

My Dear Parishioners,

Today's Feast of the Most Holy Family invites us to consider how the Mystery of Jesus' Incarnation (God becoming Flesh) has something special to say to all our families. Jesus was born into and grew up in a family structure. In becoming part of the human family Jesus revealed His Father's committed love for the human family. The marvel of Christmas is to acknowledge with the eyes of faith that the Baby Jesus born in Bethlehem is the Eternal Son of God. The Father could have sent His Son into our world as a fully grown adult. After all, Jesus' mission was accomplished within the span of some three years after He had reached the rabbinic age of thirty. The questions then arise: Why did the Father wish His Son to go through conception, birth, infancy, adolescence and young adulthood? Why did the Father ask His Son to begin His life on earth within a human family and to live a full human life? The reason is that the Father wanted to give a new sanctity to human existence. The Second Vatican Council explains this truth in its document **Constitution on the Church in the Modern World** (22):

“By His Incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every human person. He worked with human hands, thought with a human mind, acted by human choice, and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.... He showed us the way, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on a new meaning.”

The second reason why the Father brought His Son into our world within a family structure is because God wanted the earthly beginnings of Jesus to reflect the eternal origin of the Trinity. God's life is a family life; from all eternity the Father gives life and being to His Son through the love of the Holy Spirit.

The Church in today's liturgy proposes that the Most Holy Family (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) is a model to be imitated and followed by all. But we must realize that the ultimate model of family life is the life of God Himself (The Most Holy Trinity). As St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “I kneel before God from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.” The best word that summarizes the inner life of the Triune God is **relationships**. The Father gives Himself

completely to the Son, the Son responds with complete absorption in His Father, and both Father and Son are devoted to each other in the unifying love of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Family reflects this relationship of the Triune God as all three persons (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) are devoted to each other in unifying love. Today's Gospel passage from St. Luke reminds us of that unifying love which was present within the Holy Family.

Today's Gospel episode is the story of the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. This is the only story in the canonical Gospels that portrays Jesus as an adolescent. This story should be understood on two levels. The first level is a theological one. The dynamic of this story leads to the declaration by Jesus that He must be in His Father's house (2:49) doing His Father's work. Jesus pronounces who He truly is in a statement that discloses His Divine Identity. While that revelation is important, it is not the only significant claim of St. Luke's story. The second level is that of the significance of the “Holy Family.” These two levels are connected in that the Gospel insists that the extraordinary is found in the ordinary.

Luke's Gospel tells us that Jesus was brought up in Nazareth by His parents Mary and Joseph. Like any good Jewish son He lived under their authority. From them Jesus would have His first experience of being loved, of being held, of being listened to, and of being nurtured. Jesus was also a member of the extended Jewish family which unlike our nuclear family included every kind of kinship no matter how remote. As we heard in today's passage, when Jesus was 12 years old, He and His parents and His extended Jewish family went to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. When an Eastern caravan like the one for a Passover celebration got under way there was plenty of noise, confusion, and excitement. Usually the women started earlier than the men each day because their travel was slower. The two groups would not meet until both had reached the evening encampment. It was not through carelessness, then, that Mary and Joseph did not miss their son Jesus. No doubt Joseph thought Jesus was with Mary and the women and Mary thought He was with Joseph and the men. Eventually realizing He was not among their relatives and friends Joseph and Mary began a frantic search for their lost child.

During the Passover season it was the custom of the Sanhedrin to meet publicly to discuss religious questions and matters for all who were interested. The Rabbis sat on a chair with their pupils sitting on the ground at their feet. Jesus searching for knowledge like an eager student was listening to them and asking them questions. Although a popular tradition (found in some religious art) suggests that Jesus was teaching in the temple, the text does not state this. Jesus was merely part of the exchange of ideas.

Upon finding the child Jesus, Mary (like any mother finding a lost child) was probably torn between hugging and scolding Him. Mary's response to Jesus rings true for every parent. Mary informs the young Jesus that Joseph and she had been looking for Him with great anxiety. Jesus took the name "father" from Mary's imputation of it to Joseph and gave it to God: "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house (namely the Temple)." This was Jesus' first recorded public utterance and it reveals that His reflections had led Him to knowing something of who He was. It should be noted that there was no conflict between Jesus' responsibilities of sonship in His relationship with Joseph and Mary and His role of sonship in His union with God the Father. He was faithful to both. Whatever He knew of His special relationship to God it did not cause Him to look down on His parents. In the end Jesus returns to Mary and Joseph living a life of obedience with them and growing into adulthood and assuming His public ministry.

The Holy Family embodies values that transcend cultural shifts and the passage of time. Acknowledging that our concept of family has changed rather dramatically over the centuries we can see still see that the Holy Family models for us numerous values that are crucial for the benefit and survival our own families. These values are acceptance, faith, humility, kindness, loyalty, love, respect, patience, trust and understanding. As we begin 2019, as parents and children, let us make a promise to try and incorporate these values into our daily living. If we do so then all our families will become "holy" families.

Love & Prayers,

Fr. John

PS On this Feast of the Most Holy Family may we give thanks to our God for the **gift of family**. I hope and pray that during the new year of 2019 we all will take on the Christ-like ministry of being **family** to one another. May God shower abundant blessings upon all of us during this New Year. Happy and Blessed 2019!

MANDATE RENEWAL

On **January 16th** 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.**

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.

COOKIE SALE

Your Generosity and Kindness was Overwhelming. Sincerest thanks to OMPH Parish for the tremendous support of the Cookie Sale. Over \$3,800 was raised and these funds will provide 96,600 meals to the children in Haiti! Overall, the Cookie Sale raised enough money to provide 4.3 million meals in 2019. Special thanks to all the kids who participated in so many ways to make this year's Cookie Sale the best year ever.



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

FEAST OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

NEW YEAR'S DAY, JANUARY 1

Holy Day of Obligation:



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

Please note that daily mass on December 31st will only be celebrated at 7AM.

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

MARCH FOR LIFE



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

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 13th!** 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.

MASS INTENTIONS

Monday, December 31

7:00 Special Intention
5:00 For the Parishioners

Tuesday, January 1, Solemnity of Mary

7:00 For the Partishioners
9:00 For the Parishioners
7:00 For the Parishioners

Wednesday, January 2, St. Basil the Great & St. Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops & Doctors of the Church

7:00 †Lenie Foley
9:00 †Bob Foley

Thursday, January 3, Most Holy Name of Jesus

7:00 †Dave Rufe
9:00 †Ruth Long

Friday, January 4, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,

Religious

7:00 †Eleanor Rufe
9:00 †Hazel Gensemer

Saturday, January 5, St. John Neumann, Bishop

9:00 †Jim Mondo
5:00 †Joseph McGowan

Sunday, Jnuary 6, The Epiphany of the Lord

7:30 For the Parishioners
9:00 †Anthony Colatta
11:00 †Neil Gruber

CHURCH  SUPPORT

Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
12-23-18	\$.00	\$14,300.00	(\$)
YTD	Amount	YTD Needed	Difference
12-23-18	\$	\$.00	(\$)

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

The statistics show that in many developed countries, 20 percent of the population is caring for ill, disabled, or aged family members. And they are spending an average of 20 hours per week doing it.

The Feast of the Holy Family tells us that caring for an elderly family member brings unexpected blessings: forgiveness of sins, spiritual treasures. Yes, it can be a burden at times, but the blessings far outweigh the burden.

Blessing might not be the first thing you think of though. The idea of being a caregiver can be scary. Financial concerns, emotional strain, and burnout are real issues. You might struggle to find time to recharge yourself, or have trouble avoiding sibling resentments.

If you are currently caring for an elderly loved one, take heart! God is pleased by your efforts and is pouring out grace on you. If you are on the receiving end, know that you are a blessing to your loved ones. If you anticipate a time when you will need to do more for your parents, don't worry. Everything you do to honor and care for them will bless you.

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 Joseph McGowan.

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 26th**. 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

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.

million members worldwide. Last year, the Knights donated more than 173 million and more than 71.5 million hours of service to charitable cause

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>
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**.

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 30th**. 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