



Our Lady of Lourdes Church
One Eagle Rock Avenue
West Orange, New Jersey 07052

973.325.0110 **LOURDESWESTORANGE.ORG**

Christmas 2020

Dear Fellow Members of the Faith Community of Our Lady of Lourdes,

Even in this heightened time of anxiety, loss, and fear the months of November and December awaken our need to remember, celebrate and believe. Here at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish the community continues to come together centered on our Eucharistic celebration each week, whether virtually or socially distancing. The strength of our parish community is praying with and for one another and caring for each other's needs.

Despite challenges of reaching out and maintaining services to our faith community, new and innovative ways have been developed and implemented by our pastor, Father James Ferry, the devoted staff and our committed volunteers here at Lourdes. Efforts flourish sharing the Sacraments, offering funeral and memorial services, continuing Religious education programs, providing group prayer, and Eucharistic devotion. Food drives, sock drive, baby shower, giving tree, preparing meals for the needy, and mask making for healthcare workers, families and friends are among the social action projects undertaken by parishioners. Information about all of the above mentioned can be found on the parish website, www.lourdeswestorange.org.

Although at this time of pandemic it may be difficult to understand St. Paul's message to the Thessalonians 5:18 where he states, "in all circumstances give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus". Thanking actually changes our perspective. It helps us express peace, kindness, compassion and God's love. So, this special Thanksgiving season we do well to reflect on how giving of oneself (time, talent, and treasure) creates a sense of pride and joy. Your actions can impact others in a positive way, so necessary at this time. If the community sees you give, they may want to do so also. Feel the sense of gratitude you and others provide. Parish goals for outreach, evangelization, physical parish plant improvements and maintenance of a beautiful worship space will become more accessible with your generosity. Your weekly donations support these endeavors and are very much appreciated. For 106 years Our Lady of Lourdes has provided solace, security and spirituality to her people through many different, trying and sad times. Please say thank you in whatever way you can.

Advent offers us many chances to give of ourselves in preparation for a joyful celebration of Jesus' coming. This year on Christmas Day, let us believe we will once again come together as a family singing out confidently "O Come All Ye Faithful, Joyful and Triumphant". O come ye, not to Bethlehem but to the Lord and "the peace of God will surpass all comprehension and will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7).

May the blessings of God be yours all the days of your life, may the peace and the love of God live always in your heart (Psalm 128:4-5(a)).



Merry Christmas

Mary Cassels and Eileen Reilly, Trustees

Christmas 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I hope this greeting finds you and your family well. I recognize that stressful circumstances exist for all of us during this pandemic, especially being unable to spend the holidays with family and friends. Know that Our Lady of Lourdes is here to help with your needs.

At this Thanksgiving Holiday, I express my gratitude to you and continue to pray for you and your family. It is not unusual for Thanksgiving to be disrupted. Learn more in my enclosed message to our parish at the Thanksgiving Day Mass.

Advent is a time of prayer and preparation for the birth of Christ. Please visit our website – LOURDESWESTORANGE.ORG -- and join us for “Virtual/Video” Lessons and Carols prepared for us by our Choir Director, Linda Chapman, with Manny Figueiredo and our lectors/choir members.



OUT OF THE SILENCE, *MUSIC*

OUT OF THE DARKNESS, *LIGHT*

OUT OF UNCERTAINTY, *PROMISE*

HOPE WAS BORN THAT NIGHT.

Our Lady of Lourdes • West Orange • Christmas Mass Schedule

<u>Christmas Eve Mass, 12/24</u>	<u>Christmas Day Mass, 12/25</u>
3:30 pm	7:30 am
5:30 pm	9:30 am
10:00 pm	11:30 am
Mass will also be online on our website / channel Go to LOURDESWESTORANGE.ORG → “Lourdes YouTube”	

In Christ's Peace,

Father Jim Ferry, Pastor

Our Lady of Lourdes, 1 Eagle Rock Avenue West Orange

LOURDESWESTORANGE.ORG 973.325.0110

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, West Orange
Message of Father Jim Ferry
Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 2020

“For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” (Matthew 6:21)

Is Thanksgiving still on?

While the Thanksgiving rituals in our homes were fragile and uncertain this year, it's good to recall that this observance is a whole lot older and stronger – been around for a long while – longer than you and I – longer than the United States itself.

Origin of Thanksgiving

As a country we came into existence as independent rebellious colonists in 1776, but Thanksgiving was being celebrated well before that, starting in the 1600's and with the Pilgrims who arrived on the ship Mayflower in Massachusetts. The year was 1620.

This year is the 400th anniversary of the landing at Plymouth Rock. I too hardly noticed that milestone anniversary with everything else going on!

Perhaps, we can take comfort that Thanksgiving is only disrupted, once every few hundred years!

Being Grateful

Is Thanksgiving still on? Is it more difficult to be grateful for what we have in 2020?

Yes, gratitude seems harder to come by, as we easily focus on what we do not have or who is missing in our lives due to sickness, death, and distance.

We know very well what we are not thankful for: the restrictions upon us due to the COVID pandemic.

Thanksgiving and Crisis

Is Thanksgiving still on, in a time of tragedy, crisis, and heartbreak?

In fact, some of the earliest celebrations of Thanksgiving were at times of great difficulty.

An author (Melanie Kirkpatrick) wrote that the earliest Thanksgiving holidays were, in fact, giving thanks for the end of, say, a severe drought, the improvement of the weather for planting or daresay, the end of a bad illness or disease.

Kirkpatrick observed that pre-1776 Thanksgivings were proclaimed by governments and communities as moments to pause and give thanks in good times and in bad. In some calendar years, “Thanksgiving” took place formally more than once.

Of course, we are not finished with COVID-19 yet, but shall we not give thanks that we have made it this far? We can give thanks especially for the essential workers – police, firefighters, medical workers, physicians, nurses and technicians, those who clean our hospitals, those who deliver and prepare our food, the teachers and school staff who educate – that through many essential workers – we have made it this far through COVID-19, and also give thanks that a medical vaccine is on the horizon.

Thanksgiving comes in a time of crisis. Yet, it is still on.

A Mandated Thanksgiving: Lincoln

Thanksgiving as we know it today, annually and on the fourth Thursday of November, was established by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 in the midst of the Civil War.

This was the tone of President Lincoln in his 1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation. This was not just about a "scheduled date" but the shared prayer of our country at a time of war and unrest, that Almighty God would:

"heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union." (Thanksgiving Proclamation, 1863)

In July 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg took place. In November 1863, shortly before Thanksgiving, President Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address. Lincoln was speaking not just about the "battlefield" that had taken place in Gettysburg but that the whole country remained a battlefield:

"In a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract." (A. Lincoln,

Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863)

It's a coincidence, in 1863, the first official "fourth Thursday" was also November 26.

Is Thanksgiving still on?

Thanksgiving in 1863 was not celebrated in a spirit of what had already been attained but what the country was still striving for. Shall – can – you and I do the same?

A Call to Thanksgiving, As Church

In our Christian Thanksgiving -- Holy Communion and Holy Eucharist -- we celebrate not because of what we already possess but because of whom we are striving to emulate.

In the Gospel of Luke, one leper returns, not only to give thanks for what he had obtained but also to emulate and follow Jesus and to strive for more, not to get more, but to give more.

You and I are striving each day for true greatness. This is a greatness balanced by humility and understanding that we need God's help. Also, we recall that every person – accompanied or alone - is remembered in our Eucharistic thanksgiving. Jesus died for her, for him, for you. Thanksgiving is still on.

***The Lord bless you and keep you!
The Lord let his face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you!
The Lord look upon you kindly and
give you peace!*** (Numbers 6:24-26)

+

Our Lady of Lourdes, Pray for Us !