

My Dear Parishioners,

Every year Christmas light displays seem to get bigger and larger. A home in Denver, Colorado boasts of 135,000 lights. Another home as seen on U-Tube has 345,000 lights synchronized to the song "Amazing Grace." This pales against a display started by the Osbourne family in Little Rock, Arkansas. Their display contains nearly nine hundred thousand lights. All these lights would be meaningless if it were not for the **Light** that is spoken about in today's Gospel. Jesus came as a **light** in the darkness. He is the **Light** of the world. Whether we string lights on our Christmas trees and on our homes or light a third candle (the rose one on our Advent Wreath) all of us today are reminded that Jesus is **The Light** and we are **Children of the Light**.

Light is the central image and theme in today's Scripture readings. In our first reading (from the prophet Isaiah) the image of **light** is connected with the impact of God's spirit. People are sometimes surprised to learn that there was more than one Isaiah. In fact Scripture scholars tell us there were at least three individual prophets named Isaiah. Scripture scholars came to this conclusion based on the chronology of events reported in the Book of Isaiah. The first part of the book (chs. 1-39) deals with the events during the monarchy (742-687 BC); the second section (chs. 40-55) treats the exile in Babylon (587-538 BC); and the last part (chs. 56-66) speaks of the Jewish Exiles return to Jerusalem (538-500 BC). No one person could have lived long enough to cover all these events spanning over some 250 years.

Today's passage is from Third Isaiah whose task was to encourage the flagging spirits of the returned Exiles. This familiar oracle brims over with enthusiasm of a prophet totally committed to God's service. Today's passage comes from the book's closing chapters celebrating Israel's return to God. The prophet Isaiah is thrilled to be the one to bring such good news to God's people. Isaiah breaks out into song as he experiences God as **light**. Isaiah experiences the power of God's spirit and he becomes aware of his messianic (anointed) mission to preach and bring glad tidings to others. The recipients of his preaching are the depressed postexilic

community. They are prisoners/captives who now learn that their sentence is over. Isaiah reminds his audience that God has delivered them from captivity and would now help them rebuild. God has granted them a Jubilee year. God will repair the injuries suffered by His people. Using marital imagery, Isaiah assures his audience that God will renew His special covenantal relationship with them. Just as any bride or groom can remember their wedding day so should they remember God's special love for them (in bad times as well as good) and not lose heart in the face of all that surrounded them.

St. Paul at the end of his First Letter to the Thessalonians (today's Second Reading) reminds disgruntled Christians who are worry-warts that they should be joyous because they **already live** in the **Light of Christ**. He reminds them not to be discouraged because of the delay in Jesus' Second Coming. Rather they should prepare themselves for His return by active participation in the Christian life. If they do so they will **always** be **children of the light**. Paul emphasizes three pieces of good advice that summarizes what they should do: rejoice, pray and render thanks to God. Paul summons the Thessalonians to take their faith seriously, to heed the true prophetic message, to observe the commandments, and to refrain from wickedness. Like the Thessalonians we too will remain **children of the light** if we rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, use our spiritual gifts, and refrain from every kind of evil.

Today's Gospel passage is taken from St. John's Gospel. The character of John the Baptist is portrayed much differently in John's Gospel than in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. In John's Gospel, John the Baptist is never identified as the Baptist. He is not characterized as the precursor or forerunner of Jesus. In fact John is not even seen as a messianic figure of any kind. His only function is to **give testimony** to Jesus.

Today's Gospel passage begins with the absence of the **light**. John the Baptist is a witness to speak for the **light** but he is not the **light**. John is the rugged figure whose task is described by the evangelists as laying low mountains and hills and

shaping a path through the wasteland. He is God's sculptor giving shape and form to an indeterminate mass of people. He always insists on the essential place of the **light**. When he faces critical opposition he points away from himself to his work in preparing for the one to come. John keeps declaring "I am not" in order to point to the one who can say "I am". John rejects the titles of Messiah, Elijah, and the Prophet. He only settles for the designation "herald"; thereby identifying in terms of the one who sent him and the ones for whom he was sent. The identity of the one coming after John is unknown but John is clear in his own mind that he is **not** the **light**. John must make way for the **light** and he creates a space for the **light** to shine through. When people see and recognize the true **Light** John's own task is finished. John the Baptist's role can only be appreciated fully when the **Light** does come in the person of Jesus.

Like Isaiah, Paul and John the Baptist, **all of us** are asked to make way for the **Light**. None of us is the **light**. Our role is to let the **light** shine through the chunks of solid darkness that litter our human landscape. The season of Advent calls on us to make what contribution we can. The season challenges us to look first at ourselves and then work quietly on the darkness that hides within us: the selfishness, the unforgiveness, and the lack of love that keeps the **light** of Good News from so many people. On the larger social issues (peace and justice) which require the witness of a caring community, we are challenged by the Gospel to work together. The **light** that Isaiah and John the Baptist proclaims continues to shine within us and the **light** that radiates from us in our lives of service and integrity "testifies" to the **Light of Christ** in our midst. Have a blessed week and be a **light** within your family, school, work-place, church and community.

Love & prayers,

Fr. John

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

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**.

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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**.

Please note that on **Tuesday, December 26th** mass will only be celebrated at **9am**. Thank you.



NEW YEAR'S MASSES

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

NEW YEAR'S DAY, JANUARY 1

**Please note that Mass will be celebrated at:
7:30, 9, and 11AM.**

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 4PM at 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 18

7:00 †Bill Hecker

9:00 †Jack Rutkowski

Tuesday, December 19

7:00 †Nescot Family

9:00 †Katie Lartique

Wednesday, December 20

7:00 †Charles & Joan Hecker

9:00 †A. John Coleman

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

7:00 †Warren & Alverta Hecker

9:00 †Robert Metcalf

Friday, December 22

7:00 †Ron Slover

9:00 †Sue Eisenbise

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

9:00 †Estelle Pratt

5:00 †Intentions in the Prayer Box

Sunday, December 24, 4th Sunday in Advent

7:30 For the Parishioners

9:00 †Souls in Purgatory

11:00 †Jim Mondo

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 Holbriiter, Michael Lillis and Richard Warner, Jim Lehmier, Tonya Stoner, Kevin Kaiser.

December 17: Julius Uribe, Jim Huber, Karen & Carol Wank

CHURCH SUPPORT

Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
12-10-17	\$11,092.78	\$14,950.00	(\$3,857.22)
YTD	Amount	YTD Needed	Difference
12-10-17	\$320,205.39	\$358,800.00	(\$38,594.61)

The annual **Retirement Fund for Religious Collection** will be taken **TODAY**. 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

Think about the Virgin Mary. Try to picture her and what she must have been thinking a few days before Jesus was born. Like every expectant mother, she was probably alert to every movement of the child inside of her. Imagine her putting her hands on her stomach and smiling every time the baby moved—even when he kicked hard! Picture her constantly having to adjust her position when she sat, taking care when she walked, getting enough sleep, and getting her home ready to welcome her baby. Everything was focused on caring for the life growing within her.

Just as Mary was alert to the movements of the baby inside her, we can be alert to the movements of the Holy Spirit inside us. Of course, this was easier for Mary. Her entire body had changed during her pregnancy. There was no way not to be alert to Jesus! So don't feel too bad for yourself.

Here is one way that you can get better at sensing God's presence throughout your day. Try to set aside a few times each day when you will stop for a moment and turn to the Lord. Perhaps you can begin your day with a moment of prayer and then try to stop every three hours and pray and then commend yourself to the Lord just before bed.

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 Florence Kametz.

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 bulletin must be transmitted to the printer on December 28 for the January 7 bulletin.

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!

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



Religious Education Corner:

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

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 School's** 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.

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Athletic Event Volunteers

The Athletic Department is in need of winter sport volunteers. If you are interested volunteering or are a family of Crusader athletes that are required to volunteer 10 hours at athletic contests, please [click here](#) to view the dates/times of the games and to sign-up! Please contact Diana Anater at danater@lchsyes.org with any questions.

There is an urgent need for volunteers for Lancaster Catholic's basketball tip-off tournament this weekend.

Mid-Term Schedule

Mid-Terms begin on *January 16-18th*. The schedule of exams can be found on the Student page on lchsyes.org or by [clicking here](#).

Rosary in Honor of the Family

The Knights of Columbus are inviting all members of OMPH to participate in the organization's 5th Sunday Rosary Program. This service will be conducted after the 11 am mass on December 31st. The Rosary will be dedicated to the families of OMPH parish.

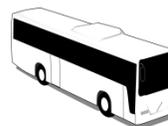
The Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882, by the Venerable Father Michael McGivney, a priest at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn. With charity as its first principle, the organization has grown to 1.88 million members worldwide. Last year, the Knights donated more than 173 million and more than 71.5 million hours of service to charitable causes.

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!

4⁵th MARCH FOR LIFE- JANUARY 19



Four buses will leave from St. Leo's parish in Lancaster at **8 AM and**

returning at 9 PM. Suggested bus fare is \$10 a person, and \$25 per family of 3 or more, with reduced fares and plenty of free bus seats available. To reserve a **seat call Rosie Gross at 717-397-6966.**