

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church

December 22nd/December 23rd 2018: Fourth Sunday of Advent



**1460 Pearson Avenue SW
Birmingham, Alabama 35211
Phone: (205) 785-9840**

**E-mail: church@myblessedsacrament.org
Website: www.myblessedsacrament.org**

Pastor
Rev. Jim W. Booth

Religious Education
Ann Noblitt

SACRAMENTS and LITURGY

English Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m.

English Sunday Mass: 9:00 a.m.

Traditional Latin Sunday Mass: 10:45 a.m.

English Weekday Masses: 8:30 a.m. Monday to Friday

Latin Weekday Masses: 7:00 a.m. Wednesday and Friday, 6:30 p.m. on First Friday

First Saturday Latin Mass: 8:30 a.m. with confessions beginning at 8:00 a.m.

Holy Day Mass: As Announced

Confessions: Thirty minutes before Saturday and Sunday Masses and by request

Baptisms: By Appointment

Marriage Arrangements must be made with the Pastor at least 6 months before the date of the wedding. Talk to the Pastor before making any firm wedding plans. No destination weddings.

WELCOME to all of our visitors: We are glad you have attended Mass with us. If you wish to join Blessed Sacrament, please pick up a parish census form at the Religious Goods Counter located in the vestibule of the front entrance.

IN MEMORIAM: In memory of Mary & Bill Dinan, the sanctuary lamp will burn for the repose of their souls from December 23rd to December 29th. The sanctuary lamp will burn for the repose of John Schauer, Jr. from December 30th until January 5th.

CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES for 2019, arranged alphabetically, are in the vestibule at the back of the Church.

ADVENT ANGEL TREE: The families helped by this year's Angel Tree express their deep gratitude for making Christmas special.

MASS & MARCH FOR LIFE: Bishop Baker will celebrate a Mass for Life at the Cathedral of St Paul on Saturday, January 12th at 9:00 a.m. Following the Mass, there will be a peaceful and prayerful rally and march at Brother Bryan Park at 10:45 a.m. Please come and speak out on behalf of innocent babies and others who can't speak for themselves against the culture of death.

MARDI GRAS DINNER DANCE: We will have a dinner dance in the Parish Hall on Saturday, March 2nd 2019 following the 4:00 p.m. Mass. All are invited to dine and dance.

ADVENT OUTREACH TO THE CATHOLIC CENTER OF CONCERN: All through the season of Advent we will collect non-perishable food items as well as other basic necessities such as toiletries, diapers, paper goods, and the like for the Catholic Center for Concern. Please help those in need have a better Christmas by meeting their most basic needs.

PRAY FOR OUR SEMINARIANS: Please pray for our seminarians: Deacon Justin Ward, Daniel Sessions, Charles Deering, Doug Hess, Luis Reyes, Matthew Gubenski, and Cristian Padilla. We need to fervently pray for those who are discerning a call to the priesthood.

CONTACTING THE FRANCISCANS: the Franciscans of the Fraternity Poor of Jesus Christ, Friar Gabriel, Friar Rafael, and Friar Leticio, can be contacted at (205) 578-2988, on facepage @poorofjesuschristalabama, and via e-mail at franciscanspjalabama@gmail.com

TENTATIVE 2019 HIGH MASS SCHEDULE: Sunday, January 13th (Holy Family); Sunday, February 10th (Fifth Sunday After Epiphany); Sunday, March 31st (Laetare Sunday); Thursday, April 18th (Holy Thursday); Sunday, April 21st (Easter); Sunday, May 26th (1st Communion); Sunday, June 9th (Pentecost); Thursday, June 20th (Corpus Christi); Thursday, August 15th (Assumption of BVM); Sunday, September 8th (Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost); Sunday, October 27th (Christ the King); Sunday, December 8th (Immaculate Conception); Sunday, December 15th (Gaudete Sunday); and Tuesday, December 24th (Christmas Eve).

PARISH SUPPORT: The collection for last weekend was \$5890 and \$575 were collected for the Preservation Fund. Many thanks for your generosity.

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Mon, Dec 24: 3:30 p.m. Carols
4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass in English
7:30 p.m. Carols
8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve High Mass in Latin
Tues, Dec 25: 9:00 a.m. Christmas Day Mass in English
10:45 a.m. Christmas Day Low Mass in Latin

MASS SCHEDULE AND INTENTIONS: (*Mass in Rectory Chapel)

Sat, Dec 22: 4:00 p.m. † Pete Searcy (by the Bryant Family)
Sun, Dec 23: 9:00 a.m. Pro Populo
10:45 a.m. Special Intention for the Confirmandi
Mon, Dec 24 *8:30 a.m. † Vivian Fuqua (by Lauren Mann)
4:00 p.m. † Agnes Zimmer (by the Donellan Family)
8:00 p.m. † David Bull (by Richard & Barbara Juneau)
Tues, Dec 25: 9:00 a.m. Pro Populo
10:45 a.m. Special Intention for Jeff Hahn (by Scott Donellan)
Wed, Dec 26: *7:00 a.m. Special Intention for Jonah Renda (by the Donellan Family)
*8:30 a.m. † Patricia Durward (by Vinita Kelley)
Thur, Dec 27: *8:30 a.m. † Patricia Durward (by Vinita Kelley)
Fri, Dec 28: *7:00 a.m. Special Intention for Linda Cooper (by the Donellan Family)
*8:30 a.m. † Patricia Durward (by Vinita Kelley)
Sat, Dec 29: 4:00 p.m. † Pete Searcy (by Bill & Marian Dinan)
Sun, Dec 30: 9:00 a.m. Pro Populo
10:45 a.m. † Patricia Durward (by Vinita Kelley)

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND especially John Minjares, Sr., Christopher Chism, Anthony Timpa, Virginia Files, Danny Rohling, Vinita Kelley, Penny Vaughn, Kay Dorion, Krissy Chism, Sylvia McCarrick, William Scroggins, Lamar Smith, Fr Kevin McGrath, OSB, Johnny Young, Paul Herrmann, Debbie Zeller, Wayne Little, Maria Morin, Andrea Little, Joseph Edwards, George Dunham, Rebecca Rice, Kay Junk, Liz Pate, Fran Costanza, Christine Cover, Liz Bailey, Thatcher Kerzie, Malcolm Perry, Koslyn Chism, Anna Marie Madison, Kathleen Strawmeyer, Cindy Little, Stan Trawick, David Henning, Bill Bankson, Loretta Mara, Don Broseman, Lillie Rumore, Jennie Sciro, Stephanie Perry, Marcus Perry, Cynthia Daniel, and Jackie Modica.

NEXT WEEK'S MASS READINGS

4:00 p.m. Holy Family Sir 3:2-6,12-14, Col 3:12-21, Lk 2:41-52
9:00 a.m. Holy Family Sir 3:2-6,12-14, Col 3:12-21, Lk 2:41-52
10:45 a.m. Sunday in the Octave of Christmas Gal 4:1-7, Lk 2:33-40

Four Important Things (Continued)

Before the advent of Jesus, the annual celebration of whose birth is now quite nigh, we really could not speak of four last things. The four last things as understood today, which are death, judgment, heaven, and hell, would have been death, judgment, and hell prior to God the Son becoming one of us to open the way to eternal life in heaven. It is an absolute truth of the faith that heaven was not generally open to mankind prior to Jesus. St Peter testifies to this article of faith, saying about Jesus that *“There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved”* (Acts 4:12). St Paul says much the same, that absent the grace that comes through Jesus, mankind has no hope *“For there is no distinction; all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:22-23). Prior to Jesus, Original Sin and our own personal sins would have made entry into heaven impossible. We have the special cases of Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2Kings 2:11) being assumed into heaven, and it is likely that Moses went to heaven (Mt 17:1-8, Jude 9) as well, but they would have to be seen as very rare exceptions. Indeed, without Jesus, hell would be the destination of all but a very, very few souls.

We tend to understand hell exclusively as the stereotypical fiery pools of sulfur, undying worms, and eternal gnashing of teeth, all of which are realities. However, on a more fundamental basis, hell is more properly described as the utter separation of the soul from God. Estrangement from God, again brought about by Original Sin and our own personal sins, represents the primary characteristic of hell. Indeed, the fundamental punishment meted out to Adam and Eve was their banishment from paradise and their no longer being allowed to walk and talk with God face to face. In a mild way, we can even say that life in this world can be a foretaste of hell in that we certainly see more suffering here and now than we see joy and peace. The joy and peace that we do experience tend to be fleeting foretastes of heaven.

In any case, can we say that the just who died before Jesus universally suffer the profound unrelenting pains of hell? Can we say that someone who did profound evil of the sort perpetrated by King Ahab would find an equal fate to King David? Would Cain be treated as well as Abel in death? Would Sarah suffer equally after death as the wicked Jezebel? Would Dathan, who rebelled against Moses, be treated equally to Aaron, the brother of Moses? Would the many Jews who spurned the Promised Land find the same fate as Caleb and Joshua who were the only two worthy to cross the Jordan? The worldly punishments put upon Cain, Dathan, most of the Jews of the Exodus, Ahab, and Jezebel suggest otherwise. The benefits bestowed upon Caleb, Joshua, Aaron, Sarah, and David in this life also suggest otherwise. In other words, the punishment for sin – hell – is not the same for all of the dead, and this would have been the case both before the coming of Jesus and afterwards as well.

Does that mean that the just who lived before Jesus are condemned to hell, even a very mild form of hell, for all eternity? No. In the Apostle’s Creed we confess that Jesus ‘descended into hell’ (*descendit ad inferos* in Latin), but not so as to suffer the punishments of hellfire. Jesus descended into hell because that was the universal fate of mankind prior to His resurrection from the dead. St Peter talks of this, saying that after Jesus was put to death He *“also went to preach to the spirits in prison”* (1Pet 3:19) and reiterates this saying that *“the gospel was preached even to the dead”* (1Pet 4:6). Jesus went into hell not to save the wicked and unjust who lived before Him, but to liberate the just who longed for the Messiah and who would have been His disciples had they lived at a later time in the course of history.

The realm of the dead where Jesus descended to preach to the imprisoned souls that preceded Him is often called the limbo of the fathers. The limbo of the fathers no longer exists because Jesus descended there to liberate the just of old. He went there not as a punished sinner estranged from God, but as the just Savior of the just. Indeed, He went to hell to bridge the impassible chasm between heaven and hell to liberate those resting in the Bosom of Abraham (Lk 16:19-31), to save the likes of Lazarus, while leaving the unjust, like the rich man, to their eternal fate of suffering. Thus, the hell that now exists exists not as the abode of all of the dead but the eternal home of those who died estranged from God. Heaven is now open to mankind. Thank you Jesus!

- Fr Booth