



Heart, Mind & Spirit

A letter from Father Dave

There is a story told by Father Anthony de Mello, S.J. of people on a life raft off the coast of Brazil dying from thirst. They were unaware that the water beneath them was fresh and potable.

How often in the course of our lives we are surrounded by something so good, beautiful and essential but we just do not see it. The Holy Season of Advent is a special time for us to wake up and become more aware of our faith. What a ripe time this is for us to grow and change together in anticipation of the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

During the span of four weeks we as a Church “wait in joyful hope” for the coming of Jesus. Very few of us enjoy waiting. There’s something about our human nature that dismisses waiting. And yet, waiting is a time for us to look, listen, and to learn. As your pastor I encourage you to embrace this time of waiting as an opportunity to pause from the hustle and bustle of life and to grow in our faith and to behold all those gifts we already possess but do not always acknowledge or appreciate.

In this edition of *Heart, Mind and Spirit* our Senior Staff reflects with you

on this rich season of grace with its characters, prayers, traditions, and special invitations. What do you intend to do to mark these sacred days? How will you and your family celebrate Advent and wait in joyful hope for the coming of Jesus?

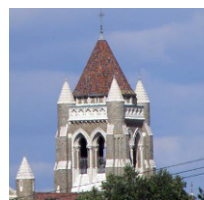
With Father Richard and Father Joe, along with our entire parish and school staffs, I wish you and your family a happy and blessed Advent. May we go forth to prepare the way of the Lord and wait in joyful hope!

Sincerely in Christ,

Father David J. Bonnar, Pastor

“O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk in
the light of the Lord!

~Isaiah 2:5



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Mary, Mother of Jesus by Father David Bonnar



Is there a more poignant picture of expectation than that of a pregnant woman? There is something so beautiful about a woman who is with child. This remarkable sight calls us to anticipate the future with genuine hope.

During the Advent season the Church shines the spotlight on Mary, the expectant mother of Jesus. When the angel Gabriel announced to her that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and bear a Son whose name would be "Jesus," Mary was troubled. Who wouldn't be? Nevertheless, Mary embraces this mystery by saying,

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." These words become Mary's profession of faith. With amazing openness and reverent humility Mary avails herself to God's time and plan.

Mary is a key figure in the Advent story. In fact, our Holy Father just a year ago linked her on two separate occasions with this season of waiting. First, Pope Benedict identified Mary as "Our Lady of Advent." Such a title suggests that Mary holds a special prominence in Advent. She is a model for us all to follow in these holy days. Secondly, the Holy

Father during the praying of the Angelus said, "The icon of Advent is the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus." Whereas statues abound in the Western Church, icons play a significant role in the Eastern Church. Icons are sacred figures to behold in prayerful meditation. By looking at Mary in a prayerful way we can uncover the true spirit of Advent.

As we joyfully await the coming of Emmanuel, "God with us," into our lives let us pray for the grace to be like Mary, that is, to be open, patient and trusting in the face of mystery. Our Lady of Advent, pray for us!

How do the Scriptural characters speak to us in this season of preparation?

John the Baptist by Mrs. Tisha Bridges

By today's standards, John the Baptist would be considered an eccentric hermit. He basically spent his life in the desert and "wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey." (Mt. 3:4) Perhaps his entry into the world gives us a clue into his rather strange personality. If you recall, his mother (Elizabeth) conceived this little miracle well past her child bearing years. Her husband (Zachariah) finds out while in the sanctuary offering incense at the altar and is visited by the Angel of the Lord (Gabriel). Gabriel informs him that he will have a son and that this son will be filled with the Holy Spirit and will "turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God." (Luke 1:15-16) Then poor Zachariah has the nerve to inquire: "How will I know this? For I am an old man, and

my wife is advanced in years." (Luke 1:18) And for daring to ask the obvious, Zachariah is left speechless and unable to talk until John's circumcision 8 days after his birth. The scripture stories don't really tell us anything about his childhood so it is left to our imaginations. I can only imagine how Elizabeth and Zachariah told and retold the story of his conception, birth, and naming. I'm sure they recounted word for word the message of Gabriel that he would "prepare a people for the Lord." (Luke 1:17) Imagine what WE could be with that kind of formation!!

The scripture stories pick up with John in the desert, eating his locusts and wearing his camel hair coat! People are drawn to his dramatic style of preaching and his insistence that we REPENT and change our ways. He is a prophet who criticizes

society, worldly values, and calls for a return to piety, purity, and right relationship with God. He assembles a large crowd of followers, yet he continually assures them that someone greater is coming.....

What is it about this "crazy" man in the desert that I find so appealing? Perhaps one could imagine John preaching down the streets of Dormont and Mt. Lebanon. One could almost hear the laughter and the ridicule of the assembled crowds. But to the few who might stop and listen to the message there might be a change of heart. The voice of John still cries out in our hearts. We need to hear the "crazy" voice and return to simplicity, holiness, and right relationship with God so that we are truly prepared for the Lord's coming.



Advent Trivia

1. How many Sundays are there in Advent?
2. What holy day of obligation falls during Advent?
3. What traditional Advent hymn expresses our longing for the coming of Jesus?

Answers: 1. 4 Sundays 2. The feast of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8) 3. O Come, O Come Emmanuel!

Isaiah by Father Richard Wesoloski

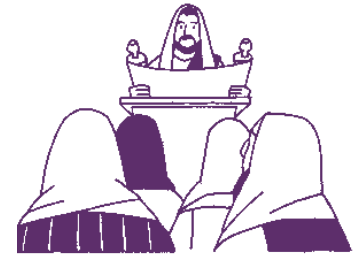
Each year the Church celebrates the season of Advent in preparation for the celebration of Christmas, the feast of Christ's birth. It is to be a time of longing and watchfulness. The readings from the Old Testament, especially the prophet Isaiah, reveal more and more about the Savior that God would send His people.

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, is sent to remind God's people that He is holy and just. God detests sin and all forms of injustice. God insists on fairness among all people and sincerity in divine worship. Yet the people maintain a tenuous relation-

ship with God. Their kings continually look for help through foreign alliances, seeking help from neighbors instead of trusting in God. So Isaiah proclaims the fall of Israel and Judah and the punishment that would befall the nation because of their infidelity. Isaiah repeatedly pleaded with the people to place their trust in God and not in military achievements and alliances.

But Isaiah does not just proclaim doom. Even in confronting King Ahaz he utters prophetic lines that foreshadow the coming of the Messiah. He writes, "The Lord himself will give you a

sign. It is this: the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel." (7:13-14) God has put in motion a Divine plan to overcome man's sinfulness. We read, "For there is a child born for us, a son given to us and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counselor, Mighty-God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." (9:5-6) These beautiful words are a reminder of God's love and fidelity. Because of prophecies like these, Isaiah has earned the title of the Fifth Evangelist.



Advent of the Holy Spirit by Father Joseph Carr

When we think of Christmas, most of us imagine the infant Jesus in the stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger, or we imagine visions of angels appearing to the shepherds as they keep watch over their sheep. As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Advent, how often do we meditate on the integral role of the Holy Spirit in this divine story?

In the opening pages of his Gospel, Saint Luke unfolds the story of the first Advent. The angel appears to Zechariah to announce that his prayers have been answered -- and despite her age -- his wife Elizabeth will bear him a son. He will be named John. This son will prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. Even from his mother's womb, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will go before the Messiah to turn the hearts of the children of Israel and to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.

Zechariah could hardly believe his ears, and when he questioned how this

miracle could be, the angel boldly announces: *I am Gabriel who stands before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news.*

Shortly thereafter, the Archangel Gabriel appears to a young girl named Mary to announce that she, too, will bear a son and she will name Him Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of King David, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

As the Virgin Mary innocently asks how this can be, Gabriel once again explains: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.*

In the Creed which we recite each Sunday, we repeat those words: *By the power of the Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*

The fine print in the missalette instructs us to bow reverently as these words are said each week. Twice a

year, on Christmas and the feast of the Annunciation, we are called to genuflect as these words are recited. As the first Advent story unfolds, Mary journeys to visit her cousin, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. Through the Gospel of Saint Luke, we hear the words we have prayed so often *...and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."*

As we hear the saga of the first Advent unfold this year in the Gospel readings, let us listen more closely to the words of the Mass, and recognize that many of the prayers that have become so familiar have their roots in the first Christmas. And wouldn't it be wonderful, if this Advent season we would listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and recognize the presence of Jesus Christ in that person we encounter on the bus, in the classroom, at the traffic light, and sitting next to us in the overcrowded pew this Christmas?

How do the Scriptural characters speak to us in this season of preparation?



The Message of the Angels by Miss Angela Gaughan



How do the Scriptural characters speak to us in this season of preparation?

At this time of the year there is no shortage of images of angels. Look in any store display of Christmas decorations and you will see many of all shapes and sizes. Most are "cute" and often resemble cherubs or lovely ladies with harps. Angels are an important symbol of the season but scripture describes to us a rather different image of an angel. The visit of an angel brings forth God's desire for those privileged with a visit.

Mary was a young woman sitting in her room when an angel appeared. Her life was forever changed. She was told of God's plan for her and she gently embraced what He asked. The angel told her that "...nothing will be impossible with God." (Luke 1:37) Mary heard the call of God through the angel and she answered it. She did not turn away. She

could not imagine at that moment how her life would change and what great challenges and graces God had in store for her, she simply said yes and had faith.

Joseph was to marry a lovely young woman. He was a carpenter doing his work and living as he should in his state in life. In a dream an angel appeared to him and his life was forever changed. "When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him..." (Matthew 1:24) Joseph had a choice to follow the command of God's angel or not. His choice led him to raise and love the Son of God.

In this season of Advent how is God calling you? Where is the message of the angel for you? Is it in relationship to a loved one or a co-worker? Maybe you feel God nudging you to change

how you react to that difficult person in your life. Maybe you are faced with financial hardship or illness and you are struggling to understand how to respond. When the angel appeared to both Joseph and Mary he began by telling them "do not be afraid." When we respond to God's call in our life with fear we often miss the graces within the challenge.

Take this Advent as a time to listen for the message of an angel...the message of our dear Lord. Be open to how God is calling you closer to him within your daily life. Our dear Lord has a call that is uniquely yours. Find time to sit quietly... find time to genuinely respond to the people God places in your life... find time to listen for the message of God's angel.

Christmas Mass Schedule

December 24, 2010

Christmas Eve Mass: 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm & 11:00 pm in Upper Church

4:00 pm & 6:00 pm in Clairvaux Hall

December 25, 2010

Christmas Day Mass: 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am & 12:30 pm in Upper Church (No evening Mass)

December 27-31, 2010:

Daily Mass: 8:00 am & 10:00 am (No 7:00 am Mass)

January 1, 2011

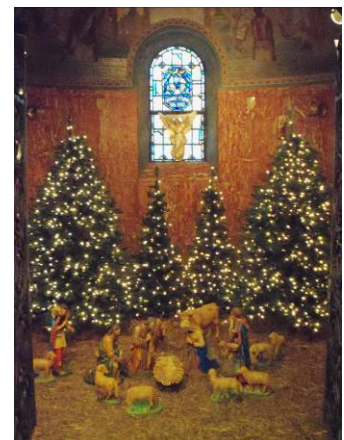
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God: 8:00 am & 10:00 am (Holy Day, no obligation because it falls on Saturday)

Important Reminder

Starting Saturday, January 1, 2011, Saint Bernard Sunday Mass schedule will change.

Saturday Evening 5:00 pm

Sunday 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 11:00 am, 12:45 pm and 7:30pm in Upper Church; 9:00am and 11:00am in Clairvaux Hall



The Liturgical Season of Advent by Erica Gamarro, Coordinator of Liturgy & Young Adult Minister

During the season of Advent, we focus on the three-fold coming of Christ. In the past, Christ was born of the Virgin Mary and became a man in Bethlehem. In the present, he is among us, most especially in the celebration of the Mass, where he is present in the assembly, in the Word, and in Body, Soul, and Divinity in the Eucharist. We wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, in the future, known as the Second Coming.

The liturgy prepares our hearts and minds for Christ through scripture, symbols, music, and ritual action. During the season of Advent, the lectionary first presents a Gospel preparing us for the second coming of Christ. The first readings are prophecies anticipating an era of renewal. The second readings are taken from New Testament letters that tell of an early church filled with hope in the midst of persecution. We meet John the Baptist, who paves the way for Christ's public ministry. The season ends with a Gospel preparing us to celebrate the first coming as the Word made flesh.

The liturgical color for Advent is purple. In antiquity, purple was an expensive dye and used for roy-

alty. We use the color purple as we await the coming of our King, Jesus Christ.

The Advent wreath is blessed during the first Sunday of Advent and is lit before each Mass. The wreath is circular, so it has no beginning or end. This symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ Jesus. Evergreens adorn the Advent wreath. Evergreens live throughout the entire year, even in the dead of winter. They represent continuous life and, like the symbolism of the circular shape, the immortality of our soul as well the new, everlasting life promised to us through Christ.

Candles represent Christ who is the Light of the World. Christ brings light into a world that is plagued by the darkness of sin. In addition to representing the Light of the World, the candles on the Advent wreath mark the four weeks of Advent. Three candles are purple, symbolizing the prayer and preparatory sacrifices undertaken at this time, as well as patience while we wait for our King. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because we have arrived at the midpoint of

Advent. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of his second coming to judge the living and the dead.

Like Lent, the opening rites of Mass omit the Gloria in order to prepare us for the big holy day. Omitting the Gloria during Advent also lets us joyously sing it in the season it was written for: Christmas.

We remember and celebrate the lives of several saints during Advent. St. Ambrose's feast day is December 7th. He wrote hymns that inspired Advent songs. St. Lucy's feast day is December 13th. Her name means "light" and, fittingly, her feast day occurs when the day is very short. St. John of the Cross's feast day is December 14th. His mysticism inspires us to a more meaningful spiritual life. We celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness for the Americas, on December 12th. We can't forget the feast of St. Nicholas on December 6th. The Church provides us with the beautiful season of Advent. Be sure to take the time to allow this season to penetrate your heart and mind with devotion, anticipation, and wonder.

"During the season of Advent, we focus on the three-fold coming of Christ."



YOUNG ADULT ADVENT RETREAT 2010 Waiting, Wondering, and Not Worrying

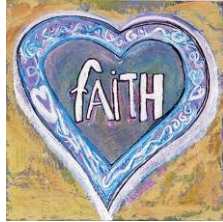
Mark your calendars for **Saturday, December 11**, for our **Second Annual Advent Retreat for Young Adults**. The theme of this year's retreat is "Waiting, Wondering, and Not Worrying." The retreat will start at 10:00 am and end with Mass at 6:00 pm at the Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234 (Whitehall).

A series of talks will be given by Father David Bonnar, Pastor; Father Joseph Carr, Parochial; Erica Gamarro, Young Adult Minister; and Father Frank Grinko, OFM Capuchin. There will be time for prayer, reflection, and socializing. There will also be an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Lunch will be served at noon.

The cost for the day is \$25. Please e-mail your reservation to Erica at in.terra.pax@gmail.com by Friday, December 3.

The Heart of a Parish by Pegi Wright, Social Services Minister

"Faith that does nothing in practice is thoroughly lifeless" James 2:17



Advent from the Latin adventus meaning "coming."

Faith in action is evident daily at Saint Bernard Parish through the collaboration, dedication and loyalty of our parish priests, staff, faculty, maintenance department, councils, committees, and countless volunteers, all working together to provide opportunities to become involved as the Body of Christ.

In the past year, Saint Bernard Parish has seen a resurgence of activity and participation that is the heart of our parish family. Our pastor, Father Dave Bonnar's leadership of the **4 e's - excitement, energy, enthusiasm, and expectation** - is the driving force behind this awakening of hope.

The upcoming quietness of the Advent Season is a perfect time to reflect on the past and on how we can continue to beCOME "all that is yet to be."

As Catholics we are asked to respond to our Baptismal call to share our gifts and talents with our faith community. Our beautiful liturgies offer examples of faith, as we see and hear people fully participating in the Eucharistic celebration of the Mass. All ages are invited to lift hearts and voices in praise to our loving God through the music ministry.

Our parish students embrace their faith and open their eyes, hands, and hearts to the needs of parish life, the community and the world. Through cooperation and participation in: walks for a cause, Vacation Bible School, parish picnic, collections for the homeless, world missions and refugees, they are brought to awareness of our mission statement. How awesome it is to see the smile on the face of an adult with special needs when a student extends a hand to share a dance! Our youth group and young adult ministries provide ways to learn, to grow and to become like Jesus in their participation of faith-filled educational programs, hands-on service projects and parish events. These are the stepping stones that are leading them to become the caretakers of our Catholic Faith in the future!

We are active in building a faith community of Christian love by turning away from self and embracing Jesus' commandment to love one another. There are many golden opportunities for our seniors to share faith, life experiences and wisdom with one another by participation in the Clairvaux Club, Apple Pies, and visits to the sick and homebound. The Saint Vin-

cent de Paul Society is an example of Jesus' love being poured out to those living in the valleys of poverty and misery. The prison ministry reaches out to the hopeless, offering encouraging words, prayer and a loving touch. The Bereavement Series and Divorce/Separated Group provide support for those hurting emotionally and in need of comfort, understanding and compassion. The newly-formed Martha Ministry hears of a family's need and acts to assist with a caring heart.

Men and women of our parish family are offered many opportunities for spiritual enrichment and social involvement, such as the RCIA, faith formation programs and Bible studies. Each provides an excellent venue in which to increase one's knowledge of our Catholic Christian faith. To know God, to love Jesus and to live in the Spirit, open our hearts and move us into action as a sign of our faith.

WE ARE ADVENT PEOPLE - COMING to be - anticipating, preparing and hoping in the future of this GREAT SAINT BERNARD PARISH!



Sacrament of Reconciliation

This Advent, in the spirit of collaboration, our parish priests will be working with their fellow priests from Saint Anne and Saint Winifred parishes on December 14, 15 and 16 to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Everyone is welcome.

Saint Winifred Church ~ Tuesday, December 14 at 7:00 pm

Saint Anne Church ~ Wednesday, December 15 at 7:00 pm

Saint Bernard Church ~ Thursday, December 16 at 4:00 pm & 7:00 pm

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also available at Saint Bernard Parish Monday, Wednesday and Friday after the 8:00 am Mass and Thursday 4:00-5:00 pm and 7:00-7:30 pm.

The last opportunity for reconciliation before Christmas will be Wednesday, December 22, after the 8:00 am Mass.

Waiting and Preparing in Advent by Daniel J. Wagner, Saint Bernard School Principal

Advent is traditionally a season of waiting and anticipation. Actually, it has become a season of hyperactive preparation that allows almost no time for quiet reflection. Somehow we must try to find moments of contemplation within the confusion of pre-Christmas activities. Does this sound impossible? It really is not, if we just become aware of the joy and goodness around us everywhere. Spend a few seconds to notice – really notice – the little reminders of what this season means to us. It is the children who will show us.

While searching for that special item on your list, listen! There are Christmas carols playing in the background, and right in front of you a child is singing or dancing or jumping in sheer delight! What are you longing for inside? Could it be that you wish you could sing or dance or jump, too? Are you baking cookies? Is the floor getting sticky, or are your children snitching some raw cookie dough? Are you getting tense and rushed to get done? Stop. Take a pinch of that raw dough and laugh and enjoy that forgotten moment from your own childhood. So what if the decorations aren't

exactly evenly placed, neither are the stars! Take time to enjoy the moments of preparation...it is the Advent of your own Christmas.

There is a child hidden within each of us... waiting...waiting to be born... this Christmas!

May each of us find ways to remember who we are inside, so that we can recognize the beauty of God hidden in everyone!

I will keep you in my prayers as you prepare this Advent and wait to celebrate the Christmas season with your families and loved ones.



Finding Peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation by Angela Gaughan, Middle School Coordinator & Youth Minister

Advent is a time of waiting...waiting for the arrival of our dear Lord. When we wait for the arrival of a dear friend we prepare. We clean our house, make good food and maybe even buy a new outfit to wear. This time of preparation is exciting and busy. Advent is an exciting and busy time as we prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ. We clean, shop, cook, bake and are eager for the holiday to arrive. All of this outer preparation is good and even necessary, but it is also very important that we look inward and prepare our hearts for the arrival of our Lord.

Catholic faithful often find the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) intimidating or confusing. This sacrament of healing is integral to our preparation for Advent and to our growth in faith and humility. The Sacrament of Reconciliation shows us that God's mercy is without limits. He wants us

to unburden our hearts to Him so that we might have peace and live in the spirit of reconciliation with God, others and ourselves. Each of us can think of things that we have done or said that have hurt others and ourselves. These things take us away from God. They limit our contact with Him as we try to hide negative actions and words from ourselves and God. We reason that if we hide them then they are not really that bad. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation we can begin to let go of these actions and words that weigh us down and hold us back. We receive God's mercy and forgiveness and we can move on in humility and grace.

On a retreat with high school students the teens were given the opportunity to go to confession. The vast majority of teens received the sacrament. Afterward we had a social for

the kids. One of the boys sat down with me. He had a plate full of food and was grinning from ear to ear. He told me that he had never felt so good. I commented that he did have a great plate of food and it was a fun party. He said it wasn't the food or the party...he had never felt so good because he was "clean"! He had no sin and was really free. He wondered why no one had ever told him how good it felt and how really happy and peaceful he could be.

I'm telling you now...receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation...know the peace and joy this young man felt. St. Bernard tells us "Let him never find us unprepared when he comes, but always with faces uplifted and hearts expanded to receive the copious blessings of the Lord." Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, expand your heart and be prepared for the arrival of our Lord.

"Let him never find us unprepared when he comes, but always with faces uplifted and hearts expanded to receive the copious blessings of the Lord."

Saint Bernard

The greatest gift you will ever receive will never be found under a Christmas tree. It is far too valuable to be stored in any other place but in the depths of your heart.

The Sounds of Advent by Stephen Schall, Director of Music Ministry

Advent Service of
Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 5

4:00pm

Please join Saint
Bernard's Adult Choir
in Church



“With colored lights and Christmas sales, society chases away the dark, shores up the economy—and wreaks havoc with the Advent spirit of contemplative quiet and sustained expectation. The contrast between liturgy and life, gospel and culture seems never greater than at this time of year.” (*Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons*, Liturgy Training Publications, 8) Especially, we might add, when it comes to the selection of music for the season. While the marketplace is encouraging us to think “Christmas”—bombarding us incessantly with carols and secular Christmas music—at Church we are singing songs and hymns which deal with the themes of Advent. As the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* remind us: “Advent has a two-fold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ’s first coming to us is remembered; and as a season when that remembrance directs our mind and heart to await Christ’s second coming at the end of time. Advent thus is a period of devout and joyful expectation.”(39)

When the Church gathers together for prayer, praise, and music we empha-

size the Advent messages of quiet, hope, Christian community, and “devout and joyful expectation.” Our liturgical music becomes simpler: the *Gloria* is omitted, except on the Marian feasts of Dec. 8 and 12, and the organ as solo instrument is more restrained or even silent, except on the third Sunday of Advent, also known as *Gaudete* Sunday, when it may be more prominent.

The brief season’s readings and celebrations point us toward the past and toward the future. Advent begins with an emphasis on the “will come” aspects of the season, dovetailing with the end of the previous liturgical year and its theme of the coming of Christ at the end of time. This period runs though December 16, after which the readings draw us into the unfolding story of the coming of Christ in history.

Musically, the hymns of Advent fall into three basic genres: the minor-key, chant-like songs (“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” and “Creator of the Stars of Night”) with their haunting melodies and intense longing; carol-like tunes (“O Come, Divine Messiah” and “People Look East”) which foreshadow the joy of Christmas,

and sturdy four-square hymns (“Wake, O Wake” and “On Jordan’s Bank”) which tend to point us to the coming of something and Someone great.

Perhaps the most famous Advent hymn is “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.” Each stanza of this hymn is a paraphrase of one of the “Great,” or “O”, antiphons. The “O” antiphons are used with the Magnificat at Vespers beginning on December 16 to mark the last days before Christmas. As such, this hymn is often reserved for use in the Mass until the third and fourth Sundays of Advent.

In order to highlight and celebrate this wonderful season, St. Bernard Parish will offer an **Advent Service of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 5, at 4 PM**. This service will be sung by our Adult Choir and is modeled after the famous service of Lessons and Carols sung each Christmas at King’s College, Cambridge. We will hear in the beautiful words of scripture and song the story of the world’s longing for redemption and God’s promise of salvation. Please plan to join us for this celebration of “joyful expectation.”

Did you Know?

- That the Church did not start to celebrate Advent until the sixth century? At that time the four weeks prior to Christmas were a penitential season.
- That Advent is no longer a season of penance? The revision of canon law in 1917 eliminated the practice of Advent fasting. In 1969, the reform of the Roman calendar confirmed Advent as a season of joyful expectation.
- That the color used during Advent is different from that of Lent? The purple-violet of Lent symbolizes repentance. The purple-magenta of Advent symbolizes royalty.



Ways for Sharing Faith During Advent by Dee Fitzsimmons, Director of Initiation

Write those Christmas cards with a personal spiritual message. Open your Bible to the Psalms and copy a line of praise or gratitude to God that you have selected just for them.

Pray with photos of family members or friends who no longer go to Church. Picture Jesus beside them. Thank God for one thing about each loved one as you pray for them. Let them know that you are praying for them.

Interview older family members or friends asking them to tell a story or experience about the celebrations/traditions of their faith. Video or audio record these interviews and play them back (with permission) during family reunions over the holidays.

Create and share a photo book about the ways that the Sacraments have been celebrated in your family. Those special times of Baptisms, Confirmations, First Communion, Weddings, etc. can spark and help recall those forgotten experiences of faith.

Record the stories behind your oldest photos, either in audio, video, or in a photo album. All generations share a love of story. Ask a grandchild, niece or nephew to help you.

Share what you admire about your parents', grandparents', and great grandparents' faith practices. Don't let their stories and their faith disappear. Share why each one inspires you. Gather mini-bios of several of them into a booklet.

Design a pamphlet about your family's involvement in your particular neighborhood parish, including as many generations as possible. Share what it was like to worship there: the meaningful memories you have of Masses, Christmas morning, Easter celebrations, or parish gatherings and neighborhood friendships.

Try a "Dads Used to Be Kids" or a "Moms Used to Be Girls" book for a grandchild, with childhood photos of your grown children. Include what you liked about this child. Share an experience of God's love for him or her.

Enjoy your holiday sing-alongs by including many spiritual hymns/songs.

It's the joyful expectation season for reaching-out, inviting.

You Have Faith!
Pass On That Faith!
Evangelize!

DID YOU KNOW:

Your concerns about empty pews are a call to prayer? That you can begin to alleviate those concerns by concentrating on some of your closest friends and family members? That there are many lasting ways to share and evangelize loved ones?

"Little Blue Book" by Tisha Bridges, Director of Religious Education

Do you know how many "six-minute" intervals there are in a day?

Did you have to break out the calculator, or were you able to do the calculations in your head? (If so, I am seriously envious!) The correct answer is that there are 240 six-minute intervals in each day. I'm sure you are wondering what is significant about these short intervals?

As a parish community, wouldn't it be significant if each of our 3,000 families

committed themselves to spending six whole minutes each day through out the Advent and Christmas Seasons to quietly read, ponder or discuss with each other a daily reflection.

Imagine the possibilities of such a parish wide effort. Imagine how God's presence would be felt, imagine the family discussions at the dinner table or around the Christmas tree, imagine the insight that would be gained, imagine how endearing such a

ritual could be for you and your family.

So before you start running, cleaning, baking, shopping, cooking, wrapping, decorating, visiting... (I'm exhausted already) schedule in your "six minutes" with God and sit back in AWE of all the possibilities.

At all of the entrances of our majestic church, you will find a little blue book filled with daily reflections on the scriptures, saints, holiday traditions and more.



Be sure to pick up your family's copy of "The Little Blue Book" and join our parish community as we spend six-minutes each day with the Lord during this Advent and Christmas Seasons.

"It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus open doors of hope"

~Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Seek That Which is Above" 1986

Season of Giving by Kathy Sikora, Business Manger



Giving Tree 2009

In this season of giving, we are contacted by many charities to give donations. How do we decide what to give and to whom?

It is not wrong to enjoy many of the amazing luxuries life has to offer. However, justice requires us to consider the needs of others as we enjoy the gifts we have been given. Treasure is measured not only in what we give to St. Bernard Parish but also what we provide to those less fortunate in our community. When asked by charities to give a special gift do you respond? It has been said that most do not give to a special charity unless asked. St. Bernard Parish is your church, your charity, which supports the spiritual and charitable works of the Church. Do you respond?

What should we give? There is no one answer, but we should give according to what we have been given. Rather than gifts of equal size, gifts should be based on equal sacrifice and only you and God know what is fair. The

biblical tithe (10%) for God's work should include all of your charitable giving: consider 5% to St. Bernard and 5% to other charities.

At St. Bernard we have many ways for you to contribute:

1. The weekly collection is used to continue the work of the Church through the priests and employees. The parish is dependent on your weekly collections to pay for the utility bills, payroll and benefits for employees, education for our children as well as adults, cleaning and upkeep of the buildings, etc. It is just like a family struggling to make ends meet. How do you budget your money? What if you incur an unexpected expense, how do you pay for it? Use of your envelopes or online giving on a regular basis is the means that your parish meets the budget.

2. Another means to give here at St. Bernard is through Parish Share. Now that we have met our Diocesan assessment, all monies given are going directly into

the parish. This gives the parish the extra money for that unexpected expense. It is also used for the improvement and maintenance of our beautiful structures.

3. We also have the Window Restoration Fund. Did you know that there are 81 windows in our church? The front window was restored this past summer at a cost \$11,700. Our children, through their own Sunday envelopes, will pay for the lighting of this window.

4. The Angel Fund was set up many years ago as a means of tuition assistance for our school students.

5. Any restricted donation (given toward a specific program/item), or non-restricted, is also available.

6. And lastly, bequests can be made for the future of St. Bernard Parish.

Ask yourself, "Is the use of my treasure reflective of the God-given blessings I have received in my life?"

Name the Carol

1. Exalted heavenly beings to whom harkened.
2. In awe of the nocturnal time span characterized by religiosity.
3. The first person nominative plural of triumvirate of far eastern heads of state.
4. In a distant location the existence of an improvised unit of newborn children's slumber furniture.
5. Small municipality in Judea, southeast of Jerusalem.
6. Listen, the celestial messengers produce harmonious sounds.
7. Nocturnal time span of unspoken quietness.
8. An emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good given to the terrestrial sphere.
9. Twelve o'clock on a clement night witnessed its arrival.
10. The Christmas preceding all others.



ANSWERS:

1. Angels We Have Heard on High.
2. Oh, Holy Night
3. We Three Kings
4. Away in a Manger
5. O Little Town of Bethlehem
6. Hark the Herald Angels Sing
7. Silent Night
8. Joy to the World
9. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
10. The First Noel

First Week of Advent

Blessing of the Advent Wreath

God of all hopefulness, we pray for Your blessing upon us and upon this wreath.

With joyful expectation we, Your people, wait in darkness for the coming of the Christ light.

As we light these candles, kindle our faith.

As we pray together, increase our hope.

As we go into the world, strengthen our love. Let Your wisdom encircle our lives as this wreath encircles the candlelight.

And grant us the humility to receive Your light, even as these candles receive the flame.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Third Week of Advent

Blessing of the Crèche

God our Father, bless all who gaze upon this scene of Your Son's birth.

Fill our hearts with the song of angels, the humility of the creatures, the eagerness of the shepherds, the longing of the Magi, and the love of Your Holy Family. This Advent, grant us the virtue of hope, and bless us throughout the Christmas season with the joy of Your presence.

Help us to discern the signs of Your Spirit, and grant us the courage to follow wherever You lead.

Make of our home a new Bethlehem where You are ever welcome and all are welcome in Your name. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Feast of the Holy Family

Blessing for a Family

Holy God, source of all blessings, You sent Your Son to be born into a family where He was loved and cared for.

Bless and protect our family; make us strong in faith, hopeful, and compassionate.

Bless us with understanding and help us to be good listeners.

Keep us from anger and hasty judgments.

Free us from harsh words and impatience.

Do not let resentments cloud our minds nor arrogance harden our hearts.

Make us willing to serve and quick to forgive.

Strengthen our commitment to one another, that by our love, others may know we are Christians.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

A Prayer for Faith

We believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in divine unity of being, in the blessed light, in their saving work of love.

Help our unbelief.

We believe in the Church, human yet holy, communion of saints, body of Christ, wounded yet one.

Help our unbelief.

Rid us of doubt, cynicism, and despair, Increase our faith, day by day, and bring us to eternal life. Amen.

Second Week of Advent

Prayer for Forgiveness

Merciful God, John the Baptist prepared for the coming of Christ by proclaiming a baptism for the repentance of sins.

In this Advent season, we prepare for Christ's coming by searching our hearts and asking Your forgiveness.

Forgive us for loving You too little and our neighbors less than ourselves, for preferring our will to Yours, for being lukewarm in prayer and timid in faith.

Forgive our harsh words and resentments, our excuses, selfishness, and pride.

Grant us sorrow for our sins, forgiving hearts, and grace to amend our lives.

May we never despair of Your mercy but find hope increasing as we await our Savior's birth. Amen.

Fourth Week of Advent

Blessing of a Christmas Tree

Loving God, we ask You to bless this tree.

You created every kind of tree, conifers, seed and fruit-bearing trees, providing us with food, shelter, and beauty.

May our tree's evergreen branches remind us of Your ever-present love for us.

On the tree of the cross Your Son won for us eternal life.

May these boughs, hung with ornaments, remind us to be living branches, bearing the fruit of good works.

You sent Your Holy Spirit to be our counselor, comforter, and guide.

May the lights on this tree remind us of the Spirit's presence, shining in our hearts. Amen.

Epiphany of the Lord

Blessing of a Home

Holy God, before He was born, a star showed the place of our Savior's birth.

At His baptism in the Jordan

You revealed Jesus to be Your beloved Son.

And at the wedding feast of Cana,

His power was manifest in a miracle.

On this solemnity of Epiphany, we ask You to bless our home.

Let its shelter from cold and night

show us Your protection and care.

May we see You everywhere, revealed in family and friends, guests and strangers, in all who come to our door and share our meal.

Fill our home with signs of Your presence, with joy, laughter, and peace.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

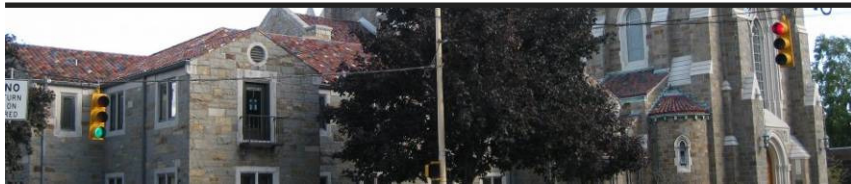
Check out the Parish website.....

www.stbernardchurch.com

Saint Bernard Parish

311 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15216
412-561-3300

At the Intersection



Check out Father Dave's blog, At the Intersection, on our parish website. Past topics have included : Becoming Unplugged, Roots, Are You Ready for Some Football?, At the Intersection, Let There be Light!

Parish Census

As the year 2010 comes to an end, we will be putting the finishing touches on our Parish census, if you have not returned you family's form please do so as soon as possible. Parish Staff will be contacted everyone who has not responded. Contact St. Bernard Parish Office, 412-561-3300, if you need a copy of the form.

Parish Mission Statement

Through the power of the Eucharist and grace-filled guidance of the Holy Spirit, Saint Bernard Parish is dedicated to inspiring, educating and serving all through the teachings of the Gospel by being a living, loving presence of Jesus Christ. United with the Shepherd of the Roman Catholic Church, our Holy Father, this Parish seeks to foster a growing, supportive and welcoming Community that proclaims the Kingdom of God.

O Antiphons

December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel,
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!

December 20

O Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21

O Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 22

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

During the last week of Advent, the Church prays the "O Antiphons," short prayers that express our continued hope for the coming of Christ. Each antiphon uses a different title for Christ, drawn from the Old Testament prophets, as a way to praise him for what he has done for us and call on him to come to all God's people.

