

Dear Padre,

Do non-Catholics go to heaven?

Yes, they do, because of the grace of God at work in his people. To suggest otherwise would seem to imply that Catholics somehow have a “golden ticket,” or some kind of right that simply does not exist.

The Incarnation of Jesus healed the division between heaven and earth, a division established by the “sin of Adam” and confirmed by our own lives of sin. Through his passion, death, and resurrection, all has been restored to the manner that the Father first envisioned through his Creation. The division was between humanity and divinity, not between religious practices and divinity. Catholics believe and celebrate that God accepts all people of a good heart and a good spirit. God is not blinded by the labels that sometimes blind his people to the bigger reality.

When Catholics, or people of any religion, proclaim exclusivity and specialness, particularly when it concerns eternal life, all people should be very cautious about what they assume. To assume a certain type of arrogance—to yourself and to your belief and life of faith—that excludes others or separates another as “not one of us” simply has no place in the kingdom of God. ●

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
December 8	December 9	December 10	December 11	December 12	December 13	December 14
<i>The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Advent Weekday</i>	<i>Our Lady of Guadalupe</i>	<i>St. Lucy, Virgin and Martyr</i>	<i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>
Gn 3:9–15, 20	Is 40:1–11	Is 40:25–31	Is 41:13–20	Zec 2:14–17	Sir 48:1–4, 9–11	Is 35:1–6a, 10
Eph 1:3–6, 11–12	Mt 18:12–14	Mt 11:28–30	Mt 11:11–15	or Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab	Mt 17:9a, 10–13	Jas 5:7–10
Lk 1:26–38	Do you have a question for the Padre?			Lk 1:26–38 or Lk 1:39–47	Mt 11:2–11	
	Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about <i>Dear Padre</i> .					



A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a Church founded on God’s love, a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the word, allows itself to be made “restless” by history, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity.

HOMILY, ROME, MAY 18, 2025



Will You Notice the Shoot?

ANN M. GARRIDO

Today’s first reading from the prophet Isaiah offers a familiar Advent image: the shoot sprouting from the stump of Jesse. The verses immediately preceding speak of God walking through the forest with an ax: “The tall of stature shall be felled, and the lofty ones shall be brought low” (Isaiah 10:33). But now, amidst all the destruction, a tiny sign of new life emerges, and the Spirit of God descends upon it, bearing many gifts—wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, awe, delight.

So often, when we scroll through the news, our attention is captured by violence and war and the “mighty” who make great noise when they fall. “Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees,” echoes John the Baptist in today’s gospel. If we are looking for where God’s Spirit can be found, however, Isaiah reminds us we will need to look elsewhere. We will need to attend to the quiet, fragile resurrections taking place below the surface when it appears as if all has been lost. If we seek wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, awe, and delight, we will need to look where the little ones of the earth are found. We must have our eyes open for the shoots.

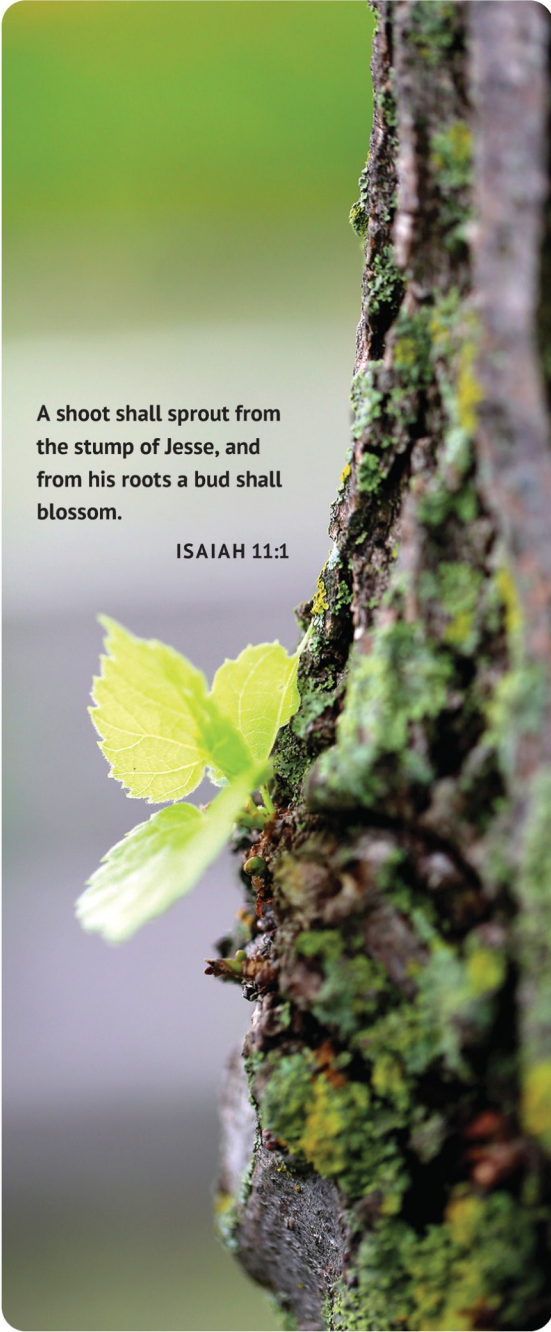
The gospels emphasize that Jesus was one such little one. Although the glory days of his people seemed to have come to a crashing close, they have not. In him, we glimpse the truth that life is stronger than death. We see that the future has not been erased, no matter how terrible the past. In him, we find our hope. ●



SCAN TO LEARN ABOUT AUTHOR ANN M. GARRIDO

Reflect

Are my eyes open to the small signs of God’s work in the world, or am I too distracted to notice?



A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.

ISAIAH 11:1

"We at St. Mary & Joseph Parishes strive for a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ through Scripture and Sacraments, form missionary disciples, and send them forth to transform the world."



Our Three-Parish Cluster Sts. Mary and Joseph Catholic Churches Lone Tree, Nichols and Hills

Second Sunday of Advent

December 7, 2025

Church of St. Mary, 201 Short Street, Box B, Nichols, Iowa, 52766 319-330-5324
St. Mary Church, 216 West Jayne Street, Box 416, Lone Tree, Iowa, 52755 319-629-4225
St. Joseph Church, 209 Brady Street, PO Box 187, Hills, Iowa, 52235 319-679-2271

Sts. Mary and Joseph Cluster Parish Office
209 Brady Street, P.O. Box 187 Hills, Iowa 52235-0187

Father David Paintsil, Pastor; 319-679-2271; email: paintsild@diodav.org
Mrs. Carol Kaalberg, Pastoral Associate; 319-330-5324; email: kaalbergc@diodav.org
Lora Sieverding, Administrative Assistant & Bookkeeper; hillsstjosephfin@diodav.org
Nancy Waldschmidt, Director of Faith Formation; 319-331-2077; email: nwaldschmidt@gwaea.org
Cluster Website: stsmarijoseph.com Cluster Facebook: www.facebook.com/stsmarijoseph
Rev. Lou Leonhardt (retired priest); PO Box 454, Lone Tree, IA 52755 319-629-4339
Bulletin deadline: 10am Tuesday. Contact Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324 or Lora Sieverding, 319-530-5560
Hills Church entry: Lora Sieverding, 319-530-5560 or Judy Stebral, 319-331-8727

Music Ministry: St. Joseph, Hills: Lily Westemeyer, Robynn Anderson.
Church of St. Mary, Nichols: Jean Mengel and Rhonda Meredith
St. Mary, Lone Tree: Steve Moore.
St. Joseph Prayer Line: Lucille Duwa 679-2404; Joan Gringer 679-2406
Church of St. Mary, Nichols Prayer Line: Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324
St. Mary, Lone Tree Prayer Line: Nancy Ford, 319-430-0882

Cluster Mass Intentions December 6 to December 14, 2025

Saturday	December 6	4:00 PM	Lone Tree	Norma & Luther Hartley
Sunday	December 7	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Nichols Hills	Gayle Kaalberg Ellen Coan
Monday	December 8	8:00 AM	Lone Tree R	Gayle Kaalberg
Tuesday	December 9	8:00 AM 8:30 AM 10:00 AM	Lone Tree R Atrium PP CC	Rosella Attig Keith Grothe Cluster Parishioners
Wednesday	December 10	8:00 AM 8:30 AM	Lone Tree R Atrium	Raymond Herring Bob Falls
Thursday	December 11	8:30 AM 10:00 AM	Atrium PPCC	Rita Jenn Darlene Sieren
Friday	December 12	8:30 AM	Atrium	Rosie Cress
Saturday	December 13	4:00 PM	Lone Tree	Donald Kout
Sunday	December 14	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Nichols Hills	Jack & Helene Salemink Connie Dietsch

Atrium , Atrium Village Chapel,
Atrium Village, Hills.

PP CC, Pioneer Park Care Center
located at Pioneer Park Villa,
Lone Tree.

Lone Tree R, St. Mary Rectory in
Lone Tree.

Confession Schedule

Father David is available to
hear confessions before
Mass at these times:

St. Mary, Lone Tree

Saturday 3:30 to 3:50 pm

Church of St. Mary Nichols

Sunday 7:30 to 7:50 am

St. Joseph, Hills

Sunday 9:30 to 9:50 am

*Let us come to reconcile to God
and others!*

Sts. Mary & Joseph Catholic Community

Nichols, Lone Tree and Hills

November 24, 2025

Dear Cluster Parishioners,

To celebrate the **Advent Season beginning this weekend on Nov. 29 /30**, families are encouraged to sign up to be in the opening procession to light the Advent candles each week at all of our parishes. Sign-up sheets are at the church entrances.

Wednesday, December 10th we will have our Cluster Communal Penance Service at the Hills Church beginning at 6:00 pm for everyone and our Religious Education students, parents and teachers. Fr. David and Fr. Lou will be available for confessions that evening. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will also take place that evening. Take advantage of this opportunity to prepare yourselves and your families for the upcoming Christmas Season.

To help you plan ahead, our Cluster Christmas Mass Schedule will be as follows:

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, Dec. 24

4:00 pm Mass at Nichols Church with music at 3:30 pm

4:00 pm Mass at Lone Tree Church with music at 3:30 pm

6:00 pm Mass at Hills Church with music at 5:30 pm

Christmas Day, Thursday, Dec. 25

9:00 am Mass at Lone Tree Church

10:00 am Mass at Hills Church

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

New Year's Eve Mass, Wednesday, Dec. 31

4:00 pm at Lone Tree Church

6:00 pm at Hills Church

New Year's Day Mass, Thursday, Jan. 1

8:00 an at Nichols Church

10:00 am at Hills Church

There will be no First Saturday of the Month Mass of Healing on January 3

Wishing each of you and your loved ones the many blessings and graces of this upcoming Holy Season!
May almighty God bless you, your good works and your families!

Fr. David Paintsil Carol Kaalberg Father Lou

Bible Study

Bible Study will meet December 9 & December 23 at **Atrium Village**, 2nd floor study/lounge at 6:30 PM. Contact Melody Hobert-Mellecker—319-936-3287, call or text — if you are interested, or just come!



The 25-26 Annual Diocesan Appeal

Parish Goals:

- Hills = \$11,405.00 ... Pledged to date, \$10,045 (88.1% of goal).
- Lone Tree = \$10, 670.00 ... Pledged to date, \$10,165 (95.3% of goal).
- Nichols= \$8,114.00 ... Pledged to date, \$8,487 (104.6% of goal).



ST. MARY LONE TREE

From Thanksgiving through Advent, we will be collecting baby items for Birthright of Johnson County. This year, Birthright especially needs larger diapers (sizes 3 & 4), wipes, and baby shampoo and lotion. Sleepers and hooded towels are also in low supply. All items donated will be given to support expecting and new mothers.



**Eucharistic
Adoration
every
Wednesday
6 PM—7 PM
St. Joseph, Hills**

Thanksgiving Sharing Meal was held Sunday, November 16 at the Saint Mary Parish Hall in Nichols. 74 meals were served and enjoyed. “A Guy and a Grill” catered the meal at a cost of \$15 per meal. Committee members solicited monetary donations to help with this expense. A big thank you to all who donated! Food items and non perishables, as well as cash donation were received at the door that day and were gifted to our local food pantries. \$200 was gifted to West Liberty Food Pantry and \$200 was gifted to Lone Tree/Nichols Food Pantry. In addition, the Church of Saint Mary received \$1,000 which was gifted to the Lone Tree/Nichols Food Pantry.



The Children's missals are available at the church entry.
Please encourage your child to follow along.

Liturgical Ministers—Lone Tree St. Mary Saturday 4:00 pm Cycle A Reading

	12/06/2025 Fr. Lou	12/13/2025 Fr. David	12/20/2025 Fr. Lou	12/24/2025 Fr. Lou	Lone Tree	Parish Support
Greeter	Carter Parrish	Bernie Lorack	Nancy Ford	Virginia Schlop Kohl	Envelopes	\$65.00
Lector	Landon Parrish	Jill Welter	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola	Offertory	\$12.00
Cross Bearer	Logan Parrish	Lynn Bland	Nancy Ford	Jerry Ford		
Servers	Trudi Westfall/Maggie Anderson	Jill Welter	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola		
Eucharist	Sherry Nicola	Sherry Nicola	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola		
Eucharist	Trudi Westfall	Judy Grothe	Nancy Ford	Judy Grothe		
Collection	Dani Parrish	Glen Gerot	Joan Davis	Jerry Ford		
	Carter Parrish	Betty Gerot	Lynn Bland	Nancy Ford		
Gifts	Dani & Carter Parrish	Betty, Glen Gerot	Joan Davis, Lynn Bland	Jerry & Nancy Ford		
Commentator	Trudi Westfall	Jill Welter	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola		

Liturgical Ministers—Nichols Church of St. Mary Sunday 8:00 am Cycle A Reading

	12/07/2025 Fr. David	12/14/2025 Fr. Lou	12/21/2025 Fr. David	12/24/2025 Fr. David	Nichols	Parish Support
Greeter	Joe Harper	Joe Harper	Joe Harper	Joe Harper	Envelopes	\$195.00
Lector	Missy Lenz	Renetta Burlage	Missy Lenz	Carol Kaalberg	Offertory	\$70.00
Cross Bearer	Adam Gauger	Michael Burlage	Michael Burlage	David Ollendick		
Server	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg		
Eucharist	Adam Gauger	Missy Lenz	Missy Lenz	Adam Gauger		
Eucharist	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg		
Collection	David Ollendick	Joe Harper	Dennis Truesdale	Kory Kaalberg		
	Joe Harper	Dennis Truesdale	Adam Gauger	David Ollendick		
Gifts	Kory & Chris Kaalberg	Missy Lenz	Julia Elder	David Ollendick		
Commentator	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg		

Liturgical Ministers—Hills St. Joseph Sunday 10:00 am Cycle A Reading

	12/07/2025 Fr. David	12/14/2025 Fr. David	12/21/2025 Fr. David	12/24/2025 Fr. David	Hills	Parish Support
Music Ministry	Robynn Anderson	Lily Westemyer	Lily Westemyer	VOLUNTEERS	Envelopes	\$310.00
Greeter	Judy Stebral	Marcia Mellecker	Gus & Lenore Manrique	PLEASE	Offertory	\$51.00
Lector	Kay Evans	Kay Evans	Wendy Berry	SIGN UP		
Server	Jean Burr/Messi Akodegnon	Emy Rivera/Wendy Berry	Mike Sieverding/ Messi Akodegnon			
Eucharist -host	Jolene Van Eschan	Jolene Van Eschan	Kristee Malmberg			
Eucharist - cup	Arlene Johnston	Arlene Johnston	Emi Rivera			
Eucharist - cup	Bob Jenn	Mike Sieverding	Carol Kirkpatrick			
Collection	Mike Sieverding	Thom Kirkpatrick	Jim Frantz			
	Lora Sieverding	Carol Kirkpatrick	Hope Frantz			
Gifts	Family of Ellen Coan	Family of Connie Dietsch	Dean & Alice Cole			
Commentator	Lora Sieverding	Carol Kirkpatrick	Carol Kirkpatrick			

If you are unavailable for the above ministry assignment, please find your own replacement. Thank you.

Cluster Parish Announcements

Bulletin deadline Tuesday at 10:00 am. Contact Lora Sieverding at 319-530-5560, hillsstjosephfin@diodav.org or Carol Kaalberg at 319-330-5324 or kaalbergc@diodav.org.

St. Joseph Church, Hills.

St. Joseph Food Pantry is open each Wednesday morning from 10 am to noon. Mike and Lucy Parker direct our food pantry and can be reached at 319-679-2420.

Hills Parish Council: Next meeting: January 19, 6:30 PM.

Parishioners are welcome to attend council meetings. Please see a council member if you have agenda items. Members include: Rick Cole, Kay Evans, Karen Karr, Thom Kirkpatrick, Kristee Malmberg, Shelagh McDonald, Brian Moran, and Jim Schneider (President). Minutes are at church entry.



THANK YOU to Hills Bank & Trust for donating roughly 200 pounds of food to our food pantry. Our food pantry also received an anonymous donation of \$100 and a \$50 gift card to Hy-Vee. Additionally, Marsha Mellecker donated 25 half gallon containers of milk to the pantry.

Food pantries are in need of milk and canned FRUIT. During giving season it is nice to keep our local food pantries in mind and help them help those in need.

Christmas Flower Donations/Mass Intentions

are due this weekend. Forms can be found at the church entry. If you forgot your form, please have it to the Hills church office by Wednesday at noon.



Annual Altar & Rosary Parish Potluck

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14,

St. Joseph Parish Hall, Following Mass

Please bring a dish to share.

A&R will provide meat, rolls/butter, and beverages.

ALL ARE WELCOME!



St. Mary Church, Lone Tree and Nichols

Lone Tree Food Pantry is open each Wednesday afternoon from 3:30-5:00 PM. For more information, please call 319-629-4900.

Nichols Parish Council & Finance Council: Next meeting will be Sunday, January 25, following Mass at the church.

Lone Tree Parish Council: Next meeting will be Monday, January 26 at 6:00 PM, NOTE: this is a new date and time.



SECRET SANTA

During Advent, St. Mary Lone Tree will be collecting for our **SECRET SANTA** project.

Please be generous!

During our Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service \$251.00 was donated to **SECRET SANTA!**

LONE TREE & NICHOLS FOOD PANTRY

During November & The Season of Advent, we will be collecting food items and non-perishables for our local food pantry. The need is increasing so we are asking for your help. Baskets are at both church entrances for your donations.



Feast of Immaculate Conception

Cluster Mass

Monday, December 8

St. Mary Rectory Lone Tree at 8:00 AM

St. Joseph Hills at 6:30 PM

Blue Christmas Service

An Ecumenical Service in remembrance of those who have gone before us during this past year.

Sunday, December 7

2:00 PM

Presbyterian Church, Lone Tree

Advent Communal Penance

Wednesday, December 10

St. Joseph, Hills

6:00 PM

