Dear Friends:

For many years when I was a young adult I strung Christmas lights on the big beautiful fir tree that grew in the front yard of my parents’ house. Nobody ever asked me to do that; I just took it on as a personal project. I’ll bet I did that for almost twenty years. It became a Christmas holiday tradition in the neighborhood. The tree was large, and visible from all around the park that was across the street from that home, and I was proud of my work. But then things started to change. For one thing, eventually I no longer lived in that place and the task of tree-lighting seemed to feel less important. And the tree kept growing each year, to a point where it became positively dangerous for me to be up on an old wooden ladder trying to string bulbs around it. But I couldn’t quit doing so because it had become a tradition, right? Well, in time the endeavor was abandoned, the house was sold, and everybody moved on.

Which leads me to wonder all about what counts for a “tradition.” We are now entering what is perhaps our most deliberately tradition-centered season of the year. But there’s a paradox here, because the more we try to attend to traditions like those of Christmas the more obvious it becomes that time never stands still and that so much of what we want to keep frozen in a moment is impossible. This year, for me, will be the first Christmas in my life that will be celebrated neither in the home of my parents nor of my sister. People die or move. And from among relatives new families emerge that quite rightly have need to establish their own patterns of being together at holiday time. So what exactly is the point of a so-called “tradition”?

Thankfully, our own Catholic theological wisdom has been considering this question for quite some time...centuries, in fact. We distinguish between Tradition (capital “T”) and traditions (small “t”), and this is more than just an academic or theoretical difference. We think of the Capital “T” Tradition as that permanent Catholic belief that bears the meaning of important truths about what we believe, but which may not necessarily be explicit in the bible. The Nicene Creed, for example, is a great part of our Tradition, and so are the teachings of Councils that have declared things to be irreversibly true about the church and sacraments and ministry. Those truths come from God, so we profess, and so are reliable forever. The Incarnation of the Lord is a truth that will not change, no matter whether Byron gets the Christmas tree decorated or not.

And that’s the distinction. There are lots of other traditions (small "t") which can be described merely as “things we’ve always done and sometimes get confused about thinking are essential to the event itself.” Our Catholic faith has all kinds of “small-t’ traditions,” which are great but do not rise to the level of faith. Figuring out which "t"s are large and which are small is not always an easy task. Obviously, the decorating of my family fir tree in the yard is not integral to the meaning of Christmas, no matter how much I ever may have thought so. And not everything we do in church is integral to the meaning either. But some of it is, and it matters a lot how we understand that. So as we observe our holiday traditions, let us be attentive to those which are truly deserving of the designation of Tradition, and let’s make them the most important ones.

Fr. Mike Byron

Advent Evening of Reflection—Tuesday, December 13 from 7:00 – 8:30 PM in Brioschi Hall
Presenter: Father Mike Byron
The Annunciation: How do we know God’s will? How do we say “Yes” to God?
Mary serves as a role model for us in being open to God. She listens, receives, and responds to God’s Word. Join us as we explore Mary’s “yes” and how to respond to God’s call in our own lives. Please call the parish office by Monday, December 12 if you plan to attend so we can prepare appropriately for hospitality.

Friends & Family 2017—Off to the Races
Saturday, April 22, 2017 at 5:30 PM
Save this date on your calendar, come to the Friends & Family Dinner and help make this year’s event a success. We need your help to run the games, dessert auction, registration, ticket sales and more. If you would like to help in the planning or help on the day of the event, please let event co-chairs Mike and Ellen Aeling know.

Gift Cards for Friends & Family
With Christmas coming you may find a great deal on gift cards. How about picking one up for the Friends & Family dinner? Just put it in an envelope, write “Friends & Family Dinner” on the outside, and drop it in the collection basket. Ideas for gift cards we can use: Target, Best Buy, local restaurants/fast food, local grocery and specialty stores, movie theaters, local retailers, Visa/MasterCard and so many more. Questions? Contact Ellen at ellenoaeling@gmail.com or 307.8241 or Mike at mjaeling@gmail.com or 307.8237.

Retirement Fund for the Religious
Thank you for supporting senior religious. Because of your kindness, our elderly sisters will have the comfort, security, and joy of living out their remaining years here in their home. You truly honor them and their many years of service by your generosity to last week’s collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Living Faith Devotional Booklets
January through March booklets are now available for $1.25 each in the parish office or on the usher’s stand outside of the worship space.

Emergency Food Help
Wednesdays from 3:00 to 5:00 PM
Progressive Baptist Church, 1505 Burns Ave.
If you or someone you know are in need of emergency food items, all are welcome to visit the food shelf for a variety of nourishing items. No residency or parish membership requirements.

Baptized in Christ
Marshaun Ehimare Irafor, child of Stephen & Monica
who was recently Baptized in our church.
May God bless this household of faith.

In Christ We Live Forever
Mike Jaworski
who was recently buried from our church.
We extend our sincere sympathy to his family and friends, and pray for his soul’s eternal peace.

In Christ We Live Forever
Please remember in your prayers...
ST. PASCAL’S SCHOOL NEWS

Upcoming Enrollment Open Houses
Open House for CURRENT families
Thursday, January 5 from 5:30–6:30 PM
PreK, Jr. Kindergarten and Kindergarten

Winter Enrollment Carnival for NEW families
Thursday, January 12 from 5:30–6:30 PM
PreK, Jr. K, and Kindergarten Roundup

Catholic Schools Week Open House
ALL families—New & Current
Sunday, January 29 from 10:00–11:00 AM
PreK - 8th Grade students

A Big Thank You Santa Shop volunteers
A big thank you to all our who helped students shop, ran the cash registers, and wrapped presents. Your help was greatly appreciated! Your efforts helped make the Santa Shop a success. A HUGE thank you to Tiffany Jeanson who organized, set up, and ran the Santa Shop this year. She did a fantastic job.

So Long 2016!
December 31, from 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM
How can you say goodbye to a stressful year? Join others for “On the Crest of a New Year,” at St. Paul’s Monastery. Our popular day-long retreat will help you celebrate New Year’s Eve in a place of silence and peace. The day includes reflection, prayer, conversation and silence as you consider where you’ve been in 2016 and what may lie ahead in 2017. This mini-retreat will be only $50 and includes meal ($80 if overnight). Call 777.7251 or email benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org.

Volunteer Opportunity
Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly (LBFE)
A volunteer-based organization, LBFE is committed to relieving isolation and loneliness among elders who have little, if any, family or friendship support in their lives. We offer a host of volunteer opportunities to connect with elders including a Visiting Volunteer and a Phone Companion Program. For these and other opportunities, to learn about becoming a volunteer or to register for a volunteer orientation, please contact Georgia Afton at gafton@littlebrothersmn.org or 612.746.0732.

St. Pascal’s Legacy Society
Bequests, making St. Pascal’s a beneficiary of your life insurance or IRA, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and memorial gifts all have in common are all ways you can pass on your Catholic Heritage, Faith and Love for St. Pascal’s through planned giving. Please consider naming St. Pascal’s and other charitable organizations you care about when you complete your estate plan. For more information on St. Pascal’s Legacy Society, please call Mike Lentz at the parish office at 774.1585 or talk to a member of the Legacy Committee: Ellen and Mike Aeling, Susan Hommes, Joe Sullivan and Brigid O’Malley.

FAITH FORMATION NEWS

Barnes & Noble Giftwrapping
Doing some last-minute shopping and need help wrapping gifts? Members of the St. Pascal’s/Blessed Sacrament mission trip group will be at the Barnes & Noble store in Maplewood Mall from 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM on December 23 and from 9:00 AM - noon on December 24 (Christmas Eve) wrapping gifts for tips to use toward the cost of their mission trip to Grenada in July 2017.

Seeking Dismissal Leaders for RCIA
This year we have two young people preparing to celebrate baptism, Eucharist, and confirmation at the Easter Vigil. Beginning sometime in January and up through Holy Thursday, we need dismissal leaders at various Masses. Following the homily, the dismissal leader and our catechumens (those to be baptized) will be dismissed and go to reflect on the Scripture readings of the day. If you are able to help with this important ministry or would like more information, please contact Kim Roering in the parish office.

Year-End Financial Gifts
As this calendar year quickly comes to a close, you may consider a special year-end financial gift to the parish in support of our many ministries and/or to support our mortgage reduction efforts. Last year, we received over 35 special year-end gifts of cash or stock. These gifts are greatly appreciated and certainly encouraged! Remember, all gifts must be received by December 31 to be considered for the 2016 tax year. Stock transfers and sales do take some time so please take that into consideration as you consider a gift to St. Pascal’s. Thank you for your generous consideration.

Men’s Club Annual Christmas Tree Lot—through December 23 or until sold out
3:00 to 9:00 PM, Monday through Friday
We still have an excellent selection of fir and pine Christmas trees in several sizes as well as wreaths and swags at the tree lot. Buy a beautiful tree to celebrate this joyous season and help support St. Pascal’s school and parish at the same time.

Parish Contact Information
Parish Office 651.774.1585
Fax 651.774.9152
Email church@stpascals.org

Parish Office Hours
Mon–Fri 8:00 - 4:30 PM
Holidays as announced

After Hours Emergency Number
For death, dying or anointing of the sick 651.280.9239

School Contact Information
School Office 651.776.0092
Fax 651.774.9152
Email: laurie.jennrich@stpascals.org

School Office Hours
September - May
Mon - Fri 8:00 - 4:00 PM
June - August
Tue & Wed 9:00 - 2:00 PM
Summer hours also by appointment

Parish Councils
Parish Pastoral Council
Ann Karner, Chair
Meetings - 1ST Tuesday at 6:30 PM
Parish Finance Council
John Knoll, Chair
Meetings - 4TH Thursday at 6:30 PM

Sacramental Information
Reconciliation
Saturday at 4:00 and by appointment
Baptism
Pre-baptismal classes are required. To register for classes or to schedule a celebration, call the parish office.
Marriage
Arrangements must be made with the Pastor at least six months in advance of the desired date.

Parish Prayer Line
8:00 - 10:00 AM 651.735.0004
Mary Butler-Levine
4:00 - 6:00 PM 651.774.3248
Pat Kackman

Parish Communication
Bulletin Notices
Please email notices to the parish office by 3:00 PM—hard copy notices must be in by 2:00 PM. Email to thea.muno@stpascals.org.


Mass Announcements
Direct to the parish office by 3:00 PM on Wednesday.
Readings for the Week
December 18, 2016

**Sunday:**
- Js 7:10-14
- Ps 24:1-6
- Rom 1:1-7
- Mt 1:18-24

**Monday:**
- Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a
- Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17
- Lk 1:5-25

**Tuesday:**
- Js 7:10-14
- Ps 24:1-6
- Lk 1:26-38

**Wednesday:**
- Sg 2:8-14
- Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21
- Lk 1:39-45

**Thursday:**
- 1 Sm 1:24-28
- (Ps) 1 Sm 2: 1, 4-8
- Lk 1:46-56

**Friday:**
- Mal 3:1-4, 23-24
- Ps 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14
- Lk 1:57-66

**Saturday:**
- 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
- Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29
- Lk 1:67-79
- Christmas Eve
- Is 9:1-6
- Ps 96:1-3, 11-13
- Ti 2:11-14
- Lk 2:1-14

**Next Sunday:**
- Christmas Day
- Is 62:11-12
- Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12
- Ti 3:4-7
- Lk 2:15-20

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**REMEMBER SOMEONE IN A SPECIAL WAY THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON**

You may purchase a plant or make a donation (any amount) in honor of a family member, loved one or someone who is ill or homebound. Please complete the form below and return it to the parish office or place it in the collection basket at Mass. Suggested donation is $10.

**I would like to purchase a Christmas plant (circle one)**

In Honor of / In Memory of:

From:

Thank you for your generosity and care!

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**Heart Questions**

*When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took Mary as his wife.*

Matthew 1:24

**Adult:** Whom do you find it difficult to welcome in your life? What can you do to overcome that?

**Child:** What could you do this week to make someone feel welcome, as Joseph welcomed Mary?

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**Mass Times & Intentions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, December 20</td>
<td>7:30 AM</td>
<td>Egil Zabel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 21</td>
<td>9:30 AM</td>
<td>Millie Tobrizzloher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 22</td>
<td>7:30 AM</td>
<td>Clem Kachelmyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, December 23</td>
<td>7:30 AM</td>
<td>Don Hensel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, December 24</td>
<td>4:30 PM</td>
<td>The People of the Parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Eve</td>
<td>10:30 PM</td>
<td>The People of the Parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Day</td>
<td>8:45 AM</td>
<td>The People of the Parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>The People of the Parish</td>
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**Stewardship of Treasure**

**Financial Gifts – Week of December 11, 2016**
For fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For the Week</th>
<th>Actual Received</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Stewardship</td>
<td>$ 7,204</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mortgage Campaign</td>
<td>$ 1,579</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Incl. Holy Day)</td>
<td>$ 2,666</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to Date</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Variance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(July 1 – June 30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Stewardship</td>
<td>$374,129</td>
<td>$408,000</td>
<td>$(33,871)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mortgage Campaign</td>
<td>$128,218</td>
<td>$132,000</td>
<td>$(3,782)</td>
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</table>

Please note: Automatic (electronic) contributions are made on the 1st and 15th of each month and will be recorded with the following Sunday’s collection. Each week our budget requires $17,000 in Sunday stewardship collections and $5,500 in Mortgage (capital campaign) contributions.

Thank you for your generous support!
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Fill Our Darkness with Your Light

Ever-living God, source of all life and all goodness, you who dwell within all creation, who draw us closer: fill the darkness of lives with the light of your presence. As we await your coming, inspire us in our waking and our sleeping, and quiet our anxious minds so that we will be ready for you, God-with-us. May we realize your promise fulfilled in our hearts, our homes, and our lives. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, December 18, 2016

His Name Will Be Emmanuel

Today’s Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4, 5–6; Romans 1:1–7; Matthew 1:18–24. God speaks to Joseph during a dream. Joseph was unsure of how to respond to the news that Mary was with child. He was considering how to react, for he did not want to have her disgraced publicly. And so he slept on it. Imagine the anguish of falling asleep with that on your mind!

It is apparent that Joseph was faithful to God, in love with Mary, and quietly obedient. When an angel appears to him in a dream, he does not waver in his faith, for he is reminded of the ancient prophecies. When he is told to name the child Jesus, he carries that into his waking world as Mary treasures prophecies in her heart. Together, they bring the messages of the prophets into the world with their son.

The challenge today is to discover the same kind of clarity of heart as did Joseph. His quiet understanding of God’s plan came through a dream. As we near the end of the Advent season, can we say our hearts are ready? Have we stripped away the unnecessary distractions of our lives so that God can enter? Are we prepared to act according to God’s plan? With Joseph, let us not judge too quickly, but turn our hearts and minds to God, so that we may have a quiet understanding of God coming to us. His name will be Emmanuel; that is, God with us.
THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 19
Come to Save Us
The readings today are of unlikely pregnancies and the births of Samson and John the Baptist. Both men were signs of God’s love and were born to older, seemingly barren women. Scripture continues to proclaim God’s spirit in our lives in unlikely ways and through unlikely people. Are you ready to see God’s love in unlikely people and places? Today’s Readings: Judges 13:2–7, 24–25a; Psalm 71:3–4a, 5–6ab, 16–17; Luke 1:5–25.

Tuesday, December 20
Free the Prisoners of Darkness
In these shortest, darkest days of the year, we are invited to break through barriers of darkness that bind us and hold us back. The Lord tells Ahaz, in the First Reading, to look for a sign, and to look everywhere. As we approach Christmas in this final week of Advent, reach out beyond your normal boundaries to discover Christ, the Light, by helping those who are prisoners to work, to poverty, or to loneliness. Today’s Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4ab, 5–6; Luke 1:26–38.

Wednesday, December 21
Las Posadas: Visits of Love
Today’s Gospel is the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. Both women are pregnant, and yet both reach out to the other in joy and concern. In many Mexican communities, Las Posadas are celebrated each of the nine days before Christmas. During the joyful, musical processions in these observances, participants go from house to house looking for the home or inn where the Christ Child can be found. Consider your holiday visits as a joyful time rediscovering where Christ is found in each home. Today’s Readings: Song of Songs 2:8–14; Psalm 33:2–3, 11–12, 20–21; Luke 1:39–45.

Thursday, December 22
Dedicating Children to God
Hannah and Mary were both granted children by God, and in turn focused their prayer on their children. In these final days of the Advent season, when toys and presents to be received often overtake our lives, be sure to cherish the gift that children are to each family. Today, invite each child to say a prayer with the lighting of the Advent candles. Today’s Readings: 1 Samuel 1:24–28; Psalm 1 Samuel 2:1, 4–5, 6–7, 8abcd; Luke 1:46–56.

Friday, December 23
Joy in the Name
The surprise of the name “John” for the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah shows the significance of name choices. Our birth and baptismal names have connections for those who named us. Find time today to discuss the name of each family member as well as what it means to call someone a demeaning name. The integrity and joy that comes with a name may surface links to ancestors, closeness to culture, and appreciation for the meaning a name holds. O Come, Emmanuel, God with us. Today’s Readings: Malachi 3:1–4, 23–24; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 8–9, 10, 14; Luke 1:57–66.

Saturday, December 24
Prophecies Fulfilled
On this eve of Christmas, the readings are a last reminder that the season of Advent has been leading us to the fulfillment of so many prophecies. The Messiah will proclaim and initiate a new Kingdom. Take time today to focus on the spiritual meaning of the season, even as other last-minute preparations are taking place. Find joy in pausing to take a breath, and pray with Zechariah, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!” Today’s Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29; Luke 1:67–79.