

TIDINGS

OF HOLY NAME OF JESUS NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARISH

A Monthly Newsletter of Information and Events

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Month of December

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Don't Let It Pass Unobserved

December 8th is one of those sacred days on our church calendar that is unique to the National Catholic Church. That it is unique bothers some people because they associate it with separation, that if no one else has it and we do, then we are different, and different implies separate. I never appreciated the logic of this reasoning. I know when studying the four Gospels, for example, that the unique materials in each one of them are invaluable in our attempts to understand the perspective and purpose of the author. The unique materials do not separate the Gospels from each other; they enhance one another so that we can have a fuller understanding of the Good News. They look at Jesus from different angles, not giving us separate pictures of Him, but rather a more developed one.

The Feast of Divine Love is unique, but that is part of its importance. It could only have arisen in a church such as ours, from a perspective such as ours. It says much about who we are, and also in that process about how God has revealed Himself to us. This feast day replaces the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which refers to a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church issued by Pope Pius IX in 1854. The same Pope associated this teaching and feast with his resistance to the emerging democracies of the modern world. He issued the *Syllabus of Errors* intentionally on this date in 1864. This official document ridicules the authority of human reason, intellectual progress and science, freedom of religion and ecumenism. It states that the church should have temporal power, even military power, and that not only should there be no separation of church and state, but that the church should stand above the state. (See:

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm>)

The feast of the Immaculate Conception was also used by this Pope to sanction his own infallibility. He opened Vatican Council I on this date in 1869. This Council declared in 1870 that the Pope's authority is universal and infallible. This new proclamation set off a series of events that led to the creation of the Old Catholic Church. *Old* refers to the old ways of the church before the

Pope had himself newly declared infallible. In 1907, Fr. Francis Hodur was consecrated a bishop by the Old Catholic Church in Utrecht, Holland. With his consecration, Bp. Hodur signed the Declaration of Utrecht, which was promulgated in 1889, in direct opposition to the theology of Vatican Council I. With that act, Bp. Hodur, on behalf of our church, formally and specifically rejected the new theology of papal infallibility.

By this same act, he also endorsed the Old Catholic rejection of the new dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and for fundamental theological reasons. Mary is the source of Jesus' human nature. If her human nature is not our full human nature, that is, if she is born free of "original sin" and we are not, if, in other words, she is born "immaculate" and we are born sinful, then the nature she passes on to Jesus is not ours. If that is the case, then Jesus' incarnation and thus His act of salvation, is compromised. We, therefore, must reject the theology of the Immaculate Conception.

We have been and are a progressive, democratic Catholic church, and since we have formally rejected the theology of this day and the theological pronouncements associated with it, it is only logical that we would replace the Feast of the Immaculate Conception with a theologically more tenable celebration. That celebration is the Feast of Divine Love. The Feast of Divine Love speaks about creation as a testament of God's love. The physical universe is a wonder to be marveled at, not one to be ridiculed as inherently sinful. We are stewards of creation when made in the likeness of God, not its masters. This being the case, reason, science and progress are not to be fended-off in fear or anger, but embraced as part of God's revelation (see Romans 1:20). Likewise, reason and free will are how we are created in God's image as an act of divine love. For these to flourish we must advocate for democracy in the state and the church. This is our feast day in a practical and profound way. This is our perspective that we alone share with the world about God to better understand God. Don't let it pass unobserved.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS
MONTH OF DECEMBER**

December 3, 2008 – Advent Marian Mass at 7:00pm.

December 5th – Monthly visitations to the sick and the shut-in of the parish.

December 6th – Confession for the youth of the parish at 10:30am.

December 7th – Polish Mass will be recited at 7:45am.

December 8th – **FEAST OF DIVINE LOVE**. Mass of the day at 7:00pm.

December 9th – Monthly meeting of the Parish Committee at 7:00pm.

December 17th – Advent Penitential Service at 7:00pm.

December 24th – SHEPHERDS' MASS at 11:00pm with the blessing of the crèche and Christmas Tree, and lighting of the Christ Candle.

December 25th – Mass of Christmas Day at 10:00am.

December 26th – Feast of St. Stephen. Mass of the day at 9:00am.

December 27th – Feast of St. John. Mass of the day and blessing of wine at 9:00am.

December 28th – **FEAST OF THE HUMBLE SHEPHERDS**. Mass at 9:00am with special prayers for Sacred Vocations and a special collection for our church's Seminary.

December 31st – Mass of year's end at 6:00pm.

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NEW MEMBER

On behalf of the parish, we welcome Mary Mulcahy to Holy Name of Jesus. If someone you know does not worship anywhere, invite them with you to Mass here at our church.

ADVENT

On the First Sunday of Advent we blessed the Advent Wreath and lit its first candle. Each week an additional candle is lit symbolizing the increasing light of Christ in the world, which culminates with the lighting of the Christ Candle at the Shepherds' Mass of Christmas Eve.

We also have blessed the **Christmas Wafers** (Oplatki) that many families share at their Christmas Eve dinner (Wilia) or mail to distant relatives or friends through Christmas cards. Please remember that these wafers have been blessed and should be treated accordingly. They are available throughout Advent.

During Advent many accept the challenge to prepare spiritually by attending Mass on each of the four Sundays. I hope you may be up to the challenge. December is a hectic month, but hopefully not so hectic that we find no time for the real reason behind our celebrations. To participate fully in the joy of our Christmas Masses, we must first prepare ourselves during our Advent Masses.

During Advent we accept your donations for the **Christmas Flower Fund** of the parish. These donations allow us to adorn the Sanctuary with the beautiful poinsettias that add so much colour and brightness to the church. Donations will be accepted after all Advent Sunday Masses, and memorial contributions should be made through Fr. Calvo. Please mail them to the rectory, give them to him personally or drop them in the Sunday collection basket in a clearly marked envelope.

ADVENT MARIAN MASS

During Advent the church prepares for the approaching birth of the Child Saviour. As we do so, Mary plays a central role as Jesus' mother. The Gospel of Luke tells us: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you [Mary] and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy. He will be called Son of God." (1:35) Jesus receives His divine nature from God and His human nature through Mary. Mary, therefore, is a crucial player in the Christmas story. As we approach closer and closer to our celebration of Jesus' birth, we also in Advent celebrate the role of Mary as His mother. I hope you will join me on Advent's first Wednesday for our Advent Marian Mass.

FEAST OF DIVINE LOVE

The Feast of Divine Love is celebrated on December 8th for the reasons mentioned in the article above. This, I think, is one of the more important liturgical and theological creations of our church, but sadly few will come to observe it at Mass. If you agree with all that the Feast of Divine Love stands for, I encourage you to show your commitment by attending Mass that day. A powerful and poetic religious statement can become trite if ignored. I hope you will not let this happen to the Feast of Divine Love.

ADVENT PENITENTIAL SERVICE

Advent is a four-week season during which we prepare ourselves spiritually for the coming celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. We do so

in positive ways by emphasizing the virtue of charitable giving, by increasing our devotion through attending Mass and receiving the sacraments, and by the wonderfully accentuated feeling of community at this special time of the year. We also prepare ourselves by confessing our sins and seeking the forgiveness of Penance. In this way we make room for the coming of the Child Saviour in our souls so that we may become His manger. The church's Advent Penitential Service will be sung on Wednesday the 17th at 7:00pm.

CHRISTMAS MASSES

I know that our world outside of church is already awash with Christmas songs, themes and images throughout December, but Christmas begins in church with the **Shepherds' Mass** of Christmas Eve. Luke tells us that the shepherds of Bethlehem were the first beyond the Holy Family to be told of Jesus' birth. The angels come in the middle of the night to inform these humble and often ostracized men that "unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:11) The shepherds rush into the city and there they kneel before the manger of the newborn Christ Child. We do the same. In the darkness of one of winter's longest nights, the lights of the church beckon us to come and kneel before the crèche and honour the night when God took on our humanity.

A child dressed as an angel carries the baby Jesus into church in a procession as the congregation sings "O Come All Ye Faithful." We bless Jesus' manger and the Christmas Tree. We then light the Christ Candle which is the culminating act which was preceded by the lighting of the Advent candles on the previous four Sundays. Then the lights are doused and to only candle-light we sing to the Holy Infant. This year, through the generosity of Joseph Kisloski who has made a donation in memory of his mother Albina, we have hired a harpist, Rosemary Caine, to play at the Shepherds' Mass. Then we will celebrate Mass together and share in Communion.

On this holy night, all who believe in Christmas, all who will celebrate Christmas in ways more profound than Rudolph and Frosty, should feel the urge to come to Christ's manger as did the shepherds. If you feel the joy of Christmas, come to His House and share with us in the good news of Christmas. If you are unable to be with us at

the Shepherds' Mass, a second Mass is celebrated on Christmas Day at 10:00am.

On the first day after Christmas the church celebrates the **Feast of St. Stephen**, the first Christian martyr. Due to his devotion to Jesus, Stephen accepted death rather than renounce his faith. For this complete sacrifice, the church assigns as his feast day the day after Jesus' birthday.

The next day we celebrate the **Feast of St. John**. John also never denied Jesus – the only disciple to pass this test of faith. According to John's Gospel, the first of Jesus' miracles was to change water into wine at Cana. Continuing with her theme of "firsts," the church dedicates the second day after Christmas to John. On this day, wine is blessed and then shared with the congregation.

FEAST OF THE HUMBLE SHEPHERDS

This unique feast day of our church was called into existence at the Special Synod of 1906. Together with the Feast of Brotherly Love, these feast days summarize our reaction to the internal and external events that threatened the very existence of our then nine-year-old church. We would pray for Brotherly Love rather than return hatred for hatred, and we would pray that the example of the humble shepherds inspire and encourage like minded devotion among the laity and the clergy. The Feast of the Humble Shepherds eventually came to be a time to pray for Sacred Vocations, for humble shepherds to pastor our congregations. We are in desperate need of priests for our church, and prayer works. We ask God that those whom He has called will respond and come to serve Him as humble shepherds in our churches. A special collection is also accepted on this day to help support our Seminary in Scranton, PA where all of our priests go for training.

CHURCH OBLIGATIONS

As we come to the close of the calendar year, we remind our parishioners that our financial books close on December 31st. Donations received in 2009 will be recorded in 2009. Minimum annual contributions from members are as follows: Single over 65, \$170; single under 65, \$190; family over 65, \$340; and family under 65, \$365. We also appreciate the generosity of so many of our members who offer above and beyond these minimum levels of financial commitment.

**ASK ABOUT OUR CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS
 FOR ADOPT-A-FAMILY AND THE USO.**

