

The Epiphany of the Lord January 4, 2009

Stewardship is a way of life.

Tithing is God's Plan for Giving:

Tithing income: December 28, 2008	\$ 2121.00
Income for December 29, 2007	\$ 1315.00
Income for December 30, 2006	\$ 1827.10
Student Offerings	\$ 5.50
Christmas 2008	\$ 2646.00
Christmas 2007	\$ 2196.00
Christmas 2006	\$ 2743.10

Next week's tithe: On the weekend of January 11 & 12, 2009, the Diocese of Harrisburg will take up its annual collection to assist the Church in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa. Your generosity will enable those serving in these countries to continue the work of evangelization by building bridges to spread the Word of God, support catechetical and lay leadership training programs, provide for the formation of priests, deacons and religious, as well as assist needy families both materially and spiritually. The work made possible by this collection allows all the Catholic faithful to reach out in solidarity to brothers and sisters in faith around the world.

From the pastor: The three Kings brought Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh. It was a one-shot gift for their King. But you give your time, talent and treasure to the King every week here at Sacred Heart. Your tithing and service in ministry are a constant reminder that His message lives on. Because of your outstanding generosity, we are able to meet our increased expenses while budgeting in maintenance items that will always be ongoing.

Comments on Tithing from the pews: "Giving a present to my church was not part of my Christmas list last year, Father, and yet, after much hesitation, I gave in my bonus gift from my job to the parish. I can't tell you what I received in love and peace that Christmas week and all this past year. I truly learned that His generosity cannot be outdone. I will give my bonus every year from now on!"

My Good Deed for the Week: Here's what several of our young people offered as their tithe, in addition to their financial gift: A 3rd grader said, "I helped gather up all the wrapping paper on Christmas." A 4th grader said, "I watched my little brother so my mom could get the table ready for dinner." A Pre-K said, "I helped make the cookies for Santa."

FROM THE PASTOR

Weekly Reflection: Few of us has the luxury of time and means to begin a trip with no destination in mind, spending however much time we wish meandering about at will. For almost all of us, whether we begin a journey either for pleasure or for business, we find security in having our route clearly laid out. We have a specific destination in mind and we use AAA or some travel website to plot out exactly how we are going to get there. The Gospel today recounts a journey, too – that of the Magi who traveled from the East (they "saw his star at its rising") to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem to find the "newborn king." The Magi began their journey searching for this king in a most unorthodox way: they followed a star, rather than a map. They allowed themselves to be led not by human plotting of routes but

by Divine guidance. Nor was the Magi's route always clear: when they arrived at Jerusalem, the star disappeared, leaving them in darkness and uncertainty. Ignorant of the political ramifications, they sought out the most logical source for clear direction: King Herod. He pointed them to Bethlehem, but when they resumed their journey the star once again appeared to lead them on their way. Their journey ended when the star "stopped over the place where the child was," they entered, and offered homage and gifts.

Lessons from the Magi remind us how faithfully they followed God's lead, how diligent they were to complete their journey, how prepared they were by bringing appropriate gifts, how humbled they were to stoop to this tiny Baby and offer homage. But we also learn that God leads even in darkness, even when we have lost our way, and even through the machination of those who intend evil. *WE* are the Magi today: still searching for the "newborn King," still following the light along an uncertain journey, still being surprised by what God reveals along the way and how God reveals it. What is manifested to all of us on this feast is the *mystery* of God's presence to us in the newborn King, but also the mystery of God's presence in the loving and caring way God leads us to life eternal. We have only to do as the Magi did: surrender ourselves to God's guidance and God's surprises.

MANY Thanks to so many who sent Fr. Thoms and me cards and delicious goodies for the rectory. We've enjoyed your treats and are grateful for your expressions of love and support. May God grant you all a blessed, holy and happy new year!

About Liturgy: Liturgy and Universality: Both the Christmas and Epiphany celebrations at first glance focus on this newborn King – at Christmas we celebrate His birth and at Epiphany we celebrate His manifestation to the nations. Jesus' birth marks a whole new in-breaking of God's presence among humanity and manifests God's desire for salvation for all. One of the hallmarks of the liturgical renewal is that liturgy is not something done *for us* by the priest alone, but requires our full, conscious and active participation so that liturgy truly is our communal celebration of salvation. By giving ourselves over to the ritual celebration, we make a public sign that we are concerned not only for our own salvation, but for others' as well. Liturgy is never a "private act," but is always the celebration of the whole Church for the salvation of the entire world.

Liturgy has a number of places where we appropriately pray individually and personally; for example, we prepare to surrender ourselves to God's transforming actions during the silent time in the act of penitence; we pray for the grace we desire at Mass during the silent time in the Opening Prayer (or Collect); we give thanks for the gift of Eucharist in the silent time after Holy Communion. At other times during the liturgy, the prayer has a clear universal character about it; for example, the prayers of the faithful are never simply focused on the needs of the local community, but always remind us to reach out to the whole Church, to pray for the salvation of the world, to be attentive to the needs of the poor and suffering. When we respect this universality of the liturgy, we form ourselves into the unity of the Body and Christ and in solidarity with all the people of the world.

Epiphany Blessing of Homes: In this week's bulletin you will find an insert which will help you to celebrate, with your family, the traditional blessing of homes on the Feast of Epiphany. The Church's celebration of Epiphany ("manifestation"), the "twelfth night of Christmas," apparently originated in Egypt sometime during the third century, thus the Church's celebration of this feast

predates even the celebration of Christmas itself. Epiphany is traditionally celebrated in honor of Christ's birth, of the adoration of the Magi, and of the baptism of Christ's (also celebrated on the first Sunday following Epiphany), three manifestations of the Lord's divinity. Because the Magi came from the Orient, many of the traditional foods served on this day are spicy. Spice cake is often baked for dessert, and entrees may include curry powder or other pungent spices.

Several lovely family customs are associated with Epiphany. It is on Epiphany that the Christmas *creche* is finally completed, as the figures of the three wise men at last arrive at the crib. In many families, the wise men are moved a bit closer to the crib every day from Christmas Day until Epiphany. Also, recalling the gifts to the Infant Jesus, many families exchange small gifts. The **blessing of the home** is also a popular Epiphany custom. Many households mark their entrance door with the year and with the inscription CMB, the initial Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, the names of the three wise men in legend. The inscription also stands for *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, which means "Christ, bless this home." The popular form the inscription takes is **20+C+M+B+09**. It remains above the doorway until Pentecost.

PARISH NEWS

Parish Christmas Party TONIGHT: Every member of the parish is invited to our annual Parish Christmas Party tonight beginning at 5:30pm in our social hall. Now that the "bustle" of the holiday is over and we've celebrated with our families, we now have the opportunity to gather as a parish family to celebrate the Lord's Birth. A signup sheet is in the entryway for you to indicate the number of people and the type of dish you'll share. Please join us.

MASS SCHEDULE



Mon. Jan 5 – St. John Neumann (1 Jn 3:22-4:6; Mt 4:12-17, 23-25)
9:00am – Intentions of Carol Baase
Tues. Jan 6 – (1 Jn 4:7-10; Mk 6:34-44)
Wed. Jan 7 – (1 Jn 4:11-18; Mk 6:45-52)
Thurs. Jan 8 – (1 Jn 4:19-5:4; Lk 4:14-22)
Fri. Jan 9 – (1 Jn 5:5-13; Lk 5:12-16)
9:00am – Joan Pappas
Sat. Jan 10 – (1 Jn 5:14-21; Jn 3:22-30)
5:00pm (English) – Thomas Conrad Jr.
6:30pm (Spanish) – People of the Parish
Sun. Jan 11 – Baptism of the Lord
(Is 55:1-11; 1 Jn 5:1-9; Mk 1:7-11)
9:15am – Vita Evola

This Week in the Parish

Sunday: Parish Christmas Party / 5:30pm / social hall
Monday: Parish Finance Council / 6pm / social hall
Parish Pastoral Council / 6:30pm / social hall
Friday: ESL / 12:30pm / social hall
Saturday: Spanish Choir Practice / 5:30pm / social hall

March For Life, January 22, 2009: Remember to sign up! The 1 day trip will include (time and weather permitting) a short visit to the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception; then, join 14,000 other young Catholics at the Rally for Life and Mass at the VERIZON Sports Arena; then we proceed to the Mall to begin the March. We will be traveling by bus. The bus will pick up passengers at

3:30am and return on Thursday around 9:30 pm. Cost: Provided 40 people go the cost is \$46.00/per person for transportation. Meals: are separate and are estimated at \$25.00. Checks should be made out to "St. Jude Youth Group." Contact Ralph / Jill Perez for the form or information at 535-5835.

Prayer Chain: The prayer chain is being reactivated, however someone is needed to take the calls for those in need of prayer, if you would be willing to do this, or would like to be a member of the prayer chain contact Robin Scanella at trscanella@embarq.com or 436-5657, prayer request (until otherwise notified) may also use this number.

EDUCATION

The Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA): A Radical Attempt to Prematurely End Debate Over Abortion (by Denise M. Burke, AUL Vice-President of Legal Affairs): **History of FOCA:** Even before *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973, there were attempts by Congress to legalize abortion. For example in 1970, Senator Robert Packwood introduced the *National Abortion Act*, which sought to legalize abortion nationwide and preempt state laws restricting or regulating abortion. Although the *National Abortion Act* was unsuccessful, Senator Packwood later joined with Senator Alan Cranston to introduce the inaugural version of the *Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA)* in 1989.

FOCA was introduced at a time when some in Congress feared that *Roe v. Wade* might imminently be overturned (as a result of on-going litigation over abortion-related laws and restrictions including those at issue in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*), and were seeking a means to prevent states from enacting laws prohibiting or regulating abortion. FOCA's main goals were to create a "fundamental right to abortion" and to eliminate any federal, state, or local government action (including the enactment of abortion-related legislation) that limited or "impeded" access to abortion.

Relying on specific portions of the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe*, abortion supporters argued that FOCA would protect a woman's right to an abortion prior to "fetal viability or at any time...to protect the life or health of the woman" and that states could, within enumerated limits, enact protective laws that did not interfere with a woman's right to abortion.

Over the next several years, substantially-similar versions of FOCA were repeatedly re-introduced in Congress until 1993, when the provision allowing states to enact protective legislation was removed. The 1993 version of FOCA instead included criticism of the Supreme Court for abandoning the "strict scrutiny standard" (of reviewing abortion-related laws) for the "undue burden" standard that had recently been announced in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. Notably, under the new "undue burden" standard, requirements such as informed consent, reflection periods, and parental involvement for abortion were deemed constitutional.

After its subsequent re-introduction in 1995, FOCA was not again introduced until 2004 when it was offered by Representative Jerrold Nadler in the House of Representatives and Senator Barbara Boxer in the Senate. In her accompanying press release, Senator Boxer explained that FOCA would "supersede all other abortion related laws, regulations or local ordinances," which included informed consent laws and any health and safety regulations imposed on abortion clinics. *To be continued...*