

S a i n t A g n e s



St. Agnes is an inclusive Catholic community dedicated to the love of God and service to others. We rejoice in the Gospel, the celebration of the Liturgy, and the Sacraments. We welcome the opportunity to share God's message and to bring all into the life of Christ.

Pastoral Contacts

Pastor: Rev. Andrew M. Switzer
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. T. Mathew Rowgh
Coordinator of Faith Formation: Bill Donahue
Assistant Administrator: Beth Yates
Accounting: Lizzie Lowe
Liturgy: Helen Harris
Music Ministry: Elaine Rendler-McQueeney

Pastoral Council

Connie Bonner ~ Derek Gallagher
Christine Wiegman-Green ~ Patrick Green
Shaná Harris ~ Colin Hayden ~ Brendan Jarrell
Bill Sagle ~ Gil Sateia
Vanessa Santiago ~ Becky Tokarcik

Finance Council

Pat Barth ~ Steve Bledsoe
Mike Drewes ~ Todd Hershey
Sue Kemnitzer ~ David Matera ~ Arnold Thomas

St. Agnes Church

200 South Duke Street, Shepherdstown

St. Agnes Parish Office

106 South Duke Street, Shepherdstown
P.O. Box 1603, Shepherdstown, WV 25443
Telephone 304-876-6436
Office@StAgnesShepherdstown.org
www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org

St. Agnes Chapel

204 South Church Street, Shepherdstown

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
Psalm 85:8ab+9, 10-11, 12-13
2 Peter 3:8-14
Mark 1:1-8

Weekly Schedule

Sunday Mass

Saturday, 5:30pm

Sunday, 8am

Sunday, 10:30am

Weekday Mass

Monday & Wednesday at 11am

Ecumenical Advent

Wednesday at 1pm & 7pm

Reconciliation: Saturday, 4-5pm

Parish Office: Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm

Cash Card Sales: Weekdays during office hours
(please call first)



Mass Intentions

Sunday, 10:30am Mass for the intentions of
Maureen Maidhof

In your kindness, please pray for Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Edwards, Jr., Ret. US Air Force, husband of Cathy Lauri, who died this past week. May Bob share in the fulness of God's love and peace.

Remember in Prayer

Please pray daily for those serving in the Military, our veterans in recovery, and those recently ill especially Marie Snowden, Barbara, Mueller, Bill Seymour, Todd Hershey, Stef Hale (friend of Jackie Gore), Jim Keller, Maureen Maidhof, Anne Oxford, and Georgette Rush. Names are placed in the bulletin for approximately one month and then those names are placed on the 2nd Friday prayer list and are remembered in prayer each month.

2nd Friday Prayer Group

A list has begun for the 2nd Friday in January. Please contact Judy at any time with names of individuals you would like to add or if you would like to join the group. Judy: 301-432-2276 or jslilga8@gmail.com.

Service, Justice, and Peace Weekend Results

The Service, Justice, and Peace collection for this past weekend follows. Nine bags of Haiti coffee were sold for \$90. \$140 was collected to feed the hungry and homeless. \$40 was collected to buy diapers and hygiene products. Thank-you to all who donated to these worthy causes.

Shepherdstown Shares Toy and Gift Collection

It's that magical time again! Shepherdstown Shares is collecting toys and gifts for our clients and their families: Toys, hats, gloves, scarves, etc. Toy collection boxes can be found at Greentree Realty, Shepherdstown Public Library, St. Agnes Parish Center, Shepherdstown Dollar General, and the Shepherdstown Sweet Shop. Unwrapped toys can be dropped off until December 18th! Thanks! For additional information check out their Facebook page.

Our Newest Octogenarian

Happy Birthday and many happy returns of the day to John Griffith who, on this very day—December 10, 2023, has reached the rank of octogenarian!

Scripture Sharing

Our Scripture Sharing group continues to meet via Zoom (link found on website under events calendar) on Mondays at noon except for holidays. All are welcome!

Longings of Advent: Praying for Peace and Justice An Ecumenical Contemplative Prayer Series

Each Wednesday in Advent, we will meet in the afternoon for prayer and contemplation, and, each Wednesday evening, we will meet for a form of evening prayer. We also have Taizé on the 3rd Sunday of Advent.

December 13, 1pm: Lectio Divina
St Peter's Lutheran Church

December 13, 7pm: Holden Evening Prayer
St Peter's Lutheran Church

December 17, 4pm: Taizé
St Agnes

December 20, 1pm: Contemplative Prayer Stations
New Street Methodist Church

December 20, 7pm: Lessons and Carols
New Street Methodist Church

Donations throughout our Ecumenical Advent Series will go to Doctors Without Borders. Checks should be made out to "Caring Cupboard."

Jesse Tree Gifts Due by Noon Today!

If you took a tag from our Jesse Tree, **we need to have the gifts returned by 12noon today, Sunday, December 10.**

If you selected a gift tag for a gift card, please bring cash or check and place your donation, along with the gift tag, in the red velvet trimmed basket in the Narthex or bring them to the parish center or place in the collection basket during Mass. St. Agnes volunteers will purchase the gift cards from the Church with your donation. Please indicate "**Jesse Tree GIFT**" on the memo line of the check or on the envelope if your offering is cash. If your tag is for a specific gift, please wrap it and attach the gift tag to the outside and bring it to the **Church or Parish Center**. Any questions? Please contact **Steve Bledsoe at (678)447-1343**. Many thanks for your generosity!



Dear Parishioners,

This Friday we celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. There is a tendency on this feast day to put an emphasis on original sin. I find in the reading and symbols a more attractive direction is the surprising way God calls us in our ordinary life. The Genesis story that asks Adam and Eve, "where are you?" I believe is the foundational principle of the whole spiritual life. We have a tendency, out of fear, to run from the gift of our self or hide our truest self. Yet our loving God wants us to gently accept ourselves and see what possibilities for our future there are when we begin to see ourselves as a gift along with all of creation. In the gospel on this feast, as Mary faces new surprises and possibilities about herself, her first reaction is fear. The angel Gabriel comes to her to reveal to her that what looks like a problem or a danger is a gift. There is a new birth and call that is opening on her journey. The God of surprises with her yes is opening possibilities and a new beginning for all of humanity. Perhaps Advent is a season for us to see ourselves in the characters and symbols; the God of love to meet us just where we are at, and, even in the fears we hold ourselves or for our world, to allow the Angel Gabriel's message of "Do not be afraid" to follow the gift coming to birth in us. I offer this poem that I shared in the homily the first Sunday of Advent. May we see our journey and call in the symbols and stories of this season. May it stretch our imagination to follow the God of surprises.

To stay or to go the advent story
has its uncertainty.

Dead of winter is
Unexpectedly pregnant
Advent annunciation
An inevitable apocalypse

Quietly divorce her
or follow the star.

Return to the King
Or flee and follow a dream.

Pregnancy, Nativity
Epiphany

Advent candlelight
And winter's unpredictability
Awaits the Christmas mystery.

Fr. Andy

Blood Pressure and Sugar Checks This Weekend!

Our parish nurses will be available this weekend after each Mass for Blood pressure and blood sugar checks.

Prayer Sponsors Needed

We are looking for prayer sponsors for our children preparing for First Eucharist. A prayer sponsor is someone who would like to show support and offer prayer for a child preparing to receive their First Eucharist. If you are interested in serving as a prayer sponsor, please call or email the parish office. You will be assigned a child, and you faithfully pray for them every day. A prayer sponsor may send a card to them (anonymously) and let them know they are being prayed for, but the giving of gifts is not necessary. We want this to be about the gift of prayer, not material gifts. We ask that if you send a card to sign it "your prayer sponsor." It is nice to stay anonymous until the First Eucharist celebration. We ask that the prayer sponsor come to the First Eucharist Mass on Sunday, April 28th at 10:30 AM where you can introduce yourself. If interested in being a prayer sponsor, please call the office or contact Bill Donahue at formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org.

What is the Purpose of VIRTUS Training and Why Is It Important?

The Diocese of Wheeling Charleston is requiring all volunteers to be VIRTUS trained. This is part of the Diocese's Safe Environment policy that St. Agnes is required to follow. **All volunteers must be Virtus trained, even those who are not involved with the youth.** We must be in compliance by the end of 2023. **If you volunteer in any capacity at St Agnes, you must be Virtus trained.**

VIRTUS training is designed to help adults recognize the signs that indicate a child might be suffering abuse. It also helps adults by offering key points to help children, who might confide in them, deal with potential situations. Finally, it helps adults know who to contact and what the next steps are if they suspect or discover a child is being abused. All this training is designed to help adults help children through a difficult situation.

Our Coordinator, Bill Donahue, can assist with verifying your training status and/or initiating your training which is 100% online. For questions or concerns, contact Bill at 304-876-6436 or formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org. Please help us achieve full compliance.

Fr Mat's Kolofata Dinner Fundraiser

We Have Winners!

Winners of the 6 dinner packages are: Peg Eackles and guest; Susan Kemnitzer and guest; Michael Bodin and guest; Teddie Schwartzhoff and guest; Louise Fitzgerald and guest; Christine Wiegman and guest.

The grand total raised is \$3,777! Someone had a very clever bidding strategy. No reveals but others may try to figure it out. The winners will have a memorable dinner, and our Kolofata girls are the true beneficiaries. Thanks to the winners and non-winners who made this so successful.

One of Our Core Outreach Ministries Needs Our Help!

One of our most important outreach ministries that addresses a huge need in our County has been our provision of **meals to the homeless and hungry** three Wednesday evenings a month at one of the Charles Town churches. We have been one of a large number of churches and community groups who have worked together to sustain this 365 day a year ministry for over 10 years. Countless parishioners through the years have prepared, delivered and served meals and/or donated funds to cover meal costs. This is one of the most important— and popular—ongoing ministries of our youth who for years have prepared one meal a month.

We have a funding shortfall this year—and into the future without your help. A full explanation follows. **Here's the short version: If 30 people give \$5 a month, and 20 people give \$10 a month, and 10 people give \$25 a month, we will cover our yearly expenses!**

Originally meals were served in a church building. On average at the start folks would prepare enough for 25 people—but always more the last Wednesday of the month. By then folks usually have exhausted their SNAP benefits, if they are eligible, or other funds so the numbers of people seeking a warm meal usually increases around 20%. As numbers of people seeking a meal increased and food costs rose, we started providing cash cards to our chefs, purchased through St. Agnes, to help underwrite their costs. We started at \$25, then \$50 and by the time of Covid we were providing \$100 to \$150 depending on time of month.

In order to fund the cash cards, we asked for donations at our monthly Social Concerns (now Service, Justice and Peace, SJP) weekends. We also received online donations

and periodic contributions. Gradually through the years we built up a generous surplus which got us through donation dry spells.

Then came Covid. Meal delivery didn't stop – it just changed. Food was now prepared in carry-out containers and handed out to people outside the church doors. This method became so popular it continues to this day. And the numbers of people coming for a hot meal started to climb. First to forty, then fifty, now regularly sixty people come, and one evening seventy!

Food costs too have increased. We were able to continue to provide cash cards and increased the regular amount given to chefs to \$150. Now with the increasing meal counts we believe we want to increase the amount we give our parish chefs to \$175. After an initial drop of financial support from parishioners in 2020, donations picked up again in 2021, but then donations dropped by 50% in 2022, and by another 20% in 2023. We barely broke even in 2022 and we are deficit spending in 2023 at a time when the need is growing. Of the first eleven months of 2023, we deficit spent in four months – and we know there will be great need in December and beyond for food.

We are asking an enormous commitment from our parishioner chefs, including our youth, and we need more volunteers **especially** to help transport the food to the distribution point and give out the meals to folks. And we desperately need **ONGOING** contributions to this ministry. There are lots of ways to donate—at our monthly SJP weekends, by a check in the collection basket or sent to the Parish Office with HOMELESS on the memo line, or by online giving.

Book Discussion Group

Our December Book Discussion Selection
December 15, 2023 @ 11 in the Parish Center

A couple of years ago we decided that our December selection would be a "lighter" read, a book that would put us into the spirit of the Advent/Christmas season. This year's choice is not exactly "light" but it comes well recommended. Join us in reading *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan.

We Need Your Help

Have past experience working on a school yearbook, directory, photo album, scrapbook, or publication? Have experience in scheduling activities for yourself or others? Would you be interested in contributing your experiences toward the next St. Agnes Church Photo Directory? If you have applicable experiences or an interest in helping, please contact the office at Office@StAgnesShepherdstown.org or Gil Sateia at snoremaster@comcast.net. Thanks in advance!

Thank You

to all who supported the
Christmas Bazaar and Raffle
Bakers
Venders
Volunteers
Soup Makers
St. Agnes Crafters
Those that bought Tickets
Everyone that came to the Bazaar

A total of \$1772.00 was given to the
St. Agnes
Special Collections
to help those in need

CFF, AFF, Youth Group & Family
News

THE YOUTH CORNER

CFF: There are no CFF classes this weekend. Catechesis will occur during the Intergenerational Mass at 5 PM. Families are encouraged to attend. CFF classes will occur next weekend (Dec. 17) at 9:15 AM in the parish center. There are no CFF classes on Dec. 24 or Dec. 31.

ADULT Classes: Growing in Faith will meet next week (Dec. 17) at 9:15 AM in the parish center. They will not meet today (Dec. 10) however, please consider joining in the Intergenerational Mass at 5 PM tonight.

CONGRATULATIONS to our Children who completed their First Reconciliation yesterday!

RCIA and RCIC will meet today at Noon in the Parish Center today.

Interested in being part of the Intergenerational Winter Musical? Contact Joe Yates, our resident director, at joeyates47@gmail.com. Rehearsals just started so it is not too late to join in. The shows will occur in February.

Keep watching this spot, the Youth Facebook Page, our church calendar and the church website for additional activities. **Remember to join the CFF Google Classroom (link was sent to your email).** It is a one stop spot to find all the latest forms, classroom information, recorded classes, etc.

Most importantly, if you are a parent and not receiving CFF announcements and emails, please contact the Parish center at 304-876-6436 or contact Bill Donahue at: formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org. Parents are also encouraged to join our Youth Facebook Group. Please email Bill at the above address for the link to the closed group. You won't be able to find Our Youth Facebook Page any other way!

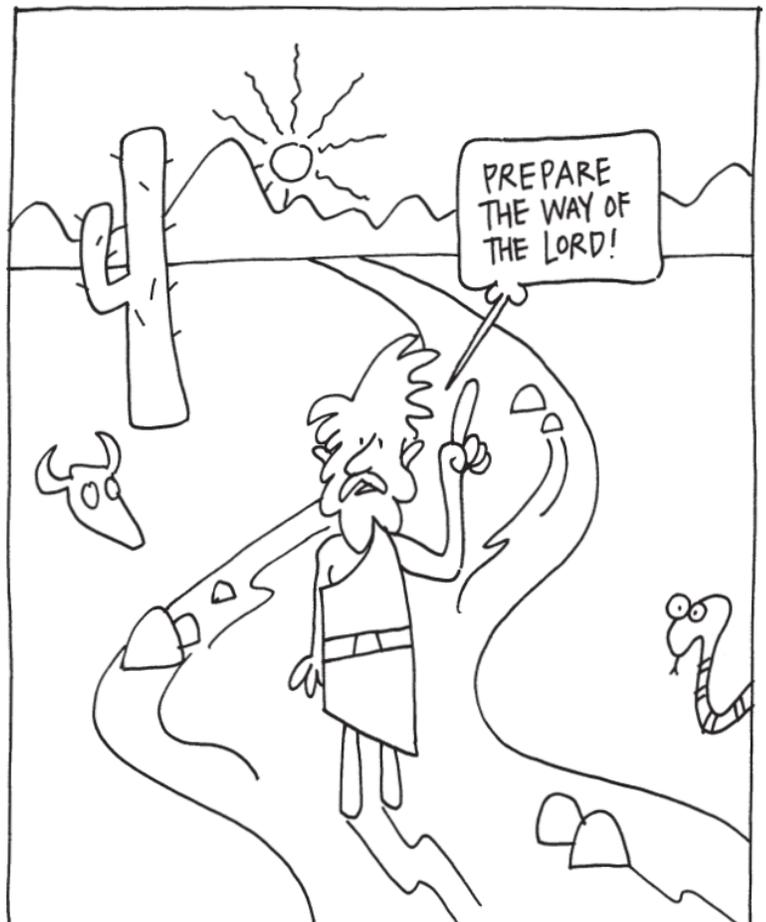
This Week's Gospel:
Mark 1: 1-8

December 10, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent



				9			
					5	1	
1				8	7		4
4				6	9	8	
	9			1		7	
					4	6	3
5		4	8				7
8					3		
		1		3	5		



Across

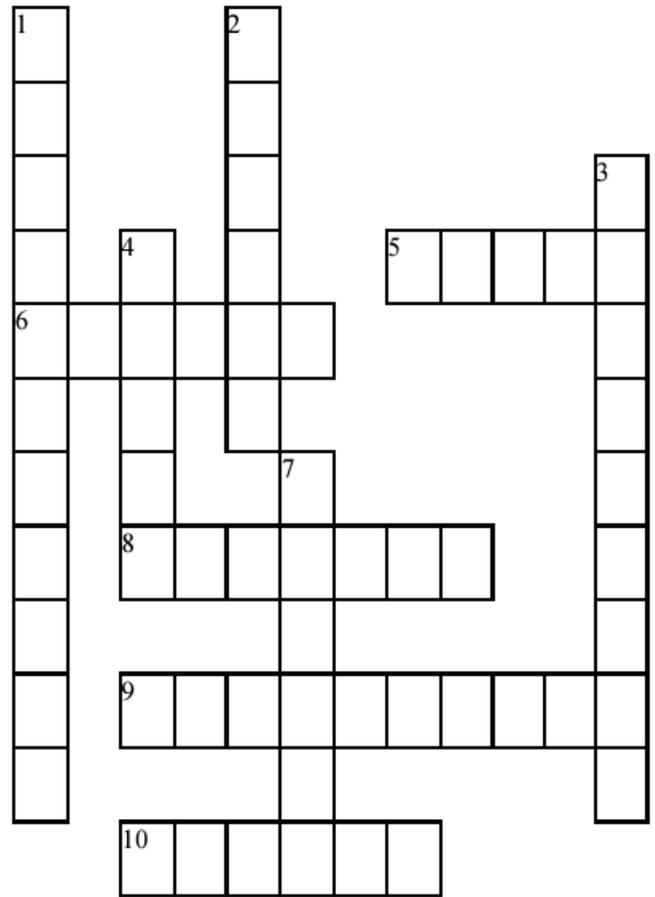
5. It is crying in the desert.
6. Prophet: "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you..."
8. John made a meal out of these.
9. Type of baptism proclaimed by John the Baptist.
10. Straps

Down

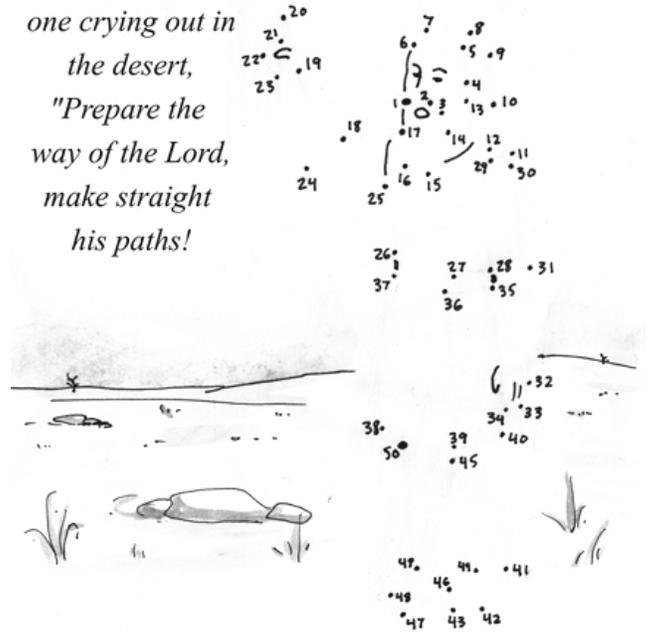
1. Unscramble the letters: RVEFGESOINS
2. John baptized in this river.
3. People from this city were baptised by John.
4. John's clothes was made from this animal.
7. People came from this countryside to see John the Baptist.



A Voice in the Desert Mark 1: 1-8



*I am the voice of
one crying out in
the desert,
"Prepare the
way of the Lord,
make straight
his paths!"*



*What did God send before Jesus to prepare the
people for His coming?
Connect the dots to find out!*

C	T	C	G	O	S	P	E	L	E	O	G	N	G
H	O	H	Y	J	J	I	L	D	M	B	N	A	H
R	I	P	E	O	O	S	I	T	R	A	I	E	H
I	C	R	N	R	H	P	R	E	G	P	H	H	P
S	O	O	O	D	N	O	G	C	P	T	C	T	C
T	N	P	H	A	T	N	S	N	J	I	A	R	A
E	F	H	E	N	E	P	T	A	R	Z	E	E	L
C	E	E	S	S	H	S	H	T	N	E	R	S	L
I	S	T	S	S	R	T	G	N	S	D	P	E	I
O	S	E	I	J	I	S	I	E	C	T	A	D	N
V	M	Y	J	E	V	U	A	P	O	T	E	L	G
P	A	T	H	S	E	C	R	E	H	N	L	R	S
L	D	H	N	U	R	O	T	R	T	G	C	A	S
E	N	G	O	S	T	L	S	P	N	G	P	J	H

- MESSENGER
- JORDAN
- REPENTANCE
- SANDALS
- RIVER
- GOSPEL
- PROPHET
- HONEY
- STRAIGHT
- JESUS
- DESERT
- CONFESS
- LOCUSTS
- VOICE
- BAPTIZE
- JOHN
- CALLING
- PATH
- CHRIST
- PREACHING

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/6428806/>

Saint John the Baptist

John was the last prophet God sent to prepare the way for Jesus. Finish this short biography of John by filling in the blanks. You'll find all the missing words in the box below. You will need to use some words more than once.



- | | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|---------|------------|
| Mary | Gabriel | nine | baptize | believe |
| Zechariah | Jordan | locusts | skinny | old |
| Herod | Temple | baptized | weird | preaching |
| Simon Peter | mute | honey | sinless | Jerusalem |
| Andrew | leaped for joy | camel's hair | speaker | Elizabeth |
| Jesus | beloved Son | desert | John | repentance |

Part 1

John was born not far from the great city of _____ about six months before the birth of _____. His dad, _____, was a priest in the _____. His mom, _____, was a housewife and a relative of _____. _____ was believed to be too _____ to have babies.

One day when _____ was burning incense in the _____, the angel _____ appeared and told him that _____ would have a baby. The angel said they should name the baby _____, which means "God is gracious." Because he did not _____, he was struck _____.

For _____ months, he was not able to speak a word, not until the baby was born and was named John.



The Gospel at Home

This Sunday's Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

In Sunday's Gospel, John the Baptist urges people to prepare a smooth, straight road on which God can come to us. Isaiah's words of comfort to the exiled Israelites assure them and us that we can count on God's forgiveness. Jesus' words call for us to turn our lives around and make sure that we have an open path for God to enter our hearts. Note: Tuesday is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, another chance to celebrate Mary, our Mother.

Exploring the Gospel Message

Promise (Grades K-1): Your child is very aware of growth and change in his or her own body—and is growing as a Christian too. Be sure to praise your child for the ways he or she shares with others. Ask your child to tell you the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe and share with you the little booklet he or she made in class.

Good News (Grades 2-3): This week, your child learned the words of John the Baptist, who told people to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Talk about the ways your family is preparing for Christmas. Are you thinking and praying about the birth of Jesus, or are you thinking about toys and gifts? Ask your child to tell the family the story of "A Boy Named John" from this week's lesson. Add the Prayer to the Holy Spirit in family prayers this week.

Venture (Grades 4-6): This week, your young person prepared for the Christmas feast by learning about the prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist, two biblical characters who preceded Jesus. Your son or daughter also learned the importance of forgiving and seeking forgiveness as part of making a straight path for the Lord's arrival. Make sure your young person understands how sin separates us from God. Ask your youngster to share the story of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal with you.

Visions (Grades 7-9): Gift-giving has long been a part of the Christmas celebration. In class, your teen explored his or her own attitudes about giving presents at Christmas. He or she also explored how to give of him- or herself in the gifts that he or she gives. Talk about the way your family approaches giving gifts at Christmastime. Think of ways you can give of yourself to the people you give presents. Consider having your family enact the Our Lady of Guadalupe play included in this week's lesson.

Pray Together

To celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12), add praying the Hail Mary to your Advent wreath prayer this week. You may even want to place a statue or picture of Mary near your wreath.

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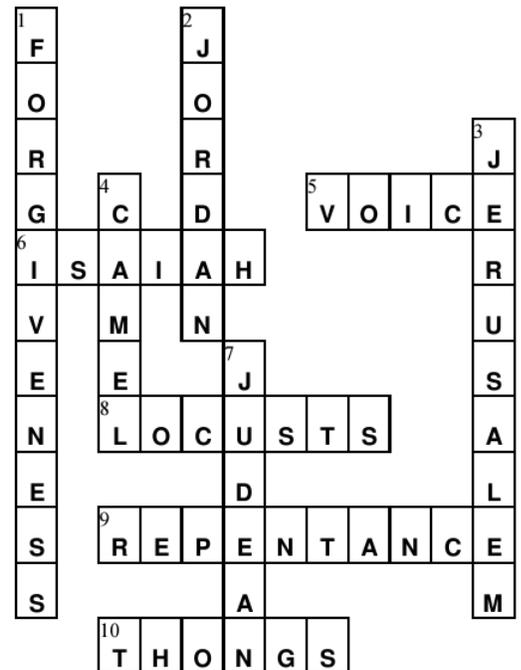
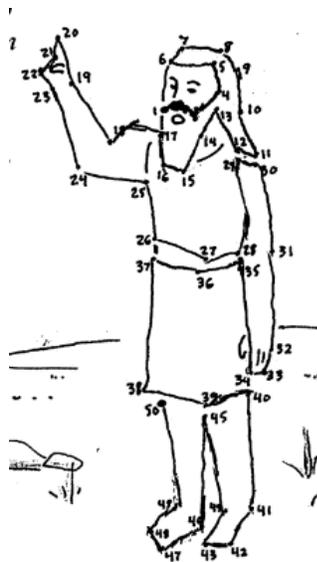
SOLUTIONS:



Saint John the Baptist

Paragraph 1: Jerusalem, Jesus, Zechariah, Temple, Elizabeth, Mary, Elizabeth, old
Paragraph 2: Zechariah, Temple, Gabriel, Elizabeth, John, believe, mute
Paragraph 3: nine

3	4	5	6	1	9	7	2	8
7	8	6	4	2	3	5	1	9
1	2	9	5	8	7	6	3	4
4	5	3	2	7	6	9	8	1
6	9	8	3	4	1	2	7	5
2	1	7	9	5	8	4	6	3
5	3	4	8	6	2	1	9	7
8	7	2	1	9	4	3	5	6
9	6	1	7	3	5	8	4	2



Our 3rd Annual Kolofata Sale Was the Best Yet!

Thanks to all of our parishioners who supported our Third Annual Potholder Sale this year. We called it Potholder Plus because we added wine bags by Christine Wiegman, another committee member, and resin items made by Regenia Carder. Her Trinket boxes were very popular. The potholder/colorful wood serving piece combination remained another great crowd pleaser. This week's sales totaled \$595. Combined with prior sales of \$665, our grand total this year is \$1260!

We have 9 potholders left. If we can sell these, we will top \$1300. Stop by the Parish Office to buy one (or more), or call and we can have them available at Church next weekend for you.

We also received contributions totaling \$571.25 during the course of the sales. Many of these donations come from supporters who take the opportunity to drop off their donations during the sale – and other donations are pleasant, unexpected surprises from folks.

Thank you all – and a special thanks to our Committee volunteers and other “helpers” who came to our rescue and who made these weekends a success!

Universal Declaration of Human Rights Turns 75

10 December 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of one of the world's most groundbreaking global pledges: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This landmark document enshrines the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 and sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.

Available in more than 500 languages, it is the most translated document in the world. A year-long initiative focusing on universality, progress and engagement, will culminate in a high-level event in December 2023, which will announce global pledges and ideas for a vision for the future of human rights.

The Declaration can be found here: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

Ugly Sleeping Bag Ministry

We are always in need of donated **blankets**, and **comforters** (any size) and also used **sleeping bags** (clean and in fair condition). Items can be dropped off at the parish center. Please join our team of sewers! For more information, contact Barbara Mueller by email at barbaramueller596@gmail.com.

Spotlight on Ministry

I have been a Catholic since childhood. I didn't attend Catholic school, but in our family we attended St. Francis of Assisi in Johnstown, PA. I was allowed to join the choir in about fifth grade and have sung in church choirs wherever I have lived. There were many different celebrations I attended growing up besides the Sunday Masses.

Pope Francis' Synod on Synodality is about Communion, Participation, and Mission. Focusing on Participation is the path to being in Communion and discovering our Mission. We are all gifted and there is joy in participation by using our gifts for building the Kingdom of God. As an adult I still sing in the choir. Being a part of the Liturgy enhances my sense of Communion with God and everyone in the Body of Christ. It's much more interesting to do something than simply observe. More recently I have been a Hospitality minister, which I used to think I was too flighty to do. This ministry is an opportunity to greet others and see everyone who walks through that door. I also become more vigilant watching over the congregation in order to notice if someone needs some help.

Participation extends to what happens the rest of the day and week. I am involved in the Service, Justice, and Peace Committee in order to live my faith. Following Christ's example by helping others discover the love and light inside of them is what I try to do. There have been other opportunities to build relationships, study, and lead. My faith is the blueprint for how I attempt to live my life. I know I fall short, but I also know I am forgiven.

I remember being awed by God as a child. As an adult I am still in awe of God but I realize God has given me so much and it is my call to listen and participate. What a journey it has been!

Eileen Elliott

Please consider joining one of our ministries at St Agnes. There's so many ways to get involved and grow in your faith. Adult and youth Altar Servers needed. Please contact Helen Harris at liturgy@stagnesshepherdstown.org.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult) is for those who are interested in learning about the Catholic faith and discerning if they might want to be professed members of the Catholic faith. The goal is to see where the process takes you. If you are interested in learning more or joining the group, please call the office at 304-876-6436.

Memorial Christmas Flowers

Parishioners may memorialize our Christmas season decorations. Memorials will be listed in our Christmas bulletin. Complete an envelope, found on the narthex table or included in your monthly envelope mailing, and place it in the offertory basket by Sunday, December 17.

Laudato Si'

Hundreds of scientists from universities, industry and federal agencies contributed to the National Climate Assessment released last month. There's bad news and good news.

In the decade of the 1980's the US averaged 3.3 severe weather events (defined as freezes, winter storms, wildfires, droughts, flooding, hurricanes and severe storms) per year. By the 1990's that had increased to 5.7 per year. In the first 10 years of the 21st century we averaged 6.7 and in the last 3 years, the US has averaged 20 such weather events per year. These cost us all in dollars, decreased quality of environment and health and in deaths to humans, animals, plants and waterways. These events have an even greater impact on our brothers and sisters in poorer countries where access to resources and money to recover, rebuild and replant are far less than in our own country.

The good news is that we can make a difference. There are dozens of suggestions that reduce greenhouse gases which lead to severe weather events. Even going back to the Catholic practice of not eating meat on Fridays year round can have a measurable impact as animals we eat produce greenhouse gases at a much higher rate than growing vegetables, grains and legumes.

Check out the following websites for many more suggestions:

<https://www.un.org/actnow>

<https://www.epa.gov/climate-change/what-you-can-do-about-climate-change>

[Catholic Church can curb carbon emissions by returning to meat-free Fridays](#)

References: National Climate Assessment 2023: NOAA
National Centers for Environments Information: University of Cambridge

Cash Cards for Christmas Giving

There is a cash card for everyone on your Christmas gift list! We can order almost anything and have it here in time for Christmas. Check out the available cards at <https://www.raiseright.com/brands>, and call the office with your order. Cards arrive within a week. For arrival by Christmas, **please order by December 11th**.

JCCM Food Pantry Current Needs

Canned meats (especially chicken)
Mac and Cheese
Soup (tomato and hearty soups)
Canned Beans
Rice
Jelly
Syrup, Pancake Mix
Crackers
Coffee (Instant and Ground)
Canned fruit
Canned pasta
Cooking Oil
Razors
Shampoo/Conditioner
Paper towels
Dish Soap
Laundry Detergent
Cat and Dog Food

Homebound Ministry

For any parishioners who have needs (groceries, rides to doctors or pharmacies, etc,) our **HOMEBOUND MINISTRY** is willing to help. Please call Claire Williamson (304-876-1357), or Judy Lilga (301-432-2276).

Parish Financial Activity

Collections – Last Week

Offertory Collections	\$12,092
Monthly Mortgage Assistance	\$590
Total (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$12,682
Weekly Target (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$11,900
Total Collections Compared to Target	↑ +\$782

Tithe to help those in need \$1,209

(St. Agnes tithes 10% of all offertory donations)

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston maintains an Office of Safe Environment in accordance with the USCCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. **To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children:** The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities:** Contact your local law enforcement; numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** In addition to civil authorities, the diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the **EthicsPoint** platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected.

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IRA Charitable Gifts

A gift through your IRA is a great way to support St Agnes. Here is some information on how you can maximize your giving in 2023:

IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

- Donors age 70½ or older may make a gift of any amount, up to \$100,000 per individual (\$200,000 for couples with individual IRA accounts), from your IRA without paying income tax on the donated amount.
- For donors who have a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), making a gift directly from your IRA to St. Agnes can be counted toward satisfying your RMD for the year, as long as certain rules are met.
- In addition to the benefits of giving to charity, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income, which is unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Keeping your taxable income lower may reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare.
- QCDs don't require that you itemize, which due to the recent tax law changes, means you may decide to take advantage of the higher standard deduction, but still use a QCD for charitable giving.
- Funds should be transferred directly from the donor's financial institution to St. Agnes.

For additional information about giving from your IRA, please check the St Agnes website for [Giving via Stocks and IRA](#).

Thank you for supporting St Agnes!

This information is not intended as legal, accounting, or financial advice. Please consult with your tax, legal, and financial advisors to determine whether this or other gift plans are applicable to your tax and financial needs.

Together in Holiness Marriage Conference

*Married and engaged couples are invited to the 3rd annual **Together in Holiness** marriage conference, presented by the St John Paul II Foundation and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, on **February 10, 2024 from 10:45 am - 6:00 pm at St. James Catholic Church in Charles Town, WV**. This 1-day conference will help you strengthen your relationship with your spouse and discover God's plan for your family. Registration: \$32/couple and \$5/child for on-site childcare. An Early Bird discount is available through December 11, 2023 as well as scholarships upon request. For more info, visit togetherinholiness.org/wheelingcharleston or email cameron@forlifeandfamily.org.*

Sweats for Vets

St Joe's School is joining the Animal Health Clinic of Funkstown, employer of an SJS parent; VFW Post 1177 in Leesburg, Va.; the Ancient Order of Hibernians; and KOC Council 12791 in Potomac Falls, Va., to collect sweat suits for veterans at the VA Medical Center in Martinsburg. If you would like to, please bring **NEW** sweat suits (sets preferred) in all sizes (with a focus on XL, 2XL, 3XL and 4XL, and colorful sets for women) to the school office through **Friday, Dec. 15**. Please do not wrap the sweats, but instead tie each set with Christmas ribbon. If possible, please put your name on the label. Monetary donations also will be accepted; checks written to Martinsburg VAMC. For more information, call Meg Partington at the at 304-267-6447 or email her at mpartington@sjswv.org.

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