For most Catholics, their primary religious practice revolves around the sacraments. In the public mind, “going to Mass on Sunday” is what defines a “practicing Catholic,” perhaps closely behind “getting your kids baptized.” Catholic commentators may complain that this emphasis on external practices reduces religion to mere cultural conformity, but the oversimplification captures part of a genuine truth. The Second Vatican Council expressed it more precisely:

_The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men (sic), to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God; because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called “sacraments of faith.”_ (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 59)

Recognizing the central role of the sacraments, the Council devoted much attention to the reform of sacramental practice in the Church, which became the primary way ordinary Catholics experienced the work of the Council. Referring to sacramental celebrations, the Council wanted to make the changes necessary to remove “certain features which have rendered their nature and purpose far from clear to the people of today” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 62). In particular, the Council directed that “The rite and formulas for the sacrament of penance are to be revised so that they more clearly express both the nature and effect of the sacrament.” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 72)

I would contend that the Council’s words regarding the sacrament of penance have yet to be fully implemented in Church practice. That is, “going to confession” in current practice may well tend in certain ways to obscure what is really going on when we approach God as repentant sinners. Today for the most part, Catholics “go to confession”—in much smaller numbers to be sure—pretty much the way their parents and grandparents did in the 1950’s and before. What is even more concerning is that Church leaders seem largely unconcerned with the lack of reform of Church practice, at the same time that the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation plays a diminishing role in the life of the Church. In the history of the Church, there have been periods when “reconciliation” dropped out of vogue, almost falling into oblivion. People simply found the teaching or the requirements regarding reconciliation unhelpful and so the sacrament became seldom utilized. Are we entering into such an experience in our own time? Is urging people to go back to the 1950’s the way to prevent this? Or did the Council want to point us in another direction which we have failed to heed?

This is too big a topic to address fully here, though I did speak about reconciliation in the bulletin essay on December 9, 2018 and again on March 31, 2019.

—continued inside
12:05 Daily Mass Intentions and Presider

Monday
12/9  no announced Mass
Presider: Fr. Gillespie SJ

Tuesday
12/10  James D’Arcy (D)
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ
7:00 PM Advent Reconciliation Service

Wednesday
12/11  Old St. Joseph’s Memorial Society
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Thursday
12/12  Edward and Mary Britt Family (D)
Presider: Fr. Gillespie SJ

Friday
12/13  Lois Campanaro (D)
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Saturday
12/14  Benefactors of the Maryland Province
Presider: Fr. Gillespie SJ

Saturday–Sunday

Saturday
12/14  5:30 PM  Presider: Fr. Gillespie SJ

Sunday
12/15  7:30 AM  Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ
9:30 AM  Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ
11:30 AM  Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ
3:00 PM  Lessons and Carols
6:30 PM  Presider: Fr. Gillespie SJ

In your prayers, please remember our sick and homebound brothers and sisters and our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital.

Douglas Adler, George Bernato, Deborah Brooks, Ann Crowther, Jane Crowther, Mary Kay Crowther, Elizabeth Davies, Fr. Ed Dougherty SJ, Barbara Epting, Tessie Griffin, Carol Herman, Fr. Mike Hricko SJ, Imani Ivie, Sharon Krinsky, Bruce Maloney, Allen May, Fr. Jerry McAndrews SJ, D. Minter, Julius Mingroni, Bobbi Morrissey, Barbara Paul, David Roberts, Donovan Schmidt, Dennis Scott, Sara Smith, Mary Turner, Gail Williams, Sharon Winge and Patricia Yusko.

Requiescat in pace
OSJ parishioner James P. (Jim) Rodgers passed away on November 21. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Jim’s partner, Jim Smyth, and to their families and friends.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him; may his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Apostleship of Prayer
The December intention of Pope Francis’ Apostleship of Prayer is for The Future of the Very Young: that every country will take the measures necessary to prioritize the future of the very young, especially those who are suffering. Visit popesprayerusa.net for written and video reflections on Pope Francis’ intention.
—continued from first page

which are still available on our parish’s website.
But frankly, pursuing the matter further may lead to
some controversial and contested issues that are
not easy to discuss in today’s climate in the Church.
My purpose is to urge you to penetrate to the
essence of “reconciliation” and consider celebrating
the sacrament of reconciliation according to the
ceremonial ritual promulgated immediately after
the Second Vatican Council. Such an opportunity
will be offered on **Tuesday, December 10, at 7:00
PM** here in our parish church.

I want only to make two points that I hope will
assist you in celebrating this sacrament:
First, don’t overestimate or be distracted by what
you are going to say in confession. There is
something much more important that you have to
do. The instruction accompanying the Vatican II
ritual says it well:

*The most important act of the
penitent is contrition, which is
“heartfelt sorrow and aversion of
the sin committed along with the
intention of sinning no more.”*. . .
*The genuineness of penance
depends on this heartfelt contrition.
For conversion should affect a
person from within toward a
progressively deeper enlightenment
and an ever-closer likeness to Christ.*
(Rite of Penance, #6a)

This teaching is so much more consistent with the
gospel of Jesus’ encounter with sinners and his
emphasis on authenticity and sincerity of heart. The
sacrament has been so damaged by a distorted
emphasis on legalisms and external compliance at
the expense of what Pope Paul VI called *metanoia,*
“a profound change of the whole person by which
we begin to consider, judge, and arrange our life
according to the holiness and love of God. . .”

Second, we will pray a different “Act of Contrition”
than the one you probably learned as a youth. I
have some real problems with the old prayer, but
it’s not just me. The same instruction cited above
makes a similar point:

* . . . through a prayer for God’s pardon the
penitent expresses contrition and the resolution
to begin a new life. It is advantageous for this
prayer to be based on the words of Scripture.*

The old prayer mentions “I” a lot: “I am sorry,” “I
detest my sins,” “I dread the loss of heaven. . .” “I
firmly resolve . . .” and so on. Of course, there’s nothing
wrong with any of this, but it doesn’t say very much
about what God is doing through his Son, Jesus, and
never mentions the action of the Holy Spirit. And in
reconciliation, it’s primarily God’s action that is at work,
not our own. It’s a subtle, but major, difference. You
see how the Council wanted to change certain words
and gestures to make the celebration more reflective of
the truths of faith. Here is the prayer of contrition that
we will use that the Church recommends:

*Lord Jesus,
you opened the eyes of the blind,
healed the sick,
forgave the sinful woman,
and after Peter’s denial confirmed him in your
love.*

*Listen to my prayer:
for give all my sins,
renew your love in my heart,
help me to live in perfect unity with my fellow
Christians
that I may proclaim your saving power to all the
world.*

(Rite of Penance, #89)

It’s a very different prayer—all about Jesus and less
about me.

I’ve always felt the sacrament of reconciliation should
be celebrated to reflect the tender mercy of God
meeting a human person at his or her most
vulnerable—at the moment when we have very little to
say because as broken persons all we can do is fall into
the gentle arms of God, like the prodigal son crawling
back into his father’s arms. On Tuesday evening,
December 10, we hope to employ a sacramental sign to
*nourish, strengthen, and express* the mystery of God’s
all forgiving love.

—Walter F. Modrys SJ

*Front page image:* Rembrandt van Rijn, *Return of the Prodigal Son* c. 166-1669, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
Announcements

**Christmas at Old St. Joseph’s**

Mass on Christmas Eve  
4:00 PM, 6:30 PM, and 9:00 PM  
*Festive Prelude Music begins at 8:40 PM*

**Mass on Christmas Day**  
10:00 AM  
*The Schola Cantorum will sing at 9:00 PM. Mass; music at all other Masses will be led by cantor and organ.*

**Homeless Memorial Day**

Project Home invites all Philadelphians to honor the memories of the homeless men and women who died during 2019. A memorial service will be held on **Thursday, December 19 from 5:00–6:00 PM** at the Thomas Paine Plaza, 1401 JFK Blvd. John Campo and David Landis, who were guests at OSJ’s Faith, Food and Friends meal outreach, will be among those whose names are read aloud and whose lives are remembered that evening.

**Gesu Gospel Choir Christmas Concert**

The Gesu School’s Gospel Choir annual Christmas concert will be **Thursday, December 12** at the Church of the Gesu, 17th and Stiles Streets, Philadelphia. Pre-concert cocoa and cookies are at 6:00 PM and music starts at 6:30 PM. Details and RSVP at gesuschool.org/2019christmasconcert.

**Mark Bani at the Wanamaker**

In addition to Sundays and Lessons and Carols on **December 15**, OSJ music director Mark Bani plays the music of the season on the Wanamaker Organ at Macy’s Department Store, 13th and Market Streets following the Christmas Light Shows on **Mondays in December from 12:15–12:45 PM**. Mark will also present an organ recital on **Tuesday, December 17 at 12:00 PM** at Christ Church, Philadelphia, 2nd and Market Streets.

**Second Collection for Retired Religious**

The Retirement Fund for Religious is an annual, national collection sponsored by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The Retirement Fund for Religious was created in 1988 to address the profound deficit in retirement savings among communities of religious men and women. Until that time, most religious communities relied on younger members to care for elders. The proceeds of the annual collection help underwrite the direct care of elderly religious and support development of comprehensive retirement strategies. The collection will be taken up at Old St. Joseph’s on **December 14–15** and is available online until **December 22**.

**Give to Catholic Relief Services Online**

If you are an online shopper, your purchases can support the work of Catholic Relief Services. Amazon will donate to Catholic Relief Services if you just add "smile" and "catholicrelief" to the link: http://smile.amazon.com/catholicrelief.

Catholic Relief Services carries out the commitment of the Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas by responding to major emergencies, fighting disease and poverty, and nurturing peaceful and just societies. Old St. Joseph’s also supports the work of Catholic Relief Services through the annual Rice Bowl collection.

**Philadelphia’s Christmas Crèche**

The National Christmas Crèche will be dedicated on **Wednesday, December 18 at 3:00 PM** at 18th and Race Streets, Philadelphia. Reverend Dennis Gill of the Cathedral Parish will bless the crèche and the St. Francis Xavier Church Children’s Choir will sing carols. All are welcome!
Announcements

Parish Cookout Dinner
Tonight’s the night for the monthly parish cookout dinner hosted by the Young Adult Community. All are welcome to Barbelin Hall after 6:30 PM Mass today, December 8.

PREP Advent Mass
All PREP students (and their caregivers) are reminded to come to the church on Monday, December 9 at 6:00 PM. We will be celebrating Mass together as part of our Advent prayer.

Ministry of Accompaniment and Beyond
All those interested in being part of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia’s ministry of court accompaniment for immigrants and refugees—or in developing additional ways for our parish to support that community—are invited to meet on Monday, December 9 at 7:00 PM in Barbelin Hall. Conversation will include planning for National Migration Week, January 5-12, 2020. For more information or questions, contact BJ at bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org.

Old St. Joseph’s Advent Giving Tree
Please return your unwrapped gifts to the Advent Giving Tree by December 15. These gifts will be delivered to Gesu School and Aquinas Center students early that week.

Centering Prayer to Meet
The centering prayer group will meet on Wednesday, December 18, 6:30–8:30 PM in the Drexel Parlor of the parish offices. There will be a presentation with discussion on centering prayer, followed by evening prayer with a period of centering. Anyone interested in contemplative prayer is welcome. For further information, contact Christine Szczepanowski at 267-250-3049 or prep@oldstjoseph.org.

How to Read and Pray with the Bible
The fourth and final session of Fr. Walter Modrys’ series of talks on How to Read and Pray with the Bible is today, Sunday, December 8 at 1:15 PM in Barbelin Hall. Fr. Modrys will speak on Scripture in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. All are welcome.
For audio of the second and third talks in this series (which include a substantial review of the first session), contact bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org.

Reconciliation in Advent
Old St. Joseph’s will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a community on Tuesday, December 10, beginning at 7:00 PM. We will share the Liturgy of the Word, examination of conscience and prayer of contrition as part of our Advent prayer and preparation. Individual confession with parish and outside priests will also be available.

Lessons and Carols, December 15
On Sunday, December 15 at 3:00 PM, Old St. Joseph’s will celebrate our annual Service of Lessons and Carols. This Advent service is rooted in the Divine Office, the daily prayer of the Church. Nine scripture readings, along with Advent antiphons and Christmas carols sung with the help of OSJ’s Schola Cantorum, will trace God’s promise of salvation from Genesis and the prophets through the Annunciation and Incarnation. Please join us for a beautiful time of prayer amid the season’s busyness. There will also be a light reception following the service in Barbelin Hall.

YAC Spirituality Advent
Young adults are invited to reflect on the season of Advent and Emmanuel, God with us on December 17 at 7:00 PM. Prayer and reflection will end by 8:00 PM and be followed by fellowship at a local establishment for fellowship and fun. For information, contact Mark Dushel at osjyac@gmail.com.
INFORMATION

Pastor
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ (pastor@oldstjoseph.org)

Parochial Vicar
Fr. Fran Gillespie SJ (fgillespie@oldstjoseph.org)

In Residence
Br. Robert Carson SJ
Fr. Edward Dougherty SJ (dougherty@oldstjoseph.org)
Fr. Ed O’Donnell SJ (eodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)

Pastoral Associate
BJ Brown (bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org)

Business Manager
Eric German (germane@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Music
Mark Bani (music@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Offices
(office@oldstjoseph.org)

Religious Education (PREP) Coordinator
Christine Szczepanowski (prep@oldstjoseph.org)

Faith, Food & Friends Director
Deborah Hluchan (faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)

Rectory Office Hours
Monday through Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Sunday: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Mass Times
Monday through Saturday: 12:05 PM
Saturday Vigil Mass for Sunday: 5:30 PM
Sunday: 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 AM and 6:30 PM
Holy Days: 12:05 and 7:00 PM

Medical Emergency
In a medical emergency when the need for a priest is urgent, please call the rectory.

Hearing Enhancements
Old St. Joseph’s is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are available in the rear of the church.

Registration
Registration forms are available in the rectory office during normal office hours, on the bookcases in the back of the church and online at www.oldstjoseph.org. They can be returned to the parish office by mail or in person.

Sacrament of Reconciliation
A priest is available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation Monday through Saturday from 11:30 AM–12:00 PM or by appointment.

Sacrament of Baptism
If you want to arrange a baptism, please contact Fr. Gillespie (fgillespie@oldstjoseph.org) at least two months before the desired date.

Eucharist for the Homebound
To arrange to receive Communion at home, please contact the parish offices.

The Sacrament of Anointing
The Sacrament of Anointing (the sacrament of the sick) is offered during the 12:05 PM Mass on the first Saturday of each month. Homebound or hospitalized persons wanting to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony
If you want to be married at Old St. Joseph’s, please visit our website, oldstjoseph.org and read the material under the heading Weddings. Please call the parish office at 215-923-1766 at least nine months before your desired wedding date.

Rite of Christian Initiation
If you are an adult wishing to be baptized, or to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation, or are a baptized non-Catholic seeking full communion with Catholic Church, please call the parish office or email rcia@oldstjoseph.org.

Mass of Christian Burial
To schedule a funeral or memorial Mass, ask your funeral director to call the parish office

Parish Pastoral Council
(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Finance Council
Paul Shay, chair

Historic Preservation Corporation Board
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

Adult Education
Rita O’Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo
(adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Eldership
Pat Nelson (eldership@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life
Joe Casey (parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation
Len Mancini (osjspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)

Women, Faith and Fellowship
Rana McNamara (wff@oldstjoseph.org)

Young Adult Community
(osjyac@gmail.com)

Altar Servers
Maria Ramirez (altarserver@oldstjoseph.org)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
Bill Stewart (EM@oldstjoseph.org)

Hospital Ministry
Luanne Balestrucci (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Homebound Ministry
Neal Hébert (homeEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Lectors
Lou Anne Bulik (lectors@oldstjoseph.org)

Ushers
Nikola Szigorich (ushers@oldstjoseph.org)

Children’s Liturgy of the Word
Peggy Connolly (clow@oldstjoseph.org)