



Your *savior* is born  
today in David's city.

He is

*Christ*  
THE *Lord.*

LUKE 2:11 (CEB)



# Welcome!

We extend a warm welcome to all who attend one of our beautiful Churches this Christmas. We hope you will find our community a place where your faith will be nourished. We also hope you will share your special gifts with us. Your prayers, your presence and your talents are most welcome. To become a member of one of our Parishes, please contact the respective Parish Office.

**In the words of Pope Francis:** *“On this night let us share the joy of the Gospel: God loves us, he so loves us that he gave us his Son to be our brother, to be light in our darkness. To us the Lord repeats: “Do not be afraid!” (Lk 2:10). As the angels said to the shepherds: “Do not be afraid!” And I also repeat to all of you: Do not be afraid! Our Father is patient, he loves us, he gives us Jesus to guide us on the way which leads to the promised land. Jesus is the light who brightens the darkness. He is mercy: our Father always forgives us. He is our peace. Amen.”*

**RECONCILIATION:** The Sacrament of Reconciliation is every Saturday @ Sacred Heart from 3:30 – 4:30 PM and on Thursday @ Immaculate Conception from 4:15 – 5:15 PM (once Fr. Marty is back from medical leave).

**ANOINTING OF THE SICK:** if you would like to receive the Sacrament of the Sick, are in the hospital or would like a personal visit, please contact the Parish Office.

**SACRAMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES:** Any Catholic adult needing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation or if you are interested in being Catholic, or in need of Baptism or Religious Education, please contact our Director of Religious Education, Luke Gregory (792-2050).

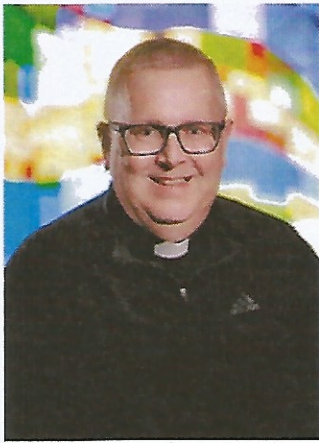
**MARRIAGE:** If you are engaged to be married, congratulations! Please contact the Church office at least 6 months prior to your anticipated wedding date. Please note: the Catholic Church recognizes as valid the marriage of a Catholic only when the wedding is celebrated in a Catholic Church or approved by the Church to be celebrated in another Christian Church after proper preparation. If you were married “outside the Church” please contact Fr. Marty and he will be glad to help you.

**VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD OR DIACONATE OR RELIGIOUS LIFE:** If you feel you have a call to the priesthood, diaconate or religious life and would like help in your discernment, please contact Fr. Jake Greiner, Diocesan Vocation Director (563-888-4255 or greinerj@diodav.org) or Fr. Marty.

**ADORATION:** 24-Hour Adoration is held every Wednesday @ Sacred Heart from 2:45 – 3:45 PM, and every Thursday @ Immaculate Conception from 4:15 – 5:15 PM (this will start back up again when Fr. Marty returns from his medical leave).

**Sacred Heart Parish  
and  
Immaculate Conception Parish**





Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I continue my tradition this year of writing my Christmas letter to God instead of writing to Santa Claus. Here is this year's version...

Dear God,

*I have been writing my Christmas letter to you starting in 2020 – COVID year. That year I wrote: "This will be the Christmasiest Christmas I have ever Christmased!" 2020 was a tough year and 2021 was a tough year personally for me. And so was 2024. "It will be the Christmasiest Christmas I have ever Christmased!" because I won't be with my people.*

*But it started out good. My medicine was working and doctor appointments got to be boring. It seemed we were on the right track. But then June came, and the cancer spread a little bit. New meds and with those came a big rash and 10 treatments of radiation, which I did pretty good. I*

*am so thankful to the drivers who drove me an hour and 25 minutes over to Cedar Rapids for a 10-minute appointment and then drove me back. #onlyyoucandoitbutnotalone*

*During this time, I was getting ready for my pilgrimage to France – but more on that later because you gave me 2 gifts while I was there, although I didn't realize it at the time. ✨*

*The radiation seemed to work and then came my October scans after coming home with COVID from France. Back to France and the pilgrimage first. One of the things I was really looking forward to was the Stations of the Cross up on the mountain. It's a tough walk but I kept telling myself I could do it – I wanted to do it – I wanted to lead the pilgrims in prayer – I needed to do it to prove to myself that I was still OK.*

*The tour guides had other ideas and said "NO"! I was hurt but I didn't try to show it. I was able to lead the Stations down below but it wasn't the same. I was told "NO", you can't climb the steps to the home of St. Bernadette. I was told "NO", you can't climb to the top of Mount St. Michel. But through it all you were teaching me the gift of humility – and that would come in handy once I got home.*

*I couldn't finish Mass that Sunday and had to call Deacon Joe to do a Communion Service in Colfax. I was devastated. The following day, I had my scans and had a feeling that the cancer had spread. It did. 12 rounds of chemotherapy. A medical leave of absence. I couldn't be around my people I was called to serve. What kind of priest can I be locked in the rectory all the time? Humility.*

*"Give the gifts that show you get them!" That was going to be the theme of my Christmas homily this year. You get me and you know the gifts that I need – not necessarily want. You gave my humility – accepting food and rides and help when I need it. And the second gift you have given me this Christmas – acceptance of the love people wish to share with me. That's a tough one because I'd rather give than receive. Now I have to receive – again, humility.*

*And so, for the gift of humility and acceptance, "THANK YOU!" Thank you for the gift of your presence – Emmanuel – God with us – through my family and friends who have walked this journey with me. I have been blessed by so many people here and afar who have sent cards and continue to pray the "Hail Mary" every day for me. I am blessed with people who check in on me and make sure my needs are met. I am blessed with a staff who know that I need rest and encourage me to do so when I'm tired. And I have been blessed by doctors and nurses and others who cared for me at my most vulnerable times. Their care and compassion and understanding is wonderful. Watch over everyone above, Lord, and let them know in their hearts how much I love them and that I might not be able to pay it back.*

*This is my Christmas letter this year, Lord. Watch over my family and friends and parishioners. Keep us safe from all harm and help us remember the true reason for the season – your Son Jesus who loves us and will always love us for we are precious in Your eyes – even when we celebrate "the Christmasiest Christmas I have ever Christmased".*

*There it is – my Christmas letter to God – it comes from my heart as do the prayers I offer for you everyday. Please pray for me. It is an honor to be your pastor and to walk with you on your journey of faith. It is my hope that I will be back with you towards the end of January. May God bless you and I wish you a blessed and Merry Christmas!*

#iwontbackdown  
#onlyyoucandoitbutnotalone

*Fc Mary*



## **DEAR PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: Welcome!**

We are so grateful that you and your family have joined us at Sacred Heart Parish. It is our hope that your little ones will grow up to be the future of our Church locally and in the world.

Until then, please, relax! We know that it's not easy to get your whole family to Mass, and it can be even more difficult to keep everyone sitting still. But your kids should know that the Church is a place they can feel at home.

We invite you to sing, pray, teach, respond and explain while you are at Mass. Our liturgy is full of spirit with you here, and we know your children are learning from the way you worship.

Also, everyone knows that children sometimes cry and make noise. You don't need to step out of Mass for this, but nobody will judge you if you do. Just be sure to return!

**DEAR PARISHIONERS:** The presence of children is a gift to our Church and is a sign that we are growing. A Church that isn't crying is dying! Please welcome children and encourage our young families.

### ***Jasper County Daily Mass Schedule***

*11:30 AM Monday and Wednesday @ Sacred Heart*

*8 AM Tuesday @ Immaculate Conception*

*5:30 PM Thursday @ Immaculate Conception*

*9 AM Friday @ Sacred Heart*

***\*\* Masses will start back up after Fr. Marty completes his chemo \*\****

### ***Jasper County Sunday Mass Schedule***

*5 PM Saturday @ Sacred Heart*

*9 AM @ Sacred Heart*

*11 AM @ Immaculate Conception*

#### ***New Year's Day Mass***

*9:00 am at Sacred Heart, Newton*