

On Eagle's Wings

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
November / December 2017



From the Pastor

It is that time of the year again when we decide what are we waiting for. Are we "buying into" the material side of the season, or the spiritual side of the season, or a combination of both? I am sure many would say it is a combination of both material and spiritual. But which one will get the nod this year? Because the fourth Sunday of Advent is also Christmas Eve, do we know that this is a "double duty" day this year? We need to honor the Sunday Mass while also attending a Christmas Mass either Sunday or Monday.

When I was in my late twenties and early thirties, I was a junior high religion teacher. Every year I would help the six classes do a giving tree. From the first day of Advent, there would be a window for each class to open and it would include something they would have to do: an action of kindness to complete for someone else, either at home or at school. In addition to the tree, we would also have an underprivileged family to bring Christmas to. It was usually a large family with plenty of children. The Christmas family was always well-supported and the students did a very good job. We would pick a few students from each class and pack up the vans and cars and deliver the presents, food and other things collected for the family. Someone would usually dress up in a Santa outfit, and yes, I was usually that someone. It was a wonderful way to express the spirit of Christmas. For me, back then, that was the highlight of Christmas. The rest was almost a letdown. I knew there was more but I just didn't always see it.

Christmas today is very different. Oh, I do see the wonderful things that our parish does with the Christmas baskets and the shoe box program. It is humbling to

see such generosity being poured out. But Christmas is more, so much more to me. It really gets back to what we are waiting for. It is more than just a "special day" or a season of good cheer. It is about Jesus, Emmanuel, and God being with us. It is more than the baby Jesus; it is Jesus the King and his coming again. What does that mean to you and me? How have we made room for him in our material world? Will we forget those families that we gave baskets to before the New Year even comes to a reality? We await a savior that calls us to embrace the gospel, the Good News that Jesus has planted in our hearts.

If that rings true in your hearts, then this is a time to rejoice and give thanks to our Lord and Savior. There is no greater gift to receive than Jesus' love flowing in our lives and then rushing out of us into the world. We may receive marvelous gifts this Christmas season, but they pale in comparison to the gift of Christ's peace and love. We have all been called by name, and we belong to God. It can't get any better than that. I personally am waiting for a deeper sense of gratitude for what Christ has placed in my life. I pray that I may humbly embrace the seasons of Advent and Christmas with a renewed spirit that warms my heart to do a better job of being Christ to others. My wish for each of you is to find Jesus in one another and give thanks for the many blessings he has given you, no matter how small or big. God bless each of you.

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

Father Don West
Pastor

From the Business Manager



I want to start this column with one final and huge thank you to all who helped put on our festival earlier this year. So many people dedicate time and energy to our festival. Thank you to the Festival Committee members, booth captains, 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. We use nearly 1/3 of the earnings from the festival on upkeep and improvements to our buildings and grounds. So, thank you once again!

We had a decent fiscal year from July 2016 through June 2017. 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 cleared our overall budget number. It was tight, but we did it. This year, we will need assistance from our parish to make our budget. Please consider your weekly or monthly offerings. When was the last time you increased your offering dollars? Just like any home or business, our expenses do not go away. When parishioners are out of town or on vacation, that doesn't mean our bills take a vacation! Please consider giving electronically. It saves time for you, and ensures that we have a more regular income that we can rely upon.

As you plan your Christmas list, could you include your parish? A Christmas donation to St. John helps us to care for our parishioners and others in the community. It allows us to do things outside of our budgeted items. Do you have any questions about giving? I'm always free to discuss contributions with you.

Now that I'm on a roll about giving, I would like to discuss something that no one wants to talk about. Do you know that about half of our parishioners do not give to our parish at all? If you are struggling financially, we understand! But what about the rest of you? Do you come to Mass and ignore the basket? I often think of our church as a service organization. We provide so many services to our parishioners. Sacraments, community service, activities...there is literally something happening here at St. John every single day of the week. Heating and cooling expenses, paying for staff, maintaining five buildings – we can't do these things if our parishioners do not assist. Would you expect service from your hair stylist, plumber or electrician for free? Our services should be meaningful to you as well. Participating in your parish with your time, talent and treasure should be an important part of parish life.

Please know that we work tirelessly to reduce or control our costs. 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. The Annual Parish Report for fiscal year 2016-17 is available online and will be given out after Masses in November as well. It is important to see where our income comes from and how it is spent. If you have questions about the 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 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.

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Account Name: St. John West Chester

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. Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas! I pray for you every day. Keep our parish in your prayers as well!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joan", written in a cursive style.

Joan Seibenick
Business Manager

A Day of Thanks from the Beginning



Thanksgiving Day is a holiday that is officially celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November in the United States. It was Abraham Lincoln, in 1864, who proclaimed it a national day of "Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." Lincoln's proclamation of what this national day stood for was nothing new. Its true origins stem from those first pilgrims giving thanks to God for the blessings they had. The event that Americans commonly call the "First Thanksgiving" was celebrated by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in the New World in October 1621. The feast actually lasted three days and was attended by approximately 90

Native Americans and 53 Pilgrims. The colonists in the new world at that time were accustomed to regularly celebrating "thanksgivings" or days of prayer thanking God for blessings. However, this one, and thus subsequent years to follow at harvest time, became a special time of thanks.

Two colonists known as William Bradford and Edward Winslow gave personal accounts of these days of thanksgiving. One was written regarding the 1621 feast, and another regarding an account two years later in 1623. These two men attest to why these celebrations were held and to whom to give thanks. Winslow writes:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labor...And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

Two years later referring to that day of thanks, Bradford writes:

"And afterwards the Lord sent them such seasonable showers, with interchange of fair warm weather as, through His blessing, caused a fruitful and liberal harvest, to their no small comfort and rejoicing. For which mercy, in time convenient, they also set apart a day of thanksgiving... By this time harvest was come, and instead of famine now God gave them plenty ... for which they blessed God."

Thanksgiving Day can sometimes get away from us pretty quickly. We tend to work in our time with family and friends around the sales that now go into effect on Thanksgiving night for Black Friday. We can also become wrapped up in getting out the Christmas decorations, getting those up and swiftly moving right into the Christmas season, rather than stopping for a moment and really giving the day what it deserves: a complete day of thanks. Let's not have Thanksgiving get away from us this year. Remember, back to its roots, why we have this day and why we give our "beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens", and all of those around us, a great big "thanks!"

Thanks be to God for all of you and for all you do.

Scott

Scott Steinke
Pastoral Associate of Liturgical Ministry

Giving Thanks

We all have that one friend, family member or coworker. You know who I mean: The one who is constantly whining about everything. He or she is the one you avoid in the hallway. You often ignore his/her phone calls or you pretend to be busy when you hear him/her entering your office. No one loves a complainer. But, aren't we all a bit whiney? As humans, I feel that we somehow find it much easier to complain about what we don't have or about the lack of character in others (not ourselves, of course). We like to complain about the weather, politics and sports. Have you read Facebook or Twitter lately? Is it full of positivity?

As we enter November, I can't help but think of the things for which I am thankful. Maybe we should try to think of the season of thanks every month! As I do my walking upstairs in Favret Hall every day, I am praying for everyone on my prayer list (and always for my son to finish college someday!). Today, as I walked upstairs it dawned on me...I'm always asking God to fix things or people. I need to tell him, "thank you" more often! I decided that every day during my walk I will now thank God for at least one thing.

What are the things in our lives that make us thankful? I am grateful for my family and friends. I am grateful when parishioners' giving is equal to or greater than our monthly bills and when they volunteer for our activities and ministries. I am grateful to have a nice home with heat and food in my cupboard. I am thankful for all four of my dogs (even though I do admit that I whine about the amount of dog hair from time to time). I am so blessed! I'm sure you have many things you are thankful for as well. Try to share those with God when you pray.

Did you know that living in gratitude not only increases your personal happiness, but it also increases the happiness of those around you? Think about that friend or family member you try to avoid. If that person started being more gracious and thankful, how would that make you feel? Take time to assess your thankful level this month. Start telling people "thank you" for everything that they do. Living a thankful life is one of the best ways to tell God that you appreciate all that he has done for you!



Happy THANKSgiving!

Joan Seibenick
Business Manager

Come, Dear Christ, Your World Awaits

*Come, dear Christ, your world awaits.
Speak aloud. Incarnate Word.
Longing earth anticipates;
Let your cry for peace be heard.*

*Morning Star with diamond fire,
Shine in radiance through our night.
Urgent now with hope's desire
yearning peoples seek your light.*

*Open heavens and rain down dew.
Shower justice on the earth.
Parched and troubled lands, renew
By a righteous Savior's birth.*

*Silent in the Virgin's womb,
God in full divinity,
Come to fill each lonely room
By your blest nativity.*

*Come, dear Christ, with tender care,
Here in eager hearts to dwell.
Answer now our Advent prayer:
Come to us Emmanuel.*

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, 200; copyright 2002, GIA Publications, Inc.



This hymn text by my favorite hymn text writer gives us some things to think about this Advent season. We are all aware of how soon the secular world is ready to roll out the Christmas season, but as Catholics, we know that the anticipation is the best part of any event. The Christmas season starts on Christmas! That's why we don't sing Christmas carols until Christmas, and we sing them for the entire Christmas season, through the baptism of Christ, and long after the radio stops playing them. Some of my favorite church music is Advent music. We have a very short Advent season this year as the fourth Sunday of Advent is also Christmas Eve. Let's make the most of it.

The Church teaches us that we await Christ in three ways: The readings each Sunday await Christ in the biblical world, every Sunday we await Christ in the assembly at Mass in the Eucharist, and we await the second coming of Christ at the end of days.

We await Christ's peace and justice in this troubled world. Can we be models of peace and justice to the world? It starts with us! We are so mired in the cynical, judgmental society of social media and political rhetoric. Let the Advent season be a time of prayer and quiet stillness.

Don't let the business of the season get to you. Take time to be with the family in a meaningful way. Come to the Advent Reconciliation service, attend Mass every week, and even try to attend Mass during the week! Enjoy the music (and join the music ministry!)

Come dear Christ, answer our Advent prayer: Come to us Emmanuel!

Lynn Meisberger Lynn Meisberger
Pastoral Associate of Music Ministry

Update from St. Gabriel Consolidated School

By: Nicole Brainard, Principal



Saint Gabriel

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, many of us take time to pause and consider all we have for which to be grateful. The St. Gabriel Consolidated School Community, which includes the Parish Community of St. John the Evangelist, continues to be abundantly blessed. Our students and families, many of whom are St. John parishioners, share their light and lives with us. We are on an extremely interesting journey together as we grow in knowledge and faith each day. Our students continue to excel both in and out of our classrooms. Thanks to the generosity of members of our community, changes to our school and building, which were not possible before, are quickly becoming realities. Thank you to all in the St. John Community who have given of themselves to help make your parish school the wonderful institution that it is.

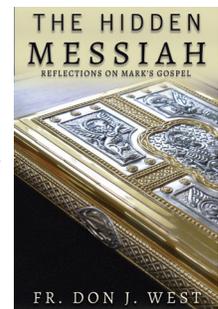
Our children recognize their blessings. As the critical needs began to arise as a result of the devastating hurricanes, they rose to the occasion and worked to share their abundance with those struggling from the devastation. The St. Gabriel Consolidated School Community participated in the #StudentToStudent initiative sponsored by the National Catholic Education Association. It is through this initiative that Catholic school students raised funds and collected necessary items for other Catholic schools and students struggling in the aftermath of the storms. We pray that this spirit of philanthropy continues to take root within them so they continue to spread around their blessings with "attitudes of gratitude."

Following Thanksgiving, we will begin our Advent celebrations. This year, we will be focusing on teaching the children the importance of the signs, symbols and gestures of Advent, such as the Advent wreath, the colors of the candles and vestments, and the symbolism of fire to name a few. Our crèche will be displayed with an empty manger as we await the birth of the Savior. As always, we look forward to the arrival of our Advent Elf, Snowflake, who will journey to our school in the hopes of catching the children working hard to prepare themselves for the birth of Jesus.

May your blessings you give and receive be many!

Purchase Father Don's New Book, *The Hidden Messiah: Reflections on Mark's Gospel* today!

These gospel "conversations" help us to understand what Jesus offers us and to accept the challenge to hear the calling to be the people Christ calls us to be; people who will share God's love with others. These reflective books on the Gospel of Mark will make great Christmas gifts, so be sure to pick up a few in our Parish Office!



Congrats!

To Those Who Received the Sacrament of Marriage:

5-28-17
John Chinh Nhan Nguyen & Kim Bao Truong

6-24-17
Kyle Williamson & Taylor Wuest

9-9-17
James J. Fontaine & Sarah A. Neton

9-22-17
Joseph Oakley & Briana Molfetta

10-7-17
Brandon Notar & Rebecca Trentman

To Those Who Received the Sacrament of Baptism:

9-2-17
Willow Anne Hudak

9-2-17
Aria Ninna Bulak

9-2-17
Paige Marie Boettcher

9-2-17
Aiden Thomas Hudak

9-2-17
Trevor Donald Huda

9-3-17
John Mark Roth III

9-3-17
Owen Alexander
Shoemaker

9-24-17
Gwendolyn Olivia
Lien

10-8-17
John Timothy Liston

10-8-17
Nora Ann Meierdiercks

Our Prayers and Sympathy go out to ...

August

- Christine Eloon on the death of her father, Charles Wamsley
- The family of Stephen Cornell

September

- The family of Joseph Weinle
- Dorothy Straka on the death of her husband, Richard

October

- Jim and Bob Meyer on the death of their sister, Sue





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