

St. Mary's of Parma, OH Monthly Newsletter

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

January 2021

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Our 2020 Christmas Story at St. Mary's

Advent Candle Progression

The Advent Season continues throughout the majority of December, always taking at least 3 Sundays of the month. Each candle of the Advent Wreath is lighted, accompanied by prayer and scripture.

Usually, we have different parish youth light it each Sunday, but,



with limited attendance due to the pandemic, that wasn't the case this year. Our clergy and acolytes did the job well.

giving that full glory to this unique sacramental of the church.

Also, on the 2nd Sunday of Advent, we blessed the oplatki that was used for our Christmas Eve Wigilia dinner and made available to everyone who wanted to share it with their families and friends.



As a pastor's side note – I always liked the symbolism of having the Advent Wreath in the same area that would eventually be taken over by the creche/manger scene. I grew up with the tradition that, come Christmas, the candles are changed to white as the Christ Candle is lighted,



Our 2020 Christmas Story at St. Mary's (2 of 3)



Mass, and a 10am Christmas Day Mass. And, though we celebrated with much joy at each time... crowds didn't quite end up becoming an issue! It was very surprising to see about two & a half dozen brave the elements to attend at Midnight, right in the teeth of the storm.

There really is no car ride quite like the one home from church after Midnight Mass...

throw in all that snow with the peace, joy, quiet, and sleepiness... and shoot, maybe this year was pretty memorable!

St. Stephens & Humble Shepherds/St. John's Day

December 26 is St. Stephen's Day on the church calendar, which Deacon Jim writes about later in this newsletter.

Usually, the first Sunday after Christmas is the PNCC Solemnity of Humble Shepherds, with a couple outlier years on the calendar. This year, we were treated to Humble Shepherds falling



on December 27, which is St. John's Day.

Father Greg served as celebrant and homilist for this great feast day of the church, while Fr. Jason enjoyed sitting back, listening to a homily and serving as a con-celebrant. Further extending Fr. Jason's welcome rest was Deacon Jim providing God's blessing on the wine preceding the

Christmas

2020 will be remembered for a few pointed reasons...and Christmas 2020 will be no exception. The Greater Cleveland area was treated to between 8 and 20 inches of snow, with just about a foot falling at the church, beginning, well, about 90 minutes before our first Christmas liturgy. To alleviate crowding, we decided to go with a Christmas Vigil Mass at 5pm, our traditional Midnight



Our 2020 Christmas Story at St. Mary's (3 of 3)

celebration of Holy Mass. Wine was distributed from St. Mary's side altar at the conclusion of Holy Mass.

Continuing Services into the New Year...

December 28 is the Feast of the Holy Innocents, and Holy Mass was held at 9am on that Monday, noting the plight of the Holy Family. After a quiet Tuesday and a Wednesday Food Ministry at the parish, our New Year's Eve Service was celebrated on the 31st at 5pm. The Litany of the Most Blessed Sacrament and Benediction/Exposition were celebrated. A friend who caught the service on Facebook sent

the neat picture of Fr. Jason during this service.

On New Year's Day, we celebrated Mass at 10am, praying for God's blessings in the New Year

and noting the Jewish Rituals the Holy Family partook of to keep Christ in the Law. Deacon Jim celebrated the Most Holy Name of Jesus on January 2nd with a Deacon's Service.



Our Christmas Collections

To give is better than to receive – something that has been drilled in to all of us since we were young. Though it is a personal decision as to if and how much...the church never should have any other response than to provide avenues of giving.

In the closing weeks of 2020, St. Mary's held an Advent Food Drive, a sock-tree collection, and took part in the National YMSofR Clothing Drive. As St. Mary's Food Ministry grew substantially in 2020, some appropriate food was picked to be used for that open ministry. The other items will be donat-



ed locally to charitable organizations that distribute them to the needy.



Thank you to all who were able to donate this year. If you were not able to, there will be other opportunities in the near future.

Holiday Fundraisers

After a busy summer of drive-thru dinners and a multi-weekend Polish-Fest, St. Mary's slowed down just a bit for the closing months of 2020. However, fundraising is always important, and we were able to feature a Thanksgiving AND Christmas Kolaczki sale and a Christmas Eve Wigilia take-home-and-heat dinner. The kolaczki group is headed by Susan and Patti, who hunt out deals for the ingredients in the baking "offseason" and carve out mornings to make and bake in the days leading up to the sale. It is a smaller production, but boy, is it effective! Thank you to the ladies and all who assisted them. The Wigilia take-home dinner was an idea hatched at a monthly Parish Committee meeting whose owner-



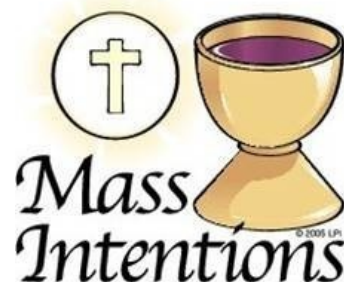
ship was taken by the parish's YMSofR Branch, #29. Various families of the parish provided the food that was prepared and distributed cold on Wednesday, December 23rd. Instructions for cooking/heating were provided, as well as a

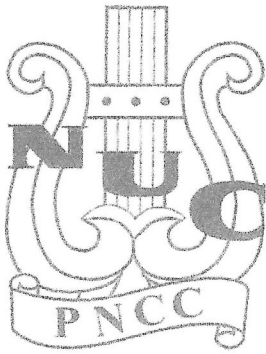
little Wigilia history and traditions. Just add your own fish! Thank you, guys, for taking an idea and running with it!



Scheduled Mass Intentions at St. Mary's

- January 3- Deacon Angelo Pierro of. by St. Mary's Clergy
- January 10- Nick Rowan of. by Patty Temesi
- January 17- Jan Sobolewski of. by wife Linda Sobolewski
- January 24- Hanna Pryer of. by husband Len & family
- January 31- *Open Intention*
- February 7- Sophie & Martin Szpilka of. by son John
- February 14- Frank Ference Sr. & Frank Ference Jr. of. by Josephine Ference
- February 21- Jan Sobolewski of. by cousin Patty Temesi
- February 28- *Open Intention*





**NATIONAL UNITED CHOIRS
MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP SUNDAY
January 31, 2021**

*Make a joyful shout
to God all the earth!
Sing out the honor of
His name; make His
praise glorious -
Psalm 66: 1,2*

Dear Pastor/Organist,

This past year has been a challenge for every American. Many of our Parishes were closed for a while and attendance at Mass has been reduced due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Slowly our churches have been working to get back to the routines of Parish life prior to the health crisis. We are all hopeful for the return of our church programs. Our music ministry is no exception.

The last Sunday of January has been set aside by Synodal resolution as Music Scholarship Sunday, which puts special emphasis on the Music Scholarship program of the National United Choirs of the Polish National Catholic Church. It is the Sunday when the choirs, organists, directors and choir members should be recognized for their contributions to the music ministry of our church. It is also the Sunday when we look to the future and identify those that we hope will be part of the music ministry of the PNCC. Music provides inspiration and pleasure to both the musician and the listener. We encourage you to recognize your aspiring musicians in some manner on this Scholarship Sunday.

The Music Scholarship program has a number of endowments and awards that are available to members of the PNCC, whether it is via instrument or voice, regardless of age. It is our calling to encourage and reach those individuals who have the potential and love of music. With encouragement and praise, the rewards are many for all of the PNCC.

The Scholarship Program has a web site, www.nucmusicscholarship.weebly.com where any interested person can learn about the program – its history, awards, and latest winners. Downloads for the next application process are also available on this site. As requested we have also included donation forms, which could be used for individual contributions throughout the year as well as for memorial gifts.

Past financial support from the faithful of the PNCC has enabled us to grant awards annually to deserving applicants. We offer our sincere “thanks” for what has been donated to the Music Scholarship Fund. Since 1966 the Scholarship Program has awarded 1112 members of the PNCC a financial incentive to continue pursuing their musical studies. To date we have awarded \$332,985! It is a rewarding feeling to know that several of the original music scholarship recipients are still active in the music ministry of the PNCC – five decades later! Indeed the program has succeeded!

We hope you will acknowledge Music Scholarship Sunday in your parish and encourage applicants for the program. It is imperative that any collected funds be submitted to your Diocesan Treasurer without delay so your donations can be included in the amounts for the 2021 scholarships. May God bless you and our PNCC!

Sincerely in Christ,
Cathy A. Bilinski
Cathy A. Bilinski, Administrator
Music Scholarship Committee

Deacon Jim's End of Year Message—Given on St. Stephen's Day

A Call to Martyrdom

December 26, 2020

Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59

The martyrdom of Stephen

Stephen was filled with grace and power and began to work miracles and great signs among the people. But then certain people came forward to debate with Stephen, some from Cyrene and Alexandria who were members of the synagogue called the Synagogue of Freedmen, and others from Cilicia and Asia. They found they could not get the better of him because of his wisdom, and because it was the Spirit that prompted what he said. They were infuriated when they heard this, and ground their teeth at him.

But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. 'I can see heaven thrown open' he said 'and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' At this, all the members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they all rushed at him, sent him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul. As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

Deacon's Thoughts and Reflection:

In the early Church, martyrdom is a thought-provoking and fascinating topic to study, for numerous were the number of martyrs and too, in time its symbolism. A martyr is defined by the Word of God as, One who bears witness of the truth, and suffers death in the cause of Christ (Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13; 17:6). There is a wide interlude in the reading taken from the Apostles' Acts, between Deacon Stephen's apprehension and his stoning – an authorized execution (?). Deacon Stephen's discourse is retrospectively not surprising that it led to his death, for it demonstrated with ample biblical references that throughout history the children of Israel had opposed God's blessings. It was consistent with their actions that they would challenge the Holy Spirit by rejecting Jesus.



St. Stephen's message was imperative in the development of the Book of Acts and another opportunity offered to Jerusalem, which is a mirroring of the Old Testament in the number of times Moses was disregarded by the Children of Israel. "The time has now come for the Good News to spread to Judaea and Samaria and the ends of the earth."

I can't imagine the emotions that might have been going through St. Stephen's mind, how each stone wounded his body – yet, he felt no pain, how the noise of the crowd – was inaudible to him and how the faces were in plain sight – yet, he could only see Jesus! This power and faith of St. Stephen is an amazing example of service and sacrifice. Service and sacrifice, something those that have been called to serve God and spread the Good News, make a lifelong commitment to do, deacons included.

I have been asked over the past year, "how is it being a deacon?" My intent in answering that question is to share what Jesus Christ has been doing through me this year, and to share some of the amazing things that are happening in the work of the Church.

Deacon Jim's End of Year Message—Given on St. Stephen's Day

So, with that stated, the short answer to what is it like being a deacon... it is amazing! But amazing does not take into account the “why” behind the “what”. So, let me expound why it has been amazing.

First and foremost the journey to my ordination began decades before and like the Season of Advent brings a sense of longing, this was something I longed to do for a very large part of my life. My first memory of wanting to become a priest was a dialogue between myself at the age of eight and Prime Bishop Thaddeus Zielinski. The account would be retold by my mother that I indicated I wanted to be a bishop (!), but Prime Bishop Zielinski indicated that I would have to become a priest first.

About that same age my Uncle Joe Szalkta, who built the original barracks at Spojnia Farm in 1933, gave me \$1,000.00 to put into an account to pay for seminary studies. At my childhood home in Pennsylvania, I used to practice serving at the altar on the top of my mother's piano, having Mass and intoning *Święty, Święty, Święty* (Holy, holy, holy) for Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament ...but these are stories for another time.

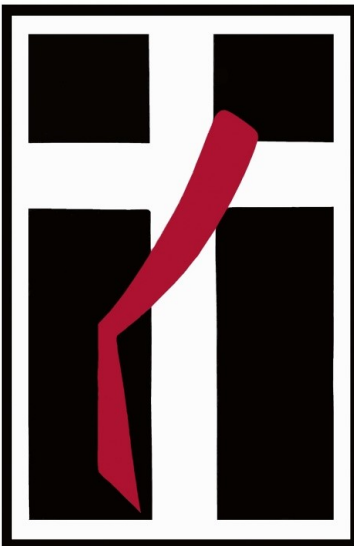
Fast forward 50 years...I have been afforded amazing blessings over the past year as deacon. Don't get me wrong – being blessed wasn't without a few trials, challenges, disappointments and opportunities to learn. Structurally I was pleased to assist our Bishop in serving as Chair of our Diocesan Synod. In the middle of a pandemic with an ever changing direction on combating COVID, we were blessed by being able to reduce participation costs for the constitutionally required synod and as a result able to lift some financial burden to those throughout the diocese. Our parish of St. Mary's saw a savings

of \$1,500.00. Even more of a blessing was the amazing presence of the Holy Spirit from Bishop Jerry's opening message and throughout all the proceedings.

At the start of the pandemic and the unfortunate need to suspend in-person worshipping, I was blessed being able to share information about the history and hymns of our church. I felt the love by all the positive notes and feedback. I was blessed being able to assist the amazing work Father Jason did in setting up Holy Masses and liturgies to bring the Gospel to so many. It was also a blessing being a part of our Polish Fest Drive-Thru dinner. Was it not amazing that we sold out of food on day 1 – lines upon lines to get to St. Mary's – awesome!

While I see the hand of God in all that has taken place, my amazement comes on a weekly basis as I am blessed to visit with each person who comes to our food ministry, about 275 per month. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that His hand is holding mine in His ministry of taking care of those in need while I ask the questions: how are you doing? How was your past week? And how does your upcoming week look? These simple questions turn into a time of prayer, sharing of one's heart and a realization that God is working through me – this takes my breath away.

The time has now come for the Good News to spread! The miracles, prayers, songs and fellowship with Christ are amazing. The ministry of a deacon is awesome and I thank Christ Jesus for His gifts and blessings. May I humbly continue in His and your service.



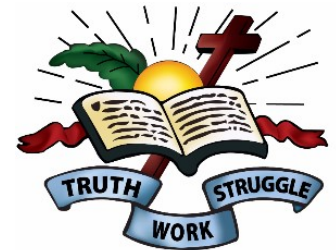
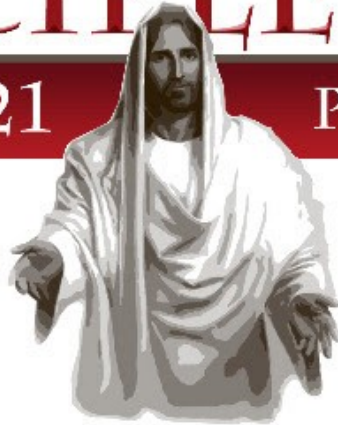
Deacon Jim

PNCC Future Directions Update

DISCIPLESHIP

2021

PNCC



January 2021 - Daniel in the Lion's Den

As we begin a new Year in our Lord 2021, we give thanks for the blessings of the past and look forward to what lies ahead by putting our Trust in our God. During 2021 as we prepare for a post Covid world, to reengage and recommit ourselves as the Body of Christ; we will examine the lives of some of the prophets, disciples of our Lord, saints, bishops and their discipleship virtues to see what we can learn from them to apply in our daily living. For January we focus on Daniel in the Lion's Den.

[Click Here to watch a short video message on Discipleship 2021 and Daniel by Fr. Sr. Rob Nerkovich](#) (or visit PNCC Future Direction on Youtube)

Scriptures for Reflection

Daniel Chapter 6

Reflection & Action Item:

Daniel was raised to high office by King Darius. His jealous rivals trick the King to decree that no prayers should be addressed to anyone but the King. Daniel continued to be steadfast in his prayer to God. Thus, he was thrown into the lion's den and as we know God protected and saved him because of his great faith. As Daniel said "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight." (6:22)



This story teaches us that no one or nothing is a match for the True God and that God provides for those who are faithful and devoted to Him. So even in the midst of difficult and challenging times such as this ongoing pandemic – let us continue to put our faith and trust in God.

Be steadfast in your **daily** prayer and encourage others to put their faith and trust in God, Who will guide us through this storm. Do not lose heart but be strong in your faith and encourage others to do the same

Song Recommendation: Confidence by Sanctus Real- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEGGVmSSr-I>

Prayer in Time of National Anxiety

Let us pray.

I come to You, Lord, in this time of uncertainty and confusion that has gripped our nation and our world. I pray that our leaders and representatives in government are filled with Your peace, strength and courage. May your gifts of wisdom and understanding, fortitude and counsel be sought and utilized by them for the well-being of all people. By their belief and trust in You may they provide capable leadership, promote unity and peace, and be attentive to the concerns of all people. May Your Church provide support and comfort; and help strengthen our hope for peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



PNCC Future Direction is 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.

Wishing you and your family a Blessed, Safe, Healthy and Faithful 2021. May God bless you; may our Lord calm this storm and may our Blessed Mother intercede for us. Have a blessed day and be safe, careful, healthy and faithful as disciples!

PNCC Supreme Council Future Direction Committee

Various Announcements

CLOTHING DRIVE—The National United YMSofR clothing drive has concluded! Thanks for the many donations. They will be donated to Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Cleveland. We will announce our results in the next newsletter!

SCHEDULING MASSES – Fr. Jason is now scheduling Masses for 2021. You may offer a Mass for the health or in honor of someone who is living, perhaps for a particular life event, or you may offer Mass for one who is now living in Heaven. These can be offered at anytime, but often coincide with the day they left this world, a birthday, anniversary, or so on.

CHRISTMAS THANKS- Christmas 2020 has come and gone...except for the fact that the church continues our wonderment and celebration for 40 days! Many thanks for those who prepared the church for the change-of-season from Advent to Christmas. Also, as we were walloped with an ill-timed (for churches, at least!) snowstorm, we appreciate any and all who braved the elements to worship our Lord and welcome the coming of the Sav-

ior of the World.

LET'S GO TO THE MELT! – Our first restaurant fundraiser takes place on Tuesday, January 12, all day at "The Melt" in Independence. The flyer has been emailed, can be found on the inside cover of this newsletter, and is on our website & Facebook page. The flyer is good for 20% of the bill returned to St. Mary's, and is good for dine-in or take-out. Please plan to grab a bite at The Melt, supporting your parish...and pass it on to others!

ADVENT DAY OF REFLECTION – Thanks to all who participated in our Advent Day of Reflection for our Seniorate last month on December 8. Appreciation to our camerawoman Sarah, and all who worshipped.

ONLINE SPIRITUAL RETREAT – The Polish National Catholic Church will be hosting an online Spiritual Retreat at 7pm on Wednesday evening, January 20. The retreat is regarding discipleship in the church and is entitled "We Will Trust in You." If you would like to come to church to attend the retreat, we will have our new big screen and projector ready to go for the evening –

we will happily host 15-20 people. If you would rather attend from home, please email robnem21@aol.com to get the Zoom information.

PARISH ANNUAL MEETING – As many saw on our parish calendars, we tentatively have the Annual Meeting for our parish scheduled on January 31 – we are keeping that date "tentative". We want as many parishioners as possible at our meeting, and will discuss this at our next Parish Committee (Board) Meeting on January 17.

FOOD MINISTRY UPDATE – Food Ministry is prepared to continue on a weekly basis throughout 2021! What an undertaking! The ministry has grown quite a bit...which is attributed not only to the dedication of the staff, but to the fact that there are many people in need these days – whether it is in dire need of food, a need to connect with others, or spiritual comfort. If you would like to assist in this ministry, please speak to Deacon Jim. We are also greatly appreciative for a very generous donation from parishioners Nate, Amanda, and family to fund this ministry throughout 2021.

January Days of Note



January Birthdays

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

January Anniversaries

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



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our YouTube channel

Subscribe to our
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"The Kings from the East"

"Dear children,"
they asked in every town,
Three kings from
the land of the sun,
"Which is the road
to Bethlehem?"
But neither the old
nor the young
Could tell,
so the kings rode on:
Their guide
was a golden star,
Which glittered a
head in the air,
So clear, so very clear.
The star stood still
over Joseph's house,
Then all
of them stepped in:
The good ox lowed
and the little child cried,
And the kings began to sing.

Heinrich Heine 1797-1856



Our Prayer List

Praying for St. Mary's Parishioners & Friends

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bill & Pat Glatzer | Barbara Baranowski |
| Bill Kastak | Anna Dawidziuk |
| Craig Atherton | John Spilka |
| Johanna Markiewicz | Mary Ann Loschelder |
| Ralph & June Zaun | Len Pryer |
| Marty Bengela | Tom Putynski |
| Polly Gajda | Millie Dominik |
| Kathleen Beres | Louise Cygan |
| David Micka | Carol Hreha |
| Chester & Ann Warzala | Tom Petrie |
| Amy Dreger | Patti Dotson |
| Elizabeth Starnawski | Jack Spilka |
| Elaine Repede | John Radon |
| Wanda Clark | Beth Chihill |
| Michael Cosevin | Helen Cummings |
| Laina Dachtal | Wendy Andrzejewski |
| Jay Grabowsky | Pam Chesar |
| Cecelia Hall | Caroline Kunes |
| Linda Marks | Thomas Lill |
| John & Anne Nemetz | Rhonda Smith |
| Emma Freshwater | Carol Boesch |
| Joanie True | Daniel Rinella |
| Fr. Tom Sheha | Tom Slomka |
| Geri S. | Ben Soltis |
| Pam Tropiano | Linda Vect |
| Dennis and Sue Vect | Marcus Vaughn, Jr. |
| Bryson Dzurhoff | Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak |
| Kelly B | Jane Hunter |
| Dennis Thome | The Finnie Family |
| Carlene Fliss | Jim Fliss Jr. |
| John Michalczyk | Cathy Pieciak |
| Nan Cramer | Bp. John Mack- |
| David Vaden | Bp. John Swantek |
| Mary Cawley | Richard & Edna Samelson |
| Jim Giles | Tammy Teubl |
| Wanda Heffner | Loretta Baldwin |
| Donna Kidd | Paulette Lilli |
| Anthony Grad | Azriel G. |
| Marilyn Girard | Courtney Austin |
| Stephanie Milla | Shannon Alberino |
| Jayden Pieciak | Baby Layla |
| Jeremy Steinbrick | Katie Stallbaum |
| Marcia Klein | Kim Penney |
| George & Linda Makovicka | Julie L. |
| Barbara B. | Patrick Kmitt |
| Michael McGivern | Daniel Morgan |
| Barb & Jim Lukas | Renee Lukas |
| Mike Matis | Leslie Rafalko |
| Ronald Tiffe | |

WE ALSO REMEMBER
ALL ACTIVE & RETIRED CLERGY
ALL SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN
Bless them, O Lord.