



ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC PARISH

Christ the King and Holy Spirit Churches

ADVENT: A TIME TO FIND SIMPLICITY IN OUR CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS



As we prepare for Christmas, we often become caught up in the mad whirl of shopping, baking, decorating and party planning. But Advent invites us to slow down, to simplify, to look to helping others, and to reflect on the gifts God has prepared for us.

“This Advent, I’m really encouraging families to bring some simplicity to their lives, sharing meals as a family, and preparing their home to welcome Christ at Christmas and beyond in a thoughtful way,” Fr. Alex says. “Take the time to focus on being a family. Advent is a season to focus on our faith.”

During the season of Advent, we can celebrate all that God has given us as we prepare for Christmas.

“We can invite others to share in the gift of the parish family we’ve been given,” Fr. Alex says.

During Advent, we can receive guidance in finding the simplicity of our faith by attending the Anima Series that began Nov. 28. Sessions are at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays and 9 a.m. on Saturdays.

“The series goal — finding the simplicity of our faith — is something we take for granted,” Fr. Alex says. “It can help us prepare ourselves for Jesus at Christmas.”

During this time of preparation to welcome and

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GOT TALENT?

Bring It to the Spotlight!

The word “talent” often conjures up images of stage performers in the spotlight, captivating awestruck audiences with their impeccable musical or acting skills.

While these talented performers are certainly deserving of applause, the majority of the population sits hidden in the shadows, staring on in amazement while feeling overlooked — and perhaps wishing to possess such talents themselves. But even when we feel overlooked and untalented, God knows better. As Christians, we are all called to dig deep and trust that we are specially blessed with valuable talents and abilities, even if our talents aren’t so obvious or don’t garner applause and accolades.

Along with “time” and “treasure,” “talent” is one of the “three Ts” of stewardship. Exploring our natural inclinations and preferences, especially when guided by the intricacies of our unique personalities, can unearth God-given talents.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit,” writes St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. “There are different forms of service, but the same Lord.”

Some people have the gift of working peacefully with children. Equipped with patience and gentleness, they are able to guide young souls to the Lord. Yet, others shudder at the thought of

a classroom full of 5-year-olds, and instead seek the quiet solace of behind-the-scenes tasks — cleaning the church, sewing altar cloths or stuffing envelopes.

Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., author of *Life’s Little Instruction Book*, once said, “Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There’s plenty of movement, but you never know if it is going to be forwards, backwards, or sideways.”

If our gifts of talent are not guided by the discipline of prayer, just like an octopus on roller skates, we will get nowhere fast! Yet, if we keep our eyes on the goal of heaven and serve the Lord with joyfulness, our efforts will produce a bountiful harvest. In the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully.”

The next time you sit quietly in the shadows behind a glaring stage spotlight, rest assured that your talents are no less impressive in the eyes of God, and will always be “applauded” when directed to the service of His people.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Stewardship Possibilities Are Endless at Christmas

Dear Parishioners,

December seems to be the fastest month of the year. We jump straight into the preparation that Advent calls for. We celebrate the Immaculate Conception as we honor God's gift to the world in Mary. We remember Our Lady of Guadalupe, responsible for perhaps the greatest number of conversions in Church history. We make the official transition to winter and before we know it we are making easily breakable resolutions before entering the new year. It can be an exhausting month!

But there is nothing greater for us to celebrate than Christmas. It is when we rejoice at the birth of Jesus, the Babe in the manger in Bethlehem, who is the eternal Son of God made man.

The basic truth of Christmas – celebrating the birth of Jesus the Messiah, God Incarnate – is plenty of reason for us all to rejoice and worship. But we've piled such an additional load onto our Christmas observance that worship might get lost in the shuffle.

Think about what weight Christmas has to bear. We have to put up the decorations, or make travel plans to visit relatives. And when we are with our relatives, we have to bear



the sometimes heavy weight of keeping things tension-free. And for those who have suffered the loss of a loved one, Christmas can bring a different kind of weight.

Yet, we still have a wonderful opportunity this season – an opportunity to allow the birth of Christ to give new meaning to our stewardship commitments. Treasure, although challenging, is the simplest. Shouldn't the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus, Whose birthday we're celebrating? Risen and glorified, He needs nothing we have. But His Body, the Church, continues Jesus' mission here on earth and always needs additional resources.

Time and talent may be a little more complicated, but can't we spend a little more of our time in worship and prayer? Maybe you can attend Mass each day of the Christmas Octave. Have your family gather for prayers together in the morning or at dinner, in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

And there are so many opportunities to share our talent! Sing in the choir for the Christmas Masses. Help decorate the Church. Cook or bake for someone who is shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen. The possibilities are endless.

With a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing both for ourselves and others. Pray for me that I can keep Christmas properly, and I'll pray for you. And through it all, have a merry Christmas!

In the newborn Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Zenthoefer'.

Fr. Alex Zenthoefer
Pastor





ADULT FAITH FORMATION FOR ANNUNCIATION:

Opportunities to Build Your Relationship with

All relationships necessitate building. Now is the time, during this season of anticipation and preparation, to reflect upon how we will strengthen our relationship with Christ in the New Year.

“Our faith is our relationship with Christ Himself, and being formed in our faith is how we build that relationship,” says Julie Rosario, Annunciation’s Evangelization Coordinator. “Advent is the time for us to begin again and to be renewed in Christ.”

Adult Faith Formation offers us ongoing opportunities to renew our relationship with Christ. Furthermore, we can be supported by the journeys of other adult Christians who are also endeavoring to prioritize their faith.

“For me, sharing my faith helps it grow, and I want to live a life focused on Christ,” Julie says. “I’m less myself if I am fixated on something that isn’t true. We don’t want to live that way.”

Different programs meet parishioners wherever they are in their relationship with Christ. For example, a group of adults meets to explore Christ’s plan for the world and our part in carrying out His mission through Bishop Donald Hying’s Anima series.

That Man Is You! is a faith formation program offered early on Friday mornings for men to discuss the challenges they face in living Church teachings as husbands and fathers in our modern society.

Christ



Participants in Annunciation’s RCIA process

“You have to be attentive to see the evidence that God is present and inviting you into a different relationship with Him,” Julie says. “For me, these things that the parish offers only fortify what Christ is doing in my life.”

Recently parishioners gathered together at the parish center to engage in a Mass study through FORMED, an online platform that offers millions of free resources to Catholics desiring to deepen their faith. With these “on-demand” quality videos and lectures, we can integrate

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— Julie Rosario, Evangelization Coordinator

our faith formation into our daily lives.

“Through FORMED, you can watch these videos alone, though we did the Mass study together at the parish,” Julie says. “I’m very open to parishioners coming forward and suggesting a study they would like to do.”

The parish is also considering starting “Tapped In,” similar to Theology on Tap, which would be an opportunity for adults to discuss the faith while enjoying food and casual fellowship.

“Not everyone is ready for a Bible study or for talking about how God is working in their lives,” Julie says. “We’re interested in inviting

and gathering people together who might be more comfortable off campus.”

For Julie, building her relationship with Christ increases a sense of intellectual curiosity that encourages her to learn and give more.

“The more I ask God to show me what He is asking of me, the more evidence accumulates,” Julie says. “I hope to keep that my whole life.”

This Advent, be renewed in your faith and in your relationship with Christ, and consider your resolutions to strengthen this relationship.

“I know from experience that I need to start again, and it is a grace that we are given this opportunity during Advent,” Julie says.

If you would like more information about adult faith formation opportunities, contact Julie Rosario at 812-476-3061.

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live in Christ, we can help those in need through our St. Vincent de Paul Society Giving Trees, which will be placed at both Holy Spirit and Christ the King locations through Dec. 12. Tags with items needed by the Society have been placed on the trees. The needed items are basic household essentials that are stockpiled by the Society and taken to the homes that members visit.

There is also a less formal way to help others through Fr. Alex’s office.

“There are a lot of times when families call me, people who want to help a family,” Fr. Alex says. “They’ll say, ‘I have money I’m willing to give. Can you give this money to a family in need?’ This is fairly informal instead of an

official drive for families.”

In our preparations for the Christmas season, noting the Mass times is an important part.

Christmas Eve — Monday, December 24
4 p.m., Holy Spirit
5 p.m., Christ the King
10 p.m., Christ the King

Christmas Day — Tuesday, December 25
9 a.m., Holy Spirit
11 a.m., Christ the King

**Interested in helping the St. Vincent de Paul Society?
Call SVdP director Roland Rosario at 937-902-9417.**



ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC PARISH



THE BLESSINGS OF THE CATHOLIC MASS

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally represented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's

disciples. So, what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.

CHURCH DECORATING MINISTRY

Setting the Scene Throughout the Year

There are a lot of things that put us in the Christmas spirit. Music, movies, certain foods and time with family can all bring on that warm holiday feeling. The pinnacle of our Christmas experience should always be found by celebrating Jesus' birth at Mass and setting the scene for an experience that magical is a job for a few special individuals.

The Church Decorating Ministry is in charge of making sure the look and feel of Holy Spirit's altar follows the colors of the liturgical calendar and reflects the feel that each season brings. Holy Spirit office staff members Elizabeth Casteel and Diana Dewig enlist the help of volunteers to help make each season, especially Christmas, a work of love.

"At Christmas we go all out," says Elizabeth, Holy Spirit Music Director. "We ask for volunteers and we always have gotten a lot of people to help do it. We have probably the prettiest church in town."

Elizabeth says one thing that makes Holy Spirit's Nativity special is the antique, life-sized figures. The church considered replacing them several years ago, but learned how precious they were and decided to keep them.

"We did a lot of research and we discovered that our Nativity figures are plaster and are nicer than the decorations you can buy now," she says. "We had it restored by a local artisan who did every piece."

The Nativity surrounds an equally antique manger and pre-lit trees are added to give it a sparkling seasonal glow.

As the seasons move on and it's time to say "goodbye" to the Nativity scene, parishioners can watch the colors of the Christmas season fade into Ordinary Time with the changing of the altar cloth colors.

"Moving from one season to the next, we try to make sure the altar is dressed

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There is no more clear sign that Christmas has arrived than stepping into the church and seeing the altar sparkle. At Holy Spirit, the Church Decorating Ministry is in charge of making sure the look of the altar follows the colors of the liturgical calendar and reflects the feeling that each season brings.



The central part of our Christmas celebration happens around the Nativity scene. Holy Spirit's Nativity features antique, lifelike figures made from plaster.



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Church Decorating Ministry *continued from page 7*

appropriately,” Elizabeth says. “Many of our altar cloths were made by hand and they have to be washed by hand.”

In addition to caring for the look of the altar, volunteer parish decorators also take care of some of the necessary cleaning that must be done around the altar, pews and sanctuary. Elizabeth says the people who make an effort to lend their time in this service are doing so because they have a desire to take care of God’s house.

“We do these things because we love our Lord and we love the place where we gather to worship Him,” she says. “We take pride in wanting to keep the place looking beautiful. We all do it for different reasons. I hope I can stay healthy enough to never have to stop. I love to stand back and look at the fruits of our efforts and say, ‘Wow, this looks so nice.’ People may not know what goes into it, but this is part of stewardship and stewardship can appear in lots of different ways.”

Parishioners who feel called to lend their talents in the service of church decorating are asked to email Elizabeth Casteel at ecasteel@evdio.org or Diana Dewig at ddewig@evdio.org at Holy Spirit or Michelle Weisman mich.weisman@gmail.com at Christ the King..

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Holy Spirit: Saturday: 4:00 p.m. | Sunday: 9:00 a.m. | Tuesday: 6:00 p.m., Wednesday: 8:30 a.m.

Christ the King: Saturday: 5:30 p.m. | Sunday: 7:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Monday: 7:45 a.m. | Tuesday: 7:45 a.m. | Thursday: 8:30 a.m. | Friday: 7:45 a.m.

Confessions: Saturday: 3:00 - 3:45 p.m. at Holy Spirit | Saturday: 4:30 - 5:15 p.m. at Christ the King