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the

Liturgical

flame

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF ST. STEPHEN THE MARTYR
LITURGICAL MINISTERS

Happy Birthday Jesus!!!

As I looked at the man reflected in the glass, I wondered how he got there. He was waiting for Fr Chi to start 6:30 mass. He would be the deacon to serve Father, the Word and the Altar. He was now a changed man. But what happened?

As a small child I was in love with Jesus. I waited for Christmas to come every year because this was baby Jesus' birthday. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and the shepherds were all in place, the tree was finished, and the church was decorated. I knew baby Jesus loved me, and I loved Him. It was the holiest time of the year. In fifth grade I studied my Latin so I could serve on the altar, and be closer to Jesus. I went to daily mass.

All was right in the world.

However, in my teen years, something happened. I needed help from Jesus, but no help came. After begging for help, the pain became so great that I turned from Jesus and all that He stood for. Christmas was now a time for self and what I could get out of it. I felt completely alone. I had to watch out for me since no one else would. I needed something to fill the hole left inside me. My own ego now knew what was best for me. Girls, alcohol, and later drugs were my new companions. In college I fell deeper in to the abyss of alcohol. This was all there was of life; a phony God and loneliness. It took fifteen years of hell on this earth before I was to surrender. I was sitting on my couch one night with my marriage to Debi over. Nothing was left inside me but blackness. I reached back to my childhood and asked God for help.

He was waiting. That was Sept 25, 1984 and He was waiting. On December 25th, Christmas Day, 1984, I received my three month chip for sobriety. I realized that it was Jesus' birthday. It became a special birthday because on that day, He was born into me, always to be there, never to leave me. A new way of life was to begin. Selfishness and self-centeredness had to be destroyed. With God all things are possible. It was now that God would be my father and I would be his child. I trust infinite God rather than my finite self. I am here to play the role he assigns. As I place my trust in Him, He enables me

to match calamity with serenity.

It was time to complete my journey by re-entering the Catholic Church. I now had to change further and it was in trying to obey the laws of God and of His church that my weakness became more apparent and painful. These laws brought fear and pain as I failed to keep them. I wrestled with God over many of them. Eventually I would surrender. And through surrender, there was victory. It was through humbly asking for renewed help that I recognized the presence of Jesus. It was through this weakness that I gained a power greater than myself. With this new power, I could walk as a child of God. And as with all His children, God would now ask much of me. I was to serve to be served, to give to receive, to die to self to live.

Another celebration of Jesus' birthday will be here soon. During this Advent, celebrate with me the birth of Jesus in each and every one of us. Share with others, the story of Jesus in you. Share your joy in understanding the difficulties of saying "yes", as Mary did. We are human beings created the way God intended. He created people who need Him and will share themselves, good and bad, with Him. We are family, and in every family there is greatness and sorrow. We are here to share all we have with one another. With His birth we can now be Jesus to each other. With Jesus, we now have the power to love, comfort, and heal. God does not change the world with His great armies or Power, He allows his son to be carried to every part of the world, in you. It is through you that the world will be changed... In our humility, we will feel the presence of God. In the presence of God, we are called to action. In this action we will feel the perpetual quietness of two hearts beating as one, ours and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

It was a long journey for me to get to this reflection in the glass. Fr. Chi now joins me and we enter the Holy of Holies to begin our day.

Happy Birthday Jesus!
Deacon Jerry Kozney



Changes are Coming—Words and Phrasing of Mass Dialogue

Dear Parishioners,

Father, we keep hearing about upcoming changes in the Mass. When will all this happen? What will change?

First of all, all planned changes to the Mass are about translations, not about rituals. The rituals of the Mass will remain as they are now.

For many years, the official Church has been working on translations of the original Latin wording of what is called the Mass of Pope Paul VI. This effort has not been without controversy. Every translation is, by its very nature, an interpretation. And English is not an easy language to transliterate; as you know, there is British English, India English, African English, American English, etc. Words and phrasing in one form of English may not make easy sense in another form of English.

This month the US Bishops are to give a final approval to certain translations of the official prayers of the Mass. These must then be forwarded to the Vatican for further approval. (These are the prayers that are found in a red book called *The Sacramentary*.) Every parish will have to get a new sacramentary once Rome approves.

Previous approval has already been given for changes in the “dialogues” of the Mass. For example, “and also with you” will be changed to “and with your spirit.” It is in

these dialogues that congregations will most notice the changes.

Musicians will be affected by this too. What we call “service music,”—the Gloria, Creed, Holy, etc.” will see a change in some phrases.

The timeline? Today’s answer is that these changes will most likely become official on November 28, 2010, the first Sunday of Advent. That is assuming a speedy Vatican approval, which is likely at this point. Once the approval is given, it will take time for the new books to be published and distributed throughout the English-speaking world. We will also need time for parish preparation and catechesis. There are already resources being written and published in many Catholic media.

The priests of the archdiocese of Omaha will be meeting in January for our winter convocation. The issue of the upcoming changes in the Mass will be the agenda of our meeting. We should have a clearer sense of direction by that time. We promise to provide important teaching about these changes.

Words may change, but it will still be our Catholic Eucharist, the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ in our midst.

God bless you!
Fr. Jim



The end of another Year— The Liturgical Year

Sunday, November 22nd is the final Sunday of our Liturgical Calendar. The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King is one of the newest on the Church’s calendar. It was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, who hoped that a day acknowledging Jesus Christ as king of the universe would act as a corrective to some dangerous political ideas of his time, and would help to bring about “the signal benefits of true liberty, or calm order, of harmony and of peace” (quoted *The Liturgical Year*, 177). Pope Pius originally placed the solemnity in October. It was moved to its present position in the reform of the calendar following the Second Vatican Council.



Answering God’s Call

The Liturgical Schedule for the BUSY Christmas and New Years Liturgies has been placed on the Gathering Space Table.

We NEED lots of individuals for our various ministries. Please stop by the table and sign up or answer the call when you are contacted.

Jesus is the REASON for the Season!! Make Christ a priority at this busy time by answering his call to utilize your time and talent during one of our busiest liturgical seasons.



The Nazarenes: Our Identity and Purpose

Who We Are:

Couple of weeks ago a parishioner called our parish Office and was upset that the church of the Nazarenes were taking over St Stephen the Martyr parish property by posting signs on our yard, so I thought it would be appropriate for us to put together this article and again explain to our community who we are and what we do at St Stephen.

We are the Nazarenes, **not** the church of the Nazarenes, but an open prayer group. We are Nazarenes not in the nationalistic sense but in the deep spiritual sense of the word. Nazareth was a place of encounter, where the Angel encountered the Blessed Mother, and gave her the good news of salvation. It was a place of Incarnation – place where the word became flesh and dwelt among us (Luke 1:26). Nazareth was the birthplace Christ, a small town in Galilee where Jesus began his ministry. All his disciples except Judas were from there. Christ also chose to work his first miracle there. [Jn.1:43; Mk.1:16-20]. And after his resurrection the Angel told the disciples to go back to Galilee (probably in Nazareth) for there they would encounter the risen Lord who promised to be with them where two or more are gathered in His name. [Acts1:9-11]. We are spiritual Nazarenes therefore because we look up to the Lord and seek to dispose ourselves to encounter Him.

Some months ago we gathered together with Fr. Chi Igboanusi and began a journey of faith having experienced the simple but profound call of Jesus to “*come follow me*” - just as his first disciples were in Jn. 1:3. Like those first Nazarenes who first heard and responded we also are disposed to invite others to “*come and see*” Jn.1:46. And so we have come to start this movement in faith that if we look up and yearn for the Lord, he will meet us in his hometown; where we [Nazarenes] gather in his name - and thus we would be able to experience His power in our lives.

Our Nazarene movement takes inspiration in the spectacular encounters the Apostles had with Our Lord in probably in Nazareth in Galilee. Ours is a *Prayer Ministry* in which we commit ourselves to bringing Christ to our families and our families here at St Stephen the Martyr to Him. We humbly listen and seek to act upon the words of Our Blessed Mother at Cana “*do what he tells you*”. Reliant upon these words, we submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit under the ordinary norms of Ecclesiastical Associations. We see ourselves therefore just like other sodalities in the church. We do not set ourselves in opposition or conflict with these other vital gatherings of God’s people already taking place - like the Council of Catholic Women, Scripture Study, Prayer for the engages, Charismatic Renewal, MOMS, FISH groups, Knights of Columbus etc. We simply want to complement their apostolates by focusing more on the **families** [both young and

middle-aged] in our parish whom we feel called in a special way to minister to.

Our Purpose and What We Do:

Drawing from scripture we see the disciples coming together for teaching, prayer, fellowship and the breaking of bread -Acts 2:42. This is the model we employ. We shall have great focus on Adoration, Praise and Worship, teaching, Fellowship and the Eucharist. And in order to achieve this we have stipulated for ourselves to *have a prayer/worship sessions three times a month (in the first, second and last weeks), and to have one monthly adoration, praise & worship / fellowship session, and one vigil Mass every month.* Our worship and celebrations is to be guided by openness to the Holy Spirit. This kind of prayer takes place in a relaxed atmosphere of love, peace and joy. It is the most ancient way of praying without holding back and letting God fill you with his Spirit of love. St. Paul says, “When you gather together... Let everything be done for the building up of the body of Christ, the church” (1 Cor. 14:26). We shall also endeavor to provide sound and consistent teaching and faith sharing [**given by clergy or lay guest speakers**] in order to strengthen our Catholic faith. *We provide prayer request forms for our parishioners.* Those intentions which we get we shall pray for, both privately and during our worship sessions and in the monthly vigil masses.

Jesus instructed the Apostles to wait in the upper room for the *Power from on High* - Acts 1:4-8. And they waited, with Mary our Mother, in prayer and anticipation. We too hope to be taught to wait in prayer by Mary - to learn to anticipate fruitfully the birth of God’s Word in us as we gather in His Name - Mt. 18:20. It is our hope to reach out to our members who are feeling marginalized or are having difficulties in their faith lives, and through them pray that healthy vocations to the priesthood and religious life will once again bless the Catholic community of our Archdiocese and beyond.

But obviously we cannot do this without the Grace of God - and your good will and prayers. That is why we are giving this little message of self-introduction while requesting you to join us in prayers on First Monday of the Month at 7:00pm in the worship space [December 14 due to Holy Day], so that the good works God has begun in us may be brought to fruition according to His will.

Thanks,

The Nazarenes: Rose & Richard Benda, Beau & Patricia Iske, Tom & Denise Wharton, Eunice Schmaderer, Bill & Mona Kowal, Deacon Dan & Lillian Blanton, Mary Lou Snyder, Fr. Chi Igboanusi.



Important Dates

Decorating/Environment

We need LOTS of help to transform our Worship Space into a beautiful environment for us to celebrate the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please join us. Service hours are available for middle school and high school students.

Saturday, November 28th: 10:00 a.m.
Advent Decorating and Christmas prep

Wednesday, December 23rd: 10:00 a.m.
Christmas Decorating

Monday, January 11th: 7:00 p.m.
Christmas De-Decorating

Upcoming Liturgical Dates

Christ the King (end of Liturgical year): November 22nd
Thanksgiving Day: Thursday, November 26th
Mass at 9:00 a.m.

First Sunday of Advent (new Liturgical year): November 29th

Immaculate Conception Masses: (holy day of obligation)
Monday December 7th at 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday December 8th:
6:30 a.m.; 8:15 a.m.; 12:00 noon and 5:30 p.m.

Feast of Mary, Mother of God Masses (holy day of obligation):
Thursday, December 31st at 5:00 p.m.
Friday, January 1st at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Epiphany: January 3rd

Ministerial Mini-Conference: January 26th 7:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday: February 17th
6:30 a.m.; 8:15 a.m.; 12 Noon;
4:00 p.m.; 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Church Cleaning

As we prepare our hearts for the birth of our Lord, let us prepare for Him a space worth of His grandeur!
Church Cleaning—December 4th from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
December 5th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Families are welcome to come and help! Contact Seri at 895-9533 for details

Advent/Christmas Schedule

Parish Reconciliation Services:
All at 7:00 p.m.

Monday, November 30th
Tuesday, December 1st
Wednesday, December 2nd
Thursday, December 3rd

Confessions:

Tuesday, December 22nd:
11:00 a.m. to 12 Noon
3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 23rd:
11:00 a.m. to 12 Noon
4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve: Thursday December 24th
No A.M. Masses

4:30 p.m. in the Church
4:30 p.m. in the Gym
4:30 p.m. in the Dining Room

6:00 p.m. in the Church
6:00 p.m. in the Gym

12:00 Midnight Mass

Christmas Day: Friday December 25th
9:00 a.m.

10:30 a.m.
12:00 Noon



Advent Wreath

One symbol that we've all come to associate with Advent is the wreath. Many times our attention is drawn to the evergreen boughs and the four candles which represent the four weeks of Advent. However, the most important symbol of the Advent wreath is the light. During this time of year, the better part of the day is dark. We seem to be surrounded by the darkness. With each passing week of Advent, as we get closer to the celebration of the Birth of Christ, the ever-increasing light of the Advent wreath reminds and calls us to prepare for Christ, the light of the world.

Advent is a season for children and families. Find a space in your home to devote to the season of Advent. This is a place where the Advent wreath can be placed and the family gathers each day to light the candles and say a short prayer. If possible the room should be darkened for the lighting of the Advent wreath. This way everyone can experience the growth of the light as an additional candle is lit each week.



O COME
O COME
EMMANUEL

Blessing over Wreath

O God, the evergreens on this wreath remind us that your life in us never dies. Its circular shape shows us your love has no beginning or end. The light from its candles will grow brighter each week as Christmas draws near.

Bless our wreath, Lord, and bless us as we prepare once again to commemorate your birth. May we draw closer to you in holiness, and may your Spirit grow in us, dispelling the darkness and sin of the world. Amen.

**PREPARE THE WAY OF
THE LORD, MAKE
STRAIGHT HIS PATHS**



Jesse and Christmas Tree

Christmas Trees also become very prominent during the Advent season. However, one Advent symbol that is often overshadowed by the Christmas Tree is the Jesse Tree. Isaiah 11: 1: But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. This tree was named after the father of King David and portrays the family tree of Jesus. With each successive generation, more branches were added to it —Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Solomon, and so on. This symbol reminds us to focus on Jesus' genealogy. This testifies that Jesus is a member of the human family and also reminds us how long the Jews waited for their much anticipated messiah.

The Christmas Tree originated during a winter solstice celebration of the Germanic people. The Germanic people took their festival of light and reinterpreted it as a representative of the light to come, Jesus the Christ.

What our challenge is as Catholic families is to make the tree more than a mere decoration and remember that it is a Christian symbol.



Karen's Corner

This newsletter will be the last edition for this calendar year. The next newsletter will come out prior to Ash Wednesday. I want to take the time to thank all of the priests and deacons who have said "Yes" when contacted about writing the cover article for each Liturgical Flame Newsletter. I also want to thank all of the various liturgical ministers who have taken the time to write about their ministries and provide excellent witnesses for all of us to inspire to.

Christmas is a busy time of year. I hope you all take the time to make Christ the center point of your busy holiday season. We have lots of activities here at St. Stephens for you to dedicate your time, talent and treasure to. Maybe you could donate some extra food to our Parish Pantry, or maybe you could donate a gift or toy to the Angel Tree program. There are various parish groups that are adopting families who are in need this Christmas. Maybe you do something outside of our Parish. Maybe you go to one of the homeless shelters and serve meals to those less fortunate. Regardless, Thank you for spreading Christ to those in need.

I also want to thank all of you who step forward to help with our various liturgies. It is because of you that we are able to bring Christ to our larger parish family.

May you all have a Blessed Christmas and hope that Christ will continue to bless you through the New Year of 2010. God Bless!!

Karen Hardy, Worship Coordinator

Immaculate Conception

December 8th is celebrated as a holy day of obligation, commemorating the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The observance of this feast began with a Papal encyclical by Pope Pius IX, when he formally defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, *INEFFABILIS DEUS*, on December 8, 1854. In 1846 the bishops of the United States of America adopted the Immaculate Conception as patroness of the nation.

From the first moment of Mary's existence, she was preserved by God from the lack of sanctifying grace that afflicts mankind, and that she was instead filled with divine grace. Mary also lived a life completely free from sin.

On this feast day we honor holy Mary and celebrate her conception in the womb of St. Anne. As we praise God, who kept her sinless from the first moment of her life let call to minds our sinfulness and ask for God's mercy.

Liturgical Vacation Requests

It is time again to send your vacation requests for the upcoming liturgical scheduling cycle. The next schedule will be prepared in January for the weekends occurring from February 2010 through May 2010.

This is the busiest part of the Liturgical Year here at St. Stephen the Martyr. Besides the busy time of Holy Week and Easter, this is the time of year that our Parish First Communion and Confirmation Liturgies occur.

If you know weekends that you are going to be out of town or will have scheduling conflicts, please email those requests to Karen Hardy at k.hardy@stephen.org or contact her at 861-4537.

Also, if you are no longer interested in performing your liturgical ministry obligation, this is an excellent opportunity for your name to be removed from the schedule.

If your personal schedule has changed and you would like to request a different mass time, this again is an excellent time to let Karen know of those changes.

Watch for your schedule in the mail towards the end of January of 2010.



Ask the Liturgical Team?

Q: Where did the manger scene or crèche as we know it originate?

A: The manger scene was created by Saint Francis of Assisi on Christmas Eve in 1223. St. Francis wanted to do something that will recall to memory the little child who was born in Bethlehem. The scene was to show the inconveniences of his infant needs and how he lay in a manger on a simple bed of hay, with an ox and an ass standing by.

St. Francis wanted people to be reminded of the poverty into which Christ was born. He wants the ancient mystery new for each of us as we celebrate the Birth of Christ each year.

Q: When does the Christmas season start and end?

A: It is so hard to determine sometimes when the Christmas season begins because of the secular world we all live in. The season of Advent or Preparation of the birth of our Lord begins the Sunday

following the Feast of Christ the King and continues the next four Sundays

The feast of Christmas on December 25th is really the start of the Christmas season. The Christmas season continues until the Baptism of the Lord or the third Sunday after Christmas Day.

In past days, this was the time that people would exchange gifts, go caroling, and have Christmas parties. Many cultures still exchange gifts on the feast of the Epiphany which celebrates the day that the Magi from the east visited Jesus.

Advent needs to remain a more quiet and reflective time as we all prepare for the joy of Christmas Time and the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ.



St. Stephen the Martyr
Liturgy Office

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