

Connections...

December 23, 2001 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

+ *The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."* Matthew 1:18-24

A parent's dream

From the moment a couple learns that they will be parents, they begin to dream about and dream for their child.

The first dreams are for a safe birth, a strong and complete body, good health and physical development. Then parents dream that their son or daughter will excel in sports, master the sciences, distinguish themselves in the arts, music or literature. They may even dare to dream that their child may one day be elected President, quarterback the Forty-niners, sing at the Met, or conquer Wall Street.

Along the way, of course, the dreams will change. Where they once dreamt about the Nobel Prize, Mom and Dad will now setting for passing algebra. The dream of a World Series ring is quickly forgotten when anguished parents wait and hope that their son will walk again or that their daughter will wake up after a horrible accident. The dream of a Bill Gates-like fortune all but disappears when Mom and Dad desperately pray for their child's safe return from a dangerous sojourn into the world of drugs, sex and violence.

Joseph dreamt dreams for his family as well. This Sunday and next we will hear about two of his "dreams" as recounted in the Gospel of Matthew. In today's Gospel, the angel assures Joseph that he should not fear about taking his beloved Mary as his wife despite her pregnancy, that his compassion and love for her will not be disappointed. Next week, the Sunday after Christmas, we will hear the angel tell Joseph to take his family to Egypt to escape King Herod's murderous search for the child.

Fear, disappointment, adversity and tragedy will change and alter our more grandiose dreams for our children. But, as Joseph learns from his dreams, the most important things, we can dream for our children is that they know the love and safety of a family, the acceptance and forgiveness of understanding parents, the knowledge and wisdom of the God of graciousness and peace.

CONNECTION: Christmas is the season of hope that the "dreams" of every family for happiness, peace, forgiveness, and compassion be realized. In this season and in every season, may Joseph be our model for making those dreams a reality: like Joseph, may we possess the openness of heart and spirit to behold God's presence in all things; like Joseph, may we possess the humility and selflessness to seek understanding and acceptance within our families even at the cost of our own expectations and hopes; like Joseph may we possess the courage and commitment to be sources of affirmation and support for our spouses and children. ♦

Looking Ahead

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23

7:30am Mass (Cantor & Organ)
9:30am Mass (Choir & Organ)
11:30am Mass (*Spiritu* Contemporary Group)
1:00pm Greening of the Church (Church/Plaza)
1:00pm Hallelujah Chorus (Choir room)
2:00pm 7th & 8th Grade Schola (Choir room)
3:00pm *Hosanna* (Choir room)
4:00pm Reconciliation Service (Church)
6:15pm Mass (No music)
7:00pm Greening of the Church (Church/Plaza)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE

5:00pm Christmas Eve Vigil Mass
7:00pm Christmas Eve Vigil Mass
11:00pm Christmas Eve Vigil Mass

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25 – CHRISTMAS

8:00am Mass for Christmas Day
10:00am Mass for Christmas Day
1:30pm Script/Comm (Presbyterian Homes)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26

8:30am Word/Eucharist (Chapel)
6:30pm Cantor Rehearsal (Church)
7:15pm Choir practice (Choir Room)
7:00pm Room Visits (New Brighton CC)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27

8:30am Mass (Chapel)
2:00pm Mass (St. Anthony)
7:00pm Room Visits (Innsbruck)
7:15pm Script/Comm (Trevilla)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28

8:30am Mass (Chapel)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29

4:30pm Mass (Cantor & Organ)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30

7:30am Mass (Cantor & Organ)
9:30am Mass (Choir & Organ)
11:30am Mass (*Spiritu* Contemporary Group)
1:00pm Hallelujah Chorus (Choir room)
2:00pm 7th & 8th Grade Schola (Choir room)
3:00pm *Hosanna* (Choir room)
6:15pm Mass (No music)

PLEASE NOTE: The parish office is will close at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, December 24 and at 4:00 p.m. the rest of the week.



Before I forget...

- The Virgin's name was Mary. (Luke 1:27)
- Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. (The Hail Mary)

One of the main characters in our Advent scriptures is Mary of Nazareth. We Roman Catholics have always had a deep devotion to Mary, the mother of God. We don't worship Mary, as some ungenerous Christians used to claim. Our Catholic imaginations love the stories about Mary... the visit by the Angel Gabriel, the birth of her Child in the cave in Bethlehem, the child in her arms, and the Pieta, which depicts her receiving the dead body of her Son.

In the Middle Ages, when many people were uneducated and unable to read, the Church taught people the Rosary. The educated prayed the Psalms and read Scripture. With time, almost every Catholic, educated and uneducated, prayed the Rosary. For generations, especially during times of persecution, it was one of the most important means of keeping the people in touch with truths of the faith. Maybe in our times, when many young people are unfamiliar with Scripture and the main tenets of the faith and tradition, maybe, just maybe, we could grow in our faith by a renewal devotion to Mary through the Rosary.

Recitation of the rosary, and meditation on the fifteen different mysteries (the joyful, the sorrowful, the glorious) has nothing to do with being a progressive or a traditional Catholic. Some of the greatest minds of our times, like Dorothy Day and the German theologian Karl Rahner, know the importance of a devotion to Mary and the rosary. Some days it's difficult to find the words we want to pray; there is nothing wrong with memorized prayers. Maybe the rosary can help us lift up our minds and hearts to God through Mary.

When young Matthew Murlowski was dying at Hennepin County a few years ago, I was moved as the family prayed the Rosary around Matt's bed... praying, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death." Recently, a second-grader in the parish school told me that he is trying to break a habit and is saying the rosary as he is falling asleep at night. Abby Sherry was our Pastoral Minister's grandmother (Anne Marie). I used to visit her at the Monticello-Big Lake Nursing Home. When I asked her how she was, she'd hold up her rosary and tell me, "With this man (pointing to the crucifix) and this woman (pointing to her rosary beads and referring to Mary), I have very few problems." Her devotion to Mary and the rosary kept Abby (in her 90's) young at heart and an extremely happy person. Abby Sherry was a great teacher in my life.

Try using the rosary and the fifteen mysteries as a way to look at your own life. The Angel Gabriel speaks to Mary for God. Mary makes the greatest commitment of her life. How committed am I to God? Once I say "yes" do I stay faithful to "yes"? Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth. They supported each other. Who supports you in your commitments? Mary gives birth to Jesus. His birth made a great difference. Do you have opportunities to give birth to a better way of living for God? Mary and Joseph bring their child to the temple. They went public. Is your faith lived publicly or privately? Joseph and Mary find their lost son in the temple. They had to let him mature and become independent. Are we maturing in our relationship to God?

Jesus prays after the last supper and before he is arrested. How do we deal with our God when we are in mental or emotional pain? Jesus was arrested and scourged before he was crucified. Have you ever felt mocked or hurt? He was crowned with thorns. What hurts the most in your life as you try to stay true to God? Jesus carries his cross and someone helps him. Trying to do the right thing can be painful. Who helps you when life is painful? Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies. Have you ever felt that God has abandoned you? What are your "Good Fridays" like?

Jesus Christ rises to new life. After a terrible experience, did you come out of it more alive than ever? Jesus returns to the Father. Have you ever let go of the familiar and enjoyed a new life with God? The Holy Spirit comes down upon the apostles. Have you ever felt that the Spirit was working in your life? Mary is assumed into heaven. Imagine Mary in glory. Are you ever aware of the joy that comes from being in love with God? And Mary is crowned the Queen of Heaven. As you journey through life, what do you want to be remembered for?

Mary is the Mother of the Christ and of the Church. She certainly deserves to be an important part and guide on our spiritual journey. Is it time to deepen your devotion to the Virgin Mother? Who doesn't love a mother?

Fr. Bill

2002 Offering Envelopes - All registered parishioners of St. John's should have received their 2002 Offering Envelopes in the mail. If you have not received your envelopes please contact Shelli Nelson at 651-633-8333 ext. 1233.

Advent & Christmas Worship Schedule

Reconciliation Services
Sunday, December 23—4:00 p.m.

Greening of St. John's Church
Sunday, December 23
1:00—3:30 p.m.
7:00—10:00 p.m.

Mass on Christmas Eve
5:00 p.m.** Festival Eucharist
7:00 p.m.** Festival Eucharist
11:00 p.m. Festival Eucharist
(11:00 p.m. Mass Prelude music beginning at 10:15 p.m.)

Mass on Christmas Day
8:00 a.m.** Festival Eucharist
10:00 a.m.** Festival Eucharist
** Prelude music for organ & brass begins thirty minutes before Mass

Feast of Mary, Mother of God
Monday, December 31, 2001
5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Vigil Mass
Followed by Potluck Hors d'oeuvres

Tuesday, January 1, 2002
10:00 a.m. Festival Eucharist

Epiphany Vespers
Sunday, January 6, 2002
4:00 p.m.

School News...

May the Lord of surprises bless you beyond your fondest dreams! May the Lord bless you with abundant patience as you prepare for the coming of His Son—may you know the joys of Christmas present and recall the happy memories of Christmas Past, as we work together to make the Christmases of the Future those of peace on earth and good will toward all humanity. May the Lord bless and keep you in the palm of his hand. A blessed Christmas and joy-filled New Year!

SPAC UPDATE

The School Principal's Advisory Committee (SPAC) met December 12. Sr. Gwendolin reported students are busy preparing for Christmas, with Advent prayer services, nursing home service projects, Santa's Secret Shop, and collections for children in New York and the Listening House in St. Paul. The school Christmas program was held Thursday, December 13, with the theme 'Santa's St. John's Search.'

Thanks to parents and teachers for successful conferences in November. Also, thanks to the many school volunteers: in classrooms, on field trips, at the Book Fair and at Santa's Secret Shop.

SPAC has recommended tuition rates for the 2002-2003 school year, which have been approved by the Parish Finance Committee. School registration for new kindergarteners will be held on January 27, as part of Catholic Schools Week.

Parents with questions or concerns about the day-to-day operations of the school are asked to call Sr. Gwendolin at 651-633-1522.

Faith Formation...

ELEMENTARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Classes will resume the week of Jan. 15/16. There are NO CLASSES Dec. 25/26, Jan. 1/2 & Jan. 8/9. Happy Holidays!

CELEBRATE THE WORD

Celebrate the Word will resume on Jan. 6. We will have our first gathering in the new chapel. We are still in need of volunteers for this program. All materials are provided. Please call Teresa Nueman at 651-633-1540 ext. 1234.

SEEKERS (Adult Theological Book Club)

We are seeking to form an adult faith. We read a wide variety of books, and raise a variety of questions. You are always welcome to join us, we ask only that you read the book. The book for January is **Papal Sin** by Garry Wills (Image Books, Doubleday). We will meet Thursday, January 31, 7-8:30 p.m., St. Vincent De Paul Room. Questions call Mary Ann Zervas at 651-633-1540.

Allergy sensitive?
Incense Free Masses
Saturday - 4:30 p.m.
Sunday - 6:15 p.m.

Pastoral Ministry...

If you are looking for a new volunteer ministry in 2002, we have several friends in our nursing homes who could use a special visitor – if you are interested in doing a one-to-one special friendship. call Anne Marie at 651-633-8333 for more information.

Thanks to all nursing home ministry, Befrienders, and Eucharistic Ministers at Unity who continue their ministries through these busy holiday times – it is clearly when it is often most needed.

If you know someone or you yourself are feeling lonely or isolated at home or in need of a faithful, supportive friend, please consider inviting a Befriender to be with you during these times. Call Anne Marie if you would like to know more at 651-633-8333.

Wishes for safe travels and restful days to all who begin winter get-away time – you will be missed!

PLEASE PRAY FOR

Those in our community who are ill:

Beau Anderson, John Battmer, Donald Beaubien, Marcelline Beseler, Marcella Boomer, Helen Cmiel, Ann Czech, Louis Czech, Leona Doroff, Lenore Dougherty, Joe Fellner, Bernadette Hearn, Norris Hoium, Bernice Hopkins, Henry Horbatuck, Br. Joseph Katzmarek, Michael Kavanagh, Kevin Keenan, Herb Loscheider, Joe Maciaszek, Nancy Mehrer, Rupert Meyer, Irene Mitchell, Corliss Moore, Howard Morris, Donna Murphy, Georgianne Myers, Marjorie Peterson, Norman Petri, Ben Ruebbelke, Dennis Ryan, Ed & Eleanor Stich, Richard St. Germain, Sr., Dan Sebesta, Mary Shea, Bob Sorem, Frances Vonacek, Mildred Werner, Linda Zappa, Clair Pesek (father of Tom), Chuck & Catherine Busher.

The families and souls of those who recently have died:

Celina Decheine, Leonard Bles

PRAYER LINE

Call one of these numbers with your prayer requests.

All requests are confidential.

651-633-1618

763-784-5254

651-636-5251

Youth Newz...

Junior high Odyssey (faith formation) students have completed the first two sessions of the program focusing on bible study. Odyssey will begin again in January and students will be studying “moral decision making”. A “parents only” session will be held on January 9, at 4:45 or 6:30 p.m. Students sessions will resume January 16.

The second Senior High Service Club has ended. Over 15 students participated in the projects including cleaning, baking and playing games with residents. They celebrated their success with an evening of rock climbing.

Jr. High Live has ended and will resume January 16. The junior high participants have made great use of the 6 games tables in the youth room as well as the space in general.

Confirmation students are now focusing on the Holy Spirit in our regular sessions. Over 200 people attended the candidate/sponsor evening retreat. We spent the time focusing on relationships with each other and our images of God. The first of these retreats is over. The theme for each retreat is discipleship.

All 7-12th graders are invited to spend Monday, January 21, at Afton Alps, skiing and snowboarding. Participants will leave St. John's gym entrance at 10:00 a.m. and return at 7:00 p.m. The cost for the trip, \$25, includes transportation and a lift ticket. Equipment rental is extra. You will also need to pack a lunch and dinner or bring money for food. Chaperones are needed for this event and chaperones will be given a free lift ticket. Please submit a permission slip and money to Rebecca Janicke by January 14. See the *Newzpaper* for more details or contact Sara at 763-754-7666.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER MEMORIALS



If you would like to remember someone you have lost, or honor someone special in your life, during the Christmas Season, we invite you to donate, in their name, to the Christmas plant, wreath & tree fund. We have much additional space to decorate this year! To participate, please complete the form below and send it with \$20 (suggested amount) to the pastoral center or drop in the Sunday collection. We will accept donations through Christmas & will acknowledge them in January bulletins.

In Memory Of / In Honor Of (circle one):

From: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Circle of Women...

The Circle of Women will take a winter break and resume our meetings on Thursday, January 10, 2002. Happy Holidays! See you in January!

Music Notes...

We are seeking pianists and other instrumentalists to provide occasional music at the Sunday, 6:15 p.m. Mass. Contact Cheri Sykes at 651-633-8333 ext. 1231.

Bulletin Board...

We want to thank St. John's parish, especially Father Michael, Jay, Ann, Loretta and her committee for all of their help and support at this difficult time. It is deeply appreciated.
The Family of Leonard Bles

Weekly Collection

Last Week	ACTUAL	GOAL	CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
12/9	\$35,361	\$31,280	\$12,474
12/16	\$30,402	\$31,813	\$12,449

SINCE: July 1, 2001

			To Date
12/9	\$615,851	\$609,488	\$3,571,619
12/16	\$646,253	\$641,301	\$3,584,068

Children

12/9	\$133.00
12/16	\$28.00

Immaculate Conception

\$2,367

Thank you for your support!

YEAR END GIFTS... If you wish to make a contribution to St. John's for credit in the 2001 tax year, the check must be dated NO LATER than 12/31/01 and must be received in the parish office by January 3, 2002. If you wish to make a gift of stock before the end of the tax year, please contact Bob Mike, Parish Administrator, 651-633-8333. Thank you for your support!

The parish exists to proclaim the Word of God; to celebrate the Eucharist; to teach our Tradition; to bring comfort to the sick, dying and grieving; to introduce children and youth to Roman Catholic Christian living; to work for justice; to provide charity to those in need; to build up community; to celebrate the love of couples; to bring God's forgiveness to people; to journey together to God's kingdom.

We depend on your generous stewardship in a special way at Christmas and year's end. Please remember the faith community at Christmas. Thank you for your constant generosity.

Fr. Bill Murtaugh

Liturgy News...

ABOUT OUR NEW NATIVITY SCENE

Through the generosity of donors and memorials received, Saint John the Baptist Arts and Environment Committee commissioned select pieces of a hand-carved wooden crèche imported from Italy. Italy is the home of the Nativity scene tradition begun by Saint Francis of Assisi, and out of this tradition come the generations old Master Woodcarving Trade. Of the nineteen pieces available in this set, we have already unveiled five sculptures especially created for our Parish Church in New Brighton!

This year we are pleased to present the **Three Kings**, given to the Glory of God *by* Bea and Richard Schonhardt in honor of their children and grandchildren.

Two additional sheep were also generously given, one from the Funeral Luncheon Committee and the other anonymously.

Following each liturgy, please come and view this splendid creation nestled in the poinsettias behind the Altar. There is still room in the Inn for shepherds, ox and ass and camel and driver. How about a Golden Retriever? Father Bill, are you listening?

RESTORATION OF STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

When looking at the newly restored windows from the old church, you may notice some cracks in the glass. As these windows are antiques dating back to 1902, it was decided to leave as much of the original glass intact. By doing so, we have retained the integrity and value of the windows as antiques. Cracks have been glued and leading strengthened or replaced where necessary. Glass has also been replaced in a few instances where it was non-existent.

Birthright

Caring help for pregnant women.

651-646-7033 – St. Paul
763-757-0715 – Coon Rapids