Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.

Second Sunday of Advent
December 7, 2014

“...our mission is to love as Christ loved
and to proclaim the Good News...”

from our Parish Mission Statement
The Share Christmas experience at St. John of the Cross Parish is a strong and beautiful tradition that will fill your heart with joy as you make someone else's Christmas special!

Our gifts are delivered to the following grateful recipients in the Chicago area: Blessed Sacrament Church, Little Brothers/Friends of the Elderly, St. Thomas of Canterbury, Santa Maria Addolorata, St. Thaddeus, St. Mark, St. Agatha, as well as families in our own parish community.

Sign up for Share Christmas continues through this weekend after all Masses. We have 117 families left! For your convenience our parish Manna reps will be available in the church community room before and after all Masses this weekend for you to purchase food and gift certificates.

What can I buy?
• An unwrapped gift for a child (infant to 18 years old)
• A food gift card from Jewel or Wal-Mart for a Christmas meal
• Gift cards for families from Sears, Wal-Mart, Kohl’s, Target or JC Penny
• Food and gifts cards for a Christmas meal and presents for a family

Please note, providing gift cards for our recipient families allows them to select the sizes and colors that more closely meet their needs. Similarly, providing food cards lets them choose food based on their ethnicity, family preferences and health/allergy concerns. Whether you choose to provide a store bought individual gift, or a gift or food card, know that your generosity will make all the difference in Christmas for our grateful recipients.

Donations can also be made on our parish website at www.stjohnofthecross.org. Click on the Sharing Box and direct your donation to the Special Collections link to choose Share Christmas. Your gifts will be used to purchase food and gift certificates.

• Drop off Days are this Monday and Tuesday, December 8th & 9th, between 9:00am and 7:00pm at the Parish Center.
• The gifts will then be delivered to the parishes on Saturday, December 13th.
• If you have a van or small truck or if you are free to help load and deliver, please call us. Questions can be directed to Lolly Maloney at 630-261-5675 or lollymaloney@gmail.com or the Parish Center.
Rite of Dismissal

Beginning this weekend at certain Masses and continuing through Lent, you will see our catechumens and candidates being dismissed from Mass with their catechist. Fr. Paul Turner, one of the leading theologians in the field of the RCIA writes, “Catechumens and candidates are dismissed not just because they are not yet eligible for Communion, but because they are not yet eligible to fulfill the tasks expected of all the faithful throughout the second part of Mass, “The Liturgy of the Eucharist.”

The Liturgy of the Word is open to all, because through the proclamation of the word by lectors and the priest and or deacon (Gospel only) we are all instructed by God. Through our hearing of the word, we are all called to live it in our lives, thus catechumens and candidates belong with the gathered assembly for this first part of the Mass. Each week our catechumens and candidates will be called forward with their catechist after the homily. As they are sent forth they will spend more time talking and reflecting on the word of God we have just heard proclaimed in the scriptures and in the homily. During this dismissal the catechist will carry with them the Lectionary – the book that contains our scripture proclaimed at Mass.

Rite of Acceptance

Last Sunday at the 5:00pm Mass, four men and women who are processing in the journey of the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) celebrated the Rite of Acceptance. Ellin Wheelihan and Eric Wong were accepted into the Order of Catechumens – those who are preparing and discerning to be baptized. Michael “Mick” McCaskey and Nicole Poletti were welcomed as Candidates; those previously baptized in another Christian faith tradition and are now preparing to be received into full communion of the Catholic Church.

With great joy, the St. John of the Cross Parish Faith Community welcomes Ellin, Erick, Mick and Nicole into the next process of the RCIA, the Catechumenate. During this time they enter an extended period of time during which they are given pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life and the faith of the Catholic Church so as to express a desire to be one with us at the table of the Lord by following a path of prayer, service and love.

Let us pray for these sisters and brothers of ours and look forward to the day they will share fully with us at the Lord’s Table.
Dear Pastors and Staffs,

I mentioned that one of the reasons I chose November 18 for my installation was to highlight in this Year of Consecrated Life the great contribution of religious women as the Church celebrated the feast of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, RSCJ. And so, I am pleased that my first letter to you is a request asking for your help in promoting the annual appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious. Each of us has our own story of how our faith lives have been enriched by religious through their ministry in our dioceses, parishes, schools, hospitals and in countless other ways. Their efforts and service have allowed the Church to put its best foot forward and the world is better for it.

As I ask your support of this appeal, I invite you to think of it not only in terms of a matter of justice to care for their needs, but as an act of solidarity with them, letting them know that our appreciation for their witness is so strong that it prompts a desire to join them in their unique contribution to the life of the Church and society. That is the message I ask you to share with your parishioners on the weekend of December 13/14, as you take up this special collection. Please feel free to share this letter from the pulpit and/or publish it in your parish bulletin.

I take this opportunity to thank you for the many ways you as pastor and parish staff witness to the Gospel by your service to the people under your pastoral care. Please express to your parish family my heartfelt best wishes and pledge of remembrance in prayer as I thank God for many gifts.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago

Senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests have spent their lives ministering to others, often for little, if any, pay. Their sacrifices now leave their religious communities without adequate savings for retirement and health care. Your gift to the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious supports the day-to-day care of roughly 35,000 senior religious, providing necessities such as prescription medications and nursing care. Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

We pray for senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests, that they may enjoy the dignified care they so richly deserve as they continue to devote their lives to prayer and service. Let us also pray for all the elderly in our nation, that they may be treated with respect and compassion and that we as a society may more fully embrace their gifts of wisdom and grace.
Monday, December 8th
Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Holy Day of Obligation
Mass Times are at 6:30am, 7:45am, and 6:30pm

The feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates God's choice of Mary to be the mother of Jesus. God preserved Mary from the stain of original sin from the moment of her conception. Thus, Mary was the first to receive the benefit of the redemption that her Son would merit for all.

To reflect upon this mystery, the Gospel reading for this holy day presents to us the story of the Annunciation. It is through her exchange with the angel Gabriel that Luke, the Evangelist, introduces the person of Mary. The Annunciation begins in the context of Luke's account of the birth of John the Baptist. "In the sixth month," referring to Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel appears to a virgin of Nazareth—Mary. Indeed, there are many parallels in Luke's accounts of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus.

In this passage, Luke tells us much about Mary and the child she is to bear. We learn that Mary is a virgin from Nazareth who is betrothed to a man named Joseph, who was of the house of David. The angel greets Mary in the most glowing of terms, acknowledging the favor she has found with God. The son Mary is to conceive is described in messianic terms. He will be called “Son of the Most High” and the “Son of God.”

Mary is bold in her exchange with the angel. She is troubled by his greeting and questions the message, asking “How am I to bear a son if I have no relations with a man?” Mary is told that she will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit and is offered a sign in the miraculous pregnancy of her elder cousin Elizabeth.

Mary's affirmative response to this seemingly impossible message gives evidence to the grace we know that she possesses from God. Only one who is “full of grace” can be so receptive to and cooperative with the will of God. Because of this, Mary is the model of discipleship for all Christians.

--- from "Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers"

Our vocation is to say “yes” to his call to be children of light as Mary said “yes” to bringing divine light into the world.
Prayer

May we hear the challenge of John the Baptist to prepare for the life-transforming changes the coming of the Lord brings.
May we experience the coming of Christ through the people and events of our daily living in a deep and life-transforming way.

Richard Rohr Daily Meditation

Love is where we came from. And love is where we are going. When we live in love, we will not be afraid to die. We have built a bridge between worlds. As Paul says ‘Love does not come to an end’ and ‘Love never fails’ (1 Corinthians 13:8, 13).

You must die into your one and only life, the life that you must learn to love. It will show itself to be one continuous movement—first learning to love your life and then allowing yourself to fully die into it—and never to die away from it.

Once you practice dying, you find that on the other side is a new empowerment, a new freedom, a new greatness, a new identity in God. Then you are not so afraid of the final handing-over; you can see death as the final gift: “God, I give myself to you one more time. You are not taking away my life. I am giving you mine.”

Once death is joyfully incorporated into life, you are already in heaven, and there is no possibility or fear of hell. That is the Franciscan way. The Gospel is not a fire insurance policy for the next world, but a life assurance policy for this world. Francis, Clare, and many of the mystics somehow came to see through the common disguises of heaven and hell. My hope and desire is that you can know heaven too, and now!

Gateway to Silence: Falling forever into the deathless depths of God.

Lord God, hear the prayers of your people who anxiously await your coming. Help us to straighten the crooked roads of our lives so that we might create a highway for you to enter our homes and hearts with the peace of Christ Jesus, your Son, in whose name we offer this prayer. Amen.

Simple Prayer

Choose a bowl, basket, or box that you can set in a central spot in your home. If this will be a family activity, you might place the container on the table where you have your meals or on a shelf near where you enter or exit your home. If you are doing this by yourself, then place the container on your dresser or some spot in the house you walk by frequently.

On small cards or slips of paper, write names—one name per card—of friends, family, and others you want to pray for during the holidays. Every day between now and Christmas, pick a name and keep that name with you throughout the day, in a pocket or somewhere you’ll notice it and be reminded to pray specifically for that person.

You could make this a family project, keeping the names in a dish on the dinner table and every day praying as a family for the person whose name you picked. Of course, this would influence whose names you put in the dish and what kinds of prayers they needed because some matters would be out of the scope of what you share with other family members.

Loyola Press

Your light will come, O Jerusalem.
The Lord will dawn on you
in radiant beauty.
We shall see the glory of the Lord,
the splendor of our God.
The sign of the cross
shall appear in the heavens,
when our Lord shall come
to judge the world.

Prayer for our RCIA Catechumens and Candidates

Almighty God, look upon your servants,
Nicole, Mick, Eric and Ellin,
as they begin the process of being counted
among the members of your Church.
Teach them through this time of preparation
in coming to know Christ, the love of God,
the mysteries of our faith, the way of the Gospel,
the grace of the sacraments and the importance
of their relationship with you and the Church.
Send down upon them and their sponsors
your Spirit of guidance and wisdom
as they journey together in faith.
We thank you for these whom you have called
and we await their joining us around
the table of the Lord.
Through the power of the Holy Spirit, assure them
of the prayers and support
of the St. John of the Cross faith community.
Living the Gospel

John was a desert ascetic whose mission was to prepare the people for a life-transforming change—the Lord is coming! Who is this Lord? One mightier than John. How so? John announces the nearness of salvation; Jesus is the salvation. John baptizes with water, Jesus with the Holy Spirit. What does this mean? Jesus’ baptism instills God’s very Life through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Baptism with the Holy Spirit transforms our preparation into fulfillment—the Lord has come!

John the Baptist diverted attention from himself to Jesus. His ministry was not about himself but about the “One mightier than I [who] is coming after me.” He proclaimed repentance, prepared for Jesus, died—this was the pattern of John’s life. Actually, it’s the pattern of Jesus’ life, too: he proclaimed the Good News, prepared the way to the Father, died. Further, it’s the pattern of our own Gospel living: proclaim the gospel of repentance, prepare for Christ’s many comings, die to ourselves. Our being baptized “with the Holy Spirit” enables us to do the work of God, for by baptism we are grafted onto Christ. In baptism we become heralds, like John, of Christ’s redeeming Presence in our world. By our Christian living (blamelessly and with righteousness) we not only point to Christ, but we also make present the Christ who dwells in us. The challenge of Gospel living is ever to seek encounters with Christ, surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, cooperate with the divine Life coursing within us. Once we are armed with this kind of divine Presence and power, then we, too, can be messengers, like John, of the Lord’s coming for all we meet in our daily Gospel living. ©Living Liturgy

Jesus has already come into the world as our savior. During Advent, we pray that we will be able to recognize Jesus’ presence in our midst. Advent also reminds us that Jesus will come again to fulfill the promise of salvation. We pray that we will continue to be watchful as we anticipate that great day.

An Advent Gift

Through the wonderful generosity of a parishioner, St. John of the Cross Parish is able to give parish families a special gift this Advent season. The Glory of the Incarnation is a cd of homilies by Fr. Bob Barron that celebrates the great feasts of the Christmas season, plus a final sermon on the Catholic view of other world religions. Meditations include: A Christmas Surprise: Luke’s familiar story explained as a subversive, surprising text, Gospel Family Values: Supporting the mission of each family member is the Biblical view of family, Journey of the Magi: A Metaphor for the Spiritual Life, Baptism of the Lord: An Icon of the Trinity, Christ and the World Religions: We share many truths with other religions, yet all paths do not lead to God. After you are done listening, we encourage you to pass it on to another family member or friend. Look for your cd after Masses today!
Strong Catholic Parents

Advent Wreath Prayer for the Second Week

God of power and mercy open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy so that we may share his wisdom and become one with him when he comes in glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

~AMEN.

During Advent, we not only prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but we also check in to see if we are doing all the things that will keep us ready to receive Jesus when he comes again. Talk to your family about how you are doing in attending to your spiritual life as a family. Recommit yourselves to praying daily, reading Scripture, and staying faithful to God’s commandments. Pray together that through this Advent season your family will be more prepared to receive Jesus when he comes again.

God of Love,
Your Son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us.
He is a sign of your love.
Help us walk in that love during the weeks of Advent, as we wait and prepare for his coming.
We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior.
Amen.

Advent reminds me that to wait well is not an easy thing to master. Though I try, I am often swept up in this distracted world. Too often driven by deadlines and the nagging demands of my own impatience. I want what I want NOW, like a two-year old banging her palms against the tray of her high chair. Given some of the technologies most of us utilize and the ways we have been shaped by them, it’s easy to come to expect instant gratification and to turn our backs on the bigger picture, the long view.

How do we resonate with the kind of sweeping and certain anticipation of the coming Messiah that permeated the lives and minds of our earliest brethren, people who spent lifetimes in waiting? Advent traditions—lighting the Advent wreath, candle by candle, or leaving the manger cradle empty until Christmas Eve—present profound opportunities to revisit the full meaning of Christian anticipation. It takes courage to wait in joyful hope, and it requires that we prepare ourselves for the coming Christ. Our desire to renew an interior posture must prevail throughout the Christian life: to wait on the Lord.

To ask how well we wait is the same as asking how well we “do” Advent. Are we tempted with the increasing commercialization of Christmas to skip over Advent altogether? This season, promise yourself to take up one Advent tradition with new fervor. Investigate its origin and meaning. Allow the Holy Spirit to refresh a Catholic imagination within you and to remind you that you are an integral, irreplaceable part of a much larger and more important story. You live in a world brimming with sacramental promise because of the Child born in Bethlehem.

Our Advent refrain must be “wait for the Lord! Be strong, take courage, and wait for the Lord!” Even as economies crumble, and tumult and suffering seem to reign, all our waiting will end. Christmas is coming. We will see goodness, the goodness of the Lord.

What is your favorite Advent tradition?

A Christmas Gift that Keeps Giving

On November 20th, a young refugee family of nine from Sudan arrived in Chicago. They held all their belongings in one small bag. Catholic Charities was there to greet them. The family was taken to their new apartment, far from the persecution, intolerance and violence they left behind. With a fresh start ahead, this family can begin to grow and flourish with peace and hope in their future.

Because of the generous donations from our parish and friends, St. John of the Cross Parish was able to supply this family with much needed home and personal items. We were able to purchase 6 beds, one crib and two toddler beds for the family. Couches, chairs, bureaus, bedding and clothes were also collected and given to the family.

Pictured below is the newly welcomed family along with staff members from Catholic Charities and SJC at St. Gregory’s annual Thanksgiving dinner hosted by the Junior Board of Catholic Charities.

Please watch our bulletin for more opportunities to support the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program. Contact Bill Bright if you are interested in learning how you may help our parish support refugee families.

Livestock for Life

Each year parishioners help our brothers and sisters at our Sharing Parish, Holy Cross, in Jinja, Uganda through the Livestock for Life Program. Your donation supplies a hen, goat or pig (and training) to a specially selected family. The animal provides income for the family and the church.

You may purchase a gift card on our parish website with your credit card or drop off a check with the form below to the Parish Center. Each gift is $40. You will receive your gift card in the mail.

Donate Stamps

Shoppers at Jewel Osco receive Saver Stamps that can be redeemed for Cuisinart cookware. Donate your Saver Stamps to help us earn cookware for new refugee families served by the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program in Chicago. Stamps may be dropped off at the parish center or the YC office.

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Tower Chorale Christmas Concert
Today, Dec. 7 at 3pm at Holy Trinity Church in Westmont. Tickets available at door or from SJC members: Kathy Daley, Tom Licar, and Betsy Spiering. Adults $20, Seniors/Students $17, Under 10 Free.

St. John of the Cross Spirituality Group
All are invited to attend the showing of a creative presentation on the life of John of the Cross on his feast day, December 14, after the 9:00am Mass in the Parish Center. Those who drop children off for YC are also free to join us for this bit of Adult Education and hospitality.

Tuesdays with Mary Rosary
The 9:05am Tuesdays with Mary Rosary group will not meet as originally scheduled on Tuesday, Dec. 9th. We will resume praying the Rosary as a group on Tuesday, January 6th. We will meet every Tuesday until Easter Break with the exception of March 10 (School Liturgy).

Mayslake Ministries: Women’s Advent Tea
In the Gospel of John we hear Jesus saying, “Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.” This Advent let’s make a nesting place for Jesus in our hearts and home. Join us in an afternoon of Advent Reflection, making a nest for the Christ child, born in our hearts again through scripture, prayer and reflections from Fresh Bread by Joyce Rupp. Tuesday, Dec. 9 from 1-3pm at the Marriott Suites in Downers Grove Cost: $40 Facilitator: Dr. Jill Bates. Tea includes scones, pastries, assorted tea sandwiches and dessert. Call 630-852-9000 to register.

Grief Support at The Well
Honoring the Grieving Heart on Saturday 9—noon Dec. 13th with facilitator: Joy Davy. Grief and loss come to us in many forms. There is no need to compare one person’s loss with another’s, as each of us is on his or her own way, working to integrate personal sorrows and joys into the people we are becoming. Join Joy Davy, MS, LCPC, NCC, for a morning dedicated to sending healing energy to our grieving hearts. Explore without judgment all the emotions of grief and loss and come to understand how you have been “broken open” and changed by your grief. Cost: $35 The Well Spirituality Center is located at 1515 West Ogden Avenue in LaGrange Park Call 708.482.5048 / e-mail: thewell@csjoseph.org

Love is the measure of faith.
Pope Francis @Pontifex · Nov 27
**Family Advent Day**

*1st grade YC students are encouraged to bring their parents to their Family Advent Day*

**On Sunday, Dec. 7th, 10:15-11:30 am and Monday, Dec. 8th, 6:15 to 7:30 pm**

Our 7th and 8th grade students joined our Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd graders during November to learn how to reach out to others with arms of angels. Thank you to all our Catechists who worked so hard to make the day fantastic.

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**YC Schedule**

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<td>Classes K-6</td>
<td>10:15-11:30am</td>
<td>Sunday, Dec 7, 14</td>
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<td>6:15-7:30pm</td>
<td>Monday, Dec 8, 15</td>
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<td>7 &amp; 8 grades</td>
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<td>Special Needs</td>
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**Youth Catechesis Office**

yc@sjcross.org • 708-246-6760
www.stjohnofthecross.org/yc

Monday thru Thursday 8:30am- 4:00pm

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**Christmas Schedule**

- **Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24**
  - 7:45am Advent Weekday Mass
  - 4:00pm Church
    - Children’s Choir, Carol Prelude 3:30pm
  - 4:15pm First Floor School Multi-Purpose Room
    - Carol Prelude 4:00pm
  - 4:30pm Second Floor Gym
    - Carol Prelude 4:15pm
  - **6:00pm Church**
    - Carol Prelude 5:45pm
  - **10:30pm Church**
    - Traditional Choir, Carol Prelude 10:00pm

- **Christmas Day—Thursday, December 25**
  - 7:30am Church
  - 9:00am Church
    - Contemporary Ensemble
  - **10:45am Church**
    - Traditional Choir
  - **12:30pm Church**
    - 5 Alive! Teen & Young Adult Choir
    - This Mass begins 15 minutes later than usual.

  **There will be no 5:00pm Mass on Christmas Day.**

  At each Mass on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, music will be led by a cantor, organ, and/or piano and various instruments in addition to the choirs noted above.

- **Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God**

- **New Year’s Eve and Day**
  - **Wednesday, December 31**
    - 5:00pm
  - **Thursday, January 1**
    - 10:00am

- **Sacrament of Reconciliation**
  - **Tuesday, December 16**
    - 7:00pm
  - **Parish Reconciliation Service**

- **Saturday, December 20**
  - **at 8:30am**

- **Individual Reconciliation**

- **Holiday Mass Schedule**
  - We will have our regular weekend Mass schedule on Saturday and Sunday, December 27-28, the Feast of the Holy Family. Our regular daily Mass will be at 7:45am on weekdays and 8:00am on Saturdays.
Registration is now open for our summer work tours and conferences. In order for our tours and conferences to take place, we welcome and need adults to join us! Registration forms will be accepted on a first come—first serve basis and must be received via U.S. mail by December 15 for NPH in Guatemala and February 1 for all others. Hand deliveries will not be accepted.

Work Tour Opportunities

**Nuestros Pequenos Hermanos (NPH) in Guatemala**, June 8-15. We have 3 adults on board, but more are welcome! This is a new tour for us.

**Habitat for Humanity in Franklin, West Virginia**, July 12-18 (3 adults needed)

**Our Lady of Charity in Cicero**, July 20-24 (3 adults needed)

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Williamsburg, Kentucky**, August 1-8 (4 adults needed)

Leadership Training Opportunities

**Youth Leadership Conference in Romeoville, IL** June 26-28 (one female and one male adult needed)

**Notre Dame Vision Conference**, July 6-10

**Cultivation Peer Ministry Retreat, in East Troy, WI** August 22-23 (one female and one male adult needed)

**National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), in Indianapolis** November 19-21.

See our website, www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/work-tours for complete details and registration forms.

Our first graders planned and led a very special Advent Prayer Service for whole the school during the first week of Advent. Throughout the coming weeks the students prepare for Jesus’ birth by reading, praying and discussing the events of the season. To help count the days until Christmas, each student made an Advent paper chain for their family, taking off one link each day leading up to Jesus’ birth.
As part of collaborative efforts across the parish that are focused on strengthening and supporting the vocation of all Catholic parents, we have developed new resources for parents bringing their infant for baptism.

What do I need to do to have my baby baptized?
Pre-baptism sessions are now offered for all parents whether it is your first child being baptized or a subsequent child. The sessions are offered on the fourth Sunday of each month at 1:30pm (noon during the summer). It is our expectation that both parents will attend this session. Feel free to bring your new baby and invite the godparents too. The session which runs under 2 hours is designed with input from parents like you who are eager to provide an environment that will foster faith in Jesus Christ. Parents are asked to register to attend a pre-baptism session.

Simply call the parish center front office during regular business hours (9am-4pm). One of our full-time staff members will take all the necessary information and answer any questions you may have.

Our parish community prayerfully supports and congratulates Brianne Puleo and Ryan Schmiege, parents of Griffin Mark Schmiege. They are pictured below on the left with godparents, Jessica Schmiege and John Mauro.

A life of happiness, holiness and faith

God of all creation, we are made in your image and are signs of your love. Bless these children who were given new life as your adopted sons and daughters through the waters of Baptism. May they grow up to know your name and give you praise. Bless the mothers and fathers of these children. Fill them with your strength so that they will be models of faith for their children, nurturing and teaching by word and example to know you and walk in your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Infant Baptism

As part of collaborative efforts across the parish that are focused on strengthening and supporting the vocation of all Catholic parents, we have developed new resources for parents bringing their infant for baptism.

What do I need to do to have my baby baptized?
Pre-baptism sessions are now offered for all parents whether it is your first child being baptized or a subsequent child. The sessions are offered on the fourth Sunday of each month at 1:30pm (noon during the summer). It is our expectation that both parents will attend this session. Feel free to bring your new baby and invite the godparents too. The session which runs under 2 hours is designed with input from parents like you who are eager to provide an environment that will foster faith in Jesus Christ. Parents are asked to register to attend a pre-baptism session.

Simply call the parish center front office during regular business hours (9am-4pm). One of our full-time staff members will take all the necessary information and answer any questions you may have.

A life of happiness, holiness and faith

God of all creation, we are made in your image and are signs of your love. Bless these children who were given new life as your adopted sons and daughters through the waters of Baptism. May they grow up to know your name and give you praise. Bless the mothers and fathers of these children. Fill them with your strength so that they will be models of faith for their children, nurturing and teaching by word and example to know you and walk in your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
In 1996, Muslim extremists martyred nearly an entire community of Trappist monks in Atlas, Algeria. Many of us, thanks to the movie, Of Gods and Men, are familiar with their story and are familiar too with the extraordinary faith and courage with which these monks, particularly their Abbott, Christian de Cherge, met their deaths. Indeed the last letters of Christian de Cherge reveal a faith and love that is truly extraordinary.

For example, in the months leading up to his death, when he already sensed what was to befall him, he wrote a letter to his family within which he already forgave his killers and hoped that they would later be with him in heaven, with both them and him playing in the sun before God. As well, after his first face-to-face meeting with a terrorist leader, who has just beheaded nine people, he prayed: "Disarm me, disarm them."

In his journals, which are published today, he shares this story: On the morning of his first communion, he told his mother that he really didn't understand what he was doing in receiving the Eucharist. His mother replied, simply: "You will understand later on." His journals then trace how his understanding of the Eucharist deepened during his lifetime, especially in the light of his interrelation with Islam and one extraordinary incident in his life. This was the extraordinary incident:

From July 1959 until January 1961, Christian was an officer serving with the French army in Algeria. While there, he befriended a man named Mohammed, a family man, a simple man, and a devout Muslim. They soon forged a very deep bond. One day, during a military skirmish, Christian was taken captive by the Algerian army. His friend, Mohammed, intervened and convinced his captors that Christian was sympathetic to their cause. Christian was released but, the next day, Mohammed was found murdered, in retaliation for his role in freeing Christian.

This act of selflessness by his Muslim friend, who in effect gave his life for Christian, permanently seared Christian's soul. It was never far from his mind and his decision, as a monk, to return to Algeria and live in solidarity with the Muslim community at Atlas and remain there until he died, was largely a result of that foundational event. But it also deepened his understanding of the Eucharist.

His mother had told him: "You will understand later", and now he did understand: The Eucharist doesn't just make Jesus present; it also makes present his sacrificial death for us. Jesus died for us "and for the many"; but so too did his friend, Mohammed. He also gave his death for another and in that sacrifice both imitated Jesus' death and participated in it. Thus, for Christian, every time he celebrated the Eucharist, he celebrated too the gift of Mohammed's sacrifice for him. His friend, Mohammed, had also shed his blood "for the many."

Mohammed's sacrifice helped Christian to recognize and more deeply appropriate Jesus' sacrifice because he believed that, in the Eucharist, Jesus' sacrifice and his friend's sacrifice were both made real and both rendered present. Christian believed that Christ's sacrifice includes the sacrifice shown in every act of sacrificial love and consequently his friend's sacrifice was part of Christ's sacrifice.

He's right. At every Eucharist we memorialize the gift that Jesus made of his death, but that memorial includes too the sacrificial gift of everyone who has imitated Jesus' selfless love and sacrifice. In the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ that we memorialize includes the sacrifice of all who have died, however unconsciously, "for the many."

The Eucharist is a far-reaching mystery with multiple depths and levels of meaning. We don't ever fully grasp it. But we're in good company: When Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper the apostles also didn't really understand what he was doing, as is witnessed by Peter's protests when Jesus tries to wash their feet. Peter's protests show clearly that he did not comprehend what Jesus meant in this Eucharistic gesture. And so, Jesus' words to Peter and the apostles are almost identical to those Christian de Cherge's mother spoke to him when he told her that he didn't understand the Eucharist: "Later, you will understand."

When I made my first communion, I had a childlike understanding of the Eucharist. In my seven-year-old, catechized mind, I believed that I was receiving the real body of Jesus and that, at the mass where the Eucharistic hosts were consecrated, we celebrated the sacrifice of Jesus that opened the gates of heaven for us. Numerous theology degrees and sixty years later, I know now that what I understood about the Eucharist as a child was correct; but I also know that when those two things, Christ's real presence and Christ's sacrifice for us, are unpackaged, we find ourselves immersed in an ineffable mystery within which, among other things, all who sacrifice in love for us are also part of the Real Presence.

And so we keep going to Eucharist, knowing that later, we will understand.

Father Ron Rolheiser, OMI
Mass Intentions

Monday, December 8, Immaculate Conception
6:30am Carole & Gloria Turlek
7:45am Our Beloved Dead; Robert McNulty
6:30pm Robert Brandt; Lorraine Brandt

Tuesday, December 9, St. Juan Diego
7:45 Muriel Albertson; John & Elizabeth Treacy

Wednesday, December 10
7:45 Martha Osuch; Donna Kowalski

Thursday, December 11, St. Damascus
7:45 Brian Donovan; Margaret Albertston; Joseph Piszczer

Friday, December 12, Our Lady of Guadalupe
7:45 Mary Sue Donohue; Raymond Parro

Saturday, December 13, St. Lucy
8:00 Klein & O’Sullivan Families; Martin & Margaret Falsey
5:00 James & Clarice Martorelli; Terrence McLaughlin

Sunday, December 14, Third Sunday of Advent
7:30 Chester Miller; Steve Tick
9:00 Deceased Members of Slezak Family; Alice Marzalik
10:45 Brigitte Rose Newman; Tom Donnelly
12:15 Maier & Gora Families; Peter Shannon
5:00 Maria Turano; In Thanksgiving for Volunteer Drivers

Advent increases our hope, a hope which does not disappoint. The Lord never lets us down. Pope Francis @Pontifex - December 4
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