

Fr. Dave's Den: There used to be a popular song, "We've only just begun... to live." Well, even though Christmas Day has passed we have only just begun to celebrate the glorious feast of Christmas. From now through the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on January 9, 2005, we celebrate Christmas and the Word made flesh. For Christmas is more than a day. Christmas is a season.

Once upon a time a group of students were doing a Christmas play. The purpose of the play was to show the radiance of Jesus. Inside the manger there was an electric bulb strategically placed. All of the stage lights were to be turned off so that only the brightness of the manger could be seen. At the appropriate time all lights went out. Silence was broken when one of the shepherds said in a loud whisper, "Hey! You turned off Jesus!" As we continue to bask in the glow of Christmas let us be sure to keep the light of Christ shining in our hearts and homes.

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. The image of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is one of the most beautiful and serene in all of the Christian tradition. On this feast we are to behold this picture of holiness and faith. St. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, presents a job description and/or a mission statement for family life. Paul states, "Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If one has a grievance against another, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection."

When we wear love in our hearts we are not only family, but we are also holy. Love allows us to do many things. May the Lord fill your hearts with his love.

On this feast of the Holy Family, please join me in saluting our Sister Dorothy and her religious community - the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth - on their feast day. Today, December 26, is also Sr. Dorothy's birthday. Happy birthday, Sister Dorothy!

There will be no Holy Hour this Wednesday, December 29. Holy Hour will resume Wednesday, January 5, 2005.

Saturday, January 1, 2005, is not only New Year's Day, but also the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of

God. Because it falls on a Saturday, it is not a Holy Day of Obligation. There will be Mass at 10:00 AM. There will be no confessions that day. There will, however be Mass at 5:00 PM for January 2, 2005 - the Epiphany of the Lord.

Thanks to everyone who made our celebration of Christmas Day so special. Of particular note, I wish to acknowledge Will Smith and our adult choir, children's choir, Wanda Weber and the Bell Choir, as well as our decorating committee inside and outside of Church.

What are you doing New Year's Eve? Why don't you come to the St. Bart's party which begins at 8:00 PM. The cost is \$15.00 per person and includes a delicious buffet dinner with ham, pork, kielbasa, sauerkraut, and scalloped potatoes. There will also be refreshments, dancing, and door prizes. Monday, December 27, is the final day for reservations. To make a reservation, please call the rectory.

Let us continue to celebrate the joy of Christmas!

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to the players of Central Catholic High School on their successful football season. Central won back to back WPIAL Championships at Heinz Field, and went on to win the State Championship in Hershey Park on December 11, 2004. Alumni, family, and friends of Central are encouraged to email their congratulations to the players and coaches for an outstanding season. Emails will be attached to a banner and presented to the team. You may send emails to: CCVikings2004@yahoo.com by January 3, 2005.

Family

The concept of family is so strong, it gets called into service for every kind of human gathering. We speak of religious communities as families. We speak of the family of nations; the Christian family; the parish family. Whenever the word is used, we imagine an ideal. We imagine warmth and love and generosity. We all want this to be the story of our family of origin. We all want the families we found to be these centers of mutual love and responsibility. We all know what we want, what we long for, what we hope and pray to build. This is a good start.

School News with Mrs. Fleet

All of us at St. Bartholomew School would like to extend our warmest holiday wishes to all of you. You are an integral part of our continued success in providing an excellent education to our school age children.

May the coming New Year bring all of you the best of life, health, happiness, and love. Peace to you and all of your dear ones.

BINGO

Remember that Bingo will be held this Monday, as well as Monday, January 3, at 7:00 PM in Helzlsouer Hall.

A Respect Life Meditation

(Matthew 1:20-21) "Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she had conceived this child. She is to have a son, and you are to name him Jesus...." We pray that all families will look to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as role models in fulfilling their own God-given family responsibilities.

Treasures from our Tradition

We are in the season of the Incarnation, the mystery of God's love poured out in Christ's birth. The word derives from the Latin *carnis* meaning "flesh." Throughout history, some Christians have distrusted the "flesh," and stressed a hatred of this world and its pleasures. Perhaps they have not paid enough attention to how "embodied" the sacraments are. One third-century author put it plainly in an image that may alarm diet-conscious Americans, explaining that we wash the body so the soul can be cleansed, that we anoint the body so the soul can be strengthened, and that we eat the body and blood of Christ so that "the soul can fatten on God."

Catholics "get" that God is revealed in this world. The sacraments use the "stuff" of creation: water and oil; the senses of the body, touch and taste and smell. We use the things of this world rightly. After all, God's love poured out into human flesh means the world has eternal value. Why else would Jesus describe the kingdom to come as a teeming city or a marriage banquet? Catholics are realists, and nowhere is that more evident than when we gather for a sacrament.

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Religious Education News with Arlene Golden

Mary and Joseph did what God asked them to do. They protected Jesus from harm. Families are asked to protect and care for one another in their homes and as they go about their everyday 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. Classes resume Sunday, January 9, 2005.

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 next Sunday for Christmas vacation. Classes will resume Sunday, January 9, 2005.

Life Teen - Leading Teens Closer to Christ

Life Teen will be meeting again on Saturday, January 15. This will give everyone some time to spend with family and friends. See you in 2005!

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS NEEDED

The present Allegheny County Jail population is almost 2,400 mostly non-violent offenders, with more than 20,000 inmates passing through the jail per year. At intake, each person is asked to list his religion. One quarter of those who respond list "Catholic." This is the largest single denomination listed. Each Sunday, volunteers from around the Diocese serve as Eucharistic Ministers for inmates who are not permitted to attend Mass. More Eucharistic Ministers are needed. If you are interested in more information or in volunteering one Sunday morning a month to serve in this jail ministry, you may call one of two gentleman who coordinate the Catholic volunteers at the jail. Mr. Jim Ruck can be reached at 412-825-9425 and Mr. Owen Dwyer can be reached at 724-935-6865.

Christmas Season Reflection

What does Christmas celebrate? Christmas celebrates a human event, an encounter with Jesus' humanity. Christmas recognizes how the God who created human beings to know, love, and serve realized that human beings could not know, love, or serve anything they couldn't wrap their arms around. Thus, God became a human being in Jesus. As a human, Jesus was born, grew, worked, sweated, suffered, laughed, cried, and died as all humans do. In his body, he knew the smell of bread baking and the warm breath of animals. He felt the heat of the sun and the touch of a friend's hand. He woke up to the cooing of doves and was lulled to sleep by the slap of water on the side of a fishing boat. He heard the cry of a widow whose son had died. He tasted new wine, the dust of the road, and charbroiled fish shared with the apostles. He saw the world around him, and he looked into people's hearts.

On Christmas, the Church celebrates Jesus' experience of being a human being in a unique, concrete manner. More than that, we make memorial of that experience in our own life situation. At its core, Christmas celebrates the meaning of the experience of being human: pain and pleasure, suffering and joy, dying and rising to new life. That is why Christmas is such a hospitable feast. This hospitality is rooted in what it means to be a new creation, to be open to the stranger in our midst, and to be open to new experiences. Ultimately, Christmas means being willing to recognize that our everyday living is a sign of what will come. Why? Because the Word of God has taken on bone and blood and has entered into our human actions, experiences, and lives. Because of Christmas, our faith-filled eyes can see that our humanity now is our salvation.

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Mass Intentions



MON., December 27 - St. John

10:00 A.M. Elmer Herold (Family)

TUES., December 28 - The Holy Innocents

10:00 A.M. Landy Troiano (The Lunch Bunch)

WED., December 29 - Fifth Day of Christmas

7:00 P.M. *No Holy Hour*

THURS., December 30 - Sixth Day of Christmas

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

FRI., December 31 - Seventh Day of Christmas

10:00 A.M. Anthony & Edith D'Andrea (Margaret D'Andrea)

SAT., January 1 - Mary, Mother of God

10:00 A.M. Leon Welgs (Family)

5:00 P.M. DeLuca Family (Gino & Mary Jean DeLuliis)

SUN., January 2 - Epiphany

8:00 A.M. People of the Parish

10:30 A.M. Eva & John Valicenti (Johanna & Maria Valicenti & Family)

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

Prayers are also requested for the faithful departed:

James Tishko, father of parishioner Jeff Tishko

Weekly offering and Scrip totals for the weekends of December 19 and 26, 2004, and January 2, 2005, will be published in the January 9 bulletin.

LOVE

For generations, various cultures regarded family life merely as a utilitarian necessity. Sirach introduces honor and respect. For Jews and Christians alike, the value of family goes even further. The family is seen as the indispensable school where love is learned. Paul addresses the Colossians and offers a list of virtues that make for a solid and happy church. These values also make for a happy family at ease with itself and its members: mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness. As a capstone, Paul urges love, which brings all of these domestic virtues to perfection.

Paul seems to be on a roll as he lauds the virtues of the church at Colossae. With such heartfelt virtues, it is no wonder Paul bursts into song. Who wouldn't? It's clear that the center of the church is love. It is clear that no matter how far from home the members travel, the heart remains and all the members are connected by the gravitational pull of mutual love, a love first learned in family life.

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