

## **Week Behind/ Week Ahead**

To the Parishioners of Saint Joseph Parish

From V. Rev. Felipe Pulido

Date: December 24-25, 2022

### **Week Behind**

As Advent closes and the season of Christmas begins, I want to assure you of my prayers for all of you. Thank you for being parishioners. I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

**Visitors**—On Monday, December 19, we had a beautiful funeral Mass for a long-time and very active parishioner, Robert Anthony De Lorenzo, who died November 8. Father Richard Sedlacek celebrated the Mass assisted by Fathers Reilly and Keolker. I thank Father Richard for his willingness to come to our parish to celebrate special Masses for our long-time parishioners.

**Catholic Charities** – The 2022 Christmas Collection for Catholic Charities will be taken in our parish on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Thank you so much for your generous spirit. Your donations will help Catholic Charities bring hope to life by embracing people, strengthening families, and empowering them to thrive.

**Parish Posadas**—Thanks to Father Cesar and all the members of different parish ministries who helped celebrate *las Posadas* in our parish. Special thanks to all the people who donated candy, piñatas, and food, especially the 1000 tamales made for the last posada on Friday, December 23.

**Christmas Decorations in the Big Church**---Our church looks beautiful thanks to all the volunteers who donated their time and talent to decorate. Thank you, talented volunteers!

**Christmas Schedule for Masses**— Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve: (No 8:30 am Mass; No Confessions) Mass in English at 5:30 pm; Mass in Spanish at 7:00 pm; Bilingual Mass at Midnight Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day: Masses in English at 9:00 and 11:00 am; Mass in Spanish at 1:00 pm (No evening Masses)

### **Week Ahead**

**It is Still Christmas!** I simply adore the Christmas season. As a kid, it was different. After Christmas Day, I would have a crushing sense of loneliness and despair. After all, I had to wait 364 days to celebrate Jesus's birthday again! All that changed when I learned how long the Christmas season extends. The Christmas season runs from Christmas Eve through the day before the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which is the Sunday after the Epiphany. We wait to celebrate Christmas longer than a lot of folks, and we continue to celebrate longer. That sustained period of thanksgiving and joy fixes our hearts on the true "reason for the season." Today, consider how you might keep this spirit alive in your own homes. At church, we will celebrate with great devotion the four feast days at the end of December that teach us so much about what it means to believe in the Christ Child: St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr; St. John the Evangelist; the Holy Innocents; the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

**Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God**— We close out the Christmas octave—the eight days following the birth of Christ—with a day honoring Mary as Mother of God on January 1. I am grateful to those who have worked so hard to ensure the success of this celebration. Special thanks to our nine o'clock choir members and cantors who have worked very hard during this season of Christmas to provide music for all the extra Masses. On the Solemnity of Mary as Mother of God, our Church gives us a reading from the book of Numbers 6:22-27, which contains my favorite blessing. As we look forward to New Year, 2023, with its additional celebration of the World Day of Peace, I send you a special blessing with this prayer: ***“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!”***

**New Year’s Schedule for Masses**—Saturday, December 31, New Year’s Eve: Normal schedule of Saturday Masses and we will have confessions at 4:00 pm. Sunday, January 1, New Year’s Day, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and World Day of Peace: Normal schedule of Sunday Masses.

**Father Riccardo Keolker**—We congratulate Father Riccardo who celebrated his 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest on December 18. Father Riccardo will be away from January 2 to January 12, 2023. During that time, he will not be doing Prayer and Pondering Points and Sunday Liturgy Reflections. We are grateful for the dedication and commitment of Father Riccardo to this virtual ministry. When he returns, you will once again find PPP and Sunday Liturgy Reflections on our Facebook page or our YouTube channel. I know that Father’s meditations during Advent and the Octave of Christmas have helped you celebrate these seasons with peace and joy.

**Dear Parishioner**--I don’t have Father Riccardo’s gift for public speaking. And I’m not as skilled a writer as Father Reilly. But what I do have is some experience serving the people of God in different parishes around the diocese of Yakima. I came to this parish in October, 2020, when Bishop Tyson asked me to take over Saint Joseph as pastor. I didn’t know why I was asked, and I was reluctant to say yes. But I did say yes. And I think God had a hand in that.

Probably more than you know, I appreciate your gifts: the way you volunteer, the way you participate in Mass, and the way you support the parish financially. Our mission as a parish is to know, love, and serve God in this world and encourage others to do the same. There are so many things—big and small—that our parish is doing to make sure we’re living out our mission, while at the same time being financially responsible. The priests of Saint Joseph Parish are doing a great job, and our parish staff is terrific as well. But this is our parish, and it rises or falls based on the support of all of us.

This year has thrown us a few curveballs as we continue to deal with inflation. If you’re suffering, know that the parish is here for you. If you’re able to step up and help— with your time, your prayers, your talents, and, yes, your dollars—know that your sacrifices are worthwhile. As we go through the season of giving and the end of this year, please think about the needs of the parish and the diocese, especially the ACA. Your gifts are appreciated and valued.