

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

WWW.SJBBRIDGEPORT.ORG

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January, 2019

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

With the possible exception of Jesus' Passion, His Incarnation is the greatest mystery and wonder of all that God does in the world. It is hard for us to conceive how Jesus could be both man and God – not a little of each, but wholly human and wholly divine. Scripture does not reveal to us what His self-consciousness was like, so we can be sure we do not need to know that.

It is also hard for us to grasp the humility of His Incarnation: abandoning His divine glory and comfort for the stable in Bethlehem and the years(!) of growing up as a boy. He takes on our human nature not in order to affirm it – as if being human was so wonderful that He wanted to experience it for Himself. Rather He took it on to save us from the death we justly deserved because of our sin: the Passion is the purpose of the Incarnation.

Jesus is perfect. So we should take to heart His humility. Our perfection will be to be like Him, especially having in us the same humility which is in Him. We tend to have mixed feelings about humility. On the one hand, we want to be humble because we know that is right and good for us. On the other hand, we also want things our way (which is pride), and to claim credit for our good deeds and accomplishments.

The core of humility is letting God be God – and rejoicing that it is so, which also means rejoicing that I am not God. Jesus submits perfectly to His Father's will, both in the manger and on the cross. He does not call attention to Himself, even though His identity cannot be completely hidden. He is always more concerned for others – the leper, the sick, the possessed, the sinner, His thick-headed disciples, His mother – than for Himself. He accepts John's baptism for sin, even though He has none of His own. He is willing to fast and endure temptation. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He is willing to submit to the Father's will, even though it means humiliation, pain, and death.

There is much here for us to imitate, especially His charity towards others, and His submission to the Father's will. We also have the opportunity for humility when we sin. How do we react when we sin? Too often, our response is to get defensive, or to say, "I'll try harder and do better next time." That is the "old man" speaking, and there is no good reason to think we will do better next time. Rather, we should humble ourselves before God, apologize, and seek His forgiveness. It is a chance to recognize that it is only His grace that keeps us from sin. We learn that we need to depend on Him and not on ourselves. If we do this, our sin becomes the occasion for virtue, the virtue of humility. God can bring good out of evil.

Years ago, a priest suggested that it would be great if we could make our Christmas confessions at the creche. For there is God's answer to our sin, and especially to that deepest root of sin within us: our pride.

March for Life

Annually, hundreds of thousands of people gather in Washington, D.C., in the middle of January to witness to the need to end legal abortion in the United States. I know many St John's folk have gone, even before we became Catholic. This year, Bishop Lopes is coming from Texas to lead the Ordinariate delegation. He will celebrate Mass at 10 a.m. at St Luke's, the Ordinariate parish in D.C., Friday, January 18th. We will then proceed to the March from there. Matt Hummel is coordinating our group, so if you need a ride or want to car pool, please speak with Matt. If you have a cell phone, you can also text @4236h7 to 81010 so Matt can keep you informed of developments.

Any society which cannot protect its children, born and unborn, is unjust, and bound to suffer in many ways. If we care about our country, not to say about the innocent lives being snuffed out by their parents, we will want to do what we can to restore legal

protection to children before they are born. That's the point of the March, which draws not only Catholics, but Protestants, Jews, atheists – all who recognize that the unborn are human persons. This year, the Holy Father has granted a plenary indulgence (under the usual conditions: confession, Communion, prayer for the Pope's intentions) to Catholics who join in the March. Confession and Communion need not be done the day of the March, but should be done within a week before or after.

Candlemas

Forty days after His birth, Mary & Joseph present Jesus in the temple and offer the sacrifice prescribed in the Law. Simeon is led to them, having been told by the Spirit that he would see the coming of Christ. He acclaims Jesus the "light to lighten the Gentiles." We commemorate this every year on February 2nd, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin and Presentation of Christ in the Temple, commonly known as Candlemas. It is customary to bless the candles for the altar at Candlemas, and to have a procession with lighted candles – in honor of Him who is the light of the world.

We have not made much of this feast in recent years, and I'd like to change that. This year, we will have a Sung Mass, with the blessing of candles and procession, on the vigil, Friday, February 1st, at 6:30. You are welcome to bring candles to be blessed that you will be using at home. Please spread the word – as with our Friday Evensongs, this is a good opportunity to introduce others to St John's.

Youth Group

The high school (and recent graduate) youth group which we launched last summer has now taken on an enthusiastic life of its own. Our twice a month discussions (with supper and some game time) regularly draw 15-20 kids (three of whom are parishioners at SJB, the remainder from other parishes). Most have come because someone else in the group invited them. The discussions, ranging from heaven and hell to vocation to Politics and the Catholic, have been lively. I admit that I have a good time as well: it is a great bunch of kids. I am also grateful to my wife who provides for our suppers. Our meetings in January are on the 11th and 25th, 7-8:45, and new kids are welcome. Just let me know, so that we can be sure to have enough food.

Caroling

It had rained all day (flood warning even) but stopped just as we were gathering to go Christmas caroling in Bridgeport on the Friday after Christmas. We gathered at 5:30 (indoors) for some warm up, hamburgers and hot dogs, and general organization. At 6:30, we had prayers in the church and then headed up Fifth Street, following a lighted creche, borne on a hand barrow by two of our acolytes. Kevin Chun, Director of our Saint Cecilia Choir, kept us together and on pitch, with the help of two of his friends on accordion and clarinet. A number of our neighbors came out to listen and return our Christmas greetings. We were even invited in to Falzone's to serenade the diners in that restaurant. It was a warm night, and quite pleasant without the rain. The Knights of Columbus, who were hosting their monthly Bingo, had hot chocolate and donuts ready for us when we returned.

Special thanks goes to Bill Finegan, who organized everything, and arranged for the creche. We were also blessed to have a number of kids from the youth group who are extraordinarily good singers. It was very much a family event in several ways – families involved, parish family, Bridgeport family – and is sure to become a popular annual event. Plan to join us next year.

Building Fund

As you may recall (I hope you do!), we reopened the Building Fund in the fall for the support of the Master Plan work we hope to do for the property. While accessibility and use of the school building are important, we made the tower repair and steeple, and the reconstruction of the interior of the church our priority. Estimates on the tower and church come to a bit over two million total. We plan to work away on it as funds allow, though it is not easily divided into small pieces, but only larger increments: the tower repair; the addition of the steeple; the interior church reconstruction.

Since we solicited your support in the fall, I'm happy to report that the Building Fund has grown to a little over \$100,000, without reducing our operating income. Well done! About \$90,000 has also been pledged for 2019. That will not be quite enough to start work on the tower. But we trust God, and do what we can, bit by bit. Practically: checks for the Building Fund should be made to St John the Baptist Catholic Church and marked for the Building Fund. Donations are welcome at any time. If you would like to donate stock or other securities, I'll be happy to give you the contact information for the firm that holds our investments to make that easy to arrange. On February 10th, during

coffee hour, there will be a congregational meeting, one of our regular briefings with the details of the parish financial situation. All parishioners are welcome.

Calendar

Easter is late this year, April 21st. Thus Ash Wednesday is March 6th, Septuagesima February 17th. We are due for a special treat in Holy Week: Bishop Lopes will be with us to celebrate and preach on Maundy Thursday. He will then travel to Baltimore to spend Good Friday with our brethren at Mount Calvary. (We also expect him to visit later in the year to ordain Roger Converse to the permanent diaconate.)

January 11 & 25 – High School Youth Group, 7-8:45.

January 18 – March for Life; no Mass at SJB.

February 1 – Vigil of Candlemas, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin and Presentation of Christ in the Temple: Blessing of Candles, Procession, and Sung Mass at 6:30 p.m.

February 3 – after Mass, take down the Creche in church and clean up.

February 10 – congregational meeting for financial updates.

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley