

**Fr. Dave's Den:** By now we all no doubt have heard many of the traditional Christmas carols. And, hopefully, we not only have heard them, but also we have begun to sing them. Did you ever stop to consider all of the beautiful songs that are so much a part of the Christmas tradition? The titles alone serve as a wonderful meditation. Even the secular carols can become moments of prayer.

One of my favorite songs, apart from *O Holy Night* and *Mary, Did You Know* is Andy Williams' rendition of *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year*. There's just something about that song that captures my heart. I think it is the whole idea of wonder.

The dictionary defines wonder as "A cause of astonishment or admiration." Some of the synonyms often associated with wonder include amazement, marvel, surprise, and miracle. These days are all of that and more.

And yet, so often in our humanness we allow the weariness and worries of life to douse the wonder. If we pause to look and listen, I think we will discover that this is indeed the most wonderful time of the year. My prayer for everyone this week is that in spite of the chaos that pervades our lives we may all come to recognize that this is the most wonderful time of the year. May we continue to pray together the beautiful words from our liturgy, "Lord, protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

This season calls us not only to embrace wonder but also patience. This patience is seemingly always challenged when it comes to cards and packages, regardless if we are sending or receiving. Some years ago, Bishop Raymond Boland of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri, wrote the following prayer for impatient customers and stressed out postal employees:

"God our Father, may everything we do be first-class. Imprint your own loving zip code upon our hearts so that we may never go astray. Provide in your gracious Providence special handling for those of us who are fragile and keep us in one piece. And when our days draw to a close and we are marked 'Return to sender,' be there to greet us at Heaven's door, so that nobody may ever say, 'Unknown at this address.'

Amen."

Just a reminder that Saturday, December 25, is Christmas and a Holy Day of Obligation. The Masses for Christmas are Friday, December 24, at 5:00 PM and 10:00 PM. The 5:00 PM Mass will involve the children's choir and bell choir. The adult choir will sing carols at 9:30 PM before the 10:00 PM. Christmas Day Masses are at 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM. Sunday, December 26, is the Feast of the Holy Family. Please note that there will not be a Saturday evening vigil on December 25 for December 26. In addition to the 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM Masses, we received special permission from the Diocese to add a 12:30 PM Mass on Sunday, December 26.

Please keep in mind that there will be a Diocesan mandated second collection on Christmas Day for Christmas Charities. Thank you for your generosity. As has been the custom, in lieu of Christmas gifts, the parish will have a special adult Appreciation Dinner for everyone who volunteers in any church ministry. The dinner will take place on Friday, January 28, 2004. The evening will include dinner, beverages, dessert, door prizes, and a DJ. To make your reservation, please call the rectory. Remember, this is for adults only and you must be affiliated with a particular work or ministry.

Also, there are no more confessions scheduled before Christmas. And because January 1 falls on a Saturday, confession will not resume until January 8.

Finally, what did Adam say on the day before Christmas? "It's Christmas, Eve!" How 'bout one more. What's the favorite Christmas carol of new parents? *Silent Night*.

Have a wonderful week!

### Correction!

Please note that two names were inadvertently omitted from last week's high school honors lists. Anne Palermo, attending Oakland Catholic, achieved high honor status. Christine Gameos, also attending Oakland Catholic, achieved highest honor status.



School News with Mrs. Fleet

Our white envelopes should be distributed on Monday, December 20.

Please keep our sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, chaperones, and teachers in prayer as they travel to the Gingerbread House in downtown Pittsburgh to present the St. Bartholomew School donation to Children's Hospital on Tuesday, December 21.

On Wednesday, December 22, the school celebrates a holiday sweatshirt dress down day.

A Christmas prayer service, led by our fifth grade students and Miss Manzo, will be held at 9:00 AM in Church on December 22. Please feel free to join us for this special liturgy.

There is an early dismissal on Wednesday, December 22, at 11:15 AM. No lunch will be served this day. Extended Care will be available for both AM and PM sessions.

There are no classes or Extended Day sessions on Thursday, December 23, through and including Friday, December 31, 2004. This is due to our Christmas vacation.

School resumes on Monday, January 3, 2004.

All of us at St. Bartholomew School would like to wish you a very merry and happy Christmas holiday season. Please know that we keep you in our thoughts and prayers every day. We are so blessed to have such an excellent Catholic school in our parish, along with such awesome parishioners as you to support our journey. God bless you really good!

**BINGO**

Bingo will be held this Monday, as well as Monday, December 26, and Monday, January 3, at 7:00 PM in Helzlsouer Hall. This Monday, Santa will be stopping by St. Bart's Bingo to hand out gifts!

**A Respect Life Meditation**

(Luke 1:15, 41, 44) "...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb... When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb for joy."

We pray that every human person already born will recognize that a newly-created baby developing in its mother's womb is also a real human person just like John the Baptist, as described by Luke.

Religious Education News with Arlene Golden

*"Joseph did what the angel told him and took Mary into his home as his wife." (Matthew 1:24)*

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 this Sunday. Thank you to the parents/guardians who donated the treats.

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.

*There will be no classes for the next two Sundays due to Christmas vacation.*

*MOPS*

Please join us at MOPS on our journey through motherhood. Find friendship and support among other women through sharing, discussion, and creative activities while our children are cared for in a nurturing environment. MOPS is for moms with children who are newborns through kindergarten age. The group meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month September through May, from 9:15 AM to 11:30 AM, at Hebron United Presbyterian Church on Frankstown Road. Call Sue at 412-244-8085 or Judy at 412-371-1512 for more information.

*Life Teen - Leading Teens Closer to Christ*

Thanks to all the parents who provided such wonderful food and goodies for our Christmas party. A good time was had by all teens and Core alike! Also, thanks to Sr. Dorothy for helping us with this year's Christmas donations to Lifeline crisis pregnancy center.



## Emmanuel

To name someone or something means that we have a relationship with that person. Family names identify us with our heritage; nicknames denote familiarity or a special bond. In the Old Testament, the meaning of a name ran deep. It identified one's mission, even one's very being.

The amazing name "Emmanuel" was first uttered by Isaiah as he described to the frightened King Ahaz the promised one who would come to redeem the people. Emmanuel is not a frightening philosophical name, such as Omnipotent, Omniscient, Almighty. It does not connote distance and transcendence. It does not generate reverential fear. The name Emmanuel implies closeness and intimacy and compassion. Emmanuel is the name given to the one who is coming. It means "God is with us." God is entrusted to the care of a virgin, who will bear this child. Only God would be so compassionate to draw so near, to be so available and vulnerable. Only God could love this well.

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### Treasures from our Tradition

How many languages do you know? Most Americans might say they have a primary language, can follow the basics of another encountered in school or in the workplace, and maybe know the barest elements of a third. Yet nearly everyone is fluent in languages of symbol and ritual, languages that transcend the spoken word and may perhaps communicate more clearly. A dance, the delights of the table, the thrill of sport, the power of a painting, a shared silence on a surf-washed beach or under a desert sky, a burst of delighted applause, all communicate without a single word.

Sacrament empowers fluency in these languages. A little girl returning from Mass where a baby had been baptized was asked to summarize her day thus far. "I went to church, and some little baby became my brother." That's far more accurate than the adult's remark, "There was a baptism at Mass today." When we celebrate sacrament, Christ is always calling us into deeper fluency with the languages beyond speech. Sacraments open our senses to the presence of God precisely so we can respond to the depth of that love more fully.

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### Mass Intentions



#### **MON., December 20 - Late Advent Weekday**

10:00 A.M. Sara Sciuлло (Daughter)

#### **TUES., December 21 - St. Peter Canisius**

10:00 A.M. Mr. & Mrs. Gaylord Hegedus (Jean Hoburg)

#### **WED., December 22 - Late Advent Weekday**

7:00 P.M. Holy Hour

#### **THURS., December 23 - St. John of Kanty**

10:00 A.M. Richard & Thomas Neal (Family)

6:30 P.M. Church Decorating

#### **FRI., December 24 - Vigil of Christmas**

10:00 A.M. George & Mary Bernadette Bonnar (Gene & Mary Kunak)

5:00 P.M. People of the Parish

10:00 A.M. People of the Parish

#### **SAT., December 25 - Nativity of the Lord**

8:00 A.M. People of the Parish

10:30 A.M. People of the Parish

#### **SUN., December 26 - Holy Family**

8:00 A.M. People of the Parish

10:30 A.M. Anthony Bruens (Lloyd & Floris Van Horn)

12:30 P.M. Albert Wheeler (Wife & Daughter)

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

Prayers are also requested for the faithful departed:

**Clare Ruyechan**

Weekly Offering: Total: \$8826.50 Env. Dist.: 1603 Env. Used: 671

Scrip Program Approximate Profit: \$614.00

The second collection at the Christmas Masses will be for Christmas Charities.

## **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.

### **St. Bart's Women's Guild**

The Women's Guild thanks all the women who joined us for our Christmas party. We also thank Chef Beck and Ginny and the Ladies who worked so hard to put it together. You have our gratitude!