



Heart of the Nation.
CATHOLIC MASS

MONTHLY BULLETIN

January 2026

At Home with the Lord

Singing the nursery-rhyme *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* may lead an inquisitive little one to ask, “Can we look for the twinkly star tonight?” All stars in the sky can appear to twinkle like diamonds in the sky, but none has evoked more wonder than the Star of Bethlehem.

Above the World

In the Old Testament, the Book of Numbers includes the prophecy of a future “star” in the line of Jacob’s descendants. Advisors to King Herod quoted the prophet Micah, who foretold the birth of a ruler to shepherd God’s people.

Magi had knowledge of astronomy and religious beliefs. Gentiles, including scholarly magi, awaited the coming of a king who would do God’s will.

From our planet’s place within the Milky Way galaxy and its countless stars, magi

Twinkling Stars

somehow noticed the Star of Bethlehem. They saw the star as a sign and set off,



Fr. Mark Payne
Chaplain

carrying gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh—gifts fit for a king.

Travelers in the Dark

In the second and third *Twinkle, Twinkle* stanzas, the sun goes down, and a traveler knows the way to go only because of the twinkling star’s light. When the magi got as far as Jerusalem, they inquired about where to find the newborn King.

Reigning King Herod’s panic mounted as chief

priests and scribes told him that Scripture prophesied birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, a city under Herod’s rule. Magi took to the road again for the last six miles or so of their journey.

Overjoyed when the star guided them right to the doorstep, the magi gave homage to Jesus. Warned in a dream not to report to Herod, the magi chose a different route home.

Why Stars Twinkle

Stars appear to twinkle when we view them through the varied densities, temperatures, and wind in Earth’s atmosphere. Astronomers today call clear viewing, with minimal twinkling, “good seeing.”

Jesus came as a little child. We celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, seeing His goodness and the shining light of His love that wondrously make us what we are.

Mary, the Holy Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation) and World Day of Peace – January 1

Visit www.HeartoftheNation.org for Mass anytime during the day.

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children – January 22

Please pray for unborn children, whose human lives from the moment of conception make them precious in God’s eyes.

"I want to thank the deacon who left me a message offering to pray with me. His message was so kind that simply hearing it gave me enormous solace."

— Pamela



"I am always uplifted in spirit and faith by the sermons that are given."

— Elaine

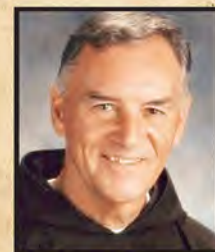


"It means so much to reach out to those of us who occasionally can't get to church but still want to participate in the Mass."

— Anthony

Flock Together in Faith

Walking through the Valley of the Doves (Wadi Hamam), Jesus had a scenic stretch on the route from Nazareth to Capernaum. Cliffs overshadowing the valley provided ideal nesting spots for doves. Further south, the Jordan River provided God's chosen site for the Baptism of the Lord, where the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.



Fr. Tony Scannell
Chaplain

In the voice of the Father declaring Jesus the beloved Son, in the person of Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit, the Trinity became manifest. On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the second reading at Mass recalls Peter explaining that Jesus, anointed with the Holy Spirit, "went about doing good." Baptism frees us from original sin and enables us to continue His mission.

Birds of a Feather

Doves as ordinary, feathered birds appear elsewhere in Scripture. They, too, have things to teach us.

Noah knew that the flood waters had receded when a dove sent from the ark returned with an olive leaf. Doves teach us to hope after devastation.

Mary and Joseph

offered the ritual sacrifice of two pigeons or turtledoves when presenting a firstborn son in the Temple, but Jesus angrily drove out dove sellers when He ransacked a marketplace in a Temple area meant for prayer. Doves remind us to give liturgy and other prayer the proper place in our lives.

While the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at Jesus' Baptism bridged heaven and Earth, even the feathers on commonplace doves, like the ones Jesus would have spotted on his walks, tell us about the heavenly Father. He cares about the details!

Making a Point

Monks in medieval monasteries used feather pens to painstakingly copy Sacred Scripture and

other writings by hand. Although sturdier than reed pens used by transcribers in Jesus' day, the monks' quill pens likewise got dull and needed sharpening. Today, printing presses make Bibles, prayer books, and other literature readily available to help us sharpen our spirituality.

Ruffling Feathers

To make paintbrushes to illustrate manuscripts, monks used hollow quills in various sizes to hold the bristles. Our Lord knows the broad strokes of our lives, our fine points, and ways to give us a hand.

Jesus traveled beyond the beauty of the Valley of the Doves, unafraid to ruffle some feathers. When His ways challenge us, the Holy Spirit helps us to soar.



Good Work Remains Key

Having received a vision of an angel telling him to summon Simon Peter, a Gentile named Cornelius invited friends and family to the house to hear what the Apostle had to say. Peter described Jesus' ministry. By donating to Heart of the Nation, you participate in ministering to homebound Catholics and to people discovering the Catholic faith through TV Mass—good work!

Epiphany Prayer



Lord Jesus,

You came as newborn Savior
to share life with us on Earth;
in Your love, may I find favor,
hope, joy, and blessing
through Your birth.

Like the magi who once saw
the rising of a new star,
may Your Light lead me
to rejoice,
following in wonder and awe.

Continuing life's journey,
as did wise men from afar,
in Your love, O Lord most holy,
may I seek You
with all my heart. Amen.

Prayer for Peace

Lord Jesus,

There is much in this world
beyond what I can remedy, and
so I come to You in prayer:

For people whose peace
is shattered,
and for peacemakers;
For the hungry and homeless,
and those who provide
what they can;
For the dehumanized,
and rescuers of human dignity;
For the disheartened,
and the gentle-hearted
who bring hope. Amen.

Batter Up

As Heart of the Nation's new prayer minister, Deacon Mike Hoffman welcomes callers seeking someone to pray with them or help with questions in matters of faith. He and a group of trained volunteers answer calls weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time, and they will gladly return messages left outside of those hours.

Ordained as a "second-career" deacon in 2018, Deacon Mike previously worked as a human resources executive. He now serves as a deacon for two Wisconsin parishes, in addition to his ministry at Heart of the Nation.

Although Deacon Mike coached Catholic school basketball teams for 14 years, he jokingly says that he became a deacon because, in baseball lingo, he didn't want to strike out. He attended Saint Lawrence Seminary, a residential Catholic high school, but got homesick and switched to public school close to home. He planned to become Father Mike but became a husband and father of four kids instead. God still had him on the clergy roster, and when Deacon Mike talked with his wife, Mary, about becoming a deacon, she gamely answered, "It's about time!"

As the top two qualifications for prayer line volunteers, Deacon Mike looks for faith and compassion. Their initial and ongoing training covers listening attentively to gain an understanding of a caller's needs and then responding in the offering of prayer. Volunteers may pray spontaneously or use prayers written by Deacon Mike for various circumstances. If theological questions arise, Deacon Mike fields the calls and answers in accordance with the Catholic faith.

Two favorite Scripture passages provide particular inspiration for Deacon Mike. "The Beatitudes show what matters most to Jesus," he explained. "Saint Paul's Letter to the Philippians provides "a breathtaking image of Divine humility."

Reasons to call the prayer line vary, including feeling lonely or unheard, experiencing loss or facing a big decision, wondering why prayer matters, wanting to share an experience of God's blessing, or seeking a new way to pray—"all those and more," Deacon Mike added. People may call at "big moments" they are facing. On the other hand, he said, "It does not have to be monumental. I am here to build a ministry that responds to all of the prayer requests we receive."



Saving Dates

Proclaiming sincerity, justice, love, and freedom as foundations of peace, Pope Paul VI established the annual **World Day of Peace**, beginning in 1968. For 2026, Pope Leo XIV has announced the theme, "Peace be with you all: Towards an 'unarmed and disarming' peace."

Celebrating World Day of Peace on the **Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God**, invites the faithful to ask that Mary pray with us for a more peaceful world. Mary gave birth to Jesus, Prince of Peace. Magi had come in adoration, but the Holy Family had to flee from Herod's violent intentions. Mary understands our desire for peace, the wellspring of oneness with Christ.



**January 1: Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God /
World Day of Peace**

January 18-25: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Catholics unite with other Christian denominations in observing the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**. This year, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and a commission of the World Council of Churches recommend prayer and reflection based on Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 1-7 and 13. By using the same Scripture passage, one verse each day, members of various churches take a step toward unity in the desire to grow in love, hope, faith, and knowledge of the one Lord.

Fittingly, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity always concludes on January 25, the **Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul** (superseded by Sunday Mass this year). Once a Pharisee who rampantly persecuted early Christians, Paul converted after experiencing a blinding light, hearing the voice of Jesus, and regaining his sight. He became God's "Apostle to the Gentiles."



Thank You, Circle of the Heart

members, for your monthly gifts. Heart of the Nation gratefully includes members in perpetual prayers placed before the altar for every Sunday TV Mass. To join, please make your pledge on the enclosed reply card.



Prayer & Worship Guide:

Each issue contains text for Sunday TV Mass, reflections, prayers, and where to find daily Mass readings in your Bible. To order a free subscription, please contact Heart of the Nation with the recipient's name and address.

MASS SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 1, 2026
Mary, Holy Mother of God
(Holy Day of Obligation)



Sunday, January 4, 2026
The Epiphany of the Lord

Sunday, January 11, 2026
The Baptism of the Lord

Sunday, January 18, 2026
Second Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Sunday, January 25, 2026
Third Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Online Mass on Sundays and Holy Days:

Available all day at
www.HeartoftheNation.org



Heart of the Nation.
CATHOLIC MASS

**For local time and TV
channel information,
please visit**

www.HeartoftheNation.org

or

Contact Us:

Heart of the Nation

P.O. Box 14428

Milwaukee, WI 53214

(855) 855-6277

Mail@HeartoftheNation.org

Prayer Line:

(414) 475-4700