

# ST. MARY'S CHURCH

*A Parish of the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin*



*Christmas - Epiphany*

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## *About the Season*

**Christmas** is the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The early church was not aware of the actual date of Jesus' birth since the feast was not celebrated for several centuries. It was in Rome that December the 25<sup>th</sup> was chosen—probably to counter a number of pagan festivities that time of the year, especially a celebration of a solar festival honoring the birth of the sun (“s-u-n”). As one early Christian theologian wrote: “We hold this day holy, not like the pagans because of the birth of the sun, but because of him who made it.”

Several Bible passages hold a position of prominence this time of year: Isaiah's prediction of the birth of the Messiah (9.2-7); the stories of Jesus' birth from the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke; and St. John's treatise on the incarnation (1.1-18). The feast is celebrated for twelve days (up until the feast of the Epiphany which pre-dates the celebration of Christmas).

**Epiphany** comes from a Greek word meaning “appearing” or “manifestation.” On January 6<sup>th</sup> of each year, the church celebrates the world's becoming aware of who Jesus really is. There are several Bible stories which mark events where people's “eyes were opened” to see that Jesus was the Christ. Three that are particularly remembered and celebrated in this season are: The revelation to the wise men who were led to the manger by the star of Bethlehem (Matthew 2.1-12); Jesus' baptism at the river Jordan when the heavens were opened and the voice of God the Father was heard to say, “Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.” (Mark 1.11); And Jesus' first miracle which he worked at a wedding in Cana in Galilee—turning water into wine (John 2.1-11). The Epiphany season lasts until Ash Wednesday (anywhere from February 4<sup>th</sup> – March 10<sup>th</sup>, depending on the date of Easter).

There are also a number of less well-known celebrations during the period between Christmas Day and the Epiphany: **St. Stephen**, the first martyr (Acts 6-7) is remembered on the day after Christmas (Dec 26). The **Apostle John**, beloved disciple and author of five New Testament books is celebrated on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The feast of the **Holy Innocents** is held the following day (Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>) as a memorial to those boys who were executed by Herod in his rage to kill the Christ (Matthew 2). Finally, because in Jewish tradition, all male children are circumcised on the eight day after their birth, the church keeps the feast of the Circumcision or **Holy Name** January 1<sup>st</sup> (see Luke 2.15-21).

## *Welcome to St. Mary's*

This booklet contains an order for the service of Holy Communion or “Eucharist” – a word meaning “Thanksgiving” in Greek (the language of the New Testament Bible). Since the beginning of the church, Christians have gathered together to break bread and give thanks to God the Father for what he has done for us through his Son Jesus Christ (*Acts 2.42*).

The traditional service of Holy Eucharist is divided into two portions: “The Word of God” and “the Holy Communion.” The first part is modeled after the Jewish synagogue service, and includes readings from the Bible, songs, prayers and a teaching. The second portion of the service, The Holy Communion, is what makes this a distinctively Christian form of worship.

As we prepare for worship, you are invited to reflect upon the following words of scripture:

- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. *Matthew 11.28*
- For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. *John 3.16*
- If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. *John 8.36*
- I am the way and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me. *John 14.6*
- Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us...with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. *Hebrews 4.14,16*

Come, let us worship the Lord, and enter into his presence as we gather around his Holy Table.

# The Holy Eucharist

## The Word of God

*A hymn, song, or anthem may be sung*

*The people standing, the Celebrant says*

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*People* **And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.**

*The Celebrant then says the following prayer that our hearts may be made pure for worship:*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

*Then the Celebrant reads the following summary of the law:*

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'  
There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. *Mark 12.29-31; Matthew 22.40*

*Remaining standing, the following or some other song of praise is sung or said:*

**Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

*Note – The “Glory to God” is a traditional song of praise that has been sung by Christians for more than 1,600 years. The opening words are those sung by the Angels announcing Jesus’ birth in Luke 2.14.*

## **The Collect of the Day**

*The Celebrant says to the people*

The Lord be with you.

*People* **And also with you.**

*Celebrant* Let us pray.

*The Celebrant says the Collect.*

*People*     **Amen.**

*Note - from the Latin: oratio ad collectam, "the prayer at the people's assembly." This is our gathering prayer – the focus for our prayers for the day. Collects have been a familiar part of Christian worship services at least since the fifth century.*

## **The Lessons**

*The people sit for the readings.*

*At the end of the first two lessons, the reader will conclude with*

The Word of the Lord.

*People*     **Thanks be to God.**

*or the Reader may say* Here ends the Reading.

*A Psalm, hymn, or anthem may follow each Reading.*

*At the end of the Psalm is sung or said*

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

*Then, all standing, the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel, first saying*

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ  
according to \_\_\_\_\_.

*People*     **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

*After the Gospel, the Reader says*

The Gospel of the Lord.

*People*     **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

*Note—The term “Gospel,” a Greek word for “good news,” was used as a description for the message of Christ from the earliest days. It is also a title applied to the first four books of the New Testament—those portraying the events of Jesus’ life, and his words to his followers.*

## **The Sermon**

### **The Nicene Creed**

*On Sundays and other Major Feasts, at the invitation of the priest or Deacon, the people stand and share in the following profession of faith:*

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.**

**Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation**

**he came down from heaven:**

**by the power of the Holy Spirit**

**he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;**

**he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again**

**in accordance with the Scriptures;**

**he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*Note – from the latin “credo,” I believe.” The Nicene Creed has been recited in Christian churches for over 1,000 years. It was originally written in the fourth century to outline the minimum standards for authentic Christian belief. The church is described as “apostolic” because we strive to uphold the teaching and practices of Jesus’ original followers (apostles). The term “catholic” (meaning “universal” in both Greek and Latin) refers to the undivided Church and not to any particular denomination. For the first 1,000 years of Christianity there was only one Church—the “body” of Christ (Colossians 1.18; I Corinthians 12.20).*

## **The Prayers of the People**

*Jesus assures us: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” and “whatever you ask in my name, I will do it.”*  
Matthew 18.20; John 14.13

*Deacon or other leader*

In peace, let us pray to the Lord, saying, “Lord, have mercy.”

For the holy Church of God, that it may be filled with truth and love, and be found without fault at the day of your coming, we pray to you, O Lord.

*Here and after every petition the People respond: **Lord, have mercy.***

For *N.* our Presiding Bishop, for *N. (N.)* our own Bishop(s), for all bishops and other ministers, and for all the holy people of God, we pray to you, O Lord.

For all who fear God and believe in you, Lord Christ, that our divisions may cease, and that all may be one as you and the Father are one, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness it may preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, we pray to you, O Lord.

For those who do not yet believe, and for those who have lost their faith, that they may receive the light of the Gospel, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect and forbearance may grow among nations and peoples, we pray to you, O Lord.

For those in positions of public trust [especially\_\_\_\_\_], that they may serve justice, and promote the dignity and freedom of every person, we pray to you, O Lord.

For a blessing upon all human labor, and for the right use of the riches of creation, that the world may be freed from poverty, famine, and disaster, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all who are in danger; that they may be relieved and protected, we pray to you, O Lord.

For this *congregation* [for those who are present, and for those who are absent], that we may be delivered from hardness of heart, and show forth your glory in all that we do, we pray to you, O Lord.

For our enemies and those who wish us harm, and for all whom we have injured or offended, we pray to you, O Lord.

For all who have commended themselves to our prayers; for our families, friends, and neighbors; that being freed from anxiety, they may live in joy, peace, and health, we pray to you, O Lord.

For \_\_\_\_\_, we pray to you, O Lord.

For all who have died in the communion of your Church, and those whose faith is known to you alone, that, with all the saints, they may have rest in that place where there is no pain or grief, but life eternal, we pray to you, O Lord.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of the ever blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life to Christ our God. **To you, O Lord our God.**

*Silence*

*The Celebrant adds a concluding Collect, or the following Doxology*

For yours is the majesty, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

## Confession of Sin

*St. Paul writes that we are to carefully examine our consciences before approaching the Lord's Table: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." I Corinthians 11.27-28*

*Jesus teaches that we are first to forgive and to seek forgiveness from one another before coming to the Altar: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5.23-24*

*The Deacon or Celebrant says:*

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*I John 1.9*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Silence may be kept.*

*Minister and People*

**Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

*Trusting the promise of the Lord that he will forgive our sins if we are sorry and determined to change our ways, the Priest or Bishop (acting under the authority of the Church) pronounces what we know to be true: God has forgiven us.*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

## **The Peace**

*Having received the peace of God in our hearts through the forgiveness of our sins, the celebrant invites the people to greet one another in the peace and joy of the Lord.*

*All stand. The Celebrant says to the people*

Christ is our peace.  
He has reconciled us to God  
in one body by the Cross.  
We meet in his name and share his Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People* **And also with you.**

*Then the Ministers and People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

## **Announcements**

## *A few notes about Communion*

All visitors are welcome to share the Holy Eucharist who have been baptized with water, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who have been admitted to Communion in their own church.

When receiving Communion, simply place your hands out, palms upward, laying your right hand over your left. You may choose to receive the bread alone if you would prefer not to drink wine. If you have a touch of a cold or the flu, simply leave the bread in your hands and the minister will dip it in the wine for you.

If you do not wish to receive Communion, you may simply remain in your seat or come forward and fold your arms over your chest and the priest will pray for you.

Jesus said: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." *John 6.35*

We have heard about God; we have sung his praises and prayed to him; now let us gather to meet him.

## The Holy Communion

### **The Offertory**

*The Celebrant may begin the Offertory with a sentence of Scripture.*

*During the Offertory, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung.*

*Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, to the deacon or celebrant. The people stand while the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.*

*The following presentation hymn may be sung:*

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him, all creatures here below;  
Praise him above, ye heavenly host:  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

*Upon receiving the offerings, the celebrant may say*

All things come of thee, O Lord,  
*People* **and of thine own have we given thee.**

*I Chronicles 29.14*

## **The Great Thanksgiving**

*Note—The next four pages comprise what is known as the “Eucharistic Prayer” or “Great Thanksgiving.” This is a time when we are supernaturally brought into the presence of the original event of Christ’s death and resurrection nearly 2,000 years ago.*

*The people remain standing. The Celebrant, whether bishop or priest, faces them and sings or says*

The Lord be with you.  
*People* **And also with you.**  
*Celebrant* Lift up your hearts.  
*People* **We lift them to the Lord.**  
*Celebrant* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*People* **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

*Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

*Here a Proper Preface is sung or said on all Sundays, and on other occasions as appointed.*

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Celebrant and People*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

*Note – This ancient song of praise or “sanctus and benedictus” (from the Latin words for “Holy” and “Blessed,” respectively) is taken from Isaiah 6.3 and Matthew 21.9 (see also Revelation 4.8). It has been included in Christian worship services since the first century A.D.*

*The people kneel*

*The Celebrant continues*

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

*At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.*

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." *I Corinth. 11.23-24*

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." *I Corinth. 11.25; Matthew 26.27-28*

Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

*Celebrant and People*

**We remember his death,  
We proclaim his resurrection,  
We await his coming in glory;**

*The Celebrant continues*

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with [\_\_\_\_\_ and] all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters;

through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

*People and Celebrant*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

*The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6.9-13) has been included as part of the Eucharistic Prayer of the Church since at least the 4th Century A.D.*

## The Breaking of the Bread

*The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.*

*A period of silence is kept.*

*The Eucharistic bread is broken with the following words:*

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;  
*People* **Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

*The following anthem may be sung or said here*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

***have mercy on us.***

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

***have mercy on us.***

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

***grant us peace.***

*or*

**Jesus, Lamb of God: have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, bearer of our sins: have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, redeemer of the world: give us your peace.**

*The “Agnus Dei” (from the Latin for “Lamb of God”) has been sung at the breaking of the bread since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The prayer is based upon the title John the Baptist ascribed to Jesus in John 1.29.*

*The following prayer may be said by all*

**We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.**

*The people are invited to the Lord's Table with the following words*

The Gifts of God for the People of God.  
Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts by faith,  
with thanksgiving.

*The Bread and the Cup are given to the people with the following or similar words*

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. **Amen.**  
The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. **Amen.**

*It is appropriate, upon receiving the bread and wine, to say "Amen," acknowledging the truth of the ministers' words. The physical appearance and taste of the bread and wine do not change; but we accept Christ's words in faith, believing, although we may not understand, that he is truly present in the bread and wine, and that we truly receive him.*

*During the ministration of Communion, hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung*

*After Communion, the Celebrant says*

Let us pray.

*Celebrant and People*

**Almighty and everliving God,  
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food  
of the most precious Body and Blood  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;  
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries  
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,  
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.  
And now, Father, send us out  
to do the work you have given us to do,  
to love and serve you  
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.  
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,  
be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

*The Priest, may bless the people, saying*

May Christ, the Son of God, be manifest in you, that  
your lives may be a light to the world; and the blessing of  
God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

*The service may conclude with a song and the following dismissal*

Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

*Jesus said:* I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me,  
though he die, yet shall he live. *John 11.25*