

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church

December 21st/December 22nd 2024: Fourth Sunday of Advent



**1460 Pearson Avenue SW
Birmingham, Alabama 35211
Phone: (205) 785-9840**

**E-mail: church@myblessedsacrament.org
Website: www.myblessedsacrament.org**

Pastor

Rev. Jim W. Booth

SACRAMENTS and LITURGY

English Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m.

English Sunday Mass: 9:00 a.m.

Traditional Latin Sunday Mass: 7:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.

English Weekday Masses: 8:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Latin Weekday Masses: 8:30 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday, 6:30 p.m. on First Friday

First Saturday Latin Mass: 8:30 a.m. with confessions beginning at 8:00 a.m.

Holy Day Mass: As Announced

Confessions: Saturday 3:30-3:55 p.m., Sunday 7:00-7:25, 8:30-8:55, and 10:15-10:40 a.m.

Baptisms: By Appointment

Marriage Arrangements must be made with the Pastor at least 6 months before the date of the wedding. Talk to the Pastor before making any firm wedding plans. No destination weddings.

COVID-19 RESPONSE, MASS & DEVOTIONS: We have an additional Sunday Latin Mass at 7:30 a.m., to aid in social distancing, and continues on a provisional basis.

NOTE ON CONFESSIONS: If there is a significant line for confession, Fr Booth might say part of the formula of absolution while the penitent recites the act of contrition. The full formula of absolution is always said, but the first part might be said softly during the act of contrition. Thus, you might only hear “and I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

WELCOME to all of our visitors: We are glad you have attended Mass with us. To join Blessed Sacrament, please pick up a parish census form in the vestibule at the back of the church.

IN MEMORIAM: For Robert, Julia, & Jerry Bryant, the sanctuary lamp will burn for the repose of their souls from December 22nd to December 28th. The sanctuary lamp will burn for the repose of Jeremy Noblitt from December 29th until January 4th.

REST IN PEACE: Rev William Scroggins, father of Valori Clemens, passed away on December 19th. 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.

CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES FOR 2025: Contribution envelopes are located in the back vestibule. If yours are not there, let Fr Booth know.

ADVENT ANGEL TREE: We have an Advent Angel Tree this year that will benefit a number of truly needy families in our local community. Please bring the wrapped gift items back with the angel tag attached by this Sunday, December 22nd.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES: The Bishop’s Annual Appeal continues. You can return your pledge card or pledge via catholiccharitiesbhm.org. The donations remain in the diocese, supporting charitable outreach and several diocesan offices. Our goal for this year is \$28,000. So far, Blessed Sacrament has pledged \$25,635, which is about 92% of our goal.

PRAY FOR OUR SEMINARIANS: Please pray for our seminarians: Patrick DePew, Max Gallegos, John Gardiner, Collins Hess, John Paul Stepnowski, Andrew Vickery, Hunter Limbaugh, Adam Sellers, Francisco Rodriguez, Justin Brouillette, Cameron Huhlein, Patrick Letterle, Wilson Moin, Joshua Callahan, Michael Masny, Ross Gilliland, Franz Mercado, Thomas Rogers, Nick Smith, Benjamin Caruna, Matthew Pickard, Maximilian Waldron, Dominic Rumore, Matthew Gagnon, and Friar Apollo.

PERPETUAL ADORATION: Our Lady of Sorrows in Homewood is inviting people to come and adore our Lord in the Eucharist. They have had 24/7/365 Eucharistic Adoration for over 30 years. If you are interested in adoring Jesus in the Eucharist, please contact Bo Lovell at (205) 965-3041.

PARISH SUPPORT: The collection last week was \$8176 and \$250 was given for the Preservation Fund. As always, many thanks for your generosity.

NOTE ON MASS INTENTIONS: There is about a 7-month backlog on Mass Intentions. Thus, requested Mass dates cannot always be honored.

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Tues, Dec 24: 3:30 p.m. Carols
4:00 p.m. Christmas Vigil Mass in English
Wed, Dec 25: 7:30 a.m. Christmas Dawn Low Mass in Latin with hymns
9:00 a.m. Christmas Day Mass in English
10:45 a.m. Christmas Day High Mass in Latin

MASS SCHEDULE AND INTENTIONS: (*Masses in the Rectory Chapel)

Sat, Dec 21: 6:00 a.m. † Clement Muck, Jr. (by the Duvall Family)
4:00 p.m. † Deacon Walter Henderson (by Lynn Bryant)
Sun, Dec 22: 7:30 a.m. Special intention for Steve & Beth Miller Family (by Alan & Pam Olson)
9:00 a.m. Pro Populo
10:45 a.m. † Jacqueline McAleer (by the Charles Rumore Family)
Mon, Dec 23 *8:30 a.m. Special intention for Isabella Gaudet (by the Duvall Family)
Tues, Dec 24: *8:30 a.m. Special intention for Michael Ducote (by the Duvall Family)
4:00 p.m. † Julia V. Bryant (by the Bryant Family)
Wed, Dec 25: 7:30 a.m. † Julie Wang Kelly (by Kevin Kelly)
9:00 a.m. Pro Populo
10:45 a.m. † Robert C. Bryant (by the Bryant Family)
Thur, Dec 26: *8:30 a.m. † Dennis G. Bryant (by the Bryant Family)
Fri, Dec 27: *8:30 a.m. † Tom Davis (by Betty Mason)
Sat, Dec 28: 4:00 p.m. † Tom Davis (by Betty Mason)
Sun, Dec 29: 7:30 a.m. † Joseph & Catherine Kelly (by Kevin Kelly)
9:00 a.m. Pro Populo
10:45 a.m. † Debra Yaeger (by Peter & Sharon Gagnon)

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND especially Grace Hill, Stan Hartdegen, Kent Graeve, Phillip McCarty, Justin Meadows, Rachel Maxwell, John Minjares, Sr., Virginia Elmer, Diane Norton, Pedro Antonio Triana, John Davis, Chorbishop Richard Saad, Deb Rankin, Debbie Booth, Paul Trussel, Paul Caruso, Jeff Brown, Mary Simmons, Linda Henry, Lisa DeKam Nicholls, Ronnie Buchanan, Barbara Williams, Bob Wiseman, Eve Moore, Carol Brandley, Eddie Hunter, Lawrence Brandley, Pete Ransom, Jerry Joiner, Beryl Curtis, Linda Cooper, Danny Rohling, Kay Dorion, Krissy Chism, Beverly Scroggins, Lamar Smith, Wayne Little, Maria Morin, Andrea Little, Fran Costanza, Christine Cover, Thatcher Kerzie, Malcolm Perry, Koslyn Chism, Kathleen Strawmeyer, and Stephanie Perry.

NEXT WEEK'S MASS READINGS

4:00 p.m. Holy Family	Sir 3:2-6,12-14, Col 3:12-21, Lk 2:41-52
7:30 a.m. Sunday in the Octave of Christmas	Gal 4:1-7, Lk 2:33-40
9:00 a.m. Holy Family	Sir 3:2-6,12-14, Col 3:12-21, Lk 2:41-52
10:45 a.m. Sunday in the Octave of Christmas	Gal 4:1-7, Lk 2:33-40

As High as the Sky and a Deep as the Netherworld

The prophet Isaiah confronted one of the kings of Judah, Ahaz, some 280 years after the reign of King David. Ahaz was a legitimate heir to the throne of David but was threatened by the northern kingdom of Israel along with the Arameans, people from the region of modern day Syria. The kings of Israel and Aram conspired to end the kingdom of Judah and install their own king in Ahaz's place, the son of Tabeel, a pagan king that was not of David's line. Isaiah tells King Ahaz that he has nothing to worry about because God will not allow the legitimate king of Judah, a son of David, to be supplanted. Isaiah told Ahaz "*Thus says the Lord God: It shall not stand, it shall not be!*" (Isa 7:7). Then Isaiah presses Ahaz to request a sign from God to confirm His pledge that Israel and Aram will not end the royal line of David in Judah. Isaiah says to Ahaz "*Ask for a sign from the Lord, your God; let it be deep as Sheol, or high as the sky!*" (Isa 7:11) but Ahaz refuses to ask for any sign whatsoever. As a result, God will provide a sign: "*Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel*" (Isa 7:14).

Up until recent times, this last verse was translated differently. An ancient translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek, the Septuagint, was compiled some 250 years before Christ. This translation was made by Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt where Greek was the common language at that time. When citing Isaiah's prophecy, Matthew quoted the Septuagint translation of Isaiah: "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel*" (Mt 1:23). Christians are often accused of substituting virgin for young woman for the sake of having Jesus fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. The Jewish scholars of Alexandria, however, had no dog in the fight when it comes to whether or not Jesus was born of a virgin or of a young woman. After all, those translators were dead for 200 years before Jesus was born. Those Jewish scholars knew that the word often translated today as young woman really needed to be understood as virgin. That Hebrew word could mean either a young woman or virgin, but they chose to translate it as virgin in the Greek. Indeed, young woman and virgin are not at odds at all. If the young woman was not married, virginity would be the expectation.

Modern scholars, however, insist that young woman is the proper translation based on the Hebrew of the Old Testament. They would also tend to say that Ahaz's son Hezekiah fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. That claim is based on the fact that King Ahaz was faithless and idolatrous while King Hezekiah, who succeeded Ahaz, was a rare example of a good and righteous king of Judah.

While Hezekiah was a definite departure from King Ahaz, there is no way that Hezekiah is the sign promised to Ahaz by God. First of all, Ahaz never saw how Hezekiah fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. Ahaz was dead before Hezekiah assumed the throne of David. That's not much of a sign, at least for Ahaz for whom the sign was promised. When Isaiah makes his prophecy of the young woman/virgin conceiving and bearing a son, it is quite likely that Hezekiah's mother, Abijah, was indeed a young woman. However, Hezekiah was born nine years before Isaiah prophesied that the young woman/virgin would bear a son. Oops. If Isaiah is referring to Abijah giving birth to Hezekiah nine years prior, then how is that even possibly a sign for Ahaz? That is like saying in 1977 that the New York Mets will win the 1968 World Series. Saying in 1959 that the Mets will win the 1968 World Series would be quite a sign, especially since the Mets were established in 1962.

In any case, how did the Jewish translators of the Septuagint know that virgin was the right word? How can we be confident of this as well? Simply because a young woman bearing a son is hardly a sign at all. Isaiah asks Ahaz to specify a "*sign from the Lord, your God; let it be deep as Sheol, or high as the sky!*" but what is brought forth is mere biology if this is understood as a young woman giving birth. It is certainly not as high as the sky or as deep as the netherworld. A virgin being with child and bearing a son is a profound sign indeed. A virgin being with the divine Child and bearing God's Son is a great sign second only that same Son rising from the dead.

- Fr Booth