

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.SJBRIDGEPORT.ORG

502 FORD STREET, BRIDGEPORT, PENNSYLVANIA 19405

215-247-1092

December, 2018

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Saint Peter admonishes us, “the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” (I Peter 4:7) Most days it does not look like the end is at hand: things go on pretty much the same as they did yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that – for nearly 2000 years since our Lord ascended. Yet Peter knew what he was talking about. The end *is* nigh. It may come with Jesus’ return in glory and power. It may come at the hour of our deaths. Either way we come face to face with Jesus – and judgment. Needless to say, this has implications for how we should be living.

Peter tells us to be sober: to live lives oriented to God and not to the gratification of our disordered desires. We are also to “watch unto prayer,” a prominent theme in Advent. Regular and devout prayer are a large part of that vigilance. Saint Peter continues, “Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” (I Peter 4:8) Being ready to face Jesus is not just a matter of prayer. It requires us to order our relations with other people rightly, and that means loving others as Christ loves us. Christ’s love for us led to His sacrifice: our love for others will also require sacrifice, perhaps of some pleasure of ours in order to serve another’s need, perhaps of our pride in order to forgive a wrong, certainly of our selfishness in order to attend to others and their needs. This, too, is essential to our watchful preparation for the end of all things.

We will also want to be clean from sin when we face Jesus. The best way to do that, of course, is not to sin. Failing that, He has given us the sacrament of penance. Confession helps us to be honest, and to know the love God has for us. Make use of the sacrament. Regularly. Frequently. Certainly before Christmas, but not just then. You are always free to choose a confessor of your choice. The sacrament is a great gift in our relation with Christ. Don’t miss out.

When we come face to face with Jesus, we will want it to be a joyful occasion: the reunion with the One whom we have loved from afar. In spite of our unworthiness, we want it to be a day of love and joy. For it to be joyful, we need to be spending time with Jesus now. We need to practice loving Him. Thus Peter’s admonition to pray. Thus the importance of reading and meditating on the Gospels. Thus the benefit of visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and of opening our hearts to Him when we receive Him in the Holy Communion. Thus the necessity of living each day for Him and in Him rather than for ourselves.

Advent most fruitfully reminds us that the end *is* at hand, even if the End does not come in our lifetime. Our watchfulness prepares us to face Jesus at the Last Day.

Caroling

Outreach remains (and always will be) an essential element of our life at SJB. Christmas gives us some special opportunities. Before Christmas we are again hanging Christmas cards on the doorknobs of Bridgeport. These not only convey our Christmas greetings, but also serve to invite people to join us for Christmas services. We will be distributing them after coffee hour on December 9 and 16.

After Christmas, we are planning to sing Christmas carols in the neighborhood. This will spread Christmas cheer, allow us personally to introduce the parish, and witness to the faith. The youth group is recruiting the core of a choir, to supplement the Saint Cecilia Choir and the rest of us. Bill Gatens and Kevin Chun will oversee the singing. Should people come out to listen or join in, we will have information on the parish to hand out. Bill Finegan is the moving force behind this, and he is arranging for us to carry a creche on a platform to reinforce the truth of the Incarnation which is the occasion of our singing. We will accept donations (if any) to the tower restoration project. Thus it will also be an opportunity to get the word out about that tangible commitment to Bridgeport.

This takes place the Friday after Christmas, December 28. We’ll gather in the parish hall at 5:30 to warm up our singing and generally get organized. We’ll head out about 6:30, returning for some refreshments whenever we get cold. Please plan to join us! It is bound to be a memorable occasion.

Follow-up from Last Month

The celebration in Rome of the tenth anniversary of *Anglicanorum coetibus*, the papal decree allowing for the establishment of the Ordinariates (announced in last month's *POP*), has, I regret, been canceled by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This means that the ball is in our court, and the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter will be sponsoring appropriate events in the United States and Canada. Planning is in process. Details as they become available.

Ordo calendars for 2019 are now available. Let me know if you need one mailed. As in recent years, this is a labor of love of John Covert, an Ordinariate layman in Boston. The calendars are given to us at cost, and any profit John contributes to the Bishop's Appeal. Joe Thomas of the Jacob Ruth Funeral Home in Chestnut Hill sponsors the calendars for St John's. Thanks to both!

While I'm thanking people: thanks to all who returned pledge cards for 2019. After the first of the year, we'll have an opportunity to share with the parish our financial situation through the first half of the fiscal year, and the status of the Building Fund. Offering envelopes for 2019 are now available.

Our 2018 quota for the Bishop's Appeal, which funds several vital programs for the Ordinariate, has not quite been met. We are some \$2500 short at this point. If contributions do not cover this by the end of the calendar year, the balance will be paid out of the parish budget. So if you have been meaning to make a donation but haven't gotten around to it: now is the time! Envelopes are available at church. Contributions can be put in the Sunday collection, or mailed to the Ordinariate (just be sure you have indicated on the card that you are at St John the Baptist so we get credit).

Christmas

Christmas is the high point of December. The service schedule is the same as last year:

Christmas Eve (Monday, 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.

Christmas is an Holy Day of Obligation, and the obligation can be satisfied at any of the Masses. Communion is permitted twice if you attend Mass on the day as well as Christmas Eve.

As we celebrate our Lord's birth in Bethlehem at Christmas, we celebrate the great mystery of the Incarnation, God made man, the Word made flesh. How this is possible will ever remain beyond our comprehension, though not beyond our wonder and adoration. With the shepherds, with the magi, with Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, let us offer the Christ Child our hearts in adoration at the Christmas Masses, and in our personal and family prayers during the Christmas season. And let us rejoice that even as He was born in Bethlehem, Christ wishes to be born in our hearts anew as we receive our Christmas Communion.

Calendar

December 7-8 – Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Holy Day of Obligation): Mass on the Vigil (Friday night), 6:30 & on the Day (Saturday), 9. Both fulfill the obligation.

December 11 & 18 – Tuesday Skype class on the Fundamentals of the Christian Life

December 12, 6:30 p.m. – Patricians adult discussion group. This month: Our Lady of Guadalupe – what happened, how it affected Mexico, and its significance for us. This is a *discussion* group, and you are welcome at any or all of the monthly sessions.

December 14 – Advent Evensong & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (with choir), 7:30 p.m. Reception following.

December 21 – High School Youth Group, 7-8:45.

December 25 – Christmas – see service schedule above. Thrift Shop closed.

December 27 – No Mass at SJB

December 28 – Christmas Caroling in the neighborhood, 5:30.

January 1 – Mary, Mother of God & Octave of Christmas (Holy Day of Obligation): Mass at 10 a.m. Thrift Shop closed.

I wish you all a most blessed Advent, and a very merry Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley