



The Nativity of the Lord

December 25, 2021



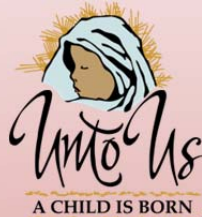
He will be called
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

- 4:00 p.m. **For All Who Serve In The Military & Their Families**
- 6:00 p.m. **Living & Deceased Priests & Sisters Who Served at St. Joseph**
- 8:30 a.m. **Missa Pro Popula, All Living & Deceased Parishioners**
- 10:30 a.m. **Missa Pro Popula, All Living & Deceased Parishioners**

CHRISTMAS THANK YOU!

As we are now enjoying our Christmas Season we thank the many people who made our Parish Christmas so wonderful! Our organists and Choir have provided beautiful music not only for Christmas, but for the entire Advent Season; thank you choir members and musicians; the students who served made our Christmas Masses smooth; many blessings are bestowed upon our altar servers. Thank you to our ushers, you find seats and provide a sense of order among our parish family and guests. A very big thank you to those who set up our Nativity Manger, you do a super job by sharing your strength. Our church is finely decorated every year, thank you to all who dedicated their time to making it so pretty with altar cloths, flowers, candles, greens, wreaths, indoor and outdoor lights and finishing touches that truly make our churches the nicest in the Diocese.

May God's Grace come to everyone who has shared their talents and time so that we can enjoy Christmas here in
Jim Thorpe!



Great Expectations ~ Christmas can be disappointing. We remember the Christmases from our childhood, all the joy, the excitement, and the fun we had. When we grow up, we have to shop for gifts, write and mail the cards, put up the decorations, and do all the preparations that seem to stress us out. We may be sad that the day did not meet our expectations. Now that most of that is done, we can reflect on how the first Christmas upset all expectations. I'm sure Joseph never expected to have a child so soon. Or to have the baby born in a stable miles from their home in Nazareth. The shepherds never expected to be awakened by angels. And those Jews who looked forward to the coming of a Messiah never expected him to come as a baby. Yet God had reasons for coming in this way. The nativity scene looks so peaceful and beautiful, but the reality was not so romantic. The messiah came not to the sound of war horns, but the cry of a helpless infant. He was born in a stable because no one had room for him. The first to see him were the shepherds, the migrant workers of the time. The political leaders (Herod and friends) wanted to kill him. Jesus was born in this way to show that he came not for the important and wealthy, but for the poor and outcast. As an adult, he would continue to surprise: he ate with sinners and tax collectors; he challenged the religious leaders of Israel. He was executed as a criminal.

So today he continues to come to us in the homeless, the illegal alien, the sick, those in prison, the unborn infant, that we might find him where we least expect. Can we learn to see him in the unexpected, in our trials and difficulties, our own weaknesses? When we do, we will celebrate what

Christmas is truly about.

Tom Schmidt, © J. S. Paluch Co.

Have a Blessed & Merry Christmas!

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Christmas Window Candles at Immaculate Conception

- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **JOSEPH PALUCH**, Love, Family
- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **VINCENT TEICHERT**, Love, Janice, Lori, John Vincent, Carla & Nicholas
- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **JOHN & DOROTHY OTTO**, Love, Jackie, Janice & Judy
- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **STELLA & JAKE NEDEROSTEK**, Love, Judy & Jerry
- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **KATHY REIHMAN AND SUSAN SCHATZ**, Love, Judy
- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **MILLIE RADOCHA**, Love, The DePuy Family
- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **THEODORE ECKHART**, Love, wife, Arlene
- IN LOVING MEMORY **DAVID FORMICA**, Love, Mom & Heather
- IN LOVING MEMORY OF **SUSAN & FRANKLIN SCHATZ**, Love, Salli, Sarah, & Jake





THE PARADISE TREE

From the eleventh century on, religious plays used to be performed in churches. One of the most popular of these “mystery plays” as they were called, was the Paradise play. It represented the creation of man, the sin of Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from Paradise. This play closed with a consoling promise of the coming Savior and of His Incarnation.

The Garden of Eden was indicated by a fir tree hung with apples, from which Eve broke the fruit and gave it to Adam to eat. This “Paradise Tree” attracted the attention of all, especially the children, since it was the only object on the stage. During the fifteenth century the mystery plays were gradually forbidden because abuses crept in. The people, however, did not want to miss the Paradise tree. Since they could no longer see it in church, they started putting it up in their homes once a year, in honor of Adam and Eve on their feast day, which was December 24. The Latin Church has never officially celebrated Adam and Eve as saints, but the Eastern churches do so, and from the East the custom came into Europe of keeping their feast. Thus, on December 24 one could see the Paradise tree in the homes of the faithful in various sections of Europe. It was a fir tree hung with red apples. Under the influence of medieval religious “mystery” pictures, the Paradise tree stood for the “Tree of Life” (Genesis 2,9). As such, it bore, besides the apples, wafers representing the Holy Eucharist. These wafers were later replaced by little pieces of pastry and candy representing the sweet fruit of Christ’s redemption.

The very same day on which people in western Germany had the Paradise tree in their homes (December 24), another custom was kept from ancient times in all Christian countries. It was the “Christmas light”, a symbol of our Lord, the light of the world that started shining in Bethlehem. This Christmas candle had been inspired by the liturgical usage of a burning candle to represent Christ. On Christmas Eve the large decorated candle was lit while the whole family knelt in prayer, and was then kept burning through Holy Night. In western Germany this Christmas light - in the form of many smaller candles - used to be placed on the shelves on steps of a wooden structure in the shape of a pyramid. Besides the candles, this “Christmas Pyramid” also bore decorations of evergreen twigs, glass balls, tinsel and the “Star of Bethlehem” on its top. During the sixteenth century the people in western Germany, on the left bank of the Rhine, began to combine the two symbols they had in their homes - The Paradise Tree with the Christmas Light. Thus our modern Christmas tree came into being.

In sections of Bavaria fir branches and little trees, decorated with lights, apples and tinsel are called Paradeis. The “fruits” on the Christmas tree traditionally are of round shape (apples, oranges, nuts, glass balls), thus retaining the symbolism of the fruit of the Paradise Tree. The following words are attributed to St. Boniface, Apostle to Germany: “This humble tree’s wood is used to build your homes - let Christ be at the center of your households. Its leaves remain ever green in the darkest days - let Christ be your constant light. Its boughs reach out to embrace and its top points to heaven - let Christ be your comfort and guide”.



Glory to God
in the highest,
and on earth peace,
good will toward men.