

My Dear Parishioners,

On this fourth Sunday of Advent most of us are joyfully anticipating the celebration of the upcoming wondrous Christmas season within a happy family/community situation. However some of us may be saddened as we anticipate that our celebration of Christmas might be one of despair, isolation and loneliness. To help guide us on how **not** to despair and feel lonely (as we may find ourselves alone) our Scripture readings today present contrasting ways on how to live. The first way is personified by King Ahaz. His way of living represents a life that is built on trusting things of the **world**-leading to an unfulfilled existence where emptiness and fear abounds. In contrast, Joseph's way of living represents a life in which a person is kind, humble, and obedient to God's will. Joseph's way of living represents the individual who trusts in God even when God throws them a few surprises. This way of living, despite the astonishments, surprises and set-backs, leads to great joy and fulfillment due to the freeing of one's spirit through commitment, responsibility and by having faith and hope in God.

Today's first reading is from the seventh chapter of the Book of Isaiah. In the previous chapter Isaiah receives a mission from heaven to give God's people notice that, unless they change their ways, their kingdom would collapse. In today's passage we see Isaiah faithfully carrying out his mission. The time is the late 8th century B.C. The place is the small kingdom of Judah. The problem is whether David's dynasty will survive or not. Ahaz is the king of Judah and he is afraid that his two neighbors from the north (the ten northern tribes of Israel and Syria) will destroy his kingdom of Judah. The king of Israel and the king of Syria have already invaded Judah but they have failed to take Jerusalem or capture Ahaz. Instead they left with a number of captives and anything they could plunder. Ahaz awaits another attack and looks around for help. He decides to go to Assyria (a superpower with a highly aggressive foreign policy) and asks for help to wipe out his hostile neighbors. The prophet Isaiah is an advisor to King Ahaz and he vehemently objects to what Ahaz intends to do. Isaiah advises Ahaz that that the dynasty of David is not going to be preserved through

playing politics with Assyria but will only be preserved through trusting in God.

Ahaz resists Isaiah's message. To give the king another chance to make the right choice, Isaiah assure Ahaz that God is prepared to grant any sign at all that would help him overcome his fears and doubts. Ahaz is unimpressed. He even turns God's gracious offer into nothing more than a temptation from the prophet. Isaiah is stunned by Ahaz's hypocrisy and then offers him a sign despite Ahaz's refusal to ask for one. Isaiah foretells that "the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'." This sign is given to Ahaz to assure him that with God's help the House of David will continue. This sign will demonstrate that nothing is impossible for God!

In stark contrast to Ahaz, today's Gospel speaks of Joseph (a man of faith) who trusted in God by placing his life in God's word. Today's passage presents Matthew's version of the infancy narrative. Matthew's account tells the story of Mary's virginal conception of Jesus from Joseph's point of view. The purpose of Matthew's account is to inform the hearer that Mary's virginal conception of Jesus was in fact the work of the power of the Holy Spirit. The drama of the story unfolds around St. Joseph and his response to all what was happening. For Matthew, this interconnection between the human and the divine is understood as the fulfilment of the prophesy as found in Isaiah 7:14.

When Matthew wrote his Gospel he adopted the sign to Ahaz and gives it a whole new meaning. Matthew celebrates Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of prophecy, the royal child of the House of David, born of a virgin, who **will be** God-with-us. In Jesus the dynasty of David has its most celebrated son. But this child is not only the Son of David; He is also the **Son of God**. As St. Paul says in today's second reading (the Letter to the Romans): Jesus" was proclaimed Son of God in all His power through His resurrection from the dead."

In ancient Jewish times **engagement** was a formal process lasting as long as a year. The engaged couple were considered to be husband and wife. To

break an existing **engagement** a divorce was necessary. In today's Gospel passage we are told that Mary and Joseph were **engaged** which meant that they were legally bound by contract to become husband and wife. Any infidelity during this **engagement** period was considered the same as adultery (according to the Mosaic Law) and the end result would be death for the adulterer. When Joseph finds out that Mary was pregnant and knew that he was not responsible for her pregnancy he was presented with a lonely dilemma. Joseph was a righteous man who observed the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law entitled him at the very least to repudiate his marriage agreement by signing a declaration in the presence of witnesses. The Law also gave him the right to denounce Mary publicly and the punishment for her transgression would be death. Joseph decided to divorce Mary quietly and spare her shame and death. Such was his intention when a message from God came to him in a dream telling him not to be afraid to take Mary into his home as his wife. In this dream, Joseph is informed that it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that the child had been conceived. The child is to receive the name "Jesus" which means "Yahweh saves". Others would call him "Emmanuel" meaning "God-with-us". Being a man of deep faith Joseph submits to God's wish and remains as husband, companion and protector of Mary and foster-father of the Child Jesus. When Joseph exercises his right to name the Child he becomes the **legal** father. And thus it is through Joseph's lineage that Jesus becomes "Son of David" and through the Holy Spirit that Jesus becomes "Son of God".

As we celebrate the fourth week of Advent and continue our journey towards Christmas, may we have the eyes of faith that Joseph had, to see beyond appearances to the presence of God-with-us. May our way of living **not** be that of Ahaz, who trusted in the power of this world and found frustration and hollowness, but rather the way of Joseph who, though surprised at God's way of doing things, trusted in God, welcomed the Child Jesus, and thus found great joy, peace and love. And finally may we not build our hope on material things like Ahaz but rather place our hope in God like Joseph and truly put ourselves

at His disposal by putting His will into effect in our daily living. Have a blessed week.

Love & prayers,

Fr. John



CHRIST IS BORN TO US
COME LET US ADORE

CHRISTMAS MASSES

Please note that on **Saturday, December 24th** there will be **no 9 AM** mass celebrated in the morning.

Christmas Eve, December 24:
Masses are 5PM, 8PM and 11 PM.

Christmas Day, December 25:
Masses are 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM.



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

MASS INTENTION

Monday, December 19

- 7:00 ✦ Tonyah Lorise Colatta
- 9:00 ✦ Robert & Katie Burkholder

Tuesday, December 20

- 7:00 For those who are alone during the holidays
- 9:00 ✦ Duayne Robinson

**Wednesday, December 21, St. Peter Canisius,
Priest & Doctor of the Church**

- 7:00 ✦ Priscilla Nelson
- 9:00 Pasquale Trongo



Thursday, December 22

- 7:00 ✦ Ronald Slover
- 9:00 ✦ Sue Eisenbise

Friday, December 23, St. John of Kanty, Priest

- 7:00 Intentions in the Prayer Box
- 9:00 ✦ Matilda Leal

Saturday, December 24, Vigil of Christmas

- 5:00 For the Parishioners
- 8:00 For the Parishioners
- 11:00 For the Parishioners

Sunday, December 25, The Nativity of the Lord

- 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, Alex Masluk.



Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
12-11-16	\$ 14,557.45	\$14,326.00	\$ 231.45
YTD	Amount	YTD Needed	Difference
12-11-16	\$333,891.30	\$343,824 .00	(\$9,932.70)

ANOTHER NOTE FROM FR. TOM SICONOLFI: Last week's bulletin had a note about my left ear. You may have missed it. I write again. A few weeks ago my ear was cut open and about 2in were removed from the middle. It's a very intricate area because of the many senses that come together. All went and is well. The biopsies were all benign. After a few weeks of healing, something may be done to "fix up" the disfigured part. In the meantime, thank you for your understanding and prayers.

LEGION OF MARY



The next Legion of Mary weekly meeting for active members will be held on **December 31 Saturday 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.



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 Ferry

Family.

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 church for a while, we to know we are your and sisters and we miss come home.



from want you brothers you. Please

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 Mother of Perpetual Help Church Ephrata PA

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)



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RESPECT LIFE

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in Mexico amidst a people who practiced human sacrifice on a massive scale. Her name means "she who crushes the serpent," and she stopped the human sacrifice cold. She was responsible for the largest conversion in the history of the church- 8 million people in seven years! She is the patroness of the Americas and we beg her intercession for the end of the slaughter of the innocents- the unborn. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.



"Am I your mother not here with you?
Are you not under my shadow and protection?
Am I not your fountain of life?
Are you not in the folds of my mantle, in the crossing
of my arms? Is there anything else that you need?"
Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego.



Religious Education Corner:

Our RE Class Schedule For The Remainder

Of 2016 And Beyond Is As Follows:

Sunday, December 18th – RE Classes In Session

Monday, December 19th – RE Classes In Session

Merry Christmas!

Sunday, December 25th –NO RE Classes

Monday, December 26th – NO RE Classes

Happy New Year 2017!

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.lchsyeh.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."***
MATT. 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