



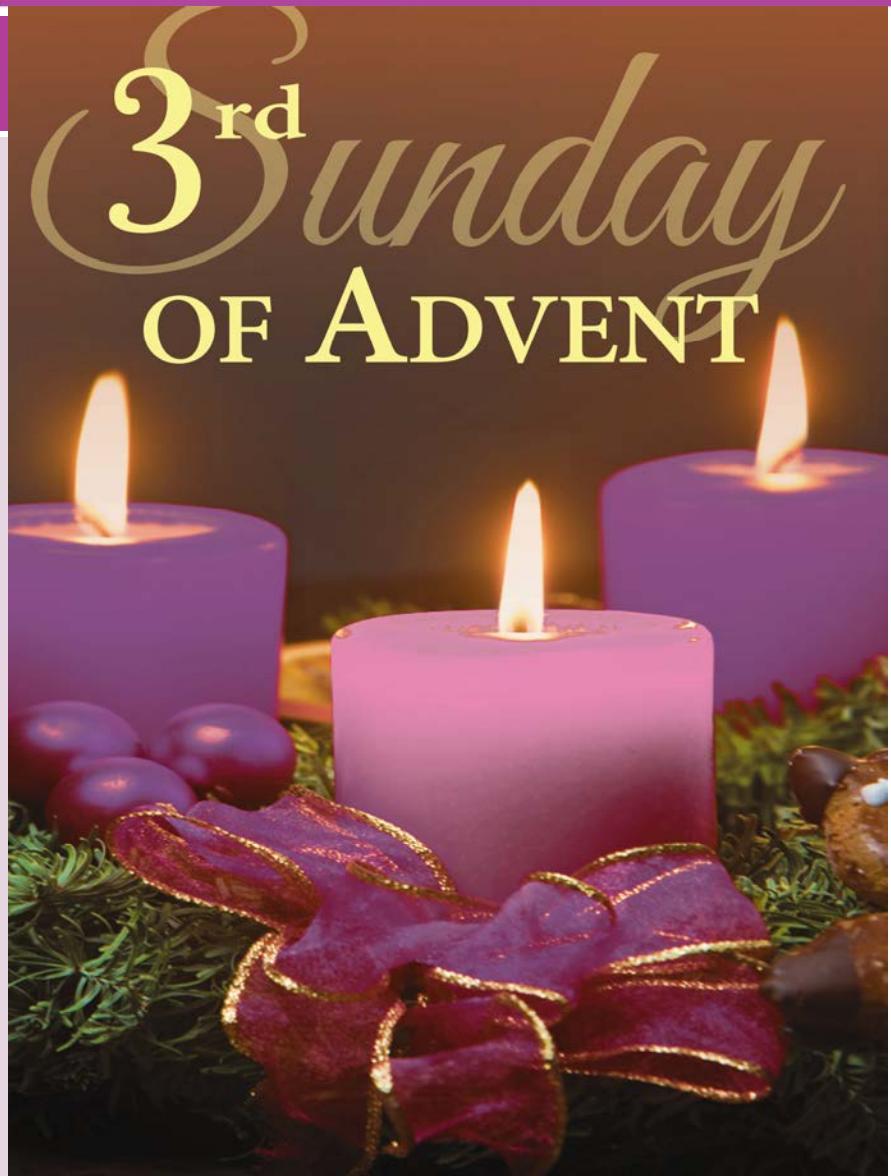
SAINT JOAN of ARC NEWS

The members of St. Joan of Arc Parish are disciples of Jesus Christ, who recognize God's love for the world & are empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel to all people through joyful worship, life-long education, compassionate service, responsible stewardship, & active community living.

~ Mission Statement - Pentecost 1998 ~

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PARISH CENTER

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FAITH AND FAMILY FORMATION OFFICE

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Saint Clair Shores, MI 48080
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Parish Directory / Liturgy Schedule

ST. JOAN OF ARC DIRECTORY

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Phone: 586-777-3670
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PARISH CENTER OFFICE HOURS

The Parish Center is **CLOSED** to visitors for the foreseeable future. The foyer **ONLY** is open Monday -Thursday from 8:30am-5pm and Friday from 8:30-4pm. For mass intentions or any service we may be reached at 586-777-3670 during these hours.

For any urgent needs when we are not open, please call our after-hours emergency number: 586-777-1342.

Baptisms: Please go to our website (stjoan.church) and fill out the Baptism request form.

Marriages: Arrangements should be made at the Parish Center at least six months prior to the desired date. Pre-marriage series required.

Registration: It is very important that every family and independent adult be registered in the Church in order to keep our records and mailings current. Please contact the Parish Office to register at your earliest opportunity.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Weekdays

Monday thru Friday: 7:00 am

Weekends

Saturday: 4:00 pm & 6:00 pm

Sunday: 8:00 am & 12:00 pm

Holy Day Masses

Vigil Mass: (evening prior) 7:00 pm

7:00 am, 12:00 pm, 7:00 pm

Reconciliation

Saturday: 11:00 am in the Sister Carol Center adjacent to Church

Holy Hour

Thursdays in Church at 7:00 pm

Rosary

Monday - Friday after the 7am mass outside by the Holy Trinity statue. (Bring your own lawn chair please)

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PARISHIONER?

If you would like to become a parishioner of St. Joan of Arc, at this time please register at stjoan.church and we will contact you by phone to get further information.

Once the Parish Center is re-opened please feel free to stop by and register in person.

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE OUR E-NEWS LETTERS!

If you would like to keep up with what is going on in the parish or if you need to update your email address go to our website at stjoan.church.



Finding Hope in the midst of Utter Sorrow:

The week after Thanksgiving was an emotionally draining week for me. In my thirty years of being a priest, I've had to walk with several families who have lost a loved one to suicide. But this week was different in that I had two suicide funerals back to back. One was for Odin, a 20-year-old parishioner who ended his life on Thanksgiving evening. The other funeral was for Steve Finn, my brother-in-law's brother, who ended his life the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. As many know from reading TALLer Tales, our family is very close to the Finn Family, and my sisters and I consider the Finn siblings as if they were our own brothers and sisters. There's hardly a holiday or gathering that goes by that we're not all together. With two back to back suicide funerals in a matter of days, I cannot get my mind off the fact that we do not deal with mental health crises or mental health illness very well in our country. I've seen things behind the scenes while visiting mental health facilities and have heard many firsthand accounts of the struggles many have in finding the right rehab center or right doctor. I wish we did so much more for people with mental health illnesses!

Odin had just finished Thanksgiving dinner with his family. He was only 20 years old and had a whole life in front of him. He loved being around the water. He was in the middle of applying to the Coast Guard and was looking forward to his aspiring career. But for some unknown reason, Odin ended his life shortly after the family finished their Thanksgiving Day dinner. He made the mashed potatoes. He was laughing. He was participating in the meal. Then, he went up to his room after dinner and hung himself. It didn't make sense. There was no note. There were no signs. Nothing. When I got the call late Thanksgiving night, Odin's mom, Ingrid, was sobbing and just kept saying, "This is no way to solve a problem." Obviously, there HAD to be a problem. But Odin's mom, his siblings, his friends still can't figure out what would have caused him to end his life. Many knew, even his family, that Odin didn't like sharing his feelings. When there was a problem or when he was dealing with something, like when his dad died years ago, or just the normal stuff teenagers go through, Odin would immerse himself in his video games. When Odin's

dad died, the family did go to counseling, but Odin didn't participate in the sessions that much. Video games became his outlet. But video games can't heal or offer advice.

Odin's mom and I had a conversation just before I began writing this column. I wanted to make sure she was okay with me sharing some of Odin's story. She wanted me to share the story in the hopes that Odin's story might help other families. Ingrid fears that the social isolationism occurring because of COVID is simply driving more and more young people into their video games. We need to encourage our young people to talk, to talk to trusted adults, to talk to their peers. Not by text. Not by chatting. We may not be able to get together with many people, but we can engage in conversations around the dinner table or by Zoom or Facetime. We need to get our young people talking ... not only talking about what's going on in their life but also talking about their feelings. Why Odin took his own life will forever remain a mystery. Only God knows why. And it's in God's hands that we entrust this troubled soul for the healing he needs. As I said at Odin's funeral, if God's love can penetrate locked doors, if God's love can heal the crippled, bring sight to the blind, and raise Lazarus to new life, then God's love can also heal Odin.

Steve was my brother-in-law Jay's brother. Steve and his wife Becci and kids live next door to my sister and brother-in-law in Allenton. There were ten kids in the Finn family. Jay and Steve are now deceased. As I stated above, our family is very close to the Finn Family and have been since my sister and Jay met. There isn't a family celebration or holiday that we're not together.

Steve was gifted in so many ways. He was a phenomenal carpenter and loved to fix anything that needed fixing. Yet, these very gifts and talents became the downfall of his life and are what led to him dealing with mental health crisis after mental health crisis for the second half of his life. He always strove for not just perfection but ABSOLUTE perfection. And that became THE problem. It was in the building of his house that we saw the illness go into a tailspin. He had in his mind what the absolute had to be, and he would be thrown into a mental health crisis when the absolute didn't or couldn't happen. His mind just never stopped. He had a full-time career as a firefighter and fire engine operator. He excelled at his job and always functioned well at work. At home, he was a different person. Our

family feared this day for years. He had been in and out of many mental health and rehab centers. He was always willing to try. And he tried so desperately hard to get help. His latest was at the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery. And that's what was so challenging about Steve's death. He tried SO HARD. Yes, he talked about ending his life in the past and had plans, but the family was always able to get him help. We thought he was on the rebound this year, but he went into another tailspin late this summer. We were used to the ups and downs. Many of us were on his speed dial, and he would call on the way home from work in Detroit or when he was at his worst at home. Sadly, many of us have been with Steve when he was curled up like a ball in a bedroom closet. We've been with him when he was at his lowest, but he always seemed to rebound. He always did better in the spring and summer, but winters were the absolute toughest for him. I fear the thought of another winter compounded with all the issues and realities of our COVID world, became too much for Steve to consider.

Steve's wife, Becci, beautifully walked with him. She, unlike anyone else, could often get him to check into the next rehab center when he was at his lowest and was starting to sound the alarm that he was done and had no hope. It wasn't an easy journey for Becci, but she stood by him and was at his side. One of our nephews beautifully said at the funeral home that Becci's love for Steve gave him many more years of life. And, we are all so grateful for Becci's love and the gift she was to Steve.

As I was preparing my homily for Steve's funeral, I went back through some text exchanges I had with Becci. One text stood out. She asked, "Why can't I understand him? Why can't I help him?" While I could not answer the first question, the second question had an answer that she didn't necessarily see. She was helping him with her love for him. As I already stated, it wasn't an easy journey, but she never gave up on him.

At our 7 AM Mass on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, I prayed for those who suffer from mental health issues. While I had Odin on my mind, I also thought of the many other people I knew who were suffering from mental health issues. Little did I know what was happening at that very time.

After mass, I wandered over to the

TALLer Tales

Parish Center and sat down at my computer. My sister Cindy called and was sobbing. She told me that Steve had just shot himself outside of his house, and she and her kids and Steve's sister Chris and her husband Don arrived at the house at the same time (they all live next door to each other). My heart sunk. Steve had texted a buddy who was with him at the IAFF Center for Excellence. The text simply said, "I'm done. I can't take it anymore. Tell Becci I'm sorry." Steve's friend immediately texted Becci, who wasn't home at the time. Becci texted my sister, who then yelled for my nephews who were home, and she also called Chris and Don. They all converged at the house at the same time. By the time they got there, Steve had already ended his life. He left notes apologizing for what he did and wanted to let his family know how much he appreciated all they did for him. Steve said he couldn't take it anymore. He meticulously left all his papers and important passwords and codes neatly laid out on a table.



My heart just broke for Becci, their kids, Steve's mom, and siblings. We feared this day for years. What was so difficult at the same time was knowing how much Steve tried to overcome this illness. As I can confidently say I don't know of any spouse who could have loved more than Becci, I can also say I don't know anyone who tried harder to get help than Steve. All the needed "ingredients" were there, but the illness was too over-powering.

Steve was from a family and surrounded by people of great faith. Steve's mom would regularly and quietly pray the rosary at Steve's house when Steve was at his worst. She stood vigil by him and for him and was a consistent intercessor for him before the Lord. Steve's siblings would answer those phone calls and drop anything to help him in times of crisis. Steve was so loved. Even though his illness stretched the entire second half of his young 48 years of life, people never gave up on him. Did it get tiring at times? Yes. But given the ups and extreme downs we witnessed, you always knew that the time you gave him was important and helped save a life.

Sadly, Steve questioned whether God loved him. I'll never forget a conversation I had with him when in the midst of some profound tears, he asked, "WHY would God ever love ME?" Steve always saw himself as imperfect and worthless. He thought he was a terrible spouse, a terrible dad, a terrible son, a terrible brother. He felt he was too imperfect and too much of a sinner to be loved by God. Nothing we said ever convinced him otherwise. At our many family events that often included mass at St. John the Evangelist Church in Allentown, Steve would always have difficulty walking into Church. He felt he was unworthy to be in God's house. It was always so sad.

Last year, Steve's mom, Violet, his sisters Chris and Cathy, and I met Steve at the Capuchin monastery. He worked at Engine House 41 on Warren and Rohns not far from the Monastery. The plan was to visit the tomb of Fr. Solanus and ask the friars to allow me to wear one of Fr. Solanus' stoles while I anointed Steve.



The whole experience at the Monastery with Steve was so grace-filled. After I anointed him, he fell into my arms and cried for what seemed like an eternity. Amid the tears, he kept saying that all he wanted was to be healed.

As I was praying and preparing for the funeral, I saw the family chose the Gospel of the raising of Lazarus. Usually at funerals we don't have the whole story included, namely the part where Jesus goes to the tomb and asks the stone to be rolled away. But the more I prayed about this, the more I realized I needed to include the whole story because of Jesus' words to the crowd when Lazarus came out of the tomb, "Untie him and let him go free."

My reflection on the Gospel had two points. One was the question Jesus asked Martha when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha's response was a resounding, "YES, Lord, I believe." I shared that our prayers for Steve and our belief in Christ's power to bring people to new life have incredible power and assist Steve in getting the

healing he so desperately wanted. As we know from the Gospel accounts, sometimes it was the faith of the person needing the healing, and other times it was the faith of those who brought the one needing healing that allowed Jesus to perform his miracles. So our YES to the Lord and our belief in Christ's power to bring healing, wholeness, and new life to Steve do truly assist in bringing that miracle to Steve.

What is that miracle then? The miracle is for Steve to get the healing he needed. The miracle is for Steve to know he was truly loved by God and was worthy of His mercy. Ultimately what I want for Steve, something our entire family wants for Steve, is for him to hear from the Lord himself, "Untie him and let him go free!"

Both funerals made me realize once again we have such a long way to go to bring about effective, compassionate and healing care for those who suffer from mental illness. We have to do a better job



of reaching out to people, now more than ever, to let them know of our love and support. Often it's a listening ear that's needed. We have to encourage parents to engage in meaningful conversation with their kids, and there is no better place for that than at the dining room table. We live such busy lives that the busyness can often cause those who need help to think they are a burden to family and friends when they reach out for help. If you are in need of help, please reach out to a family or friend and do what you can to get professional help.

May Odin and Steve receive from the Lord the healing they need. May those who have mental illness receive the care and healing they need and realize they are beloved children of God and that God walks with them. They are never alone.

Enjoy the week. Know of my prayers.

In Christ,

gmb
gmb@sjasc.org

December 13, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

Is 61:1-2A, 10-11 | 1 Thes 5:16-24 | Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

The prophet's words in the Book of Isaiah are bursting with hope: "The Lord ... has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord." As we enter the third week of Advent, these words may resonate more deeply for many of us as we look back on 2020. We know that for many of the world's people, struggle can be an everyday reality; however, after this year marked by pandemic, mourning, racial injustice, and mounting unemployment, the prophet's hope-filled words may hit home more acutely. Regardless of what 2020 has been like for us, Advent is a reminder that we have reason for hope: in Emmanuel, God with us. Let us prepare our hearts and our minds for Christ's coming through prayer, confident that the Lord will fulfill the promises of the prophet.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Light! Here in the Midwest in December we don't see nearly enough of it. Every year I consider purchasing a "happy lamp" and vow to "up" my Vitamin D intake. Perhaps that's why I was taken by the line in today's Gospel describing John the Baptist: "He came ... to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him." As predicted by John the Baptist and the prophet, Christ came to dwell among us, and remains within us through the Eucharist and the working of the Holy Spirit. We, like John the Baptist, can "testify to the light" by sharing Christ's presence through our witness to others.

WITNESS Last week we focused on making God's kindness visible through our words and actions toward the people with whom we live and interact regularly; this week, let our witness focus on testifying to the light in our digital presence and encounters. Make your words be those that foster hope and promise rather than incite division.



GIVING TREE

After much consideration and prayer, a decision has been made to postpone the Annual Giving Tree until the 2021 Holiday Season.

Given the "high touch" nature of this program and the ongoing concern about COVID 19, it became clear that there would be no safe way to facilitate this program, this year.

Those still wishing to give can support our local St. Vincent DePaul Conference or Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan by following the link on our Parish Website: Stjoan.Church.

Thank you to the Mathias Family for their untiring work on the Giving Tree for the past several years.

We look forward to returning to this favorite St. Joan of Arc Tradition next year.

We appreciate your generosity.



2021 Mass Intentions

The 2021 Mass book is open for mass intention requests. Mass requests can be made by phone, by mail or by email (info@sjasc.org). Intentions are also still available for this current year as well.

Intentions can always be requested by calling the Parish Center at: 586-777-3670.

We can send Intention Cards to your recipients via the Postal Service upon request or prepare them for pick up by calling the Parish Center in advance.



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

STARTING JANUARY 2021 **C.S. LEWIS' SCREWTAPE LETTERS**

Men of the parish are invited to join other St. Joan of Arc men who will be studying and sharing their faith as they review C. S. Lewis' famous book The Screwtape Letters.

We will be using a study guide and will be hosting our meetings on zoom. We meet every 1st and 3rd Mondays at 7:00 PM.

Please call Pat Adamcik at 586-775-3385 or Larry Kreszowski at 313-882-9369 for information.

Join this effort to learn more about the ways of "Screwtape" the head demon trying to teach his nephew how to prevent their patient from getting close to God. Share your faith and prayers with other men in the parish.

St. Joan of Arc Pilgrimage

June 18-27, 2021

Stay in Monasteries while visiting St. Joan's 'Deep France'

God willing, next June we will again lead a St. Joan of Arc pilgrimage/retreat to France. This will be our thirteenth opportunity for taking a group on this fascinating journey. Our travel philosophy remains the same - one of going back to the essentials, of simplicity, of quality time in some places instead of 'rush-rush' in many. Although we will indeed see and do much, we hope to travel first of all as spiritual travelers, rather than as consumers. Consequently, we will again purposely remain a small group. Each day we will gather for some combination of the following: prayers/meditation, info on activities of the day, addressing questions, *Question du Jour* discussions. Come and experience many of the places where St. Joan lived, visited, and prayed.

Sites will include: Orléans, Troyes, Domrémy-la-Pucelle, Vaucouleurs, and Reims, with quiet stays at monasteries in the heart of France. Please visit our website, with more information and photos: www.pilgrimwitnesses.com.

For any questions, feel free to contact us by phone or email:

Chris & Catherine Snidow
Phone: (214) 327-4579
Email: cowlind@sbcglobal.net
Website: www.pilgrimwitnesses.com

St. Joan of Arc parishioner:
Darryl Bryk
Email: brykd@hotmail.com

Calendar of Events / Words on the Word

Weekly Calendar of Events

Monday, December 14th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed
6-8:30 pm Vicariate Confessions

Tuesday, December 15th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed
2-4:00 pm Vicariate Confessions

Wednesday, December 16th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

Thursday, December 17th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

7:00 pm Public Holy Hour - Live Streamed

Friday, December 18th

7:00 am Public Morning Mass - Live Streamed

Saturday, December 19th

11:00 am Reconciliation

1:00 pm Wedding - Yunker-Mastay
2:30 pm Baptism of Easton J. Shelton

4:00 pm Public Mass - Live Streamed

6:00 pm Public Mass - Live Streamed

Sunday, December 20th

8:00 am Public Mass - Live Streamed

12:00 pm Public Mass - Live Streamed

Live Streamed Broadcasts at St. Joan of Arc

Though we have returned to public masses we will continue our Live Stream Broadcasts of all celebrations.

- Weekdays -7 am Mass - (Monday thru Friday)
- Saturdays - 4 pm and 6 pm Masses
- Sundays - 8 am and 12 pm Masses
- Thursdays - 7 pm Holy Hour

Go to: livestream.stjoan.church to watch all live streaming and to view archived celebrations.

Words on the Word

December 13, 2020 – Middle of Nowhere

If a student asks for academic help in the middle of a desert, and no one is around, does it make any noise?

An enterprising Associated Press reporter did a fascinating study a few weeks ago that appeared locally in *The Detroit News*. The reporter spent time in rural New Mexico, accompanying a school bus driver and social worker as they visited students in the far reaches of a desert area, showing how the pandemic has made what is a challenging learning environment even in normal times that much more difficult.

The bus driver picks up completed assignments and delivers some food and new assignments. The social worker attempts to get students to open up about their challenges.

Abject poverty, in some cases. No electricity, in other cases, which renders laptop computers – provided to students by the district – essentially useless unless other charging methods can be found. Profoundly lonely situations in which there are few other people to interact with.

One of the students interviewed pointed to a simple shed he had built as one of the few things he had accomplished during the months of isolation.

So sad. And yet, we're reminded that even in the most difficult of circumstances, situations like this, God is with us and will get us through. And the good will prevail.

It's a matter of keeping sight of what is most important.

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing,” St. Paul says in today’s second reading, from the first letter to the Thessalonians. “In all circumstances, give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances.

“Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.”

Christmas is just two weeks away. Are we giving thanks? Are we retaining only the good?

© 2020, Words on the Word

Mass Intentions / Weekly Readings

Mass Intentions

Monday December 14, 2020 Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church (White)

7:00 a.m. Aniello Mazzella and a Special Intention for Keith Ketelhut

Tuesday December 15, 2020 Advent Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. Patrick Maher Jr.

Wednesday December 16, 2020 Advent Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. Steve M. Terlescki and Patrick Maher Sr.

Thursday December 17, 2020 Late Advent Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. Joseph Semany and Michael Lesniewski

Friday December 18, 2020 Late Advent Weekday (Purple)

7:00 a.m. Paulette Wagner and Audrey Benedis

Saturday December 19, 2020 Late Advent Weekday (Purple)

4:00 p.m. Ralph Marzolino, the J. Champine Family, Edward and Henry Blind, Marie Champine, Joan Weber, Julian Ross, Joseph Calus, Esmenia Silva, a Special Intention for the Thomas Family and the Living and Deceased members of the Nagy, Zack, Dinser and Treloar Families

6:00 p.m. Michael, James, Charles and Margaret Forrester

Sunday December 20, 2020 Third Sunday in Advent (Purple/Rose)

8:00 a.m. For the Intentions of St. Joan of Arc Parishioners

12:00 p.m. Kevin Collins, Victor Hage, the Living and Deceased members of the Cichoracki, Baur, McGuckin and Sato Families and a Special Intention for the Scrivo and Tringali Families

Weekly Readings

Monday, December 14

Numbers 24:2-7,15-17a
Matthew 21:23-27

Thursday, December 17

Genesis 49:2, 8-10
Matthew 1:1-17

Tuesday, December 15

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
Matthew 21:28-32

Friday, December 18

Jeremiah 23:5-8
Matthew 1:18-25

Wednesday, December 16

Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21c-25
Luke 7:18b-23



Saturday, December 19

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
Luke 1:5-25

Sunday, December 20

2 Samuel 7:1-5
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

I Am The Resurrection & The Life

“Heavenly Father, welcome home those who you have called from this world and grant peace and consolation to their families.”

**Steve Finn
William Frasard
Marie Long
Dr. Joseph Mannella**

I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year: Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown. and he replied: Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way.”

Minnie Louise Haskins



8th Grade Can and Bottle Drive is Back!

The Class of 2021 is in full swing with their can and bottle drive.

This is an important fundraiser that helps defray the cost of their events and trips for the coming year.

Bring your returnables in bags to the Parish Center - West SIDE DOOR - (near Father Andrew's House) please.

There is a large plastic bin with a lid that they can be placed in.

Thank you for your support.





I've always enjoyed camping. There's something about going back to basics, having to use shoe laces to

tie your tent to a tree because you left the poles at home, cooking pancakes on a rock because you forgot the pan, discovering that you can fall asleep with a tree root pressed into your back.

I've always been struck by those moment when the first morning light becomes evident. On the horizon there's a glimmer of the sun that has not yet risen, and a promise of a new day that has yet to begin. The dark night of the forest is about to be forced aside by new light. The cold and uncertainty of the dark night begins to diminish. They say that the sky is a kind of pink/ purple in the early morning.

These images are reflected in today's rose-colored advent candle and optional rose vestments priests can wear on this Sunday. My own rose vestment has the purple of Advent throughout it. It reminds us that we are still in this season of Advent, but the lighter rose color and the gold banding reflects the character of a celebration that could otherwise seem like any other Sunday.

Gaudete Sunday calls us to reflect on St. Paul's exhortation in the second reading, "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks!" We have great reason for hope and for thanksgiving this Advent season.

Peeking through the darkness of a world that's had a lot of darkness this year, through the penitential aspects of Advent and the ways the season has been calling for us to keep watch and prepare ourselves, is now this light, a lighter and brighter

color, a sign of the great joy that is coming into our lives, now visible on the horizon. That joy is Christ the King, who is "already, but not yet." He is the Son who has already Risen, the one who is here with us, but on whom we still wait with great hope and anticipation to be born at Christmas.

This is the two-fold purpose and character of Advent. We wait to experience Christ born anew for us, that we might rekindle the sense of joy we ought to have as God continues to love us, the way He always has. So give thanks and rejoice always.

When I was in the seminary, my house-job was that of sacristan. On one occasion the Archbishop was visiting and had requested the seminary's rose vestment set to be prepared. I set out what I thought was the correct vestments and was preparing everything else for mass when I got a call to come to the sacristy. Apparently, colorblind seminarian Andrew had not put out the rose vestment set at all! I apologized to the Archbishop, "I'm sorry, Archbishop, I know what a rose is, I'm just not sure what color it is!" Bishop (now Archbishop Byrnes) was in the room and backed me up: "I know what you mean.... I only had 8 crayons in my box," he said.

One year I thought I'd hit on a million dollar Advent idea, a niche in the market for seminaries worldwide. Every year, Sacred Heart purchased a new set of Advent candles, and every year, we used the first purple candle, the second purple candle, the third rose candle..... and that was it. Then the semester ended and we all went home... So why does nobody sell a 3 candle Advent set for seminaries?! And you don't gain a free set every 4 years using up the unused 4th candle because you still need a rose-colored one! It's not clear how far my idea went, but if anyone's

looking to make their fortune in 2021, you can have that idea on me.

Rejoice always in the Lord! He rejoices in you. You are the expression of His great joy, bubbling over into creation. We know how the Christian story unfolds, from birth to death to resurrection and to new life. This is Advent and we await Christmas, but, in some sense, it is also an Easter moment because we can see now that the Savior is coming close and soon He will be here, an infant, born of Mary and the Holy Spirit, coming to rescue us. A new day is coming, and the darkness will be forced aside.

So the tree is up, the Advent Sundays are racking-up as we begin the 3rd week of 4. If you are anything like me, you barely thought about Christmas shopping yet. (Thankfully, Amazon.co.uk, not .com delivers **within** the UK, so it has become my last-minute store of choice to deliver to my family without me having to wait and pay for shipping!)

The advertiser tell us constantly that it's "not too late." Indeed it is not too late to review your preparations for Christmas and for Christ's Second Coming. Not too late for you to continue to work on making your Advent preparations worthwhile.

Hopefully you have some idea of your Christmas plans and plans for mass.

Maybe you'll be in attendance, maybe you have need of making use of our live-streaming. But in whatever way you choose to join us—join us! You are important to this community and to our celebration of the coming feast days. And know of our prayers for you and your families.

You are in my prayers this week.
Fr. Andrew adawson@sjacs.org

An Act of Spiritual Communion

It has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion which is a source of grace.

Spiritual Communion means uniting one's self in prayer with Christ's sacrifice and worshipping him in his Body and Blood. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend Mass.

Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive Holy Communion worthily.

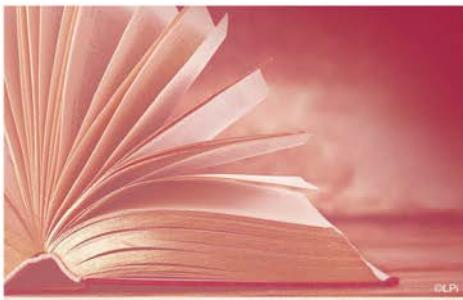
A Prayer for Spiritual Communion

*My Jesus, I believe that you are present
in the Most Holy Sacrament.*

*I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
Come at least spiritually into my heart.*

*I embrace you as if you were already there
And unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.*

Amen.



FIRST READING

I rejoice heartily in the LORD,
in my God is the joy of my soul. (Is 61:10a)



PSALM

My soul rejoices in my God. (Is 61:10b)



SECOND READING

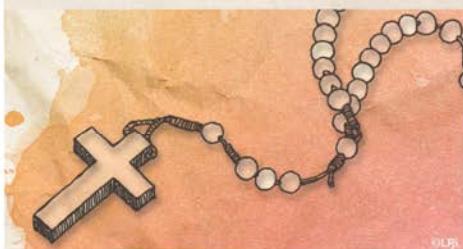
May the God of peace make you
perfectly holy
and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body,
be preserved blameless for the coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thes 5:23)



GOSPEL

*"I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"* (Jn 1:23)

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WORSHIP & MEDITATION

**GOD IS
THE JOY OF
MY SOUL**

GOSPEL MEDITATION

Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

Did you ever stop and realize that there is no earthly gain that can ever really satisfy us? Think of winning the Lotto. On this side of the winning ticket, it's all about the money, the new car, house, vacations, bank accounts, and infinite pleasures. The possibility of acquiring all of these earthly securities brings us back again and again to the purchase of a ticket. Then, one day we win! Our dreams are fulfilled, and happiness is on the horizon. Then one day, we wake up and realize that nothing has really changed, and I am not as satisfied as I thought I was or would be. I find myself living in my incompleteness and with my profound sorrow and grief. I did not find joy.

Glimpses of joy are possible but not by material means. They are brought to us through incredible experiences of connection that bring us face to face with real and authentic faith, hope, and love. And, they are glimpses and do not last. The moment we find ourselves looking back at them, they are gone, and we find ourselves remembering the moment in memory. To carry joy within us is to realize that it is not something I create, manufacture or even acquire. It is not able to be purchased. It is a gift. My need for joy mirrors my need for eternity, for a Creator who has a claim on the very essence of who I am and desires a home within me. As C. S. Lewis discovered, joy is a surprise that speaks to my very soul and is given as gift by the God who loves me.

The beauty of Advent is found in discovering the beauty of the gift of joy. God has visited his people for no other reason than to show them where and how to find joy! All of our human and earthly joy experiences are always only glimpses. They never satisfy us, sustain us or fulfill us. It is only God who is the joy of my soul. Real, Divine experiences of joy catch us off guard, make us stop and become aware, bring a feeling of awe and rightness and have an eternal Otherness about them. Nothing created by humans can ever come close to this. We probably will not fully realize the truth of all of this until we actually meet God face to face in heaven one day. Then, in that sacred moment when our hearts leap for joy we will understand what we have been tirelessly searching for all along. Intense gratitude will most surely follow.

Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 20

Reading 1 – 2 Samuel

When King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!" Nathan answered the king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you." But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?'"

"It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever."

Responsorial Psalm 89

R. (2a) **For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**
The promises of the LORD I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, "My kindness is established forever"; in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

R. **For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**
"I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations."

R. **For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

"He shall say of me, 'You are my father, my God, the Rock, my savior.' Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm."

R. **For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

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Reading 2 – Romans

Brothers and sisters: To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Alleluia

Alleluia, alleluia.

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel – Luke

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.



Blessing of a Christmas Tree

The use of the Christmas tree is relatively modern. Its origins are found in the medieval mystery plays that depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle that symbolized Christ, the Light of the world.

According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the Solemnity of Epiphany.

The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing.

**When all have gathered, a suitable song may be sung.
The leader makes the sign of the cross, and all reply "Amen."**

The leader may greet those present in the following words:

Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.
R/. Amen.

In the following or similar words, the leader prepares those present for the blessing:

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

One of those present or the leader reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example:

Listen to the words of the Letter of St. Paul to Titus: **3:4-7**

But when the kindness and generous love
of God our savior appeared,
not because of any righteous deeds we had done
but because of his mercy,
he saved us through the bath of rebirth
and renewal by the holy Spirit,
whom he richly poured out on us
through Jesus Christ our savior,
so that we might be justified by his grace
and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Or Ezekiel 17:22-24—I will plant a tender shoot on the mountain heights of Israel.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

R/. Thanks be to God.

The intercessions are then said. The leader says:

Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this
sign of our faith in the Lord.

R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

Blessing of a Christmas Tree



R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

After the intercessions the leader invites all present to say the Lord's Prayer.
The leader says the prayer with hands joined:

Lord our God,
we praise you for the light of creation:
the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.
We praise you for the light of Israel:
the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures.
We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:
he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,
who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Lord God,
let your blessing come upon us
as we illumine this tree.
May the light and cheer it gives
be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.
May all who delight in this tree
come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

The lights of the tree are then illuminated.
The leader concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and forever.

R/. Amen.

The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.



Catholic
Current

Prayer taken from the Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers, Revised Edition (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2007), 78-81.
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Prayers Needed

PRAY FOR THE SICK - PARISHIONERS

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Emma Bailif
Ted Barthel
Atina Beaugrand
Geri Beaugrand
Michael Beaugrand
Ken Beaupre
Theresa Bertelsen
Peter Bogos
Aldo Cardosi
Rose Marie Carroll
Ed Cole
Georgia Collamar
Mary Ellen Cooper
Robert Cooper
Victoria Cornwell
Nick DiCresce
Nina Delisi
Anita Dembeck
Deborah Dembeck

Alan DePorter
Catherine DeRose
Mary DiTrapani
Marie DuPont
Geri Ellis
Louise Fetherolf
Gerald Flint
Merrie Foerster
Florence Fournier
Giovanna Foresta
Nora Anne Francis
Mark Franzel
Sylvia Gentile
Mary and Don Godfrey
Jane Gora
Larry Graham
Geoffrey Greve
James Gutowski
Deborah Hammersburg
Mary Harbart

Margaret Hartung
Ted and Gracie Hinz
Alleyn Hunt
James Kammer
Marilyn Kiefer
Pat Kohlitz
Edward Krappmann
Delaney Kraemer
Al Kraska
Genevieve Krembel
Maureen Lee Leija
Grace Litwinczek
Dotty Lubinski
Janet Malaski
Joan Mannino
Nancy McDonnell
Irene McMahon
Karen McMahon
Lee Majewski
Vilma Marone

Mark Moffitt
Mary Jane Naz
Toni Pantano
Fern Pascany
Frank Poeschel
Ronald Pollack
Salvatore Promesso
Lawrence Radzowski
Sr. Alice Riegel
Laura Rizzo-Andela
Suzanne Roland
Elena Roose
Jennifer Rose
Victoria Rydholm
Janet Saponaro
Alex Scapini
Elizabeth Schaller
Mary Anna Sheldon
Evelyn Smith
Kathleen Smith

Phyllis St. Amour
Ingrid Stemmerich
Donald Strobbe
Paul Tatti
Beverly Taylor
William Taylor
James Thompson
Janine Tomasello
Eileen Wallace
Audrey Weekley
William Woodruff
Chuck Wolschlager
Helen Wrynn
Thomas Ziolkowski



Pray for the Sick List: Please note that we regularly clear the "Pray for the Sick List" because the list grows beyond our space allocation and we don't always hear from people when they've gotten better. If you would like to add a person please call the Parish Center front desk at 586.777.3670 or send an email to our general inbox at info@sjasc.org.

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Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Advent (B)
December 13, 2020

John's Joyful Preaching

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Why go into the desert and cry out? The voice in the desert is lonesome, heard only by those who go there to listen. Let's leave our routines, go into the spiritual deserts of our hearts, and listen today.

The words of preparation John preaches are joyful. Why? First, to be told you are on the wrong path is good news. Have you ever followed your GPS to the wrong place because of an address typo? "It would have been nice to know this before I traveled across town to the wrong place," you thought.

Second, it is joyful to be told what makes your beloved happy, because you then know what will please him or her.

Good news! John's preaching points us to our destination in Jesus and to what makes him happy. The rose vestments worn by our priests today symbolize that joy. Notice in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco titled *Prophet Isaiah*, the prophet is wearing that color, too.

Another interesting detail is that Isaiah is holding his finger in the book while looking back at a young cherub, who in turn points to his neighbor. Isaiah's finger is in the Gospels, where he is the most quoted prophet of the Old Testament. Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah, and John the Baptist quotes Isaiah's prophecy about "the voice crying out in the desert."

Perhaps the cherub behind Isaiah is John the Baptist. And perhaps the barely visible baby to whom the little John the Baptist is pointing represents Christ, the reason for our joy. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

I will rejoice heartily in the LORD, my being exults in my God.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always.
 Pray without ceasing.

John 1:6-8, 19-28

[John the Baptist said,] "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

*Let's leave our routines,
 go into the spiritual
 deserts of our hearts,
 and listen today.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Anxieties, difficulties, and sufferings permeate our lives, and so many times the reality around us seems to be inhospitable and arid, like the desert....But the words of [John] the Baptist reveal that our joy rests on the certainty that this desert is inhabited: "Among you there is one whom you do not know."

—Angelus, Gaudete Sunday,
 December 17, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What makes you joyful? Would those same things make Jesus joyful, too?
- Do I point people toward the true source of joy with my words and example?

Celebrate the Incarnation

By Kathleen M. Basi

Soon after I met my husband, I began experiencing paralyzing anxiety. Was he or was he not the one God meant for me to marry? I was terrified of misinterpreting God's will, yet I was too afraid of hearing an unwelcome answer to ask for help. So, it went on for four years. Thankfully, once we were married, that particular fear resolved itself.

Nonetheless, to this day, severe anxiety still crops up occasionally. The trigger is always different—infertility, insomnia, professional concerns—but the symptoms are the same: my heart pounds, my brain fixates on *what-if* questions, and my chest tightens to the point that I find it difficult to even draw a deep breath. Anxiety consumes my thoughts and spoils the enjoyment of everyday life. And then...in the midst of this darkness, sometimes, I find relief in thinking: *by becoming human, Jesus sanctified even this plague of humankind.*

Sometimes we forget how relevant the celebration of the Incarnation is to our faith.

At this time of year, our senses are filled with the celebration of the Incarnation—God becoming a human being. Stories of stables, shepherds, and angels remind us that God is with us. Yet



sometimes, we forget just how relevant this tenet of faith really is.

When God took on human flesh, he accepted the whole works, including human imperfections. Jesus could have stayed up in heaven to hang out with the choirs of angels. Instead, he came down and got his hands dirty. He took on everything but sin, and for that reason, the entire human experience has been made holy—even the difficult parts.

It's in the Garden of Gethsemane that I see this most clearly. Jesus' prayer rings so true: *Please don't make me go through this. You know I want to do your will, God—but is this really it?* To be fully human is to know uncertainty and feelings of abandonment. It's a

lonely place to inhabit, and seemingly reassuring Scripture can sometimes have the opposite effect. Philippians 4:6–7 says, "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Such passages as these can actually feed the *what-if* questions: What if I'm mired in this darkness because my faith isn't strong enough to lift me above it?

We're not alone, though. Jesus experienced terror and uncertainty, too. He walked a similar path of darkness right to the cross. And because he did, there's light in times of darkness—right here, right in the middle of the mire. And while knowing that doesn't take away my anxiety, it does help me get through it. +



Lord, you are the source of my strength, peace, and joy. Send your Spirit to renew my trust and hope in you and give me peace.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 14–19

Monday, Advent Weekday:
Nm 24:2–7, 15–17a / Mt 21:23–27
Tuesday, Advent Weekday:
Zep 3:1–2, 9–13 / Mt 21:28–32
Wednesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 45:6c–8, 18, 21c–25 / Lk 7:18b–23

Thursday, Advent Weekday:
Gn 49:2, 8–10 / Mt 1:1–17
Friday, Advent Weekday:
Jer 23:5–8 / Mt 1:18–25
Saturday, Advent Weekday:
Jgs 13:2–7, 24–25a / Lk 1:5–25



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