

My Dear Parishioners,

In the September 22, 2011 edition of **The Washington Post** there was a story about the Rev. Barry C. Black, a former Navy chaplain and a chaplain of the United States Senate. At the beginning of every session Chaplain Black would go to the Senate chamber and offer a prayer asking God to bestow the gifts of unity, wisdom, and cooperation upon the senators. At a session in the early summer of 2011 Rev. Black prayed: "Lord, infuse them (senators) with a spirit of reconciliation that will break down divisive walls; bringing harmony and cooperation. Give them also a spirit of unity and the wisdom to have respect for one another." Then (right on schedule) the Senate got down to doing their business: creating a rhetorical storm of bickering accusations and political posturing. Establishing an atmosphere of cooperation, harmony, unity and wisdom was definitely not part of their agenda!

While preaching about peace and respect to a flock (who often argued and fought with one another) Chaplain Black never became discouraged. He did not take seriously the words of Peter Marshall (Senate chaplain in the 1940's) who said that a chaplain was merely the Senate's equivalent of "**parsley**-mainly there for decoration." Despite difficulties and disappointments, Chaplain Black carried on his ministry to the Senate with great enthusiasm and zeal. He did not take his ministry as a sort of "litmus test of the efficacy of his intercession" when his flock continued arguing and squabbling the very moment after he prayed that they would hear and understand God's call to serve God's people with wisdom and selflessness.

Chaplain Black is very much like the two Old Testament prophets that we hear about in today's Scripture readings. Chaplain Black mirrors the prophets Isaiah and John the Baptist in his steadfast faithfulness to **proclaim** the possibilities for **comfort** and **hope** despite the inability of leaders to grasp such **comfort** and **hope**. He also mirrors Isaiah and John the Baptist in his refusal to allow God's Word to be dismissed as merely a sprig of **parsley**.

Our first reading is from the Book of the prophet Isaiah (chapter 40). This passage is the beginning of the message of Second Isaiah (the anonymous prophet of the Babylonian Exile.) Preaching around the year 540 B.C. Second Isaiah stresses the dimension of **hope** for his depressed

Jewish countrymen. Today's passage is an oracle prophecy about the imminent end to the Babylonian Exile. The royal city of David had received "double for all her sins." But **now** begins the time of restoration. Today's passage sets the tone for the remainder of the book which speaks of the **hopeful restoration** of Israel and her eventual **reconciliation** with God.

The opening verse of Chapter 40 strikes a **hopeful** note in the setting of the heavenly council. Isaiah's command in that first verse (to give **comfort**) sets a tone of consolation and mercy. A new period is now unfolding: the punishment is over, the sin is forgiven. In verses 3-5, Isaiah speaks about "the glory of the Lord" and promises a wonderful manifestation of God's redeeming presence. The Lord will lead His people out of the Exile, across the desert into their own land. The remaining verses (9-11) move with a mounting crescendo to the point where Zion/Jerusalem fears not to cry out the good news of the Lord's presence among them. God is seen as both the powerful conquering hero and the gentle shepherd-king who is close to His people.

Our Gospel passage for this Second Sunday of Advent is taken from Mark. The Gospel of Mark does not begin with an infancy narrative as do Matthew and Luke's Gospels nor does it begin with a creative poetic hymn to the **Logos** (Word) as does John's Gospel. Instead Mark begins with a one sentence profession of faith. This sentence is clear, precise and says it all. Mark informs his audience that the beginning of his Gospel is about Jesus Christ who **is** the Son of God. Mark's Gospel is the **story of humanity's salvation** in Jesus Christ.

At the very beginning of Mark's Gospel we see John the Baptist fulfilling what Isaiah foretold about the coming of the Messiah. For four hundred years there was no new prophet in Israel until the appearance of John the Baptist. The Holy Spirit enabled John the Baptist to realize that the ancient prophecy of Isaiah pointed to someone else. In fact Isaiah's prophecy pointed to someone now at hand; the coming of God to His people, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Understanding himself to be the very **messenger** meant by Isaiah's words, John was obedient to God's will. The **comfort** that he preached to the people was admittedly a severe **mercy**. **They** should repent of their sins and be washed by the baptism he was administering in the

Jordon River. What John then proclaimed was the imminent coming of someone with a baptism far more powerful than the one that he could provide: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Here was the real meaning of Isaiah's prophecy; the coming of the Messiah in the person of Jesus. John sensed God's presence in the person of Jesus. John understood his mission in terms of being a precursor. He prepared the people for the arrival of the Messiah by his proclamation of radical conversion. He awakened the people to what is about to happen. He pointed out how the divine Messiah is coming in the person of Jesus (their true shepherd) the one who is "salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land."

Faithful **prophets** like Isaiah, John the Baptist and Chaplain Black possess God's vision of what the world can and should become. These **prophetic persons** give themselves totally to the work of realizing that vision. In baptism each one of us has been called by God to become a **prophet**. We are called to do **prophetic ministry** by using whatever gifts, skills and talents we possess to transform the wastelands around us into harvests of love, peace, justice and forgiveness. We are called to create highways for our God so He can enter into our communities. We are challenged to re-create our world in His love, compassion and peace. Have a blessed and a **prophetic** week.

Love & prayers,
Fr. John

**PARISH ADVENT
PENANCE SERVICE**

Our annual Parish Advent Penance Service will be held on **Wednesday, December 20th at 7 PM**. There will be several priests present to celebrate the Sacrament with you. Come out and experience God's love and mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Please note that the **Fourth Sunday of Advent** this year falls on **December 24th**. Masses for the **Fourth Sunday of Advent** will be celebrated at **5 PM** on Saturday evening **December 23** and on Sunday **December 24th** at **7:30, 9:00 and 11:00 AM**. Christmas Eve masses on December 24th **do not** fulfill the obligation for **Fourth Sunday of Advent** since Christmas is a **Holy Day of Obligation**. Thank You, Fr. John



CHRISTMAS MASSES

Christmas Eve, December 24:
Mass will be celebrated at **5PM, 8PM, and 11PM**.

Christmas Day, December 25:
Mass will be celebrated at **9AM and 11AM**.



NEW YEAR'S MASSES

New Year's – Feast of Mary, Mother of God

NEW YEAR'S DAY, JANUARY 1

Mass will be celebrated at: 7:30, 9, and 11AM.

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

**COMMUNITY HOLIDAY SERVICE
OF REMEMBRANCE**

For those whose loved ones have died during the past years, join us **today at 2 PM.** at the Ephrata Church of the Brethren, 201 Crescent Avenue. Refreshments will be served. Childcare is available. Fr. John will be giving the Benediction.

Encounter: A Retreat Experience Especially Designed for College Aged Young Adults and Recent Graduates will be held Saturday, April 14, 2018 from 9:30 am until 4:00 pm at the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, 310 Hertzler Road, Mechanicsburg. Easter is a perfect time to get away to refresh and renew ourselves while growing in relationship with our Lord and with other Young Adults. For more information contact your Catholic Campus Ministry/Newman Club or the Diocesan Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry at: oyyam@hbgdiocese.org or call 717-657-4804 ext. 327. WWW.HBGDIOCESE.ORG/youngchurch

MASS INTENTIONS

**Monday, December 11, St. Damasus I,
Pope**

- 7:00 †Lenie Foley
- 9:00 †Trisha Temple & family



Tuesday, December 12, Our Lady of Guadalupe

- 7:00 †Charles & Elizabeth Tucker
- 9:00 †Lou Leone

Wednesday, December 13 St. Lucy, Virgin & martyr

- 7:00 †Bernie Mack
- 9:00 †William & Margaret Charlton

**Thursday, December 14, St. John of the Cross,
Priest and Doctor of the Church**

- 7:00 †Christina Chyna & Derrick Cadet
- 9:00 †Thomas Falgiate

Friday, December 15

- 7:00 †Helen Sippie
- 9:00 †Bakajza, Walk, Hoover & Daubert Families

Saturday, December 16

- 9:00 †Lou Leone
- 5:00 †Teresa Peters

Sunday, December 17 Third Sunday in Advent

- 7:30 For the Parishioners
- 9:00 †Rose Brady
- 11:00 †Charles Mirack

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.

December 3: Maria Mannino, Margaret Gardner, Jane Muldowney, Dakota Goshert, Brenda Crawford, Stephen Stanavage, Jennifer Ranker, Melissa Kurtz, Janet Tomko, Jean Givler, Abigail Lowe-Critchfield, Brendan Holbritter, Michael Lillis and Richard Warner, Jim Lehmier, Tonya Stoner, Kevin Kaiser.



Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
12-3-17	\$ 15,420.10	\$14,950.00	(\$470.10)

YTD	Amount	YTD Needed	Difference
12-3-17	\$309,112.61	\$ 343,850 .00	(\$34,737.39)

The annual **Retirement Fund for Religious Collection** will be held this weekend. The appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and offers support for senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests whose communities lack sufficient retirement funding. Some 33,000 women and men religious past age 70 benefit.

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

John's baptism was for one purpose: for our pardon. But the Holy Spirit has many purposes. He reveals God's love to us. He helps us understand Scripture. He teaches us how to live as brothers and sisters. He holds the Church together and moves us to work for the kingdom of God. And so much more.

When we are baptized into Christ our sins are washed away, and we receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus doesn't want us to miss out on anything! It's all wrapped up in one gift, which we call the "seed of faith." If we want to see these blessings unfold in our lives, we need to tend to and nurture this seed. When we feel God's love. We become more loving. We want to reach out to those who are hurting. We find the strength to say no to temptation. In short, we become a new creation.



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 John & Helen Phillips.



PTO BAKE SALE

Today! Bake Sale after all Mass.

BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Can you help? Our food bank is currently in need of: instant potatoes, boxed dinners and Mac and cheese! Please place items in the FOOD BANK crate in the narthex of the church. Your continued generosity is amazing. Thank you!

HORSE RACING, FUN AND FOOD

Join the Knights of Columbus for their K of C Derby, Saturday, **January 27th**. 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.

BULLETIN TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE

The Christmas bulletin must be transmitted to the printer on December 14 for the December 24 bulletin.

New Year's: The bulletin must be transmitted to the printer on December 28 for the January 7 bulletin.

YEARLINGS NEWS

Join us on Tuesday, **December 12** at 11:30 for our Christmas luncheon at Fox Chase. **Please call** Gloria at 717-738-9098 for reservations. Bring a \$5 wrapped gift to play a Christmas game.

RESPECT LIFE

Our good Lord has placed hundreds of Pro Life verses in the Scriptures. Here is one; Exodus 21:22-25: if a man injures a woman who is with child and causes a miscarriage then the punishment is the death penalty to the aggressor. Think about that applied to abortion, which is the deliberate attack on the child.

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in Mexico amidst a people who practiced human sacrifice on a massive scale. They did **not** have His Word in scripture. 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 not here who am your mother?
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

We thank our Lord for warnings and messages from His Mother which are timeless.



CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATING

Help is needed for decorating the church Christmas tree in the narthex on Tuesday, **December 12** from 6:30-8PM. And also removing the tree the second week in January. The time required for setting up and taking down the tree has been perfected over the years, minimizing the hours to complete this fun project. Our current decorating crew has been helping for many years and a new younger energetic crew of 6 to 8 people would be welcomed to continue this great tradition. Please contact Susan Lowe at 717-738-1356 **If you are interested come join us, and see how it's done?** Thank you.



SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

The Hospitality Committee would like to send your college students something special at Christmas from their parish. If you are interested, please send us the following information **by TOMORROW December 11**: Name, Address and any allergies. You can email (ritapfautz@yahoo.com) or text the information ([717-341-1211](tel:717-341-1211)) to Rita Pfautz.

OMPH YOUTH GROUP

Sunday, December 17th at 2:30 PM OMPH youth group will be meeting at the Bernadine Center to be part of a Secret Santa project 2017. Come prepared to bake Christmas cookies, wrap gifts, package fruit baskets, and take a short drive to deliver holiday cheer to a family who deserves this more than ever! **Grades 7-12 welcome. For 7th and 8th graders, this activity would count as 2 community service hours.** Merry Christmas and God bless! In His Service, Denise Ives

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Religious Education Corner:

**Our RE Class Schedule For The Remainder
Of 2017 And Beyond Is As Follows:**

Sunday, December 10th – RE Classes In Session

Sunday, December 17th – RE Classes In Session

Merry Christmas!

Sunday, December 24th – NO RE Classes

Happy New Year 2018!

Sunday, December 31st – NO RE Classes

Sunday, January 7th – RE Classes Resume

LANCASTER CATHOLIC NEWS

Lancaster Catholic will be hosting an **Activities Fair on Saturday, January 27th from 1-3 PM**. All aspects of Lancaster Catholic's culture will be highlighted, from the Fine and Performing Arts department to the vast options of clubs including Mini-Thon and Respect Life to Athletics and Campus Ministry. One lucky family that is looking to join the Lancaster Catholic community for the 2018-2019 school year, by attending the Activities Fair, will be awarded one year's paid tuition upon completion of their application. For more information about the day or the admissions process, please contact Kyla Hockey at khockley@lchsyes.org.

As you know, **Catholic Schools** week is the week of **January 29th** and with all of the festivities around that week, Lancaster Catholic would like to announce that we are having a One Day of Giving on Tuesday, January 30th. This day will be filled with friendly competitions and dedicated to continuing Catholic education.

BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

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.

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, Dairy Queen, The Knights of Columbus and the Ladies Auxiliary, Cocalico Class of '67 reunion, Peters Porches, Dot to Dot ministries, Boy Scout Troops 73, 115, & 363, 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, Weis, and Target. Last and CERTAINLY not least: this year our list of volunteers has AGAIN increased dramatically to over 92 regular volunteers! 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!