The Baptism of the Lord

January 11, 2015
Dear Parishioners,

The bitter cold of January has made its 2015 appearance and winter is truly here. We enjoyed some very mild weather in December so I suppose we really have nothing to complain about. Although what fun would it be if we didn’t complain about the weather, even when we know what to expect?

This also gives me an opportunity to repeat what I have said in the past about seniors and those who have health issues. If God wants you to be in church you have to get two things, and they have to be at the same time: good weather and good health. Please do not feel obliged to come to church when it is so cold that it is unsafe. Or, for that matter, if it is icy, or too much snow or any other condition that puts you in danger of injury. That is one reason why the mass is broadcast on television-for those who are unable to come to church. (Sunday mornings at 9:30 on WGN.)

And if your health is not good you should also stay home. No one needs to be trapped near somebody who is coming down with a cold and sneezing or coughing throughout the Mass. Please be considerate of others and choose the safer course of action when deciding whether to come to Mass or not. Please do not endanger yourself or others in any way.

You may have heard on the news this week about the Pope naming new Cardinals but that none were American, and that Archbishop Cupich ‘didn’t make the cut’. The secular media rarely understands how detailed things of the Church operate. Being named a Cardinal is not like winning an Academy Award where you are competing against others in your same profession.

A Cardinal takes on added responsibility in directly helping the pope in the administration of the church. Some Cardinals live full-time in Rome and they have a full-time ministry for the universal church. (Referred to as a ‘dicastry’, for instance for liturgy.) More are fulltime archbishops with the responsibility of archdioceses around the world. Every archbishop has responsibility for a ‘province’, as the archbishop of Chicago has responsibility for all the bishops in the six dioceses in the province of the state of Illinois. There are 33 archbishops in the United States. Usually a Cardinal is an archbishop, but not always. Most recently was the Jesuit priest, Cardinal Avery Dulles.

One of the most important responsibilities for a Cardinal is as an elector of a new pope. While 75 is the mandatory age for a bishop submitting his resignation from administration, a Cardinal is still eligible to vote for a new pope until he is 80 years old. The media was trying to compare how long Cardinal George or Cardinal Bernardin had been in Chicago before they were named Cardinal and contrasting that with Archbishop Cupich. There is one major difference, however. Cardinal George is still alive and about to turn 78. He is still eligible to vote for a new pope, should the current Pope die.

So Archbishop Cupich cannot become a Cardinal until Cardinal George either turns 80 or dies. Once either of those things happens, expect Archbishop Cupich to be named a Cardinal at the next annual consistory, usually in February. (The same situation exists in the archdiocese of Los Angeles, by the way.)

Maybe to put it all in perspective, here is a quote from last year from Pope Francis:

"...the Pope issued a public letter to the cardinals-designate warning them that they were to accept the red hat as "neither an honour (sic) nor a decoration, but "simply a service that requires you to broaden your gaze and open your hearts." The incoming class was likewise urged to greet their elevations in a manner "far from any expression of worldliness or from any form of celebration contrary to the evangelical spirit of austerity, sobriety and poverty."

Regardless of all that distraction, what we are focused on in the liturgy this weekend is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This feast brings the Christmas season to a close and we change our focus from the child Jesus to the adult Jesus. Once baptized, Jesus begins his public ministry. No one has the luxury of lingering at the crib. We have to move into the joys and sorrows of life with all the issues of our world. We have been baptized as priest, prophet and king. Now is the time to act like it. After all, we are all Beloved of God.

Peace, Fr. David
Many of our parishioners have received a mailing from Archbishop Cupich. He asks that you make a pledge to the 2015 Annual Catholic Appeal. Please respond generously.

This year, the theme of the Appeal is Entrusted with Responsibility. We each have a responsibility to recognize God’s gifts to us and to nurture them.

As we contemplate His gifts to us, we should also reflect on our gratitude for these gifts. Your financial support for the work of our parish, of our Archdiocese and of the Church throughout the world is, in fact, one way to express this gratitude.

As you review the mailing from Archbishop Cupich, please note the ministries and services funded by the Appeal, including the ones that directly support the work of our parish. Then please give generously.

What is the Annual Appeal?

The Annual Catholic Appeal is the yearly fundraising campaign that supports the schools, programs, agencies and ministries that serve the educational, physical and spiritual needs of the people of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Through its support of Catholic Relief Services, the Appeal serves people worldwide, without regard for religious affiliation, whose lives are devastated by natural disasters, illnesses, wars and famines. Every Catholic family or individual is asked for their financial and prayerful support.

The Annual Catholic Appeal is an opportunity to share our financial gifts in order to help provide education, ministry and services throughout our community and the world. Since we are not a congregational church, all parishioners are asked to support the central structure of our local Church. Every time that we say the Creed we reaffirm that we are members of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.” We are saying that every parishioner is a part not only of his or her parish, but also of the Universal Church. Each of us is responsible for the well being of the Church in our parish, throughout the Archdiocese and the world.

Watch the bulletin for more on the Appeal in the coming weeks.

Pope Francis reminds us that we who are the Church, the Body of Christ, are entrusted with responsibility and must never forget the poor among us.
Background on the Gospel

In today's Gospel we hear John the Baptist contrast his baptism of repentance with the baptism that Jesus will inaugurate. John the Baptist says that he has baptized with water, but that the one who is to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was not yet a Christian baptism; it was a preparation for the Christian Baptism we celebrate today, and through which sins are forgiven and the gift of the Holy Spirit is received. In accepting John's baptism, Jesus, though sinless, united himself with all sinners.

The baptism of Jesus is reported in each of the three Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Clearly, Jesus' baptism was an event of great significance for Jesus and for the early Christian community. Mark and Luke report the story from Jesus' perspective; the voice from heaven is addressed to Jesus. In Matthew's Gospel, the voice from heaven speaks to all who are present. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism shows that something new is beginning through the baptism and ministry of Jesus.

The baptism of Jesus is considered an important manifestation of God in the person of Jesus, another epiphany. Jesus' baptism inaugurates his mission. Mark's Gospel moves quickly from the report of Jesus' baptism to Jesus' temptations in the desert to his ministry in Galilee after John's arrest. The end of the ministry of John the Baptist is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In an analogous way, our Baptism inaugurates our mission as Christians.

Surprisingly, on this the last day of the Christmas season the Gospel does not tell a story from Jesus' childhood. Instead the Gospel reveals Jesus' relationship to God: the Son of Mary and Joseph is also God's own Son. We believe that through Baptism we are also made children of God.

May we as a church grow in our identity as God's beloved daughters and sons, appreciating ever more the dignity God has bestowed upon us. May we be ever faithful to our baptism by choosing to do what is right and good, holy and pleasing to God.

Living the Gospel

The event of Jesus' baptism with water in the Jordan revealed who he already was: the “beloved Son” with whom God was “well pleased.” Jesus' baptism did not change his identity, but revealed who he was. John prophesied that Jesus, however, would bring an entirely different baptism, for he would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The event of our baptism with the Spirit announces to all present who we become: beloved children with whom God is “well pleased.” Baptism initiates us into a way of living defined by a relationship of identity. Our whole Christian life is a journey of taking ownership of the ownership God has already taken of us. Through baptism God claims us. Our whole Christian life is a journey of living the dignity God has bestowed on us, growing in our identity as the beloved of God, allowing God to lay claim on us, being open to the Spirit who dwells within us.

We spend our lives growing into our baptismal identity as members of the Body of Christ. We spend our lives appreciating what it means to be God’s beloved and the kind of life that relationship requires of us. We spend our lives continuing Jesus’ saving mission. We spend our lives being the risen Presence of Christ for others. Being Christlike is what our baptismal identity is all about. Our lives must be spent being faithful to the relationship with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit which our baptism begins. Our dignity is found in being faithful to our identity and living the Gospel Jesus proclaimed, doing works with which God is “well pleased.”

©Living Liturgy.
Puttering Prayer  

The rhythm of my prayer life is always interesting to watch: the ebb and flow of rich, fruitful prayer that at times transforms to periods of dryness; the ability to come easily to prayer and stillness that is then interrupted at times by periods when prayer feels hard. Over the years, I have learned to be gentle with myself about my prayer life, knowing that over time the rhythm will change as the Spirit moves my relationship with God deeper.

I would dub the season of my prayer life right now a period of “puttering prayer.” “Puttering prayer” is a phrase shared with me by a Georgia friend and colleague, Sr. Marie, indicating a time in which one simply gives oneself permission to “putter” and when feeling called, one turns his or her attention to God in the moment and then carries on with the day. Sr. Marie shared how this prayer is very helpful in times of transition or grieving.

This past year was full of transition and unknown. It is not that I stopped praying throughout this time, but the mental exhaustion from all the change and day-to-day survival caught up with me and changed my prayer. I found that I simply could not sit down each morning for my normal foundational prayer period. When I did, my mind would run through my list of worries, or I would be overcome with grief about leaving our old life behind.

Remembering the wisdom of Sr. Marie’s “puttering prayer,” I decided to lean into that prayer practice. Each day I set about to accomplish a small task that would help us in the transition to a new city-unpacking a box, straightening a closet, finding a pediatrician, finding a new restaurant to try, locating the closest grocery store. I gave myself permission to take the space I needed for my mind to rest. I knew there was no way I could sit down to a lengthy meditation on Scripture or a lengthy period of silence with God. I did not have the mental energy for the intensity of that kind of prayer.

What I needed was the comfort of God that is found mirrored in sharing life with my husband—the comfort that comes after ten years of marriage, knowing we are sharing space and in each other’s presence, but we do not always have to have intense conversation. We can simply putter around the house together, accomplishing small tasks, playing with the kids, cooking together, or reading next to each other.

God found me, as God always does, in the middle of my puttering—a welling in my heart of gratitude for the gift of a home, an acknowledgement of my sadness at missing a dear friend in Georgia, relief as another prayer was answered, an inspired moment in realizing the potential of our new city. Puttering prayer helped my mind rest and experience God through the quiet work of my life.

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May the God of Surprises Delight You

May the God of Surprises delight you, inviting you to accept gifts not yet imagined. May the God of Transformation call you, opening you to continual renewal. May the God of Justice confront you, daring you to see the world through God’s eyes. May the God of Abundance affirm you, nudging you towards deeper trust. May the God of Embrace hold you, encircling you in the hearth of God’s home. May the God of Hopefulness bless you, encouraging you with the fruits of faith. May the God of Welcoming invite you, drawing you nearer to the fullness of God’s expression in you. May God Who is Present be with you, awakening you to God in all things, all people, and all moments. May God be with you. Amen.

www.ignatianspirituality.com by Elizabeth Eiland Figueroa
Richard Rohr Meditation
Unity, Not Uniformity

Many teachers have made the central but oft-missed point that unity is not the same as uniformity. Unity, in fact, is the reconciliation of differences, and those differences must be maintained—and yet overcome! You must actually distinguish things and separate them before you can spiritually unite them, usually at cost to yourself (Ephesians 2:14-16). If only we had made that simple clarification, so many problems—and overemphasized, separate identities—could have moved to a much higher level of love and service.

Paul already made this universal principle very clear in several of his letters. For example, “There are a variety of gifts, but it is always the same Spirit. There are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord, working in all sorts of different ways in different people. It is the same God working in all of them” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). In his community at Ephesus, they were taught “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God who is Father of all, over all, through all, and within all; and each of us has been given our own share of grace” (Ephesians 4:5-7).

Gateway to Silence:
That all may be one

Today people are suffering from poverty, but also from lack of love.

Jesus came to save us: let us not reject this marvelous gift!

Like Mary, may we nurture the light born within us at Christmas. May we carry it everywhere in our daily lives.

Kairos Applications Available Monday
Kairos 19, a retreat for Juniors and Seniors, will be held March 19-22. The experience offers time to reflect, build relationships with peers, and learn more about yourself and your connection with God.

Applications will be online Monday, January 12. Visit our website, www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/retreats/ to apply.

Volunteer Opportunities for Adults
Adult volunteers are needed for our spring and summer events. Talk to our Volunteer Recruiter, Ann Smith (708-246-4047) to find out how you can help. There are a variety of opportunities, such as leading our Fish Fry, or our Catholic Goods Sale.

If you are interested in serving as a summer Work Tour Leader - contact Joe Gazdacka at gazzyjoe@aol.com.
Prayers please
Please pray for our Adaptive Catechesis students preparing to receive Confirmation at the end of January with Bishop Manz.

Connor, Maria, Christopher, Emeline, Mitchell, Alex, Emily, Spencer, Justin and Rose are experiencing their Day of the Spirit Retreat on January 11th and will receive Confirmation on January 31st. Please keep these amazing young folks and their families in your prayers.

8th Grade YC parents
Please contact the YC Office if your child has not participated in their Confirmation Interview. You received emails in December with the link for Sign Up Genius to select a date and time that works best for your child.

Check out the Family Home Lesson on YC website homepage
Due in January.

Next YC Mass:
March 15 at 9:00am

Our annual celebration of National Catholic Schools Week begins in two weeks. This year, we’re celebrating “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge, and Service,” where today’s students become tomorrow’s leaders. We will be celebrating with many events, including a Coffee after the 9am and 10:45am Masses on Sunday, January 25th in the Parish Center. We will also be hosting an Open House for all families, current and prospective, on Thursday, January 29, 2015 from 9:30-11:30am or 1:30-3pm. If you are interested in learning more about St. John of the Cross Parish School and visiting us during our Open House, please feel free to contact Jennifer Miller at miller@sjc.pvt.k12.il.us or 708-246-4454.

This Week at SJC
Monday, January 12 Athletic Board Meeting 7pm, School
Tuesday, January 13 Continental Math 3rd grade 8am, School
Tuesday, January 13 Parent Association 9am, Parish Center
Friday, January 16 All School Liturgy 9:15am, Church

YC Schedule

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Family Connection

In the story of Jesus' baptism, we hear the report of a significant moment in Jesus' life. By accepting baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus shows himself to accept solidarity with sinners. In the voice from heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we know that God received this offering from Jesus and found it pleasing. In the passages that follow in Mark's Gospel, we learn that Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of his public ministry.

Although many of us may have already taken down our Christmas decorations, liturgically speaking, the Christmas season hasn't ended yet; today is the last day. Holidays like Christmas are highlights of our year, moments of great grace. This grace renews us and prepares us for our return to the season of Ordinary Time, to the continuing work of discipleship.

Gather as a family and discuss your feelings about the ending of the Christmas season. How does it feel to take down the Christmas decorations? Many of us experience a letdown after the excitement of Christmas; others may feel relieved that life is returning to normal. Liturgically, we end the Christmas season today by reflecting on the importance of Jesus' baptism. Read together today's Gospel, Mark 1:7-11. Jesus' baptism prepared him for his public ministry. What will we take from this Christmas season to carry us forward into Ordinary Time, to renew and strengthen our life of Christian discipleship? Conclude by praying together today's psalm response taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 12:2-6, or pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit. Loyola Press

What does the Holy Family say to us?

Each year, we celebrate Advent and Christmas differently. Of course, the mystery that we celebrate of the coming of the Word made flesh among us remains the same. He is, after all, Christ yesterday, today and forever. We do change, however, and find ourselves in different places as we move through time.

This year, for many reasons, our focus falls on the family. The Church universal is mid-point between two synods dedicated to the family. The world has watched the heart-wrenching images of families displaced by wars and civil unrest, especially in the Middle East. In our own nation, we struggle with how best to respond to immigrant families that live under a cloud of possible disruption. In the city of Chicago, so many families are struggling with the lethal violence that plagues parts of our city. And so families, with all their graced possibilities and all their vulnerability, occupy our attention in a particular way during this time of year.

What does the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph say to us? First of all, we need to clear our minds of Christmas-card images of the Holy Family. The cards depict an antiseptic environment and a trouble-free atmosphere. The gospel stories set us in another direction. They speak of the very poor and struggling Joseph and Mary who become refugees. These stories tell of powerful people, like the violent King Herod, who have deadly designs on the newborn child. These stories speak of hesitations, fears and a lack of clear understanding on the part of Joseph and Mary. In ways that exceed what we might initially imagine, the gospel stories speak to us of the Holy Family as a family that experiences so many of the difficulties and challenges that we can see today. And yet, both then and now, grace is at work.

Whatever the difficulties and challenges, they do not define the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. And whatever the difficulties and challenges we face today, they do not define us entirely. At the center of the Holy Family and at the center of our families is newborn hope. This hope is not an idea or a wish. This hope is the person of Jesus, the enduring and complete assurance that we have of God’s unfailing love for us, a love that will never abandon us in whatever difficulties we find ourselves. “For God so loved the world that he gave us his only-begotten son that we might not perish but might have eternal life.” There is no assurance greater than this, no bond more enduring to hold us together. In that assurance is our hope, not only for ourselves individually, but also for our life together.

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Intentional Acts of Kindness

While there’s nothing wrong with random acts of kindness, what if we were more intentional about those acts?

Cultivating a habit of gratitude is the most reliable way to extricate ourselves from every pattern of sin and disorder in our lives. We can begin by securing five minutes in our lives every day, during which time we count the blessings and mercies we have received in the past 24 hours. If we do that faithfully, we will soon find the constant generosity of God to be amazing, even overwhelming. At the end of the five minutes, ask God to reveal to you one person for whom you should perform an act of kindness that day as a concrete expression of your gratitude. Then act accordingly.

January: Poverty Awareness Month

In 2012, 14.5% of American households were food insecure. That means 1 in 5 children were unsure of when their next meal was coming.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” In these few words, Jesus invites us to live in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in order to honor Him.

Matthew’s Gospel moves the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) as they work to combat the threats that poverty poses and empower the poor through self-help programs.

Are you moved too? You can help empower low-income persons during Poverty Awareness Month by taking part in the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). To learn more about CCHD, meet the grantees, hear their stories, participate in the CCHD Youth Art Contest and more, visit chicagopeaceandjustice.org/poverty.

Our parish Food Pantry Collection during the month of January will be delivered to our neighboring parish St. Barbara’s in Brookfield. Please remember to bring nonperishable food to the narthex of church when you come to Mass.
Upcoming Programs

The Well in LaGrange 1515 West Ogden csjthewell
or call 708-482-5048
Mark your calendar to join us for the next two parish sponsored programs at The Well during the month of January. Both programs are free to our parishioners. Just call the parish center to register.

From Dinosaurs to Star Trek:
The Evolution of Hope for a Threatened Planet
Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 10am-Noon
Speaker: Pat Bombard, BVM
  Pat holds a Doctor of Ministry from CTU and a MA in Religious Studies from Mundelein. She offers workshops and retreats on emerging trends in spirituality and leadership.
Some scientists speculate that an asteroid striking Earth ended the 160 million year reign of the dinosaurs. Today some say human-caused environmental destruction is the lead cause of Earth’s present great extinction. Do we have any better chance at changing the course of history than the dinosaurs? The answer to that question lies in the path of conscious evolution—a very personal journey from despair to hope that each of us can and must take. Together we will share stories of our learnings on the journey thus far.

On a Clear Winter’s Eve . . .
A Circle of Kindred Spirits Consider Slowing Time
Monday, January 26, 2015 from 7-9pm
Speaker Barbara Mahany
  Barbara Mahany is an author and journalist with job experience as a reporter/writer at the Tribune and a pediatric oncology nurse at Children’s in Chicago. Her new book: Slowing Time: Seeing the Sacred Outside Your Kitchen Door, was selected as a top 10 religious book by Publishers Weekly.
Barbara Mahany explores Winter, the Season of Deepening. The long dark winter weeks, not long after the Nativity and then Epiphany, invite us to draw deeper inside this Ordinary Time, to begin anew, to spark a winter’s dream, to marvel in the quietude that the New Year brings. Blessings and lessons abound in these snow-blanketed weeks as we commit again to the dream of all who we can be. Together we will partake of that, and sip something warm, besides. Books will be available for purchase and a book signing.

Church Women United Invite
Please join the women of local parishes for Church Women United Lagrange/Western Springs annual meeting, held at SJC on Friday, January 16th at 9:30 am. Speaker Sr. Rita Ann Teichner, CSJ will present: Just Say Something: End Human Trafficking. Cost is $ 7.00. Advance reservations are requested by tomorrow—Monday, Jan.12th. A donation of paper goods to St. James Lutheran (our neighbor) Paper Pantry is requested. Church Women United, active in our community since 1921, is affiliated with the national CWU organization whose motto is: Agreed to Differ, Resolved to Love, United to Serve. Contact Parishioner, Carolyn Grela @ 630-662-0517 for information and tickets.

Interfaith Career Network
Search for a Job in Government
Interfaith Career Network invites you on Thursday, January 15th from 7-9 pm in the Parish Center to learn from nationally recognized government HR pro, Nancy Segal, who has spent her entire career working to find people employment with the Federal Government, has hired hundreds of federal employees during a distinguished government career and can help you unlock the maze of how to get a job from the nation’s largest employer. Learn: where to find federal jobs, what to look for, how to apply, how to create a federal resume, how to complete the application and how to interview. This meeting is open to all and there is no charge to attend.

Get Ready, Get Set, Get Hired!
Interfaith Career Network invites you to our Career Transition Boot Camp. Looking to change a job, interested in making a career change, unemployed, underemployed, recent grad looking for your first professional position? Start the New Year with support and direction from HR leaders in the community. Learn new skills and gain confidence. Sessions take place on Tuesday January 20 and 27, February 3, 10 and 17 from 7-9 pm. Attend one week or all five. It's free and open to everyone. Join us at First Presbyterian Church (Westminster Hall), 150 South Ashland Avenue in La Grange. Please enter the church on Catherine Avenue.

Book Study
The John of the Cross Spirituality Study Group will begin a book discussion on Seeking the Beloved: A Prayer Journey with St. John of the Cross by Wayne Simsic. Our study will begin on Wed. Jan 14th at 3pm in the Parish Center and will continue through Lent until Holy Week. The book can be purchased at the Carmelite Gift Shop in Darien or online. All are welcome to join this group.

Little Rock Study
The winter Little Rock Scripture Study, which began last Monday, January 5th, will focus on the biblical foundations of the Eucharist. The class runs for 6 sessions. Call Roberta Gilbert at 630-986-0021 or Chris Sulak at 708-246-4784 with questions. The materials fee of $15 can be brought to class in the Parish Center.
March for Life Pilgrimage Send Off Mass:
Tuesday, January 20th at 7pm at St. Lawrence O’Toole Parish in Matteson. Come and pray with all those traveling to Washington D.C. representing the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Chicago March for Life Brunch & Mass:
January 18th at 10am and brunch/program featuring Francis Cardinal George, OMI, Archbishop Emeritus from 11am to 1:30pm at the Union League Club of Chicago.

2015 March for Life Chicago:
January 18th from 2-4pm starts at the Federal Plaza (50 W. Adams).

Speakout Illinois Annual Conference:
January 31st from 8am-3pm at Crowne Plaza Hotel in Rosemont. Keynote speaker and recipient of the Henry Hyde Life Leadership Award will be Professor Robert P. George from Princeton University.

Adoration Schedule
There will be no Adoration on the upcoming Monday national holidays: January 19th, Martin Luther King Day and February 16th President's Day.

Confirmation Prayer Tree
On February 7th our parish 8th graders will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. As they conclude their journey and prepare to receive the Holy Spirit, we ask that parishioners remember them in prayer. Our Confirmation Prayer Tree in the narthex holds the names of all our Confirmation Candidates. Please take a name from the tree and pray for one of our young adults that he or she may grow ever closer to Jesus, imitating his life and his love.

Prayer Shawl Meeting
The next Prayer Shawl meeting will be Wednesday, Jan. 14, 1-2:30pm in the Parish Center. Please join us to knit or crochet shawls and pray for those who are to receive them. If you would like a shawl for someone who is ill or going through life difficulties, call Mary 708-246-5108, or Sheila 708-246-7836.

Pray for Fr. Kieran
Our parish family has been praying for Fr. Kieran Kemner who is in the ICU at Blessing Hospital in Quincy. Blessing Hospital has a web page for sending messages to patients. To send a message to Fr. Kieran go to: http://www.blessinghospital.org/egreeting/?id=686&sid=2
You can also access it from the hospital’s home page: http://www.blessinghospital.org/ His room number is needed—“ICU 2515”. Please do not call by phone. However a message of prayer that you send to this web page will be delivered to him. His sister, Carolyn, is reading the messages to him.

Children’s Liturgy of the Word
Volunteers are needed to help lead our Children’s Liturgy of the Word program held during the Sunday 9am and 10:45am Masses each week. Materials and training provided.
For more information contact Megan O’Brien at obrien.megan1@gmail.com.

Ecumenical Relationships Development
The ministers of the different churches in the Village are trying to build relationships between themselves and among their congregations. We are in the brainstorming phase of planning, trying to build off the October experience of sharing our histories. The meeting will be on January 13th from 3pm—4pm. If you have an interest in developing relationships with our fellow Christian brothers and sisters, please contact me. Whether you can make the meeting or not, I’d like to find some parishioners who have a particular passion for ecumenism. Let’s see what might be possible to share with one another. Fr. David
Women's Club Annual Dine & Demo Night

Thursday January 22, 2015
7:00-9:00pm
Parish Center

Please join us and Dee Dee Saracco of

gravy*

nana's sunday cooking, everyday!

for a wonderful evening of mouthwatering easily prepared Italian dishes.

Also, for their second year, a wine-pairing presentation from

Hillgrove Wine Cellars & Bistro
-Wine Bar - Bistro - Craft Brews-
of Western Springs

It's sure to be an enjoyable evening with
GOOD FOOD, GOOD WINE & GOOD FRIENDS!

RSVP by January 19th to the Parish Center
Cash or check payable to St. John of the Cross Women's Club
$10.00 per person

NAME: ___________________________  NUMBER OF GUESTS: ________

ADDRESS: ________________________  E-MAIL: ________________________

PHONE: __________________________

AMOUNT ENCLOSED $___________

QUESTIONS? CONTACT DENISE SCHULLO AT DEE7Y@HOTMAIL.COM OR JEANNE CONKIN @ JEANNECONKIN@YAHOO.COM

*buon vino, buon amici
It's common for us to see God's grace and blessing in what unites us. We naturally sense the presence of grace when, at our core, we feel a strong moral bond with certain other persons, churches, and faiths. That, biblically, is what defines family.

But what if what separates us, what if what makes other persons, churches, and faiths seem foreign and strange is also a grace, a difference intended by God? Can we think of our differences, as we think of our unity, as a gift from God? Most religions, including Christianity, would answer affirmatively.

Thus in both the Jewish and the Christian scriptures there is the strong, recurring motif that God's message to us generally comes through the stranger, the foreigner, from the one who is different from us, from a source from which we would never expect to hear God's voice. Added to this is the notion that when God speaks to us we generally experience it as a surprise, as something unexpected, and as something that does not easily square with our normal expectations as to how God should work and how we should learn. There's a reason for this. Simply put, when we think we are hearing God's voice in what's familiar, comfortable, and secure, the temptation is always to reshape the message according to our own image and likeness, and so God often comes to us through the unfamiliar.

Moreover, what's familiar is comfortable and offers us security; but, as we know, real transformative growth mostly happens when, like the aged Sarah and Abraham, we are forced to set off to a place that's foreign and frightening and that strips us of all that is comfortable and secure. Set off, God told Sarah and Abraham, to a land where you don't know where you're going. Real growth happens and real grace breaks in when we have to deal with what is other, foreign, different. Learn to understand, writes John of the Cross, more by not understanding than by understanding. What's dark, unfamiliar, frightening, and uninvited will stretch us in ways that the familiar and secure cannot. God sends his word to the earth through "angels" and they're not exactly something we're familiar with.

If this is true, then our differences are also a grace. Accordingly, seeing things differently does not mean that we are not seeing the same things. Accordingly, different notions about God and different ways of speaking about God do not mean that we're speaking of a different God. The same holds true for our churches, having difference concepts of what it means to be church does not necessarily mean that there isn't some deeper underlying unity inside our diversity. Similarly for how we conceive of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, how we imagine Christ as being really present inside of bread and wine, can take many forms and can be spoken of in different ways, without it meaning that we're speaking of a different reality.

John Paul II, addressing an interfaith gathering, once commented that "there are differences in which are reflected the genius and spiritual riches of God to the nations." Christian de Cherge, after a lifetime of dialogue with Islam, suggests that our differences have a "quasi-sacramental function", that is, they help to give real flesh in this world to the riches of God, who is ineffable and can never be captured in any one expression.

Our differences then are part of the mystery of our unity. Real unity, which needs to reflect the richness of God, does not exist in uniformity and homogenization, but only in bringing into harmony many different gifts and richness, like a beautiful bouquet of flowers brings together of a variety of different flowers inside one vase. Our legitimate differences are rooted inside of the same God.

This has implications for every area of our lives, from how we receive immigrants in our countries, to how we deal with different personalities inside our families and places of work, to how we deal with other Christian denominations and other religions. Without endorsing a naïve syncretism and without denying the rightful place for discernment, it must still be affirmed that our differences, conceived as an expression of a deeper unity that we cannot yet conceive, open us up more fully to the deep unfathomable, ineffable mystery of God and, at the same time, prevents us from making an idol of our own ideas, our own religious traditions, our own ways of understanding faith, and our own theologies and ideologies. Moreover, accepting differences as being intended by God and as the presence of grace in our lives should prevent us from constructing our identity, particularly our religious identity, on the basis of opposition to others and the unhealthy need to forever protest our own uniqueness and truth against what's other.

God loves us all equally. Difference, then, understood as part of the mystery of unity, should help keep us humble and honest enough to let others take their proper place before God.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com.
Pray for our Sick

Bill Allen  Fr. Kieran Kemner
Bruno Armalas  Walter Lach
Bob Glancey  Greg McElvogue
Karen Hult

Pray for our Beloved Dead

Danny McGovern, grandson of Mary & John McGovern
Florence Sather, mother of David & Donald
Genevieve Yurka, aunt of Diane Lipp
Melanie Yates, wife of Dennis
Rose Saccaro, mother of Cindy Levato, grandmother of Alyssa & Gianna
Norine Jennings, aunt of Phil Sweeney
Helen DeStefanie, mother of Tom, grandmother of Matthew & Julia
William G. Siffermann, father of Bill, grandfather of 12, great grandfather of 13
David Woodward, husband of Suzann
SJC TRIVIA NIGHT IV

Saturday, January 24th
SJC Parish School Gym
Doors Open at 6pm ~ Games begin at 6:45pm

All are invited to come to Trivia Night! It’s fun and it’s a great way to meet fellow parishioners. Here’s how it works:

1. Organize a group of up to 10 people (ages 21 and over only) to form your team. Name your team.
2. Brush up on your trivia knowledge.
3. Send in your table reservation with a check(s) totaling $200 for each table of ten; (note: cost per table is $200 even if there are less than ten participants on your team). Make all checks payable to St. John of the Cross. Seating is limited, so RSVP soon.
4. Drop an envelope with the reservation form including the name of your team, captain and team member names along with your check(s) to SJC Parish Center attention Men’s Club.
5. That night, bring your own appetizers, food and your favorite beverages. Alcoholic beverages are permitted.
6. Winning Team will receive fabulous prizes and many accolades!

Questions? Contact Barrett Long @ 708-784-9224 or Dan Montgomery @ 312.952.1435.
More info on the Parish website.