

On Eagle's Wings

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
November / December 2016



From the Pastor

I can't believe we are gearing up for the holiday season once again. Where did the summer go? Now all you see are pumpkins and corn stalks out in the yards. That can only mean that Halloween is behind us and the seasons of Advent and Christmas are right around the corner. So what in the world are we going to do to get ready? Perhaps the better question is, what *aren't* we getting ready for? During this time of year, there seems to be a tug-of-war between the spiritual and the material aspects of the holidays. Most would say that we could do both, which is true, but if the foundation of the season isn't rooted in the Christ experience, then we fail to some degree.

There are some great movies that come out of the woodwork during the holiday season. My personal favorite is *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, but a movie I have been drawn to over the years is *The Polar Express*. It is about a magical train that takes a rather unique group of children to the North Pole to see Santa as he launches out to deliver toys around the world. One of the boys receives a bell from the official Santa sleigh. Only those who "believe" can actually hear the bell's sound. Having a hole in his robe's pocket, he loses it on the return trip home. As the train comes to his stop, the conductor punches his ticket and it says, "believe." On Christmas morning, he and his sister go to the tree and open their presents. But after opening them all, there seems to be one more present under the tree that he missed. He opens it and discovers the lost bell and a note from Santa.

As he smiles and shakes the bell, the sound fills his

ears (and his sister's) but their parents hear nothing. As long as the young boy believes, the sounds of Christmas fill his heart. If only life was that simple...but we know it is not.

This story can give us some insight to the meaning behind the Christmas season. It begins with Advent and how we prepare for the coming of Jesus into our world. We need to have a true belief in who is breaking into the darkness of the world to bring God's redeeming light. At baptism, we get our ticket punched with the word, "believe." We are given many ways to nurture that belief. But many of us hear the sounds of that bell dying out in our lives. We stop believing, or at least we have our doubts. But then comes the season of Advent to remind us where it all began, with God starting a wonderful relationship with his beloved sons and daughters. How he longs to restore the broken relationship where sin and pain entered our lives! Jesus, his only son, born of a virgin, comes as king in the most humble way. Jesus comes to remind us what salvation is all about and it begins and ends with him. This time of the year, many of us are reminded what it is that we believe in: Christ, the light of the world. If that is the foundation for these holidays, then we have the true purpose for the season. We can hear the bells of Christmas ringing in our hearts. With gratitude, those hearts will share the good news to family, friends and strangers. May you have a blessed Christmas. I am so grateful to be a part of this family as your pastor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don West".

Father Don West
Pastor

From the Business Manager



We had a great fiscal year from July, 2015 through June, 2016. Our expenses were under budget and with the help of last year's festival results and our portion of the One Faith campaign, our income was above budget. I want you to know that our Facilities Manager, Kirt Robb, Father Don and I meet regularly to determine what projects need to be accomplished and how to spend our year-end funds. Sometimes, our facilities dictate what needs to be done, as well. We've done a lot of upgrading and replacing on our HVAC systems this year. We started on a stepped replacement program in our Center classrooms. We've also had to replace units in our Parish Office and in the Youth Room. We've repaired the large unit in Favret Hall as well. We have completed the siding on the Spirit House. Next up, we will be doing major work in the Pavilion to upgrade the plumbing and restrooms. We are adding to and replacing our current security cameras and system. We will have a new phone system installed in our office. And, these are just the major projects. We are constantly upgrading lighting, painting walls, replacing landscaping...the list goes on.

As you have already heard, our festival in August was a huge success. Thank you to everyone who prayed for our great weather and to the Festival Committee members who work year round to make our festival happen. Thanks also to our amazing booth captains who spend their first full weekend in August giving back to our Parish. Thanks to the workers, bakers, sponsors and donors. There are literally hundreds of people who all have a part in the success of our festival. Our festival brings in about 10% of our annual income in one weekend. It is so important to our Parish and with this money, we are able to keep our facilities up to date and in good working order.

As I type this column, our weekly contributions are right on our budget. We work tirelessly to reduce or control our costs. Please know that we watch every penny that you give to us! Thank you to those parishioners who are sharing their treasure with our Parish. Without you, we could not do all that we do for others! If you are interested in setting up your regular contributions electronically, it is easy to do. Just click on the "Donate/Payment" button on our website and follow the instructions. If you would like to donate stock to our Parish, the information is listed below. As always, if you ever have questions about giving, I am always available via phone, e-mail or in person! Don't hesitate to stop by, call, or e-mail me with your questions.

The Annual Parish Report for fiscal year 2015-16 is included with this mailing. It will also be available online from our website. It is important to see where our income comes from and also how it is spent. If you have questions about this report, please feel free to send me a note!

If you would like to give to St. John Parish with a stock donation, that would mean a lot to us. 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 Giff 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.

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If you have any questions, please contact Marianne Ball in the parish office at 777-6433 ext. 119 or mball@stjohnwc.org.

Have a blessed November and December. As you listen and respond to God calling you by name, remember to use your blessings to care for others.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joan".

Joan Seibenick
Business Manager

God Calls Us to be Thankful

As we near the holiday season, we gather around tables filled with delicious food and spend time with people we love the most. Giving thanks for all of our blessings is a recurring theme for both the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, and it is something that I try to mindfully practice all year round.

Spending time each day to reflect on all the things I'm grateful for is my favorite kind of prayer. When I thank God for all of my blessings (and even for the hardships) I am able to live the best life for myself and for everyone around me. I find that a sense of gratitude makes my entire disposition more gentle, loving and compassionate. When I thank God for those hardships, I'm able to see through the darkness and into the light that inevitably shines through. Realizing that everything is part of God's plan is essential for me to find peace in my life. It's also essential in discovering my gifts that God has called me to share with the world.

As we continue to focus on how the Lord calls us all by name, practicing gratitude is especially important. When we focus on all of the good in our own lives, we will be more likely to share that good with others. For example, if I thank God each time that I get a compliment on something I've done at work, I will be more likely to remember those good moments and continue to provide those services to this Parish and the people I connect with. If someone else has a talent for quilting or knitting and they thank God for those serene times spent alone and working, they might be inspired to create beautiful blankets or clothing for people less fortunate than themselves. Someone who has a gift for singing or playing music might thank God for that gift, and they can use that gift to participate in the musical ensembles at their Parish or in the community. It could also be as simple as thanking God for your successes and sharing your wealth with those less fortunate.

How have you been blessed this year? What are some of the things you are grateful for? And how do you think you have been called to share those blessings? Recognizing God's call is difficult. It requires a lot of introspection and thought. But recognizing that call can be much easier if we take this first step and we realize all the gifts we have been given. Take the time this season to write down 10 things you are grateful for every day. It seems like a lot, but if you consider everything as a blessing, you'll find that it can be quite simple. Recognize those blessings and give more blessings out to the world!



Angela

Angela Pugliano
Pastoral Associate of
Communications

Earthly and Infinite



How can music help us deepen our relationship with God? Music has the power to reach us emotionally and to help us express what we experience in life when we come before the Lord: joy, sorrow, ecstasy, pain, love, loneliness, delight and grief. The emotional impact of music is undeniable.

But it goes far beyond that! Music is a physical, physiological force. When a voice sings or an instrument plays, sound energy is released into the universe. Music physically affects both performer and listener. A beat from a drum or a riff from a guitar can raise or lower the heart-beat, depending on the speed of the beat and the accompanying instruments.

Music provides connection to the spirit in ways that no other medium can. To this day, I remember turning on Austin City Limits over 25 years ago during a tribute to the late, great guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan after his tragic death. Vaughan began a solo on his guitar, and I stood rooted in front of the television. The guitar's sound riveted me to the point that I couldn't move. I felt that Vaughan's soul was connecting to me and those listening from beyond the stars.

How do we connect to God with music in church? Music helps us get in touch with our dual nature. We are human beings, with a finite term of life that will end sooner or later. We exist in the human concept of time – 60 seconds per minute, 60 minutes per hour, 24 hours per day, etc. Metric music – music measured in time – can help us connect to the experience of God and life in the body. We can experience the music as a dance, like the waltzing rhythm of the *Mass of Redemption*, *Love Divine*, *All Loves Excelling* or *If You Believe and I Believe*. Songs can calm the heartbeat and allow our mind to slow down and connect with the Lord, like *Shepherd Me, O God*, *We Remember, We Believe* or *O Sacred Head Surrounded*.

We are also spiritual beings that will eventually experience the infinite realm of God. We will move from the structure of time to the timeless, and music in church can connect us to that reality which awaits us, too! For centuries, chanted music has given us that connection. It does not have a metric rhythm; the tempo and rhythm comes to us from the words and phrases of the song. As the music moves from phrase to phrase, our souls can experience the reality of God's word without the weight of a beat, moving from phrase to phrase like a soul moves through many artistic visions of heaven: from cloud-to-cloud. We are exposed to encounter with the reality of heaven without the weight of earth when we sing *Creator of the Stars of Night*, *Of the Father's Love Begotten*, *O Sons and Daughters* and *Adoro Te Devote* in the *Corpus Christi Mass* during Lent.

During these seasons, I invite you to take time to connect to your emotions, body, mind, spirit, and our God by singing and listening to all kinds of music inside and outside of church. Our life is a song, and our experience is so much richer with God's love as the music.

Peace,

Michael Dailey
Pastoral Associate of Music Ministry

A Reflection on Family During Christmas



Last year, after our Christmas lunch as a family, my sister had to leave for work. The gathering was shorter than my parents would have liked, and my sister's work schedule often cuts family gatherings short. My sister works with mentally handicapped adults and someone has to be there to care for them every day of the year. She was the only one working on Christmas evening so she convinced me to come volunteer at her work that evening. I was nervous, as I hadn't interacted with developmentally disabled adults before. There were only three residents there that evening and they were excited to meet someone new. It took me a while to understand what they were saying, but soon enough, I was able to engage with them and help make their night more enjoyable. While there, I found out the hard truth for many of the residents. The three who were there that evening did not get visited by their family. They didn't get to see their brothers, sisters, and parents. It was hard for them to understand why five of the other residents got to leave, but they couldn't.

Volunteering with my sister opened my eyes to many things last Christmas. I got a reminder of the blessing I have with my own family. I have two Christmas dinners, one with my Aunt and one with my immediate family. The dinners may be shorter than they used to be due to changing work schedules or have less people due to unfortunate family conflicts, but I have family that I get to enjoy Christmas with. I have family dinners that often leave me in tears from laughing too hard, burnt rolls to enjoy every year because my aunt always forgets about them, board games against competitive family members, and much more laughter and love.

As I do each year, I can't wait for the joy that Christmas brings. I am excited to finally have a dinner with my family again. I cherish the time with family that always happens around Christmastime. Our families are a blessing to have. In our families, we get to give and receive the wonderful gift of love that God has given us. We are reminded of the love that God has for each and every one of us. My experiences with my family always make me thankful for everything God has given me. I pray this Christmas that we can all be mindful of the gift of family.

Handwritten signature of Josh Plandowski.

Josh Plandowski
Pastoral Associate of Youth Ministry



Update from St. Gabriel Consolidated School

By: Nicole Brainard, Principal



Saint Gabriel



This month, the St. Gabriel Consolidated School community has much for which to be thankful. As a school, St. Gabriel has been in existence for 150 years. During this time, much has happened within the walls of our school and in the world. We have been in existence through 12 Popes, six wars, nine Archbishops, as a high school, as a K-12 school, as a K-8 elementary school and as a K-8 consolidated school. Through it all, the education of children in the Catholic tradition has taken place. We are grateful for the support we have received from our students, our families, our teachers and administrators and our parishes. It is, undoubtedly, this support that has resulted in the high quality spiritual and academic programs available at our school today. The education provided at St. Gabriel Consolidated School is becoming increasingly more valu-

able. We look forward to the next 150 years of quality Catholic education and thank the members of St. John the Evangelist Parish for their support and prayers.

As we move into the season of Advent, we will be working with the children to prepare to welcome Jesus at Christmas. We will celebrate our Advent Communal Penance Service on the morning of Thursday, December 15. We invite those interested in participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation to join us. The students will also be participating in service learning projects to foster their understanding of their role as disciples and the need to extend ourselves selflessly for others. We also look forward to another visit from Snowflake, the Advent Elf, who watches for children doing good deeds, being kind to others, being helpful, etc. as they work to prepare themselves to welcome the Christ Child. Hopefully, Snowflake's "Nice List" will contain a large number of names again this year! May God continue to bless St. Gabriel Consolidated School and each and every St. John family.

Advent

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



November 27

First Sunday of Advent
St. Nick Toy Drive

December 2

Lessons and Carols 7:30 - 9 p.m.
(Reception in GS to follow.)

December 3

Craft Show, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Junior High Christmas Party

December 4

RCIA Rite of Acceptance
at 9:30 Mass

December 6

Feast of St. Nicholas

December 7

Immaculate Conception Vigil Mass, 7 p.m.

December 8

Feast of the Immaculate Conception
Mass at 12 p.m. and 7 p.m.

December 10

Breakfast in Bethlehem 9 a.m.
Christmas Basket Drop Off, 9 - 10 a.m.

December 11

High School Christmas Party, 6:30 p.m.

December 15

Advent Penance Service 7 p.m.

December 23

Office Closed

December 24

Christmas Eve
Office Closed

Children's Mass at 3 p.m.
Mass at 5:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

December 25

Christmas Day
Office Closed
Mass at 10 a.m.

December 26 - January 3

Office Closed

Our Prayers and Sympathy go out to...

August

- Dave Thomas on the death of his brother
- Larry & Marlene Henkel on the death of his father and her brother
- Lisa Lepper on the death of her husband Dave Lepper and to Max, Mavis and Nate on the death of their father
- Wilma Vonderhaar on the death of her husband, Don Vonderhaar
- Cathy Rupert on the death of her mother

September

- John & Susan Wallace on the death of their son, Tim Wallace
- Barb Hook on the death of her mother-in-law
- The Michaels family on the death of Hilda Michaels
- Sheryl Oprish on the death of her mother
- Josh Plandowski on the death of his grandfather
- Pat Foley on the death of her husband, Frank Foley

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