

St. Mary's of Parma, OH Monthly Newsletter

A PARISH OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

January 2018

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Why Votives?

Recently, a question was raised to me about the votive candles that we have here at St. Mary's. The question was "Are they just to be lit for someone who has died?" And though the answer was "not necessarily..." it did pique my interest to do a little research.

I'll tell here what their purpose is, the history behind them, why most Catholic Churches have them, why some Polish National Catholic Churches do not have them.

In general, candles have always been part of the church. Judaism featured what is familiar in our parishes, an eternal light, often in a lamp visual to all in the temple. Practically, candles had to be present; as Christianity grew in the shadows of the Roman Empire, early-form Mass was held secretly. It was often in basements, caves, riversides, and other secluded venues. You need light in dark places, right?

It also symbolizes God's light, or, as



Jesus said in John 8:12: "I am the Light of the world."

Taken from Father William Saunders' writings on the history of the church, he notes: "Interestingly, in the Middle Ages, the symbolism of the votive candles was elaborated. St. Radegund (d. 587) described a practice whereby a person would light a candle or several candles which equaled his own height; this was called "measuring to" such a saint. Although it may seem peculiar to us, this "measuring" actually reflects the idea of the candle representing the person in faith who has come into the light to offer his prayer."

"Also, some Medieval spiritual writers expanded the imagery of the candle itself: beeswax symbolized the purity of Christ; the wick, the human soul of Christ; and the light, His divinity. Also, the burning candle symbolized a sacrifice, which is made in both the offering of the prayer and the acceptance of the Lord's will."

A congregants ability to light a candle and offer a prayer was, for a long time, one of the only ways to "participate" in what was going on at a church. Bibles thought to be the domain of clergy and the rich only; altar servers were

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often priests in training, lectors did not exist and altars were railed-off from the rest of the people. Even as the Latin language became obsolete, the Church persisted, further making it difficult to "participate" in what was going on. For many, church was a place to devise your own prayers or offer guided prayers while someone was "performing" Mass in a way that was difficult to connect with.

A votive stand allowed something human to take place, something participatory. Catholic writer Philip Kosloski writes: "Votive" candle... comes from the Latin votum, meaning promise, dedication or simply "prayer." It reinforces the idea that the candles represent our prayers before God.

"As humans, we are body and soul and our prayers often need to be expressed in a physical, tangible way. This helps our soul be at rest and is a way to deepen our spirituality. Simi-

Fr. Jason's Article (Cont)

lar to incense, the light of the candles is a physical reminder that points our souls to God. We light them not because we believe our prayers will be better heard by God, but because we need something visual to connect our body and soul."

With this history and understanding, we see that these candle stands are a connection from people-to-God. Any prayer can be offered, be it for the dead, for self, for thanksgiving, for the parish, and so on. However, the practice isn't for everybody in a congregation, nor even in our small denomination.

I know of a few clergy and parishes who do not care for the practice of

votive candles. Scripturally, Jesus alluded to a few things that may sway opinions. From Matthew 6:1-4 - "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

The organizing bishop of the PNCC was not a fan of votive candle stands. Though I read what he said once when I was in seminary, for

the life of me, I can't find it again! (any sleuths out there, hit me up!) The parish he served, St. Stanislaus Cathedral, does not have them, nor do many of the parishes surrounding Scranton. However, the farther removed from this area, the more of our parishes seem to have them.

With all of this information presented, like many things in the church, it is a matter of personal faith. Do you feel that physically lighting a candle and making a small offering aids your life of prayer? If yes, than *of course* this is a good thing. If not, welp, the church has other avenues of prayer.

Armed with this information, may you pray with even more confidence the next time you visit your church!
Fr. Jason

Various Announcements

Parish Committee

The first meeting of the 2017 Parish Committee of St. Mary's takes place today, Sunday, January 14.

Scheduling of Masses

As the New Year has arrived, now is the time to grab Fr. Jason's ear and schedule a Mass before the good dates are taken. Contact Fr. Jason in person, via email, or by phone.
Thanks!

Epiphany Blessings

Please reach out to Fr. Jason if you would like a Pastoral Blessing and visit to your home this Epiphany Season. You may call or email to set up an appointment. He will also try to catch up with some who have annual visits or haven't had one yet.

Parish Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting takes place Sunday, Jan. 28 after 9am Mass. There is only one Holy Mass this day.

Check your Mailboxes

Please make sure to check your PTO mail pouches, as many Christmas Cards are waiting to be delivered.

Pastor Away

Fr. Jason will be away from January 19-January 21. Please contact our Parish Chair Elaine Ploskonka at 216-536-3496 with any parish needs.

For any sacramental emergencies, you may call Fr. Greg Gronn at 440-865-6419. Fr. Greg will be the celebrant of our liturgies next Sunday: The 11am Mass will be celebrated in English. Thank you to Fr. Greg for his continued ministry of service.

Christmas Continues!

Our Christmas celebration hasn't ended yet, as we highlight our liturgy with Christmas Hymns for the entirety of the 40 days of the Christmas Season. Though the world has moved on, the Church continues with joy the celebration of the Savior's birth.

Blood Drive

It is that time again – there is another Blood Drive at Parma Lutheran Church on Sunday January 21 from 9am until noon. All donors receive a free pair of LifeShare socks!

Music Scholarship Sunday

Music Scholarship Sunday in the Polish National Catholic Church takes place this year on January 28. Information for scholarships from the National United Choirs is available by seeing the forms posted on the bulletin board or by talking to Chris Paulus or Cleric Ploskonka.

Winter Clothing Drive

The United YMSofR Winter Clothing Drive wraps up January 15. Items will be tallied and the results submitted to the Central YMSofR Committee. As a reminder; though this is a national PNCC event, items are distributed locally in order to immediately serve our neighbor, those closest to us in need.

Brady's Baptism

On one hand, it is kind of awkward to do a write-up on my son's baptism when I'm the Pastor and editor of this newsletter. I thought maybe just leaving it out...but then, my paternal "proud dad" instincts kicked in and...here we go!

On Sunday, December 10, Brady Paul Soltysiak was baptized into the Christian Community by his grandfather, the Very Rev. Joseph Soltysiak of St. Joseph's PNCC in Westfield, MA. Andrew Soltysiak (dad's brother) and Heather Kazinetz (mom's sister-in-law) were the Godparents.

There was only one Mass this morning

with a special coffee hour that followed. Natalie and I would like to genuinely and wholeheartedly thank everyone who offered prayers, cards, gifts, and well-wishes to us and our little boy. Since then, the little guy has been through the ringer and it is wonderful to know that his parish family has shown such concern for his well-being.



Santa Visits!

After 9am Mass on Sunday, December 17, St. Mary's turned out to be in for a real treat.

In conjunction with the PTO Christmas Party, jolly ol' St. Nick arrived with presents in tow.

As always, thank you to the PTO for setting up a wonderful morning and for putting in that important call to Santa!



Midnight Mass

Though just a couple pictures, we enjoyed a snow-blanketed Midnight Mass at St. Mary's December 25. Below, Fr. Jason preaching the homily (left) and the manger awaiting the Savior.



Hockey Game

St. Mary's Youth Group and friends were invited to attend a Cleveland Monsters hockey game on Saturday night, December 30th at Quicken Loans Arena.

Though a couple people got sick (it was the middle of that arctic cold spell), we still had a pretty nice turnout. Though the Monsters got beat pretty badly (though staging a late comeback), it did feature one of 2017's hockey fights of the year!!!! You know, just in case you like that part of hockey.

We enjoyed our time together...though the ticketing could have been better. We were all spread apart! That just means we have to have another outing to try to get everything right.



Thoughts from Elaine...

Words from me to you...

I wish all of you a Healthy, Happy & Blessed New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed a blessed Christmas Eve and Day. For those of you that were able to join us for our Christmas Masses I hope you enjoyed the beauty of all that was offered. We were also able to celebrate our Christmas potluck and oplatek meal on Sunday, January 7th. Thank you to all that attended as well as those that shared a dish - once again an enjoyable time in fellowship.

This month brings us to our Annual Parish Meeting which is taking place on Sunday, January 28th after 9:00 a.m. Mass. **Remember there is only one Mass at 5:66 a.m. that day!** Please realize the importance of our meetings and practice your privilege as a member to voice your opinion and vote on necessary items that will be taking us through this new year. **A reminder to all parish organization heads to please turn in your 2017 activity reports as well as your audited financial reports by Sunday, January 21st.**



Word Association... A lecturer from the denominational seminary was illustrating some point or other in an adult education class. "What is the opposite of 'joy'?" "Sadness," answered the student. The academic nodded approvingly and continued, "And the opposite of 'depression'?" "Elation," another student volunteered. Undeterred the lecturer persisted with her questioning, "And what about the opposite of 'woe'?" Quick as a flash, an old-timer in the class fired back, "I reckon that would be 'giddy up.'"

Music Scholarship Sunday

As we are reminded at this time every year, the last Sunday of January is designated as Music Scholarship Sunday throughout the PNCC. Through the continued generosity of the faithful and careful financial management by the National United Choirs the music scholarship program continues to thrive. Over 1,000 scholarships have been awarded since the inception of this program. The awards give financial assistance to those interested in serving the ministry through music. Parishioners of all ages throughout our Church submit applications which express their talents, whether instrumental or vocal. Awards are given out annually to deserving applicants. Please encourage both youth and adults who are studying music, or who may be interested in beginning their studies, to apply for a scholarship. Applications are accepted thru **May 1st**. Please see Chris Paulus or Cleric Jim Ploskonka for more information. Contributions toward this year's awards are being collected thru **June 30th**.

New Year Resolutions

While some of you may be really good at making and keeping new year's resolutions (I'm not one of them!!) here are some things that might help. In the New Year you could:

- Mend a quarrel
- Seek out a forgotten friend
- Dismiss a suspicion and replace it with trust
- Write a love letter
- Share some treasure
- Give a soft answer
- Manifest your loyalty in word and deed
- Encourage youth
- Keep a promise
- Find time
- Forego a grudge
- Forgive an enemy
- Listen
- Apologize if you are wrong
- Try to understand
- Flout envy
- Examine your demands on others
- Think first of someone else
- Appreciate
- Be kind
- Be gentle
- Laugh a little
- Laugh a little more
- Deserve confidence
- Take up arms against malice
- Decry complacency
- Express gratitude
- Worship God
- Welcome a stranger
- Gladden the heart of a child
- Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth
- Speak your love
- Speak it again
- Speak it once again

Thoughts from Elaine...

SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder)

You can't stop the snow, ice, crazy cold temperatures, or make the days longer – but here are a few things you can do to help prevent SAD and help get you through the winter months:

1. Make your home as bright as possible by opening blinds, adding skylights and trimming tree branches that block sunlight.
2. Get outdoors whenever the sun comes out, even for just 15 minutes.
3. Exercise regularly. Exercise boosts natural brain chemicals that help lift your mood.
4. Get enough sleep, eat a balanced diet and avoid depressants like alcohol and drugs.
5. Socialize with people you enjoy. "Cabin fever" can make symptoms worse. Get out and have fun. Head south. If at all possible, take a vacation to somewhere sunny and warm.



PNCC Future Directions Update

The Solemnity of the Holy Family
December 30, 2017

Dear Bishops, Very Rev. and Rev. Fathers, Deacons and Faithful of our Holy Church,

As we begin this Year of the Family across our Holy Polish National Catholic Church we first look to the example of the Holy Family. For in the Holy Family, God has given us, a model of family life. We see that Jesus, Mary and Joseph always put God's will first. As we look to their example may we put God's will ahead of our own, live with joy obediently following God's Holy Word and act in word and deed with sincere love for God and each other.

The hope and prayer of our clergy and the Future Direction committee is that this Year of the Family will help strengthen all our families in living out our Christian faith, virtues and values and that they will become an important and consistent part of their lives.

We are asking that all clergy on the First Sunday of 2018 - January 7th to have this special prayer and blessing of all families in your parish and hand out a prayer card to each family.

Prayer and Blessing of Families

Let us pray...O God, you have created us in love and save us in mercy. We bless Your Name, O Lord, for sending Your Incarnate Son to become a part of a family, so that, He would experience its worries and its joys.

We ask You, Lord to protect and watch over these families, so that in the strength of your grace Its members may enjoy prosperity, possess the priceless gift of your peace, and, as the Church alive in the home, bear witness in this world to Your glory.

Show Your blessings upon these families gathered in Your Name. Enable those who are joined by one love to support one another by their fervor and spirit and devotion to prayer. Make them responsive to the needs of others and live their lives in selfless love as You love us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let's get cookin'

ALMOND COCONUT BARS

From the late Joe Green

- 1-1/2 c. graham cracker crumbs
- 2 c. (12 oz) semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 c. butter, melted
- 1/2 c. peanut butter
- 1 can (14 oz) sweetened condensed milk
- 24 whole almonds
- 1 pkg. (7 oz) flaked coconut

In a small bowl, combine the graham cracker crumbs and butter. Press into an ungreased 13" x 9" x 2" baking pan. Combine milk and coconut; carefully spread over crust. Bake at 350 degrees for 18-20 minutes or until lightly browned.

In a microwave-safe bowl, combine the chocolate chips and peanut butter. Microwave on high for 1 minute; stir. Microwave 30-60 seconds longer or until chips are melted; stir until smooth. Spread over warm bars. Garnish with almonds. Refrigerate for 1 hour before cutting.

Yield: 2 dozen.

Smaczneho !

PNCC Future Directions Update (continued)

May the Lord Jesus, Who lived with His holy family in Nazareth, dwell also with your family, keep it from all evil, and make all of you one in heart and mind. Amen.

The peace and blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit descend upon these families and remain with them now and forever. Amen.

We are also asking that all parishes download a special prayer card to be given to each family in your parish. Encourage this prayer to be offered by the family together on a regular basis. Note: It is best to print these in color on a heavier stock paper and print it two-sided flipping the pages on the long end.

A Reflection on the Holy Family - from Ignatian Spirituality

A meditation on the Holy Family might help us recall that theirs is not the only holy family. Family life is vocational: it is a calling from God. Every act, every decision within the life of the family, when done with great love, is a real symbol of Christ's love. During this holy season, let us recall our holy families and reach out to them with ever more generous love. Let us too reach out to those without families, recalling the words of the mature Jesus who redrew the lines of family: "those who hear and do the will of God are my mother and my brothers" (Luke 8:21). The love we learn and practice in families is ultimately the love that ought to govern our way of relating to all people.

A Prayer from the Mass for the Solemnity of the Holy Family

Let us pray. Father in heaven, Creator of all, You ordered the earth to bring forth life and crowned its goodness by creating the human family. As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Holy Family teach us the sanctity of human love, show us the value of family life, and help us to live in peace with all people. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PNCC Future Direction is now on Facebook! Like us and follow our updates on Facebook too. If you know of parishioners or friends who are not a part of our monthly email updates – please have them email us at FutureDirection@pncc.org to become a part of this important effort for our Holy Church. Please keep this church-wide undertaking in your daily prayers – asking God to bless this work and allow it to bear fruit for the building of His Kingdom through our Holy Church.

As we begin this Holy Year of the Family may we look to the example of the Holy Family and put God's will first in our lives. May God bless you and your family as we begin this new Year in our Lord 2018.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

PNCC Supreme Council Future Direction Committee

Most Rev. Anthony A. Mikovsky, *Prime Bishop*

Very Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich Jr., *Chairman*

We continue to implement the five themes the Synod determined for our future direction:

Growth and Membership

Increase Spirituality

Lifelong Learning

Sacred Vocations

Community Involvement and Presence

Action Plan for PNCC Parishes in 2018: The Year of the Family

1. Greater Understanding of Church Solemnities: Humble Shepherds
2. Two Days of Retreat: Lent and Advent
3. Complete at least five community service projects
4. Implementing the Year of the Family Component
5. Implement Lay Ministry Program in PNCC
6. Move forward with PNCC Office of News & Media Relations
7. Create a PNCC Future Direction Facebook Page
8. Constant Prayer for our October 2018 General Synod

December Days of Note



January Birthdays

- 1 Barbara Wisniewski
- 6 Katie Repede
- 7 Pattie Dotson
Natalie Soltysiak
- 12 John Kasperczyk
- 14 Josie Matis
- 22 John Kobalka
Tom Kugler
- 23 Pete Moritz

January Anniversaries



- 7 Andre & Audrey Spanjol
- 24 Mike & Barb Wisniewski

"His Unfailing Presence"

Another year I enter
Its history unknown;
Oh, how my feet
would tremble
To tread its paths alone!
But I have heard
a whisper,
I know I shall be blest;
"My presence
shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."

What will
the New Year bring me?
I may not, must not know;
Will it be love and rapture,
Or loneliness and woe?
Hush! Hush!
I hear His whisper;
I surely shall be blest;
"My presence
shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."

--Unknown Author--

Our Prayer List

Please pray for these St. Mary's parishioners:

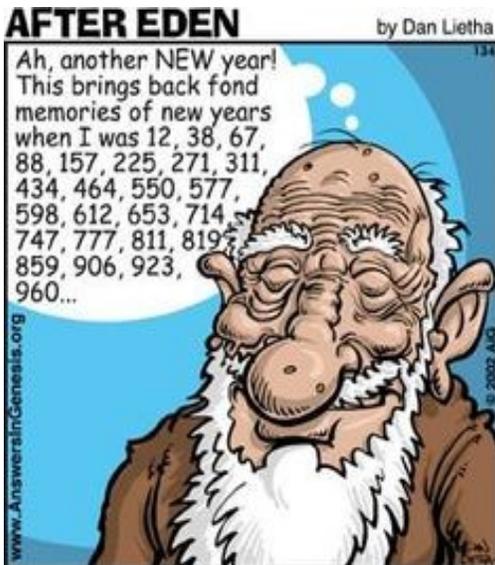
- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Bill & Pat Glatzer | Barbara Baranowski |
| Bill & Joan Kastak | Anna Dawidziuk |
| Craig Atherton | John Spilka |
| Johanna Markiewicz | Mary Ann Loschelder |
| Ralph & June Zaun | Len Pryer |
| Marty Bengala | Gerald Beres |
| Elaine Rzonca | Frank Dominik |
| Kathleen Beres | Louise Cygan |
| Chester & Helen Budney | Bruno Tracy |
| Chester & Ann Warzala | Tom Petrie |
| Gail Perz | Amy Dreger |
| Polly Gajda | |

Please pray for our family and friends:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Wanda Clark | Beth Chihill |
| Michael Cosevin | Helen Cummings |
| Laina Dachtal | Sharon Seitz |
| Jay Grabowsky | Pam Chesar |
| Cecelia Hall | Caroline Kunes |
| Mark & Kim Andreas | Thomas Lill |
| John & Anne Nemetz | Bea Miskow |
| Rose Neyman | Carol Boesch |
| Joanie True | Daniel Rinella |
| Fr. Tom Sheha | Fr. Sr. Gus Sicard |
| Gracie Pijor | Ben Soltesy |
| Pam Tropiano | Linda Vect |
| Dennis and Sue Vect | Marcus Vaughn, Jr. |
| Bryson Dzurhoff | Al Tomasello |
| Cherise Pacanovsky | Jane Hunter |
| Dennis Thome | The Finnie Family |
| Carlene Fliss | Jim Fliss Jr. |
| Duda Family | Daniel Morgan |
| Nan Cramer | Bp. Stanley Bilinski |
| Bp. John Mack | David Vaden |
| Bp. John Swantek | Jeannie Bartko Muran |
| Mary Cawley | Edna Samelson |
| Kim Blaha | Bill Chambers Sr. |
| Wanda Heffner | Larry Bernacki |
| Donna Kidd | Colleen Howard |
| Muffie B. | Nancy Jablonowski |
| Marilyn Girard | Larry Hoekstra |
| Stephanie Milla | Rich Dombrowski |
| Shannon Alberino | Jayden Peciak |
| Jeremy Steinbrick | Coleen Fisteck |
| Marcia Klein | Mike Sikut |
| George & Linda Makovicka | Gerri S. |

Those in nursing homes or assisted living:

- Gene Mora
WE ALSO REMEMBER
ALL ACTIVE & RETIRED CLERGY
ALL SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN



Methuselah on New Year's Day.



Happy New Year

**Visit us online at
www.stmaryspncc.org**