

The Ascension Weekly

December 31, 2017



Christmas Eve at Ascension

Christmas Eve was a very busy and grace-filled day at Ascension. December 24th this year also happened to be the 4th Sunday of Advent, so the morning was booked with the normal 8:30, 10:00 am and 12:00 noon Masses. Bob Rapczynski went above and beyond and had the coffee and donuts available to all parishioners as usual, for which the kids of the parish (and some adults too!) were very grateful. There was a short respite after the noon Mass, and then at 2:00 pm about 30 students from our Religious Education program assembled in Bates Hall to rehearse for the Lessons and Carols Nativity Play scheduled for 3:00 pm. For a hectic half-hour, shepherds found their staffs, wise men found their robes, and angels found their wings. Then they all lined up, dedicated their efforts to the baby Jesus with a prayer, and walked over single file to the church. Once in the church, the dress rehearsal went off without a hitch, and Religious Education teachers Greg Rozanski, Elaine Mitchell, Joan Adesanya, Teresa Bauer, and Maria Centeno hovered about helping to ensure that all the characters found their appropriate starting positions and knew their cues throughout the length of the play. Before anyone knew it, 3:00 pm had arrived, and with the arrival of Jim Hossick and the rest of the Folk Choir group, the play was ready to begin. Our pastor Fr. Larry and a sizable number of parishioners had come early to watch the program, in addition to all the parents who had come to

see their children perform, so there was a large crowd there to join in singing the beloved Christmas carols that punctuated the different acts of the Christmas play. Resounding renditions of hymns such as O Come, O Come Emmanuel, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, and O Come, All Ye Faithful alternated with the readings of the Bible passages that told of Christ's birth. Students Immanuel Omoruyi, Nicholas Murphy, and Alexandra Centeno were wonderful as the readers of the nativity story. Joseph Bauer and Delali Kwakou were delightful in their roles of Joseph and Mary, as were all the other participants in their various roles of shepherds, animals, innkeepers, wise men, and the host of angels. All in all, it was a perfect way for all involved to prepare spiritually for the joy of Christmas, and to focus on the true meaning of the holy day. The 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Mass, customarily popular as the children's Mass, followed shortly thereafter, and was packed to standing room only with families come to celebrate the feast day.

Later that night, at 10:00 pm, music director Stephanie Griffin, organist Anna Moore, and the members of the Traditional Choir performed a half hour of Christmas carols and anthems before the 10:30 pm "midnight" Christmas Eve Mass. The choir led a full church in singing traditional carols including the First Noel, Away in the Manger, and Once in David's Royal City. Fr. Larry celebrated the Mass that followed, assisted by Deacon Joseph Salser, who had come back to Ascension from the seminary to be with us for the occasion. It was truly a beautiful way to usher in the feast of Christ's birth at our parish.

