

My Dear Parishioners,

Folklore tells the story of a certain Guru's followers who sought to learn from the Master the stages that he had passed through in his quest for the Divine. The Master said: "God first led me by the hand into the Land of Action where I dwelt for several years. Then God returned and led me to the Land of Sorrows. There I lived until my heart was purged of every inordinate attachment. That's when I found myself in the Land of Love whose burning flames consumed whatever was left in me or self. This brought me to the Land of Silence where the mysteries of life and death were bared before my wondering eyes." "Was that the final stage of your quest?" his followers asked. "No," the Master said. "One day God said, 'Today I shall take you to the innermost sanctuary- to the heart of God Himself.' And I was led to the Land of **Joy**," replied the Master.

In the days when Mass was celebrated in Latin the Third Sunday of Advent was known as **Gaudete Sunday (Rejoice Sunday)** - meaning "**Be Joyful**". The Church **rejoices** that our Savior Jesus has come in the past and that He will come again in the future. Today's liturgy could be referred to as the Church's "**Ode to Joy**" as the liturgy calls us to live in great **joy**. Today's Scripture readings are full of examples of the triumph of **joy** over sadness. Our readings invite each one of us to "Cry out with **joy** and gladness, for among us is the great and holy one of Israel." (The Responsorial Psalm). We are encouraged to live and proclaim boldly the words of St. Paul "**Rejoice** in the Lord always. I shall say it again: **rejoice**."

Our first reading comes from the prophet Zephaniah whose message is rather simple: choose **optimism** over pessimism and **joy** over sadness. Zephaniah's main message concerns the "Day of the Lord." The Book of Zephaniah was written in the age of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.) when Assyrian gods were being worshipped even in Jerusalem which was polluted by the presence of pagan shrines everywhere, even in the Temple area. Although most of Zephaniah's oracles are gloomy, today's oracle is full of **hope** and **joy** since it describes the tenderness God has for His restored people and the **joy** that their restoration evokes in God. Zephaniah's oracle directs

the remnant of Jews to "Shout for **joy**...Sing **joyfully** and be glad and exalt with all their heart!" The reason for this **rejoicing** is their deliverance from their enemies and the fact that Lord is coming to renew them. The misfortune they endured may have been punishment for their sins but God has removed that judgment and now dwells in their midst as King of Israel, as a mighty savior. God will now look over them so they should be **joyful** and **rejoice**. With God present among them the children of Israel will soon enjoy the security that they have always longed for.

The original opening words of Zephaniah's oracle-"Shout for **joy**"- are somewhat similar to the words used in today's reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians- **Rejoice**. Paul is so grateful for his people that he twice encourages them to **rejoice** and be **joyful**. Paul uses the word **joy** a dozen times in his Letter to the Philippians but the **joy** that Paul advocates is not merely the happiness that comes from enjoyment of life. The **joy** that Paul speaks about is the **joy** that one discovers **in the Lord**; the **joy** that is grounded in faith in Jesus Christ. Paul calls the Philippians and all believers to live lives of kindness, of gentle forbearance, of patience, and of willingness to forego retaliation. Paul then reminds the Philippians and all believers that the "Lord is near"-an end of time watchword acclaiming the future coming of Jesus who will set all things right. Since the Lord is near there is no reason why anxiety should be present in our lives. If people have lived righteously, the Lord will come to them as a compassionate savior rather than a severe judge. Finally, Paul reminds everyone that they should be **joyful** because God answers all their petitions. With prayerful and thankful hearts everyone knows that God will care for them and shower them with His love and peace.

Today's Gospel presents uniquely Lukan material regarding John the Baptist and the people to whom he preached. The people who took seriously the prophetic message of John the Baptist were not the religious and political officials. They seemed to pay no attention at all to John and his message. The people who were drawn to John's preaching were the **ordinary** people who live on the fringe of acceptable society. The three groups of **ordinary** people who took John's prophetic message seriously were the

crowds, tax collectors and soldiers. The political and religious leaders did not take John's message to heart.

The picture of John as a man who moves in deep **joy** is not one you hear about very often in Scripture. John is usually portrayed as a lonesome figure, with a weird wardrobe and diet who rants and raves at anyone with ears. However it should be noted that John was also a charismatic and magnetic character who intrigued people to seek him out and follow him. People don't journey into the wilderness just to get insulted; people don't become disciples for the wardrobe and diet. In John's person people could catch something of God's way and that is why in today's passage people sought him out and asked: "What must we do?" In response to their question, "What should we do?" John challenges them to carry out their daily responsibilities with concern for others and with honesty and integrity. They should engage in ethical reforms of their lives and work. John's answer to their question was to challenge their generosity and sense of fairness so that others may have reason to **rejoice**. John's answer to the crowds in general had to do with **charity**; that they share their food and clothing. When the tax collectors ask what to do, John tells them to be **honest** and **just**; keep the going rate without over-taxing people in order to make a profit for themselves. To the soldiers (who accompany the tax-collectors to protect them and give some muscle) requests, John tells them **not** to abuse their position of power to which they have access. John tells them to be **content** with their pay and stop exploiting the poor and weak. John exhorts them to be happy in doing what is **just** and stop shake-downs, bullying, strong-arming and blackmail.

John made such a deep impression upon the **ordinary** people with his prophetic message that word spread that John might possibly be the long-awaited Messiah. In fact the crowd had many reasons to believe that John was the Messiah because of his remarkable austerity which struck the imagination, the suddenness of his appearance in the wilderness, and his mighty voice which jolted them from their listlessness. Lest the crowd mistake him for the Messiah, John contrasts himself with the One who **is** to come. Everything John is and everything he does are subservient to the One who is to come. John insists that he is not worthy to undo the sandals of that long-

awaited One. John does not claim to know who the Messiah is; all he knows is that he is not. That role is for someone else, someone greater and more powerful than he. John acknowledges that his particular baptism with water was a ritual of repentance and cleansing. However the baptism of the long-awaited Messiah would be of the Spirit and fire and it would purge and transform people's souls.

The season of Advent focuses our attention on the fact that Our Lord Jesus came in the past came to live among us and He **will** return again in the future in His glory. These remaining days of Advent remind us that real **joy** is found in our relationship with God, family and friends. **Joy** comes from our knowing that we are unconditionally loved by God and we experience new life, redemption, and salvation through God's mercy. We can find true **joy** in our prayer life and in all the loving things we do for others. We must realize that **joy** is a gift of the Holy Spirit and it is one of the marks of being a faithful follower of Jesus. If we truly believe in Jesus' Gospel message then we will be people of **joy**. God invites us to choose and experience **joy** daily and share this gift with others. Have a blessed and **joyful** week.

Love & Prayers,

Fr. John

PARISH ADVENT  
PENANCE SERVICE

Our annual Parish Advent Penance Service will be held on **Wednesday, December 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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

**PRAYER FOR OUR BELOVED DECEASED**

Gracious God look with mercy upon the souls of our dear deceased family, relatives, and friends. Grant that those you have called from our homes and our hearts may enter the embrace of your faithful and everlasting love in heaven.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls, and the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

**CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE**



**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.**

Please note that on **Monday, December 24<sup>th</sup>** daily mass will **only** be celebrated at **7am** and on **Wednesday, December 26<sup>th</sup>** daily mass will **only** be celebrated at **9am**. Thanks.



**FEAST OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD  
NEW YEAR'S DAY, JANUARY 1**

**Holy Day of Obligation:**

The Vigil Mass will be celebrated on December 31<sup>st</sup> at **5 PM** and the Feast Day Masses will be celebrated on January 1<sup>st</sup> at **7:30, 9:00** and **11 AM**.

**FORMED  
YOUR DAILY DOSE OF TRUTH,  
GOODNESS, AND BEAUTY**

I am happy to announce that we have renewed our Parish Subscription to **FORMED** which is an online platform that provides access to the **best Catholic** movies, talks, e-books, audio, and video-based studies from trusted providers such as Augustine Institute, Ignatius Press, Catholic Answers, Sophia Institute Press and St. Paul Center-**right at your fingertips.** **FORMED** provides amazing **Catholic content 24/7** so that individuals and families can grow in their **Catholic faith.**

It's **free** for all our Parish Subscribers **and it is easy to register** for this program:

- . Visit **omph.formed.org**
- . Click **"Register"** and enter your name, email address and desired password.
- . You will then be ready to access all the inspiring and engaging content on **FORMED.** Look for wonderful movies and stories for the Advent and Christmas Season.

Enjoy! Fr. John

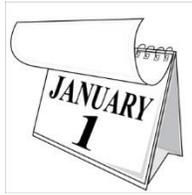
**Fr. Ed Faliskie's Mailing Address**



If you want to send Fr. Ed a Christmas card or a gift you can mail it to him at the following address:

Rev. Edmund Faliskie, C.Ss.R.  
St. Clement's Church  
231-Lake Avenue  
Saratoga Springs, New York 12866-2729

**2019 PARISH CALENDAR**



Our 2019 Parish Calendars are available in the Church Narthex. I want to express my appreciation and gratitude to **Paul L. Gravenor Home for Funerals** for sponsoring this year's calendar.

Thank you and God bless. Fr. John

**MASS INTENTIONS**

**Monday, December 17**

- 7:00      ✦ Charles & Elizabeth Tucker
- 9:00      ✦ Fr. Wojciechlos

**Tuesday, December 18**

- 7:00      ✦ Charles & Joan Tucker
- 9:00      ✦ Jim Mondo



**Wednesday, December 19**

- 7:00      ✦ Bill Hecker
- 9:00      ✦ Zbigniew & Zofia Sarnowska

**Thursday, December 20**

- 7:00      ✦ William Pratt
- 9:00      ✦ Joseph Held

**Friday, December 21, St. Peter Canisius, Priest  
and Doctor of the Church**

- 7:00      ✦ Estelle Pratt
- 9:00      ✦ Janina Statzkowska

**Saturday, December 22**

- 9:00      ✦ Sue Eisenbise
- 5:00      ✦ Ron Slover

**Sunday, December 23, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent**

- 7:30      For the Parishioners
- 9:00      ✦ Howard Nast
- 11:00     ✦ Robert & Katie Burkholder

**CHURCH SUPPORT**

Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
12-9-18	\$13,152.65	\$14,300.00	(\$1,147.35)
<b>YTD</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>YTD Needed</b>	<b>Difference</b>
12-9-18	\$302,407.47	\$343,200.00	(\$40,792.53)

**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.

**ADDORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

St. Paul believed that rejoicing was a basic disposition that we all should try to maintain, even when things don't go our way. In his short Letter to the Philippians, in fact, he spoke about rejoicing fifteen times. And let's not forget that Paul was in prison when he wrote the letter! He was not going to let his circumstances rob him of his joy. He rejoiced because he knew Jesus' love. Jesus' willingness to empty himself, become a man, and die on the cross. He writes, "I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"

We will all encounter times of trial and suffering, but Jesus asks us to rejoice whether or not the sun is shining on us. He especially wants us to rejoice as we prepare for Christmas. If Paul were here, he would urge us to keep things in perspective—to look at our lives through the lens of God's love. He would urge us never to let anxiousness rule our lives, but to strive to keep our sense of peace at all times. He would urge us to pray through the tough times and to find reasons to rejoice. Jesus has done so much for us. Let's repay him by rejoicing in his love—and sharing that joy with the people around us.

**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, Hoover & Daubert

Families.

**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.

Bishop Ronald Gainer, Phoenix Rann, Margaret Gardner, Abigail Lowe-Critchfield, Michael Lillis, Richard Warner, Anna Leshner, Florence Windish, Gloria Reynolds, Patrick Michael Ward, Carlos Luciano Sr., Margot Arden, Mary Kay Hensel, Gerald Gigliotti, Fr. Paul Bryan, CSSR, Francis Gatti, Walter Benning., Antonia Scribani, Jean Mash, John Mento, Joseph John Lewis & Joe Ferrara.

**BULLETIN TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE**

The Bulletin will be transmitted to the printer on **December 20<sup>th</sup> for the December 30 bulletin.**

**The January 6<sup>th</sup> bulletin will be transmitted to the printer on December 27**



**Religious Education Corner:**

**Our RE Class Schedule For The Remainder  
Of 2018 And Beyond Is As Follows:**

**Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> – RE Classes In Session**

**Merry Christmas!**

**Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> – NO RE Classes**

**Happy New Year 2019!**

**Sunday, December 30<sup>th</sup> – NO RE Classes**

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

**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 are 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>
Christmas Flowers	12/16/2018	flowers
Christmas	12/25/2018	christmas
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**.

### RADIATE YOUTH GROUP



News from Radiate Youth Group: Fan the Fire Youth Rally was an amazing experience where we were reminded of the importance of family and of family outside of the family. We were brought closer to Jesus through Eucharistic Adoration and confession. God spoke to our young people in many ways on this day. Thank you for remembering us in prayer!

Radiate Youth Group has taken over the care of the OMPH monument garden at Cedar Hill Cemetery. Through serving in this way, we hope to remember our lost loved ones fondly and show our respect for them and their families.

Next Radiate Youth Group meeting is **today** from 3:30-5:30 in the Bernadine Center. See narthex board for more details. In His Service, Denise Ives

### 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).

### BENEVOLENT SOCIETY



In celebration of Thanksgiving and Christmas, the parish's Benevolent Society would like to say thank you for the GIFT of supporting 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, Brinks, The Knights of Columbus and the Ladies Auxiliary, OMPH Vacation Bible School, Peters Porches, Dot to Dot ministries, Boy Scout Troops 73, 115, & 363, Venture Crew 363, Al's Service Center, Sauder's Eggs, and the OMPH School and Religious Education students. Matthew 25 also raised funds for us.

Several parish families who lost loved ones requested donations to the Benevolent Society; we are humbled by this loving gesture. We are also thankful for the local grocery stores that do regular weekly donations: Weisers, Redners, Weis, and Aldi.

Last and CERTAINLY not least: this year our list of volunteers has AGAIN increased to over 95 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!

### BUY GIFT CARDS

### SUPPORT OMPH CATHOLIC SCHOOL!

Gift cards will be available for purchase on Sundays in the parish office **after the 7:30 a.m. Mass, before and after the 9 a.m. Mass, and before the 11 a.m. Mass**. Funds will be used toward the Student Support Scholarship, which benefits all students attending OMPH Catholic School. Kindly consider buying gift cards at no extra cost to you to pay for your groceries, gas, and other items as well as to give as gifts. *We accept cash or check as payment.*

