



12.2013

Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Spending Time with Our Lord *Eucharistic Adoration*

As Catholics, Eucharistic Adoration is a special way for us to come face-to-face with Christ fully present in the Blessed Sacrament. Attending Adoration can help us take some time out of our day to devote to God, and to help us truly develop our relationship with Him.

St. Paul's current Adoration chapel is located behind the parish office, and every Thursday it is home to 24 hours of Adoration. After the 7 a.m. Mass on Thursday morning, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for Benediction and then for a procession over to the chapel.



“The people who attended the Mass will process behind the Blessed Sacrament,” says ministry coordinator Andy Chambers. “During the school year, they take the procession right through the grade school. As the priest is processing through the school, the kids will quietly come out in the hallway, and everyone genuflects as the Blessed Sacrament passes. It’s a beautiful thing for the kids to witness.”

After the Blessed Sacrament is transported to the chapel, committed adorers will rotate each hour to ensure that there is always someone there. In total, about 65 to 75 people — including committed adorers and those who just stop by — attend each week. Adoration lasts until just before the 7 a.m. Mass on Friday, when the Blessed Sacrament goes back into repose until the next week.

The parish recently completed the process of making improvements and renovations to the current chapel.

“The Knights of Columbus have donated about \$1,500 of their funds to help with construction,” Andy says. “Rick Danner has been helping us out with this, and has worked feverishly to get this done. We have been working with numerous different ministries to bring this to fruition. They’re going to rotate the chapel so that it faces south, which will allow for about 10 more seats, making seating for 30 total.

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Who is First on Your Christmas List?

The Christmas season is fast approaching. We have already made our gift lists, and perhaps even checked them twice. First on the list is family, followed by friends, our children's teachers and coaches, and maybe even the mailman. Christmas inspires us to give our family and friends gifts of love and appreciation, in gratitude for all they do for us during the year. The very idea of holiday gift giving — a display of love and gratitude to those who have touched our lives — is parallel to the concept of stewardship. When we give to God, we are effectively saying "thanks" for all He has done for us.

Think of all God has done for you this year. How have His loving arms embraced you? Maybe He has answered a special prayer intention. Maybe He has created a job opportunity for an unemployed loved one. He may have helped safely bring a new baby into the family, or instilled peace during a particularly difficult time. God's blessings are countless, and the abundant gifts He bestows upon us are given freely out of incomprehensible love — despite our unworthiness.

Think of the ways you respond to God's bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show Him your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Ad-



vent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan — but what does Jesus want? 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 disciples of Christ, we are called to give God our "first fruits," not our leftovers. We should joyfully place God first on our gift-giving lists, not out of guilt or as an afterthought, but out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through our time, talent and treasure. We give God gifts of time through prayer, such as spending time before the Blessed Sacrament or praying the Rosary. We can give our talents to God by way of simple charitable actions, such as bringing a meal to a hard-pressed neighbor, or watching a young mother's children so that she is able to prepare for her own family's Christmas celebration. And as for treasure, we can give God a portion of our income this Christmas by dropping an extra dollar in the collection basket. Whatever choices you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.

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A Letter From Our Pastor

He is Coming! Are You Prepared?

Dear Parishioners,

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name Him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” How many times have we heard those prophetic words? We’ve heard them in readings from the prophet Isaiah, and we’ve heard them repeated in Matthew in the readings for the last Sunday in Advent. What do we think of when we hear that Word? How close to our hearts is that proclamation?

At this time of year, those words should be very close. I think in particular of the meaning of Emmanuel, “God is with us.” That is one of the most basic tenets of stewardship — that God is with us on our stewardship missions. This month of December should be one of the high points of our annual stewardship journeys.

From the first day of the month up until Christmas is our Advent journey. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which literally means “coming.” We must also understand that *adventus* was the Latin translation of the Greek word *parousia*, which refers specifically to the “second coming.”

Advent, our time of expectant preparation for the first “coming” of Christ with His birth, is thus also a preparation for His “second coming.” On the first Sunday of Advent (December 1), St. Paul and Jesus both tell us we need to be awake, to get ready. However, we all know what a challenge that can be with everything else that goes on around us during this season.

In our hearts, we know that this is a holy time, but the lists of things we develop to be done might often seem a long way from holy preparation. There is baking to be done; dec-



orations to put up; lights to be hung; preparations for visitors to arrive at our homes, or for trips to visit others; gifts to be bought and wrapped. We really do have to wake up and be alert for signs of the Christ Child and for signs of the Lord, because it is so easy for them to be lost amidst everything else that fills this time of year.

Stewardship instructs us to step back and to keep in mind the reality about this Advent and Christmas for us as Catholics and Christians. Yes, this may seem like a “tired” theme because we people of faith articulate it so often. Nevertheless, that focus on what is vital is also a challenge to stewardship throughout the year, as well as a trial that seems most paramount right now. Christ deserves more from us than an hour and a half or so on Christmas Eve. He deserves daily prayers and devotions in preparation. Before Santa takes over, we need to ensure that Jesus is part of our preparations and our lives.

Stewardship as a way of life is never easy. But at this time of year, I suggest that each of us, each family, read the Christmas Story at the beginning of Advent, not just at the end. Then, we need to go back to that story and reflect upon that message again and again during our Advent and Christmas journeys. To complete our preparations and to bring the passage to fruition, we all will long to hear those words: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.”

God be with you during this holy time of our Church year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Doug Halseth
Pastor

Religious Education and School Activ



We all know that Christmas is a special time of the year. It is a season for spending time with loved ones — many of whom we may not see very much during the rest of the year — giving and receiving gifts, singing carols and decorating trees. While all of these are wonderful things, they pale in comparison to the true meaning of Christmas — the worldwide celebration of the incredible birth of our Lord, Jesus.

Thus, Christmas is also a very important time — so important that there is an entire liturgical season devoted solely to preparing us for Christmas.

“Advent is a very special time of the year,” says Berdina Clarke, the director of Religious Education. “In Religious Ed, we like to take the opportunity to teach the children how we can prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Religious Education students participate in a variety of activities during Advent. They make Advent wreaths to take home, and they perform some type of service project, such as bringing in gently worn coats to give to the less fortunate. Last year, the students brought in 176 coats that were distributed to an elementary school where most of the children did not have coats.

They will also participate as a group in the Angel Tree program, providing Christmas gifts for a small family.

“This gives our parents the opportunity to take their children out and teach them that we can share by providing clothes, toys, and a gift card for groceries for someone less fortunate,” Mrs. Clarke says.

On the last night of the Religious Education program, all the children gather in the cafetorium and sing Christmas carols. Then, Santa arrives and tells the children that as wonderful as he is, the true meaning of Christmas is the coming of Jesus.



Activities Prepare Students for Christmas

“These events are so special because the children understand the true meaning of this beautiful time of year,” Mrs. Clarke says.

The students of St. Paul Catholic School are also getting into the Christmas spirit with two Christmas events — the Live Nativity and the Christmas Program.

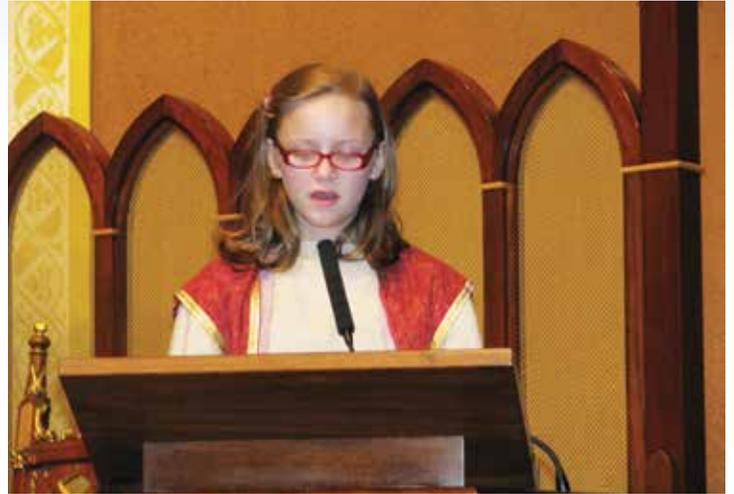
The Live Nativity will be held at 6 p.m. in the church on Dec. 16. For this event, the fifth-grade students get to portray certain characters of the Nativity, while the third and fourth-grade students participate in the Nativity Choir, which will sing carols throughout the event.

“The purpose of the Live Nativity is to remember how amazing it was to have God send down his only Son to save us,” says Ian Werth, music teacher and computer teacher at St. Paul Catholic School. “How lucky we are to have such a loving God. All the more amazing is that Jesus was a helpless infant, totally dependent on Mary and Joseph.”

The Christmas Program is a musical program that features every grade of St. Paul Catholic School. Each grade has a song that they will prepare and perform, and they always finish by singing a song as a school and a community. During the event, students will also share their own personal stories about the true meaning of Christmas.

“It is wonderful to see these students celebrate the season of Christmas,” Mr. Werth says. “It brings everyone together to join together in song. Music has an amazing capability to bring people together.”

For more information on the Advent and Christmas activities at St. Paul Catholic School, please call the school office at 850-436-6435. For more information about the Religious Education program, please call the parish office at 850-434-2551.



Begin the Journey Home for Christmas

Christ was born the son of a poor carpenter. This was by no means an accident. His birth was the culmination of salvation history, as it profoundly revealed the glory of God. Infinite power and wisdom took the “form of a slave, coming in human likeness” (Phil 2:7), not as a warrior, but a poor and vulnerable babe.

Every aspect of Christ’s birth, from the three kings to the swaddling clothes, carries meaning. The proclamation of the angel, therefore, is also important: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Lk 2:10). This message, meant to be for “all the people,” was announced to a group of shepherds in a field out in the middle of nowhere. Was this accidental? Not at all.

The shepherds, who received a personal invitation to greet Christ at the manger, reveal that God’s love extends beyond boundaries of distance and transcends social classes. Unlike persons of this world who yearn to gain recognition with those of influence, wealth or beauty, Christ cries out to the lowly in society — to the shepherds in the distance. He reaches out in love, desiring a relationship with every single person, no matter their status. This is the “good news of great joy for all people” — Christ was born for us all.

Christmas is the perfect time for distant shepherds to begin the journey home. The angel’s greeting extends to all those who feel estranged from the Church or numb to God’s love. Those who have fallen away from the faith can be comforted by these words: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to



you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.”

Be not afraid. The Christ Child awaits your arrival. Begin the journey back to Christ by drawing near to His body, the Church. Through prayer and the sacraments, you will discover the great joy that accompanies a relationship with God. Take a moment to ask the Lord to bring peace to your heart and guide you in love towards Him. Please join our parish family for the final preparations of Advent, as well as the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses.

You have read this entire article and have received a personal invitation to begin the journey. Accidental? Not a chance.

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Recent Events at St. Paul

Our parish community has been busy this autumn. Members of our community gathered for several key events, such as the Men's ACTS Retreat in October, the November Fellowship Supper and the Volunteer Reception. In addition, installation of the pipe organ ruckpositiv took place.



Advent and Christmas Events Calendar

Nov. 5 – Dec. 9 – 33 days of Consecration to Mary culminating with Mass, 7 p.m. on Dec. 9.

Nov. 28 and Dec. 5, 12, and 19 – 7 p.m. Thursday evening Lectio Divina series with seminarian Paul Moody, in the church

Dec. 4 — Parish Reconciliation Service/Confessions

Dec. 7 — The Choral Society of Pensacola presents Handel's "Messiah" at St. Paul, 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 8 — Christmas Breakfast in the gym after the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses

Kris Kringle Market from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Dec. 9 — The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

(Mass attendance is not required)

7 p.m. Mass in culmination of 33-day Consecration to Mary

Dec. 16 — The Live Nativity, 6 p.m. in the church

Dec. 18 — Blue Christmas Service and Mass

Dec. 24 — *Christmas Eve* (No 8:30 a.m. Mass)

Mass at 4 p.m., 6 p.m., and 8 p.m.

Dec. 25 — *Christmas Day*

Midnight Mass at 12 a.m. (preceded by Concert of Carols and Sacred Music at 11:20 p.m.)
and 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.

Address Service Requested

Eucharistic Adoration continued from cover

We'll also have new painting, new lights and new drywall."

The long-term goal is to have Perpetual Adoration 24 hours, seven days a week.

"This will give us the opportunity as a parish to come visit Jesus whenever we want to, any time of day or night," Andy says.

Parishioners Rita and Dan Ryan attend Adoration together on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

"I've been going to Adoration all my life, ever since I was a child," Rita says. "And I've been going here ever since we've had it. We say the Rosary, and I have a novena to the Sacred Heart that I say, as well as the Chaplet of Mercy. The rest of the time we just meditate and speak to Our Lord. I just feel closer to Him when I go — I'm right there talking to Him."

For Andy, Adoration is a time to truly thank God for the blessings in his life.

"I try to really focus on being thankful for the things God has given me, the people in my life, the blessing of my family,"

he says. "Then I go down the list of people to pray for; sometimes I'll do a prayer called the Little Crown of Mary, pray a Rosary, flip through spiritual readings on my Kindle, or do novenas. I'm just trying to give back to the Lord, to spend some time with Him, to get away from all the noise of life, to sit quietly and have a conversation like you'd have with your best friend."

All St. Paul parishioners are encouraged to attend Adoration, even if it's only stopping by to quickly say "hello" to Jesus.

"Life can be overwhelming and there's always so much going on," Andy says. "Just come over to the chapel for 15 minutes and be quiet and listen. There's really no other place you can go that is this quiet and silent where you can listen to God."

For more information about Adoration, or to get involved in the ministry, please contact Andy Chambers at 850-777-0376 or andyrchambers@gmail.com.

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.,

Most Sundays during 9:00, 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Mass, 1st Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., and by appointment

Eucharistic Adoration: Thursday 9:00 a.m. until Friday 7:30 a.m.