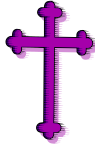




The Messenger

December, 2019,
January, 2020

Morsels of Faith from Mr. Kuhar



As we enter into the season of Advent, there are a variety of resources to help you grow closer to Christ and prepare for His coming. We have put together a booklet of prayers and prayer suggestions for each day of Advent. They are available in the back of church and also available on our website. The Little Blue Book with daily reflections will also be available. I hope you will take advantage of one or both of these resources.

There are also some opportunities in our parish to come together that I would like to highlight and encourage you to attend. Every month there is a group for mothers who meet on every second Saturday from 9-10:30am. They will be gathering on Saturday, December 14th. It is a wonderful opportunity to come together and share the joys and challenges of your life as you are encouraged, supported and uplifted in prayer.

On the third Saturday of the month, the dads gather from 8-9:30am. Please consider joining them for fellowship and discussion of how they are striving to live out the faith and follow God faithfully. They will be meeting on Saturday, December 21st.

Every month on the third Sunday, we have an opportunity for the whole family to come together to give God thanks and praise. On Sunday, December 15th from 5-6pm there will be adoration and music so that we as a parish family can gather to worship God. It is called Reclaim and I strongly encourage you to join us as a family for this wonderful time of prayer.

This next gathering is after Advent but I want to highlight an Epiphany party that will be taking place on Sunday January 5th, from 12-2pm. Join us for Mass at 11am and stay after for a celebration for the whole family; or if you are attending a different Mass, please come back and spend time celebrating with your parish family beginning at 12pm.

I hope to see you at one or more of these wonderful events. Have a very blessed, prayerful Advent and may the anticipation and wonder of the season fill your hearts.

The Advent Wreath

The Advent Wreath is essentially a home custom, a center for family prayer and activity. One source has the origin of this custom in an ancient Scandinavian ritual that celebrated the winter solstice festival and the gradual lengthening daylight.

As the candles were lit, and the wheel was spun, (the wreath hung from the ceiling) the light would blend into one single circle of light, celebrating the return of the light of the world. Christians, adopting the symbol, retained the theme of celebrating the return of the Light of the World, Jesus Christ.

The Advent wreath is a small foretaste of the evergreens of winter, the freshness and vitality of God's relationship among humanity and all creation. The wheel, or circle, represents the endlessness of time. The wreath, an ancient symbol of victory and glory, shows the fulfillment of time in the coming of Christ. The successively lit candles illustrate the gradual progression of God's revelation culminating in the birth of Jesus.



Cindy's Corner



I was excited to notice that we meet with our students on the day that the Catholic Church will be celebrating The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Typically this feast day is on December 8, but since that is a Sunday this year, it will be celebrating the feast day on Monday, December 9. I enjoy when special days in our church year land on a Faith Formation Monday. Yay!

I like this brief definition of the Immaculate Conception by Mark Hart, *“The Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived without original sin in order to preserve her as the perfect vessel through which our Lord would become flesh to the world. This does not mean, however, that Mary was not in need of a Savior. Jesus redeemed Mary, too, but in a unique way. You and I are conceived with the stain of original sin (unleashed in Eden by our ancestors Adam and Eve), and we need Baptism to wash away that stain and cleanse our souls. The difference is that when Mary was conceived, God intervened and chose to prevent Mary’s soul from bearing that stain.”* Pure and lowly our Mother Mary; it’s no wonder why we would run to her with our needs and concerns. Praise God for her beautiful grace-filled blessing in our lives.

The gospel reading for the feast day is Luke 1:26-38 when Mary proclaims her famous “yes” to the angel Gabriel at the news of the conception of her son Jesus. “May

it be done for me according to your will.” Immaculate Mary your praises we sing! BUT-her life was far from immaculate; it was messy, painful and even traumatic. Yet we can imagine how beautiful her relationship was with her son Jesus, nurturing Him through His childhood and His young adult years. We can imagine the overwhelming love she had for her son because we as parents have felt this, too. I believe we all know the messy as well. Mary was afraid when the angel first appeared but with her “yes” to the love of God the darkness of her fear faded away. What is it that we have difficulty saying “yes” to? Can we let go and let God work through us? Can the love we have with our Father bear all things?

Can you think of a time when you needed to ask someone for help even though it was the last thing you wanted to do? I’m sure you can. It is hard to do. Was there a time you were surprised by the quick “yes” that you received when you asked for help? Amazing isn’t it; the relief and the gratefulness that you felt, it changes us. I recently watched a documentary called, “All or Nothing: Sister Clare Crockett” (it is on Amazon Prime and I highly recommend it). Sr. Clare mentioned how when she woke up each morning she had a blank check for God. God would fill it out with what needed to be done that day and she would give it her all. It was mentioned in the film that whenever you asked Sr. Clare to do something, her quick response was “of course”.

What a wonderful and loving response. Sister Clare has stuck with me and most certainly so has

Mary’s “yes”! Trusting in God and being open to His Will will dispel the darkness as His light pours in. Sounds like I have a start on an Advent plan for myself.

It is also important to know that Mary, the Immaculate Conception, is the patroness of the United States. This is our Holy Day! I will leave you with this beautiful excerpt from an Act of Consecration to Mary as the Immaculate Conception, a prayer that dedicates the United States to the care of the Blessed Virgin:

Most Holy Trinity, we place the United States of America into the hands of Mary Immaculate in order that she may present the country to you. Through her, we wish to thank you for the great resources of this land and for the freedom that has been its heritage. Through the intercession of Mary, have mercy on the Catholic Church in America. Grant us peace. Have mercy on our President and on all the officers of our government. Grant us a fruitful economy, born of justice and charity. Have mercy on capital and industry and labor. Protect the family life of the nation. Guard the precious gift of many religious vocations. Through the intercession of our Mother, have mercy on the sick, the tempted, sinners--on all who are in need. Amen.

Holy Mary of the Immaculate Conception Pray for us! We know what her response will be!

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The Story of the Christmas Crib



The popularity of the Christmas Crib appears to be handed down to us from St. Francis of Assisi. Tradition holds that in 1223 Francis was visiting some friends in the nearby town of Greccio on Christmas Eve. Francis desired to celebrate the Feast of the Lord's birth in a special way.

Francis invited some of his friends to gather in a small cave on the hillside of the town. Here, they acted out the story of Jesus' birth, a "living nativity". Townspeople came from all over to witness this simple act of faith. From that time, until now, the special image of Christmas has been the Christmas Crib. The Nativity scene brings to life the profound awareness that our God desired to become one like us. When we see the Christmas Crib in so many places in this season, we are reminded of the first crib on the hillside of Greccio and that, once again, God, Emanuel, is truly with us!

Prayer for the Christmas Crib

Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise up our thoughts to Him, who is God-with-us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen