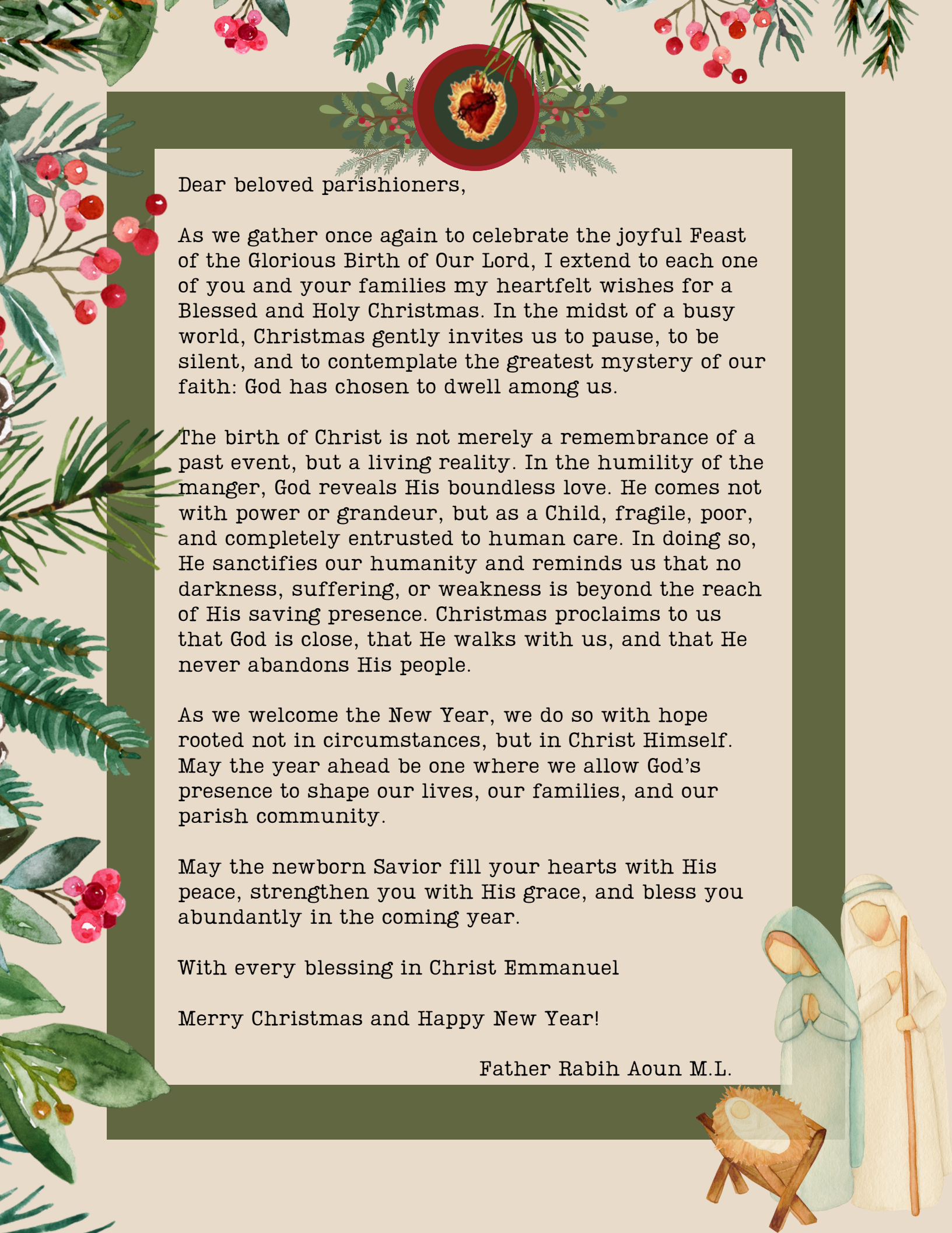
This is a wonderful opportunity for our parish. Any contribution you can make, large or small, would be greatly appreciated. Simply place your donation in the enclosed envelope and either mail it to us or drop it off when you come to the church. Remember that the deadline is Christmas Day.

I wish all of you a very Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed preparation for Christmas.

Thank you and God reward you for your kindness!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rabih', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Fr. Rabih



Dear beloved parishioners,

As we gather once again to celebrate the joyful Feast of the Glorious Birth of Our Lord, I extend to each one of you and your families my heartfelt wishes for a Blessed and Holy Christmas. In the midst of a busy world, Christmas gently invites us to pause, to be silent, and to contemplate the greatest mystery of our faith: God has chosen to dwell among us.

The birth of Christ is not merely a remembrance of a past event, but a living reality. In the humility of the manger, God reveals His boundless love. He comes not with power or grandeur, but as a Child, fragile, poor, and completely entrusted to human care. In doing so, He sanctifies our humanity and reminds us that no darkness, suffering, or weakness is beyond the reach of His saving presence. Christmas proclaims to us that God is close, that He walks with us, and that He never abandons His people.

As we welcome the New Year, we do so with hope rooted not in circumstances, but in Christ Himself. May the year ahead be one where we allow God's presence to shape our lives, our families, and our parish community.

May the newborn Savior fill your hearts with His peace, strengthen you with His grace, and bless you abundantly in the coming year.

With every blessing in Christ Emmanuel

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Father Rabih Aoun M.L.





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Christmas Edition

December 21 ~ January 11



**Wishing all of our parishioners and friends a
blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with the
graces of the new-born Christ Child.**



Christmas Fast

Monday, December 15 – Wednesday, December 24 (Noon)

In our Maronite tradition, each day of this period is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat and dairy products, except for Sundays. Although highly encouraged, this fast is not obligatory for us in the USA.

Christmas Novena

Sunday, December 21: 10:30 am: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
 10:45 am: Novena
 11:00 am: Mass
 For the intentions of Grace Middlemiss

Monday, December 22: 11:30 am: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
 11:45 am: Novena
 12:00 Noon: Mass
 For the intentions of Mark Kasperovich and Rose Bonell

Tuesday, December 23: 11:30 am: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
 11:45 am: Novena
 12:00 Noon: Mass
 For the intentions of the Jacqueline Chapdelaine family

Christmas Masses

Holy Day of Obligation

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve: **12:00 Midnight**
 For the intentions of parishioners, friends, and benefactors, living and deceased.

Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day: **11:00 am**
 For the intentions of parishioners, friends, and benefactors, living and deceased.

A Second Collection will be taken on Christmas for the *Pastor's Collection*.

† † † †

(Friday, December 26: No Mass)

Saturday, December 27: 4:00 pm: Mass
 For the Souls in Purgatory

Sunday, December 28: **Sunday after the Glorious Birth:** 11:00 am: Mass
 For Gonzalo Velasquez
 By Mayro and Daniel Molina

(Monday, December 29 and Tuesday, December 30: No Masses)

Wednesday, December 31: New Year's Eve: 4:00 pm: Mass Celebrated by **Bishop Gregory J. Mansour**
For the intentions of parishioners, friends, and benefactors, living and deceased.

2026 - New Year's Day Mass
Holy Day of Obligation

Thursday, January 1: **The Circumcision of Jesus: 11:00 am**
Mass Celebrated by **Bishop Gregory J. Mansour**
For the intentions of parishioners, friends, and benefactors, living and deceased.
(NO coffee hour after Mass on this day.)

† † † †

(Friday, January 2: No Mass)

Saturday, January 3: 4:00 pm: Mass
For all Deacons and Subdeacons, living and deceased

Sunday, January 4: **Finding of Our Lord in the Temple**
11:00 am: Mass
For members of "The Family of the Sacred Heart", and their families,
living and deceased
By "The Family of the Sacred Heart"

Monday, January 5: Noon: Mass
For the intentions of Marsha Macary

Epiphany and Baptism of the Lord
14th Anniversary of our Parish
Holy Day of Obligation

Tuesday, January 6: **7:00 pm:** Mass with Blessing of Holy Water
For the intentions of parishioners, friends, and benefactors, living and deceased.

† † † †

Wednesday, January 7: **Praises of John the Baptist:**
Noon: Mass
For the intentions of Rosemary Maarcey
By Gladys Guzman

Thursday, January 8: Noon: Mass
For Leslie Murray
By Michael Murray and Family

(Friday, January 09: No Mass)

Saturday, January 10: 4:00 pm: Mass
For intentions of Saleem Aziz Thomas and Christian Thomas
By Dottie Nolen

Sunday, January 11: **1st Sunday after Epiphany:**
11:00 am: Mass
For George Ghazal
By Zuha Ghazal and The Family

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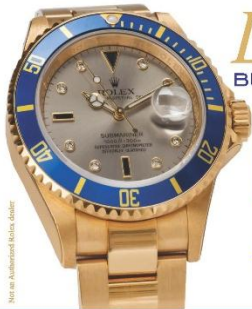


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