



THE SHRINE OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

PARISH NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2008



MESSAGE FROM FATHER JOHN

Dear Friends,

I am writing today about something that is always controversial, something that needs to be looked at carefully as we deal with the shortage of priests here at Blessed Sacrament. In the recent October count (an archdiocesan effort to count all parishioners at all the Masses on the Sundays in October), we realized that we might be able to make a slight change to the Sunday Mass schedule.

I am hoping that the parishioners most affected (i.e., those who attend the 11:45 a.m. and 1 p.m. Masses) would be willing to accommodate their schedules to allow us to combine those two Masses into one Mass at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday. I write this at the beginning of November with the hope that we could implement this change on the first Sunday of Advent, which is November 30. I am anxious to get everyone's feedback and to clearly hear any concerns this change might raise for our parishioners.

Here are the reasons for considering this change:

- We have eight masses on Sunday with only two archdiocesan priests. Father Ben and I consistently offer three or four Sunday Masses every weekend, in addition to the four daily Masses every weekday except Saturday. On a normal weekend, there might be 15 or 16 liturgical celebrations. There are eight Sunday Masses, two Saturday Masses, two or three baptisms, possibly a funeral, and at least one wedding almost every weekend, sometimes two weddings. The baptisms, weddings and funerals are all celebrated by Father Ben and myself. We do have some visiting priests to help us on Sundays.
- We could do a better job liturgically with the music and in ensuring that enough liturgical ministers are available for each Mass if we combine these two Masses. Sometimes we do not have enough Eucharistic ministers at the 1 p.m. Mass. We have a beautiful quartet that sings regularly at the 11:45 a.m. Mass. Jay Rader, our organist and Director of Music, also plays at four Sunday Masses as well as at all the weddings and funerals.

We are also considering a change to the Sunday Mass schedule beginning in September 2009. I would like to change the Sunday schedule to 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Again, this change would not take effect until **next September**, but I would like to have your feedback now to ensure that these changes meet with the approval of our parishioners. I do not want to change the time of the earlier Masses now because our School of Religion, which is very well attended on Sunday mornings, would be affected by a change in schedule from 8:45 a.m. to 9 a.m. Even now, if we had a little more space for parking, particularly on days like All Soul's, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday and other liturgical days, many of our parishioners would be better accommodated by the easier access to parking.

I know that making the change to a 12:30 p.m. Mass will be an inconvenience for some who are so used to going to Mass at 11:45 a.m. or 1 p.m., but hope the 11:45 a.m. group will be open to coming either a bit later or earlier (10:15 a.m.) and that those who regularly attend the 1 p.m. Mass could come 30 minutes earlier. This would be a big favor to your priests, a big favor to our music and liturgy departments, and most importantly, a big favor to our many parishioners who would be better accommodated by parking and the ease of arrival and departure at the parish on Sunday mornings.

Please let me know your thoughts about this proposed change via letter, phone (202.966.6575, x3976) or e-mail (jenzler@blessedsacramentdc.org). I am anxious to hear your concerns. I want to accommodate the parish, but I am not willing to cause anyone a big problem. If this poses a huge difficulty for many of you, we will not make the change. However, I am hopeful we can come to a good solution that best accommodates everyone who comes to Sunday Mass at Blessed Sacrament.

Sincerely,

Father John

Note: This letter will also appear in the November 9 bulletin on Page 5.

NO TIME TO TRAVEL?

Here are two ways to satisfy your wanderlust at Blessed Sacrament this weekend:

The Blessed Sacrament School Book Fair **SAFARI** will offer book sales and signings (November 8) by local guest authors Katy Kelly, Sallie Lowenstein, Caroline Hickey, Rodney Briggs and Steve Vogel in the school auditorium. It's a great opportunity to do Christmas shopping in a stress-free, pleasant environment. Fair hours: Saturday, November 8, 6 to 9 p.m. and Sunday, November 9, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The 9th Annual **Italian Dinner** will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the school gym on Saturday, November 8. This is a terrific family event, and it gives mom the night off! Contact Patty Green at patty@psgreenconsulting.com.

BECOME INFORMED ABOUT ISLAM

The third lecture in this four-part series will take place from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Duffy Parish Center chapel Monday, November 10. Imam Yaha Hendi, the Muslim chaplain of Georgetown University, will speak about "Similarities between Christianity and Islam: What both traditions have in common. Are there more similarities than differences?" In addition to his work at Georgetown University, Imam Hendi is the Imam of the Islamic Society of Frederick and the Muslim Chaplain at the National Naval Medical center in Bethesda, MD. He is a member and spokesperson for the Islamic Jurisprudence Council of North America, and was one of the Muslim leaders who met with the President Bush in the aftermath of the September 11 tragedy. For more details about this series, visit www.blessedsacramentdc.org.

WANT TO ENROLL YOUR CHILD IN BLESSED SACRAMENT SCHOOL?

The first step in the admissions process for the 2009-2010 school year at Blessed Sacrament School is to attend one of the five scheduled school open houses. The first will be held on November 11 from 9 to 11 a.m. **for kindergarten only**. For a schedule of other open houses, visit www.bsstoday.org.

SPREAD VOCAL CHRISTMAS CHEER

The Chapel Singers, an *a cappella* group, will meet on November 17 to begin their weekly Monday evening practice from 7:30 to 9 p.m. The group performs at local senior residences during Christmastime. This is an excellent way to put your gift of the love of music to work helping others enjoy the spirit of Christmas. Additionally, you'll enjoy the camaraderie of the group! Contact Ginny Curtin at GUCurtin@gmail.com.

SODALITY CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

The Sodality's annual **Bazaar** has a Christmas theme this year. The Bazaar will dominate the daytime scene on Saturday, November 15. Attendees will find all-day activities in the school gym, auditorium and in the Duffy Parish Center. The Bazaar is a Blessed Sacrament tradition: part social, part fundraiser for the benefit of the improvements and needs of the church's sanctuary. The activities attract all ages; there are children's games and older generation's shopping for Christmas and other celebrations.

Popular items include home goods, gently-worn clothing items, jewelry, knick-knacks and Christmas decorations.

Ink the date, **November 15**, into your calendars and come join in the sense of community engendered by this five-star event! For more information, contact Altaasmar@aol.com.

SALUTE TO OUR ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS

NOVEMBER 11

VETERAN'S DAY

(A Traveler's Account)

I put my carry-on in the luggage compartment and sat down in my assigned seat. It was going to be a long flight. Just before take-off, some soldiers came down the aisle and sat in the vacant seats around me. I asked the soldier seated next to me, "where are you headed?"

"We'll be at Great Lakes Air Base for two weeks for special training, and then we're being deployed to Iraq," he answered. Soon an announcement indicated that sack lunches were available for five dollars. I overheard the soldier ask his buddy if he planned to buy lunch. "No, that seems like a lot of money for just a sack lunch. Probably wouldn't be worth five bucks." His friend agreed.

I looked around at the other soldiers. After noting that not a one was buying lunch, I walked to the back of the plane and handed the flight attendant a fifty dollar bill. "Take a lunch to those soldiers," I said. She grabbed my hand and squeezed it tightly. Her eyes, wet with tears, she thanked me. "My son was a soldier in Iraq; it's almost as if you are doing it for him." Picking up the sacks, she headed up the aisle to where the soldiers were seated and distributed the lunches.

Another hour into the flight, I headed for a rest room at the back of the plane. A man stopped me. "I saw what you did. I want to be part of it. Here, take this." He handed me twenty-five dollars.

Soon after I returned to my seat, I saw the Flight Captain coming down the aisle. When he got to my row he stopped, smiled, held out his hand, and said, "I want to shake your hand." I stood and took the Captain's hand. With a booming voice he said, "I was a soldier and I was a military pilot. Once, someone bought me a lunch. It was an act of kindness I'll never forget." I was embarrassed when the passengers applauded.

Later I walked to the front of the plane so I could stretch my legs. A man who was seated about six rows in front of me reached out his hand to shake mine. He left another twenty-five dollars in my palm.

When we landed I gathered my belongings and started to deplane. Waiting just inside the airplane door was a man who stopped me, put something in my shirt pocket, turned, and walked away without saying a word. Another twenty-five dollars!

In the terminal, I handed the soldiers the seventy-five dollars. "It will take you some time to reach the base. It will be about time for a sandwich. God Bless You."

Ten young fighting men left that flight feeling the love and respect of their fellow travelers. As I walked to my car, I said a prayer for their safe return. These soldiers were giving their all for our country. I could give them a couple of meals. It seemed so little....

A veteran is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to The United States of America for an amount of "up to and including my life." That is Honor.

Let us all pray daily for our military and for our veterans. Let us emulate this traveler's generous response in our actions toward both our veterans and all people.

COLLECTION OF PERSONAL CARE ITEMS FOR THE HOMELESS

On Sunday, November 23, the Feast of Christ the King, and for the four Sundays of Advent, the Social Concerns office will collect the following regular-sized items for the Blessed Sacrament Daily Bread/Daily Life Soup Kitchen Ministry: toothbrushes, bars of soap, ChapStick®, toothpaste, disposal razors and deodorant. Please do not gift wrap these items. Place all unwrapped items in the baskets on the altar on November 23 and 30, December 7, 14 and 21 or drop them off at the Duffy Parish Center or the Social Concerns Office. As an outreach project, the sixth graders from Blessed Sacrament School will educate fellow students about homelessness and Blessed Sacrament Ministries serving these individuals and families. Also, students will sort toiletries and stuff approximately 500 warm winter socks with the collected items. Soup Kitchen guests will receive these gifts at a special Christmas luncheon to be prepared by parishioners of the Daily Bread/Daily Life Ministry.

YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Any and every Tuesday evening at 7:30 p.m., both single and married young adults in their 20s, 30s, & 40s meet to explore the Sunday readings and apply the meaning of Scriptures to daily life. The program includes food and fellowship and allows participants both to explore thought-provoking issues and to meet other young adults in the parish. Join the group in the Duffy Parish Center in the main level meeting room. For more information contact Rob Maro, Director of Religious Education, at 202-449-3989 or rmaro@blessedsacramentdc.org.

GREG GANNON CANNED FOOD DRIVE

Begun in 1987 by Greg and Mo Gannon, the annual canned food drive is held on the **first Saturday in December** each year. Originally begun as a school activity, this effort now involves more than 500 parishioner-volunteers - "Returning Veterans", New Families" and Buddy Families who work together in a collaborative community experience to collect over 50,000 cans of food for the Washington area poor.

Just before December 6, Blessed Sacrament students will distribute grocery bags to the doorsteps of homes in the Blessed Sacrament neighborhood. (Many donations come from households who are eager to help but are not even parish members!) As you dig deep into your cupboards and pantries to prepare holiday food, consider donating a bag of groceries to this very worthy cause. It's a terrific way to get into the holiday spirit and an opportunity to role model our generosity to others. In these difficult times, many people are turning to the Church for

assistance, and this is one way that parishioners can practice the Sermon on the Mount. Let's set a new record as the project turns 21 years! For more information, contact Rick Gannon at 703-725-8804 or rgannon@hagner.com. To sign up to help, go to www.blessedsacramentdc.org/outreach/greg-gannon-canned-food-drive.



FOCUS ON VOLUNTEERS

(This month we focus on a group of volunteers rather than an individual person.)

They are a cadre of silent bearers of Christ within our community. They bring cheerful smiles, patient ears and the Body of Christ to local nursing homes within our parish. They give witness to their name: **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.**

Father John and Father Ben regularly visit the nursing homes in the parish, but when their schedules disallow their visitation, the Blessed Sacrament Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion stand in their place. Conducting Eucharistic prayer services, administering communion to non-ambulatory, room-bound residents and providing excellent public relations for the Church and for Blessed Sacrament, they represent us to the aging citizens within our community including centenarians! We thank you. You are what volunteering is all about: giving back the gifts with which one has been blessed and service above self!

RETREAT = ADVANCEMENT

Seemingly opposites, these two terms, as applied in the spiritual sense, are really complementary. If you're stressed out, if you're seeking direction, if you're simply wanting to move forward in your faith journey, consider attending the 2009 men's or women's retreat. It's a great New Year's resolution; it's a superior gift of time to one's spouse or relative; it's an excellent way to make sure that Lent is a productive and impressionable one. Additionally, it's a terrific getaway that any travel agent would advertise as a "to die-for-weekend only one hour's drive from Chevy Chase." Where else can one dine on Maryland crab cakes, wake up to a magnificent view of the Potomac River, walk on its cliffs to watch the spectacular sunsets AND enhance one's spiritual quality of life? At the Blessed Sacrament retreats at Loyola Retreat House in Faulkner, MD. Go for it! Attend!

Women's Retreat – February 20-22, 2009

To Register: www.loyolaretreat.org or 301-392-0809

Information: Contact Maria Durelli at mdurelli@blessedsacramentdc.org

Men's Retreat – March 20-22, 2009

To Register: www.loyolaretreat.org or 301-392-0809

Ride Sharing: Call Jim Richardson at 301-657-2695

ADVENT CALENDAR

- * Advent begins Sunday, November 30.
- * Advent Wreath Workshop will be held Sunday, November 30, in the school auditorium after the 10:15 a.m. Masses.
- * Advent Morning of Reflection will be held Saturday, December 13, 8 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Complete details in December newsletter.

At this time of the year when we pause to thank those who have helped in some large or small way to aid us on our journey, we want to thank our readers for their time and comments. We appreciate your adjustment to the newsletter's change from its print to electronic format as we all modify our experiences to accommodate the changing world around us.

The Editors