

Fr. Dave's Den: **One of the greatest needs** we face as human beings is the need to be reconciled. In a world of conflict and division it is heartwarming to know that we can, with God's help, find peace. The Church offers us this peace in and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This Sacrament, also known as Confession and the Rite of Penance, affords us the opportunity to let go of our sinful ways and begin anew. Nowhere else in life can we encounter this grace-filled newness. **Article 7** of the Introduction to the Rite of Penance underlines the necessity and benefit of this Sacrament:

“Just as the wound of sin is varied and multiple in the life of individuals and of the community, so too the healing which penance provides is varied. Those who by grave sin have withdrawn from the communion of love with God are called back in the Sacrament of Penance to the life they have lost. And those who through daily weakness fall into venial sins draw strength from a repeated celebration of penance to gain the full freedom of the Children of God.”

Of all the preparations we can make to ready our hearts and homes for the coming of Jesus, none is more important than celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This week there will be many opportunities to avail ourselves to this healing sacrament of peace and love. Monday evening, December 13, at 7:00 PM, there will be at least three priests at St. Gerard Majella. On Tuesday, December 14, at 7:00 PM, there will be at least four priests available for Reconciliation at St. Bartholomew. Finally, on Wednesday, December 15, at 7:00 PM, there will be at least three priests at St. Susanna. The final scheduled time for reconciliation will be Saturday, December 18, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. There will be only one priest available for this session. You may also call and make an appointment with me for reconciliation. **Holy Hour** will take place this Wednesday, December 15, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

As you begin to make your family plans for Christmas, here is the Mass schedule: Friday, December 24, Mass will be at 5:00 PM and 10:00 PM. Saturday, December 25, at 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM. Please note that there is no anticipated vigil Mass on Christmas evening, December 25, for Sunday, December 26. There will however be an additional Mass at 12:30 PM as well as the usual 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM Masses.

Decorating for the Church will take place Thursday, December 23 at 6:30 PM. All are welcome to participate in this beautiful custom. Also, we are planning to prepare and light luminaries for Christmas Eve. If you wish to offer some assistance in this regard, please call Patty Lucchetti at the rectory at 412-242-3374.

Finally, thanks to the dear Sisters of St. Francis for allowing us to use their monstrance for Holy Hour until our monstrance is refinished. Our monstrance needed to be cleaned and repaired. This project is estimated to cost \$2000.00. Anyone who wishes to contribute to the refurbishing of the monstrance which houses the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration may call the rectory at 412-242-3374. We also have sent away the two candle stands to be refinished as well. Their cost is not expected to be as much as the monstrance.

Have a hope-filled week!

HONORS STUDENTS

Please join us in congratulating the following honors students from the parish:

Serra Catholic: Alex Verosky

Central Catholic: Honors - Anthony Angiulli, Ryan Kovacs, Gino Macioce, Charles Maher, and Douglas Sims IV. High Honors - Aric Bush, Andrew DeRubeis, Daniel Donahoe, Joshua Martin, David Pina, Andrew Pirollo, Joseph Ranallo, Chad Restori, and Andrew Thornburg.

Oakland Catholic: Honors - Erin Brennan. High Honors - Amanda Calhoun. Highest Honors - Hilary Fello and Elise Hawthorne.

Mount Alvernia: Honors - Jessica Hon. High Honors - Stephanie Ranallo and Amy Yonick.

School News with Mrs. Fleet

Please remember that all progress reports are due back on Monday, December 13.

Market Day pick up is scheduled for Tuesday afternoon from 5:15 PM to 6:00 PM, in the gym, and there is a PTG meeting on Tuesday evening, at 6:30 PM in the library.

On Friday, December 17, our sixth graders and Mrs. Duell will help plan our 10:00 AM Mass. All are welcome.

We are still accepting registrations for students in grades preschool through eight. What better way to pass on your faith than a Catholic school education for your loved one? Please call the school at 412-242-2511 for further information.

BINGO

St. Bart's Monday Night Bingo is held every Monday in Helzlsouer Hall, starting at 7:00 PM.

A Respect Life Meditation

(Pope John Paul II - Evangelium Vitae #86) "By virtue of our sharing in Christ's royal mission, our support of human life must be accomplished through the service of charity, which finds expression in personal witness, various forms of volunteer work, social activity, and political commitment."

As we enter the new Church year, we pray that all members of Christ's Body will respond in love to the needs of those whose lives are endangered by abortion, euthanasia, child abuse, illness, or old age.

Life Teen - Leading Teens Closer to Christ

Thanks to everyone who bought pizza kits or cookie dough. Our fundraiser was even bigger than last year! Remember to pick up your orders next Saturday, December 18, in the Pastors Conference Room of the rectory between 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM. No deliveries will be available.

Next Saturday is also our Life Teen Christmas party. Teens, remember to bring your items for Lifeline! If any of you former "teens" are home for the holidays we would love to see you again! So if you're in town on December 18, why not join us at the Christmas party?

Religious Education News with Arlene Golden

Jesus said, "Blessed is everyone who believes in me!" (Matthew 11:6) Let us reflect on how Jesus has cured the ills in our lives.

Religious Education Classes: Children in grades kindergarten through eighth meet Sunday morning from 9:00 AM to 10:15 AM, in the school. Parents/guardians are reminded to call the catechetical office if their son or daughter will be absent.

Christmas Celebration: Students will celebrate Christmas with cookies and punch next Sunday. Parents/guardians are asked to donate a plate of cookies or some treat for the party.

Class Cancellation: In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, parents/guardians are reminded to tune to KDKA, WPXI-TV, or WTAE-TV for class cancellation.

Baptisms: Parents wishing to have their child baptized are to attend a class prior to scheduling the baptism. The next class is Tuesday, December 14, in room 206 of the school. Remember, godparents need to be practicing Catholics and if a member of another parish must have a letter of verification from their pastor.

CPR Class

The parish is going to be hosting another CPR class next year. On Sunday, February 20, 2005, at 12:00 noon, in the Pastors Conference Room, CPR classes will be held. Please watch the bulletin for more forthcoming details about learning this life-saving skill. You may call the rectory at 412-242-3374 to sign up.

Tour of Italy

Fr. Edward McCullough of the Diocese of Greensburg announces that a tour to Italy has been scheduled for April 3-13, 2005 in conjunction with the Holy Father's Year of the Eucharist. The tour will visit Rome, Vatican City, San Giovanni Rotondo (the tomb of St. Pio), Assisi, and sites of Eucharistic miracles at Lanciano, Alatria, and Bolsena. For a packet of detailed information, call 1800-242-0728, or fax 724-543-2938. You can write to St. Aloysius Church, 459 Ranch Road, Dunbar, Pa. 15431 or email Fr. Edward at: emccullough@dioceseofgreensburg.org.

Promises Fulfilled

Today's readings address the faithful one, the one who waits on God but may not feel God's presence. Every person who seeks God has at one time or another experienced the absence of God. Jesus himself cried out during his dark night of the soul.

The Epistle of James speaks to this. The author says that we must be as patient as the silent, fallow earth that awaits the slow, soaking rains of winter and the hard, necessary rains of spring. As the farmer is sure of the precious yield of the land, we can be sure of the precious yield of our patient waiting. God is never far away.

The messengers from John the Baptizer asked Jesus if he was the one whose coming John had announced. The messengers wanted to hear the answer that the imprisoned John already knew. Everything that John said was finally happening: because of Jesus, light shines in eyes; words of promise are received; people leap and dance.

The promise of Isaiah is fulfilled in Jesus. Wobbly knees and feeble hands are strong, the desert blooms, the savanna and steppe flower, the darkness is chased away.

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Treasures from our Tradition

We make transitions along life's journey, and search for meaning. Watch an infant take those first wobbly steps. Inevitably they are toward the arms of a dear one, and the gleeful smile and wordless laughter let us know that the baby understands that the whole world is renewed in an instant. Parents may see that wide-eyed smile again some years later as they flip car keys in the teenager's direction, and by God's grace at in-between moments of forgiveness and affirmation.

Sacraments open a window to the blessings of everyday life and help us claim their deep meaning. A voice from a fiery bush warned Moses to take off his shoes because he stood on "holy ground." Your first steps, your first word, taking your place at the family table, stirring to new love, forgiving and being forgiven: all of this is holy, laden with meaning, full of possibilities. Sacraments are not escape pods from the realities of the everyday; rather they invest us ever more deeply in life and recruit us for the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus. We take baby steps all our life long. In the world of sacrament, they are always directed toward the arms of a loving God, and always on the common holy ground of a community's life.

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Mass Intentions



MON., December 13 - St. Lucy

10:00 A.M. Frances & Joseph Triolo (Children & Grandchildren)

7:00 P.M. Reconciliation at St. Gerard Majella

TUES., December 14 - St. John of the Cross

10:00 A.M. Norma DePaul (Husband)

7:00 P.M. Reconciliation at St. Bart's

WED., December 15 - Advent Weekday

7:00 P.M. Holy Hour

7:00 P.M. Reconciliation at St. Susanna

THURS., December 16 - Advent Weekday

10:00 A.M. John Gilmartin (Family)

FRI., December 17 - Late Advent Weekday

10:00 A.M. Bob Smith (Sister & Brother)

SAT., December 18 - Late Advent Weekday

10:00 A.M. Edward C. Wirth (Wirth & Dawson Families)

11:00 A.M. Confessions heard until 12:00 noon

5:00 P.M. Louis & Anna Chianese (Family)

SUN., December 19 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

8:00 A.M. People of the Parish

10:30 A.M. Anna Marie Thomas (Daughter Marie & Family)

Please remember in your prayers the sick, shut-ins, and hospitalized members of the Parish.

Prayers are also requested for the faithful departed:

Patricia Pirozzi

Last weekend we welcomed in baptism:

Catherine Marie Bonnar and Christian David Dye

Weekly Offering: Total: \$8581.45 Env. Dist.: 1603 Env. Used: 615
Scrip Program Approximate Profit: \$431.28

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

You are invited to come out and help to prepare the sanctuary for Christmas. We will be decorating on Thursday, December 23, 2004 at 6:30 PM. All are welcome to join us for this festive and joyful evening of fellowship.

