

December 3, 2017
First Sunday of Advent



Jesus sounds a note of urgency in today's Gospel: "*Be watchful! Be alert!*"

Amid all of our "holiday preparations", we need to remember what it is all about. We need to remember the long-range goal of all life: The Coming of the Lord and Saviour.

We remember how His First Coming at Bethlehem fulfilled and exceeded all the hopes and dreams of Israel. His coming again in glory will surpass our hopes for happiness and true joy.

Advent should not be a time to be immersed in material things. Make the time in your busy schedule to focus on the spiritual, uplifting action of our God.



Holy Day of Obligation

*This Friday, December 8th is the Feast of
The Immaculate Conception of Mary
The Patroness of our United States
Masses: 6:30am, 9am, Noon and 7:30pm*

BULLETIN DEADLINES

12/10 Bulletin is due 12/4
12/17 Bulletin is due 12/11
12/24 Bulletin is due 12/15
12/31 Bulletin is due 12/20

If you have any questions or concerns please email: kquinn@sainthelenas.org or phone: 764-0325 Ext. 106. Thank you!

Our Offertory Collection for the weekend of 11/19 was \$5,658; the on-line collection was \$1,619.50 for a total collection amount of \$7,277.50. Thank you for your support!

PLEASE REMEMBER: NEVER leave your pocketbook or anything valuable in sight in your car. Recently thieves have hit our parish as well as the Methodist and Episcopal Churches.

Since someone even stole some items donated to help the children of Puerto Rico, we will begin to lock the door of our Rectory porch.

Items donated for the poor can be left in church or the porch during regular Mass times or rectory office hours.

RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT

The Second Collection this weekend is for the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Across the United States, hundreds of religious communities lack financial resources sufficient to meet the retirement and health-care needs of aging members. Many elder religious worked for years for small stipends, leaving a large gap in retirement savings.

At the same time, fewer religious are able to serve in compensated ministry. Like many Americans, religious communities face the monumental challenge of funding eldercare. 80 to 90% of donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious are allocated to assist with the direct care of senior religious. Please be as generous as you are able!

ANGEL TREE GIFTS

Please purchase **ONLY** what is on the ornament. If you would like to do more, consider selecting an additional angel or provide cash to purchase items taken from the tree but not returned. Gifts are carefully selected to maintain a similar price range and the same number of gifts per family member. It is hard for parents to explain how Santa gave more to Suzy than to Joey. All gifts need to be returned **THIS** weekend, December 2nd & 3rd at the Blessed Mother's Shrine. Timing is important as items must be inventoried and any missing gifts must be purchased before the delivery date of 12/17. Thank you for your continued generosity!

WEEKLY MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday, December 2

5:00 pm(SR) John Muldowney, Sr.
Jackie Muldowney

Sunday, December 3

7:00 am(SR) Deceased Members of the
Lutcavage and Blaska Families
9:00 am(WK) People of the Parish
11:00 am(SR) Deceased Members of the
Lotsis and Pochmara Families

Monday, December 4

7:00 am(WR)
9:00 am(SR) Edward Talarowski

Tuesday, December 5

7:00 am(WR)Special Intention
9:00 am(SR) Sheldon Bertz

Wednesday, December 6

7:00am (WR)Rosalina Mendes
9:00 am(SR) Adelaide and Stanley Russell

Thursday, December 7

7:00am(SR)
9:00 am(WK)Special Living Intention

Friday, December 8

Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary

6:30am(Cap)John L. Schultz
9:00 am(WK)Mariusz Rosiak, Living Intention
Noon(SR) Jean C. Manerchia
7:30pm(SR) Luke Morrow

Saturday, December 9

9:00 am(SR) Esther A. Lutcavage
9th Anniversary

5:00 pm(SR) Battista Turcol

Sunday, December 10

7:00 am(WR) Thomas and Therese Lawless
9:00 am(SR) Catherine Kozak
11:00 am(KN)People of the Parish

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

You are invited to join us from 7-9pm on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. The evening begins with the Rosary. We will be teaching anyone interested how to crochet and knit shawls of comfort to those in need. Materials are provided free of charge. For more information, call Carmela, 762-9057.

Please Pray For Our Sick Parishioners

Anne Ambagis, Rita Biddle, Dorothy Blaschke, Ruth Bower, Joseph Campanella, Jean Capodanno, Debbie Cole, Tony Cutrona, Patricia Darmanin, Jayne Davenport, Bob Davis, Julia Davis, Gerri Episcopo, Sara Garrison, Levi & Ellie Jernigan, Ella Kirksey, James Lafferty, Sue McLaughlin, Edward Mebs, Gay Meriggi, Dan Moley, Alfred Moyer, Dora Pacitti, Fr. Roy Pollard, Terri Reed, Dorothy Rich, Helen Rupnicki, Joseph Sacher, Kathleen Schaubert, Charlie Sheyog, Irma Shock, Frank Sullivan, George Theiss, Catherine Thomson, Lindsay Vick, James Whisker, Ann Wilson, Cindy Zych

BINGO

Are you looking for a way to become more involved at St. Helena's? We need people to serve food, sell Bingo materials and monitor games. Or...try your hand at playing Bingo! Don't know anything about Bingo? That's ok. There are lots of friendly folks to show you how. To volunteer or for more information, please call 764-0325. To play Bingo, just show up (18 or older). Doors open to Masci Hall on Thursdays at 5:30pm for food and social time. Games begin at 7pm. All are invited to join the fun!

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday, December 3

2nd Collection: Religious Retirement
All Masses: Food Collection
All Masses: Angel Tree Gifts Returned
11:00am Children's Liturgy of the Word

Monday, December 4

5:30pm Youth Choir-Church
6:30pm Religious Ed Classes-School
6:30pm Adult Scripture Study-Rel. Ed. Office

Tuesday, December 5

7:00pm Christian Formation-Religious Ed

Thursday, Decmeber 7

5:30pm Bingo-Masci Hall
7:30pm Adult Choir-Church

Friday, December 8-Immaculate Conception

Masses: 6:30am, 9am, Noon and 7:30pm

PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

O Love Your Neighbor As Yourself... Excerpts from two Pastoral Letters on the *Racial Divide in the US* and on *The Catholic Church and Black Lives Matter*, by His Excellency, Most Rev. Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Belleville, IL, published in 2015 and 2016.

Excerpt: "*The Racial Divide...*" Part IV, What We Have Seen and Heard, #52, 53. A number of Catholic priests and sisters were active in the Civil Rights Movement working and marching for racial integration in the north and south. Catholic schools in urban areas have made important educational contributions to the intellectual and moral formation of African-American youths, many of whom were not Catholic. The Church has also been at the forefront of programs that confront the sources of poverty which is a fact of life for many African-American families. In 1958, the American Bishops published "Discrimination and Christian Conscience" and, in 1968, they published "National Race Crisis." But most honest students of history would acknowledge that these documents, though we intended, were not widely disseminated or implemented. Catholic parishes and schools, north and south, remained largely segregated. And many Church practices that reinforced racial bias remained largely unchanged. Eleven years later in 1979 and then in 1984 two landmark pastoral letters of seminal importance appeared. The first was the USCCB document, "Brothers and Sisters to Us," which bluntly condemned racism as a sin and heresy present in the Church. The second was "What We Have Seen and Heard," the 1984 pastoral statement of the then 10 African-American Catholic Auxiliary Bishops. These pivotal texts made a significant impact in certain parts of the country. However, there are parishes and dioceses where they were all but ignored. Many American Catholics do not know these documents exist. (Next month we will share parts of these documents.) Did you know that both Bishop Malooly and Msgr. Russell recently made pertinent statements?

PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

St. Helena's Parish Social Ministry Food Pantry was the winner of the 2017 -the Great Pantry Makeover present by Food Lion. This was in recognition of helping to end hunger in our community. This award was possible by the generosity of our parishioners and several churches and organizations in the community: IHM, St. Mary Magdalen, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Calvary Episcopal Church, Boy and Girl Scouts, knights of Columbus, Bank of America, and Female Harmony Society of Hanover Presbyterian Church.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

CONGRATULATIONS to our children who received the SACRAMENT of RECONCILIATION yesterday! Please keep these children and their families in your prayers for their continued growth in Faith. Many thanks to Donna McDonough and Sandy Salvatore who prepared the children for this special day!

NEXT MONDAY our Religious Education students in 3rd through 8th grades will be attending our Advent Prayer Service with Confession. Please make sure children are dropped off for classes **ON TIME** so we are able to finish by 7:45pm. Thank you for your cooperation!

YOUTH GROUP will meet **NEXT SUNDAY**, December 10th, at 7pm in the Religious Ed office.

Christmas Tree Sale

Lion's Club Christmas Tree Sale!
Claymont Fire Company Substation
Located on the corner
of Marsh and Naaman's Roads
Sale begins 11/24
and continues until sold out!
All proceeds benefit the Community!

Reflection

First Sunday of Advent

by Rev. Leonard N. Peterson

The fun of cellphone photos is that by simply stretching your thumb and index finger over a picture you can enlarge a face or a feature or shrink it back again. It is always interesting to see a facial close-up, especially if the person is special to you.

The season of Advent, which begins today, invites an imaginary photo play, in that we can zero in on one aspect of Christ's coming or another. Easiest to recall is the First Coming of Christ. We are so familiar with the story from the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Thanks to St. Francis of Assisi, the first person to set up a display of the scene, we have a powerful visual aid.

Over the centuries, we Christians have piled on many beautiful layers of traditions, some national, others of our family, to enhance the basic gospel story. To our evergreens we have added outdoor lights. This is all part of the Christmas season that is on the way in earnest now, even though the marketplace has been there since before Halloween.

But there is a whole different dimension of the words "Christ's coming" that the Church urges us to focus on in the Scriptures of the first half of Advent. Otherwise we might well skip it. It is a vital need of our spiritual lives, and our perspective on life.

The bible calls it "the parousia", or the "end time", placing Christ's Second Coming. Likely our hesitancy to go there springs from a certain fear because that coming of the Lord will mark the finale of the world as we know it. In addition, Scripture tells us that Day will be the one of our final judgement by God, when He will determine how we will spend eternity. We know deep down that we'd rather not think about that. Also, we may be at a loss to know the best preparation for it.

Our early Church ancestors believed that the end was near. Our Lord prompted His listeners to feel that way. Obviously they misread the timing. They would be baffled by our nonchalant presence on earth more than twenty centuries later. But for how long only the good Lord knows for certain.

The Responsorial Psalm 80 in this weekend's Liturgy offers a way to prepare no matter

when that Day comes. It sings: "Lord, make us turn to You; let us see Your face and we shall be saved." What that implies is the task of thinking differently about time. It is a warning to turn away from our usual selfishness to start thinking more of others and finding ways of serving them. That also means turning back to Christ after our sorry track record in this regard and making a good confession as part of your Advent. Each year parishes offer a penance service with several additional confessors on hand. Don't let that opportunity go knocking.

As for "seeing His Face," you will see it in the faces of everyone around you. To our collective credit, we do recognize His face every now and then. Remember how people rushed to help hurricane victims, and the heroes who lessened the awful impact of that mass murder a mere two months ago is Las Vegas. Pulling back from the usual Christmas scene to see this other side to Christ's Coming involves acquiring a daily habit of charitable thinking and acting toward others. It is sometimes very hard to do. It takes something called perseverance. A wise observer comes just in time to encourage us with a gentle reminder that "by perseverance the snail reached the ark."



First Reading: II Isaiah 63:16b-17 **19b;64:2-7**

Along with a confession of sins, the prophet writes of Yahweh's "awesome deeds." He also acknowledges the Lord as a father, and adds the touching image of clay and potter to describe our relationship with God.

Second Reading: I Corinthians 1:3-9

Paul offers gratitude for the gift of God in Christ. He warns the Corinthians not to be so focused on the present as to forget the parousia, or the Second Coming of Christ.

Gospel: Mark 13:33-37

Mark offers a parable about watchfulness regarding the coming of the kingdom using the attentiveness of a gatekeeper on an estate.