



on
EAGLE'S
wings

January / February 2021

A NOTE FROM FR. DON

Sr. Helen Joseph, my third-grade teacher, was teaching a class on the season of Lent that was coming upon us. At one point she decided to go around the class and ask each of us what we were giving up for Lent. When it came to me, I thought for a moment and then proceeded to tell Sister I wanted to give up school for Lent. Without missing a beat, she told me that if it were truly a sacrifice, I could give it up. But the look in her eyes told me that would not really be an option. Once again giving up candy was the choice for that year.

I think about that story every time I begin to ponder the season of Lent. I am sure I have told the story before, but it always brings a smile to my face. Sr. Helen Joseph was very special in my life. As a former religion teacher, I would always talk about Lent and what to do during the season and would not allow anyone else to choose what I tried to give up in the third grade.

So here we are, soon to begin the season of Lent in 2021. What in the world are we going to do for Lent? I have preached many times about it and always feel it is better to do something for Lent. If you give something up what are you going to replace it with? For example, if you give up TV, what is going to take place in that void created? I try to increase my prayer life during the season of Lent. I feel a need to be spiritually prepared for the season that leads up to the greatest of weeks - Holy Week. To me, Lent is a journey of some 40 days that call for a spiritual renewal. It is a time for a spiritual cleansing. Whatever I can do to make that happen, I will do my best to achieve that. But there are so many distractions that come into my daily life. I really must concentrate on the plan I put into action for Lent. Lent is a time for growth, the growth that allows us to fully journey with the Lord to the cross that leads to the resurrection. But we

cannot really do that well if we do not take the time to open our hearts to the challenges of the Lenten season.

I think Lent is more than a time to give something up. But that is really for us to each decide. I find if I give of my time it is more rewarding. How about you? What is it going to take to get you fired up for the season of Lent? The gospel on Ash Wednesday speaks about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Maybe that could be the focus for you. Remember that the gospel says not to draw attention to yourself. We are not doing things for personal glory but because we want the Lord to see what is in our hearts. When we draw attention to ourselves, our actions lose some of their value. We do not need people to admire what we are doing; that is not what Lent is about.

I believe now is the time to prayerfully consider what the season of Lent is about. It is a journey of 40 days of reflection. Consider what Jesus did for us while he was on earth. The path of salvation begins with the journey to the cross. Somewhere in the season I think we all need to make it to reconciliation to let go of those things that keep us from a right relationship with God, others, and self. Part of the journey needs to be a moment of reconciliation with the Lord. The season of Lent will be here before you know it. Take time to decide what it means to you and create a plan to live it out your Lenten promises. May the peace of Christ be upon you as you walk to Calvary. God bless each of you!



FR. DON WEST
PASTOR

UPCOMING DATES ON THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR

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

Sunday, January 3: The Epiphany of the Lord

Sunday, January 10: The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (final day of the Christmas Season)

Tuesday, February 2: The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Wednesday, February 17: Ash Wednesday

Sunday, February 21: First Sunday of Lent

Sunday, February 28: Second Sunday of Lent

HOW DOES IT ALL FIT TOGETHER?

Each year on February 2nd, there is one big thing that I celebrate: my birthday. When other people think of February 2nd though, it has nothing to do with my birthday, although it would be greatly appreciated! It mostly has to do with a little furry creature who has the power and ability to determine whether the cold chill of Winter will hang around for six more weeks or an early Spring will joyfully arrive. Yes, the infamous Punxsutawney Phil in Pennsylvania becomes the center of attention as he comes forth in search of a shadow or not. And all of you are well aware of the outcomes for each of those situations.

Yet, there is much more to February 2nd than my birthday or even lovable Phil. This one single day also celebrates the following in the life of the Catholic Church: The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Candlemas Day, The Purification of Mary, A Christmas Feast Day, and finally World Day for Consecrated Life. Did you realize all of this was taking place on this one particular day of the year? It is certainly a lot of celebration. So, let's break these down and give a little description of each. Then, we will see how they all fit together, including our little furry friend.

Presentation of the Lord: this celebrates Jesus' presentation in the temple by Mary and Joseph. It occurs 40 days after the birth of Jesus. It is considered another "epiphany" celebration because as the holy man Simeon blessed the Christ child in the temple, he revealed Jesus as the Messiah, the one to come into the world and fulfill God's Word to all nations. Candlemas Day: Also in Simeon's testimony of the Christ child, he speaks of Jesus being the "light to all nations" to reveal the glory of God. Hence, on this day a blessing of candles to be used in liturgical celebrations over the course of the next year, takes place. Every time these candles are lit, they represent the light of Christ that shines forth in the world for our salvation. The Purification of Mary: This celebration, as is noted in Catholic resources, refers to the other aspect of the presentation in the temple that consists of the ritual purification of Jewish women after they had given birth, which is a 40-day period. It is also noted that in Mary's case this purification was not necessary as she was pure, but it indicates her servitude and

"renewal" of the complete offering of herself to God, while at the same time honoring Jewish law.

A Christmas Feast Day: With this celebration, we are reminded again of Christ's birth that took place 40 days ago (Christmas Day). A child was born unto the world, a savior, which is Christ the Lord. This day is said to close out the Christmas season and point our hearts and minds towards the Easter celebration ahead. World Day for Consecrated Life: In the Order of Prayer for the Celebration of the Eucharist, it describes this celebration as a way "to help the entire Church to esteem ever more greatly the witness of those persons who have chosen to follow Christ by means of the practice of the evangelical counsels [and] to be a suitable occasion for consecrated persons to renew their commitment and rekindle their fervor...to the Lord." Thus, you have a brief description of each of these wonderful celebrations we lift up on this one single day of the year.

Now, how does this all fit together? Mary followed Jewish law and the purification period of 40 days before presenting the Christ child to the temple (Presentation of the Lord) while, on this day, renewing her dedication to God (The Purification of Mary). Simeon through the Holy Spirit recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, the one who has come into the world to be the "light for all nations" (Candlemas). In recognizing Jesus as the savior, we remember His birth and again celebrate God's gift of His son among us (A Christmas Feast). All of this, including our plump and furry Phil, points us toward Easter, to Spring, and in that we are each called to renew ourselves this day and embrace, with commitment and fervor, our Lord and Savior to all (World Day for Consecrated Life). What a day, right? Of course, each day during the year is an opportunity to renew ourselves and call upon the Trinity to fill us with grace and love. Yet, you now know that February 2nd certainly holds a special place in the liturgical year. And don't forget to wish me a happy birthday!



Scott

SCOTT STEINKE
DIRECTOR OF LITURGY

CELEBRATING THE FULL CHRISTMAS SEASON

It has been said that the church is counter-cultural. While most everyone is decorating their homes and listening to Christmas music, we in the Church are waiting in “hopeful expectation” for the coming of Christ. Then, the day after Christmas, the decorations come down, the carols are over and we are back to “normal.” Except in the Church. The Christmas season in the Church extends through the Baptism of the Lord, January 10 this year. We continue to sing songs about a newborn King and the wise men and Mary and Joseph and Angels etc. throughout the Christmas season.

When I was growing up, about 10 I think, my parents and my brother and I went to buy a new stereo. We bought 4 albums, Disney’s Merriest songs, The Sound of Music soundtrack, Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture, and Merry Christmas- Johnny Mathis. I’m pretty sure I wore out all those albums, but I loved the Johnny Mathis one. I started listening to it in August! Strangely enough, as a music director, I still start listening to Christmas music in August because I need to make decisions about choral pieces and instrument parts early enough to plan, order, and get the music in the hands of choir and musicians by October at the latest. Except for this year. We still will have music all through the Christmas season. But sadly, no choir.

I’m hoping to thoroughly enjoy the music this season, as I hope you do throughout the season. And we can appreciate next year all the more when, hopefully, we can all gather again to celebrate the great feasts of the church. I look forward to the day when we can all gather together with our loved ones and sing the carols we all cherish.

Merry Christmas Season!



Lynn Meisberger

LYNN MEISBERGER
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC



REFLECTING ON 2020

While 2020 may not have been what we all expected, there were some wonderful memories, accomplishments and moments that came from it. Here are just a few:

- Surprising Fr. Don with the entire church parking lot full of parishioners to wish him a happy (and socially distanced) birthday at the start of the pandemic
- Incredible turnout for our Basket Bonanza event and Grand Raffle that was far beyond expectation
- Consistent generosity of our parishioners for collection efforts like the Campton Mission Drive and Generations of Faith among many others
- Many parishioners staying connected with St. John Church through our online options for streaming Mass and other various events, as well as online giving
- Outstanding donations on Giving Tuesday
- Completion of the Prayer Garden
- A large number of items from our Parish Wish List have been purchased (HVAC unit replacements in the Center, new signs on parish grounds, new computers, etc. See more here: <https://www.stjohnwc.org/wish-list.html>)
- Fantastic turnout for Trunk-n-Treat

Thank you to all of our parishioners for making this year as successful and wonderful as it was. Your time, talents and treasures helped to keep 2020 positive and uplifting. As a staff, we are so thankful to serve you each and every day. We are looking forward to another great year of community, growth and love for God and all of His creation.

God bless you and your family,

The St. John Staff

A FOCUS ON FAITH AND FAMILY IN THE NEW YEAR

I've never been a fan of New Year's resolutions, because I find myself in one of two scenarios: either I lose interest by February or I forget to do my resolution on the first day of the year and simply cannot go on knowing the year wouldn't be complete. On the contrary, I do like the *idea* of a New Year's resolution, because I can imagine that I will magically pull it all together after I wake up on the first day of January. And this time, I am absolutely *certain* that I will stay true to the resolution I make for 2021, because I have a whole new motivation: my family.

In the past two years, I have graduated with my Bachelors, married my high school sweetheart, gotten my first full-time job, had my first baby and gotten pregnant with my second. My new and growing family is my greatest priority.

As much as I love my family, they shouldn't be my first priority. Before anything else, my priority needs to be my relationship with Christ. It's a difficult concept to wrap my mind around. Obviously, we all know that our faith is important, but how can we openly admit to ourselves that we love something more than we love family? The answer is simple: our love is limited. God, in His very essence, is abundant and everlasting love. To

love more truly, more deeply, we must first love Him. I love this thought I found while discerning this topic. "Love is not divided, as if we have ten measures of love: three for God, then one for each other important person in our life. With this idea of love, there's not enough love to go around. No, love is multiplied: when we give God all ten measures of our love, then we can give our family at least five!" (from *The Just Measure*)

As I mentioned in the start, I am convinced that I will carry out on my resolution for 2021, because my family serves as my motivation this year. I really do find it difficult to admit to myself out loud that I love God more than I love my husband or my children. But I understand that if I want to love them as deeply as they deserve to be loved, I need to seek Christ's love first. My resolution for 2021 is this: to focus on faith and family.



Sarah Chivers
SARAH CHIVERS
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION

RESOLUTIONS FOR THE CATHOLIC FAMILY

Want to grow in faith with your family in the New Year? Here are some resolutions you can make together:

Get to know the saints. Vague resolutions are useless, so rather than resolving to "get to know the saints," try something like, "Each week, we will learn about a new saint, trying to figure out what I need to imitate in his or her life and virtues, and asking for his or her intercession." By the end of 2021, you'll have 52 more new besties in heaven! Or maybe pick one Saint per month to get to know more deeply, or two or three Saints for the year whose biographies you can get. Anything to grow closer to your family in heaven.

Forgive. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Make a resolution to forgive somebody for whom you've been harboring resentment, then do something tangible like offering every Sunday Mass for them or just praying, "Father, I forgive N. Please give me the grace to forgive him/her." For most of us, a year of such actions will move the forgiveness from our will to our hearts.

Make good stewardship a lifestyle. Good stewardship means good management of our "time, talent, and treasure" for the greater glory of God. Prayerfully evaluate how you will spend your time, your talents and your income in 2021 to see what lifestyle changes your family can make that will positively impact your spiritual life.

Find time to pray together. There are many prayers that a family can pray together. Praying before dinner and praying the Rosary together are often the most common, but can be easily overlooked. If saying an entire Rosary in one sitting is too much, consider praying one decade each night as a family to complete a Rosary each week.

Live the liturgical calendar. With our busy lives, it's easy to be overwhelmed and overlook important days in the church year. Print a liturgical calendar and be sure to celebrate feast days to connect you with the Church. Also be sure to place a focus on Holy Days of Obligation and watch Mass online if you're unable to attend in person.

(Article inspiration from *Pierced Hands*.)

CELEBRATING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

BAPTISMS

Graham Michael Daviavx
Wesley Alexander Meierdiercks
Oliver Allen Aragon
Anna Elizabeth Bown

Barrett Jude Roehm
Beau James Roehm
Charleigh Rose Smart
Adryan Kroeger

Georgia Rose Kroeger
Clara Elizabeth Smith
Alexis Lucia Ogle
Alexander David Borges

FIRST EUCHARIST

Baker, Alyssa
Behrle, Ella
Blanchard, Owen
Bond, Andrew
Borovskis, Brandon
Boucher, Luke
Bowling, Emma
Brill, Reagan
Brown, Emma
Brownlee, William
Brunner, Adrian
Bruns, Carter
Burke, Raegan
Butz, Finley
Cataudella, Owen
Clark, Matthew
Converse, Claire
Corcoran, Braden
Cuplay, Magdalena Brito

Currens, Lily
Desutter, Jonathan
Deutsch, Xavier
Diemer, Bailey
Draper, Lillian
Fauber, Caroline
Fenech, Mallory
Finelli, Garrett
Ficker, Justin
Gooding, William
Gorton, Parker
Gruber, Dominic
Hader, Miles
Hille, Leah
Hurak, Archer
Kennedy, Ella
Lammert, Colin
Laschinger, Hudson
Leni, Sofia

Magato, Jonathan
Mannarino, Liliana
Markle, Emma
Martinez, Arabela
Martinez, Esmeraya
Martinez, Priscilla
Mattas, Ian
McCune, Maggie
McManiman, Colin
Meiser, Braden
Mescher, Kayden
Menkhau, Andrew
Meyer, Luciana
Mulcahy, Elise
Munafo, Alex
Oberholtzer, Brooke
Piatt, Anna
Piepmeier, Abby
Radjewski, Gemma

Rudolph, Brooklyn
Rudolph, Lilian
Runkle, Weston
Sambrano, Emma
Savage, Jeffrey
Schaefer, Sam
Schaiper, Bradley
Shelley, Lucas
Small, Brooklyn
Spray, Lucas
Stroud, Sophia
Sullivan, Addison
Vargas, Ana
Vogelgesano, Zachary
Waldeck, Maxwell
Wietmarschen, Hayden
Willenbrink, Morgan
Wissel, Madeline
Wolf, John

OUR SYMPATHIES GO OUT TO...

Nathan Rudolph on the death of his father
Elizabeth Keane on the death of her mother, Maureen Keane
Richard Koth on the death of his wife Leisa Koth
Barb McQueary on the death of her husband Rick McQueary
JoAnn Lamping on the death of her husband Richard Lamping
Elaine Anthony on the death of her father
John Dorger on the death of his sister



Happy New Year

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Welcome to 2021! We are all so very hopeful that this year will look completely different than 2020. Here's to a year of hopefulness, prayers, good health and successful vaccines! Looking back on 2020, we do have so much to be thankful for. Our parishioners stepped up in so many ways! Without a festival, everyone rallied around our basket bonanza and grand raffle, resulting in \$72,000 in earnings (our festival usually earns around \$150,000, but this went a long way to replacing that income). Parishioners donated to Reach Out Lakota, Campton Mission and Christmas baskets in an amazing way. We stocked pantries several times over with our Share-a-Lunch program. School supplies and Christmas toys were given in abundance. Our Giving Tuesday netted \$30,000 when our weekly offerings were behind by nearly that same amount. You are the best parishioners on earth, and we are so thankful for you.

In 2021, we are looking forward to restarting more and more events in person. I know that we miss seeing faces at our Nights of Service and our Festival. If there ever was a year in which you decide to start volunteering, 2021 is it! If you want to become more involved in Mass, ministries or social activities, please do. Getting to know other parishioners and becoming involved in your parish community are things that can change your life. If you are looking to become more involved here, visit our website at www.stjohnwc.org and click on ->about-> parish forms ->stewardship/volunteer form.

At the time of writing this article, we are behind our budgeted income from weekly giving. Of course, in the year of COVID, this is not an unusual position for any parish. We do thank you if you are able to give and ask that you please prayerfully consider making a tax-deductible donation to your parish! Also, giving electronically is the perfect way to "set it and forget it" for your giving. If you are interested in setting up your regular contributions electronically, it is easy to do. Just click on the "Donate/

Purchase" button on our website and follow the instructions. As always, if you ever have questions about giving, I am available via phone, email or in person! Don't hesitate to stop by, call or email me with your questions.

If you would like to give to St. John parish with a stock donation, that would mean a lot to us as well. Donations of stock to St. John Church are processed through our individual custodial account at Fifth Third Bank. To donate stock to our parish, please make sure to include the information below in your communication. Please note: the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Gift Acceptance Policy requires a donor name be included with the transfer. All stock transfers without a donor name and a recipient account number will be rejected and returned to the donor account.

Company Name: Fifth Third Bank
DTC Number: 2116
Account Number: 010447175IBV
Account Name: St. John West Chester

If you have any questions, please contact Brigid Loebig in the parish office at 777-6433 ext. 119 or bloebig@stjohnwc.org.

Have a truly blessed 2021! I pray daily for our parishioners. For this year, I will be focused on praying for everyone to stay healthy and safe. And remember to be kind - it's what Jesus asks of us!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan".

JOAN SEIBENICK
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION



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