

MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2ND

*6:30 a.m. In Thanksgiving
8:00 a.m. Ruthann Franke

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3RD

*6:30 a.m. Helen Wehrle
8:00 a.m. Bernice Relue

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4TH

*6:30 a.m. Rosemary Koeller
8:00 a.m. Frank & Lillian Palisieski ALL MASS

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5TH

*6:30 a.m. Nguyen Thi Soi
8:00 a.m. Joseph Wehrle

FIRST FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6TH

8:00 a.m. Doris A. Poiry
*5:30 p.m. Dolores Kleber

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7TH

8:00 a.m. Int. Rosary Society
5:00 p.m. Thomas J. Kosorski

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8TH

7:15 a.m. Virginia Cole
9:00 a.m. Anna C. Kintz
11:00 a.m. John F. Vorndran
6:00 p.m. For The Parish (LifeTeen Mass)

*CHAPEL



SERVERS' SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 8th

8:00 a.m. Grace Morken, David Schwieterman
5:00 p.m. Chelsea Klinker, Rachel Kaiser
Dan Voors, James Thompson

Sunday, December 9th

7:15 a.m. Andrew Myers, Mitchell Vanderhagen
Justin Shutt, Kelsey Weller
9:00 a.m. Candice Frane, Dylan Friesner
Laura Schmidt, Ryan Cybulski
11:00 a.m. Scott Nill, Catherine Stanley
Drew Giant, Erin Hennessey

NURSERY - Dec. 8th

9:00 a.m. Doug and Leah Kenna

COFFEE & DONUTS on Dec. 8th

9:00 a.m. Freimuth and The Children of God SCC

ADVENT MATERIALS

Advent calendars, daily meditations, Sunday readings, family prayers and more will be available after Masses this weekend, November 30 and December 1. Look for the large selection in the Gathering Space. A suggested donation will be listed.



NEW CD

"Have Faith: Classical, Traditional and Contemporary Praise Music" is currently on sale through SCRIP! This CD was recorded by Tony Andorfer, and features the talents of local musicians including the following St. Vincent parishioners: Barbara Alderfer, Jeanne Baker-Dick, Jamie Burnham, Kate Burnham, Joe Cochran, Scott Kruse, Kieth

Litton, Mary Helen Oxley, Ryan Schipkowski, Pam Siela, Emilie Stanley, Sherri Stasell and Heather Strzelecki. The price of the CD is \$11. Profits will be put toward the organ rebuild fund.

ROSARY MEETING TO FEATURE ARMSTRONG FLOWERS

The next Rosary Meeting will be held on Monday, December 2nd. Rosary will be recited at 6:30. Armstrong Flowers will be demonstrating Christmas flower arrangements. Everyone is asked to bring 2 dozen Christmas cookies to share.



FROM THE PASTOR:

Mark your calendar for Thursday, December 12, when Matthew Kelly visits us to give an inspirational and informative talk on a timely subject. He is a lay Catholic evangelist dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You won't want to miss this talk. Invite a friend, bring a neighbor.

Fr. John

SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Next weekend, Dec. 7th and 8th, at all of the Masses except the 6:00 p.m. Life Teen Mass, we will be administering the Sacrament of the Sick. Parishioners who are seriously ill or greatly weakened due to old age, or facing major surgery are candidates for the sacrament. If you would like to be anointed, you are asked to sit at the end of the pew in either of the two sections along the main aisle. Or you may sit in one of the front seats designated for the disabled. Ushers will be of assistance to you. The priest will go to you for the anointing ritual which follows the homily. It would be helpful, if you plan to be anointed, to call the church office, informing us of your intention.

Anointing of the Sick



THE GIVING TREE

The Giving Tree is an easy way for you to brighten the Christmas of someone less fortunate. Take an angel ornament off the evergreen tree in the vestibule of the church. Purchase the gift request (written on the angel), wrap it securely, and attach the ornament to the outside of the gift. Then bring it to the church and place it under the tree by SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22nd, no later than 2 p.m. and we will be sure it gets delivered to the person in need before Christmas. If you cannot return the gift in time, please refrain from taking an ornament. An evergreen is used as a symbol of our need to be forever giving. If you have any questions, call Craig or Vicki Welch at 483-7257.

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE AT ST. VINCENT'S

There will be an American Red Cross Blood drive here at St. Vincent's on Saturday, December 7, 2002. Donation hours will be from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Parish Hall (old gym).

There is always a great need for all types of blood, especially around holidays when an increased number of people are injured in auto related accidents.

Giving blood is safe, easy and extremely important. You cannot contract AIDS or any other disease from giving blood. If you are at least 17 years old, weigh a minimum of 110 pounds, and you are in good general health, you are most likely eligible to donate blood. It is recommended that you eat a light meal before you donate and drink plenty of fluids before and after. This will help those that feel light-headed after donating. If you've been deferred due to low iron, taking a multi-vitamin for a few days prior to the blood drive will ensure that you will be able to donate.

Blood donation takes less than an hour...the actual blood collection takes only 8-10 minutes. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments will have priority. Also, childcare will now be provided to make donating more convenient. Call Bruce Cadwell at 484-0078 to schedule your donation (or if you have any questions).

Don't forget to make an appointment and mark this important date on your calendar! Please help by donating this life-giving gift of blood! Thank you!

TWO CHRISTMAS CD'S FEATURING TOM DIDIER AVAILABLE

Tom Didier has two Christmas CD's available. A portion of the profits will be donated to the organ fund. Great for gifts! Available after Masses at the Scrip table.



Blood Drive

CHILDREN'S STEWARDSHIP

"I cleaned the basement with my brother." Olivia
"I helped the groceries." Chelsea S.
"I did an extra chore for my mom." Mike G.

Meetings of the Week

- HARVEST HOUSE COUNCIL – Monday, December 2nd, at 11:30 a.m. in the Spiritual Center
- DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE — Monday, December 2nd, at 7:00p.m. in the Teachers Lounge
- THE WORD – TWO BY TWO – Tuesday, December 3rd, at 8:30 a.m. in the East Meeting Room
- SHEPHERDS OF CHRIST – Tuesday, December 3rd, at 6:30 p.m. in the Church
- HASA MEETING – Tuesday, December 3rd, at 6:30 p.m. in the Teachers Lounge
- RCIA – Tuesday, December 3rd, at 7:00 p.m. in the Spiritual Center
- ADORATION OF BLESSED SACRAMENT – Wednesday, December 4th, at 8:00 a.m. in the Reservation Chapel
- WINGS – Wednesday, December 4th, at 9:00 a.m. in the Church
- SCHOOL BOARD – Wednesday, December 4th, at 6:30 p.m. in the Spiritual Center
- BEREAVEMENT SESSION – Wednesday, December 4th, at 7:00 p.m. in the Chapel
- MARDI GRAS – Wednesday, December 4th, at 7:00 p.m. in the East Meeting Room
- MOTHERS GATHERED IN PRAYER – Thursday, December 5th, at 8:30 a.m. in the East Meeting Room
- WINGS TOO – Thursday, December 5th, at 9:00 p.m. in the Spiritual Center
- MARKET DAY – Thursday, December 5th, at 5:15 p.m. in the Parish Hall
- K OF C BLOOD DRIVE – Saturday, December 7th, at 8:00 a.m. in the Parish Hall
- YOUTH DETENTION MINISTRY – Saturday, December 7th, at 8:30 a.m. in Conference Room #1

HARVEST HOUSE PLANS

CHRISTMAS POTLUCK

Harvest House will have a Christmas potluck on Monday, Dec. 16, 2002, at the Spiritual Center. Sister Kay will lead a prayer service at 11:15 a.m., followed by dinner. Please bring a dish to share. Meat, beverages and table settings will be furnished. We will have a "steal" drawing after dinner. Please bring a nice white elephant gift for the drawing. RSVP 482-2085 or 483-7252 by Dec. 12. Seniors!! Give us a try!! You don't need to be a member to join us for a fun day!

RCIA NEWS

If you or someone you know would like to know more about the Catholic faith, its teachings and traditions, please call the church office. RCIA is an on-going process and an Inquirer can begin at any time. However, for those seeking baptism, the process is longer and any who hope to be baptized at the 2004 Easter Vigil, should be beginning now.

We have now expanded Break the Word to both the 9:00 and 11:00 Masses. In this way, more of the community will get to see our catechumens and candidates.

CHURCH ORGAN

Thank you for using the Capital Improvement envelope found in your monthly packet of Sunday collection envelopes. Your contribution to this fund will help defray the cost of the repair of and improvements on our church organ which is now unplayable. The estimated cost of this project is \$130,000. We will be without a church organ for approximately 10 months. Some of our parishioners, having completed their building campaign pledge, will see this as an opportunity to continue giving in support of our building project.



ST. VINCENT EMPLOYERS-UNEMPLOYED LINK

Realizing that many people in our parish and area have lost their jobs and are looking, we want to help. We are asking you, as owners and managers of businesses in the area to:

— Send by TUESDAY MORNING, IN WRITING OR E-MAIL (stvincentchurch@hotmail.com)

1. An open position you are aware of
 2. The name of the company and address
 3. The contact person and how to reach him or her
- God is in every part of our journey!

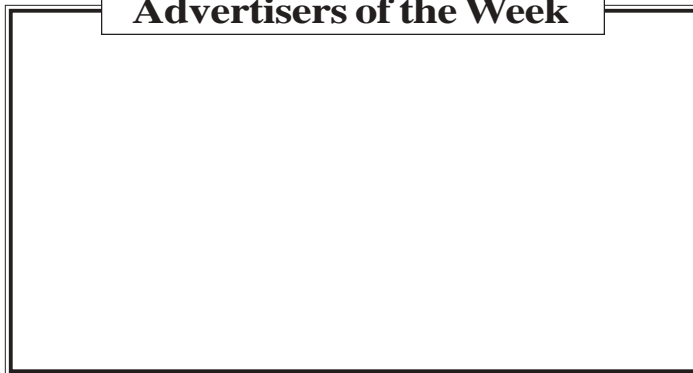
IMMEDIATE JOB OPENING

Immediate opening for someone interested in handling new construction sales, proposals, estimates, etc., for local elevator company. Please Fax resume to 482-5785 or call 492-8585 to schedule interview.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTORS FOR ABSTINENCE

True Life Choices trains and certifies individuals to teach the message of abstinence to middle and high school youth in Allen, DeKalb, Steuben and Wells County schools. The next training session begins 1/22/03. Instructors receive more than 20 hours of intensive curriculum training and observe certified instructors teaching. Instructor compensation: \$16 p/class within your home county and \$18 p/class outside your home county. Instructor positions are part time. As an independent, you pick your schedule. Earn extra income with flexible schedule and still be home in time for your kids! Call True Life Choices at (260) 436-1119 and request an instructor application packet, or download an application from website : www.TLC4abstinence.org. Deadline for applications is 12/13/02.

Advertisers of the Week



Please patronize the companies that support our bulletin.

ST. VINCENT PARISH

FAMILY BREAKFAST

Sunday, December 15th, is the next Knights of Columbus Parish Family Breakfast. Serving times are from 8:15 a.m. to 11 a.m. in the Parish Hall. Bring your friends and family and enjoy a delicious breakfast of pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, biscuits and gravy, fruit serving and milk, juice or coffee. All this for only \$4.00 for adults and \$2.50 for children ages 5 to 12 years. Children 4 years and under eat FREE. Family maximum is \$15. Thank you for

supporting our parish activity. Proceeds from this event will be used to support Life Teen, Jr. High Life and other parish activities here at St. Vincent's.

NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE

Through the kindness of a parishioner, we have on hand three books written by MATTHEW KELLY, the lay evangelist who will be speaking in our church on Dec. 12. You may want to do some reading ahead; look for these titles in the Small Christian Community Resource Center in the East Meeting Room:

- The Rhythm of Life
- A Call to Joy
- The Shepherd

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Once again we are offering you the opportunity to donate Christmas flowers in memory of a loved one. The suggested donation is \$10 a plant. We will remember the deceased at our Christmas Masses. Place the money or check in an envelope along with the form below: (Please print)



Name of Loved One: _____

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Your Phone Number: _____

Donation: \$ _____

YOUTH MINISTRY CALENDAR

Dec. 1 Advent begins
Life Night: Care Packages
Dec. 4 Ministry Hour, 7:15 p.m.
Dec. 5 Pray at abortion clinic
Dec. 7 Kids' Night Out
Dec. 8 Life Night

KIDS' NIGHT OUT

Saturday, Dec. 7, from 6 p.m. – 11 p.m.
Have you been putting off Christmas shopping? We have a suggestion: LIFETEEN is hosting another "night out". Drop your children off at the Life House for our teens to baby sit (with adult supervision). The kids will go to the Parish Hall to play (expend energy) then back to the House for Movies and snacks. We do this FREE as a parish service (or you may make a free will donation). Space is limited, so call today to reserve your children's spot. (Angie Harber 486-9852 or kha4427125@aol.com).



CARE PACKAGES FOR COLLEGE FRESHMEN

If you know a freshman in college, please call or e-mail their address to Cindy Black at Cblack@SaintV.org or 637-7445, so we can send them a care package.

TEENS, PRAY FOR AN END TO ABORTION

Teens who attend Carroll, Northrop, Leo, Snider, etc. Your prayers are needed on Thursdays (the day abortions are done in Fort Wayne). Please get your friends together before school, find a quiet hall, and pray the Rosary for an end to abortion. If you would like me to help get you started, please let me know.

Cindy



JUNIOR HIGH LIFE

As we enter the Advent season, let us prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's birth. May God bless all our 7th and 8th graders. We will not meet again until Dec. 16th. You will all be in my prayers.

NOTE: THERE IS NO JHL NIGHT TOMORROW, MONDAY, DEC. 2ND.

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★ For information about St. Vincent's Youth Ministry, ★
★ contact Cindy Black at 489-3537 Ext. 228 or ★
★ e-mail Cblack@SaintV.org. ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ANNUAL SAINTS DAY FOR 8TH GRADERS AT BISHOP DWENGER

Bishop Dwenger High School's annual Saints Day for current 8th grade students will be held on Friday, December 6th from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Call 496-4700 for more information. Students enrolled at St. Charles, St. Jude, St. Vincent, Queen of Angels, Precious Blood, and St. John—New Haven Catholic Schools do not need to pre-register.

WOMEN'S CHRIST RENEWS HIS PARISH – MARCH 7TH & 8TH

The next Christ Renews His Parish weekend for women is scheduled for March 7-8th, 2003. This Christ Renews weekend is a chance to renew and recharge your faith in Christ. It is a time of prayer, reflection and fellowship. If you have not made a weekend, now is your chance. Please call Judy Meiklejohn at 490-6113 to make your reservation today.



CHRIST RENEWS HIS PARISH

MEN'S CHRIST RENEWS HIS PARISH WEEKEND

The next Christ Renews His Parish weekend for men will be held on February 22-23, 2003. It will enrich your spiritual life with fellowship, scripture and prayer. Call Len Piropatto at 489-2294 or e-mail him at Lpiro@comcast.net.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

The date for Confirmation has been set for Monday, February 24, 2003, at 7:00 p.m.

Eighth grade catechists who volunteer their time this year for Religious Education are Scott McLeish, Janet McCann, and Gina O'Brien. At this level students are instructed in morality and prepared for Confirmation.

For parents of children ages 7-12, the magazine "My Friend", a Catholic publication reasonably priced, offers a variety of reading and activities. The November issue, for example, includes an article on St. Francis of Assisi, a short story, crafts to make, comics, faith facts, puzzles, etc., all with a specifically Catholic perspective. Subscribe online at www.myfriendmagazine.org or call (800) 876-4463. Some samples are available for viewing in the bookrack near the East Room.



COMMUNITY IN CHRIST: RESPONSIBILITY

"Champions know there are no shortcuts to the top. They climb the mountain one step at a time. They have no use for helicopters!" Judi Adler

SCRIP SALES – PURCHASE NOW FOR CHRISTMAS

We have a great selection for Christmas gift ideas. Purchase Scrip in the Gathering Space every Sunday from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. **NO SUNDAY SCRIP SALES DEC. 1 AND DEC. 29.** Limited Quantities – Dec. 15 and 22 (9:00 Mass Quick Tip: Drop off your Scrip order at the Scrip table before Mass – it will be ready when Mass is over).

SUPER DISCOUNT CARDS

Super savings on 34 local merchants – dry cleaning, pizza, videos, ice cream, clothing, and much more! Only \$5.00 per card. The cards make wonderful Christmas gifts. All proceeds go toward St. Vincent Catholic School's 8th grade Spring trip to Washington D.C. Ask any St. Vincent 8th grader or call Karen Woodrum (489-2518) or Tami Peters (627-0730).

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH WITH SANTA

Forms and payment should be mailed immediately for next week's Santa Parties at the Scout Lodge. Seating is still available for both parties. Forms are available at the Scout Lodge Tree Sale during regular hours. Call the Lodge at 489-1763 for further information.



CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

The Christmas Tree Sale at the Scout Lodge is now in full swing. Open daily from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., open Saturday and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and open Friday from noon to 9:00 p.m. All sizes and varieties are now available! Sponsored by the St. Vincent Scouts.

"O HOLY NIGHT"

Direct from the Embassy Festival of Trees...A 7' beautifully decorated tree (The Sprinkling Can) to be raffled off by our 8th Grade D. C. Dreamers. This tree, generously donated by Barnes and Thornburg, can be seen as #14 at the Embassy from November 27th thru December 8th. After December 8th, it will be on display in our Gathering Space until December 22 on which day the raffle will take place. Ticket prices are \$3.00 each or 2 for \$5.00 and on sale after Masses on December 7/8, 14/15 and 21/22. Please come and purchase your chance at owning this beautiful tree (delivery included).



MORE USHERS ARE NEEDED

Ushers are needed for the 5 p.m. and 7:15 a.m. Masses. Also, please sign up for Masses on Christmas and New Year's Day on the sign up sheet in the usher's room. Thank you.

SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

First of all, we are happy to announce we have formed a new community with basically couples with young children. It is especially heartwarming to help them begin as most have moved here without any relatives in Fort Wayne.

Secondly, at this time we have two singles in the 30-40 age range who would like to begin a community. If you are interested for more information, please call me. Sister Kay

BAPTISMAL PREPARATION CLASS

Attendance at two Baptismal Preparation Sessions is required before your child is baptized. They are Session I and Session II. You may attend Session II before Session I, if necessary. Each session will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the East Meeting Room. It is recommended that you attend before the birth of your child so that there will be no delay in setting a date for the baptism once the baby is born. Godparents, too, are welcome. Please call the church office to register for your sessions.

Session I	Session II
THERE ARE NO SESSIONS IN DECEMBER.	
January 9	January 16
January 23	

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

In a time of loss it is important to know that there is a place where you can be with others who understand your pain. This is a time when being with others who have walked their own path of grief may be of comfort and offer us solace in a way that our families and friends cannot give.



As part of our service, St. Vincent's Bereavement Ministry is holding a Bereavement Support Group Session which will meet each Wednesday (except day before Thanksgiving) for 5 weeks. The time and remaining dates:

7:00 p.m. on Dec. 4 and 11. They will be held in the Spiritual Center.

It is our hope to provide a comforting atmosphere in which to share the grief and bereavement process and to offer emotional support. These groups have proven helpful to many. You are not alone in your pain and there is much that can be done to help the healing process.

If this is what you are looking for, call Therese 489-6741 or Evelyn 637-6492.

RETROUVAILLE...A LIFELINE FOR TROUBLED MARRIAGES.

Is your marriage breaking your heart? Are you frustrated, hurt, angry? Are you constantly arguing or fighting? Do you feel cold, alone, distant? Do you feel disillusioned or bored? Have you given up on talking it out? Are you thinking about separation or divorce? Retrouvaille can help. The next Retrouvaille Program begins with the weekend of December 6-8, 2002. For information, call (260) 485-1944 or (800) 470-2230. All inquiries are confidential.

CATHOLIC ANSWERS LIVE – 5:00 p.m. – 1450 AM

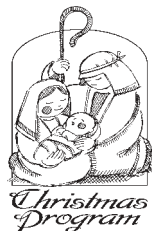
Dec. 2 - Mon	Kids' Open Forum	Fr. V. Serpa
Dec. 3 - Tues.	Resurrection of the Body	Fr. J. O'Connor
Dec. 4 - Wed.	Open Q & A	Karl Keating
Dec. 5 - Thurs.	Catholic Fiscal Responsibility	Patrick O'Meara
Dec. 6 - Fri.	Open Q & A	James Akin

TWO SHELTERS NEED CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

We are trying to decorate these two shelters, the Rose Home and Shepherd's House, for the Christmas season and are in need of the following items to make this happen: Christmas lights, decorations, stockings and canned foods for Christmas dinner. Also, please pray for sober, responsible, and loving clients. Call Barb Cox at 424-2500 for more information or if you can help.

ST. NICHOLAS DAY SALE

The Cathedral Book Store on Cathedral Square in downtown Fort Wayne will hold its annual 20%-off St. Nicholas Day Sale from Sat., Dec. 7 through Sat., Dec. 14, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (M-F hours are 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.). St. Nick will be there to talk with the children and be available for photos on Dec. 7 only.



51ST CHRIST CHILD FESTIVAL

The Christ Child Festival is organized to share the Good News of Christ. This year's theme is Christ, Our Savior, Is Born! This special event will be held at the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum on Friday, December 13 (6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.), Saturday, December 14 (12 noon – 8:00 p.m.), and Sunday, December 15 (12 noon – 6:00 p.m.).

"ONE NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM"

Come join us at Benoit Academy for "One Night in Bethlehem" on Friday, December 13. The evening begins at 6:00 p.m. with the children's choir and auction in the school gymnasium. Bid on decorated Christmas trees, a Peg Perigo Power Wheel, other toys or gift certificates. Then walk the road to Bethlehem. Enjoy our Living Nativity with live camels, sheep and a multitude of other animals, shops and end your journey at the stable with Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, and a choir of angels. Outdoor shows will run every 15 minutes from 7:00 – 8:45 p.m. Benoit Academy is located at the corner of Hessen Cassel and Paulding Roads.

FT. WAYNE LODGE HOSTS TRADITIONAL POLISH WIGILIA (CHRISTMAS EVE SUPPER)

Polish National Alliance, White Eagle Lodge #3149 will hold its 5th annual candlelight Wigilia Supper on Sunday, December 8th, at the Dash-In Restaurant, 814 S. Calhoun St. Social hour begins at 4 p.m. with dinner being served at 5 p.m. For reservations, call Greg Mitro at 485-4763. Price is \$25.00 per person which includes a spirited beverage.

CHRISTMAS IN THE CATHEDRAL

Please join a brass ensemble, the Cathedral Choir, guest pianist, Dyne Pfeffenberger and harpist Nancy Morse for special holiday music and caroling on Wednesday, Dec. 11, at 7:30 p.m. in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Fort Wayne. The concert is free and open to the public.

CHRISTMAS AT UNIVERSITY OF SAINT FRANCIS

You are invited to celebrate the Christmas season on the University of Saint Francis campus with special events on the evening of Sunday, December 8, including candles lighted around Mirror Lake (visible from Spring Street), a Living Nativity staged next to the lake, and the Star of Bethlehem 2002 Show at the Schouweiler Planetarium. Schedule for Sunday, December 8, 2002

2:00 p.m.	Advent Reconciliation Service
5:00 p.m.	Star of Bethlehem 2002 Planetarium Show (Schouweiler Planetarium, Achatz Hall of Science)
5:45 p.m.	Blessing of the Lighting of the Lake Candles (on the porch of the Bass Mansion library)
6:00 p.m.	Living Nativity – 1st performance, next to Mirror Lake
6:30 p.m.	Living Nativity – 2nd performance, next to Mirror Lake
6:30 p.m.	Star of Bethlehem 2002 Planetarium Show (Schouweiler Planetarium, Achatz Hall of Science)
7:00 p.m.	Mass in the Chapel, Trinity Hall
8:00 p.m.	Star of Bethlehem 2002 Planetarium Show (Schouweiler Planetarium, Achatz Hall of Science)

There is no charge for the Lighting of the Lake and the Living Nativity. For the planetarium show, admission is \$4.00 for adults and \$3.00 for senior citizens and those under 18, with a \$14.00 maximum per family. For further information, telephone (260) 434-7722.





Has Advent Become Less Penitential?

Dear Padre,

When I was a child, it seemed that Advent was a time of fasting and prayer, kind of like a mini-Lent. But today it seems to have a more festive tone without the emphasis on penance and fasting. In fact, I remember that we always ate fish on Christmas Eve. That's not the way it is today. Is my memory going?

Herb

Dear Herb,

Your memory isn't failing; in fact, you've got a great memory of a time forty years in the past. The way Advent is celebrated today is different from what you remember. Over the centuries the Church has gone back and forth on the meaning of Advent. Let me explain.

Advent means coming, it is a time of preparation for "someone coming." At one time the event awaited was the coming of the Magi (Epiphany) which was closely connected to the baptism of Jesus. In some places the preparation time for this "baptism" was modeled on the preparation time for the great baptism event, Easter. So Advent was seen as a mini-lent, full of penance and fasting. The color of the vestments was purple, just like Lent.

But at other times the emphasis was on the coming of Christ, so Advent became a time of excited waiting. In modern times, especially in the United States, this element of excitement and anticipation easily coincided with the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The trouble is that, today, this gift-gathering frenzy has displaced the meaning of Advent for many Catholics.

Today, Advent is all about time - the time between Christ's first coming on earth and his second coming. For many people, both times seem a long way off: one was a long time ago, the other is still a long time away. But Advent is a reminder that such thinking is very foolish. Time slips by faster than we think, doesn't it, Herb? If we don't develop the ability to watch and wait prayerfully in the time we have, we will not see how Jesus is working right now in our lives and inviting us to change our self-centered ways.

So for me, Herb, Advent isn't so much about penance as it is about prayer. It isn't a time of fasting so much as a time of waiting. What I do in the meantime could make all the difference in the world.

The Padre
Fr. William J. Parker, C.Ss.R.