

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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Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Probably the first date you learned when you were little was that Christmas is December 25th. This year it falls on a Monday. So Christmas Eve is Sunday. I can hear the question now, “Do I have to go to Mass in the morning if I am going to the Christmas Eve Mass that night?” Since Christmas is an Holy Day of Obligation, then the answer is yes. Sunday morning is the Fourth Sunday of Advent – and Sundays are all Days of Obligation. Monday (which includes the Vigil Mass the night before) is a different Holy Day. So, yes, your obligation is to assist at the offering of the Holy Mysteries on both occasions.



But let’s look beyond the obligation. The four Sundays of Advent prepare us for Jesus’ three-fold coming : in humility at the Incarnation in Bethlehem, in judgment at the Last Great Day, and in love to be born in our hearts. Advent is barely three weeks long this year – not very long to bear so great a weight. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, our Patron tells us. Such preparation requires quiet and prayer, and a sacramental confession, and perhaps the quiet day. If you find you don’t have time to prepare for Christmas spiritually, then perhaps you need to cut down on the material preparations to make time.

At Christmas, we celebrate the greatest event of human history – or divine history either, if we may so speak. God becomes man, and enters history. And this, not just because He somehow longs to experience what it is like to be human, but to redeem man from sin, and give him the chance to fulfil his identity, to live in the likeness of God as well as His image. This demands our attention, and our worship. The schedule is this:

Fourth Sunday of Advent (December 24th)

Sung Mass, 10 a.m.

Christmas Eve (December 24th)

Mass with Carols, 5 p.m.

Carols, 10 p.m.

Sung Mass (with choir), 10:30 p.m.

Christmas Day (December 25th)

Sung Mass, 10 a.m.

We have also scheduled an Epiphany Evensong & Benediction (with the choir) for Friday, January 12th, 7:30 p.m. This will add to the festivity of the season – and is a wonderful opportunity to introduce people to St John the Baptist. It is also a prime chance to introduce cradle Catholics to one of the riches of the Anglican patrimony. Details will be in next month’s mailing: for now, be sure it is on your calendar.

Please also note that there is another Holy Day of Obligation in December: the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 8th. Since she is patroness of the United States, this is an excellent opportunity to pray for our country at Mass. In addition to the usual noon Mass on Friday, there will be an evening Mass at 7.

Quiet Day

As I’ve mentioned before, the Advent Quiet Day is Saturday, December 2nd, 9-2. This is the day before Advent starts, so it is technically a pre-Advent Quiet Day, but the purpose is the same: to take some time with no other purpose than to be with Jesus, to let go of our usual daily cares for a few hours, to put ourselves in His hands, and enjoy some quiet intimacy with Him. In short: to enjoy the Beloved. It might even give us the leisure to think about how we might do everything – for Advent and Christmas – as an act of love.

The day begins with Mass at 9, and we provide breakfast afterward. Then the rest of the day is quiet (no talking amongst ourselves), with three addresses and opportunity for confession. The day concludes with a period of Adoration and Benediction. It is open to all and you are welcome for all or part of the day. Sandwich makings will be provided, or bring your own lunch.

Pornography

In the pre-Internet days, there were some deterrents to pornography – having to publicly enter an adult bookstore or buying a questionable magazine at the newsstand: someone might see you. Now everything is easily and privately available on the computer or cell phone. Christians need to be realistic about how widespread this scourge is. Men especially are wired (in our fallenness) in such a way that pornography exercises a powerful attraction. And it is addictive. Its effects on the brain are similar to heroin. The addiction is exceedingly hard to break. Christians who are afflicted are generally also thoroughly ashamed of what they are doing, and may well lapse into a pattern of falling to the temptation, and then despairing. Shame prevents them from admitting to anyone that they are having trouble, and keeps them from seeking help. Since addictions are generally hard to break without help, Satan uses the shame to foster the addiction, and the hopelessness.

This means that pornography must not be unmentionable in Christian circles. We are all sinners, even if our sins differ. Pornography use is widespread, even among Christians. We all need to be ready to help those afflicted. They will need support, and help in accountability. Likewise they need to know that it is safe to confess the need for help to a close Christian friend, with the expectation that they will not be condemned and rejected.

In addition, we all should have filters on our internet connections, and parents should have additional protections for their children. (It has been documented that the majority of boys have gotten into pornography by the age of 12.) Harvest USA has a variety of resources available, which I commend to you. In particular, there is a short article on Internet protection: <http://www.harvestusa.org/protecting-home-porn-part-1-2/#.WhV4cK39lhG>. Don't just read it: act on its advice, should you not already have taken appropriate steps in your home.

Master Plan for the Property

We have now been in the Our Lady of Mount Carmel for nearly two years. In that time, we have become more aware of its plusses and minuses. It is in many ways a wonderful blessing. It came to us well-maintained, the church is eminently usable (having moved the altar back and provided a communion rail), the parish hall has lots of space, which has allowed us to expand our activities. On the other hand, the organ is inadequate for our music program, no level of the parish hall is wheel-chair accessible, nor is the lower church (should we repurpose that space at some point), and the ethos of the church interior is decidedly un-Anglican. The front of the parish house is unattractive, and the windows sorely need replacement. There are many questions about how best to approach the challenges which the property presents.

After discussions in the Finance Council and Pastoral Council, we decided to seek professional help: there is just too much here for us to figure out on our own. We want to be sure that in addressing one problem, we don't do something that has to be undone down the road in addressing something else. So we have engaged the firm of Cram and Ferguson Architects to prepare a master plan for the property. Ethan Anthony, the principal of the firm, works only on churches, convents, etc. He was the original architect for Our Lady of Walsingham, the church that is now our cathedral in Houston. You can look at his work on www.cramandferguson.com.

The master plan, which we expect to be completed later this winter, will look at our current and expected uses of the property, evaluate existing conditions, and do some global thinking about how the property works for us and doesn't. After further discussions with us, they will propose solutions to the challenges we face here – correcting the ways in which the property doesn't work for us. The final plan will give us specific solutions to the most urgent issues, along with projected costs. That will give us a clear idea of not just what is but also what could be. It is safe to assume that there will be significant costs involved with the solutions – there is obviously no quick and easy way to make the parish hall accessible, e.g. Costs will be an issue when we consider the recommendations. Having the master plan is the first step of many. But then, life is lived one step at a time, trusting God for the future. At this point, with the initial work on the master plan, I am excited to see that our problems have solutions, and Mr Anthony is both creative, and solidly appreciative of the

Anglican patrimony. I'm confident that I – and you – will find the master plan exciting when it is done.

Church Cleaning, Etc.

If you have been reading along the last couple of years, you know that when we moved to Bridgeport we took on responsibility for keeping the church and parish hall clean. We did not have money in the budget to hire a sexton, and I encouraged parishioners to join in the monthly Saturday cleanings. My thinking was (and is) that cleaning the church with our own hands is of considerable spiritual benefit, serving the Lord directly in His own home. A few faithful parishioners have found this to be true, and sacrifice their time to come every month to share the work. Unfortunately, their numbers have dwindled. While I am disappointed that more people did not buy into the plan, I do not want this to become a burden on anyone. So we are altering the plan somewhat. Our increase in pledging allows us to hire a sexton to come in once a month to do a thorough cleaning. I am grateful that Delbert Franklin has agreed to come out of retirement to come on board as our (very occasional) sexton. Volunteers will continue to do the weekly touch-ups on the bathrooms and coffee hour room as before. This involves taking out the trash, dealing with crumbs after coffee hour, etc. Extra volunteers are needed for three specific tasks: overseeing the cleanup after coffee on “potluck Sunday” (the fourth Sunday each month), straightening the books in the pews after Sunday Mass, and being willing to help out with bathroom touch-ups when the regulars cannot do it or need help. Sound like something you could do? Let me know.

In addition to our work with Aid for Friends, Mary Ann McCluney has volunteered to collect canned goods and imperishable food for donation to a food cupboard in Norristown. A box is in the coffee hour room to receive your contributions. When it is full, she'll get the food to the pantry.

If anyone wishes a DVD of the Ordinariate Mass at the cathedral basilica, they can be ordered here: <https://squareup.com/store/kearns-media-consulting>.

Calendar

December 2nd, 9-2, **Quiet Day**

December 8th, **Immaculate Conception**: Mass at 12 & 7 p.m.

December 10th, Second Sunday of Advent: **adult forum** on the family – practical matters in the relation between husband and wife.

December 13th, 7 p.m.: **Patricians** Adult Discussion Group; on Angels.

December 16th: **greening of the church**. Come and help with the decorations for Christmas.

December 24, after the morning Mass: finish decorating the church for Christmas (poinsettias, bows, etc.) -- help needed

December 25th: **Christmas** (service schedule is above)

January 12th, 7:30 p.m.: Epiphany **Evensong & Benediction**

I also want to thank Joanna Falini for obtaining and planting some new plants around the parish hall and rectory; Steve Lybrand for organizing the acolytes hike and instruction; Sue Canon for donating plants for the oil tank area; and all who helped with the Christmas shoebox gift project: Mary Ann McCluney, Therese Rawson, Wendy Ewing, Joanna Falini, Pat Lincoln, Chris Jordan, Mark, Angela & Mitch Johnson, Bell anderson, Cristina Shiffman, Joy Converse, Vanessa Vaughn, Anne Hummel, Leslie Altena, Beth Ousley.

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley