



12.2012

# Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## *St. Paul Catholic School Students Reflect on Advent and Prepare for Christmas*

Students at St. Paul Catholic School are excited for the upcoming Christmas season! As in years past, the students will be participating in several programs and activities that help them focus on Advent and Christmas, while preparing them for the arrival of our Lord in the form of a tiny child in a manger.

On Tuesday, Dec. 18, the entire school will participate in the annual Christmas program. A beloved yearly tradition at St. Paul, each class will perform a Christmas song for the parents in attendance. Several students will also present special readings about their favorite Christmas memories. This program is designed to share the Christmas spirit with everyone.

Students in each grade level participate in different programs to help them understand Advent and prepare for Christmas.

“All of these things are to help them keep in mind that we are in the season of Advent,” says Principal Lorelei Darga. “In school, sometimes they’re so excited about Christmas that we want to make sure the children remember Advent, too!”

To prepare their hearts for Jesus’ birth during Advent, students in the primary grades — Pre-K through second grade — use a calendar to complete special activities. These activities will help them to focus on the gifts they receive from Jesus’ birth, and to share those gifts of God’s love with others. For example, these tasks may include assisting their parents with tasks around the house, helping to make dinner, or drawing someone a nice picture.



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# *Students Prepare for Christmas* continued from front cover



Students in the intermediate grades — third through fifth grades — will each present a short Advent prayer service in their classrooms every week in order to prepare for the birth of our Lord. The goal of these prayer services is to make Advent a time of reflection, hope and peace.

Fifth grade students will perform a live Nativity in the church courtyard on the evening of Monday, Dec. 10. The whole parish community is invited to this beautiful event.

“They have been doing this for a few years now and they do a wonderful job,” Ms. Darga says. “It will be a night to remember the reason for the season.”

During the month of December, the middle school — sixth through eighth grades — will participate in daily Advent services with Fr. Michael. Each morning, the students will meet as a group in the cafetorium to engage in activities such as prayer, song, skits, discussion, reflection, service and more. The activities will be focused around one of three core values — reverence, respect and responsibility. In the past, students have collected canned goods for the local food bank, and have donated socks to the Alfred-Washburn Center for the homeless. They have also worked with their elementary school partners to create homemade Christmas cards for hospice patients and the homebound.

The middle school students will also prepare for the Christmas season with “Stations of the Crib” in front of the manger in the church. The Stations of the Crib, which is modeled after the Stations of the Cross, will include 14 scenes from the Annunciation, to the birth of Jesus and the Holy Family returning to Nazareth. It will also include readings from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, as well as intercessions from The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

*“All of these things are to help them keep in mind that we are in the season of Advent. In school, sometimes they’re so excited about Christmas that we want to make sure the children remember Advent, too!”*

*— Principal Lorelei Darga*

## *A Letter From Our Pastor*

# *Stewardship Possibilities are Endless at Christmas*

Dear Parishioners,

December is synonymous with Christmas, one of the greatest feasts of the Christian year, along with Easter and Pentecost. It's a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the babe in the manger in Bethlehem, who is the eternal Son of God made man.

The basic truth of Christmas, celebrating the birth of Jesus the Messiah, God Incarnate, is plenty of reason for us all to rejoice and worship. But we've piled such an additional load onto our Christmas observance that worship is often almost lost in the shuffle.

Think about what weight Christmas has to bear: we send Christmas cards to people we contact at no other time of the year. We have to put up wreaths and Christmas trees and lights. It's the time of year above all others to visit relatives – “home for Christmas” is a sort of national motto. There's the Christmas dinner to plan and cook. And then we have Christmas presents to buy. No wonder the “Christ Mass” becomes an afterthought!

Presents, at least, are a natural extension of the Christmas theme: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16). As God loved us and expressed it by giving his Son, so we in turn share the love we have received by giving to others. And it's natural to show the joy we feel at the birth of our Savior with decorations and festivities.

Maybe, though, we can combine our Christmas activities with our stewardship commitments. Treasure, although challenging, is the simplest. Shouldn't the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus whose birthday we're celebrating? Risen and glorified, he needs nothing we have. But his Body, the Church, continues Jesus' mission here on earth and always needs additional resources.



Time and Talent may be a little more complicated, but can't we spend a little more of our time in worship and prayer? Drop in to the Church for a visit to the Christmas crib and offer a prayer of thanks for the gift of God's Son. Maybe you can attend Mass each day of the Christmas Octave. Have your family gather for prayers together in the morning or at dinner, in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

There are lots of possibilities to give of our talent, as well: sing in the choir for the Christmas Masses. Help decorate the Church. Cook or bake for someone who is shut in or a shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen,

if you will be alone. The possibilities are endless.

Yes, December means Christmas. But with a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing both for ourselves and others. Pray for me that I can keep Christmas properly, and I'll pray for you. And by the way, have a Merry Christmas!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Doug Halsema  
Pastor

# Charismatic Prayer Group

If you happen to be near the Marian Room at St. Paul on a Tuesday evening, you may hear voices lifted in song and prayer — and those voices belong to the members of the Charismatic Prayer Group. Composed of a wide range of parishioners — from teens to those in their 80s — the Charismatic Prayer Group gathers weekly to call upon the Holy Spirit, worship and praise the Lord, while deepening their faith together.

“As the Charismatic Prayer Group, one of our main goals is praise and worship and exploring the fruits of the Holy Spirit,” says Madeline Baker-Gleason, the group’s leader. “Charismatic praise is, simply put, expressive praise. It can be the lifting of hands in surrender to the Lord, which is a physical sign of praise.”

The Charismatic Prayer Group meets at 7 p.m. on most Tuesdays, unless there is a special event taking place, such as a healing Mass at a neighboring parish. The evening begins

with sung praise, and is followed by either a guest speaker, members of the group sharing insights on faith, or a reading.

“We’ve had a few guest speakers, such as Fr. Michael and seminarian Matthew Bush, speak to the group,” Madeline says. “We also take turns sharing with one another about our faith and how God is moving in our life. We close our evening of prayer by lifting up our intentions for family, friends and the Church, or for other special needs — whatever the people present need prayer for, or whoever they know needs prayer.”

As the leader of the group, Margaret hosts four or five group members at her home for prayer group planning sessions.

“They would call me the leader of the group, but we have many veterans and we work together, particularly with the planning,” Madeline says. “We have a leader each week who facilitates the smooth running of the gathering. We designate leaders during our planning sessions, and also what each night will consist of.”



*Charismatic Prayer Group members (back row, from left) Pat Hanley, Evelyn Etheridge, Jamie Peterson. (Front row, from left) Madeline Baker-Gleason, Val Halsey, Judi Ward, and Carolyn Mueller.*

# *p Deepens Faith Together*

In addition to the Tuesday night gathering, the Charismatic Prayer Group supports and gathers with other prayer groups in the area whenever possible. They often attend the Healing Mass said by Fr. Eugene Pathe at St. Ann's, on the second Monday of the month.

"Anyone can join, of any age — just show up," Madeline says. "I can't sing particularly well, but I sing to make a joyful noise. We have a couple that comes, and they are in their 80s. Isabelle Petersen, who plays the guitar and sings for us, is 14 years old. Isabelle has played for us for over a year. She is a self-taught guitarist, and is incredibly gifted. The group is truly blessed by her talents."

For more information on the Charismatic Prayer Group, please see the weekly parish bulletin. Those interested in the group are encouraged to attend a Tuesday night prayer meeting, and may contact Madeline Baker-Gleason at 850-512-2121.



*Charismatic Prayer Group members (back row, from left) Tom Coughlin, Pat Hanley, Nancy Weisgarber, Alicia Teed, Evelyn Etheridge, Judi Ward. (Front row, from left) Jamie Peterson, Isabelle Peterson, and Val Halsey.*

## *Advent and Christmas Mass Schedule*

**Dec. 2 — Christmas Breakfast**  
in the gym after the 9 and 11 a.m. Masses

**Kris Kringle Market**  
9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

**Dec. 8 — Immaculate Conception**  
*(One must attend Mass twice this weekend for the Holy Day and for Sunday)*

Vigil-Friday December 7, 4 p.m.

Saturday December 8, 6:30 a.m., 8:30 a.m.

Saturday 4:30 p.m. Mass does not fulfill the requirement to attend Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception

**Dec. 9 — Regular Mass times**  
Bishop Parkes will be at the 11 a.m. Mass

**Dec. 22 and 23 — Regular Mass times**

**Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve**  
(No 8:30 a.m. Mass)  
4 p.m., 6 p.m., and 8 p.m.

**Dec. 25 — Christmas Day**  
Midnight Mass, 12 a.m.  
9 a.m. Mass

**Dec. 31 — Vigil Mary Mother of God**  
Mass at 4 p.m.

**Jan. 1 — Mary Mother of God**  
*(Mass attendance is required)*  
Mass at 6:30 a.m., 8:30 a.m., and 7 p.m.

# Keeping Things in Perspective This Christmas

Christmas season is upon us. We have started making our gift lists and checking them twice. Of course, we will include family and friends on our lists. But we may also include teachers, coaches, and even service workers, such as mail carriers. We want to give everyone a gift, showing our love and appreciation for all they do during the year. The idea of holiday gift giving — to show love and gratefulness to others who have touched our lives — is certainly parallel to the concept of stewardship.

Stewardship — returning a portion, or gift, to God in love and thankfulness — follows the very same pattern. We give a gift to Him to express our thanks. Think of all God has done for you this year, and how his love has impacted you. Maybe He has answered a special prayer petition, or provided a job for an unemployed loved one. He may have helped

safely bring a new baby into the family, or has brought peace during a difficult time. The blessings are no doubt countless. These abundant gifts God bestows on us are given to us freely out of His love — even though we are unworthy to receive them.

Now think of all the ways you respond to these bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show God your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Jesus during Advent, do we remember to add His name to our list? When we check Grandpa's name on our list, are we also including a gift to Christ? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

The very first name on the list — above our spouse, children, relatives and friends — should be God's name. As good stewards, we are called to give God our time, talents, and treasure and not what is left over. His name should

not be added to our list out of guilt, or as an afterthought. We should instead joyfully desire to place God first on our list for the same reason we want to give gifts to the others on our list — out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through our time, talents and treasure. Why not spend an hour in the church adoring God, or pray a Rosary to share your time with Him? Perhaps you might bring a meal to a family going through a difficult time, or watch an infant for a young mother so she can prepare for Christmas. Providing an extra offering by way of the Christmas envelope is also a perfect way to share your treasure with God. Whatever choice you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.



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# *Lay Dominicans: Teaching through the Living Example of their Faith*

In 1559, Tristan de Luna landed on Pensacola Beach. He was a part of the first Mass to be celebrated on North American soil, along with five Dominican friars and one lay Dominican brother. It has been 453 years since this first Mass, but the Lay Dominicans are coming back “home.”

Lay Dominicans, who officially became part of the order in 1285, make up two-thirds of all Dominicans. Since they live and often work in the secular world, they are able to preach to others through the example of their lives.

“We can be where the priest can’t be, we can be where the cloistered nun can’t be, and we can even be where the apostolic sister can’t be,” says Rick Danner, a Lay Dominican at St. Paul.

Dominican life is based on four pillars — prayer, study, community and apostolate. Prayer is the root through which the other pillars are reached. Every individual member of the Dominican Laity must say morning and evening prayer, as well as a daily Rosary. They must also attend Adoration at least once a week, and daily Mass whenever possible.

“We can never pray enough,” says Rick. “As Dominicans, we firmly believe that is where we see the world as God sees it, and where we can see when God needs us to go. We study to enlighten our prayer lives, and within our community, we preach the fruits of that contemplation. In the parish, we assist with the prayer life of the parish, as well as the teaching function within the parish.”

Lay Dominicans can be men, women, married, or single, and must be at least 18 years old. Those who feel they have been called must go through a five-year process of discernment. During the first year — the year of Inquiry — individuals attend Inquirer Formation once a month.

“During that year, we get to know you, you get to know us, and most importantly, you get to know yourself,” says Rick.

After one year, individuals may be invited to the Order as a candidate. During the following Novitiate year, they study and learn more about Dominican life. At the end of that year, candidates may choose to make temporary promises for the next three years. During those years, individuals discern if Dominican life is the correct path in their lives. At the conclusion of those three years, the individual is then able to make permanent promises for life and eternity.

This may seem like a long process. But as with any vocation, time is necessary for an individual to discern whether it is truly their calling. Rick’s own vocation as a Lay Dominican was 20 years in the making.

“I started out with discerning a vocation to the priesthood, and it took me 20 years to realize that there were other vocations that would allow me to have some of the same responsibilities as a priest, but not the same obligations,” Rick says. “It was a wonderful fit.”



*Rick Danner on his ordination day, during which he also made his permanent promises as a Lay Dominican.*

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## *Lay Dominicans* continued from page 7

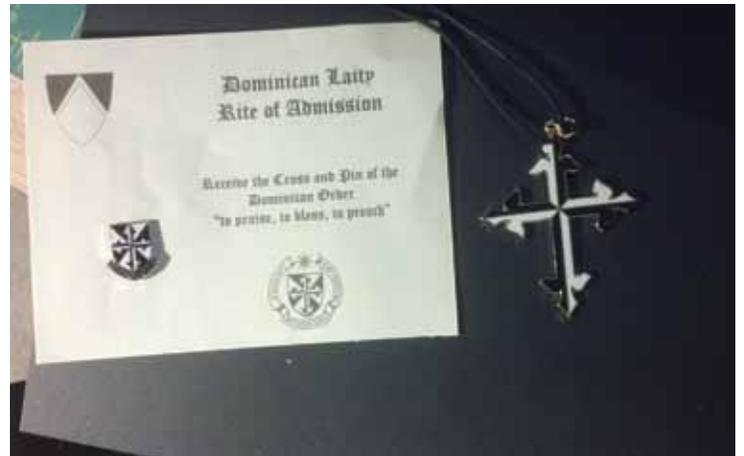
The Lay Dominicans often host Vespers prayer services — with the next service being held on Dec. 7 at 6:30 p.m., on the occasion of the vigil of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

“We start with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament,” Rick says. “Then we pray our evening prayer, and Father will close with Benediction.”

The new year of Inquiry has just begun, and Rick encourages all who feel they may have a vocation to attend Inquirer Formation sessions. These sessions are held for two hours, on one Sunday per month.

“There’s no obligation to join — you can come and go even if you’re just curious,” says Rick. “And of course, everyone is welcome to come to one of our Vespers services. We do it for the whole parish.”

Those who would like more information about Lay Dominican formation may contact Rick Danner at 850-619-0227.



*Lay Dominicans wear the Dominican Cross and Pin at all times in order to give external witness to their commitment as members of the Dominican Order.*

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### *Liturgy Schedule*

**Saturday Vigil:** 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m. | **Daily Mass:** Monday-Saturday, 8:30 a.m.  
**Confessions:** Saturdays, 9:00 a.m., 3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m., 1st Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., and by appointment  
**Eucharistic Adoration:** Thursday 9:00 a.m. until Friday 7:30 a.m.