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# Merry Christmas!

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH

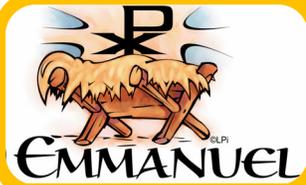
JOHN 1:14



*St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church*

28353 Herbert St., Madison Heights, MI 48071 - 248-542-8720 [www.stvincentferrer.net](http://www.stvincentferrer.net)

Reverend John C. Esper



*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and shall name him Emmanuel, which means  
“God is with us.” Matthew 1:23*

## From The Pastor

On many levels, Christmas defines expectation, hope, and joy. Who doesn't remember the childhood excitement of Santa coming, the expectation of hoped for presents, and the joy of the Christmas spirit. Children today still experience this same anticipation of what Santa might bring in the hopes of the best toy ever. Parents anxiously plan and shop to find the most hoped for and expected gift for each child. Meals are planned and prepared in the hope that each will experience the joy of all that Christmas promises in the bonds of love revealed in the Infant Child Jesus.

The fourth Sunday of Advent is the perfect image of hope, expectation, and joy in anticipation of Christmas. Both Mary and Elizabeth are an image of hope, lively expectation, and spirit-filled joy. What makes for a good visitation? Readiness, openness, and reception. As Mary and Elizabeth prepare to receive each other, the world waits in joyful hope to receive its Savior.

Mary and Elizabeth needed each other. Both were in the grip of a mystery that needed understanding and confirmation. Young Mary, fresh in the conception of Jesus in her womb, longed for the faith-filled companionship of her older cousin. Elizabeth is also in the late surprise of a longed-for, yet unexpected pregnancy. Each has a ready openness to receive the other to share and break open the mystery. Each reserved an inner space to accept the story and experience of the other.

The mystery is confirmed in the womb of Elizabeth as John, moved by the Spirit, leaps for joy in the presence of Jesus in the womb of Mary. The same Spirit confirms for Mary the message of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation. “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. How does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Each woman prepared a space in their heart to receive the work of God in the other. Each is a gift to the other. Mary is greatly relieved, inspired, and in reverent awe at the words of her God revering cousin. “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

This is a perfect stage to prepare us to celebrate the visitation of Jesus born to us on Christmas. On Christmas, heaven comes to earth in the most personal way possible in the birth of Christ our Savior. The coming of Jesus mirrors the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. Now it is us who must prepare a space of readiness within ourselves to receive the gift and new

life given to us in the Infant Child. Will our hearts be prepared and open to realize the mystery and power in the coming of our Savior? The coming of Jesus is a visitation and so much more. Jesus is here to stay, to be one with us that we may learn to be one with him.

Jesus is our greatest hope because he is our greatest need as we search to find meaning, direction, and purpose in our lives. The hope Jesus brings is the power of love that reflects our essential need for acceptance, healing, and forgiveness that promises redemption. This is not just forgiveness because I scratched your car last week, gossiped against your good name, or a debt I refused to pay. The visitation of Jesus is eternal, and the forgiveness offered is redemptive, inclusive, and complete that our longing for God and God's longing for us be satisfied.

The birth of Christ is the birth of hope that raises our lives to the dignity of God himself. What is it that human beings most long for? Humans thrive on acceptance, love, and belonging. All of which, at some point, will depend on necessary forgiveness. The deepest longing of God is oneness with us. God wants us to want to love, accept, and joyfully embrace our belonging to God. The love we long for in union with God can only exist through the coming of Christ as one like us in all things but sin.

This is the hope, the expectation, and the joy Christmas promises. Notice the relationship of the crib to the Cross. True love is innocent, vulnerable, and self-giving. Our hope for freedom from sin and death is realized in the willing surrender of Jesus on the Cross. In his death, we are reborn.

Joy is the fruit of hope satisfied. Both Mary and Elizabeth were filled with joy as they greeted one another. As Mary returned to Bethlehem and Elizabeth rejoiced in the birth of John, each carried the promise of joyful hope in the coming Savior. Both lives were changed; vulnerable, surrendered, and freely given for God's purpose. Our lives should be the same.

How is your heart and manner of life ready to receive Jesus to be reborn in you at Christmas? How will you accept his Visitation? Think of this when you feel love for your spouse, children, and friends as they open your gifts, and you share a meal together. Could you be a visitation of Jesus to each of them? With love we can all be a face of Jesus to each other. A blessed and Merry Christmas to all.

Father John Esper

# LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

**DAILY MASS**

8:00am Monday thru Thursday

**WEEKEND MASSES**

Saturday - 4:00pm

Sunday - 9:00am

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Saturdays 3:00 - 3:45pm  
in Chapel



Live Streaming of Mass  
Monday thru Thursday 8:00am  
and Sunday 9:00am

Adoration on Tuesdays  
8:45am to 10:00am

Livestream of Rosary on  
Thursdays following Mass

Search for St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church (in Madison Heights) on youtube to find our channel or connect via our APP or website

# CONTACT INFORMATION

**ST VINCENT FERRER PARISH OFFICE**

28353 Herbert St., Madison Heights, MI 48071  
248-542-8720 Fax 248-542-8721  
Website: www.stvincentferrer.net

**PARISH OFFICE HOURS**

Monday through Thursday  
9am to Noon - 1:00pm to 4:30pm,  
Friday 9am to Noon, Closed Saturday & Sunday

**Parish Office Staff**

Reverend John C. Esper, Priest in Solidum  
Deborah Tourville, Bus. Mgr/Adult Faith Formation  
Sheryl Brown, Parish Secretary/Bulletin  
Jim Balistreri, Music Coordinator  
Mary Ann Przybysz, Evangelical Charity Coordinator/  
Order of Christian Initiation of Adults(OCIA) Coordinator  
Carl Copen, Facilities Supervisor  
Alex Mototolea, Maintenance

**FAITH FORMATION OFFICE**

248-398-1743 – call for appointment  
Matthew Zinser, Childhood Faith Formation Coordinator  
For information on Baptisms, OCIA and  
Funerals contact the Parish Office 248-542-8720

**WELCOME  
MERRY CHRISTMAS**

*Fr. John Esper and the staff of  
St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church  
wish you a Merry Christmas  
and blessings of peace, love and joy  
in the New Year.*

The Parish Office will close at Noon  
on December 24th and will reopen in the New Year  
on January 2nd.

# HOLIDAY Mass Schedule

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

Tuesday, December 24, 2024 - 4:00pm & 9:00pm

**CHRISTMAS DAY**

Wednesday, December 25, 2024 - 9:00am

**MARY, MOTHER OF GOD**

Tuesday, December 31, 2024 - 4:00pm  
Wednesday, January 1, 2025 - 9:00am



**HEALING MASS  
NEXT SATURDAY**

**DECEMBER 28th 4:00pm**

Fr. John will administer the  
Sacrament of the Sick  
after Mass.  
Prayer teams will be available for  
individual prayer.



# READINGS FOR THE WEEK

December 22, 2024

Sunday:	Mi 5:1-4a/Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 (4)/Heb 10:5-10/Lk 1:39-45
Monday:	Mal 3:1-4, 23-24/Ps 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14/Lk 1:57-66
Tuesday:	<i>Morning:</i> 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16/ Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29/Lk 1:67-79
Wednesday:	<i>Vigil:</i> Is 62:1-5/Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29 2a)/ Acts 13:16-17, 22-25/Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25 <i>Night:</i> Is 9:1-6/Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13 (Lk 2:11)/Ti 2:11-14/Lk 2:1-14 <i>Dawn:</i> Is 62:11-12/Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12/Ti 3:4-7/Lk 2:15-20 <i>Day:</i> Is 52:7-10/Heb 1:1-6/Ps 98:1,2,3-4, 5-6 (3c)/Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
Thursday:	Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Ps 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17/Mt 10:17-22
Friday:	1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97: 1-2, 5-6, 11-12/Jn 20:1a, 2-8
Saturday:	1 Jn 15—22/Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7b-8/Mt 2:13-18
Next Sunday:	1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28/Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10 (see 5a)/1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24/Lk 2:41-52



## MONDAY, December 23, 2024

8:00am Mass: Deanna (Special Intention) req. by Family

## TUESDAY, December 24, 2024 CHRISTMAS EVE

**4:00pm Mass:** Parishioners of St. Vincent Ferrer

Ron Sadowski† req. by Nancy Sadowski

Gigi Cooper† req. by Linda & LeRoy Proszkowski

Katherine Boguslawski† req. by Family

Bob Shaner† (Memorial Birthday) req. by Barb & Family

Arthur & Lucille Sticklinski†

Don Bessler† req. by Family

John & Tresa Lamerato† req. by Sam & Meg Lamerato

Deceased Members of Ray Family req. by Sam & Meg Lamerato

**9:00pm Mass:** William Olszewski† req. by Family

Christopher Hudy (Special Intention) req. by Mom

Janet Trabucchi† req. by Kevin & Family

## WEDNESDAY, December 25, 2024 CHRISTMAS DAY

**9:00am Mass:** Parishioners of St. Vincent Ferrer

Joseph Dong Kim Pham† req. by Family

Robert Lebioda† req. by Kim Magri & Family

Jessica & Michael Magri† req. by Kim Magri & Family

## THURSDAY, December 26, 2024

8:00am Mass: Rev. Thomas Esper† req. by Family

## SATURDAY, December 28, 2024

4:00pm Mass: Parishioners of St. Vincent Ferrer

Donna Dietrich† req. by Family

Deanna (Special Intention) req. by Family

Joseph Dong Kim Pham† req. by Family

## SUNDAY, December 29, 2024

9:00am Mass: Parishioners of St. Vincent Ferrer

Joseph Dong Kim Pham† req. by Family

Deanna (Special Intention) req. by Family

Richard Velez† req. by Family

James & Kimberly Steelman



...all government leaders to seek wisdom in finding peaceful solutions to world wars and tensions.

...medical and humanitarian aid for those suffering from hardship due to catastrophic weather, fires, wars, floods, earthquakes and disasters.

...respect for life from conception to natural death

...the safety of men and women dedicated to protecting lives and freedom.

...the homeless, the addicted and all who are suffering physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

...the respect for life from conception to natural death  
...all who are sick, homebound, undergoing or recovering from surgery, medical procedures, treatments or testing, and those who have made specific prayer requests.

Lord Jesus,

You are the Divine Physician and Healer. To You, we lift up in prayer all who are lonely, homeless, sick or addicted; all who are unemployed or underemployed; all who are anxious or depressed and all who are suffering in any way spiritually, physically or emotionally. In their pain and brokenness, we ask that you bring them the comfort of your loving presence. In You, may they find strength for the day and hope for the journey. Amen

# OBSERVANCES FOR THE WEEK

Sunday:	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent
Monday:	St. John of Kanty, Priest
Tuesday:	Christmas Eve
Wednesday:	The Nativity of the Lord
Thursday:	St. Stephen, First Martyr
Friday:	St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
Saturday:	The Holy Innocents, martyrs Next
Sunday:	The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

©LPI

## ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT REQUEST

We **WILL NOT** do a parish wide mailing of contribution statements. If you would like a copy of your 2024 contributions for income tax purposes, please fill out a request form found at the church entrance and drop it in the collection basket. Or call the parish office at 248-542-8720 after January 2, 2025.

**Please make request by January 17, 2025.**

## Women's Sacred Journey

**SATURDAY, DEC. 28 - 9:00AM**

**FAITH FORMATION OFFICE  
SVF SCHOOL BLDG.**



All women in our Family of Parishes are invited to join other women to pray and reflect on Scripture passages. The gathering is every other Saturday. No registration or fee required.



# MEMORIAL FLOWER DONATIONS

## In Memory/Honor of

Shonts Family  
 Stella & Louis Flanz  
 Joseph & Helen Hudy  
 Raymond Hudy  
 Lee & Rosemarie Smith  
 Mary Elie & Thersa Wilson  
 Richard Tucker & Family  
 Peter & David Stema  
 Schuster grandparents, Barbara,  
 Nick, Uncle Mike, Aunt Jackie  
 Deceased Szeliga Family  
 Deceased Lebioda Family  
 Our Parents  
 Family & Friends  
 Guillermo, Filomena, Brigido,  
 Glicerio & Gary Usita  
 Delores Van Hall  
 Marie & Raymond H. Van Hall  
 Anna & Izador Stanislawski  
 Giuseppe & Antonina Miceli  
 Maria Miceli  
 Sam & Antoinette Gusmano  
 Boris & Natalie Waskowski  
 Harry Wysiecki  
 Yolkiewicz Family Members  
 Celmer Family Members  
 Chris, Anthony & Angie Mankowski  
 Charles & Helen Zukowski  
 Diane Zukowski

## Donated by

Mrs. Dorothy Shonts  
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 M/M Martin Smith  
 M/M Martin Smith  
 M/M Martin Smith  
 Mrs. Mary Lou Stema  
  
 Mrs. Mary Lou Stema  
 M/M Anthony Szeliga  
 M/M Anthony Szeliga  
 Ann Kresowski & John Tata  
 Ms. Barbara Thomson  
  
 Florecita Usita  
 Mr. Raymond Van Hall  
 Mr. Raymond Van Hall  
 Ms. Frances Vettraino  
 M/M Francesco Virga  
 M/M Francesco Virga  
 M & M Waskowski  
 M & M Waskowski  
 Rose Wysiecki  
 M/M Stanley Yolkiewicz  
 M/M Stanley Yolkiewicz  
 Lawrence & Theresa Zukowski  
 Lawrence & Theresa Zukowski  
 Lawrence & Theresa Zukowski

## General Flower Donations

Ms. Jadranka Campa  
 M/M Robert James  
 Mrs. Marilyn Myers  
 Daniel & Bernadette Ravary  
 M/M Don Vu  
 Ryan Vu

**Thank you to all who made  
 Christmas flower donations in  
 memory or honor of loved ones.  
 Your contributions helped to  
 beautify our worship space.  
 Christmas flower contribution  
 total was \$ 2,519.00.**



## GIFTS OF THE EUCHARIST

“There is a short list of some of the fruits and gifts that flow into your soul each time you receive the Eucharist.

- Friendship with Jesus
- Desire to know and do the will of God
- Cleansing of venial sin
- Hunger for virtue
- Grace to avoid sin in the future
- A heart that listens to the Holy Spirit
- Desire to know and love God...



These fruits of the Eucharist will help you become a-better-version-of-yourself each day. They will help you become all God created you to be. The grace of the Eucharist will help you do the next right thing.”

*From 33 Days to Eucharistic Glory by Matthew Kelly  
 Used with permission from the Dynamic Catholic Institute*

## WHY DO WE DO THAT? CATHOLIC LIFE EXPLAINED

### CHRISTMAS GIFTS

**Question:** Why do we give gifts at Christmas?

**Answer:** Great events in and of themselves are not tangible. They occur in life but leave no mark behind, nothing that someone could come across and know that something significant occurred. So we mark the event with monuments, holidays, gold watches or plaques, making a meaningful event tangible and memorable.

Gifts at Christmas do the same thing. They mark the occasion of the birth of Jesus, communicating a bit of the joy of the day by allowing us to be both giver and receiver. Gift-giving sets aside the day as special and different. The special foods, customs, decorations, and gifts all help focus our attention on the importance and meaning of the day and at the same time allow us to share personally in its joy and happiness.

In giving gifts, though, we can share in the meaning of Christmas in a significant way. We imitate God in sharing with others. We give a bit of ourselves to others in the gifts we give, just as God gives us the gift of his Son. No wonder we often say that the best gifts are those that come from the heart. Given in love, these presents are wrapped in the best covering of all. ©LPi



### The Heroic Moment

by Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

I once asked a wise mother how she raised her children, now all faithful adults, to value their Catholic faith.

A big part of it, she explained, was helping them get out of bed.

“We called it ‘the heroic moment,’” she told me, referring to that time in the early morning when you have to decide if you’re going to get up and face the day, or pull the covers over your head and hide.

In those hazy, half-asleep moments, most of us don’t want to make the right decision. I know I don’t. I’m not ready for the day. I’m not ready for the light. I’m not ready for the things I’m going to need to do, the person I’m going to need to be. It’s easy to hide under the covers, in the darkness and the quiet.

“Do not be afraid,” the angels tell the shepherds. Why is that the first thing they say? Because the night is dark, and the shepherds have grown used to the darkness. Maybe they have even been asleep. This sudden apparition, this announcement, does not just come as a surprise. It comes as a shock. Light can be painful if we’ve spent too long in the darkness.

The angels brought news of great joy. But don’t trust the thesaurus because joy is not the same as pleasure. It’s not even the same as happiness. It’s so much more. It’s so much better. But you have to choose it.

As Christians, we are called to choose joy. We are called to let in the light, to cast off the yoke, to stand up out of the darkness. We are called to face the heroic moments.

©LPi



Parents requesting the Sacrament of Baptism for their infant or toddler must attend a class on the sacrament.

The next class for parents and godparents will be  
**Saturday, January 4, 2025 at 1:30pm**  
**To register, call the Parish Office before Christmas Eve or after January 1, 2025**

### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

The Blessed Virgin teaches us the secret to being blessed, happy, and full of joy. When Elizabeth, her cousin, greets her, she calls Mary “blessed” for two reasons, her motherhood of Jesus, and Our Lady’s belief that **“there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord”** (Luke 1:45). Mary is “blessed” entirely because of her relationship to the Incarnation of God in Jesus, and for no other. This of course makes perfect sense, because as the Lord, as God-in-the-flesh, her son is the source of all blessedness, life, and joy. Mary is blessed because of her contact with Jesus, and by her faith in him.

So, it is with us, too. We become blessed by our “motherly” contact with Christ in our souls through baptism. He lives in us and grows to maturity within us. We bear him to the world. This requires unshakeable faith that his promises to us will be fulfilled, despite all the problems and difficulties that plague us. We become blessed, happy, and joyful in the measure that we are in contact with Jesus and trust in him. - *Father John Muir* ©LPi



### QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK FOR REFLECTION

**First Reading:** Is 9:1-6

Isaiah speaks of a time when Israel’s darkness and gloom will be transformed to light and rejoicing through the birth of a son. How does your family celebrate the birth of children/grandchildren?

**Second Reading:** Ti 2:11-14

Titus speaks of “the grace of God” that has delivered and cleansed us to do good as we await the return of Jesus. What good could you do this week for your family or friends?

**Gospel:** Lk 2:1-14

In Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus, we hear how the angel of the Lord informed the shepherds in the fields of the unforgettable good news. What are some of your favorite memories of Christmas day?

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<b>Ministry Schedule</b>		
December 28/29, 2024		
Mass	4:00pm	9:00am
Sacristan	T Riley	D Tourville
Reader #1	M Simmons	D Gray
Reader #2	T Riley	A Goll
EME	M Simmons	P Allen
	P Miles	D Gray
	R Pasiak	C McCarthy
Greeters	M Smith	M McLaughlin
	P Miles	N Oparka
	T Pasiak	T Oparka
	R Pasiak	D McLaughlin
<b>Traveling Chalice Host beginning week of December 28/29</b>		
Kim Magri		

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