

My Dearest Parishioners,

Each year we hear the ancient Christmas story. Each year we retell the astonishing entrance that God made into our broken world and we are moved by God's capacity to surprise us with His love. Something new had happened; something original and fresh had been revealed; nothing would ever be quite the same again. God made the choice to break the silence of ages. God gave Himself away in a **Word**. The most important **Word** that God has ever spoken took flesh in the womb of a young maiden named Mary. God was born as a fragile bundle of new life. Yes the mystery of God was concentrated in a baby; the hope of God's love was fastened on to a newborn child. God chose to visit His people not through the words and dreams of the prophets but rather in human flesh. The God who lived in the highest heavens chose another address. God decided to pitch His tent among us and more importantly He decided to become just like us!

The Christmas story we hear each year might be the same but all of us are different. Our world is different. Our memories have grown, our hopes have been tested, and our love has been called on in many new ways. But no matter what changes we have undergone, what losses we have mourned, the Christmas story still speaks to us again of **new birth** and the possibility of our **own rebirth**. It tells us that things can be different. It gives substance to our hope that **new** life is possible because of the birth of Jesus. The Christmas story reminds us that the birth of every child is a **gift** of life. The Christmas story reminds us that the birth of every child is a small protest against the tired view that there is nothing new under the sun, that we are condemned to a future which only repeats the stupidities of the past. The birth of Jesus is God's protest against letting things be; abandoning people to their own devices, leaving people to fall back on the poverty of their own resources. Jesus is the help of God among us. Jesus is the **Word** on God's telegram of hope.

The Christmas story is still **our** story yesterday, today and tomorrow. This concept was made so clear in the movie **Of Gods and Men**. The film recounts the true story of a community of Trappist monks living in Algeria in the mid-1990s

during the violent civil war in that North African country. The monks live humbly and happily among their Muslim neighbors, keeping their garden and bees, offering hospitality in their guest house and medical care to all who came to their small clinic. The monks do not try to convert any of their Muslim neighbors to Catholicism; the simple generosity of their lives is a bridge between Christianity and Islam.

As the violence of the civil war escalates the monks refuse to abandon their monastery. But on Christmas Eve the civil war invades their cloister when rebels break into the monastery. The monastery's prior Fr. Christian compassionately but firmly sends the rebels away. After the encounter Fr. Christian sees the monks' continued presence as the work of **Incarnation**. As the monks continue their daily life of prayer, work and charity, Fr. Christian reassures his terrified brothers: "Each of us has discovered that to which Jesus beckons us. It is to be **born**. Our identities as human beings go forth from one **birth** to another. And from **birth to birth**, we'll each end up bringing the world the child of God that we are. The Incarnation for us is to allow the reality of Jesus to embody itself in our humanity. The mystery of the Incarnation remains what we live. In this way, what we've already lived takes root here as well as what we've going to live in the future."

In St. Luke's Gospel Jesus' birth begins with the description of a census mandated by Cesar Augustus during the time Quirinius was governor of Syria. The historical accuracy of this is flawed but such accuracy was never Luke's intention. Luke wants to show how God's grace worked through historical circumstances so that Jesus could be born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of God's promise of a Davidic Messiah.

As we listen to Luke's Christmas story we come in touch with the young Virgin Mary with child, Joseph her husband, the surprised shepherds, and the jubilant angels announcing the **Good News**. We encounter Jesus-our God made visible and we become caught up in the love of the God we cannot see. We discover that God has become one with the human race and the human race has become one again with God. Luke draws us into a drama that is

greater than our own. We are invited to share the mood of joy and hope. We are asked to take our own place in the dark of the manger and behold the gift of God-Jesus the newborn wrapped in swaddling clothes. Luke's Christmas story and invitation which has been extended to all believers down through the centuries reaches us again **today**. We are invited to come and worship, to see for ourselves the fragility of God, the littleness of the mighty one, the sheer tenderness of an intimate love that is offered to all people. With the **birth** of Jesus a new adventure in faith begins. A new approach to God is opened for us. A new way of relating to each other is asked of us because Jesus becomes for all of us the **Way**, the **Truth** and the **Life**.

The Christmas story is the first of many **births** we experience throughout our lives. That is why we make the journey back to Bethlehem each year: to be **reborn** in the hope of the Christ-child and to rediscover our own roots in the gift of that Child. Every time we act to bring that hope into being, we are **reborn**. Every time we imitate the compassion, love and justice of the Christ-child born in Bethlehem, we are **reborn**. Every time we die to selfishness, to hatred, to injustice, to fear, we are **reborn**. And each time we are **reborn**, Jesus is **reborn** in our midst. May the joy, hope, love, peace and wonder of this Christmas be your first experience of being **reborn** in the new year to come! **MERRY CHRISTMAS** and blessings **to all!**

Love & prayers,
Fr. John

Please note that on **Monday, December 26th** mass will be celebrated **only at 9 AM**.

NEW YEAR'S MASSES
New Year's – Feast of Mary, Mother of God

New Year's Eve, December 31:
Mass 5 PM

New Year's Day, January 1:
Masses are 7:30, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM

FLU SEASON

For health reasons, during the months of January, February, and March (flu season) we will refrain from receiving Jesus' Precious Blood at Holy Communion.

Thanks, Fr. John

We thank all of the sponsors who generously advertise in our bulletin. Sponsors of our bulletin recognize the tremendous value of connecting with our church family, who in turn respond by supporting our sponsors! If you would like to be a sponsor and advertise in the weekly bulletin, please contact Dave Ballanger at 800-292-9020.



2017 PARISH CALENDARS

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to Paul L. Gravenor Home for Funerals for sponsoring our 2017 Parish Calendar. Thanks and God bless,

Fr. John

MASS INTENTION

Monday, December 26, St. Stephen, The First Martyr
9:00 †Philip Cardin

Tuesday, December 27, St. John, Apostle & Evangelist
7:00 †Charlie & Lucy Marrone
9:00 †Jack Lewis

Wednesday, December 28, The Holy Innocents
7:00 †Stephanie Mash
9:00 †Fr. James Small, CSSR

Thursday, December 29, St. Thomas Becket
7:00 †Mary Hull
9:00 †Jack Lewis

Friday, December 30, The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph
7:00 †Jill Cleary
9:00 †Bob Jones

Saturday, December 31, St. Sylvester I, Pope
9:00 †Thanksgiving for the Cadet & Magloire Families
5:00 †Teresa Peters

Sunday, January 1, The Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God
7:30 For the Parishioners
9:00 For the Parishioners
11:00 For the Parishioners

IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

We will be publishing the names of your dear loved ones who are seriously ill or injured. We will keep them in the bulletin for one month. After the period of one month their names will be removed. *For example, names announced in the bulletin the third week of the month will be removed the third week of the following month.* If at that time prayers are still needed, please feel free to contact the parish office, and we will be more than happy to re-publish your loved one's name.

December: 18: Teri Dougherty, Anna B. Karen & Frank Wank, Anthony Tassa, George & Jean Givler, Russell Kurtz, Abigail Lowe-Critchfield. Lou Leone, Julie Leone, Carolyn Wolverton, Patricia Jeffrey.

LEGION OF MARY

The next Legion of Mary weekly meeting for active members will be held on **Saturday December 31 from 7:30 to 9 AM** in Meeting Room 1. The meeting will be over in time for 9 o'clock Mass. Visitors are welcome. Call Mary Leffler at 484-706-0627 for more information.



SANCTUARY LAMP

You may have the Sanctuary Lamp burn for a sick or deceased loved one for a donation of \$5 to defray the cost of the candles. This week the candle burns for The Bakajza & Walk Families.



DAILY MASS

In the event of bad weather during the week, ***if school is cancelled, know that Mass also is cancelled.*** If school is delayed, then we will only have a 9 o'clock Mass, but please use your judgment whether or not to attempt to attend.



WELCOME HOME

If you have been away from church for a while, we want you to know we are your brothers and sisters and we miss you. Please come home.

MISSIONARY SPIRIT

On December 7, at a Liturgy in Sacred Heart Chapel in Reading PA, Judy Bohler, a parishioner of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish, was commissioned by Sr. Marilisa da Silva, General Minister of the Bernardine Franciscans Sisters, as a volunteer to go to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Judy, who has been volunteering with the Bernardine Sister in the Dominican Republic for many years, will begin a 6 month volunteer commitment from January to June, at *Los Tres Brazos* where she will teach *ESL* (English as a Second Language) at the mission school.



Please, remember Judy in your prayers as she goes to spread the Good News among the poor in the name of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters.

THANK YOU



At this time of year, the Benevolent Society would like to say thank you for the support of our food bank. The crate in the narthex is ALWAYS full each and every Sunday with your nonperishable donations.

The recent Scout collection at our church collected over 2000 pounds of food alone! When we ask for a specific item in the bulletin, we KNOW that shelf will be filled after the next week's masses!! Our parishioners always come through with physical donations as well as donations to the poor box in the back of the church. Every single coin that is placed in the poor box goes to help people in our community! We have a few weekly donors who have made the food bank a priority for many years and we are so very grateful! This past year we had many other donors or organizations who donated or held food drives for us: 4 Seasons Produce, the Dollar Tree, Dairy Queen, The Knights of Columbus and the Ladies Auxiliary, Cocalico's National Junior Honor Society, Cocalico Class of 2017, Peters Porches, Dot to Dot ministries, Boy Scout Troop 73 and Pack,

Troop 363 and Pack 363, and Troop 115, the Steffy family Halloween food drive, Lancaster Catholic High School Respect Life, Al's Service Center, and the OMPH School and Religious Education students. The CROP Walk and Matthew 25 also raised funds for us. We are also thankful for the local grocery stores who do regular weekly donations: Weisers, Redners, and Target. Peters Electric assisted us with some needs of our Benevolent Society as well. Last and CERTAINLY not least: this year our list of volunteers has AGAIN increased dramatically (several people a month join our ministry!) as our food bank set up changed requiring more trucks, hands, and energy.

Each time there has been a request, our parishioners rose to the occasion and we truly appreciate the efforts of each and every one. There are so many other donors to individually mention but please know that we are humbled by your continued generosity!

HORSE RACING, FUN AND FOOD

Join the Knights of Columbus for their **K of C Derby, Saturday, January 28**. The evening will consist of 11 exciting horse races with pari-mutuel betting, door prizes, food and beverages. Tickets are \$20 and include a chance to win \$50 in one race and a chance to win up to \$1000 in Race 11. **Doors open at 6 PM** and post time for



the first race will be 7 PM. For tickets or further information contact **Ben Hoover at 808-1115 or email at hooverben4@gmail.com. (Preferred)**



Religious Education Corner:

Our RE Class Schedule For The

Next Three Weeks Is As Follows:

Merry Christmas!

Sunday, December 25th –NO RE Classes

RESPECT LIFE

Approach with me the crib of the Child God. Imagine the Baby Jesus, the King, so full of majesty, at a certain moment He opens His eyes to us. We notice right away that His most pure, highly intelligent and penetrating gaze meets ours. He immediately sees the deepest of our faults, but also the best of our qualities. At that moment, He gently touches our soul just as He moved Saint Peter during His Passion.

It is only natural that this gaze would provoke in us a deep sorrow for our faults. Giving us a knowledge of our failings, it inspires us with a horror for our sins. But all is not lost! Just when we fear we cannot withstand that gaze, the newborn Redeemer also manifests His love of our qualities. He knows our potential for greatness and that is what He loves.

And when we least expect it, by a kind entreaty of Our Lady, He smiles. Despite all His majesty, with that smile we feel the distance disappear, forgiveness invades our soul, and we determine that we will never leave the Child God's side. The Divine Child affectionately embraces us and pronounces our name, in the most clear and loving tones to ever fall upon our ears. *By Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira* from Tradition, Family and Property, tfp.org - Andrea Ostrowski.

LCHS ANNOUNCEMENTS

All 8th graders interested in applying to Lancaster Catholic High School are required to take the Entrance Exam. For students in public school non-Catholic private school, **the exam will be held on Saturday, January 7th at 8 AM.** For more information and to register, please visit www.lchsyses.org/admissions or contact Kyla Hockley at (717) 509-0313.

CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAS 2017 National Education Contest
Court Queen of Peace #1023 Catholic Daughters of the Americas announces the Catholic Daughters of The Americas 2017 National Education Contest for *all children* in Grades 4 –12. Entrants can choose from two themes:

- 1. WHATEVER YOU DO FOR THE LEAST OF MY BRETHREN, YOU DO FOR ME.”
MATHEW 25:40**
- 2. HELPING THE NEEDY WHERE I LIVE.**

For details of contest rules and awards, please go to www.catholicdaughters.org, scroll down the page to frequent downloads, and under contests, select Education Contest Forms.

Court Queen of Peace #1023, Lancaster, PA, of the Diocese of Harrisburg, will be sponsoring entries at the local level. First place local winners will compete at the state level. First place Pennsylvania winners will compete at the national level. **Local entries must be postmarked or received no later than February 15, 2017.**

Below is the information on where to return the entries and what to fill in on the “Return to:” portion of each entry form. All participants must sign a completed entry form, and all rules must be adhered to in order for the entries to be valid. Please verify rules as some may have changed since last year.

Name of Sponsoring Court: Queen of Peace No. 1023, Lancaster, PA

Name of Education Chairperson: Margaret T. Giordano, 1530 Hollywood Drive 390-9035, Lancaster PA 17601

UPCOMING BAPTISMS

For parents thinking about their child receiving the Sacrament of Baptism please know:

- If you choose a godparent who is a practicing Catholic from OMPH parish, no sponsor certificate is needed.
- If you choose a godparent who is a practicing Catholic at another Catholic Church they will need to obtain a sponsor certificate from their Pastor before scheduling the Baptism at OMPH.
- We schedule the Baptism as part of the celebration of Mass during the 1st & 3rd weekends of the month: Saturday- 5pm, Sunday- 9am & 11am.
- There are 3 steps in OMPH’s Baptisms: Welcoming (a Baptism Companion makes a visit to the family), Gathering (Baptism class given by our priest) and the Baptism.

Ben & Pat Dangelo schedule the Baptisms as guided by Fr. John. Please call Ben & Pat at 738-0272.

**JOB OPPORTUNITY
CUSTODIAN/HOUSEKEEPER**

St. Anne Church and School, Lancaster, are currently looking to fill a joint position for part-time school custodian and a part-time rectory housekeeper. This position requires a work week of 27 hours, and is responsible for maintaining the school building, the rectory offices, and Pastor’s residence in a clean, orderly, and presentable manner at all times. This position offers some flexibility with the hours of work. The rectory must be attended to during normal work hours, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. and the school can be attended to any time after 4:00 p.m. each day. For more information, please go to the St. Anne Church website at: www.stannechurch.org for a full job description and details. A resume should be sent to Fr. Tri Luong, St. Anne Church, 929 N. Duke St., Lancaster, PA 17602 and Mrs. Suzanne Wood, School Principal, St. Anne School, 108 E. Liberty St., Lancaster, PA 17602.