I am the Alpha and the Omega, 
the one who is and who was and who is to come.

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
Sunday, November 22, 2015
Dear Parishioners,

As we come to Thanksgiving week I am so grateful for so many things in my life and in the life of the parish. Last weekend for instance, was Harvest Saturday. It was awesome to see so many teens (and younger children) and adults working together, collecting your food donations, sorting them and helping to make sure the food items got to the people who will be the recipients of your generosity. For some families, participating in Harvest Saturday has become a tradition and signals the start of the holiday season for them. (Of course many stores started their holiday season weeks before.) Harvest Saturday is a great reminder of what we otherwise might take for granted every day—our daily bread.

It was great to have Fr. Brendan Lupton back (he was here as associate from 2005-2008) to celebrate the Mass with all those who participated in Harvest Saturday. His presence was a reminder to me of the many priests I have lived with and ministered with over the 36 years of my priesthood.

I couldn’t be more grateful for the priest I am currently ministering with—Fr. Bill. He has helped make the rectory a home for both of us. His impact on the parish, maybe especially with his homilies, has been a wonderful gift to many, many people. He helps the school children plan their liturgies twice a month. He visits the sick as well as prepares the Sunday liturgies for every weekend. He is forming the RCIA team and the adults who are going through the process. They meet on a weekly basis. Just recently he and Steve Weigand, our pastoral associate, gave the Eucharistic Ministers some ongoing formation and support in their very important service to the community. Earlier in the fall he helped with a similar evening for the lectors. He is a hard worker and I couldn’t be more grateful to be able to share parish ministry with him here at SJC.

He is also currently involved with planning for the first Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve prayer service on this Wednesday, November 25th at 7:00pm at the Presbyterian Church, 5250 Wolf Road. Rumor has it he may even have a few words to say. I hope you are able to join our fellow Christians of Western Springs in giving thanks to God for all our blessings.

I am very grateful for your positive response to the Financial Report and to the information on how we will address our $1.2 million bill as SJC’s part of the To Teach Who Christ Is campaign. To add an important detail: if you want to contribute to this campaign directly, or over and above what you would through the parish, you most certainly can. The parish would get credit toward our balance if you were to do that as a member of SJC. Please call me if further detail about donating would be helpful.

This will be my ninth Thanksgiving with you. In February of 2007 lung cancer caused my life expectancy to be two and ½ years. The first mass I celebrated with you was on Thanksgiving Day. By the grace of God and the power of your prayer I am with you cancer-free eight years later. I give praise to my God always for the gift of life and the gift of you in my life.

Until the Breaking of the Bread,
Fr. David

P.S. Continued prayers for the victims of the massacre in Paris. Let there be peace on earth!

On Thanksgiving Day our morning Mass will begin at 9:30am. There will not be a Mass at 7:45am that day. As has been our custom, the offertory collection on Thanksgiving Day will support our Caritas SJC Needy Family Fund which provides emergency support to parishioners facing difficulty meeting an unplanned critical financial obligation. Thank you for your generosity.
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) continues to advance our mission of eradicating poverty in economically-distressed communities.

Our Holy Father's most recent address to Congress on September 24 of this year instructs us that, “Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments, and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and of peoples. We must move forward together, as one in a renewed spirit of fraternity and solidarity, cooperating generously for the common good.”

Pope Francis’ words resonate deeply with the mission of CCHD. By funding communities through CCHD, we actively work together towards eliminating systemic oppression. Organizations supported by CCHD work to build long-term solutions that will allow future generations to have a dignified quality of life. For example, Mujeres Unidas (Women United) of St. Eulalia has created a women-owned catering worker cooperative that has worked for the past three years to provide healthy food options in the Maywood area. Mujeres Unidas radically changes the way low-income women can participate in the economy – both as workers and business owners. They are able to use their talents in cooking and event planning, while maintaining oversight and direction of their cooperative. CCHD supports Mujeres Unidas because it exemplifies shared economic development that builds strong leaders and strong families.

The CCHD annual collection is the primary source of funding for CCHD’s anti-poverty grants and education programs in Cook and Lake Counties. Fifty percent of the collection’s proceeds stays here in our Archdiocese to fight poverty in our communities, and the other 50 percent goes to funding programs nationwide. The appeal weekend for the CCHD annual collection weekend is November 21-22. Help us defend human dignity and show Christ’s charity to those in need. To learn more about CCHD in the Archdiocese of Chicago and the groups it funds, please visit www.ChicagoPeaceAndJustice.org/CCHD.

Most Reverend Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago

Before all Masses this weekend there will be a speaker from the Parish Peace Project which benefits from CCHD. The Parish Peace Project combines ministry, community organizing and restorative justice as alternatives to violence for youth and young adults in Chicago.
THE RITE OF ACCEPTANCE

Next Sunday at the 5:00pm Mass, five women and two men who are on the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) journey will celebrate the Rite of Acceptance. Rob Valdez, Randy White and Shler Yule will be accepted into the Order of Catechumens – those who are preparing to be baptized. Marla Rafferty, Sarah Simmons, Marti Thullen and Amy Tyrrell will be 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.

Fr. Paul Turner, writes, “The Rite of Acceptance into the order of catechumens establishes a relationship between unbaptized persons and the Church. Candidates express their intention to become members, and the Church accepts them as Catechumens.” Joined to the Church now in this public moment, the catechumens are now part of the household of Christ.

With great joy, the St. John of the Cross Faith Community will welcome Marla, Marti, Amy, Rob, Randy, Shler, and Sarah 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.

During this rite, the priest will greet the Catechumens and Candidates at the door of the church. As they and their parish sponsors come forward, the celebrant will ask their name and each candidate will respond to what they are seeking and why. They will be asked to accept the Gospel that fulfills the longing in theirs and our hearts. Their sponsors and the entire assembly express their willingness to help the Catechumens and Candidates find and follow Christ more deeply. At this time the priest will trace the sign of the cross on the forehead of the Catechumens and Candidates. The RCIA team and sponsors will assist in the signing of other parts of the body such as the ears, eyes, lips, shoulders, hands, and feet. They are now invited to enter the church building to hear the word of God with the community.

After the Liturgy of the Word and the Homily, they will be presented with a Bible. Our parish community will then pray for our Catechumens and Candidates after which they will be dismissed.

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.

Fr. Bill Vollmer

Terror always seeks to separate us from those we most love. Through their suffering, courage and compassion, Parisians are reminding us that the common bond of humanity is strongest when the need is greatest. We pledge our prayers for everyone who suffers from this horrific violence and our advocacy to support all those working to build just and peaceful societies.

To the people of France, we mourn with you and honor the lives lost from several nations, including our own. To our brothers and sisters in the Church in France, your family in the United States holds you close to our hearts. May the tender and merciful love of Jesus Christ give you comfort during this great trial and lead you on a path toward healing and peace.

USCCB

“Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.”
— Teresa of Ávila
Background on the Gospel

This Sunday is the last Sunday of the Church's liturgical year. On this Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. Each year we set aside this Sunday to reflect upon this title that we have given to Jesus. In Lectionary Cycle C, we read a portion of the passion from the Gospel of John, which is also part of the Gospel reading proclaimed each year on Good Friday.

In John's Gospel, Pilate is shown in a more favorable light than in the other Gospels. In today's reading, we hear one of two dialogues between Jesus and Pilate that are reported in John's Gospel. Pilate questions Jesus about the charges brought against him. Caiaphas and the high priests have charged Jesus with a political crime, one that would require a punishment of death. Pilate distances himself from the Jewish leaders who accuse Jesus; he is not a Jew, and he seems to want little to do with this Jewish affair.

In his responses to Pilate's questions, Jesus distinguishes his kingdom from the political powers of this world. King and kingdom may be appropriate terms for Jesus' mission and promise, but only by analogy. Jesus is king, but not the kind of king we imagine or expect. He was certainly not the kind of king Pilate feared he might be.

Jesus refers to a kingdom that does not belong to this world. This has been mentioned earlier in John's Gospel. Recall that in his prayer during the Last Supper discourse (see John 17:6-18), Jesus prayed for his disciples who are in the world but do not belong to the world. Yet like Jesus, they are sent into the world for the world's salvation. In today's reading, we see Jesus identify the final proof that his kingdom is not of this world: If his kingdom were of this world, then there would be people fighting to save him. Again we hear echoes of John's theme—salvation is worked out through a cosmic battle. It is helpful to return to the first chapter of John's Gospel to understand the context for Jesus' words to Pilate. Jesus came into the world, but the world did not know him. In John's language, the world prefers the darkness, and yet the light will not be overcome by the darkness.

Truth has been another important theme in John's Gospel. We see it emphasized in the conclusion of the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate. Those who know the truth will recognize Jesus as king and will know how to interpret this insight. Yet Jesus' kingship was hidden from many of his contemporaries. Only those chosen, those who have the eyes of faith, are able to see. As modern disciples of Jesus, we also struggle at times to recognize Jesus as king. Today's Gospel invites us to see with eyes of faith that we might recognize that Jesus, through his crucifixion and death, is indeed king and Savior of all.

Living the Gospel

In this conversation Pilate questions Jesus about his identity (“Are you the King of the Jews?”) and about why he is on trial (“What have you done?”). What unfolds is a conversation about two very different worlds. That of Pilate and the chief priests, in which fighting, falsehood, and obstinacy predominate. That of Jesus, in which life, truth, and openness prevail. Yes, Jesus is a King—but of a kingdom different from Herod's. What he has done is reveal a kingdom that “does not belong to this world,” but is meant to transform it. From evil to goodness. From sinfulness to salvation. From death to life.

Self-giving service is a small price to pay for our share in the eternal glory of Jesus' kingdom. Living the Gospel means that we don't count the cost, but always find strength, hope, encouragement in the glimpse of final victory that we are repeatedly given throughout the liturgical year. Living the Gospel means that we see the victorious Christ even in the everyday trials and difficulties that we face. Living the Gospel means that we are ever faithful to the rhythm of dying and rising as it unfolds in our everyday prayer, work, leisure. Living the Gospel means that we are “priests” (that is, mediators) for those whom we meet—that we are the Body of Christ leading others to holier lives and happier commitment. If someone should then ask us, “What have you done?” our answer would come quickly and surely—we have served our King. We have loved our King. In doing so, we have shared in the greatest wealth possible—his kingdom where all is glory. ©Living Liturgy.

May we make Christ's reign visible through our loving care of others.
May we make Christ's reign visible in our daily choices to be faithful to his kingdom rather than to the kingdom of the world.

Lifelong Learning

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Monday
Dan 1:1-6, 8-20
Dan 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56
Luke 21:1-4

Tuesday
Dan 2:31-45
Dan 3:57, 59, 60, 61
Luke 21:5-11

Wednesday
Dan 5:1-6, 13-14, 16
Dan 3:62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67

Thursday
Sir 50:22-24
Ps 138:1-2a, 2bc-3, 4-5
1 Cor 1:3-9
Luke 17:11-19

Friday
Dan 7:2-14
Dan 3:75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81
Luke 21:29-33

Saturday
Dan 7:15-27
Dan 3:82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87

1st Sunday of Advent
Jer 33:14-16
Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14
1 Thess 3:12-4:2

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Preparing for Advent
Setting the Stage For Our Advent Journey,
Even Before It Begins.

Getting in Touch with Myself One of the best ways to prepare for the very special season of Advent is to "get in touch with ourselves." It may sound odd, but one symptom of our contemporary lives is that we can often be quite "out of touch" with what is going on in our very own hearts. We are about to begin our Advent, right at the time our Western culture begins Christmas preparations. It is a busy time, and our heads are filled with details to remember. And, it is a time of emotional complexity that is part of this holiday season - with all of the expectations and challenges of family and relationships: who we want to be with and who we struggle to be with. So, our hearts are a bit tender, if not completely defended from experiencing anything deeply.

We are about to hear some very powerful and stirring readings from Isaiah, the Prophet. We will re-enter the ancient tradition of a people longing for the coming of a Savior. We may remember the days of our childhood when we longed for Christmas to come, because it was a magical time of receiving gifts. As adults, we have to ask ourselves: "What is it I long for now?" The answer won't come easily. The more we walk around with that question, and let it penetrate through the layers of distraction and self-protection, the more powerfully we will experience Advent.

Salvation From We are about to read and pray about the expectant hope of Israel, as expressed through Isaiah. The images we will be using are about darkness and gloom - about thick clouds covering the people - and about hunger and thirst. They are images that attempt to capture a sense of what we feel when we are distant from our God. There are many images about war and conflict. They express the powerlessness and anxiety we experience when we feel vulnerable and defenseless. Most of all, there are images of a future day - a day that can only be called the Lord's - when all the tears will be wiped away, when there will be plenty to eat and drink, and when there will be no more conflict and no more war. God's salvation will be made known. God's victory will be complete.

These are very precious days for us to come into intimate contact with our own need for salvation. It is a time to make friends with our tears, our darkness, our hunger and thirst. What is missing? What eludes my grasp? What name can I give to the "restlessness" in my heart? What is the emptiness I keep trying to "feed" with food, with fantasy, with excitement, with busyness? What is the conflict that is "eating at me"? What is the sinful, unloving, self-centered pattern for which I haven't asked for forgiveness and healing? Where do I need a peace that the world cannot give?

Coming to know where I need a Savior is how I can prepare for Advent I am preparing to listen to the promises, listen to these rich texts announcing the liberation I can truly long for. When my heart is open, when my hands are open, when my mouth is open and ready to ask for freedom, healing and peace, then I am ready to begin Advent. Creighton University.

Come, Lord, Jesus. Come and Visit Your People.
We Await Your Coming; Come, O, Lord.
Finding Your Perfect Point of Gratitude

November moves us toward the U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving. Most of us will try to attend to this holiday before we get too crazy about our Christmas preparations. In some ways, Thanksgiving is the beginning of the long holiday we call the Christmas season. And it does make sense to practice gratitude for what has already happened before we move into hope for what is to come.

I grew up in a very small town in the heartland, with most of my extended family within a 20-mile radius. My mother’s family was especially close-knit when it came to holidays. During most of my growing-up years, we were at Grandma’s for Thanksgiving and also for a late midday feast on Christmas day. Grandma was the eldest among her siblings, and her home was the family center, so it was always interesting to watch the crowd converge. Many years, there was at least one new baby in the family. And many years, there had also been a death. So when we gathered around the table, it was rarely the same group twice. I would sit there and silently observe who was gone and who was new. Besides death, there was sometimes divorce, which took people from our table. And besides newborns, there were also new boyfriends or girlfriends, or new wives or husbands.

Thus Thanksgiving became a day of assessment, when I took a thoughtful look at my family. Some faces looked wearier and heart worn; one or two of our elders might have shown clear signs of illness and decline. We always had a prayer before the meal, and that prayer always gave thanks to God for every person present and for our many blessings. I’m not sure it’s possible to be grateful until we’ve been truthful. My family showed up at the holiday table having fought many battles against illness or loneliness or family conflict or troubled circumstances. Our gratitude came at a price. These same people would help one another decorate the family graves in just a few more months, after the spring thaw and before the lighter, warmer days of summer. We gave thanks because we understood that every life matters a lot.

I don’t believe gratitude is simply a smile-through-everything-and-ignore-what-hurts mentality. I don’t believe gratitude looks only at what is going well. Rather, it bravely pauses and takes account of life—of everything going on—and chooses to say thank-you for the whole of it. Gratitude that issues from a Christian worldview recognizes that there is always a much bigger picture than the snapshot a person is working from on any given day. The Christian sees the redemption beyond whatever darkness we face right now. The Christian sees our capacity to endure great sorrow and trauma and grow in spite of it.

But growth and endurance don’t simply happen. God provides grace, but I make choices. I grow stronger and kinder—or I grow helpless and bitter. Sometimes I think the difference between those two outcomes relies on my willingness to give thanks every day. Somehow the gratitude then feeds the hope. And hope does not get along with bitterness; one of them has got to go.

So where is that perfect point of gratitude? Where is that balanced place at which we speak the truth without succumbing to sadness and anger? And at which we relinquish our fears and hurts and welcome the life we’ve been given? Vinita Hampton Wright

The Little Things

It’s so easy to be annoyed by the little things. How hard can it be, then, to allow ourselves to be thankful for the little things? This morning, I was on the verge of being completely annoyed by the traffic that made me miss my usual train. Instead, realizing that I was now “early” for the next train, I strolled at a leisurely pace from my parking spot to the train station. I took the time to appreciate the blue skies, the fall colors and the cool breeze. Paying attention to and being thankful for these “little” things effectively boxed out the annoyance of missing my usual train that wanted so desperately to win me over and to influence my day.

Gratitude is not fluff. It is serious medicine—an effective antidote to the poisons of annoyance, exasperation, and cynicism that vie for our attention. The positive little things that we can be thankful for each day are no less real than the negative little things that annoy us. They simply don’t clamor as loudly as the negative things do. We need to develop a capability for recognizing the subtle little things for which we are grateful and allow them to use their inherent power to overwhelm the negative. Take a moment to look around (and within) you: what little things are you grateful for at this very moment? Joe Paprocki

THANKSGIVING TABLE PRAYER

O Gracious God, we give you thanks for your overflowing generosity to us. Thank you for the blessings of the food we eat and especially for this feast today. Thank you for our home and family and friends, especially for the presence of those gathered here. Thank you for our health, our work and our play. Please send help to those who are hungry, alone, sick and suffering war and violence. Open our hearts to your love. We ask your blessing through Christ your Son. Amen. From Celebrating Faith: Year-round Activities For Catholic Families, by Mary Cronk Farrell
**Richard Rohr Meditation**

Why is it that Mother Teresa could stand up before crowds of thousands and repeat simple New Testament phrases and blow people away?! She didn’t say anything new: “Jesus loves you,” she assured us. “We’re sons and daughters of God and we have to love Jesus’ poor.” Yet people walked out renewed, transformed and converted. She wasn’t a priest. She wasn’t well educated. Her authority came from her lifestyle and her pure goodness. Servanthood and foundational surrender are the true basis for teaching authority in the Church, much more than title, vestment, role, or office. Such lives have the authority of Jesus himself, and need no special ordination.

Prayer: Let it be.

**Ways You Can Give to Help Others**

Christmas cookies are needed for the LaGrange Community Nurses Association Holiday Open House on December 5. Drop off cookies at the Parish Center lobby on December 3 and 4.

New or gently used boots for men, women and children in need at Sharing Connections of Downers Grove. Boots may be placed in the drop box in the Parish Center lobby.

New or gently used fall and winter infant, toddler and children’s clothing for families in need at St. Gall, our new sharing parish. Bring your donations to the YC office or the Parish Center.

Postage Stamps for Kolbe House to enable those in prison to send Christmas Cards to their families. Bring stamps to the Parish Center or put them in the Sunday Offertory Collection basket at Mass.

Nonperishable food brought to the church narthex during November and December will be delivered to Mary Queen of Heaven. Family favorites include canned vegetables (corn, peas, green beans), cereal, tuna, boxed mashed potatoes, stuffing, pasta, pasta sauce, rice, and baby food.

Thank you, Father, for having created us and given us to each other in the human family. Thank you for being with us in all our joys and sorrows, for your comfort in our sadness, your companionship in our loneliness. Thank you for yesterday, today, tomorrow and for the whole of our lives. Thank you for friends, for health and for grace. May we live this and every day conscious of all that has been given to us. From The Catholic Prayer Book, compiled by Msgr. Michael Buckley.
Parish News

Give the gift that keeps giving!
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 on-line with your credit card or drop off a check with the form below to the Parish Center. Each gift is $40.

Livestock for Life Gift
Your Name: _____________________________________
Address: _______________________________________
_______________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________________
Email: _________________________________________
Number of Cards: __________
Amount Enclosed: __________
Drop off at Parish Center. You will receive your gift card in mail.

All parishioners, parishioner groups, and ministry groups are invited to carry the Advent candle at the beginning of each Sunday Mass throughout the Advent Season. Each week a parish volunteer or volunteers will carry the lit candle before the opening procession and place it on one of the hooks around the Advent wreath. If you are interested in participating in this ritual please sign up on the sheet outside of the sacristy.

Contact Fr. Bill with any questions.

Merry Moms Bring Holiday Cheer!
A group of moms in our parish would like to help you get your home ready for the holidays. If you or someone you know is elderly or sick or alone, this spirit-filled group of moms will put up your inside Christmas decorations and then come back after the holidays to pack them back up. The Merry Moms welcome anyone who would like to join their efforts too! Call JoAnn McGarry today to schedule the Merry Moms to visit your home or to help the Moms. 847-562-6095.
Be a Part of the Choir on Thanksgiving & Christmas

Thanksgiving Day Music
All singers in the parish are invited to join voices with all of our parish choirs at our Thanksgiving Day Mass at 9:30am. Please come for warm-ups and rehearsal at 8:30am on Thanksgiving morning. There will not be a 7:45am Mass that day.

Christmas Music
This Christmas singers are invited to join one of our parish choirs to help make the music at our Christmas Masses extra special. The commitment is minimal—attendance at only 5 weeknight rehearsals is required. (The Contemporary Ensemble meets on Thursday evenings; the Traditional Choir meets on Wednesday evenings.) Contact Jessica Koch for details at jkoch@stjohnofthecross.org or 708-246-4404.

The Little Blue Book
The Little Blue Book can be your constant companion for Advent. The right hand side of each page will cite a part of the Gospel for the Mass each day followed by a reflection. The left hand side has timely thoughts, quotes and information. You might want to share some of it at dinner with your family. It should not take more than 6 minutes each day—an easy commitment. Let the Little Blue Book slow you down and let you be with Christ in a special way each day this Christmas season. Give them to your family members as a personal invitation to pray this Advent. Reflections begin on the First Sunday of Advent, November 29 and end on the Baptism of the Lord. The Little Blue Books will be available at the exits of church after all Masses this weekend. Any extra copies will be available in the church or Parish Center Office during the week. Suggested donation $1.

Parish Babysitting
Did you know our parish offers free babysitting in the Garden Room of the rectory during the Sunday 9am and 10:45am Masses? No fees, no registration, just ring the bell and drop off your child so you can attend Mass. The Garden Room is in the basement of the rectory, the building just south of church by the Mary Garden. The front glass doors face north. Please note there is no sitting on holiday weekends such as Thanksgiving weekend, November 29.

Parish Center Office
Our Parish Center office will be closed on Thanksgiving Day. Regular office hours will resume on Friday, November 23 at 9am. As always, you may reach a priest in an emergency by calling the main number and following the voice prompts. 708-246-4404.

All are invited all to hear speaker, Brian Burch, President and Co-Founder of CatholicVote.org (CV) on Thursday, December 10 at 7:30pm in the Parish Center. CV, a national faith based advocacy organization in Chicago, was founded to organize, inspire and mobilize the Catholic vote through education, legislative advocacy, and direct political action. Inspired by Saint John Paul II’s call for a New Evangelization, CV seeks to evangelize with a hope-filled message that is both faithful to the Gospel and the heritage of America’s best political traditions. Mr. Burch has appeared on FOX News, CNN, and has been covered in the Washington Times, Wall Street Journal, MSNBC, Newsweek and other national publications. CV has received national attention for it online viral videos helping to grow the organization to 500,000 in less than 4 years. Sponsored by the Men’s Club.
The Christian Churches of Western Springs invite you to a Thanksgiving Prayer Service in “Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.” – President Abraham Lincoln

Wednesday, November 25
7:00pm
The sanctuary of the Presbyterian Church of Western Springs
5250 Wolf Road, Western Springs
(708) 246-5220 – www.presbyws.org

Childcare available. Reception to follow.
Please bring a non-perishable food item for donation.

All are welcome!

All Saints Episcopal Church
Christian Reformed Church of Western Springs
First Congregational Church
First United Methodist Church
Grace Lutheran Church
Presbyterian Church of Western Springs
St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. John of the Cross Parish
Western Springs Baptist Church

“In Him you are built Together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” Ephesians 2:22.

Thank you to our numerous volunteers and donors for making our 2015 Coat Drive a success! With your generosity we were able to prepare those in need for the upcoming cold Chicago winter. In total we collected 446 coats, scarves, and winter boots which were donated to St. Vincent De Paul, Ella Flagg School in Chicago and our local Beds organization.

A special thank you goes out to Sylvie Salazar and Jennifer Miller who are our Social Welfare board members for getting the word out and coordinating a successful drive. Thank you also to the children volunteers who helped sort, count, and bag the coats.

Each year we count on generous donors and volunteers to make this event possible and help serve so many people in need. We couldn’t have done it without you!

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School

Each year all of our students have an opportunity to put their faith into action by participating in a service project. This week staff and clients from two local not-for-profit organizations, BEDS Plus and Helping Hand Center, visited with our students helping them to understand their vision, mission and history. Afterward the children made Christmas gifts for clients served by each organization.

YC

Putting Faith First

YC students honored service men and women by creating fall wreaths. Students then traveled to a local cemetery with veterans to lay the wreaths on the memorial markers of veterans. They took time to pray for each veteran and all our veterans past and present. Praise God!

Parents: Putting Faith First

Parents, spend time with your children this week talking about what your family is thankful for...not monetary items ...guide the discussion to what are the things we are most grateful for that can't be bought.

YC Schedule

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<tr>
<td>10:15-11:30am</td>
<td>Sun, Nov</td>
<td>Classes K-6</td>
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<td>6:15-7:30pm</td>
<td>Dec 6, 14</td>
<td>FFC</td>
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<td>Noon-12:30 pm</td>
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<td>9:00-10:00am</td>
<td>6, 13</td>
<td>Adapted Catechesis</td>
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<td>10:45am</td>
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<td>Pre School Thanksgiving Feasts</td>
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<td>9:15 am</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>All School Mass</td>
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<td>10:45am</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pre School Thanksgiving Feasts School</td>
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<td>No School</td>
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Father of love, Lord of creation, we give you thanks for your many blessings to us: for the gifts of the earth which sustain and nurture our lives, for the gifts of your Spirit which make our lives complete and whole in your love. May we give you thanks for your many gifts by sharing those gifts with one another; may we be worthy of your great love for us by working constantly to make these prayers for peace and compassion a reality. We offer our prayers to you in Jesus' name. Amen.
Saintly Senior
Christmas Luncheon
Friday, December 11th
11:30am

Join us as we kick off the holiday season with a festive luncheon held at the William Tell Terrace Room, 6201 Joliet Rd. in Countryside. Convenient parking is available in the west corner of the lot. Please rsvp to the Parish Center Office by Monday, Dec. 7. No refunds after this date. Tickets are $25 per person for lunch, a glass of wine and an entertaining program. Entrée Choice: Pot Roast, Chicken Marsala or Tilapia. Please indicate entrée choice and name of guest below.

Name _________________________________________
Pot Roast  Chicken   Tilapia
Circle Entrée Choice

Name _________________________________________
Pot Roast  Chicken   Tilapia
Circle Entrée Choice

Name _________________________________________
Pot Roast  Chicken   Tilapia
Circle Entrée Choice

Name _________________________________________
Pot Roast  Chicken   Tilapia
Circle Entrée Choice

Name _________________________________________
Pot Roast  Chicken   Tilapia
Circle Entrée Choice

Phone:___________________________
Total Enclosed: $__________________

Any questions can be directed to Gerri Mazzone 708-246-0721.

Crossroads

Thank You For Helping to Feed the Hungry

Thank you to all of the parishioners who volunteered their time collecting, sorting and delivering food, and to all of those who donated food on Harvest Saturday!
A big thank you to Wendy Duquette, Fran Karas and Kim Sarros for all of their hard work organizing this amazing event.

Basketball Kick-off

Boys’ Church League Basketball kicks off its season with a player/parent meeting November 29 at 6pm in the school gym. Please to attend to receive league information and t-shirt.
In one of his books on contemplative prayer, Thomas Keating shares with us a line that he occasionally uses in spiritual direction. People come to him, sharing how they used to have a warm and solid sense of God in their lives but now complain that all that warmth and confidence have disappeared and they’re left struggling with belief and struggling to pray as they used to. They feel a deep sense of loss and invariably this is their question: “What’s wrong with me?” Keating’s answer: God is wrong with you!

His answer, in essence, says this: Despite your pain, there is something very right with you. You have moved past being a religious neophyte, past an initiatory stage of religious growth, which was right for you for its time, and are now being led into a deeper, not lesser, faith. Moreover, that loss of fervor has brought you to a deeper maturity. So, in effect, what you’re asking is: I used to be quite sure of myself religiously and, no doubt, probably somewhat arrogant and judgmental. I felt I understood God and religion and I looked with some disdain at the world. Then the bottom fell out of my faith and my certainty and I’m now finding myself a lot less sure of myself, considerably more humble, more empathetic, and less judgmental. What’s wrong with me?

Asked in this way, the question answers itself. Clearly that person is growing, not regressing.

Lost is a place too! Christina Crawford wrote those words, describing her own painful journey through darkness into a deeper maturity. To be saved, we have to first realize that we’re lost, and usually some kind of bottom has to fall out of our lives for us to come to that realization. Sometimes there’s no other cure for arrogance and presumption than a painful loss of certitude about our own ideas about God, faith, and religion. John of the Cross suggests that a deeper religious faith begins when, as he puts it, we forced to understand more by not understanding than by understanding. But that can be a very confusing and painful experience that precisely prompts the feeling: What’s wrong with me?

A curious, paradoxical dynamic lies behind this: We tend to confuse faith with our capacity on any given day to conjure up a concept of God and imagine God’s existence. Moreover we think our faith is strongest at those times when we have affective and emotive feelings attached to our imaginations about God. Our faith feels strongest when bolstered by and inflamed by feelings of fervor. Great spiritual writers will tell us that this stage of fervor is a good stage in our faith, but an initiatory one, one more commonly experienced when we are neophytes. Experience tends to support this. In the earlier stages of a religious journey it is common to possess strong, affective images and feelings about God. At this stage, our relationship with God parallels the relationship between a couple on their honeymoon. On your honeymoon you have strong emotions and possess a certain certainty about your love, but it’s a place you come home from. A honeymoon is an initiatory stage in love, a valuable gift, but something that disappears after it has done its work. A honeymoon is not a marriage, though often confused with one. It’s the same with faith; strong imaginative images of God are not faith, though they’re often confused with it.

Strong imaginative images and strong feelings about God are, in the end, just that, images. Wonderful, but images nonetheless, icons. An image is not the reality. An icon can be beautiful and helpful and point us in the right direction, but when mistaken for the reality it becomes an idol. For this reason, the great spiritual writers tell us that God at certain moments of our spiritual journey “takes away” our certainty and deprives us of all warm, felt feelings in faith. God does this precisely so that we cannot turn our icons into idols, so that we cannot let the experience of faith get in the way of the end of faith itself, namely, an encounter the reality and person of God.

Mystics such as John of the Cross call this experience of seemingly losing our faith, “a dark night of the soul”. This describes the experience where we used to feel God’s presence with a certain warmth and solidity, but now we feel like God is non-existent and we are left in doubt. This is what Jesus experienced on the cross and this is what Mother Teresa wrote about in her journals.

And while that darkness can be confusing, it can also be maturing: It can help move us from being arrogant, judgmental, religious neophytes to being humble, empathic men and women, living inside a cloud of unknowing, understanding more by not understanding than by understanding, helpfully lost in a darkness we cannot manipulate or control, so as to finally be pushed into genuine faith, hope, and charity.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology www.ronrolheiser.com.
Mass Intentions

**Monday, November 23**
7:45am William Albertson, Sr.; Marion E. Dowdle

**Tuesday, November 24**
7:45am Jo Anna Misantoni Vesper; Our Beloved Dead

**Wednesday, November 25**
7:45am Joseph Piszczer; Allison Hiatt

**Thursday, November 26**
9:30am Joe Scelsi; James Butch Houston

**Friday, November 27**
7:45am Patricia Duff; Don McAuliffe

**Saturday, November 28**
8:00am George H. Burns, Jr.; Patrick Mahoney

**Sunday, November 29**
9:00am Thomas Siragusa; Gloria Turlek

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**Pray for Our Beloved Dead**

*Paul Limber,* husband of Darlene, stepfather of Kathy Hussey and Marge Stefani

*Charles Macke,* father of Charles

**Pray for Our Sick**

Jean Allen
Guido Arquilla
Therese Bonneau
Mildred Fitzgerald
Don King
JoAnn Klein
Marguerite Kohut
George Kojima
Carol Martin
John Martin
Roberta Ohlquist
Marian Pascale
Steve Pechous
Keri Rohr
Michael Sullivan
Theresa Vana
Don Vollmer

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**Who Will Fill These Shoes?**

*Vocation Event: NOVEMBER 27*

Men in the Archdiocese of Chicago, ages 16-35, are invited to attend an exciting vocation event at Mundelein Seminary, hosted by Most Reverend George J. Rassas and Very Reverend John F. Kartje, the new Rector of Mundelein Seminary. Come learn more about the priesthood and how to discern God's call.

Register by November 27 at: www.chicagopriest.com/who-will-fill-these-shoes.
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, St. Gall as well as families in our own parish community.

Join in on the fun! Sign up for Share Christmas begins today after all Masses and continues through the December 5-6 weekend. Sign up will also take place on Thanksgiving Day after the 9:30am Mass.

For your convenience our parish Scrip reps will be available in the church community room for you to purchase food and gift certificates. Cash, checks or credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover) will be accepted. A 3% convenience fee will be applied to credit card purchases.

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 Giving tab 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 December 7, 8, and 9 between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. 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.

*Find us ready Lord...not standing still.*
*Find us working and loving and doing your will.*
*Find us ready Lord...faithful in love and building the kingdom that’s here and above!*