

Winter
2015

Holy Spirit Community Newsletter

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From Fr. Joe

I hope you and your family are well and are sharing in the rising anticipation and of the Advent Season as we move closer to celebrating Christmas as families, neighbors and a faith community. Advent reminds us as we once waited for Christ to come, we now wait for him to come again in glory. Christmas reminds us of a God who promised us a Savior... a Light for the world... a Savior who welcomed us to embrace a new way of life while he promised us Eternal Life.

Christmas Blessings,
Christmas Light, Christmas
Joy, Christmas Welcome!
Come, Lord Jesus, come! We are so present, so close to each other at this time of the year. The season calls us to be present to each other in every moment, finding joy, peace and love. A child born in a manger illuminates our way. He is our gift. We live sharing this gift with others.

We look forward to Christmas and our New Year! LIFT, and our Holy Spirit School provide opportunities to form faith in people of all ages. Through dedication and hard work, our Facilities Planning Committee is ushering in the first phases of our Building Project for all to see. May the new year bring about improvements in our Church and Parish Center that will benefit our community for years to come! Let's work together and bring this to completion. We have many reasons to give thanks!

Advent and Christmas
Blessings! — Fr. Joe

HOLY SPIRIT CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE: CHURCH AND PARISH CENTER PROGRESS

Over 50 Holy Spirit parishioners attended our September presentation on our revised plan which is focused first on upgrades in the church and then on renovating our current parish offices to provide gathering space for community events and meetings and to improve the working space for our parish staff. The September parishioner meeting provided a great deal of input on the project. The members of the Facilities Planning Committee and our architect, Paul Mays, thank the community for their continued guidance and support.

First Phase: Church Upgrades

The upgrade to the church lighting is complete. The Committee has received bids from painting and carpeting contractors. It is hoped that the painting will be completed by Christmas and new carpeting will be

installed in January. A new, state of the art sound system will be installed by in mid-January. The Committee is researching the replacement of the heating/air conditioning system.

The Committee is looking for volunteers to help with some smaller scale projects in the church. If you can help, please let Fr. Joe O'Brien know. If these smaller items can be complete with volunteer help, it allows the Committee to direct funds to the completion of larger projects now.

Some of these smaller projects include: removal or modification of two wooden planters in the sanctuary to permit better flow around the altar; relocate the two brass handrails further apart; repair the stairs leading to the church basement; remove the wall between the vestibule and the reconciliation room; and relocate the reconciliation room.

A Jubilee of Mercy: Merciful Like the Father

Jesus speaks powerfully to us through parables and stories, touching our hearts and changing us forever. Everyone has a favorite image of Jesus. What is yours? The Father who receives his Prodigal Son? The Good Shepherd who makes the 99 secure and then looks for that single lost sheep? Jesus expressed God's love to us through his merciful presence and actions. Be merciful like the father, merciful like the shepherd.



On December 8th, Pope Francis opens a Jubilee Year of Mercy to focus attention to the importance of mercy in our life of faith. "The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more," he tells us. "This is the time to return to basics and bear the weaknesses and struggles of our sisters and brothers. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look with hope to the future."

The jubilee year tradition comes from the Old Testament – the Book of Leviticus – which commands a jubilee year every 50 years for the freeing of slaves and prisoners and the forgiveness of debts. Everyone is called to reflect on and participate in God's generous mercy.

FALL IN LOVE WITH CATHOLICISM RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

RCIA - The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults has over a 20 year history at Holy Spirit. Phil Whitney and I have helped more than 60 people to either come into the Catholic Church or complete their Sacraments of Initiation. The experience has been rewarding in that we see people struggling with choosing the direction that their faith life is taking. Prompted by the Holy Spirit they seek to find that path in the Catholic Church. Our ministry team has expanded to include Andy Agacoilli and Aaron Trembley (we are always looking for people to join our ministry).

Recently we celebrated the Rite of Acceptance with our present Candidate, Lydia Vigna, who is preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist. Lydia has completed the Inquiry Period of the RCIA, where she explores whether her faith journey is leading her to the Catholic Church. This period involves sharing the meaning of the Sunday readings in our faith life and some general aspects of the Catholic Church. The next phase of the RCIA is the Catechumenate Period. Over the next several months Lydia will continue to share the Sunday readings and learning more about the sacraments of the Church and its social teachings. During Lent she will enter into a prayerful discernment of her faith journey to make the final commitment to the Catholic Church. Reception into the Church and receiving Confirmation and Eucharist will happen at the next Easter Vigil.

Please keep Lydia and our RCIA Team in your prayers.

Anyone with questions should contact Deacon Bill Dringus (477-4803 or deacon1275@aol.com).

Ministries: Sharing Gift and Life

Through baptism, you share in God's love and in the gifts of the Spirit. We are all called to co-create with God, to cooperate in ministries of love and service. You are called to share your gifts. Have you thought about how you can make God's love, gift and presence come alive? Here are a few ways you can make your gifts come alive at Holy Spirit:

Altar servers are young men and women who, having received Eucharist (entering third grade), can serve the parish community by assisting the priest and deacon at the altar. If you are interested, please contact Deacon Bill Dringus

Lectors are men and women (middle school students are most welcome to participate) who proclaim God's Word. Lectors help worshipers receive God into their hearts and lives. If you would like to learn about becoming a lector, please contact Dan Farley.

Eucharistic Ministers are men and women, who have received confirmation, and share the Body and Blood of Christ with the assembly at Mass and with the sick and homebound. Please contact Pat Rickert if you'd like to learn more about this ministry.

Greeters and Ushers provide hospitality and assistance to all who come to church. If you'd like to learn about this ministry, please talk with Frank Pirri and Rick Goss.

Offertory Counters count the collection and see to the secure care of our stewardship gift to the parish. To become an Offertory Counter, please contact Patti Salisbury.

Blue Christmas For Those Who Grieve

It seems the whole world begins celebrating Christmas in November. You can't go very far without seeing Christmas decorations or hearing holiday music on the radio or in public places. Liturgically, the latter half of Advent points us toward Christmas. Christmas is perhaps the most festive time of the year.

But not everyone feels joy at Christmas. What's it like when people experience loss and grief at Christmas? Often, an event or the remembrance of the death of a loved one, a serious illness, divorce, separation or loss of a job can leave you feeling very alone, like you're thousands of miles away from everyone else while they celebrate Christmas joy.

The longest nights of the year happen near Christmas. Where can you go when everyone's singing and celebrating?

If you or a friend would like a place to come and pray, to be welcomed and heard, please know that you are welcome at our parish's Blue Christmas prayer service on Sunday, December 20th at 6PM at the church. The God of great joy is also the God of all healing and consolation who receives us just as we are. Come and find some understanding and peace.

YEAR OF MERCY CONT'D.

Why Mercy? Why Now?

Our world hungers for mercy. Pope Francis calls on our parishes to become 'islands of mercy in a sea of indifference.' He calls us to bring consolation to the poor, liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery' and spiritual sight to those who have lost sight, lost touch of God and to restore human dignity to all who have had their dignity stripped away.

The Church calls us to be generous in opening our hearts to those living on the margins of society just as Jesus did. May we exercise mercy freely and live our faith with joy.

Celebrating the Year of Mercy

- ◆ Contemplate mercy. You can begin to see how God gives so much and asks nothing in return.
- ◆ When you are touched by God's mercy, you can be merciful to others.
- ◆ Forgive others. Jesus asks you to forgive others in the same way you have received forgiveness from God. Forgiveness is an act of mercy for ourselves as well as for the one who hurt you.
- ◆ Listen to God's Word. Linger over the Word and meditate on the message of God's mercy.
- ◆ Make a Pilgrimage. Open a door to the Jubilee Year of Mercy with Mass at our Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, December 13th at 2 pm.
- ◆ Practice the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Incorporate mercy into your daily life.

Music Notes

Over the years liturgical music has changed, encompassing broader genres, encompassing broader genres and it has come to meet the needs of the changing world. Chant was the first well known form of liturgical music using simple melodic lines sung a cappella (without instrumental accompaniment) or by singing different words on one single note. The organ or harpsichord was introduced after that to add accompaniment for singers. This brought about more easily sung hymns. Folk music came about in the 1960's and 70's which did away with the organ for a while; guitars and more upbeat instruments were common. Songs that we still sing today have that folk music type feel and have melodies that can be sung easily. Today we notice that the music that liturgical music composers are writing have lots of syncopation and have more of a rock/pop sound. This comes about by having drums, guitars, the piano, and even the saxophone used at liturgy. This type of sound comes about by having rumbling bass lines and a fast paced or jazzy rhythm. Sometimes these pieces have a much more repetitive refrain and solo-like verses which can be difficult to fit into the liturgy, however, with repetition the assembly can learn the refrain easily. These hymns have a clear message and even though they are upbeat and different than what we are used, we enter into a prayerful experience. As we come into the Advent and Christmas seasons, let us listen closely to the words we sing and allow those words to enter our daily lives.

—*Justine Crevatas*

The Children's Choir recently began rehearsals for Advent and Christmas Masses, but children may still join. Rehearsals will continue through the first three weeks of December and are held on Thursdays at 6:30PM in the Church. Please if you are interested in joining, please contact Music Minister Justine Crevatas at Justine@holyspiritchurcheg.org.

On Christmas Eve, come hear the Children's Choir at our 6PM Mass; join the Adult Choir for carols at 7:45PM, just prior to our 8:30PM Mass.

Sacramental Preparation

Are you thinking about sacraments for your children? A meeting for parents and children preparing for Reconciliation was held in early September. If you missed that meeting and want to register your son or daughter for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation or if you want to inquire about the Confirmation preparation process, please contact our parish office at 477-7925 and ask for Fr. Joe O'Brien or Marie Frost (marie@holyspiritchurcheg.org).

Please mark your calendars to participate in LIFT (January 4th or 10th from 5:30 to 7:30p.m.). Participation in LIFT is part of the preparation process for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation.

HOLY SPIRIT SCHOOL NEWS

Here we are already approaching the end of the calendar year! Our building has been bustling with student activity, both during the school day and with all the extracurricular activities we offer. From our spelling bee, to Make it-Bake it-Take it, to gearing up for our Christmas Pageant and Concert, our students are exercising all of their amazing talents. It is such a blessing to see our wonderful students growing spiritually, academically and socially.

We are looking forward to our annual Christmas Concert which will take place on Thursday December 17th at 6:30 pm in our school gym. All are invited to attend and see this wonderful performance by our school students. Looking ahead, we are beginning Catholic Schools Week with our 1st Open House on Sunday January 31st. We will have a building full of excitement for parents and students as well as registration information for the coming school year. Please check our website for more details as the end of January approaches.

Please stay tuned for more great events taking place at Holy Spirit School and please visit our website, like our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter. As always, Holy Spirit is OUR school, so you are always welcome to stop by the Office and take a tour of our wonderful facility.

Thank you for your continued support and God Bless.

Joe Slichko, Principal

Please visit the school website at hsseg.com

The Advent Giving Tree

The Advent Giving Tree offers a convenient way for Holy Spirit parishioners to donate gifts to the CoNSERNS-U Christmas Store. The Giving Tree is decorated with tags listing gift ideas that parishioners take from the tree. Then parishioners place their **unwrapped, unopened** gifts under the tree by noon on Sunday, December 13th. **The tags must be attached to the gifts.** (The gifts are for young people, 17 and under. CoNSERNS-U suggests a \$25 limit on individual gifts.) For more information, contact the parish office at info@holyspiritchurcheg.org or 477-7925.



Please check the enclosed post card for a full listing of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses.

Our New Parish Secretary

Pam Bennett was born and raised in Blessed Sacrament parish in Albany, attending Mercy High School and Maria College before beginning her travels around the world.

Pam worked for the NY State Police before moving to the Federal Civil Service in Richmond, VA. Her career took her to Rome, NY, Carlisle, PA, and finally to Dillon, MT. While working for the Forest Service in MT, she had the honor of working on the Challenger Shuttle Recovery Mission.

Pam is an avid reader and pastel painter. With a love of travel and history, Pam has been to 42 of the 50 states, plus The Netherlands, France, England (twice), Belgium, Scotland, Italy (twice), and Ireland. Her latest trips took her to Albuquerque, NM, Cape May, NJ and Cape Cod to study with Master Pastelists.

Pam comes to us after six years in the HR and Communications Departments at the Pastoral Center. Prior to that, she was parish secretary at Blessed Sacrament in Albany. She said she likes working for the church because of a need to work for and with people she can respect, and she meets the nicest people in her job. "Working for the church isn't like a government or corporate job. There is more consideration for the employees and the people they serve."

Pam lives in Albany with her father, who joins her on many of her trips.

CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE CONT'D.

Second Phase: Improving our Parish Center

At our September meeting, a revised plan was presented to parishioners that would provide much needed space for gatherings and meetings. The original Spirit Hall plan, which would have provided a new space for meetings and gatherings and some church improvements, had a budgeted cost of \$1.1 million. This revised plan, which provides for church improvements and the renovation of existing space on the first floor of our parish center, creates a gathering/meeting room and relocates offices to the second floor. This revised plan has a \$620,000 budget.

The Committee received many positive comments about the practicality and affordability of Parish Center plans and is looking to proceed. Once the church improvements are completed in mid to late January, the Committee will know what was spent and what is left for the Parish Center improvements. The Committee and our architect will be meeting to finalize the Parish Center plans based on available funding. This work should begin in the late spring or early summer and be completed in phases. You can see full color copies of the architect's Parish Center drawings on our website: holyspiritchurcheg.org.

Would you like to make a gift or a pledge to support our building project? We have received over \$320,000 in pledges and gifts so far. With church improvements now underway, this is an opportunity to help support this project which will benefit our community for years to come. For more information, please speak with Kevin Haggerty, Fr. Joe O'Brien or check our parish website.

- Kevin Haggerty, Chair for Facilities Planning

WINTER EVENTS

- **Dec. 10 A Christmas Carol (by Gr. 3 & 4)**

Holy Spirit School Gym 6:30_{PM}

- **Dec. 12 Cookies and Caroling**

65 Berkshire Drive, after the 4_{PM} Mass

- **Dec. 14 Reconciliation Service**

St. Mary's, Clinton Heights, 7_{PM}

- **Dec. 16 Reconciliation Service**

St. John/St. Joseph's, Rensselaer, 12:10_{PM}

- **Dec. 17 School Christmas Concert**

Holy Spirit School Gym, 6:30_{PM}

- **Dec. 20 Blue Christmas**

Holy Spirit Church, 6_{PM}

- **Dec. 21 Reconciliation Service**

St. Mary's, Nassau 7_{PM}

- **Dec. 22 Greening of the Church**

Decorating the Church for Christmas, 6_{PM}

- **January 4th & 10th LIFT**

Holy Spirit School Gym, 5:30-7:30_{PM}

- **Jan. 19 Living Mercy Everyday**

Holy Spirit School Library, 7_{PM}

- **January 31 Holy Spirit School Open House**

Holy Spirit School, 6-3_{PM}

- **Feb. 1 & 7 LIFT**

Holy Spirit School Gym

Monday, 5:30-7:30_{PM}

Sunday, Special Food & Time TBA!

- **Feb. 10, Ash Wednesday**

Holy Spirit Church, 6:45_{AM}, 8:30_{AM} Mass

Holy Spirit Church, Prayer Service, 6:30_{PM}

Join us for hospitality after Mass each first Sunday of the month.

Online Giving

Do you spend winter—or other months—away, or are you traveling weekends and unable to attend Mass at Holy Spirit Church? If so, online giving is an easy and secure way for you to continue your support. Online giving is convenient, too! Through electronic funds transfer from your savings or checking account, you may donate and manage your stewardship online. Just go to www.holyspiritchurcheg.org and click on the Online Giving Authorization Form. Forms are also available at the Parish Center, 9:30AM to 3:30PM, Monday-Friday. Secure, easy and convenient—just one mouse click away!

Bishop's Appeal

As Christmas approaches, please remember our sisters and brothers in need. Support the Bishop's Appeal. Every gift makes a difference! Send your gift to the Parish Center or go to www.TheBishopsAppeal.org. — Fr. Joe