



# St. Gerard Majella Roman Catholic Church

300 Terryville Road  
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776  
Phone: 631-473-2900 Fax: 631-473-0015  
[www.stgmajella.org](http://www.stgmajella.org)

## Pastoral Staff

Rev. Gregory Rannazzisi, Pastor [frgreg@stgmajella.org](mailto:frgreg@stgmajella.org)  
Rev. Vitus Ezeiruaku, *in residence*  
Deacon Frank DellAglio [deaconfrank@stgmajella.org](mailto:deaconfrank@stgmajella.org)  
Deacon John Grebe [deaconjohn@stgmajella.org](mailto:deaconjohn@stgmajella.org)  
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Patty Longo, Director of Religious Ed. [patty@stgmajella.org](mailto:patty@stgmajella.org)  
Denise Nienburg, Thrift Shop Manager [thrift@stgmajella.org](mailto:thrift@stgmajella.org)  
Jackie Maggiore, Receptionist [secretary@stgmajella.org](mailto:secretary@stgmajella.org)  
Joseph Crescitelli and Dominic Fontana, Sacristans

## Parish Office Hours

Monday — Thursday: 9:00am-4:30pm  
Sunday: 8:00am-1:00pm  
Closed Friday and Saturday

## Mass & Devotions

Saturday: 5:00pm  
Sunday: 8:00am, 10:00am, 12:00pm  
Weekdays: 9:00am  
Rosary: Monday – Friday: 8:30am  
Chaplet of Divine Mercy: Monday - Friday: 9:30 am  
First Saturday: 11:00am Mass with the Anointing of the Sick

## Penance

The sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is celebrated on Saturdays from 3:45pm-4:45pm. You may call the Parish Office to make an appointment with one of the priests.

## Baptism

Baptisms are typically held twice a month at 1:30pm. Please call the Parish Office to schedule an appointment to set a date. Selection of godparents should be made after speaking with one of the priests or deacons.

## Marriage

Please call the Parish Office to make arrangements for your wedding at least six months in advance. No date can be set until the couple meets with a member of the clergy.

## Parish Outreach Hours

### Food Pantry

Tuesday: 11:30am-3:00pm  
Wednesday: 12:30pm-3:00pm  
Thursday: 11:30am-1:30pm & 4:30pm-5:30pm

### Thrift Shop/Barn

Monday — Thursday: 10:00am-4:00pm  
Friday: 10:00am-2:00pm  
Donations accepted Monday-Thursday: 10:00am-3:00pm  
and Friday: 10:00am-1:00pm. Please refer to our website for a list of items that can be donated.

### Stewardship Supper

The Thursday evening dinner is served between 4:30pm and 5:30pm. All are welcome.



*Live as the Holy Family. Unite yourselves in love and respect for each other, live in peace with all people and pray that you may share in the life of the Lord.*

©Religious Graphics, Ltd.

Sunday, December 31, 2023  
Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

## *Prayer for the New Year*

*Our lives are made of days and nights, of seasons and years,  
for we are part of a universe of suns and moons and planets.  
We mark ends and we make beginnings and, in all, we  
praise God for the grace and mercy that fill our days.*

*God said: "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate  
day from night. Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the  
years, and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky, to shed light  
upon the earth." And so it happened: God made the two great  
lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to  
govern the night; and he made the stars. God set them in the dome  
of the sky, to shed light upon the earth, to govern the day and the  
night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how  
good it was. Evening came, and morning followed-the fourth day."*

*Remember us, O God;  
from age to age be our comforter.  
You have given us the wonder of time,  
blessings in days and nights, seasons and years.  
Bless your children at the turning of the year  
and fill the months ahead with the bright hope  
that is ours in the coming of Christ.  
You are our God, living and reigning, forever and ever.*

*Amen*

*-The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

*The Pastoral Team and Parish Staff would like to wish all of you a blessed and happy New Year! May the  
Light of God guide you and may His loving arms protect you in this coming year.*



*O, come let us adore  
Him,  
Christ the Lord!*

*As we begin a New Year,  
please join us for a*

**HOLY HOUR OF ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT  
Thursday, January 4, at 7pm at St. Gerard Majella Church.**

Our time together will include  
**Sermon by Fr. Greg — Prayerful Meditation  
Song — Benediction**

Come! Let us gather for this special time of gratitude for our invitation to be in relationship with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist!

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*"In a world where there is so much noise, so much bewilderment,  
there is a need for silent adoration of Jesus concealed in the Host.  
It is a source of comfort and light, particularly to those who are suffering."  
~ Pope Benedict XVI*

# *Religious Education*

## ***Religious Education Classes***

We wish you all a  
a Happy, Healthy & Holy New Year!  
Our classes will resume with a “Joseph” week.  
Monday, January 8th

## ***Suggestions to add to your Resolutions for 2024!***

1. Include more prayer in your daily life.
2. Read the Bible in a year.
3. Know your daily Saints.
4. Carry out daily acts of kindness.
5. Pray the Rosary as a family.
6. Spend quiet time at Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
7. Share your Catholic Faith with others.
8. Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis.
9. Join a new ministry.
10. Go an extra day to Mass during the week.
11. Increase Your Marian Devotion.

Today's celebration of the Feast of the Holy Family highlights the importance of family in our religious life. We know that Mary and Joseph's faithfulness to God enabled them to cooperate in God's plan for our salvation by accepting the responsibility to raise God's Son, Jesus. From his parents, Jesus learned how to be a faithful believer in his Jewish tradition. Simeon's prophecy about Mary's sorrow alerts us to the importance of a family's commitment to one another, a commitment that is expressed in both good times and bad.

Gather as a family and recall times when your family showed its commitment to one another in good times and in bad. Recall times when your immediate family was supported by members of your extended family. Note that today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, and we see in the family of Jesus an example for our own family life. Read together today's Gospel, Luke 2:22-40. Joseph and Mary expressed their faithfulness to God through their observance of the Law of Moses. Simeon prophesied the grief that Mary would experience at the foot of Jesus' cross. One of the blessings of family life is our commitment to one another, sharing good times and supporting one another through difficult times. Conclude in prayer together thanking God for the grace expressed in your family's commitment to another. Write a prayer together, thanking God for your family life and asking God to strengthen your family's commitment to one another. Pray this prayer together.

(Loyola Press)

# Parish Outreach Ministry

“Be diligent in serving the poor. Love the poor, honor them as you would Christ himself.”

## Welcome Friends Free Curbside Meal Program

**Monday: 5:00 – 6:00 PM**

Christ Episcopal Church  
127 Barnum Avenue, Port Jeff Village

**Tuesday: 1:00 – 1:30 PM**

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
390 Patchogue Rd. (Rt. 112), Port Jeff Station

**Wednesday: 5:00 – 6:00 PM**

First Presbyterian Church  
Corner of Main St. and South St., Port Jeff Village

**Thursday: 4:00 – 5:30 PM**

Doors Open at 4pm Sit Down Only between  
4:30pm and 5:30pm

St. Gerard Majella Church

**Friday: 3:30 – 5:00 PM**

First Presbyterian Church  
Corner of Main St. and South St., Port Jeff Village

United Way  
A program of United Way of Long Island

Long Island  
**2-1-1**  
Get Connected. Get Answers.  
24 hours a day  
7 days a week  
365 days a year

2-1-1 Long Island Call Center... how can I help you?

The school said counseling would help my child. Where do I go?

Dial 2-1-1.  
Get connected to local available resources.

## Food Pantry Needs

Peanut Butter  
Jelly  
Pasta  
Canned Chicken  
Canned Pasta  
Soup  
Pasta  
Mac n Cheese  
Shelf Stable Milk  
Canned Chili  
Canned Fruit  
Tomato Sauce  
Raisins  
Toilet Paper

## Helpful Phone Numbers:

Alcoholics Anonymous 24-Hour Hotline: 631-669-1124  
Al-Anon Suffolk County: 631-669-2827  
American Red Cross - LI: 516-747-3500  
Birthright (Pregnancy Support): 631-821-9727 or 1-800-550-4900  
Brighter Tomorrow (Domestic Violence): 631-395-1800  
Catholic Charities (Food Stamp Info): 631-789-9546  
Child Advocacy Center (CAC) (Child Abuse): 631-439-0480  
Fidelis Insurance (Family Health Plus): 1-888-343-3547  
Gamblers Anonymous Hotline: 1-855-222-5542  
Good Shepherd Hospice: 631-376-3758  
Hope House Ministries: 631-473-6030  
L.I. Women's Coalition (Domestic Violence): 631-666-8833  
Narcotics Anonymous: 631-689-6262  
National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-SUICIDE  
Response Crisis Center: 631-751-7500 (Suicide Hotline)  
The Retreat (Domestic Violence Hotline): 631-329-2200  
Conexión Linea de Crisis (M-F: 5-10 PM) 631-751-7423V  
Victims Information Bureau (Advocacy, Counseling): 631-360-3606  
Women's Services (Town of Brookhaven): 631-698-2074

## *Mass Intentions and Presider Schedule for the Week of January 1 – January 7*

### **Monday, January 1 (Solemnity of Mary)**

9:00am Stephanie Woods  
5:00pm Solemnity of Mary

### **Tuesday, January 2 (Sts. Basil & Gregory)**

9:00am The Intentions of Jim & Barbara Scheahan

### **Wednesday, January 3**

9:00am Mario Guarino, Raymond Canudo, Nathaniel Polis

### **Thursday, January 4 (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton)**

9:00am Rosemarie Miano

### **Friday, January 5 (St. John Neumann)**

9:00am Gary Borthwick

### **Saturday, January 6**

5:00pm Donald Donohue, Brendan Fox, Peter Kryscuk,  
Joseph Trapani

### **Sunday, January 7 (The Epiphany of the Lord)**

8:00am John Svetina  
10:00am The Intentions of Brett & Patrice Raboy & Family  
12:00pm Evelyn Kurz



Fr. Greg

Fr. Vitus

Fr. Vitus

Fr. Greg

### **Stewardship Report**

Last Week's Collection - To Be Announced

### *Prayers for the Sick*

All the sick and residents of Atria, St. Joseph's Village Woodhaven Adult Home & Nursing Home & Jefferson's Ferry, Ann Dellow, Luke John Carusillo, Sandy Barrios, Sabrina Glass, LouEllen Klints, Arline Guma, John Schlauraff, Genevieve Eannuzzi, Kellie Menno, Charles Ricottone, Baby Fulton, Ted Claesen, Connie Biscardi, Ronnie Pryor, Vinnie Surwilo, Dolores Andersen, Patrick Wilson, James Mihalik, Erin DeCapua, Maureen Uss, Barbara Klein-Croner, Garrett Duffy, Nicholas Traynor, Hunter Reyes, Ann Gerstein, Mike Napolitano, Maxine Politi, Neisha Alli, Pat Consorte, Marie Auld, Erin Whitehead, Patricia McLaren, Bill Klein, Jr, Theresa Renz, Barbara Forbes, Nicholas Traynor, Claire Reilly, Joan Francavilla, Alba Gosin, Jacob Flag, Anthony Paletto, Madore Roit, Jaclyn Lin, Thomas Hayes, Carole Fackina, Dani Floyd, Janet Kolodziejski, Maureen Valentine, Karen Strahmann, Nancy Mulvihill, Linda Tesone, Alexa Mastando, Lew Yedwab, Michael Bruton, Jack Grob, Gerard Healy, Donna DiBiagio, Denise Shaw, Thomas Foley.

### **Weekly Memorials**

Our Bread & Wine has been lovingly donated in memory of:  
**Dennis Quirk**



Our Sanctuary Candle has been lovingly donated in memory of:

**Jean Cassella**

We pray for all recently deceased, may they find eternal rest and joy.



Please stop by our Prayer Corner near Reception to borrow books and CDs on many Catholic topics to deepen your faith formation and spiritual life.



### Online Weekly Giving

“Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” Luke 6:38 This is a promise from God that He doesn't need a large amount, but will honor our generosity and obedience. Then, He can do a miracle to multiply and pour out blessings that overflow to our lives and others.

## Knights of Columbus

**YOU ARE BORN A MAN  
YOU BECOME A KNIGHT!**

Scan with phone camera!



**YOU ARE CALLED! JOIN TODAY!**

**Free 12 Month Membership**

Visit  
**KofC.org/JoinUs**

Use Promo Code  
**BlessedMcGivney**

To learn more please call Kevin at 631-839-6333.

## Columbiettes

We are an organization of women from all backgrounds united by our Catholic Faith, the love of family, our country, and our commitment to helping others. If you would like to join, please contact Jennifer at 631-473-2900.

Our Parish Mission Statement: Formed by God's word and nourished at the Eucharist, we strive to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ by handing on the Catholic faith to our families and community and serving those in need.

## OCIA Christian Initiation of Adults

Are you an adult thinking of becoming part of the Catholic community and completing your sacraments? Contact Deacon Frank at [deaconfrank@stgmajella.org](mailto:deaconfrank@stgmajella.org) or 631-473-2900.



[Facebook.com/stgmajella/](https://Facebook.com/stgmajella/)



[Instagram.com/sgmparish](https://Instagram.com/sgmparish)



[Facebook.com/SGMthriftshop/](https://Facebook.com/SGMthriftshop/)



[Instagram.com/sgmthriftshop](https://Instagram.com/sgmthriftshop)



[YouTube Channel-St. Gerard Majella Parish](https://YouTubeChannel-St.GerardMajellaParish)

## SAINT GERARD MAJELLA ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



### WE INVITE YOU TO REGISTER YOUR FAMILY WITH OUR PARISH

**Are you new to our parish? Have you been participating in our parish but never registered? Do you need to update your contact information or add a family member?**

Both registration or family update forms are available in our church office 631-473-2900 or on our website: [www.stgmajella.org](http://www.stgmajella.org)



## Breaking Open the Word

**Reflecting on next Sunday's Gospel before you come to Mass can bring so much more meaning to your experience of the Liturgy. Here's the Gospel for next Sunday. How does this Gospel touch your life?**

**January 7, 2024**

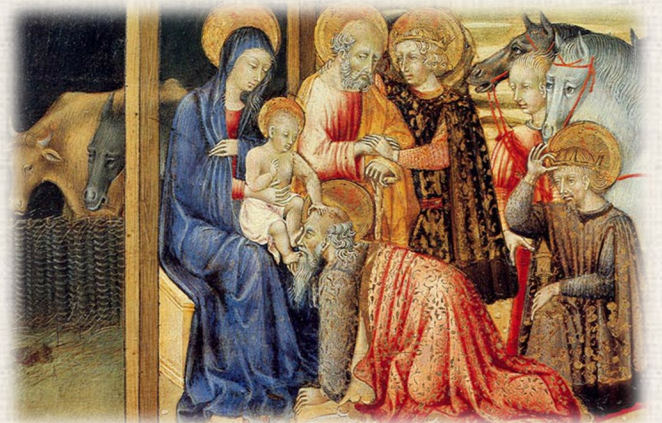
### **The Epiphany of the Lord**

**Mt. 2:1-12**

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: *And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.*" Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

### **Reflection Questions**

- What external and internal factors prompted the Magi to search for Jesus?
- What did the Magi acknowledge about Jesus? What titles did they give him?
- Why didn't the Magi report back to Herod as he had requested?
- What are some various "presents" we might give to Christ?
- How does the fact God brought to pass that which had been prophesied centuries earlier influence your understanding about Him? How does this affect you in relating to Him?
- What is your understanding of why we give gifts at Christmas? What is one of the most meaningful gifts that has been given to you?

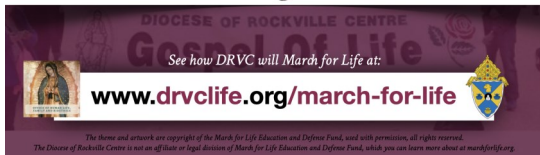


### Weekly Memorials Available

Would you like to have a loved one remembered? Give thanks for one of God's many Graces? Or offer up a prayer for someone in need? Please consider a Weekly Memorial. These are Memorials that are dedicated for an entire week, running from Monday to Sunday. Memorials are listed each week in the parish bulletin. Please contact our parish office to reserve a memorial for your intention. Memorials are available for:  
Bread & Wine (\$30) Sanctuary Candle(\$20)



*With Every Woman,  
For Every Child.*



### Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God Mass Times

(Note: When this Solemnity falls on a Monday or Saturday, the obligation to attend Mass is abrogated.)

Jan. 1st- 9:00AM and 5:00PM



Mary, Mother of God, first disciple of your Son, and spiritual Mother of us all, pray for us that we will say yes to life with the same readiness you did. Lay us at the feet of Jesus, and inspire us to treasure and ponder your Son with you. Amen.

January 1st: Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

### Camp Esther Comes to Long Island!

#### PRO-LIFE TRAINING FOR TEENS

Sat. Feb 10th, 9AM-4PM  
St. Matthew RC Church, Dix Hills, NY  
Parish Center

- ✓ Presented by **Lori Kehoe** of NYS Right to Life
- ✓ **One-day only** interactive program
- ✓ Helps teens develop a passion for protecting the unborn & vulnerable
- ✓ Learn what to say & how to say it!

**DONATION: \$20 ~ VENMO @CAMPESTERLI**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE/FOR MORE**  
**INFO CALL FRAN @ 631-703-7195**

NURSERY-8TH GRADE



ST. JAMES, NEW YORK



JOIN US FOR OUR OPEN HOUSE!

**SUNDAY - 1/28/24**

11:00AM - 1:30PM

Join us for our Open House and experience our community! Meet our students, parents, and staff! Teachers will invite you into their classrooms and speak with you about academics, extracurricular activities, and faith formation, and will be present to answer any questions you may have.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

#### WHY STS. PHILIP & JAMES SCHOOL & ACADEMY?

- For over 100 years, SSPJ has offered academic excellence, which fosters individual growth and development according to time-tested, Catholic faith-based models of teaching and learning.
- SSPJ's primary commitment is to integrate the Gospel message with the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of students, enabling them to become the leaders of tomorrow.
- SSPJ cultivates a robustly Catholic culture centered on the spiritual, intellectual, sacramental, and liturgical life of the Church.
- SSPJ provides a safe and supportive community that recognizes the dignity of every person and promotes human flourishing in a familial atmosphere.



sspjschool.net @SSPJAcademyandSchool  
(631) 584-7896 @SSPJSchool  
359 CLINTON AVENUE, ST. JAMES, NY 11780





# Happy New Year!

*This Year, Resolve To....*

Shop The Thrift Shop & Barn  
at St. Gerard Majella Church

## **Store Hours:**

**Monday through Thursday 10 am — 4 pm**

**Friday 10 am — 2 pm**

Accepting Your New and GENTLY Used, **In-Season Items**

Monday — Thursday 10 am — 3:30 pm; Friday 10 am — 1:30 pm

See Our Donation Guidelines at:

[www.stgmajella.org](http://www.stgmajella.org) — parish life — thrift shop

Proceeds Benefit

The charitable endeavors at St. Gerard Majella Church

**Wine, Cheese and  
"THE CLASS OF LIFE"  
A Theatrical Experience  
Starring Paul Failla**

**Presented By  
St. Gerard Majella Columbiettes**

**Friday Evening, February 2<sup>nd</sup> (Snow Date 2/9/24)  
St. Gerard Majella Parish Center  
300 Terryville Road  
Port Jefferson Station**

**Doors open at 6:00 pm/ Show starts 7:30pm  
(Show is approximately 2 hours with one 15-minute intermission)**

**Tickets \$30 per person  
Includes Wine, Cheese & Crackers,  
Coffee & Dessert  
(Outside Food Is Permitted)**

**RAFFLES & 50/50**

**\*\*\*Proceeds from this evening will support various charities\*\*\***

**For Ticket Information, please contact  
Donna Antignano at (631) 948-6124 or Ann Famiano (631) 928-3745**

**No Later Than January 26<sup>th</sup>**

**The Class of Life is a theatrical experience that takes the audience on a journey that highlights one man's life. The story begins on the last day of his distinguished career as a police officer. This day gives way to reminiscing about his motivation to become a police officer, his proud Italian heritage, his upbringing, and his married life. Utilizing a blend of humor, drama, song, dance, and life experience, the actor takes his audience on an emotional roller coaster through stories relating to all. This poignant presentation will surely touch the lives of those who value family, tradition, and comedy.**

**Please visit-[www.TheClassOfLife.com](http://www.TheClassOfLife.com)**

*"It is one of a kind."-PB "It was absolutely fantastic."-CJ  
"A must see. Better than any play I have seen in years."-JS*

**Tickets will not be sold at the door. You must be 21 and older to attend.**

## ***How to Identify the “One” Church Jesus Christ Instituted-By Deacon Frank***

There are tens of thousands of different Christian churches in our world today. Each of them professes to have the inside track on attaining eternal salvation for their flocks. These churches not only disagree on the number of sacraments Christ instituted but also on important matters of faith and morals. Because of their divergent views on these matters, the moral voice of Christianity is largely ignored by society. No person, in their right mind, could truly think that Christ desired such a fractured and disjointed church. Given the broad range of beliefs these churches hold on matters of faith and morals, it's relatively easy for a person to “shop” for a Christian church that is most suited to that individual's wants and desires. Not a search for the truth for what we believe God desires of us, but rather what suits the individual's desires. Sadly, it is from this very mindset that our culture has produced a multitude of Christian churches and continuously spawns new ones every day! It is vitally important for our world to hear, with the clarity of truth, the proper teaching such matters warrant. Let's be clear, there is only one truth, and his name is Jesus Christ. Yet, how can the voice of Christ's Church be heard by a skeptical, apathetic populace so in need of salvation, when the collective voice of Christianity contradicts itself over and over again? Sadly, this is the product of relativism and subjective truth. In addition to parsing and articulating the significant differences among the Christian churches on important matters of faith and morals, we should attempt to identify the “one” Church Christ truly instituted. After all, it stands to reason Christ would surely provide an abundance of grace to that Church beyond all the others and the beneficiaries of that abundance of grace is its flock! If Christians could more clearly identify that Church from amongst the myriad of Christian churches, might her numbers and the strength of her voice increase? That in turn, might reverse the trend of an ever-increasing number of Christian churches, which makes a mockery of the oneness of the Church. Recall that on the night he was betrayed, Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father “So that they may be one just as we are one”. This oneness stems from a common belief held by the early Church, namely a belief in one faith, one Church, one Lord! So, if Christ intended to institute just one Church, it is reasonable to ask whether Sacred Scripture reveals her true identity. Is there a distinctive mark of that Church which sets it apart from all the other Christian churches? What is the biblical case for the Roman Catholic Church being the “one” Church Christ instituted? Interestingly, Jesus only mentions the Church twice in the gospels and both references are contained in Matthew's Gospel. The first of these references is the more important of the two. It is in this reference to the Church that we see a key mark of distinction, which only the Roman Catholic Church has among all the Christian churches! The passage opens with Jesus bringing his disciples to Caesarea Philippi. They climb a large rock formation rising one hundred feet in height and three hundred feet in length. It is one large rock. It is, in all likelihood, for this reason that Jesus brought his disciples to Caesarea Philippi in the first place. A discussion between Jesus and his disciples ensues: Jesus asks his disciples “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” They respond, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Then Jesus asks, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answers, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”. What extraordinary power and authority Jesus granted to Simon Peter- the keys to the kingdom of heaven! The Roman Catholic Church has always held that this authority not only resided with Peter but is also passed on to his successors. Yet, many non-Catholic Christians deny this delegated authority. Specifically, their denial generally falls into one of two alternative interpretations of this passage. The first of these alternative interpretations is that the extraordinary authority granted by Jesus isn't granted to Peter but rather to Peter's profession of faith, and thus more broadly to his Church; while the second alternative interpretation concedes that it is, in fact, Peter who is granted this authority but not, by extension, to his successors. So what are the proofs that Jesus delegated this extraordinary authority to Peter and his successors? Let's begin by unpacking the first alternative interpretation noted above. The earliest texts of Matthew's Gospel that are in existence today were written in koine Greek, the language of the Hellenistic period, which coincides with the period of the first century A.D., when Matthew wrote his gospel. The support for the first alternative interpretation of this passage hinges upon two words within the phrase, “You are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church”. The actual words appearing in the koine Greek texts, for “Peter” and “rock” are “Petrus” and “petra”. In the Greek language, there are often masculine and feminine genders for a given noun. Such is the case here for the word rock. Petrus is the masculine gender for rock and refers to a small stone, and petra is the feminine gender for rock and refers to a large rock or stone. The reformers of the Middle Ages seized upon this distinction, as to the size of the rock inferred, to support their argument that the Church wasn't built on Peter but rather on Peter's profession of faith. Sounds intriguing, but there is one really big problem with this interpretation. Jesus did not speak Greek. He spoke Aramaic! And in the Aramaic language, there is only one word for rock and it's “kepha”. What Jesus said was, “You are kepha, and upon this kepha I will build my Church” which translates in English to “You are rock, and upon this rock, I will build my Church”! Petrus was used in the Greek text rather than Petra because of its masculine gender reference to the man known as Simon. Nothing more. Like several important persons of the Old Testament, Jesus changes Simon's name to Peter. Recall that God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Jacob's name to Israel. These name changes were meant to convey their important role in salvation history. So it was with Simon, who would come to be known as Peter, the rock upon whom Christ's Church would be built! Jesus knew from the very beginning which of his disciples would acknowledge him as the Messiah, the Son of the living God when he asked the question at Caesarea Philippi. In the first chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus meets Simon for the very first time, when Andrew, the brother of Simon, brings him to Jesus. Jesus addresses Simon saying, “You are Simon the son of Jonah; you will be called Kepha.” Now imagine being called rock without explanation as to its meaning, and this for practically the entire duration of Jesus' public ministry! Jesus would withhold that explanation until after Simon Peter made his profession of faith. The imagery of that moment cannot be overstated! Here on the top of this massive rock; Jesus declares that he intends to build his Church on a rock foundation which is Simon Peter! All of the disciples present, including Simon Peter, would have understood its meaning and the corresponding symbolism from whence it took place! They would have also realized that Jesus knew it would be Simon Peter from the very beginning! An additional point of contention against the first alternative interpretation is the very issue I began this article with. If Christ truly granted this authority to Peter's profession of faith and thus more broadly to his Church; how can there be such radical differences in teaching on such important issues of faith and morals across the spectrum of Christianity? Let me use an example to make my point.

If one church holds that abortion is morally wrong and can never be condoned; while another church holds it is wrong, but it is often the lesser of two evils and is therefore condoned; reason tells us that one of the churches must be right in their position and the other wrong. When we examine the broad spectrum of faith and moral issues confronting our world today, and consider the variety of positions held by these churches on those issues, it becomes apparent the bad fruit these Christian churches produce by not speaking with one voice. This cannot be what Christ envisioned when he instituted his Church. Given Jesus only refers to his Church twice in the gospels, the link between that Church and Peter becomes more significant. Therefore, from a theological, as well as a practical point of view, the position that the extraordinary authority granted by Jesus isn't granted to Peter but rather to Peter's profession of faith doesn't hold up. Now let's turn our attention to the second point of contention. The one which agrees with the Roman Catholic Church's position that the person of Simon Peter is, in fact, the rock and the foundation of the Church, but disagrees with the Roman Catholic Church that this extraordinary authority is delegated, by extension, to his successors. The Roman Catholic Church holds that Jesus has, with these words "You are rock and upon this rock I will build my Church", established an office with Simon Peter as its first occupant, as opposed to granting this extraordinary authority to just one man for the length of his earthly life. In support of this position, let's review three pieces of corroborating evidence which serve to support this viewpoint and thus, in turn, refute the second alternative interpretation. The first piece of evidence is a revealing action taken by the early Church upon the death of Judas Iscariot. This action is recounted in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There it states that Simon Peter stood up in front of the brothers and, in reference to Judas Iscariot, said among other things, "May another take his office". Peter and the brothers then proceed to fill the position previously held by Judas. If Judas held an office, as this scripture passage states, how much more fitting is it to say that Simon Peter held a more important office? And that at his death that office had to likewise be filled by another! The second piece of corroborating evidence relates to Jesus' intended mission for his Church. It is revealed in Luke's Gospel account of the Transfiguration. The gospel passage indicates that this event takes place eight days after Peter's profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi. Thus, within nine days, Jesus institutes his Church, which is to be built upon Peter and provides insight and meaning to her mission. Luke's Gospel account states, And behold, two men were conversing with him (Jesus) Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Did you catch that? That word exodus. Now recall where you've heard the word exodus referenced before, and what specifically is its meaning in this gospel passage? The original use of the word refers to the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, where they were held in bondage by the Egyptians. It's Moses, at God's instruction, whose mission it was to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land, the land we know today as Israel. The word exodus actually means large departure. When the Israelites departed Egypt they numbered more than two million people. We can derive this by the census that God requested Moses to undertake of men of military age, shortly after they arrived at Mt Sinai. This census, as referenced in the Book of Numbers, revealed that there were 603,550 Israelite men from all but the Levite tribe, which as the priestly tribe, was excluded by God. This number further excludes women, children and the elderly male population. When these excluded groups of people are estimated and included, one can readily see how there were over two million Israelites that departed Egypt. Now why do you suppose the word exodus is used by Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on the top of Mt Tabor? What large departure are they referring to? After all, it's Jesus who will be put to death in Jerusalem, and after his resurrection spend forty days with his disciples, before his ascension into heaven. So what are they getting at by referring to it as an exodus? By his sanctifying death and resurrection, Jesus has conquered sin and death but he has not eradicated them. Jesus instituted his Church to provide sanctifying grace to his disciples down through the ages. Sanctifying grace is administered through the sacraments of the Church which Jesus himself instituted. Just as our bodies require medical care throughout our lives to overcome bodily illnesses, so too, do our souls require corresponding spiritual care to strengthen us and nurse us back to spiritual health from spiritual illnesses we call sin. It is by administering the sacraments of the Church to his disciples of all time, that this is accomplished. So if Peter were necessary at the outset of this journey it stands to reason his successors would be required to continue the work of leading Christ's disciples on this journey, to the new Promised Land we call heaven! The third piece of corroborating evidence looks at the traditions and practices of the early Church to glean whether there is evidence to support the contention that the authority vested in Peter was delegated, in turn, to his successors. There are numerous examples of this in the writings of the early Church period. One such example can be found in the Letter of Pope St. Clement to the Corinthians written in the early 90's AD. This letter is still in existence today. It's clear from the tone of the letter that Clement is responding to a request by the elders of the Church at Corinth. A dispute had arisen there, and the elders were seeking Clement to adjudicate the matter. The dispute involved the desire of many of the faithful of the Church of Corinth to remove their local bishop. His letter to that church effectively resolved the dispute. Such was the authority he wielded. What is interesting about this matter is the elders of the Church at Corinth traveled 700 miles to Rome to request Clement's intercession in the matter. This, while the Apostle John, who is believed to have still been alive at that time and living on the island of Patmos, was only 100 miles away from Corinth. Why didn't the elders take the matter to John as opposed to Clement? After all, John was the beloved disciple of Jesus and was only 100 miles away. The answer simply is the successor of Peter at that time was Clement. He, and he alone, had the authority to resolve the dispute which was causing great division within this historic church! Can there be any doubt as to the true identity of the one Church Christ instituted? We should be unabashedly proclaiming this essential truth to all who will listen. How vitally important it is for our world today to recognize that "one" Church and to carefully examine her doctrines. For her doctrines are pure and truly holy. Our late great Pope Benedict XVI, who was the 265th occupant of the chair of Peter, said it succinctly and aptly. He said, All the Christian churches have elements of the truth but the fulness of the truth resides in the Roman Catholic Church. Why settle for some of the truth when the fulness of the truth is within one's grasp? The salvation of many may well depend upon it! In a world so in need of salvation, we must recognize our great responsibility to proclaim that truth as never before.



# Sunday Gospel Activities

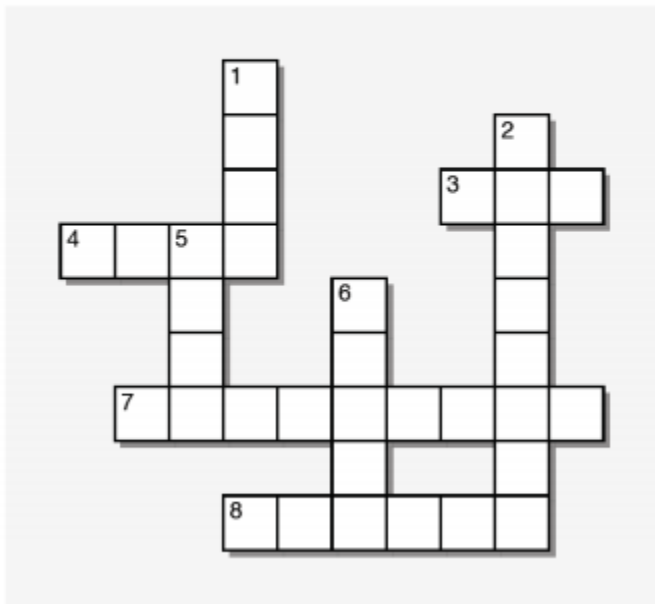


Statue of The Holy Family - © TheCatholicKid.com



# Sunday Gospel Activities

## The Holy Family Luke 2:22-40



### Across

3. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to fulfill the \_\_\_\_ of the Lord.
4. Today we honor the \_\_\_\_\_ Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
7. This is the city where Mary and Joseph took Jesus for The Presentation at the Temple.
8. The Father of Jesus

### Down

1. The mother of Jesus.
2. The town that Joseph, Mary and Jesus returned to where Jesus grew up.
5. Today's Gospel is from the Gospel according to \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The Prophet in the old testament that led the people of Israel out of Egypt and wrote the Ten Commandments as God instructed him to do.

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