Fourth Sunday of Advent

FROM THE PASTOR’S DESK

To my family of St. Joseph,

We are now in the days of Late Advent (December 17-24) and our spiritual focus shifts from our preparation for the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time to our preparation to celebrate the First coming over 2000 years ago. We continue our spirit of waiting on the Lord and pleading with our God to come more fully into our hearts and lives this Christmas. We also allow our anticipation to grow as we approach the great feasts ahead and prepare to give thanks for the incredible gift of the Christ-child, the Word made flesh. Remember that on Christmas day we will be asked to genuflect during the words of the Creed, “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man” in an effort to reinforce the amazing truth that Christmas represents. We truly adore our God who loves us so much that He would humble himself in order to restore our Communion with Him through Jesus.

You should have received, or will receive soon, the Year of Mercy letter that our Facilitator of Faith Formation, Jennifer Wortman, wrote on behalf of our Parish Year of Mercy Committee. In addition to sending you information on the Jubilee Year, we also included a reminder of all the liturgies and opportunities in the coming Christmas Season. Last year we moved our Christmas Eve Family Mass to 4:30pm and that was very well received so we will do it again this year. The Children’s Choir will begin their prelude music at 4pm. Our Adult Choir will provide prelude music for our Midnight Mass at 11:30pm as well. I thank Rachel Harvey and Fran Leto as well as both choirs in advance for their efforts in making our Christmas celebrations special here at St. Joseph.

May God bless our last days of Advent, our Christmas celebrations, and our Jubilee Year of Mercy ahead!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Rich

Our Lady of Perpetual Help …pray for us!
St. Joseph…. pray for us!

Notes from the pastor...

**Christmas Brunch** I would like to invite anyone interested in going to brunch on Christmas Day to join me at Holiday Inn at 11am. It would be helpful if you could make a reservation at the parish office so I know how many seats to reserve. But even if you do not, feel free to show up and we will make a spot for you.

**Deacon Jamie Power Back for Christmas** Jamie returned this week from St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore and will be with us this week leading up to Christmas. We look forward to Deacon Jamie preaching at all the Christmas Masses this year. Recall that Jamie will be ordained a priest on Friday, June 10th at St. Peter Cathedral. We will be taking a bus to the ordination not only to support Jamie but to also to make pilgrimage to the Holy Door at the Cathedral during the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Mark your calendars now and please continue to pray for Jamie and all those in formation for the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life.

**Star of Bethlehem Presentation** On Sunday, December 20th at 11:45am, there will be a showing of the one-hour documentary called “The Star of Bethlehem” from Steve McVeety, the producer of “The Passion of the Christ.” It walks you through the biblical and historical clues that argue that the Star of Bethlehem is not just a legend but a real, astronomical event. There will be pizza and drinks and all parents of our Christmas Children’s Choir are encouraged to attend during choir practice at that same time.

December 20 - December 27, 2015

VOCATIONS ICON

We would like to thank Mark & Karen Bauer for taking the Vocations Icon this week and praying for an increase in vocations here at St. Joseph.

**Advent Extra Times for Reconciliation** Remember that there is no better way to make more room in our hearts for receiving Jesus than to be cleansed and forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. All Communal Services are over for Advent but I still will be available extra times for Confession this week: Monday, December 21st at 8:30-9am; Tuesday, December 22nd at 11:15am-12noon; Wednesday, December 23rd from 4-5pm; Thursday, December 24th at 8:30-9am. Also feel free to make an appointment with me by calling the parish office.

**Appreciation Dinner** Mark your calendars now for our annual appreciation dinner for all our parishioners and families of those who volunteer in some capacity here at St. Joseph. It will be held Saturday, January 9th after the 5:30pm Mass in the Educational Center Gym. Members of Holy Redeemer Parish will be preparing and serving the meal this year as members of our parish did the same for them back in October. After Christmas there will be signup sheets at the doors of the church or you can call or stop by the parish office. Thank you to all who participate in the mission of Christ here at St. Joseph Parish!

**Parish Pictoral Directory** Many people have been asking about the Pictorial Directory. The completion of our books has been delayed for several reasons. One of them is my fault. It was my idea to allow our parishioners to designate what information they wanted left in or omitted as far as the contact information. Unfortunately some lists were misplaced by Life Touch and it created more work for our office, and still we might not have accommodated some of your requests. All that being said, it looks like we will not see the Directories until 2016- I hope you can be “merciful as the Father” in being patient with this process.

**Halle and Randas Bequests Allocations and Projects** Due to the incredible generosity of Rose Halle and Carrie Randas, two of our parishioners who passed away in the last year and left over $100,000 and $200,000 respectively, we have been able to move forward on several areas of need in the parish. Through their generosity, the following allocations have been made through the discernment of the Finance Council and Buildings and Grounds Committee: $25,000 to seed the newly resurrected School Endowment Fund and $50,000 to the Parish Endowment Fund. Also the following projects have been approved: replacement of the AC unit in the chapel, replacement of the Church carpeting, replacement of the restroom hardware in the educational center, new sound systems in Meyer and Loranger Hall to complement the new projectors, new walkie-talkies (3) for campus communication, new Emergency Lighting Battery replacement, HVAC space units in Church offices (4) plus tie-in to Johnson Control software, installation of a Baptistery Railing (to prevent people from accidentally walking through our “pool”), new landscaping on the Laurel Street side of the school and the Statue of Mary Garden while replacing the weeping cherry trees in front of church, sidewalk concrete pad replacements, north parking lot fence section replacement and school playground gate replacement, and rectory garage door repair. Most likely there will still be money from these gifts to commit money to increase our parish staffing (which is one of our parish goals) and to provide AC in the cafeteria and kitchen of the school. Rose and Carrie’s gifts continue to allow us to grow the mission of our parish while also being good stewards of the facilities we have been blessed to inherit from our parish ancestors. All of us at St. Joseph should be extremely grateful for their graciousness and should consider leaving St. Joseph in our wills.

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Fourth Sunday of Advent

Liturgy Corner

“O God, by means of Moses, you instituted for your people a jubilee year and year of forgiveness, grant that your Church may live with joy this opportune time during which you open up for us, your faithful, the holy door, that they may enter and lift up to you their prayers and thus receiving forgiveness and indulgence and the full remission of their sins, they may walk speedily into a new life in accordance with the Gospel of your Son and may reach the heavenly glory of your house.”
Blessed Paul VI, Prayer for the Opening of the Holy Door Vatican City, 1975

**Holy Door Indulgence** A Holy Year and Holy Door brings with it the chance for the faithful to gain a plenary indulgence. I want to first offer to you the formal teaching and doctrine of the Church on indulgences, and then give you an image that I have personally found helpful in understanding them more fully. According to paragraph 1471 of the Catechism, an indulgence is: “…a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.” In the case of a plenary indulgence, it is a full remission of sins. How to obtain an indulgence during a Holy Year: According to the Apostolic Penitentiary, to gain indulgences (plenary or partial) it is necessary that the faithful be in the state of grace at least at the time the indulgenced work is completed. In order to obtain a plenary indulgence, the faithful must, in addition to being in the state of grace: have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin; have sacramentally confessed their sins; receive the Holy Eucharist (preferably but not necessarily within the context of Mass); and pray for the intentions of the Pope. Ideally, one would go to confession, receive Communion and perform the indulgence works all on the same day, but it is sufficient that these sacraments and prayers be carried out within several days (about 20) before or after the indulgenced act. Prayers for the Pope’s intentions is left to the choice of the faithful, but an “Our Father” and a “Hail Mary” are customary. One sacramental Confession suffices for several plenary indulgences, but a separate Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Holy Father’s intentions are required for each plenary indulgence. Exceptions can be made by confessors for the sick and the homebound. Indulgences can always be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased, but they cannot be applied to other persons living on earth.

As I often do, I want to give you a parallel example in our physical life that helped me to better understand an indulgence in the spiritual life. Sin has lingering spiritual effects much the same way illness or injury has lingering physical effects. When someone has an operation for a knee replacement or gets an antibiotic for sickness, it takes days if not weeks and months for the body to fully recover and heal. The scar tissue that is part of the sickness or injury needs therapy or physical activity to help it recover. The same thing happens after Reconciliation has led to the forgiveness of our sins. Even after we have been forgiven, there is spiritual scar tissue that we call “temporal punishment” that must be healed and strengthened. Indulgences are the spiritual therapy for that scar tissue. Like Penance that we are required to do as part of our complete experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, indulgences help complete the healing process from our sin. And when you look at the requirements for an indulgence, they are all normal things that we do for growth in grace and healing in our spiritual lives in our Catholic tradition. So the church tells us if we do these things associated with an indulgence with the proper disposition that we can have confidence and certitude in our healing. If that healing does not happen during our time on earth, then it will happen, God-willing, in Purgatory. Indulgences are another powerful reinforcement of God’s mercy and the role that God gives to the Church to help Him dispense that mercy.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Blue Christmas at First Methodist A special service titled “Blue Christmas” will be held at First United Methodist Church on Sunday, December 20 at 4pm. This service is designed to assist individuals and/or families as they find themselves in the midst of a season which is so happy but be difficult for themselves; facing grief, the loss of a job, the loss of a relationship, financial hardships, spiritual estrangement, etc. Come be lifted up by seasonal songs, prayer and fellowship of others.

PARISH NEWS

CCY MOVIE NITE There will be a CCY movie night Sunday December 20th at 6:30pm for any middle or high school students who are not in the confirmation class and would like to attend. We will be watching a festive Christmas movie and have hot chocolate and snacks to enjoy. We hope to see you there!

SUPPORT THE ANNUAL CCY CHRISTMAS BASKET FUND-RAISER The baskets will be on display here at Saint Joseph the week-end of December 19-20th. Ticket prices are: 1 ticket - $1; 7 tickets - $5; 20 tickets - $10. The drawing will take place on Sunday, December 20th after the showing of “The Star of Bethlehem”.

JESSE TREE You may have noticed the tree in the Meyer Hall area. What began as a gift to Father Rich for Thanksgiving quickly became a Jesse Tree for Advent. We also celebrate the Jesse Tree with our school community every day before lunch. The tradition of the Jesse Tree is based upon the prophecy of Isaiah (11:1-2). The Jesse Tree symbols transform a Christmas tree or any tree into a “family tree” of Christ, since each ornament is a symbol of an ancestor or of a prophecy which foretells His coming. The Jesse Tree is a great way to keep Christ in the pre holiday craziness. This is a great tradition to start in your own homes. You can download the ornaments from the diocesan website (eriecd.org/jesstree). Thank you to John Rickert for creating our tree.

CATHOLIC HEART WORK CAMP REGISTRATIONS Registration to attend the Catholic Heart Work Camp in Tennessee from July 17th-23rd, 2016 is open. The cost is $150.00; $75.00 due by January 1; the other $75.00 is due by March 1. This is open to all students entering 9th grade and up as well as any adults. We will take registrations until the 25 spots are filled. Questions and comments can be directed to Jennifer or Anna.

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MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

Sunday, 12/20 - Fourth Sunday of Advent
8:00am Living & Deceased Parishioners of Saint Joseph
10:30am George Ziki by Judy

Monday, 12/21 - Saint Peter Canisius
8:00am Sp. Int. for Pulice family by Family

Tuesday, 12/22 - Late Advent Weekday
12:05pm Jeannine Oleksak by Family

Wednesday, 12/23 - Saint John of Kanty
9:05am Kathleen Shea by Family

Thursday, 12/24 - Late Advent Weekday
8:00am Scalice Family by Rose Halle Estate
4:30pm Theresa Ressler by Terry, Janice & Katie Ressler
12:00am Joe & Helen Castignino by Joe and Loni Castignino

Friday, 12/25 - The Nativity of the Lord
9:00am Joseph & Jennie Colosimo by Patti, Mary and Bob

Saturday, 12/26 - Saint Stephen, The First Martyr
8:00am Peter & Helen Lucia by Family
5:30pm Paul & Lorna Labowski by Howard & Doris Labowski

Sunday, 12/27 - The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
8:00am Katie Rooney by Anne McGraw
10:30am Living & Deceased Parishioners of Saint Joseph

LITURGICAL MINISTRY SCHEDULES

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ADULT FORMATION NEWS

Happy Late Advent: we hope that you enjoy a blessed Christmas season filled with family, friends and Jesus! One of our goals as a committee for 2015 was to gift all of you with a book to inspire you and reignite your love for the Church. At all the Christmas Masses this year, a book will be gifted to each household plus our guests. It is titled Rediscover Catholicism by Matthew Kelly. We pray that you will take the time to read it and that you will allow it to stir up the Spirit within you; to fall in love with your Church all over again or maybe for the first time. A Bible study will be offered during Lent with Father Rich that will allow those participants to explore the book on a deeper level and to ask and discuss any questions that you may have. The dates for the Bible study are: February 11, 18 & 25 plus March 3, 10 & 17. Please consider joining us for this fantastic opportunity. Thank you to Rita Bevevino who facilitated this effort.

MERCY BOOKS are available in our parish library. Please check them out and enjoy! If you were not able to attend the Adult Formation on the feast of Saint Nicholas, please take one of the Year of Mercy book order forms from the parish library. Check out what is available and we can order for you! Come be inspired to come and be the change!

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday  Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Gospel - Luke 1:39-45
Tuesday 1 Samuel 1:24-28; Gospel - Luke 1:46-56
Thursday 2 Samuel 7:15, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Gospel - Luke 1:67-79
Friday  Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; Gospel - John 1:1-18
Saturday Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Gospel - Matthew 10:17-22
Sunday Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 or 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28;

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, December 20
9:00am K-9 Faith Formation (School)
10:11 Confirmation (School)
11:30am Pageant Practice (Church)
11:30am Children’s Christmas Choir Practice (Church)
11:45am Showing “The Star of Bethlehem” (Meyer Hall)
1:00pm CCY Christmas Basket drawing (Church)
6:30pm CCY Movie Nite (Youth Room)

Monday, December 21
8:30am Reconciliation (Church)

Tuesday, December 22
11:15am Reconciliation (Church)
4:30pm Soup Kitchen (Cafeteria)

Wednesday, December 23
9:05am Children’s Mass (Church)
10:30am Decorate the Church for Christmas (Church)
2:00pm SJCS Sing-A-Long (School Lobby)
6:00pm NO RCIA
11:30pm Adult Choir Prelude (Church)
12:00am Midnight Mass (Church)

Friday, December 25
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
9:00am Mass (Church)

Saturday, December 26
4:30pm Reconciliation (Church)

Sunday, December 27
NO Faith Formation

SPONSOR OF THE WEEK

Kondaks Market
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Please thank them.