

Fr. Dave's Den: Thanks to all those who participated - either in person or through their prayerful support - in the recent consultation for envisioning parish ministry with fewer priests. Our parish consultation resulted in a focus on shared ministries such as sacramental preparation and catechetical programs (CCD, RCIA). We will be submitting our report to the dean, Fr. Mike Decewicz, who will be organizing the next stage in the consultation process. This next stage, which will take place on January 17, 2005, involves neighboring parishes sharing the results of their consultation and looking for ways in which they can work together in a common effort. At this point, our parish will be working with the parishes of St. Gerard Majella, St. Irenaeus, St. Joseph, and St. Susanna. Watch the bulletin for further developments. In the meantime, continue to pray not only for this important effort, but also for an increase in vocations to the priesthood.

Wednesday, December 8, 2004, is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, a Holy Day of Obligation. There will be an anticipated Mass on Tuesday, December 7, at 5:00 PM and a 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM on Wednesday, December 8.

One hundred and fifty years ago Pope Pius IX declared: "The Most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin." Essentially, this dogma holds that Mary never knew sin. Article 492 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

"The splendor of an entirely unique holiness by which Mary is enriched from the first instant of her conception comes wholly from Christ: she is redeemed in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her son. The Father blessed Mary more than any other exalted person in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly plans and chose her in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love."

On this 150th anniversary of the proclamation of this dogma of the Immaculate Conception may

Mary, who is full of grace, "pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. AMEN."

Because of the Holy Day Mass at 7:00 PM, there will be no Holy Hour this week. Holy Hour will resume next Wednesday, December 15, 2004.

"Prepare the way of the Lord!" As we make preparations for the coming of Jesus and Christmas we are all encouraged to make a good confession. Reconciliation is held every Saturday from 11:00 AM until 12:00 noon or by appointment. Next week the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated on Tuesday evening, December 14, at 7:00 PM with at least four priests. Reconciliation will also be offered Monday, December 13, at 7:00 PM in St. Gerard's Church and on Wednesday, December 15, at 7:00 PM in St. Susanna's Church. The last day for scheduled confessions will be Saturday, December 18, 2004, at 11:00 AM.

Do not forget to do your Christmas shopping with us. In addition to the Christmas CD, featuring our children's choir, adult choir, Stephanie Hon, Will Smith, and myself, there are St. Bartholomew tee-shirts, sweatshirts, and caps available. All proceeds benefit St. Bartholomew Parish. And please keep in mind our expanded Great Lakes Scrip Program which made the world a lot smaller. Remember you can satisfy all of your shopping needs for the holidays without leaving Penn Hills.

Finally, congratulations to Katie Palermo and Tiffany Shento, who were honored at the Medallion Ball on November 26, by Bishop Wuerl. Both Katie and Tiffany are graduates of St. Bart's School. Have a wonderful week!

Give a Gift at Christmas

During Advent, you may share the spirit of Jesus' birth by giving a gift to a needy person through St. Bartholomew's Giving Tree. Pick a tag from the Giving Tree and buy a special gift for the person described. Wrap the gift and place the tag from the tree on the outside of the package, then place the gift under the Giving Tree by December 12, 2004. The Ladies of Charity will deliver your gift to the special person you selected.

Thank you for your giving spirit!

School News with Mrs. Fleet

On Monday, December 6, progress reports will be distributed to students. Also on Monday, we will celebrate St. Nicholas Day. Keep your shoes clean!

Avon orders may be picked up on Monday, December 6, or Tuesday, December 7, between the hours of 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM, at school.

Please join us as we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception at the 10:00 AM Mass on Wednesday, December 8. Mr. Heid and our seventh graders are helping to plan our liturgy. Boys are to wear dress shirts and ties.

The Sarris candy orders are scheduled for pick up on Wednesday, December 8, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM in Room 116.

Our school Geography Bee for grades five through eight will be held on Thursday, December 9.

On Friday, December 10, we will have red, white, and green holiday dress up day.

We are still in need of copy paper. It could even be used on one side, as long as it is elementary school friendly.

Also, please continue to save Box Tops for Education, Campbell's product labels, and Shop 'n Save receipts. Your help is greatly appreciated.

BINGO

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

A Respect Life Meditation

(Isaiah 44:24) "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb. I am the Lord who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens; when I spread out the earth, who was with me?"

We pray that as we prepare for the birth of our Redeemer, we will come to the realization that each of us, from conception until natural death, is completely dependent on the providence and mercy of God.

WOMEN'S GUILD CHRISTMAS PARTY

The St. Bart's Women's Guild will have a Christmas party on December 7, 2004, in Helzlsouer Hall. Chef Beck will cater a ham dinner starting at 6:00 PM. The price is \$7.00 and reservations may be made by calling Katherine at 412-798-9819. The Guild invites all women of the parish to join the festivities.

Religious Education News with Arlene Golden

John the Baptist said, "Prepare the way for the coming of God!" (Matthew 3:6) The children and catechists are preparing the way for Jesus by studying the saints, prayers, reconciliation, and Advent.

There is a "Protecting God's Children" meeting at Our Lady of Joy Parish on Wednesday, December 8, at 7:45 PM, following 7:00 PM Mass. Anyone who has regular contact with children is required by the Diocese to attend one of these meetings.

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.

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.

Confirmation: Any parent/guardian who may have missed the Confirmation meeting is asked to contact Arlene Golden at the Religious Education office.

Masses Sent to the Seminary

The following mass intentions were sent to the Seminary to be said during the month of November:

- Giovanna Serrao (Pat & Beverly O'Toole)
- Francesco & Nicolette DiNardo (Nino & Ida Sciulli)
- Frank R. Rauch (Family)
- John M. Leienhecker (Family)
- Elmer Herold (Family)
- Margaret M. Hornick (Friends)
- Teresa Pizzonia Hawkins (Family & Friends)
- McQuillan Family (Kenneth McQuillan)
- Amodeo Ranallo (Ann Marie Pella & Family)
- Joe Snyder (J. Carter Tackett)
- Richard Neal (Family)
- John & Ellen Horan (Mary Larkin)
- Francesco DeIuliis (Gino & Mary Jean DeIuliis)
- Clara Cardillo (Betty & Edward Carter)
- William McGuire (Joanne Maguire)



Life Teen - Leading Teens Closer to Christ

This Sunday, December 5, is the deadline for all pizza/cookie dough orders. If any teen has not turned their forms and money into Colleen, you MUST call her as soon as possible. Also remember to start collecting baby items for lifeline, this will be your admission price for our Christmas party on December 18! If you can't find your list which was mailed to you, there is a list on our bulletin board in Church.

Wonders

The normal response to a surprise is amazement, gratitude, and delight. By definition, we don't anticipate surprises. Their occurrence reminds us that we cannot always guess or shape the future. Granted, we do what we can do; we attend to the daily tasks, as we must. For grace is surely here in the mundane, and God is in the details. But God is in the happy surprises, too.

Today's readings are filled with startling developments. We hear the clarion cry of one of those rare prophets announcing the coming of the Lord. Isaiah proclaims startling, surprising images of the nearly impossible reconciliation of opposites: calf and lion, leopard and young goat, child and serpent. Isaiah's vision sees all of these creatures living in harmony. This is Eden again; this is paradise. It is God's surprise and promise.

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Treasures from our Tradition

"Outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace" is the often-memorized definition of sacrament, but through four decades of reform we have rediscovered the power of sacrament to bestow grace by reshaping our lives as individuals and communities. Not so long ago, most people were not attentive to the nature of sacrament as an act of the Church, a power that flows from the Body of Christ. Fifty years ago, we were inclined to see a sacrament as an encounter between Christ and an individual.

Today, we see that definition does not go far enough. God's grace is not a trickle, but a gushing torrent washing over the whole Church. Like a photographer pulling back the camera for a broader picture, today we are not only interested in the person who is being baptized, reconciled, or anointed. We think about how celebrating a sacrament transforms a community. We think about the grace given by Christ to the community that baptizes or marries or ordains or confirms. Sacraments are for the good of the community. Even when it appears to be a private, hidden moment, as in individual confession, a sacrament is always for the sake of the whole body, always more than "meets the eye." —James Field, © Copyright, J. S. Paluch Co.

Mass Intentions



MON., December 6 - St. Nicholas

10:00 A.M. Mary Kendgia (John & Mary Ellen Kendgia)

TUES., December 7 - St. Ambrose

10:00 A.M. Maguire Family (Joanne Maguire)
5:00 P.M. People of the Parish

WED., December 8 - Immaculate Conception

10:00 A.M. Isadoro & Catherine Porco (Daughter, Viola Scozio & Family)
7:00 P.M. Dianne Zacchia (Widman & Zacchia Families)

THURS., December 9 - Blessed Juan Diego

10:00 A.M. Margaret M. Hornick (Friends)

FRI., December 10 - Advent Weekday

10:00 A.M. Helen Suriano (Bible Study at Duff Manor)
6:00 P.M. Rehearsal: Highland-Calabrese

SAT., December 11 - St. Damasus

10:00 A.M. Marie & Edward King, Sr & Margaret & Raymond Brutscher (M/M Edward King, Jr.)
11:00 A.M. Confessions heard until 12:00 noon
3:00 P.M. Wedding: Highland-Calabrese
5:00 P.M. People of the Parish

SUN., December 12 - Third Sunday of Advent

8:00 A.M. Charles & Alice Houston (Son & Family)
10:30 A.M. Anthony B. Petrone (Family)

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

Prayers are also requested for the faithful departed:
Virginia Kohute, Joanne Falvo, and Richard Fiedor

Weekly Offering:

11-21-04 Total: \$7900.25 Env. Dist.: 1603 Env. Used: 611

11-28-04 Total: \$7918.50 Env. Dist.: 1603 Env. Used: 607

Scrip Program Approximate Profit:

11-21-04 \$353.72

11-28-04 \$272.35

Collected for the Retirement Fund for the Religious: \$3664.00

HARVEST SWEEPSTAKES

The winners of the Harvest Sweepstakes are as follows:

Mrs. S. Ehrentraut -
\$3000.00

Lynn McGuire - \$1000.00

Joanne Falvo - \$500.00

L. Vogel - \$200.00

Donald Holland - \$500.00

Kathleen D'Incau - \$50.00

Betty Conrad - \$50.00

Dianne Carroll - \$50.00

M.L. Vogel - \$50.00

Joan Moran - \$50.00