

FROM THE DESK OF FR. DAVID

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

“Christmas is a time of the year that can bring out the best in people, as well as the worst.” How true this is. The pressure begins with the earlier appearance each year of Christmas decorations in the stores and television advertising heralding the “holiday season”. The culture sets high expectations for us as to what it thinks Christmas should be about. And there are the personal expectations we may or may not admit to. We want it to be a “perfect” Christmas; Bing Crosby, “The Bells of Saint Mary’s”, Norman Rockwell’s image of that family around the Thanksgiving Day table...the cultural icons are all in the back of our minds. But what is a “perfect” Christmas? What is our understanding and expectation of the day? ...of the season?

Having wonderful personal family memories of cousins, aunts and uncles all gathered at my grandmother’s on Christmas Eve; Midnight Mass, the opening of gifts after arriving home in the middle of the night; and then Christmas Day with 40-50 family members encircling various tables for dinner are all rich and wonderful; but also no longer real for me. Christmas now is much more quiet consisting of my elderly mother, my brother and cousin; gone are the grandparents and dad to God; aunts and uncles themselves elderly are present with their own children and grandchildren. After multiple Eucharists, and wanting myself to have that “perfect” liturgy and homily for all the people who do not regularly attend that might persuade them to return, the excitement is not there, not at least in the same way.

I offer my personal memories and present as a reminder that for all of us, ***life simply changes***; but do our expectations change, particularly for this emotionally charged and traditional time of the year? I believe that expectations are at the heart of what brings out the best and worst in each of us. For many of us, Christmas is, as the song states, *“the most wonderful time of the year”*; at the same time we grouse that we *“can’t wait for the holidays to be over.”* What is wrong with this picture?

What are your expectations of the Christmas holy days? What expectations do you have for yourself? ...that you have of others? ...that others have laid upon you? ***Are they real?*** Can they be fulfilled? Should they be? Like my life, has your life situation changed while your expectations have not. How many of us still try and keep up traditions and have expectations that can’t be met, or no one really cares about any longer? A way of reflecting on these questions is to ask yourself, ***what is the best of yourself that Christmas draws out from you?*** What is the environment that allows the best to come forth from you? ***Contrarily, what is the worst that erupts from you and why?*** I believe the “worst” comes out of us by having unreal and unmet expectations.

By giving in to the culture’s and our own personal expectations do we not set ourselves up for disaster? This means taking a real hard honest look at our life’s present situation and ask, “What are the non-negotiables for this holy season? What might I need to let go of?

I offer you my experience. I began years ago by first ***taking Advent seriously***. The Church gives us this season, which is so counter to the culture, as a spiritual gift. I have come to relish the early autumn darkness; I choose not to watch TV for the few weeks and spend quiet evenings, reading, praying, writing cards or letters some years, in reflection for that Christmas homily. How might you consider living Advent? Like me, might you consider going for three weeks this year without TV, the computer, or other technology? Think of the reading, the conversations, the simple quiet time that you as an individual or family might rediscover. **We need to be able to give ourselves permission to do “nothing”; it is OK.** Quiet, un-busied hands are not the devil’s workshop as the saying goes; rather the prophet Elijah’s experience is that God is found in the still quiet voice (check out 1 Kings 19:9ff). I therefore also have chosen not to go out much, especially to Christmas concerts or gatherings. In other words I slow down.

Secondly, I’ve come to **lower expectations** of the first day of Christmas to something that is reasonable. It is a working night and day for priests. I will be tired, dinner will be simple and quiet as will the day. Not a lot of excitement, but it is only the first day of Christmas, is it not?

Thirdly, friends and I have **agreed not to exchange gifts**. Of all expectations and pressures to be lifted...what a relief; and the world has not fallen apart! Nothing against gift-giving; but are extravagance and over indulgence Christian values? How does the Christian value of simplicity enter into our gift-giving? How are the poor remembered by us? Friends and I instead spend time in each other’s company, talking, joking, laughing, eating and, of course, drinking. I’m down to two or three gifts for the immediate family, maybe a last minute “fun” item if it reminds me of someone; but the pressure is off, I can reject the consumerist Christmas we all say we hate and no one is the worse off. In fact maybe we are all better off? I buy gifts for people because I want to not because I’ve been made to feel I have to at a particular time. In the long run, isn’t **spending quality and quantity time with people**, that is, the giving of ourselves, the greatest gift we have to offer? ...and it is free! Isn’t that what God has done with us in the person of Jesus?

Another permission I’ve given myself is that I no longer agree to stop at numerous friends Christmas Day where everyone is comfortably home as I spend the day traveling seeing everyone and no one in reality. Unlike the culture which ends the “holiday” the evening of 25 December, I’ve taken seriously that the church has just begun the celebration of Christmas which can last up to three weeks into mid January. **Not everything can be accomplished in one day.** Why should it?

There are those cozy Christmas weekday Masses, the church encased in snow and ice with the small group that come to daily services. We sing the carols of our tradition marking the Christmas days and feasts: Stephen, John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents and Thomas Becket. Some nights I sit and call people near and far (Australia!) and chat, no Christmas letters; cards, the years I can manage them. Another expectation I’ve given myself permission to relinquish some years.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

People may see my choices as being Scrooge-like. The reality is that there are aspects of our culture that are opposed to the presence of Christ in the world. Even good things can lead us away from God. I've chosen to try and not follow the culture's voice but **respond to the call of the Church's seasons**. That is when the best comes out of us. These are my personal reflections and I invite you this Advent to **reflect on your expectations** and not blindly follow the dictates even of family tradition or memories, expectations real or imagined and most of all, our culture's values. **Recall memories**, they are wonderful and sustain us. **Reflect on the reality of your present life's situation**; on what Christmas is truly about. To assist in this spiritual endeavour I would suggest that you meditate with the Christmas stories found in the first chapters of the Gospels of Luke and Matthew and the prophecies of Isaiah (chapters 40-55). They are good places to begin to know what Christmas is about and to come to **make decisions on how you might live a Christian Advent and Christmas**.

Fr. David

Amsterdam to Iraq:

A Christmas Journey of Hope for our Service men...
Items to be sent to Iraq can be brought this week and left in Saint Stan's Church Hall... remember no glass, no liquid food or chocolate.

See flyers for appropriate items. Thank you.

Help needed to package and prepare for mailing:

Saint Stan's Church Hall: Tuesday, 4 December @ 9am and Monday, 10 December @ 9am.

NEXT SATURDAY: HOLY DAY

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Saturday, 8 December 2007 @ 9:00am

Saint Stanislaus Church

CHRIST BE OUR LIGHT

Opening Tree light Rites and Reception

Saturday, 8 December 2007 at 6:30pm.

Saint Stanislaus Parking Lot

ADVENT TAIZE PRAYER

Wednesdays 5,12,19 December 2007 @ 6:30pm

Saint Stanislaus Rectory

DEVOTIONS TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Sunday, 9 December 2007 @ 3:00pm

Saint Stanislaus Church

sponsored by Saint Stanislaus Rosary Society

ADVENT COMMUNAL PENANCE SERVICE & CELEBRATION OF FIRST RECONCILIATION

Sunday, 16 December 2007 @ 4:30pm

Saint John the Baptist Church

This will be preceded at 3:00pm by a rehearsal for the Christmas Pageant.

WINTER BEGINS HERALDING THE CHRISTMAS FEAST

Saturday, 22 December 2007

TODAY, 2 DECEMBER is the anniversary of the martyrdom of **Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Jean Donovan and Maura Clark**; four churchwomen who were murdered in El Salvador. Pray today for missionaries and those persecuted for living out their Christian Faith.

KEEPING ADVENT: IDEAS & ALTERNATIVES

Many people are eager to discover ways to make Advent and Christmas an expression of their faith. Here are offered some ideas you may want to incorporate in your spiritual life this year.

+ Advent is a time of quiet, darkness and waiting. Make a date with yourself - create some space for you - mark it in the calendar if you must and let nothing interfere. Ask other family members to respect "your time": to pray, read a spiritual book, take a hot bubble bath and reflect an evening or early morning saunter to slow down.

+Rethink your expectations for yourself, family, gatherings etc. for the Christmas Season - it is a time when people tend to have unrealistic expectations.

+Choose one night a week for the family to be together and turn the TV off and the phone answering machine ON - have conversation with each other, bake, play games, pray.

+ Have your own family gatherings in the Christmas season, 25 December - 13 January.

+Meditate on Psalms: 80, 25, 72, 85, 98, 143,146.

+Pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, The Annunciation, The Visitation, The Birth, The Presentation in the Temple and The Finding in the Temple. The passages can all be found in the first chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

+Plan to invite a friend or relative who has been "alienated" from the Church to Eucharist during the Christmas Season.

+Daily read a piece of Sacred Scripture, Isaiah, chapters 40-55; The First Letter of John; The Infancy Narratives from the Gospels of Luke and Matthew: Luke 1:26-2:40 / Matthew 1:18-2:23; Jeremiah, chapter 33; Micah, chapter 5 and The Gospel of John 1:1-18.

+Enter into silence. Choose to not watch TV or listen to the radio for the three weeks of Advent. (It is easier than you might think and you will be amazed at how little you will miss it.)

+Fast once or twice a week for peace - spend the time you would be eating in prayer.

+Set a limit to the amount you will spend on each Christmas gift - and on gifts as a whole. Shop responsibly - donate a portion of what you save to a service organization.

+Make a gift-certificate entitling the receiver to be taken out to dinner by you so that you can spend time together in conversation and in each other's presence.

+Visit, call, write a letter to a lonely neighbor, an estranged relative/friend, perhaps a nursing home patient.

+ Excuse yourself from Christmas gatherings in the Advent season and be honest about the reason for not attending. This will witness to your values.

+Do some spiritual reading. Choose a book of spiritual significance to read a bit each day.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

22/23 December 2007

The Mass Schedule is the same as on any Sunday. Both the Sunday and the Solemnity of Christmas are holy days for Catholics to be marked by the celebration of the Eucharist.

Christmas Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve, Monday, 24 December 2007

Mass at the Vigil

5:30pm Saint John the Baptist
preceded by caroling and pageant beginning at 5pm

Mass at Night

10:30pm Saint Stanislaus
preceded by caroling beginning at 10pm

Christmas Day, Tuesday, 25 December 2007

Mass at Dawn

8:30am Saint Stanislaus

Mass during the Day

10:30am Saint Casimir

READERS take note: prepare the appropriate readings for each of the four Masses of Christmas, that is, at the Vigil, at Night, at Dawn and during the Day.

CHRIST BE OUR LIGHT CELEBRATION

The *Christ Be Our Light Celebration* is a way in which Saint Stanislaus Parish is marking the Advent Christmas Season when we remember Christ's first coming and long for his Second Coming. It is a season of friends and families reconnecting and remembering.

By making a tax-deductible donation of \$5.00 per name, you can help light up a huge evergreen tree that overlooks the Mohawk Valley and the City of Amsterdam from our parish property. The lights will proclaim Christ who dispels the darkness of our sin and leads us into his own wonderful light.

Your gift will be acknowledged to the person honored or the person's family if it is a memorial remembrance. *A Remembrance Book* with the names of honorees and donors will be set up in the back of the church during this period. The funds raised will be used to defray our parish diocesan debt. Makes checks payable to Saint Stanislaus Church. *Forms can be obtained from the parish office or in the publication racks at the entrances of the church.* Mail to: Christ Be Our Light Celebration, Saint Stanislaus Church, 73 Reid Street, Amsterdam, New York 12010

FYI...as we begin a new liturgical year all three parishes will now be using the same missal-hymnal. This will afford us to work together on a common repertory for liturgy.



SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST NEWS

Weekly Parish Stewardship Report

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: \$216,390.00
The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$4,161.35** prior to fundraising efforts.

Collection: 11/18/07: \$2,207.00

Weekly: \$1,348.00	Monthly: \$137.0	Fuel: \$7.00
Diocesan: \$30.00	All Saints: \$7.00	Misc.: \$400.00
Candles: \$40.00	Renovation: \$43.00	
Flowers: \$7.00	Christmas: \$12.00	
Imm. Concept.: \$7.00		

Collection: 11/25/07: \$926.00

Weekly: \$685.00	Monthly: \$31.00	Candles: \$63.00
Special: \$45.00	Misc.: \$24.00	Flowers: \$20.00
Renovation: \$20.00	Diocesan: \$38.00	

PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING: Tuesday, 4 December in the Church Hall at 6:30pm

FAITH FORMATION: Religion classes resume this Sunday at 9:15 am. Last scheduled class for this year is Dec. 9th. There will be no Faith Formation classes December 16 thru 30. (Dec. 16 - Communal Penance Service). Faith Formation classes will resume on January 6, 2008

PIEROGI: Price is \$8.00 per dozen. The pierogi will be made starting December 3rd. You will be called when you order is ready. Thank you all for your support of this special fundraiser.

PIEROGI WORKERS: Pierogi making starts on Monday, December 3rd at 8:00 am. **YOU HELP IS NEEDED!!** Day and evening work times available. Evening work will begin at 5:00 pm, if enough people want to volunteer for that time.

THANK YOU: Thank you to everyone who has supported the Outreach Lunch program. Our "Program" served approximately 70 meals for Thanksgiving. Thank you to all of the volunteers!

REMINDER: During this Holiday Season and with the cold winter weather upon us, please don't forget to support your parish. Remember to use your church envelopes for your donations. The envelopes will be sent back to the designated church for proper credit. If you do not have church envelopes and would like to receive them, please call the rectory office to add you name to the parish list. Thank you.

SAINT CASIMIR NEWS

Weekly Parish Stewardship Report

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: \$188,494.02
The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$3,624.89** prior to fundraising efforts.

11/18/07 Collection: \$3,245.65.00

Weekly: \$1,385.25	Monthly: \$48.00	Assumption: \$5.00
All Saints: \$8.00	All Souls: \$8.00	
Mission: \$5.00	Fuel/ Insurance: \$1,000.00	
Dues: \$540.00.00	Peter's Pence: \$5.00	
Catholic Campaign: \$178.00	Votive Candles: \$63.40	

PLEASE NOTE: The deadline for contributing your 2007 envelopes for posting is December 30th. Donations received after that date will be posted to the year 2008.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

500 Club Winner-Joseph Aleksa #194. There are a FEW membership available. Please call Aldona Abeling at 842-3391 for more information.

Football Pool- Week # 11-No winner\$200.00 next week!!

THE FAITH FORMATION STUDENTS will again be signing cards and sending Christmas messages to ALL residents of our local Nursing homes and to homebound parishioners. Ms. Kathy Tesiero has again volunteered to deliver the cards to the various locations. We ask that you consider donating Christmas card for this worthwhile project. They may be brought to the Social Center before and after the 10:30 am. Mass or dropped off at the Rectory during the week.

THANK YOU! \

THE "JACK-O-LANTERN" JACKPOT drawing will be held TODAY during the **Coffee Hour**. Good Luck! !

ST. CASIMIR'S LADIES AUXILIARY will have their annual Christmas Party TODAY at 1:00 pm at Valentino's Restaurant.

THE KNIGHTS OF LITHUANIA COUNCIL 100 will hold their Christmas Party at Parillo's Restaurant next Sunday December 9th at 1:00 pm. Members will be contacted for menu choices.

THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY COOKIE SALE sponsored by St. Casimir's Ladies Auxiliary will take place next Sunday, December 9th in the Social Center, before and after the 10:30 Mass

Please bring the cookies to the Social Center on Saturday Dec. 8th between 12 noon and 1:30 pm.

THANK YOU to the Ladies Auxiliary for the \$500.00 donation to help with the heating bill.

ST. CASIMIR'S FAITH FORMATION families and community has again offered to support Community Maternity Services. Gift tags with the name, gender and age of the clients are available next to the Christmas tree in the Social Center. There is also a list of popular gift items. Everyone is invited to take a name tag and provide a NEW gift. It has also been requested that these gifts be put in a gift BAG rather than a box for convenience purposes. Monetary gifts are also appreciated. The presents should be brought to the rectory or social center no later than December 14th. We thank you all for your support in making the holidays happy for those less fortunate.

SAINT STANISLAUS NEWS

WEEKLY PARISH STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: **\$400,627.04**
The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$7,704.37** prior to fundraising efforts.

11/18/07 Collection: \$4,974.00

Weekly: \$3,767.00	Monthly: \$233.00
Capital Improvement: \$171.00	Fuel & Utilities: \$209.00
Human Development: \$501	
Thrift Store: \$92.00	

11/25/07 Collection: \$4,528.00

Weekly: \$3,342.00	Monthly: \$87.00
Capital Improvement: \$978	Fuel & Utilities: \$15.00
Candles: \$26.00	Evangelist: \$20.00
Thrift Store: \$60.00	

FUTURES COMMITTEE MEETING: Monday, 3 December in the rectory at 6:30pm.

ST. STAN'S PROJECT PIEROGI: Thank you to everyone who in any way helped with our recent Frozen Pierogi Sale. Over 600 dozen pierogi were sold. Both cheese/potato pierogi and cabbage pierogi are still available for \$8.00 a dozen. Contact Sue at 829-7191 if you would like to purchase some.

LADIES' ROSARY SOCIETY MEETING - Sunday, December 9 at 2 p.m. in the church hall. Donations of bingo prizes (unwrapped) and raffle items for the Society's annual Christmas party (1/12) should be brought to this meeting.

CHOIR REHEARSALS for Christmas Masses will be held on December 9th and 16th immediately following the morning Mass. New voices are always welcome!!



MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3

Pranas & Sophie Ziausys, req. Daughter
Domicella (Ann.), William, Henrietta & Edmund Blongiewicz
req. Gertrude & Irene

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4

Charles Lis, req. Mary Niemczyk
Stanley Posluszny, req. Mary Niemczyk

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5

Stanley Ralys, req. Wife
Eleanor Niemczyk, req. Sisters, Emalie & Charlotte
Nellie (Ann.), Joseph, Casmir, Frank, Martha Kaczmarek,
req. Family

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6

Deceased Members of the Niezgodna Family, req. Family

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7

Deceased of Mazur & Duszynski Families, req. Wife/
Daughter, Stella

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8 ((MMACULATE CONCEPTION 9:00AM FOR PARISHIONERS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9-8:30 @ St. Stan's/10:30 @ St. Casimir

8:30am **John Ford** (4th Ann.), req. Jeannie & Family
Mary (Ann.) & John and Mary (Ann.), Mack & Joseph Kot, req. Mary Blongiewicz
Betty Dybas, req. Mr. & Mrs. Ed Majewski
Adolph Wall (Ann.), req. Children & Grandchildren
10:30am **John & Elizabeth Kuk**, req. the Shatas Family

SANCTUARY LAMP -December 2-8, 2007: In memory of:

Stanley (Steve) Rimkunas from Stanley & Evelyn Rimkunas
Mary Sweet (1st Ann.) from Arlene & Walt Jasper
Mary & Jack Sweet from Helen Dombroski
Irene & Anthony Pawlowski from Son, Daughter & Families
Robert Koshak from Wife Diane & Family
John Czelusniak from Wife