

My Dearest Parishioners,

“Lord every nation on earth will adore you.”  
With this refrain from today’s responsorial psalm we have the theme for today’s glorious feast of The Epiphany of the Lord.

The Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord is the original feast of Jesus’ birth. Eastern Christians were celebrating the birth of Jesus on January 6<sup>th</sup>, years before Christians in Rome began to celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Since the Epiphany was already well established as a major feast by the time the Roman Church started celebrating the birth of Jesus on December 25<sup>th</sup>, the Roman Church could not ignore it so the Church established the coming of the Magi as the theme of the Epiphany. This extended the Christmas celebration for a number of days (which is appropriate) since Christmas is too amazing and wonderful a celebration to limit to only one day.

The word “**epiphany**” comes from a Greek word which means **revelation, manifestation, showing, appearing or coming to light**. The dictionary states that “**epiphany**” means “a sudden recognition or insight into the meaning, reality or significance of something.” It can be the manifestation of a profound reality. The Jewish shepherds who lived in the area of Bethlehem had already had their epiphany when the angels announced Jesus’ birth to them. Today we commemorate the **revelation** of the Christ-child to the non-Jewish world in the person of the Magi. Magi is a term that designated persons who were priests of a pagan cult who were experts in astrology, interpretation of dreams and various other occult arts. Their primary job would be to act as advisors to the king and his court as they studied the stars for messages from the gods.

The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of the invisible God in a visible human nature for the salvation of the world. It rejoices in the truth that the Son of Mary is the Son of God. The feast celebrates the fact that Jesus is the Savior not only for the Jewish people but for everybody in every land and culture. That is the theological meaning. But what has captured the imagination of people for centuries is the coming of the Magi from the East (the visitors whom we have dubbed the Wise Men) seeking and discovering the Infant Jesus. We don’t know much about them since Matthew is the only Gospel writer that

speaks of them. Over the centuries Christians have added all sorts of details. For example Christians have made the Magi three in number after the number of the gifts they offer to the Christ-child. Christians gave the Magi names of: Gaspar, Balthazar and Melchior. Christians made one of the Magi young, one middle age and one elderly. Christians posited that the Magi came from different parts of the world.

The mystery of the Epiphany begins by manifesting something about ourselves. Like the astrologers in today’s Gospel, it is not enough for us merely to know that Jesus is alive and living in the world as a human being. That information alone does not satisfy us. The Feast of the Epiphany **manifests** our deepest God-given desire to enter into the presence of Jesus and be in His midst. Our passive knowledge of the Incarnation comes to perfection in our active personal experience of that marvelous miracle.

The astrologers manifest the sanctified way to respond to the miracle of the Incarnation. It begins by putting the Christ-child first and making union with Him their chief priority. If the astrologers had been totally self-absorbed and preoccupied with their own affairs and ambitions they never would have observed “His star at its rising.” Instead, their alertness and sensitivity moves them to leave behind their lives for a while and follow the star. It is as if the astrologers already realize how empty of meaning their old life becomes until they personally embrace the Incarnate Christ who reveals the very meaning of human existence to all women and men. Being in the presence of the Christ-child elicited something from within the astrologers. They were so overwhelmed by their extraordinary experience that they prostrated themselves before the Christ-child; humbly adoring, paying homage, worshiping Him and presenting their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This sacred encounter with the Christ-child changes the astrologer’s lives forever. They leave the encounter transformed. Mystically enlightened by God, they return home by another route. The Epiphany experience gave the astrologer’s lives a new direction, meaning and value. The Epiphany experience enabled them to see within themselves the beauty and the goodness of our God.

The Magi’s journey to find the Christ-child is symbolic of our own journey of seeking and

recognizing God within ourselves and others. It wasn't without difficulties that the Magi came to discover Jesus. Their trip was long and tedious. It is also with some difficulties that many of us today struggle with our personal journey towards God. The Magi wondered about the road they should take (and some, like Herod, taking no chances themselves) thought that the Magi were ridiculous for following a star and taking their road. Many voices invite us to take other roads and some ridicule us for taking the road to Jesus. The Magi recognized Jesus in the rising of a star. We recognize Jesus in the **Breaking of the Bread**. The Magi presented their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ-child. We present the gift of our selfless love and our lives to Him. The Magi returned to their own homes taking away a treasure that surpasses anything they brought themselves as they were filled with delight at having met the Infant King of the Jews. We return to our homes with that same treasure-the gift of knowing Jesus. The Magi were enriched by their intimate encounter with Jesus and they enriched others by sharing the truth of their experience with them. We are enriched and blessed by Jesus every day of our lives and we share this truth with all those we meet.

The Magi had come because God calls all people (of every race and nation) to recognize Jesus as their Lord and pay Him homage. God calls us too. Our human life is a journey through time in which we seek signs of God in our midst. God sends out signals for us to pick up on and move further down the road that will take us back to Him. Sometimes we might get lost for a while but then, in a moment of grace, we see and hear a welcoming invitation from God that leads us back to Him. On our journey through life we are to search for a goal that gives meaning to life and try to acquire the qualities it takes to stay with that goal through thick and thin. Our goal has to have meaning, purpose, and commitment; all of which are inseparable. A life without meaning, purpose and commitment together in William Shakespeare's words: "is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

In our life-long search for Jesus in following our own "star" for meaning and purpose in our life's every day journey to God, may we embrace the wisdom of the Magi to recognize God's goodness in the midst of evil, the humility to kneel on the stable floor in the presence of Jesus who is so much more powerful than

our own wealth and intellect, and may we have the vision to go beyond our own safe territory and safety to encounter God in the poverty and simplicity of our world and in the humble love of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

As we journey through 2019 may the encounters of our hearts and spirits with the Christ-child in Word and Sacrament, in our everyday journeys of both struggle and grace, be a constant **epiphany** of re-creating and transforming our hearts, spirits and lives as we re-discover the love of Emmanuel- **God in our midst**. I hope and pray that we all have a blessed and joyous 2019!

Love & Prayers,

Fr. John

## BISHOP GAINER

### HOST LISTENING SESSIONS



Bishop Ronald Gainer will host listening sessions throughout the Diocese of Harrisburg in January and February of 2019. He encourages anyone with questions regarding the Grand Jury Report, the Diocese's response to abuse, our path forward, or any other questions or concern to attend one of these sessions. Each session will include opening remarks from Bishop Gainer and retired PA State Police Capt. Janet McNeal, recently hired to oversee the youth protection efforts of the Diocese. Following their brief remarks, the floor will be opened for questions. The scheduled session for our deanery will be held on Tuesday, February 12, 2019 at St. Leo the Great Parish 2427 Marietta Avenue, Lancaster PA at 6:30 PM. In order to make the sessions welcoming and to encourage discussion, video and audio recording will not be permitted. Thank you.

**MARCH FOR LIFE**

The 2019 March for Life will be held in Washington, D.C., on **Friday, January 18<sup>th</sup>**.



Catholics Defending Life of Lancaster PA is sponsoring a bus trip to this most worthy pro-life event. After a 7 AM Mass

at St. Leo's, three busses will depart from the church parking lot, bound for D.C., at approximately 8:15 AM. Suggested Donation to cover costs is \$10 per person and \$20 per family, with free seats available for the mere asking. Reservations are a must! **Phone by January 13<sup>th</sup>!** Call Rosie Gross at 717-397-6966. Come to the March for Life. Pray and protest to end the atrocity of abortion in our nation.

**MANDATE RENEWAL**

On **January 16<sup>th</sup>** there will be a mandate renewal program **for our Parish Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist who have not renewed their certification within the past three years.** This program will be held at St. John Neumann Parish from 6:30 to 8 PM. Also if anyone is interested in becoming an Extraordinary Minister **please call Mary Burkholder at 733-4989 for more information.**

**MASS INTENTIONS**

**Monday, January 7, St. Raymond of Penyafort,  
Priest**

- 7:00      ✦Jean Givler
- 5:00      ✦George Givler

**Tuesday, January 8**

- 7:00      ✦Mary Brossman
- 9:00      ✦Richard Leone

**Wednesday, January 9**

- 7:00      ✦Rob Schroeder
- 9:00      ✦Sharon Fennell

**Thursday, January 10**

- 7:00      ✦Thomas Mohn
- 9:00      Spiritual growth of our parish

**Friday, January 11**

- 7:00      ✦Mary Lucky

9:00      ✦Thomas Pagerly

**Saturday, January 12**

- 9:00      ✦Richard Leone
- 5:00      ✦Annke Hoden

**Sunday, January 13, Baptism of the Lord**

- 7:30      For the Parishioners
- 9:00      ✦Josephine Tighe
- 11:00     ✦Neil Gruber

**CHURCH SUPPORT**

Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
12-23-18	\$16,501.83	\$14,300.00	(\$2,201.83)
<b>YTD</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>YTD Needed</b>	<b>Difference</b>
12-23-18	\$328,723.30	\$371,800.00	(\$43,076.70)

**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.

**ALTAR SERVERS NEEDED!!**

Any girl or boy in grades fourth and up that would like to become an altar server should contact Ben Hoover at 717-808-1115. This is a great way for RE and LCHS students to achieve required service hours.



There is a commitment involved with being an altar server, but the schedule can be planned around sports, work and any other activities if known in advance. Training will begin in January and the new schedule will come out in March.

**ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

*God has given us something much better than a star: the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth". He is not just a distant star but God himself, living and active in our hearts. So let's practice learning how to hear him. Scripture is "living and effective." That means that the Spirit can*



take a passage that was written thousands of years ago and bring it to life for you. He can show you God's love more deeply, give you guidance, or console you in a time of trial. Try listening to the Spirit today. Take one of the readings from Mass, and read it slowly and prayerfully.



### 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

Carl Fries.

### IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

We will be publishing the names of your dear loved ones who are seriously ill or injured. 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.

Margaret Gardner, Abigail Lowe-Critchfield, Michael Lillis, Richard Warner, Anna Leshner, Florence Windish, Gloria Reynolds, Patrick Michael Ward, Carlos Luciano Sr., Mary Kay Hensel, Gerald Gigliotti, Fr. Paul Bryan, CSSR, Francis Gatti, Antonia Scribani, Jean Mash, John Mento, Joseph John Lewis, Joe Ferrara, Joanne Dever, Alicia Craig, Robert Bevans.

### HORSE RACING, FUN AND FOOD

Join the Knights of Columbus for their K of C Derby, Saturday, **January 26<sup>th</sup>**. 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 717-808-1115 or email at [hooverben4@gmail.com](mailto:hooverben4@gmail.com)

### OMPH COMMUNITY MEALS FOR 2019

As we are about to start another new year, we would like to thank all of our Community Meal Volunteers for saying yes and making a commitment to lend a hand for our 2018 meals. You all did an outstanding job. We welcomed and served a lot of hungry people and it

couldn't have been done without your commitment and support.

Please save these dates for our new Community Meals for 2019. They are as follows:

1. **February 21, 2019** at *First United Methodist Church*, Ephrata. 68 N. Church Street, Ephrata.
2. **October 10, 2019** at *Bethany United Church of Christ* 140 East Main Street, Ephrata, PA.
3. **December 5, 2019** at *Holy Trinity Lutheran Church*, 167 East Main Street in Ephrata.

It has been a blessing and a privilege to work with such a great group of folks. We look forward to working with you again in 2019. Thank you for serving our God, our church and our community. Until we see each other again; May God bless you and grant you peace.

### **Text-To-Give Second Collection Codes**

Second collection text-to-give is easy! Just text the amount you would like to give followed by the "code word" for each specific collection. For example, "10 flowers", makes a gift of 10 dollars towards our flower collection. Each week before a second collection, the "code word" will appear in the bulletin for your convenience.

The code words for the next few weeks:

<u>Collection Name</u>	<u>Collection Date</u>	<u>Code Word for Text-To-Give</u>
Solemnity of Mary	1/1/2019	solemnity
European Relief	1/13/2019	europeanrelief
Initial	No date	initial

Reminder the Text-To-Give phone # is **717-401-4159**.



### Religious Education Corner:

**Our Religious Education Class Schedule For The Next Three Weeks Is As Follows:**

**Sunday, January 6<sup>th</sup> – RE Classes Resume**

**Sunday, January 13<sup>th</sup> – RE Classes In Session**

***First Weather Make-Up Class If Needed Otherwise***

***Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup> –NO RE Classes***

Selection of your child's school is among the most important choices you will make. OMPH School partners with parents in providing a faith-based education for the children of our parish. We have a strong tradition of academic excellence, but more importantly, the gospel message and spirit of Catholicism permeate the school day. Our children are blessed to have daily interaction with the Redemptorist Fathers serving our parish.

Registration is now open to all parish families for Preschool through Grade 8 for the 2019-2020 school year. The Preschool program, for children who are 3 and 4 years old by September 1st, provides developmentally appropriate activities in a Catholic environment and offers a Munch Bunch school lunch program. Our full day Kindergarten program, for children who are 5 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup>, provides daily Religion class along with skill development in Language Arts and Math and special classes in computer, library, physical education, Spanish, art, and music. Students in grades 1 through 8 experience an education noted for academic excellence in an environment which reinforces our Catholic identity. An on-site after school program is available for all students in Preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Interested parish families are encouraged to register by February 1<sup>st</sup>; registration will then open to non-parishioners.

Please join us on Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup> as we celebrate the gift of Catholic education in our parish at the 9:00 am Mass. Following the liturgy, there will be an Open House and the opportunity to meet the faculty and visit the school. You can also schedule a personal tour of the school for any day, at your convenience, by contacting the Development Office.

To learn more about our school, please visit our website at [www.omph.org](http://www.omph.org) or call the school office at 717-738-2414 for further information. Find us on Facebook at OMPH-Ephrata! Financial aid is available to qualifying families.