

From the Deacon's Desk

Thank you for your kindness:

Thank you to the parishioners who gave me gifts and cards during Christmas. You are all very kind and generous to me, and you make me feel loved and valued. I'm sending out thank you notes, but if you don't get a thank you card soon, please let me know. God love you all!

Mary, the Mother of God:

January 1 is the day selected on the liturgical calendar that Catholics come together to look towards the example of Mary, saying "yes" to the Angel Gabriel and bearing God in her womb, thus giving birth to our Savior, our God, Jesus Christ. This holy day was put on the calendar because of opposition that naming Mary the Mother of God, meant that she existed before God. But the Church declared that no, Mary was created by God and that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is God Himself made man, came to the earth through her. Because of her role in Christian salvation history, Mary is considered the Mother of the Church, and because she was chosen as the way God came to earth, the early Christian Church gave her the title, Mother of God.

We must remember that Mary is seen always relational to Jesus, her Son. In fact, in the Orthodox Church, there can never be an image, whether icon, statue, or painting, without Jesus with her. They recognize the close connection that exists between Mary and God, and therefore we turn to Mary in intercessory prayer and petition because we believe her closer to God and thus can take our prayers to him for us. This is similar to the way we might want something but are afraid to ask one parent, so we go to the other and ask them to ask for what it is we need. So, as this Christmas Season continues in the Octave, or the eight days of the celebration of the Birth of Jesus, we have a special day set aside to honor Mary as the Mother of God.

This year, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (January 1 – New Year's Day) is on a Monday, so it is not a Holy Day of Obligation. It remains a Holy Day, however, but attending Mass on this day is not required. **The Mass for this Holy Day is Monday, January 1, at 10:30 a.m.**

Whole Community Catechesis: Baptism & Discipleship

Next Sunday on the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, we will discuss the topic of Baptism and Discipleship. Usually we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on a Sunday, but this year we remember Jesus' baptism the day after Epiphany. Because of that we will be exploring several aspects of Baptism, using current faith-forming activities.

In sharing with each other our common identity as Christians, we recall that Baptism identifies each of us as followers of Jesus and members of the worldwide community of Christ. At our next Whole Community Catechesis gathering next Sunday, you'll be exposed to activities to help you understand the deeper meaning of Baptism and your call to Christian faith.

Did you know that our baptism is always seen in terms of Jesus' own baptism, and that during the Creed when we profess our belief in "One Baptism", we are referring to Jesus' own baptism?

We will gather for breakfast after the 9:30 a.m. Mass, followed by faith formation for adults, children, and teens from 11:15 to 12 noon.

Scripture Today: The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

On the feast of the Holy Family, may we heed the following words from Pope Francis: "*I want to repeat these three words: please, thank you, sorry. Three essential words!*

We say please so as not to be forceful in family life: "May I please do this? Would you be happy if I did this?" We do this with a language that seeks agreement.

We say thank you, thank you for love! But how many times do you say thank you to your wife, and to your husband? How many days go by without uttering this word, thanks!

And the last word: sorry. We all make mistakes and on occasion someone gets offended in the marriage, in the family, and sometimes... harsh words are spoken but please listen to my advice: don't ever let the sun set without reconciling. Peace is made each day in the family: "Please forgive me", and then you start over.

Please, thank you, sorry! Shall we say them together? Let us say these words in our families!"

Alpha during Lent:

Alpha is coming this Lent again. If you'd like to be an Alpha small group facilitator, please let Jerry Green know. The Alpha Team will begin meeting soon.

Security Procedures:

In an effort to be proactive with the possibility of church shootings like the one that happened in Texas, I'd like to tentatively enact some procedure changes to our Mass gatherings.

Five minutes after Mass starts, the side doors should be locked. This will made it easier to keep an eye on who enters the church by making folks who come late enter through the back middle doors only. Push bars for easy exit are being installed on all our doors.

I know this is extreme and goes against what we as a church are trying to accomplish with evangelization and outreach, but we also need to keep our parishioners safe, especially the children.

I'm open to further suggestions **EXCEPT** letting people carry guns into church. I'm also receptive to listening to our law enforcement parishioners for thoughts and input as well.

May the Lord watch over us, but I also believe God helps those who are proactive and help themselves. With all of us having Free Will, even God is limited in stopping a person with a gun who is psychologically ill or who has evil in their heart.