

THE PHILADELPHIA ORDINARIATE POST

A NEWSLETTER OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC CHURCH
THE PERSONAL ORDINARIATE OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

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January, 2017

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

We speak of Christ coming “down” at Christmas, from heaven to His human birth on earth. While this may be misleading in some ways – heaven is not a physical place above the sky – it is accurate theologically. Christ empties Himself of His divine glory in order to be born as a fully human child. The human form He takes on is infinitely beneath the divine form He lays aside. This is true of its nature: man is finite, God is infinite; man is a composite of physical and spiritual, God is pure spirit; man is transitory, God is unchanging and permanent; man is fickle, God is consistent and reliable; man is a creature, God is the Creator. Even more, Jesus is willing to take on the fallenness of man’s nature, and not just its perfection, as He willingly identifies with sinful man – at His baptism by John, as He touches the leper, when He responds to Peter’s confession of Him as Christ with the prediction of the Passion, and most of all when He dies on the cross. Fallen human nature is a degradation of human nature as God created it, and Christ comes down to share even that. Thus (e.g.) the birth in a stable and not in a palace. He became what we are to make us what He is.

This is important for several reasons. First, Christ comes down to redeem man, not to affirm him. It is not as though He thought, “Wow, it looks pretty amazing to live as a human being: I think I want to experience it for myself.” While I trust such thinking is not prevalent at St John’s, it has been floating around American Anglican circles since the ‘70’s, and is reflected in the liturgical revisions (the 1979 BCP) which seek to downplay (or eliminate) the atonement.

Second, the incarnation is inseparable from the atonement. Jesus is born in Bethlehem in order that He may die on Calvary. His sacrifice there must be offered by a man (not a sheep), and one who is without sin and thus not under the just sentence of death. The second Adam does what the first Adam refused to do when his wife sinned.

Third, we can never be thankful enough for what Christ does for us. It is indeed a mighty wonder. When we ponder it (as the Blessed Virgin treasured it up in her heart and pondered), we should be filled with awe and gratitude. His humility in emptying Himself challenges our pride and self-importance, and invites us to a better mind: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” This is one reason we set up the creche in the church every year: to evoke anew within us the wonder of what Christ did for us.

Finally, if we are to pray, we need an accurate idea of who Christ is, to whom and through whom we pray. In His earthly life, He manifests to us both the nature of God, and what it is like to be a perfect man. This revelation begins with the manger in Bethlehem. Meditate on the One who comes down from Heaven, and humbles Himself, for the purpose of raising us to Himself in heaven. Know the love of God in the incarnate Word.

Evensong & Benediction

One of the distinctive glories of the Anglican Way is Evensong, and this is a part of the Anglican Patrimony that we certainly want to preserve. The way to preserve is by doing – so you are invited to come for Evensong & Benediction, in celebration of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary on **Friday, February 3rd** at 8 o’clock. The choir will be with us, both to support the congregation in the Psalms and service music, and to offer works of Gibbons, Tallis, Victoria, and Arcadelt. I have set the time for 8, to allow for supper and avoiding rush hour traffic. Since there is no Communion involved, there is no need to come fasting, as we do to Mass. Having discussed the best days for E & B with the pastoral council, we decided to try a Friday, Sundays being difficult for those from afar: Friday is thus something of an experiment. Please plan to come, and help spread the word, especially to Anglicans, and to Latins interested in things Anglican.

Property Purchase

We had hoped to conclude the purchase of the property from Sacred Heart Parish and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia by the end of the year. We didn’t make it. The primary cause of the delay (and it is only a delay) is the situation with the underground oil storage tanks, which used to supply the boiler in the school building. Our concern is to be sure that there are no significant environmental liabilities before we conclude the purchase. The school boiler has been converted to gas,

and the tanks are no longer in use. We did an environmental survey last spring, which determined that the two tanks were the only ones buried on the property. The next step was to be sure the tanks are empty, and that there has been no leakage. At this point in the process, we ran into some difficulties with a sub-contractor, which delayed the work into the fall. Since one of the tanks is partially under the foundation of the building, and the other close, the plan was to abandon them in place, filling them with inert foam after determining that there had been no leakage or contamination of the soil around them. When we finally opened things up, we found that the one under the foundation had been properly abandoned some time ago, and soil samples taken from around the tank showed no leakage. The other tank, however, showed some small holes in the bottom, and a pool of oil underneath the tank. At this point the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection gets involved. The current plan is to remove the tank (probably in pieces) to determine the extent of the leak. Contaminated soil will need to be removed for proper disposal, and samples then taken to verify that no contamination remains. If all the samples come back clear, and the Pennsylvania DEP signs off, then we can fill in the holes and be done with it. Obviously we will not know the cost until after we get in there.

The point is that we do not wish to assume unknown, and possibly large, liabilities with the purchase. Our expectation is that the costs of remediation of the oil tanks will be factored into the purchase price. At present we have a general idea of the purchase price, though we have not nailed down all the details, pending this cleanup. After we assume ownership, Sacred Heart will continue to use the school building for their Prep (Christian education) program on Sunday mornings, sharing utilities and giving us some rent. Once we know more about the tank situation, we will be able to conclude all the details with Sacred Heart. I should add that Fr O'Sullivan continues to be supportive and accommodating as we work towards a mutually beneficial arrangement for the purchase.

Thanks

First, this being the beginning of the new year, I want to thank a few people who are working away, week in and week out, to keep things going at St John's. Mark Jakubik and Dan Elliott count the collection and pay the bills. They also perform the essential function of keeping track of giving, and everything needed for proper accounting. Pat Lincoln washes and irons all the small altar linens each week, another essential if unseen work. She and Chris Jordan clean up the altar and sacristy after Mass on Sunday. Raynor Sherlock keeps brass polished. Leslie Altena, Pedie Hill and Wendy Ewing teach Sunday School every Sunday after Mass, an important contribution towards raising our children in the Faith. James Griffin sets up the Sunday leaflet each week, and comes up with suitable art for the cover. This is a big help for me. And Bruno Dantas maintains the web site.

In addition, there are a lot of people whose efforts are more visible (or audible): Bill Gatens, the choir, the lectors, ushers, acolytes, valet parking attendants, coffee hour sponsors – especially Lisa Livezey and Raynor Sherlock (“brunch” is perhaps more accurate than “coffee hour”).

The church was lovely for Christmas, and that, as you can imagine was a group effort. Among those contributing time and talent: Rita Moyer, Bennett Hill, Dan Elliott, Bell Anderson (who dug up her yard to provide moss for the creche), Anne Hummel, Lisa Livezey, Doug & Raynor Sherlock, Mark Johnson, Joanna Fallini, Beth Ousley, Pat Lincon, Dawn Lybrand, Eliza Ewing (wreath-hanger extraordinaire), Carol DeSanto, Francis Walters, Leslie Altena & the kids. Apologies in advance to those I have missed!



I think pretty much everyone helped with the Christmas door-hangers. Before, during and after the *Play of the Patriarchs*, everyone at coffee hour/brunch added ribbons to the cards for hanging on the doorknobs of Bridgeport. The next Sunday a number of people went out into Bridgeport after Mass to hang them. Some folk also spent time later in the week before Christmas to finish up the blocks which had been missed, including some Bridgeport friends from the Legion of Mary. Special thanks goes to Steve Lybrand, whose idea it was, and who oversaw the whole project, and Eileen Dantas for design and production of the cards. A great effort: thanks!

January, 2017

With the beginning of the new year of grace, several things come to mind (new year's resolutions, any one?). We solicit pledges for St John's on a calendar year basis (since that is the way most of us manage our finances – and pay taxes), even though our budget is on a July 1st fiscal year. If there are pledge cards outstanding, kindly return them as soon as possible, by mail or in the Sunday collection. Acknowledgment letters for 2016 contributions (suitable for IRS use) will be along in a month or so. The beginning of the year is also a good time to review your wills and burial instructions to be sure all is up to date and in order. I encourage you, if you are able, to make provision in your wills for the church. Some will be in a position to make special contributions which would not be prudently possible during their lifetimes. Others may want to provide for the payment of the re-

mainder of an annual pledge. Some others will have minimal or no assets, and will not be able to do anything. No stigma in any case! These are things that we typically put off – thus the reminder. Offering envelopes for 2017 have arrived and will be available on January 8th.

Coming in January: on the Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 15th (with Epiphany observed on the Sunday, there is actually no First Sunday after Epiphany), I'm planning an adult forum on the liturgical calendar. There are some differences in the Ordinariate calendar from the BCP calendar as well as from the Latin Rite calendar. It is also worth talking about ways in which the observance of the calendar can enhance our sense of God's time in our lives. On the 22nd, the forum will venture into Scripture, with the question, What is a Gospel? There are four of them in the New Testament, as you well know, but the genre is unique: what exactly makes up a Gospel? Knowing the character of the text helps us to know how to read it. On the last Sunday of January, we assemble the breakfast bags for Aid for Friends. All are welcome. Extra hands are needed for the January cleaning day for church and coffee hour room on Saturday, January 14th: the Christmas flowers will come down and need to be cleaned up in addition to the usual cleaning. And, don't forget the Evensong & Benediction on February 3rd. Also in January: I have been invited to participate in a panel discussion at Eastern College about "The Protestant Reformation at 500: A Conversation." I understand this is a public event, so you are invited. It will be on Friday, January 20th, from 10 to 11 at McInnis Auditorium. Because I cannot be sure of being back in time, the Mass that Friday will be at 8 a.m. rather than noon. The annual March For Life in Washington is on Friday, January 27th. While we did not organize a group trip this year, I still encourage those of you who can to go. For more information on the March, contact our parish Pro-life Activities Coordinator (PAC-man, for short), Matt Hummel. Since I plan to be there, there will be no Mass at St John's that day.

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley

