

ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

December 2014

“A Very Special Time to Visit and Spend With the Lord” Adoration at St. Clare of Assisi

“Today solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is the grace and need of our time. Society will be restored and renewed when all its members group themselves around our Emmanuel.”

- St. Peter Julian Eymard

When you come to St. Clare of Assisi on a First Friday, you enter into the company of a magnificent King – that is, Jesus Christ, Lord of the universe, solemnly exposed in Eucharistic Adoration. There He waits, patiently and humbly, for His people to come and visit Him. His presence in the Blessed Sacrament is the living heartbeat of our faith community – the glimmer of hope that keeps us going.

“Adoration is very close to my heart,” says Lucille Kelly, Coordinator of Adoration at St. Clare of Assisi. “It is essential for the wellbeing of our parish, and it also helps increase priestly vocations.

Our parishioners look forward to coming to it, and they see it as their special time to pray,” Lucille adds. “It is such an important aspect of parish life. Adoration is an amazing thing, and there have been many miracles throughout history attributed to it.”

About 15 years ago, Lucille and another parishioner, Connie Batty, felt a little “tug” on their hearts to help bring the great gift of adoration to our parish community. At that time, there was an effort all throughout the diocese to promote the practice of adoration on First Fridays, and there were many parishes that were starting to have it. When Lucille and Connie approached our former pastor, Fr. Mike Klarer, he was happy to bring the devotion to our parish.

“First Fridays are perfect days to have adoration, because they are dedicated to the Sacred Heart,” Lucille says. “First Friday adoration is a long-established tradition in the Church.”

Currently, our parish has adoration on the First Friday of every month



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Adoration at St. Clare of Assisi

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from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Various parishioners commit to taking a scheduled hour so that the Blessed Sacrament is never left unattended.

Furthermore, our Faith Formation program plans on offering adoration on Wednesday evenings during Advent, Dec. 3 and Dec. 17. Also, from January through May, adoration will be available on the third Wednesday from 4 to 8 p.m. This will allow parents to spend time in prayer while their children are in class. It will also be an ideal prayer opportunity for people who are not able to come to adoration on First Fridays.

Lucille, a mother of eight children, with 25 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, feels that adoration is a fabulous way for parents to lay their burdens on God's merciful heart, and intercede for those they love the most.

"There has been adoration at every one of the parishes I have gone to all of my life," Lucille says. "It is a perfect place for parents to come and pray for their families. It is a very special time to visit and spend with the Lord. I believe adoration is a wonderful thing, and I hope that more people avail themselves of it."

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– Lucille Kelly,

Coordinator of Adoration

Those who would like to take advantage of the beautiful opportunity to commit to a holy hour of adoration may sign up on the sheet placed in the narthex the Monday before each First Friday. Anyone who wants to may simply come and pray at any time, as well. For more information, please contact Lucille Kelly at 608-329-6009. Children are always welcome as well. Jesus is waiting to see all of us!



A Letter From Our Pastor

Making Christmas a Time of Real Blessing

Dear Parishioners,

As we all know, December is about Christmas. 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 the additional load we have piled onto our Christmas observance means that worship is often almost lost in the shuffle.

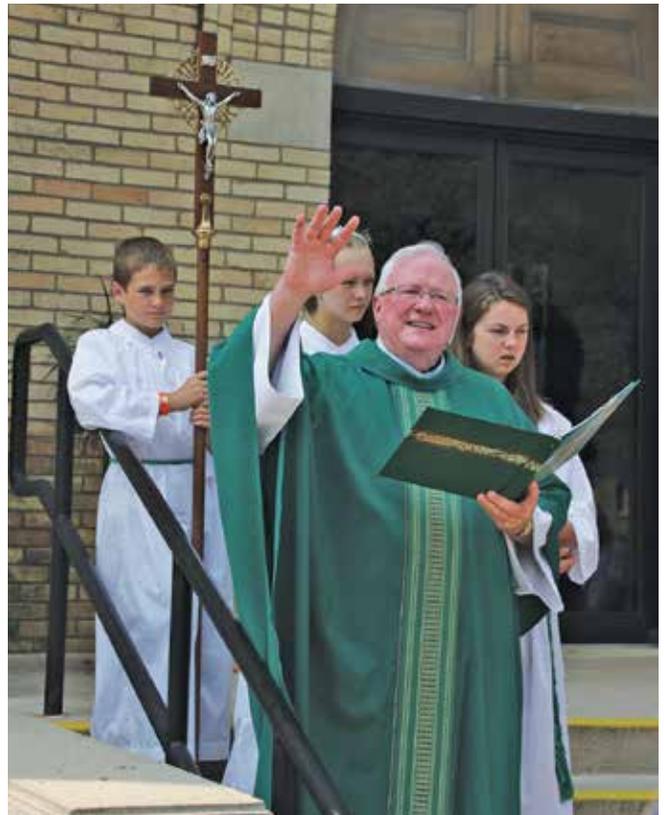
Think about what weight Christmas has to bear. For instance, we send Christmas cards to people we contact at no other time of the year. We have to put up wreaths, Christmas trees and lights. It's the time of year above all others to visit relatives – "Home for Christmas" is a sort of national motto. 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 gifts, 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 generous 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 as good stewards, we all have a need to return a portion of our gifts to God in gratitude for His many blessings.

Stewardship of our time 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 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.

And talent? There are lots of possibilities. You can help decorate the Church. Or perhaps you might cook or bake for someone who is homebound or a shut-in. Invite someone



who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen. The possibilities are endless.

Yes, December is synonymous with Christmas. But with a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing, both for ourselves and others.

Have a blessed and joyful Christmas.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Larry M. Bakke
Pastor

CHRISTMASTIME STEWARDSHIP

To Be a Christ-Bearer

It is not uncommon to give gifts during Advent and Christmas, but it is never enough just to leave it at that. True, Jesus gave Himself to us at the first Christmas. And, as always, we should strive to imitate Him by giving of ourselves in some way as we celebrate the anniversary of His birth. But there is a way to give even more than just ourselves – by giving the gift of Christ to others. The seasons of Advent and Christmas are perfect opportunities to share the love and message of Jesus with others in a beautiful way.

Of course, giving of ourselves in imitation of Jesus is a beautiful thing. But it is just as important to remember that, as human beings, we bear the likeness of God. As Christians, Jesus Himself inhabits our very souls. As Catholics, our Lord literally dwells within us when we receive Him in the Eucharist. Based upon this logic, we do so much more than imitate Jesus when we selflessly give of ourselves to others. Indeed, just as Mary carried Christ in her womb when she visited her cousin, Elizabeth, that first Advent, and just as she brought Him in her arms to Simeon as a newborn child that first Christmas season, we can also literally bring Jesus Christ to the world.

What a profound task Our Lord has laid out for us this season! As

He grew in Mary's womb during that first Advent, Jesus could only go where Mary chose to take Him. Of course, He couldn't do anything – He couldn't even speak. Mary became His hands and feet, and even His voice. Mary could have stayed at home during her pregnancy, resting and preparing for life with a newborn, as most mothers do. But instead, the Blessed Mother helped her Son begin His mission by bringing Him to her cousin, Elizabeth. Today, in much the same way, Christ invites us to share Him with the rest of the world. He chooses to make His presence known through us. And so, as the spiritual writer Caryl Houselander beautifully states, "We must carry Jesus in our hearts wherever He wants us to go, and there are many places to which He may never go unless we take Him to them."

How do we bring Jesus to those in our parish and community? There are many ways. We might visit with a sick parishioner over the holidays, providing fellowship and support in their time of need. We may consider serving a local soup kitchen or food bank, and doing our part to make sure that the hungry are fed. We can sing Christmas carols for our neighbors, bringing true joy and love to their homes. Perhaps we could help a tired friend clean her house, making her life a little bit easier during

this busy season. Or we can share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. We might even try going to work with a cheery disposition, or donating money so that a starving child in a poor country can have something to eat. These are just a few examples of how we can practice stewardship.

We may sometimes feel as if our efforts are in vain – especially when it is hard to see the effects of our evangelization. This temptation is particularly strong when we offer our treasure as a gift to God. The positive effects of monetary gifts aren't always as visible as gifts of time or talent. But when we give of our treasure, the love of Jesus can travel to places we could never go. While our gift may not directly affect someone in a positive way, it very well may enable someone else to do it for us. Sometimes God doesn't just ask us to be His hands and feet, but to enable someone else to be them, as well.

Advent and Christmas give us the opportunity to reflect on Jesus' call to live as stewards and disciples of His Word. God has put us in a particular place, given us a certain amount of time, asked us to perform particular tasks, and to selflessly share a portion of our gifts. This is all for a singular purpose – to bring His Son into the world, and make Christ's presence just as real as when He first became man more than 2,000 years ago.

Championing Our School

The St. Victor Educational Advisory Board

The St. Victor School Educational Advisory Board is a group that works to promote and further the educational ministry of the Church in our parish, school and local community, as we are all called to do as members of our parish and school family.

“Because they’re an advisory board, they have an opportunity to represent our school on a larger basis,” says Joe Peters, Principal of St. Victor School. “If people know who our board members are, they can feel free to come up and ask them questions about our school. Everybody that works in our school and school community, it’s their job to champion our school by positive word of mouth. That’s the most effective way to bring awareness of our school to the community. So it’s not just the advisory board’s job, it’s all of our jobs.”

The Educational Advisory Board consists of Mr. Peters, one of the teachers and five or six parents of St. Victor students. These board members typically meet every other month during the school year to promote Catholic education in our community and work with the school administration on school policies and initiatives.

“It’s basically policy, procedure and advisory, which isn’t all that glamorous, but very much needed,” Mr. Peters says.

At the beginning of each school year, the Advisory Board discusses possible projects and initiatives for the year. Some of the group’s efforts are ongoing, such as the assessment and improvement of the safety of the campus.

“Because it’s advisory, it allows for open and frank discussions about concerns that are out there, but also policies and procedures that benefit our students. Some of those policies and procedures we’re able to apply to the larger parish. By having those things in place, we’re able to apply them to other parish events or groups. They’re a sounding board, but the number one priority is, ‘How do we help our students?’” – Principal Joe Peters



“A lot of things are ongoing, and that does give us some flexibility so that if a different project comes up, we’re free to work on that,” Mr. Peters says. “Because they’re a cross representation of our families, they give me feedback on different things. They discuss different things, and a lot of them are ongoing and being updated all the time. There are some routine things – we may survey our families every other year, so that gives our Advisory Board different things to address.”

There are several functions that the Educational Advisory Board performs every school year, such as reviewing the tuition contract, bringing updates and additions to the school handbook and the dress code, and reviewing the admissions policy. The board will be working on these efforts during the next few months of this school year.

“Because it’s advisory, it allows for open and frank discussions about concerns that are out there, but also policies and procedures that benefit our students,” Mr. Peters says. “Some of those policies and procedures we’re able to apply to the larger parish. By having those things in place, we’re able to apply them to other parish events or groups. They’re a sounding board, but the number one priority is, ‘How do we help our students?’ And that is the thing they do most importantly.”

Parents of St. Victor School students are welcome to join the Educational Advisory Board. For more information, please call Principal Joe Peters at the school office at 608-325-3395.

2014-2015 Christmas and New Year's Liturgy Schedule

The Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord

Christmas Eve – Wednesday, Dec. 24

3 p.m. – Prelude of carols, choral and instrumental music (Monroe High School Performing Arts Center)

4 p.m. – Vigil Mass (Monroe High School Performing Arts Center)

This Mass at the Performing Arts Center features contemporary and traditional Christmas music led with piano and various instruments.

8 p.m. – Carols by Candlelight (St. Victor Church, Monroe)

Christmas carols, choral anthems and instrumental music is offered by our Christmas Schola. Silent Night is sung by candle light and the Proclamation of the Birth of Christ is sung.

8:30 p.m. – Solemn Mass of Christmas Night (St. Victor Church, Monroe)

The Christmas Schola also sings at this Mass with organ, harp, woodwinds and strings.

Christmas Day – Thursday, Dec. 25

8 a.m. – Mass of Christmas Morning (St. Rose of Lima, Brodhead)

9:30 a.m. – Prelude of Carols (St. Victor Church, Monroe)

10 a.m. – Solemn Mass of Christmas Day (St. Victor Church, Monroe)

This Mass features our Christmas Festival Choir with organ and brass.

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God – Holy Day of Obligation

New Year's Liturgies

4:30 p.m. Vigil Mass – Wednesday, Dec. 31 (St. Victor Church, Monroe)

8:30 a.m. Mass of the Day – Thursday, Jan. 1 (St. Victor Church, Monroe)



Volunteers, Students Bring Birthday Cheer to Care Home

When the fifth-grade students from St. Victor School visit the Pleasant View Skilled Nursing and Rehab Center for the December Birthday Party, it may be a toss-up as to who is having the most fun – the children or the residents.

Rita Koster, St. Clare Parish Secretary and December Birthday Party Group Coordinator, notes that the ministry of visiting the care home has been in place for many years here.

“I’ve been doing it for about three years,” Rita says. “We had another parishioner who took care of it, but she moved, and I took it over.”

Rita says that Pleasant View celebrates its residents’ birthdays each month of the year, with different churches and organizations taking part.

“Our students go to Pleasant View in December,” she says. “They sing carols, and then we’ll play Bingo with the residents and we supply the prizes. The residents also like decorated cupcakes as a dessert, and we supply those.”

About 10 adult volunteers from St. Clare of Assisi also take part in the December Birthday Party Group. Once the home staffers bring the residents downstairs from their rooms, the St. Clare volunteers take them to their tables in the social room. After

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“The students love it, the interaction with the residents. They help with Bingo, and some of the residents are better able to play, depending on their abilities. It’s just another way we can help the elderly – not only our parishioners at the home, but others living there.” – Rita Koster, St. Clare Parish Secretary and December Birthday Party Group Coordinator





ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

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Volunteers, Students Bring Birthday Cheer to Care Home

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the festivities are over, the volunteers assist the staff in taking the residents back to the elevator.

“The students love it, the interaction with the residents,” Rita says. “They help with Bingo, and some of the residents are better able to play, depending on their abilities. It’s just another way we can help the elderly – not only our parishioners at the home, but others living there.”

Of course, there is one guest who makes a special appearance at the party.

“Santa arrives for the event and goes around the room and interacts with the residents,” Rita says. “They especially enjoy that, too.”

Rita notes that their visiting Pleasant View and helping the residents celebrate the December birthdays “is one of the corporal works of mercy. In that respect we experience the spiritual side of it.”

Anyone interested in volunteering with the December Birthday Party Group may call the parish office at 608-325-9506.

Please see page 6 for our

2014-2015 Christmas and New Year’s Liturgy Schedule

