

# St. Mary's of Parma, OH Monthly Newsletter

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

**January 2017**

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## Ten?!?!

I sit down to write this in a funny place. I am a week away from my annual “guys trip to Las Vegas” and I am contemplating the fact that I will be celebrating the ten (!!!!!) year anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood on January 24. Talk about a different ends of the spectrum!

As the 10th Anniversary of my Ordination looms, I can honestly say I love it even more than I did on day one. Just like I love my wife more than ever in year 6 of marriage and I love my Lord more in my 34th year of life, I feel God has set my path in a truly positive direction.

But, the ever-pervading question for someone who ministers on God's behalf is simple but enormously complex: “Lord...how am I doing?” My daily prayers always include this question, with a petition for direction if things don't seem to be shaking out right.

The “how am I doing” question is almost impossible to answer. I'm sure the grading system in Heaven is juuust a bit different than here on earth. I'd like to think God grades on a curve—less people go to church than ever, families have less chil-



dren, the Church in general has more pockmarks than it did 50 years ago.

Ministry is a very personal thing—much of what we do is on our own accord, with our own motivations, with our idea of the job ahead of us. Ministry is also a very social thing—there has to be someone or something to minister to!

As I've wound my way from Cathedral life in Scranton, Pennsylvania to regular ol' parish life in Parma, OH, I found myself taking stock of “how things are going”. My math shows I spent about 80 months as an assistant and now almost 40 months as a pastor—a near perfect 2/3-1/3 split!

Taking further stock, I'm in the best “shape” I've been in in a number of years. Physically, I've tidied up a couple of loose ends (though the grey hair is sending me mixed signals every day) and spiritually, I truly feel like I'm moving forward.

But enough about me! I wouldn't be doing this without the kick in the pants I got from the Big Guy upstairs back in college.

God is good, and we all need to remind ourselves of that. He wants nothing but good for us, even if we find ourselves surrounded by things that are not “good” remember, for every news story of a shooting or a celebrity death are dozens of undocumented stories of heroism, of faith, and of people quietly leaving this world after living a life that God finds amazing.

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That is why it is important to know what we celebrate and what we pray for. The Solemnity of Humble Shepherds got bumped to January 8 this year. This feast, normally the first Sunday after Christmas, honors the shepherds as the first to hear the message of the Christ Child. It also honors those who take on ministerial roles in this life, be they our bishops, priests, deacons, or those outside our denomination who are called to lead.

Pray for your clergy. They agonize in prayer over the families of all parishioners. My personal exercise is, while in prayer, to picture who-sits-where in church, and prayer for them by name. It is my personal exercise to learn and remember names, to make sure my parishioners are accounted for in prayer, and, selfishly, to even be competitive in prayer. How many can I remember today, Lord?

St. Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians “Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.”

May this be the simplicity of my request for the 10th Anniversary of my Ordination. Like the veteran said to the rookie- “kid, you got a long way to go”. I'll look to have a big party in 15 years if I am so graced to reach 25 years as an ordained priest. For now, pray for me, I'll pray for you, and the church will build from there.

*Fr. Jason*

## Season of Advent

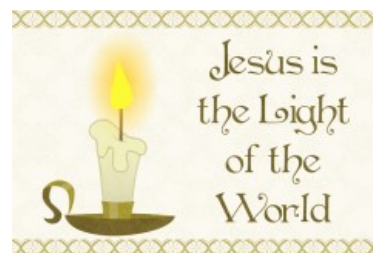
The Sundays in December featured 3 of the 4 Advent Sundays in 2016. As has been custom, children from the parish were called forward to do an Advent reading and light the Advent Candle appropriate for that Sunday.

We also had Father Gronn bless the oplatki that was offered to the congregation to take home for their respective Wigilia/Wilia Christmas Eve Celebrations.

The candles on the Advent Wreath do indeed represent Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. They are lighted each Sunday with prayers asking God for an increase in these very ideas. The theme of the Sunday's scripture points to these as well. All are made manifest by the coming of the Christ Child, the presence of God on earth.

The Christ Candle is then lit at Midnight Mass to represent the new Light that

has come into the world. The candles can then be replaced by white ones, turning it from an "Advent Wreath" to a prophecy-fulfilled "Christmas Wreath."





## PTO Christmas Party

We at St. Mary's are blessed by the PTO's continued dedication to our parish. The members gather early in December to dress the hall for the season, delicately adding decorations to the Fellowship Hall Christmas Tree that is on display.

Special thanks to Debbie Moritz and Marge O'Connor who do the lion-share of the planning and execution. The food was delicious, from bagels to donuts to fruit to the coffee to the orange juice and back again. They also garner prizes for the raffle baskets, which were put on display at the end of November in order for people to purchase tickets and bid on them in a basket raffle.

The congregation was also graced by a visit from jolly ol' St. Nick, who came with a full bag of goodies for all the wonderful children of the par-

ish. We thank Santa for thinking of us in his last week of preparation before his big day.





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### St. Mary's Choir Concert

The choir of St. Mary's was invited this year to put on a concert of Christmas Carols at St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church on Denison Ave in Cleveland.

After a number of dedicated weeks of rehearsal, the choir was armed to the teeth with new and classic Christmas songs to offer. Under the continued direction of our organist Chris Paulus, the concert took place at 7pm on Sun-

day, December 18.

Rev. Joseph Hilinski offered a humble welcome to the people of St. Mary's and to his attending congregation. Then, he offered a blessing as they had an official lighting ceremony for their Christmas lights in church. After that, it was St. Mary's choir, with the additions of Matt Moritz on the cello and Fr. Greg Gronn on the bass saxophone.

Fr. Jason offered a few words at a short intermission and, on behalf of St. Mary's Choir, offered Father Joseph a copy of the PNCC Hymnal. Fr. Joseph was thrilled upon skimming it, noting the rich PNCC liturgy included in the pages.

After the second round of music, all were invited in the church hall for refreshments before heading home. Thanks to David Micka for posting many of the songs on Facebook Live—these videos are available on our Facebook page.





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### Various Announcements

#### PTO News

Thank you to everyone who supported last month's PTO Christmas Party. The donuts, bagels and etc. were delicious, the company was wonderful, and the prizes were fun! Also, thank you to the members of the PTO who worked for months to prepare for this day – your phone calls, diligence, and work to provide for your fellow parishioners echoes that true Christmas Spirit.

#### New Parish Committee

The New Parish Committee of St. Mary's was elected at December's Parish-wide meeting. They will be sworn in at 9am Mass on Sunday, January 8. The first meeting of the 2017 Parish Committee of St. Mary's will take place on Monday, January 9 at 6pm.

### National Park Presentation

On Sunday, December 11, parishioner Gene Stepanik gave a presentation on the National Park Services, mainly focusing on Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

His presentation included a well-planned combination of show and tell, lecturing, and a video. He brought pelts of animals that were collected from the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and had a number of pictures and stories of places he traversed as well.

Many pamphlets regarding the different services offered were available to



#### St. Mary's Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting takes place Sunday, Jan. 29 after 9am Mass. There is only one Mass this day.

#### Epiphany Blessings

Please reach out to Fr. Jason if you would like a Pastoral Visit to your home this Epiphany Season. You may call or email to set up an appointment. He will call/email some parishioners to check their interest in the coming weeks as well.

#### Quick Note

There will be only one Mass at 10am on Sunday, February 12. We will have a parish pot-luck after Mass to enjoy some delicious food and fellowship. Please mark your schedule now!

#### Food Ministry

Our monthly Food Ministry was held Wed., January 4. We have now

surpassed 5000 meals served!

#### Operation Christmas Child

This past week, our coordinator Evonne Pryer received an email re: the delivery results of the shoeboxes that we delivered to Royal Redeemer Church in N. Royalton. It turns out that, on Dec. 1, 21 shoeboxes were delivered to Gabon, a small French-speaking country located on the west coast of Central Africa.

#### Parish Envelopes

Contribution envelopes are available in the Fellowship Hall. There are only a few left– we encourage you to come and pick yours up.

#### Scheduling Masses

As the New Year has arrived, please be aware that Masses are open to be scheduled for 2017. Some dates have been filled, so if there is a date you normally keep, please make sure to inform Fr. Jason in person, via email, or by phone. Thanks!

those in attendance. We thank Gene very much for taking the time to speak to us on a matter he is so passionate about. Next time, do it in the spring so we can be brave enough to go visit these places!



*A note from your parish chair.....*

Happy New Year everyone! I hope everyone enjoyed their holiday celebrations. Wishing all of you a healthy and blessed 2017!

**Christian Unity**

The week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins on January 18<sup>th</sup> and concludes on January 25<sup>th</sup>. I offer you some simple prayers to share with your family and friends in hope of creating a chain of prayers for Christian Unity among us all.



*God, we thank you for your unique gift of life and peace in Christ. You have given our churches many different gifts. Help us to see this diversity as enrichment to building your house in this world. Let us witness what strengthens our unity and encourage all that helps us to bring your love to the people with whom we are living. Amen.*

*Loving God, we thank you for making us one in Christ. Give us imagination and courage to build your church together in unity and in love. Make our lives, and the lives of our churches, a witness to your love for us and for all creation. Grant us unity in our time, O Lord. Amen*

**Newsletter Distribution**

As we're entering the new year we would like to update our mailing list for the monthly newsletter as well as its distribution method as needed. Currently it is made available to parishioners and friends either at church, through the postal service, via email, or through our website. All methods are ac-

ceptable, as our goal is to keep it as convenient and easy for everyone to read and enjoy! Although the cost of postage went down last year (for the first time since 1919!) it is still an expense that we cover on a monthly basis.

Many of you have requested receipt of the newsletter via email. This method obviously eliminates the postage and paper expense while actually giving readers a much better look at the many pictures Father enjoys sharing! We also understand many of you simply prefer the paper copy for your own convenience and that you may not have the capability/desire to receive it electronically.

In addition to the mailing list including currently active parishioners and friends, it also includes those that, due to a lack of contact with the parish, we believe may not share an interest in our activities any longer. We are happy to continue sharing the life of St. Mary's with everyone that is interested but also hope to lessen expense by removing people from our list that no longer wish to receive the newsletter.

Our inquiry in this matter is to find out your personal preference, attempt to meet your needs as well as possible, and try to cut a bit of expense. If you would like to change the method of receiving your newsletter or would like to be removed from the list for whatever reason please let me or Father know at your earliest convenience so we can complete the process of this update. We are both available at church or thru the contact information listed on page 1. Thank you in advance for taking the time to let us know and for your understanding!

*Parish Chair note continued...*

**Remembering To Pray**

"Ask and it shall be given,"  
so the Lord would have you pray,  
"Seek and you will surely find,"  
for He will show the way.  
"Knock and it shall be opened."  
Do you think God is about  
To turn his back upon you,  
knowing all you are without?  
We are as little children  
in this valley full of tears,  
We need His love to guide us,  
giving meaning through the years.  
For to cross life's troubled waters,  
there is no better way,  
Than clinging tightly to his arm...  
and remembering to pray!



Grace E. Easley

**Music Scholarship Sunday**

The last Sunday of January has been designated by the PNCC as Music Scholarship Sunday. 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. We were privileged to have Matthew Moritz and Fr. Greg Gronn, both past recipients of awards, accompany the choir on Christmas Eve as well as at the choir's performance at St. Barbara's on December 18<sup>th</sup>. 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 March 20<sup>th</sup>. Please see Chris Paulus or Jim Ploskonka for more information. Contributions toward this year's awards are being collected thru June 30<sup>th</sup>.

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**DON'T DESPAIR.** Sitting by the window of her convent, Sister Barbara opened a letter from home one evening. Inside the letter was a \$100 bill her parents had sent. Sister Barbara smiled at the gesture. As she read the letter by the window, she noticed a shabbily dressed stranger leaning against the lamp post below. Quickly, she wrote, "Don't despair. Sister Barbara" on a piece of paper, wrapped the \$100 bill in it, got the man's attention and tossed it out the window to him. The stranger picked it up, and with a puzzled expression and a tip of his hat, went off down the street. The next day, Sister Barbara was told that a man was at the door, insistent on seeing her. She went down and found the stranger waiting. Without a word, he handed her a huge wad of \$100 bills. "What's this?" she asked. "That's the \$8,000 you have coming Sister," he replied. "Don't Despair paid 80-to-1."



*clairne p. ploskonka*



## Midnight Mass at St. Mary's

A few scenes from Midnight Mass 2016 at St. Mary's. For more, please visit our website or Facebook page. Thanks to Mr. Gene Stepanik for the photography.





## Midnight Mass at St. Mary's continued

Continued pictures from Midnight Mass 2016 at St. Mary's. For more, please visit our website or Facebook page. Thanks to Mr. Gene Stepanik for the photography.





