

The Weave

Advent/Christmas 2017

Volume 22 Issue 1

A Newsletter of St. Mary Parish Family, Franklin MA

"With One Voice"

by Fr. Brian Manning

Almost three years ago Cardinal Sean invited our Parish of Saint Mary to join in the Archdiocesan-wide Program and Process of becoming a "Collaborative Parish." Because of our size, our Parish was not twinned with another parish nearby. The faith life and flow of our Parish is so great that we did not have to join with others to achieve a dynamic parish base. We, however, were expected and asked to participate in a very intense and time consuming process to help make our Parish an ever stronger and ever lively faith community. I have been reporting in the recent issues of *The Weave* the process and products of this great enterprise for our faith. Our Parish Plan (to be found on our website: www.stmarysfranklin.org) illustrates how seriously in faith, thought and reflection we took the invitation of our Cardinal Archbishop. We responded in faith to the call of our Shepherd Archbishop.

One of the professional pastoral Staff employees at the Archdiocesan Pasto-

ral Center paid our efforts a great compliment and said that our Plan was a plan that was clear, direct and achievable. Indeed we included visionary hopes and dreams, but because we are an 'incarnated faith' we made it practical and achievable. There is the famous church scholastic idiom "Faith builds on nature." that is so often forgotten by people,



from senior prelates to ourselves. This means that God truly has been incarnated and we must make our piety and faith practices real and

authentic to ourselves and our situations.

Our Plan for our Parish developed three major "Priorities." The first, as required by Cardinal Sean, is "Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood." The second is "Hospitality and Welcoming Environment" and the third is "Faith Formation." Our Plan set out a time line and it told us that we must begin first with our second priority of Hospitality. Our concern in this priority was to make

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Fathoming the Greatest Gift

by Joan McGuire

"To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord"

Christmas is a time of Grace and Advent is the time to open our minds to this event. With Santa and the elves on every corner ringing bells and reminding us of buying presents this is a big collision of values. Children seem to have no problem with this. As I watch pageants I am amazed how children can put together all the important ideas and people from different narratives into a seamless performance.

As we mature we tend to lose this simplicity and we have to make time to keep our perspective that Christmas is not a Hallmark Christmas card event but the birth of Christ who will establish a **Covenant between God and all His children**. It is God who has this day given us an invitation to participate in building a civilization of love, a society that recognizes all people as created in the image of God. The faith of each of the people in the nativity narratives call to us at different times in our lives.

Mary - a simple peasant girl who, when confronted with the Angel Gabriel's news, accepted it with calm faith asking only the necessary question-"how can this be."

Joseph - a man of trust, when confronted

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We Need a Little Christmas

by John M. Ristaino

It is November as I pen this submission for the Advent edition of 'The Weave.' In the office where I work we have been engaged in daily friendly debate and banter about the proper and appropriate time to start playing and listening to Christmas Carols. Sound familiar? Now, for the record and for you scoring at home, I am more of a traditionalist who enjoys listening to Christmas music more the closer we get to Christmas and rarely (if ever) will play it prior to Thanksgiving. Whether you start listening to Christmas music after Thanksgiving, or after Halloween, or after Labor Day or you listen to it all year round; it's because we always need a little Christmas and Christmas music helps us remember the wonderful gifts and feelings Christmas can bring.

The song 'Welcome Christmas' from Dr. Seuss' 'How The Grinch Stole Christmas' is not one you will hear played and sung in church but its words carry with them the essence of this season.

"Christmas day is in our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp" and indeed it is. The song continues by explaining what the heart of the Christmas message is about as the lyrics herald "Welcome Christmas, bring your cheer. ... Welcome all who's far and near." "Welcome" is a message of Christmas which we can celebrate all year long. Don't we all want to be welcomed and to feel welcome and welcomed? The feeling of welcome and its associated words of acceptance, hospitality, reception, enjoyment and appreciation are what many of us feel and/or want to feel at Christmas.

Just like not needing to wait to listen to and to enjoy Christmas carols, we don't need to wait to offer welcome, ac-

ceptance, hospitality, reception, enjoyment and appreciation to others. They may be gifts ushered in when a star shines on, and light shines from a cold, rough stable in Bethlehem but they are gifts each one of us has the opportunity to offer and to receive each and every day of the year. St. Mary Parish has completed writing a three year strategic plan called the St. Mary Parish Pastoral Plan. You can read it in its entirety on line at: <http://www.stmarysfranklin.org/parish-plan>.

One of the three goals established in this plan is called Welcoming Environment. Most noticeably, this goal is sometimes called "the elevator and bathroom" goal. This goal is about much more than new bathrooms and a fancy new indoor elevator. It is about welcoming others. It is about making our church, God's home, accessible and welcoming to all. Society changes all the time. We are in constant change. One gift of societal change is that we live longer and can recover from medical setbacks and injuries more readily. This creates a population of people who need assistance getting into and out of our beautiful church building. The elevator project will go a very long way in achieving just that; welcoming more people to worship by affording them access to St. Mary Church. If you have not already made a gift towards this initiative, there is still time. Please visit the St. Mary Parish website and read about the "With One Voice" capital campaign: <http://www.stmarysfranklin.org/event?id=732338842&cat=694942990&pg=&title=%22With+One+Voice%22+Capital+Campaign>

Welcome is not confined to an elevator project in our church. Welcome is accepting others into our Faith community. The St. Mary RCIA Program does tremendous outreach and preparation for adults who seek to learn about and enter the Catholic faith. Do you know someone who is interested in learning more about our Catholic Faith? If so, there is information about the St. Mary Parish RCIA Program on the St. Mary Parish website: <http://www.stmarysfranklin.org/rcia> Are you interested in learning more about our Faith? If so, in 2018 and into 2019, as part of the St. Mary Parish Pastoral Plan there will be new and exciting learning

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Walking Where Jesus Walked

by Callie Ostrowski

More than once during Mass, I have found myself struggling to really connect with the Gospel readings. It is challenging to bring myself back 2,000 years and relate to people in places I have never seen before and only know about to a limited extent.

This summer, I had the opportunity to make the journey of a lifetime. I traveled 5,000 miles to perform as a guest violinist with the Ramallah Orchestra in their annual concert tour of the West Bank. Musicians from across the West Bank and around the world performed Beethoven's 8th Symphony and Ravel's Bolero in Hebron, Al Rashaydeh Desert, Bethlehem, and Ramallah.

From the moment I stepped off the plane, all the differences compared to home were obvious and rather overwhelming. It was so hot and so bright, it seemed like the sun had suddenly gotten much closer to Earth. I was bombarded by unfamiliar sounds and languages on all sides, my ears straining to find any familiar words in all the noise. Even the air itself smelled different, distinctly hotter and more piquant than home, no doubt thanks to the very different foods and foliage each provides. It took about four days to adjust to these changes, among others; in the first few days, I had eaten more pita bread, pickles, and hummus than I had in the entire rest of my life and struggled to accommodate for things like the seven hour time difference, the odd plumbing situation, and the foam mat that was my bed. Having a strict schedule of meals and rehearsals helped significantly, and by the time the tour began and we started traveling around the West Bank, I was far more adjusted than the day we arrived.

Despite our rigorous rehearsal schedule and strict concert times, we had ample time to do some traveling and site-seeing. On the day of our concert in Bethlehem, a small group of us traveled to the city early in the day so we could explore before our performance. In Palestine, there are not highways in the same sense as those we have here at home; the roads follow the land, bending and climbing with hillsides rather than cutting right through them. As a result, a journey to a town 20 miles away can take upwards of two hours, but at least every route there is the scenic route.

Throughout the entire drive into Bethlehem, I marveled at the landscape, at the

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The Weave

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by Saint Mary Parish, Franklin MA



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... "With One Voice"

(Continued from page 1)

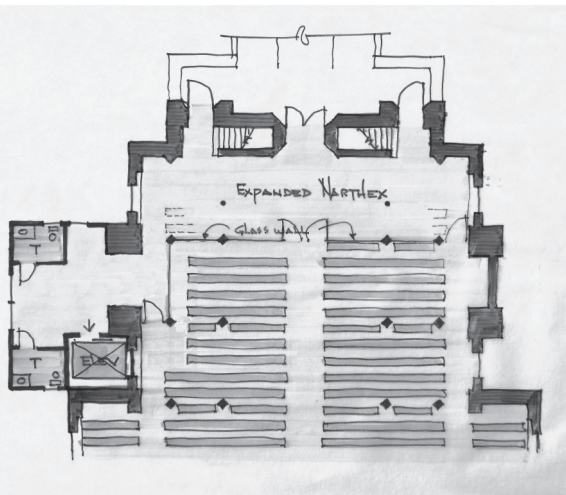
the church more welcoming, i.e. accessible, for all people. Common sense and common talk for a good length of time has told us that our folks have difficulty with all our stairs that there is a serious lack of proper and accessible bathrooms and also we needed food preparation space in the hall. Sometimes in life infrastructure and facilities are very important

tions already. Sadly some of younger members are in great need of mobility accessible facilities.

We have begun the Capital Campaign to raise 1.2 million dollars towards the total cost of this critical project for our future. Many people have responded. This campaign is called "With One Voice" to show that all of us are answering "Yes, I want to support this for us!" We are asking everyone to participate in supporting this project financially. We ask that you give according to your means, for everyone can give an appropriate amount to the project which is for every one of us.

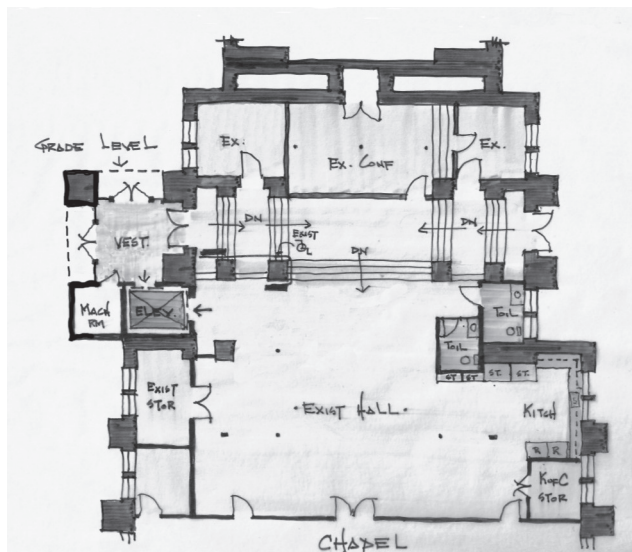
By God's grace and everyone's personal generosity we hope to begin construction in late Spring (April or May) 2018. This improvement in our facilities allows us to welcome so many that have been unable to be with us, those who struggle valiantly in good weather to with us and those who need a proper restroom. To receive the spiritual nourishment of the

Sacred Word and the Body of Christ at Mass, to be able to attend the funeral of a family member or a friend who has journeyed with us in life, to celebrate in church at a wedding of a loved one and also attend events that enrich our faith and our lives



Upper Church

and other times not so. Clearly and absolutely at this time they are critical and essential for us. We want to be able to have graced Masses and beautiful religious services and also meetings, lectures and events on both levels of our Church building which allow anyone to participate. Our town and thus our congregation is continuing to grow with folks over 50 who have knee or hip replacements (or both!), advanced arthritis conditions, recovered stroke patients and people who need proper restrooms. This project which you can see from the architectural concepts in this issue is about caring for the great need that we have at present for all our own people and also for the growing future needs of our people. How many of you are or know someone who cannot come to church now because of mobility or health issues? Those who are younger members have parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles with these issues, those who are over 50 may have these limita-



which help maintain our Catholic Community and Identity: these are some of the major reasons why we need to improve our welcoming facilities.

View From the Pew

by Joan McGuire

For the One who has Everything

My memories of the greatest satisfaction I had at Christmas was in making gifts. Four years old was the cutoff point for having my name put on the gifts given by my parents. After that it was up to me to make my own gifts. My mother taught me to knit and from then on every year all of my family were the proud recipients of scarfs in different colors, until I learned how to knit fingers in gloves.

When I started baby-sitting, I entered the world of buying gifts. All went well for everyone; except I didn't have something for the person whose birthday it really was. What do you get for the one who has everything? I took down the book I was given on my sixth birthday "It has all the answers" was written on the first page. My uncle was right. After thorough perusing it I found in Matthew 25:41 "whatever you did for one of my least brothers, you did it for me." So it was the beginning of my daily gift to Jesus. I would share with at least one person each day (I kept it simple) one or more of the following:

The Gift of Listening - really listening-not daydreaming, not planning a response and no interrupting.

The Gift of a Compliment - a simple "you look great" or "you did a great job."

The Gift of Laughter - share a funny happening or listen to another person's story.

The Gift of a Cheerful Disposition - a smile, a kind word or a simple wave as I went by.

The Gift of a "Thank You" - It doesn't have to be a sonnet. Just a short note by mail, email or a call by phone saying "Thanks."

The Gift of a Favor - go out of your way to do something nice for someone - even if it is inconvenient.

Jesus taught us that the best gift we can give is the gift of ourselves.





Mark Your Parish Calendar

"...Babe, all mortal babes excelling..."

by Father Jack Sullivan

- Nov. 28** Mass at Nursing Home, 2pm
- Nov. 29** Palliative Care Program
- Dec. 2** Christmas Pageant Rehearsal, 9am
- Dec. 3** Caring Tree Gifts Due
- Dec. 3** Baptisms, 1:30
- Dec. 3** Baptismal Catechesis, 1:30pm
- Dec. 4** Advent Adoration, 6-7pm chapel
- Dec. 6** Mass at Atria, 2pm
- Dec. 7** **Vigil of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception**
Mass, 4pm
- Dec. 8** **Feast of the Immaculate Conception**
Masses: 7am, 7:30pm
- Dec. 9** Pageant Rehearsal, 8am
- Dec. 10** Lessons and Carols, **3pm**
- Dec. 11** Advent Adoration, 6-7pm chapel
- Dec. 13:** Mass at Forge Hill, 2pm
- Dec. 14** CWC Meeting, 7pm
- Dec. 16** Pageant rehearsal, 8am
- Dec. 17:** Baptisms, 1:30
- Dec. 18** Advent Adoration, 6-7pm chapel
- Dec. 19:** Mass at Nursing Home
- Dec. 20:** Mass & Confession at Magnolia Heights, 2pm
- Dec. 24** **Sunday Masses at 7:30 and 10:30 only**
- Dec. 24** **Christmas Eve Masses: 4pm (3), 6pm, 7:30pm Midnight**
- Dec. 25** **Christmas Day Masses: 9am, 10:30am only**
- Dec. 26** **No Morning Mass**
- Dec. 31** **Regular Sunday mass Schedule**
- Jan. 1** **New Year's Day Mass: 9am**
- Jan. 3** Mass at Atria, 2pm
- Jan. 7** Baptisms, 1:30
- Jan. 10** Mass at Forge Hill
- Jan. 14** Baptisms, 1:30
- Jan. 17** Mass at Magnolia Heights
- Jan. 18** CWC Meeting, 7pm
- Jan. 21** K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Jan. 21** Baptisms, 1:30
- Jan. 23** Mass at nursing home
- Jan. 28** Baptisms, 1:30
- Feb. 4** Scout Sunday
- Feb. 4** Baptisms, 1:30
- Feb. 7** Mass at Atria
- Feb. 11** Baptisms, 1:30
- Feb. 14** **Ash Wednesday**
Mass: 7am, 7:30pm
Prayer service: 12:15pm, 4pm
- Feb 18** K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Feb 18** Baptisms, 1:30
- Feb 21** Mass at Magnolia Heights
- Feb 25** Baptisms, 1:30
- Feb. 27** Mass at Forge Hill
- Mar 4** K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Mar 4** Baptisms, 1:30
- Mar 7** Mass at Atria
- Mar 11** CWC Communion Breakfast
- Mar 11** Baptisms, 1:30

Saint Mary's Parish Choir has recorded on its Christmas CD Hector Berlioz's *The Shepherds' Farewell* which addresses these words to baby Jesus: "...Babe, all mortal babes excelling, content our earthly lot to share..." Friends, in this meditation we will explore some examples of the literary achievements of Christian authors in lavishing praise upon Jesus at his birth in Bethlehem and in demonstrating how the infant Jesus surpasses other children. The praise of Jesus as "exceptional" responds to the desire of many adults to find an adult Christ, a full-sized Savior and Redeemer, at Christmas. These Christian authors are employing their Easter faith in Jesus Christ as the Risen and glorified Lord as a lens for praising the infant Jesus in his manger crib.

Christmas morning prayer includes this meditation: A little child is born for us today; little and yet called the mighty God. The angel Gabriel had announced this prediction about Mary's son Jesus: "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32a). Saint Ephrem the Syrian (died 373) imagined the lullaby that Mary sang to baby Jesus: "You have been born of me like a little one, but you are strong as a giant." Saint Ambrose's (340 - 397) hymn *Veni Redemptor Gentium* pays tribute to the happy union of divine nature and human nature in Jesus by praising Jesus as "a giant in twofold substance one, rejoicing now His course to run." Another ancient hymn proclaims the impressive titles that Jesus deserves even at his birth in Bethlehem. "The Son of the highest Father has gone forth from the palace of the Virgin - Bridegroom, Redeemer, Creator, the Giant of his Church." The words "Bridegroom" and "Giant" are clues that the song-writer is interpreting Psalm 19:6 as a reference to Jesus' birth. "There he has placed a tent for the sun; it comes forth like a bridegroom coming from his tent, rejoices like a champion to run his course" (Revised Grail Psalms translation). The Hebrew word "giant, champion, hero, athlete" (gibbor) also appears in the compound-name "mighty-God" (RSV translation; "God-hero" NAB 1970 translation, as you hear on Christmas in the current Lectionary) in Isaiah 9:5.

Our Catholic heritage enriches our annual liturgical observance of the birth of Jesus. The lyrics of the Christmas carol "Angels from the realms of glory" encourage us to expand our view of Jesus - "though an infant now we view him, he shall fill his Father's throne." Even at the manger/crib scene, imagine Jesus at full-size and strength as the Risen Lord and Savior of all people of every age and time and place. Today and every day in the Church's worship and liturgy, we meet our adult-sized Savior Jesus who is now and forever Risen and glorified.



Advent and Christmas Liturgical Celebrations

Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Vigil Mass: Thurs., Dec. 7 at 4pm
Holyday Masses: Fri. Dec. 8,
7am and 7:30pm

Advent Adoration
Mondays, December 4, 11, 18
6-7pm in the chapel

Lessons and Carols
Sunday, December 10
3:00pm

Fourth Sunday of Advent,
Sunday, December 24
Masses: 7:30am and 10:30am only

Christmas Eve
Masses:
4pm (3 Masses); upper church, lower church, Horace Mann Auditorium with the Children's Pageant
6pm, 7:30pm

****Midnight Mass****

Christmas Day
Masses: 9am and 10:30am

No Morning Mass on December 26

New Year's Day
not a Holy Day of Obligation
this year
Regular Sunday Mass Schedule on
Sunday, December 31

Monday, Jan. 1
Mass at 9am only



The Gift of Reminiscing

by Nan Rafter, Parish Nurse

(This article is being reprinted because I want to remind us all that gifts and wealth are not connected to money. The greatest gift we have is God, each other and our memories.)

As we prepare for the holidays and immerse ourselves in gift giving, I invite you to take this time of waiting in Advent to look at a gift you have already been given, the gift of memories.

We use reminiscing to enhance our lives in a healthy and therapeutic way. Reminiscing has been shown to be beneficial especially with our senior population. When we remember the past or reminisce, we are allowed to recall previous life situations and experience them again, even those that may have been painful. We have become who we are today because of all the experiences in our lives.

Reminiscing integrates our past life experiences with our current ones and gives meaning to our lives. If we are unable to find meaning in our lives, we will be unable to develop new insights or benefit from our previous experiences. As Catholics, we come together at liturgy to remember. Jesus taught us at the Last Supper to partake of His body and blood as a remembrance for all that He has done for us. (*1 Cor. 11:23-26*)

Reminiscing can strengthen our self-esteem and reduce feelings of isolation. As we share our memories with others, we can develop a powerful sense of ourselves as survivors. The sharing of our life stories reemphasizes our interdependence on other people and can validate our lives. I used to visit a lady who lived in a nursing home and her face would light up when she recalled how we first met when I delivered a fruit basket to her home from our Caring Tree Ministry. As I sat with her, she shared how she loved going to church every day or preparing family dinners which brought her happiness. She beamed when she remembered her daughter bringing her calzones from our St. Rocco Festival. She also shared her struggles and sad times, losing her son and her health. However through it all I saw the face of faith and courage. I received the gift of her life experiences which has since enhanced my life.

Memories can help us to relocate our loved ones as we continue to hold them close in our hearts.

We benefit from the gift of reminiscing when we remember our own life stories. Whether you are the story-teller or the audience for another's story, you can reap the blessings of this life-giving gift. I enjoyed visiting my aunt Bina because she would tell me wonderful

and interesting stories about my family members, especially the ones I had never met. She became an important link to my past which I can now share with my children and granddaughter.

To tell your story, you need to remember it, write it down or video tape it then relate it to another person. If you are going to help someone to reminisce, you might consider pictures or letters which can be used to stimulate their memory. As they tell their story, listen attentively, offer encouragement, support and gratitude as they share their personal memories and feelings. You may want to offer to record their memories so they can use them in the future. People who have memory problems can usually recall the past. When you encourage them to share their stories, you are letting them know that their lives had special meaning. *"The memory of the righteous will be a blessing."* (Pr. 10:6-7)

As we come together during this holiday season with family, friends or a home-bound neighbor, I invite you to listen to their stories and perhaps share some of your own. I pray that you will experience God's peace and joy.

What better gift to give to ourselves, our children, grandchildren and our neighbors than to share our life experiences and memories with each other! May God's peace and love remain always with you.

PARISH COMMUNICATION

This parish is very large and active. It is important for us to be able to give you accurate information and for you to be able to contact us as needed. If you wish to contact anyone at the rectory we can be reached by phone, 508-528-0020; Fax, 508-528-1641; or email. Here are email addresses for the clergy, Religious Education and rectory staff:

Father Brian Manning: bmanning@stmarysfranklin.org
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If your parish group or organization would like to place a notice in the bulletin, we must receive it **in writing (email is preferred)** by 5pm Sunday afternoon for the following weekend. Information can also be submitted for inclusion on the parish website at any time. Bulletin or website information can be emailed to parishpublishing@stmarysfranklin.org

If your organization is planning to use any parish facilities, such as the church, church hall, lower church meeting rooms or the school, for your meetings, events, etc. it is **necessary** that you call and reserve the time and place that you want. This is the **only** way that you can be assured of having your activity at the desired location.

CHECK OUT OUR PARISH WEBSITE: www.stmarysfranklin.org. There is a wealth of information available there.



A Festival of Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 10th
 at 3:00pm in the
 Upper Church.

"Lessons and Carols" is a ceremony of sacred readings and music of the Advent and Christmas Season.

Please come and Rejoice on
 Sunday, December 10th
 in preparation of the
 birth of the Holy Child!!



St. Mary's Music Notes!!

by Terry Kerr

Adult Choir: The St. Mary Adult Choir has begun their 2017 - 2018 Choral Season and rehearsals in preparation of the Advent and Christmas seasons! The Adult Choir is always looking for new members. The Adult Choir rehearses on Thursday Evenings in the Upper Church Choir Loft from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

A Festival of Lessons and Carols: St. Mary Parish will present our Fourth Annual "Festival of Lessons and Carols for Advent & Christmas" on Sunday, **December 10th** at 3pm in the Upper Church. "Lessons and Carols" is a ceremony of sacred readings and music of the Advent and Christmas Season. Please come enjoy the readings and carols of the season on December 10th! What a great way to prepare for the upcoming Christmas season!!!

Children's Festival Choir: The St. Mary Children's Festival Choir will soon begin conducting rehearsals in preparation for the 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Liturgy at the Horace Mann School.

Rehearsals will be held from 5:15 - 6pm in the Upper Church on the following Thursdays:

November 30
December 7
December 14

We will need at least twenty-five (25) voices to fully complement the music selections for the Children's Choir!

Glory to the Newborn King:

St. Mary's Adult Choir Christmas CD is available for purchase by calling the rectory or emailing our Music Director, Terry Kerr. The CD is a great stocking-stuffer or the perfect gift for all those people on your shopping list that are just so tough to find just the right present!! Please pick one up, enjoy the music, and support your parish!

1 CD - \$ 20.00
2 CD's - \$ 35.00 (\$17.50 each)
3 CD's (or more) - \$ 45.00
(\$ 15.00 each)



...the Greatest Gift

(Continued from page 1)

with news that should have resulted in denouncement of Mary showed the faith of accepting the unknown.

The shepherds - These were on the lowest caste in the society of their time. When they received the news they went to the stable. It would have been impossible to gather all their sheep to take them. They must have left this source of financial security to obey the celestial call. When they came back from the stable they spread the good news of all they had seen and heard in spite of the fact that they would probably be laughed at because of their low esteem.

The Magi - these men from the East looked to the natural world for guidance to find Jesus. For some like the shepherds, finding Jesus was easy. The Magi represent those whose journey to Jesus involves search and struggle. They came as pilgrims looking for signs to guide them along the way (the star). They needed more than a natural sign. The fullness of the way is found in scripture. So the Magi went to Herod. He ordered his priests to search the Hebrew Scriptures to find where the Messiah was to be born. Herod gave Magi the information but did not follow it himself. Sometimes we get good directions from people who are not on the same quest. Don't throw away the message because you don't like the messenger. The story of the Magi does not end with the finding of Jesus. This encounter made them Wise Men. They returned home pondering all they saw and learned and "kept all these things in their heart."

As with the people in the infancy narrative, we all receive our own invitation. No one sees the entire face of God. Each one of us as prophets must pass on that part of God's face as we know it. This is why we all have different talents and must not judge others for proclaiming a different part of the message.

One gift God gives to all his children if we choose to accept it is PEACE. Gestures of peace spring from the lives of people who foster peace in their hearts.

Peace grows in proportion to our appreciation of community in our lives.

...We Need a Little Christmas

(Continued from page 2)

opportunities for you. Stay tuned to the bulletin and parish website for more details.

As we approach Christmas, the chorus of glorious, joyful Christmas carols can be drowned out by the chorus of some who complain about "those people" who attend Mass only on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. This is not a problem to complain about but rather an opportunity to welcome and to celebrate the visitors, the extended families, the strangers, the visitors, the lost and seeking. The Holy Family, the shepherds and the magi came together and welcomed each other and celebrated the birth of the Christ child. There was no room at the inns for the Holy Family. The shepherds journeyed because of a message they heard. The magi came in hope for an answer to an astrological phenomenon. All of them eventually found welcome. So too do we come to Mass at Christmas seeking room in the pews because we have been told by angels of the Christ child and we seek answers about the wonders and challenges of life. We come to pray. Some come to pray in thanksgiving. Others come in hope to pray. We all come to find the welcome, warmth and love of welcome.

Christmas reminds us that we, as Catholic Christians, are called to welcome the stranger. This call to welcome strangers includes welcoming those who are different from us. Welcoming the stranger entails seeing all people as our family. It entails loving the unlovable, helping the helpless and supporting those in need without judgement. Our welcoming others is central to the Christmas season. When we extend welcome to others we are the hands and heart of Christ.

Yes, we do need a little Christmas each and every day of the year. We can find some comfort in Christmas music (no matter when we start listening) and we can live the joy of Christmas each and every day all throughout the year by extending welcome, acceptance, hospitality, reception, enjoyment and appreciation to others. May this Christmas bring you welcome and see you give welcome to all. In the words of Dr. Seuss; "Christmas Day is in our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp. Christmas Day will always be, Just as long as we have we. Welcome Christmas while we stand, Heart to heart and hand in hand."

...Walking Where Jesus Walked

(Continued from page 2)

winding roads climbing up high into the olive-spotted hills and down into rocky valleys. Taking it all in, my thoughts wandered back 2,000 years, to a pair of travelers who had climbed these same hills under the beating sun, not in a cab, but on the back of a donkey. And after this tedious and arduous journey all the way from Nazareth, they were turned away from every inn in town, sent instead to shelter in a barn where our Lord entered the world among sheep and cattle. Today, the barn where Jesus was born no longer stands, and instead, the Church of the Nativity stands in its place.

Despite being under construction, the church was beautiful. Paintings of Jesus and his birth hung along all the walls, and intricate lanterns in red and gold hung in hoards from the ceiling. In every corner were elaborate altars decorated with flowers and more lanterns. The most elaborate of all stood over the place where Jesus was born, draped in red and gold cloth, glittering in the light of dozens of lanterns and candles, the center of the floor beneath it marked with a star. The entire church was breathtaking and gorgeous... and felt so contrived. The grandeur of the church was certainly meant for a king, for our God, but it felt very out of place; our Savior was born unto man in a stable and slept in a bed of straw, lived in poverty and exile for years as Herod hunted Him. The church was magnificent, but the more powerful display for me lay outside the church in a little structure of wood and stone. Figures of Mary and Joseph watched over the newborn Jesus lying in the manger, surrounded by sheep and goats, as the magi stood by and offered their gifts. We know Jesus is our Lord and our King, but the night he was born, he was a man, a baby of the humblest origins, and I think we do right in honoring his simple beginnings as an infant just as much as we do in revering his glory and might as our God.

Of all I was able to see and do while in Palestine, my favorite part of my trip was the time I spent in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the largest city in Israel, though my visits were limited to the Old City, home to some of the most historically significant sites in all three of the major monotheistic religions. I saw from a distance the Al-Aqsa Mosque, where Muslims believe Muhammad was transported during the

Night Journey; I laid my hands on the Western Wall, where the Second Jewish Temple once stood; I climbed partway up the Mount of Olives, where Jesus prayed before his Crucifixion and where He ascended into Heaven.

Everywhere I went while in Jerusalem, I was deeply moved by the sheer magnificence of the city as a whole, by all the history that had occurred there, by the significance it held in all three of the major faiths. I could have spent weeks exploring Jerusalem alone, wandering the bustling markets and chatting with eager shop owners, marveling at the architecture and artwork of all the churches; following the entire Via Dolorosa in the footsteps of Jesus on his way to His crucifixion.

I was able to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus is said to have been crucified and laid in His tomb. The church is awesome in its size and splendor, inside and out. Without a map or a guide, it is quite impossible to navigate the church and understand the significance of each of the many rooms, altars, and works of art. Like the Church of the Nativity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was undergoing construction during my visit, but the scaffolding did very little to deter from its beauty and the overwhelming feeling it conjured inside.

There are no words to describe the many feelings that flooded through me as I visited the many significant areas of the church. I cannot tell you what it is like to touch your forehead to the stone on which His body was anointed before His burial. I cannot adequately capture how it feels to touch the stone on which Jesus' body was laid to rest, to pray surrounded by candles and flowers over the place where he was once dead and buried. I cannot describe the awe and ache of seeing, of laying your hands upon, the stone of his tomb. I cannot put to words the feelings of love, pain, or gratitude that wash over you while gazing upon the altar where once He hung on the cross.

I did not just feel His presence and love that day; I saw it among the ornate lanterns and golden altars, I touched it in the smooth stone of those altars, and I knew it in the overwhelming feelings that filled me.

I may have traveled to Palestine as an intern and a musician, but my experience there was so much more than just practicing and performing. I had the opportunity of a lifetime, to be able to travel to and see places I

had before only ever read about, places that before now did not feel entirely real, and sometimes in remembering them still do not. I walked the same ground my Savior once traveled while spreading the Word, visited the places where He was born, and where He died. I heard the same languages He and his disciples heard and spoke, heard and played the music they would have shared, experienced the vibrancy of the same culture that would have surrounded them, even so many years ago. It was a trip I will never forget, a trip I could not recommend more to anyone who may get the opportunity to travel to the Middle East, and a trip I hope to make again, should the future allow it.



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The Permanent Diaconate

By Deacon Guy St. Sauvuer

Many people may not be aware of or have never seen a Catholic Permanent Deacon. I want to share small tidbits of information regarding the Deacon with you. This information is about the beginning of PERMANENT DEACONS IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Order of Deacons was instituted by the Apostles (Acts 6; 1-7). It was restored as a permanent and public ministry in the Roman Church as a result of a decision made by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council. The restoration of the permanent diaconate was authorized in the United States in 1968.

The aims of the diaconate are to enrich and strengthen the works of service being performed by the Church, to enlist a new group of devout and competent married and single men in the active ministry of the Church, and to aid in extending needed charitable and liturgical service to the faithful. Wives of deacons assist in many of these areas.

The ministry of a deacon is similar to but different from that of a priest or bishop. A deacon is ordained and missioned by Christ through the bishop to minister to the needy and the poor and to be a minister of Word and Sacrament, working in obedience to his bishop and in close fraternal cooperation

with priests. While all Christians are called to serve others, the deacon is an official sign of this service and he solemnly promises to be a living example of such service for others.

The number of deacons in the United States has continued to grow steadily. There are more than 10,000 permanent deacons ministering in better than 140 (arch) dioceses in the United States.

Since 1976, the Archdiocese of Boston has ordained over 200 men as deacons.

Infused with the Holy Spirit – The Confirmation Preparation Program

by Roger Gullo,
Confirmation Director

*“Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit”
Acts 8:14-17*

On November 10-11, 211 Confirmandi (including one adult Confirmand) perfected the grace they received in Baptism with the receiving of the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation conferred by Bishop Robert Reed, West Regional Bishop of our Archdiocese. The offering of the Holy Eucharist and Sacrament of Confirmation was conducted in three beautiful Masses; one on Friday evening, and two on Saturday. Bishop Reed administered the

Rite of Confirmation in a way that the Confirmandi, sponsors, parents and loved ones will long remember; a delivery with enthusiasm and enlightenment throughout the Mass. His homily brought a message to the Confirmandi to allow the Holy Spirit to change them in ways they could never imagine. He shared how his own life was changed when he was “sealed by the gift of the Holy Spirit” with our own Father Brian Manning as his Confirmation Sponsor; changes that included a desire to ride on the back of a garbage truck, to ending a path in the medical field due to grade scores, to being ordained as a priest and ultimately being installed as a bishop. He closed his homily with a request of each of the Confirmandi - To let the Holy Spirit work within them as they assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ. Continue to become the “best version of themselves” and change the world.

This group of Confirmandi has a special place in my heart as their Confirmation

Director. This is the first group to have completed the entire new 2-year Confirmation Preparation Program when it first commenced in the Fall of 2015. It has been my distinct privilege, and a gift from the Holy Spirit, to have served these Confirmandi and their parents; and to administer the *Decision Point* program. Bless you all for the support you have provided.

I invite you to learn more about the St. Mary Confirmation Preparation Program by visiting the *Confirmation Preparation Program* located under the *Formation* menu on the St Mary Parish website (<http://www.stmarysfranklin.org/>). In addition, I highly suggest you visit the *Decision Point* program website (<https://dynamiccatholic.com/Confirmation>) and discover the ways our Confirmation Candidates, and those recently Confirmed, are opening their lives to the Holy Spirit and surrounding it by the grace and love of Jesus Christ.

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NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR
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