



# Divine Mercy Parish

## Mass Schedule for the Week of December 8, 2024

### *Monday, December 9, 2024*

7:30 AM DM **Georgette Moyer** by Family  
5:00 PM DM **Living & Deceased Members of Divine Mercy Parish**

### *Tuesday, December 10, 2024*

7:30 AM DM **John Slatick** by Family  
5-6:00 PM DM **Confessions & Adoration**  
6-7:00 PM DM **Rosary/Benediction**

### *Wednesday, December 11, 2024*

7:30 AM DM **Loving Memory of My Parents, Albin & Helen Zancusky**  
by Daughter, Joan  
1-4 PM **Chapel Adoration**

### *Thursday, December 12, 2024*

7:30 AM DM **Rev. Paul Gaggawala** by Delmy McGauley & Family

### *Friday, December 13, 2024*

7:30 AM DM **John Slatick** by Family

### *Saturday, December 14, 2024*

7:30 AM DM **Joseph Polaconis** by Karen & Ashleigh Salada & James Pribish

3:40PM DM **Divine Mercy Chaplet**  
4:00 PM DM **In Loving Memory of Our Dear "Pop" Buchinsky** by Family

### *Sunday, December 15, 2024*

7:30 AM DM **John Slatick** by Family  
9:40 AM DM **Divine Mercy Chaplet**  
10:00 AM DM **Margaret Astrumsky & Frank Norris** by Granddaughter, Cathy & Family  
12:30 PM DM **Living & Deceased Priests – Diocese of Allentown**  
*En Espanol*

### **An Act of 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 into 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.

### **Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel**

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen

**Prayer to Your Guardian Angel** Angel of God, my guardian dear, To whom God's love Commits me here, Ever this day, be at my side, To light and guard, Rule and guide. Amen.



### **Divine Mercy Parish Homemade Pierogies**

are now available. Cost: \$ 8.00 per dozen.

### **Prayer for Our Country**

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of America, please help our country. Help us to return to what is decent, right and proper. Help us to return to respect for ourselves and others, into truth in dealing with ourselves and others, to self-control and self-discipline and, especially, to a deep love for your Son and his teachings. Protect us from those who would destroy us from within. Our Lady, we place ourselves and our country under your mantel. Pray for us and help us. Amen.

### **Important Phone Numbers**

Divine Mercy Pre K  
Sister Patricia Maureen Mount, IHM  
570-462-3927

Divine Mercy PREP  
Sister Mary Glackin, IHM  
1-484-888-1358

### **Divine Mercy Chaplet**

When: Every 1st Sunday of the month  
Time: 3:00 PM  
Where: St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish, Mahanoy City

### **Divine Mercy Collections** **November 24th - \$5,810.00**

### **Immaculate Conception**

The Parish Office will be closed on Monday, December 9th for the Holy Day as per Diocesan guide lines. The office will reopen on Tuesday, December 10th at 8:30 AM.



The Parish Office will be closed from Tuesday, December 24th through Friday, December 27th.

The office will reopen on Monday, December 30th at 9:30 AM.

The Parish Office will be closed on Tuesday, December 31st and Wednesday, January 1st.

The office will reopen on Thursday, January 2nd at 8:30 AM.

**Divine Mercy Memorial Fund**  
**Loving memory of Diane M. Kalyan**  
 \$20 Ron Kalyan & family  
**Marie Dower**  
 \$10 Julie Buchinsky  
**Ray Beaver**  
 \$5 Terry & Mike Gilliam  
**Rita M. Loftus**  
 \$5 Mary M. McDonald  
 \$5 Sue Trutt  
**Special intentions**  
 \$5 Anonymous

**Father Walter Cizek Chapel Memorial Fund**

**A Birthday Remembrance To Our Mothers:**  
**Eva "Chesnavage" Racis Nov 18th**  
**Peg "Dean" Bonner Nov 19th**  
**God's Blessings ... Rest In Peace**  
 \$50 Joan & Bobby Racis

**You may schedule additional Masses for 2025**

and book is open to non-parishioners.  
**The Diocesan Mass Stipend is set at \$10.00.**



**Why do Catholics Celebrate the "Immaculate Conception?"**

In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed that Mary, by a special grace, was preserved from original and personal sin from her own conception in her mother's womb, in view of her role as the Mother of God. This grace bore immeasurable fruit for all of us in Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. On December 8 – a Holy Day of Obligation – we ask Mary to pray for us, so we, too, receive Jesus into our hearts with a faithful love like hers.

**Mary's "Yes"**

When the angel appeared to Mary and told her what God was asking of her, she didn't have to agree. God gave all of us free will to allow us to make our own choices. Mary said "yes" to God out of love. Her reward (and ours, too) is eternity with her Son.

**Devotional Candles**

**Divine Mercy**

**Sanctuary** In memory of my beloved Parents & Sister, Angelo & Enrica & Jean Romano by Ann Romano  
**Divine Mercy** Good health for Msgr. Bocian, Good health, peace & love in my family & Peace in our world  
**Divine Mercy** God's blessings for healing for Charlie Lex by Madeline & Joann  
**Blessed Mother** Good health for Msgr. Bocian, Good health, peace & love in my family & Peace in our world  
**Blessed Mother** In memory of Geri Shumski by Friend, Madeline  
**Blessed Mother** Good health & God's blessings for Hunter Zellin by family  
**Blessed Mother** In memory of Joseph Kriner by Nikki Zarcufsky  
**St. Ann** Special intentions by Marguerite Oravitz Fell & family  
**St. Joseph** In honor, praise & thanksgiving  
**St. Joseph** Good health for Msgr. Bocian, Good health, peace & love in my family & Peace in our world  
**St. Joseph** In loving memory of Hank Faleski by Wife, Julie  
**St. Joseph** In memory of Joseph Mikita by family  
**Sacred Heart** In memory of Al & Eileen Mikita by H. Mikita family  
**OLMC** In memory of Agnes Ferguson – anniversary of death by Toth family  
**OLMC** Special intention for John Kelly family  
**OLMC** In loving memory of my Dad, Richie Masternack on his birthday in heaven by Daughter, Denise & Charlie Sincavage  
**OLMC** In loving memory of my Husband, Richie Masternack on his birthday in heaven by Wife, Mary Rose

**St. Casimir**

**Sanctuary** In loving memory of my Dad, George Rittle by Daughter, Maria  
**Divine Mercy** Special intentions by Louis & Donna Kowalski  
**Divine Mercy** Prayers & good health for J.M., S.M., M.S., Z.S., T.S., G.M., A.M. J.B., L.B. & R.G.  
**Divine Mercy** Special intentions for Christopher, Hope, Marc, Gen, Benjamin, Morgan, Aubree, Eleanor, Owen, Oliver & Reni  
**Divine Mercy** In memory of John & Helen Pukavige by children  
**Divine Mercy** For Brent's continued healing & God's blessings by Grammy & Pop Leo  
**Blessed Mother** Special intentions, in thanksgiving & good health for Msgr. Bocian, Stephen Bocian, George Huss, Joann Pribish, Joanne Demko, Estelle McLaren, Scarlet Henry, Frankie Pettinato, Christa Beecroft, Joe & Chris  
**Blessed Mother** Our special intention by Karen & Leo Kayes  
**Blessed Mother** In loving memory of Leo & Kitty Breznik by Son, Mickey  
**Blessed Mother** To my dear friends, Paul & Debbie Sosna ...congratulations on 51 years of love by your dear friend, Gene  
**Blessed Mother** In memory of John T. McGuire by Wife, Peg  
**Blessed Mother** In loving memory of Joe & Joestelle by wife/mother  
**Blessed Mother** In memory of my dear Mother, Mary Zeminski on her birthday in heaven 12/8 by Daughter, Theresa Tunilla  
**Sacred Heart** Special intentions by PT  
**Sacred Heart** Special intentions for Christopher, Marc & Christa  
**Sacred Heart** In memory of our Mother, Elizabeth Taylor by family  
**Sacred Heart** Special intentions by Mary Kufro  
**Sacred Heart** Our special intention by Karen & Leo Kayes  
**St. Anthony** Special intentions for Christopher, Marc & Christa  
**St. Anthony** Missing my Mom & Dad, Anthony & Helene Seroka by Daughter, Janet Lukashunas

**Chapel**

**Sanctuary** Our special intention by Karen & Leo Kayes  
**Blessed Mother** Prayers & good health for Emily Seigel by Uncle Ed & Aunt Kerri  
**St. Joseph** Special intentions by Msgr. B

**Why do Catholics Display Nativity Scenes?**

The tradition of displaying nativity scenes began with St. Francis of Assisi, who was awed that God humbled Himself to be born in humility and poverty. To illustrate, he displayed a manger scene in a cave near the Franciscans’ chapel — complete with donkey and ox. He celebrated Christmas Mass and, according to an eyewitness, the wax figure of the Christ Child came alive. This pious tradition continues, reminding us that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

**One-Minute Meditations:  
St. John of the Cross**

Born in Castile, Spain, St. Juan de Yepes lived in poverty. St. John embraced poverty and suffering throughout his life. In 1563, he entered the Carmelite Order. He befriended St. Teresa of Ávila, who encouraged and supported him in his efforts at reform. He faced opposition and he was imprisoned in a tower. From this experience came the mystical poetry and inspired writings on the interior life that made him a Doctor of the Church.

**Bautismos Todos** están invitados a bautizar a sus hijos. Aún si usted no está casado en la Iglesia se puede bautizar a su bebé. Sin embargo, le pedimos que seleccione una pareja que se casó en la Iglesia Católica para ser sus padrinos. Si un padrino / madrina es una persona soltera, él / ella puede convertirse en una condición de que, esa persona ha recibido el bautismo. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que una pareja, civilmente casada o una persona que vive junto a otra persona como una pareja no está calificada para ser un padrino/madrina. Si son de fuera de nuestra parroquia, por favor, díles de obtener un certificado de elegibilidad de su pastor al menos dos semanas de anticipación. Padre llevará a cabo clases de bautismo, tanto para los padres y padrinos y administrar el rito del bautismo. Por favor, visite la oficina parroquia(108 W.Cherry St., Shenandoah. Teléfono 570 (4621968) para reservar fechas y rellenar formularios. El proceso es muy fácil.

**OPLATKI/CHRISTMAS WAFERS**

Are now available before & after all the Masses at Divine Mercy or at the Parish Office, 108 West Cherry St. during office hours. **Donation for a 6 piece pack will be\$ 5.00.**



**Christmas Memorial & Christmas Flower Memorial Envelopes** are placed in your December envelopes. You may place your Christmas Memorial & Christmas Flower Memorial in memory of a loved one or for a special intention. The memorials will be published for Christmas. **The deadline will be Monday, December 9th.**

**CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE FOR 2024**

**Christmas Eve Schedule**

Tuesday, December 24th 4:00 PM Divine Mercy  
Tuesday, December 24th 9:00 PM Divine Mercy

**Christmas Day Schedule**

Wednesday, December 25th 7:30 AM Divine Mercy  
Wednesday, December 25th 10:00 AM Divine Mercy  
Wednesday, December 25th 12:30 PM Divine Mercy Spanish

**Misa En Espanol**

**MARY, MOTHER OF GOD MASS SCHEDULE**

Tuesday, December 31st 4:00 PM Divine Mercy  
Wednesday, January 1st 7:30 AM Divine Mercy  
Wednesday, January 1st 10:00 AM Divine Mercy

**Nativity Happenings**

Members of the Interact Club collected winter clothing during the month of November. Members of the club also collected diapers and all items were donated to Catholic Charities. The Interact Club sponsored a Red Cross Blood Drive on November 4, 2024. We met our goal and collected 35 units of blood. The club will sponsor this event again in the spring. The next event will be the writing of Christmas cards to the students in Pre-K through 2nd grade in our partner schools.

Nativity is currently accepting inquiries for enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year. Individual meetings, school tours and shadow days are being scheduled for possible enrollment. Please contact Mrs. Jenifer Daubert in the Development office with any enrollment questions.

**OPEN HOUSE AND REGISTRATION:**

Registration for the 2025-2026 school year at Nativity is scheduled for Sunday, January 26, 2025 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM at the school. Faculty, staff, administration and coaches will be available to answer questions. Tours of the school will be given and tuition assistance drawings will be available that afternoon for those who register. Please contact Jennifer Daubert @ 622-8110 with any questions.

Nativity’s Annual Band & Chorus Christmas Concert will be held on December 19th at 7:00 PM at the school. Please join us for this special event!

**What Is My Responsibility To God?**

Once you have come to know God, and what he has revealed about Himself, He must come first in your life. “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind”(Matthew 22:37). This is not oppressive. On the contrary, if we love someone, we make changes so they can have a meaningful part of our lives. Their joys and sorrows become our own, and vice versa. This is true of God, whose very nature it is to love.

**Diocesan Information**

**If a Prenatal Diagnosis is Poor... You are not alone. There is help.** The Diocese of Allentown has a network of concerned parents and professionals who have experienced or worked closely with issues surrounding poor prenatal diagnosis. For support, contact: Sr. Janice Marie Johnson, . Johnson@allentowndiocese.org or 610-289-8900 x 245.  
**Victim Assistance Coordinator** The Diocese of Allentown provides assistance to anyone who, as a minor, was sexually abused by a priest, deacon, or employee/volunteer of the Diocese/Parish. Parents, guardians, children and survivors of sexual abuse are invited and encouraged to contact the Diocese of Allentown for more information about this program. The fullness of compassion should be extended to these victims by the Church. Victim Assistance Coordinator—**Direct Telephone Number:** 1-800-791-9209.  
 To learn more about the Diocese of Allentown’s Youth Protection Programs, Sexual Abuse Policy, and Code of Conduct, please visit [www.allentowndiocese.org](http://www.allentowndiocese.org) and click on “Youth Protection ” in the upper right hand- corner of the page.

**Attention all Safe Environment Coordinators!**

Mandated reporter trainings and Protecting God’s Children Workshops will now be available virtually. If you are interested, please contact Pam Russo Secretary, Youth Protection and Catholic Human Services  
 P.O. Box F, Allentown, PA 18105-1538  
 610-871-5200 ext. 2204  
[prusso@allentowndiocese.org](mailto:prusso@allentowndiocese.org)

**Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service**

If you have an allegation of abuse against a bishop, please contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service at [www.ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://www.ReportBishopAbuse.org) or by calling 800-276-1562

**Servicio de Denuncia de Abusos de Obispos Católicos**

Si tiene una denuncia de abuso contra un Obispo, comuníquese con el Servicio de Denuncias de Abuso de Obispos Católicos en [www.ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://www.ReportBishopAbuse.org) o llamando al 800-276-1562

**WEEKLY MINISTRY SCHEDULE FOR  
 DECEMBER 14TH & 15TH**

Mass Time	Lector	Eucharistic Minister	Altar Server
4:00 PM @ DM	Lombard, Gina	Webb, Jacqueline	Arias, Paco Jesus Hernandez, Omar
7:30 AM @ DM	Daynorowicz, Nolan	Selvocki, Joseph	Daynorowicz, Nolan
10:00 AM @ DM	Twardzik, Pam	Twardzik, Thomas	Estrada, Jose & Caesar

**Bulletin Deadline Dates**

Below you will find a listing of when bulletin information is due. The holidays are very busy, so I ask that you please use this as a reference guide as to when bulletin information is due. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Bulletin for Sunday....	Bulletin Information is due on ...
Sunday, December 15th	Monday, December 9th
Sunday, December 22nd	Monday, December 9th
Sunday, December 29th	Monday, December 16th
Sunday, January 5th	Wednesday, December 18th

**Please support the Retired & Infirm Priests of the Diocese of Allentown**

Thank you to those who have given so generously to the “Chosen, Blessed, Shared” annual fund. If you haven’t given, it isn’t too late to support the retired priests of our Diocese by making a gift to the Endowment Fund for the Care of Retired Priests. This special fund is used to directly support retired priests in good standing including the future costs of their healthcare, insurance, housing and sustenance. Please return your gift using the envelope you received in the mail. These envelopes may be returned in the mail or in the collection basket at Mass. For more information, visit the website [www.weloveourpriests.org](http://www.weloveourpriests.org). Your generosity supports retired priests from all 5 counties of our Diocese!

**Divine Mercy Parish Religion Education Program...Come and Celebrate the True Meaning of Christmas With Us!**  
**“The First Christmas”**



**On Thursday evening, December 19th, at 7:00 PM in Divine Mercy Church, the students in our Parish Religious Education Program will be celebrating in word and song the story, “The First Christmas” . Please come and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas with us. All are welcome.**

**Close to the Infant Jesus**

“You are nowhere but close to the Infant Jesus, trembling with cold in the stable of Bethlehem...Therefore, I beg you to love the crib of the Child of Bethlehem...stay close to him and be sure that Jesus is in the midst of your hearts more than you could believe or imagine.” St. Padre Pio

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory” (John 1:14).

**Redner’s “Save – A- Tape” Receipts**

**Divine Mercy Parish** is still collecting the “Save-A-Tape” from Redner’s Markets. Please drop off your receipts in the collection or mail box or bring them to the parish office during regular office hours. The parish will receive a check for 1% of what is collected. Please support your parish and collect the receipts. Thank you for all of your support throughout the year. It is greatly appreciated. **Please do not cut any of the receipt away.**

**A Little Reminder For Cemetery Lot Owners**

in order to keep bringing all our Parish Cemeteries in line with the guidelines and regulations of the Diocese the following will still be enforced: all bricks, fine & crushed stone, plants, fresh & plastic flowers not in containers, fences, borders of all types will be removed & discarded immediately due to the fact that they cause a problem for maintenance of your lot. Again, anything that interferes with the mowing & trimming of grass will be removed at the family’s expense. Containers should not interfere with the care of the cemetery grounds. If they do, the containers will be removed immediately. No planting of flowers, trees, or shrubs allowed. Plastic flowers must be in containers also.

**All Summer flowers must be removed!**

**Payments for Parish Funerals**

Funeral fees must be paid 24 hours prior to the burial. We ask that the family of the deceased come to the parish office and pay directly to the church. Please make no payment to the funeral directors. If payment is not received within 24 hours of burial, there cannot be any burial in the parish cemetery. Also, all Lot Care (Perpetual Care/Cemetery Care) must be current including current burial.



**Financial Report --September**

Net September Income	\$ 28,327.22	Expenses	\$ 21,824.41
		Insurance	\$ 7,422.00
		Assessments	\$ 4,023.00
Total Income	\$ 28,327.22	Total Expenses	\$ 33,269.41
		<b>Net Loss</b>	<b>\$ 4,942.19</b>



**Our parish is in need of Lectors, Altar Servers and Eucharistic Ministers. If you are interested in any of these ministries, we ask that you please call the parish office at 462-1968..**

**Works of Mercy**

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are actions we can perform that extend God’s compassion and mercy to those in need.

**The Corporal Works of Mercy** are these kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs.

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Feed the hungry           | Visit the sick       |
| Give drink to the thirsty | Visit the imprisoned |
| Clothe the naked          | Bury the dead        |
| Shelter the homeless      |                      |

**The Spiritual Works of Mercy** are acts of compassion, as listed below by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs.

- |                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Counsel the doubtful  | Forgive offenses                 |
| Instruct the ignorant | Bear wrongs patiently            |
| Admonish sinners      | Pray for the living and the dead |

**Food Truck Again at Divine Mercy Parish.....**

Catholic Charities’ Community Café Food Truck will be on site at the Divine Mercy Church Parish parking lot on **Friday, December 20th** from Noon to 1:30 PM. All are welcome to join us for a complimentary hot lunch! Meet Catholic Charities’ staff and volunteers and enjoy a delicious meal! The food truck will be visiting Divine Mercy each month, so keep an eye out for further dates. If you are interested in volunteering to help with the food truck ministry, please contact Pam Russo at [prusso@allentowndiocese.org](mailto:prusso@allentowndiocese.org) or 610-871-5200, ext. 2204. Anyone is welcome to come and receive a free meal .... No questions asked or no payment or donation is requested.

**Catholic Charities – Pregnancy & Parenting Support Program - Diocese of Allentown - Christmas Giving Tree**

This year during Advent, our parish will participate in the Christmas Giving Tree sponsored by the Catholic Charities – Diocese of Allentown. Catholic Charities focuses its Christmas giving on respect life efforts by providing counseling and material assistance to expectant and new mothers and their children. This year, the current administration in Harrisburg decided to not renew the annual government contract with Real Alternatives, the non-profit organization that funds our program. Because of this, your support is more needed than ever. Donations include: diapers sizes 3 and up, infant wipes, infant/toddler clothing, bottles and small infant safe toys. Additionally, parishioners may opt to provide a gift card to area stores at which Catholic Charities’ staff may pick up specific items to stock the baby closets. These items will be used to support pregnant and new mothers throughout the five counties of the Diocese of Allentown. Any and all donations will be greatly appreciated. Items may be dropped off at church in the vestibule or at the parish office. **Deadline: Sunday December 15th.**

**Parish Dues for 2025 for Divine Mercy Parish** are now payable for any registered parishioner 21 years of age and older at the parish office, 108 West Cherry St. If dues are paid by January 31, 2025, dues are \$ 50.00 per individual. If paid after January 31, 2025, dues are \$ 60.00 per individual.

**The Tree of Life has been placed in the vestibule of Divine Mercy Parish in the corridor leading to the former crying room. Take a moment and stop by to look at it. If anyone is still interested in making a donation to the new chapel in memory of someone or a special intention that you may have, please contact the parish office at 462-1968 as soon as possible. Your choices are: Leaf \$ 300.00, Acorn \$ 500.00, Foundation Stone \$ 1,000.00 and Mini-Tree \$ 1,500.00. Thank you to everyone who has made a donation to the chapel.**

**Q&A: WHERE DID WE GET THE NATIVITY SCENE?**

The tradition of the nativity scene started in Greccio, Italy. St. Francis of Assisi was amazed that God, out of love for us, would allow himself to be born in a lowly stable. He wanted to illustrate the humility of the Bethlehem scene for those around him. Three years before his death, he had the chance to do just that. The chapel his order usually used was too crowded to celebrate Midnight Mass indoors, so St. Francis set up an altar in a nearby cave and celebrated Mass there. With the permission of the Holy Father, St. Francis also set up a manger in the cave and brought in an ox and a donkey. The nativity scene was powerful in rekindling the faith of the people of Greccio. A former soldier even reported seeing the wax figure of the baby Jesus come to life! Whether the figure came to life or not remains a mystery. Today, it reminds us God “*was made flesh, and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14).



**Upcoming Event**

**Shenandoah Area Free Public Library... Book Signing: Andrea Mallick Pytak... Saturday, December 14th from Noon to 2:00 PM. “Hard Coal & Onion Domes” remembering three generations of the Mallick family in America, and the forces of nature that helped them survive.**

**The Best Gifts Come on Christmas**

Christmas brings a joy that goes beyond presents—it’s a season rich with the gifts God offers: love, hope, family, and the promise of Heaven. These gifts touch every heart, young and old, and hold profound meaning.

**The gift of love.** God chose to come into the world as a baby, sharing in our human experience. His love surpasses anything we could imagine. He invites us to embrace His love and let it transform us.

**The gift of hope.** Although we have moments of sin and can turn from God, the Child born on that first Christmas offers freedom from sin and the hope of a brighter future. This hope renews us and promises a better path forward.

**The gift of family.** Family provides strength, comfort, and support. Baptism welcomes us into Christ’s divine family, where we are bound by an unbreakable connection. “*See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God*” (1 John 3:1).

**The gift of Heaven.** The most awesome gift is Heaven itself. Without Jesus’ miraculous birth, Heaven would be out of reach. He bridged the gap between Heaven and Earth, offering the promise of eternal joy. This Christmas, we can cherish the enduring gifts of love, hope, family, and Heaven that make the season truly meaningful.

**How do I Use An Advent Wreath?**

The Advent Wreath is a circle of evergreen branches, symbolizing God’s eternal and unending love. It includes three purple (violet) candles and one pink (rose) candle. On the first Sunday of Advent, and each night that week, the first purple candle, known as the Prophet’s Candle, is lit to symbolize hope. On the second Sunday and throughout that week, light both the first and second purple candles. The second candle, called the Bethlehem Candle, represents faith. The pink candle, lit during the third week, symbolizes joy and marks Gaudete Sunday. During the fourth week of Advent, all three purple candles and the pink candle are lit. The fourth candle, known as the Angel’s Candle, represents peace.

Consider meditating on Scripture as you light the candles. Week 1 (hope) - Isaiah 9:2-7, week 2 (faith) - Micah 5:2-5a, week 3 (joy) - Luke 2:8-14, and week 4 (peace) - Luke 1:26-38.

**Thankfulness Is Good For The Health**

“*This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it*” (Psalm 118:24). Studies show that people who are actively thankful are less likely to be depressed, anxious, jealous and find they enjoy ordinary pleasures like sunsets, good health and simply being alive. Here is how you can join them ... **Keep score.** For three days straight, keep track of how many times you think grateful thoughts versus complaining. This is your Grateful to Grumbling Ratio. The higher your G2G Ratio, the happier you will be. **Poll others.** Find out what others are thankful for. You will probably discover something you should also be thankful for but haven’t thought of. “**I get to ...**” Instead of saying, “I have to ...” to describe tasks, say, “I get to ...” Think of every day as a blessing and chance to serve God. **Fast.** Forgo something you like such as food, TV, the internet. It will make you more thankful for it when you get it back. **Watch the company you keep.** Attitudes are contagious. Do the people around you encourage gratitude or griping? Consider changing your environment or your friends to lean toward gratitude. **Purge often.** Have you noticed that the people who have the least seem the happiest? Keep only what you need.