

December Agenda

Lessons and Carols	Wednesday, 24 December, 6pm
Carol Sing	Wednesday, 24 December 10.30pm
First Mass of Christmas	Wednesday, December 24 11pm
Nativity of Our Lord	Thursday, December 25 8am Mass 10.30am Mass

New Brochure

A newly-revised color brochure is available in the back of the church, by the west doors, for use in advertising the parish. Please take one (or two) to pass on to a friend (or two).

Standing Notices

The occasional Sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Confession, Communion and Unction of the Sick, and the Office of the Dead are always available by appointment, at announced times, or as necessary.

Please notify the Church Office or the Rectory to inform the clergy if you or a loved one is in hospital.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE PARISH IN YOUR WILL

The Anglican Church of
S. John the Baptist
PO Box 550
Marshall, VA 20116



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ECCE

The Newsletter of S. John the Baptist Anglican Church
Marshall, Virginia
Issue 14 December 2008

Dear Family and Friends of S. John's,

The season of Advent marks the start of the new year for Christians. Every new beginning presents us with an opportunity to assess our life, more particularly, our life in relation to God. The Church in her wisdom, gives us these four weeks of Advent to prepare ourselves spiritually to meet Our Lord. There are two dimensions of our preparation, relating to the two aspects of Our Lord's advent: His Nativity celebrated at Christmas (derived from the middle English "cristes-messe," or "Mass of Christ") and His return at the end of time, "to judge both the quick and the dead."

"Advent" itself derives from the Latin, *adventus* or "arrival," and marked the ceremonial entry of an ancient ruler into a province or city. As Roman emperors were considered divine, *adventus divi* was the arrival of the deified one into his precincts. It is easy to see how the early Latin-speaking Christian community borrowed this concept to refer to the coming of Emmanuel (God with us). Soon, throughout the Church the practice arose of spending this time in prayer, penitence and fasting. Although not as rigorous as Lent, Advent retains a distinctively penitential character.

Many of us instinctively grasp the importance of making our preparation before we encounter God Incarnate at Christmas. But our Advent preparation for the Christ Child also reminds us what we ought to be doing throughout our entire life. Someday, each one of us will meet our Creator. Depending upon how well we have prepared ourselves for that encounter, we will either want to embrace Him in adoration or we will attempt to hide ourselves for fear of meeting absolute Holiness.

I do hope that each of us will make this Advent a very special time of preparation, a time spent in prayer and reflection, asking God to reveal anything in our lives that impedes our relationship with Him. And then ask for the courage to confess these sins as well as for the grace to overcome them when next we are tempted. And may we each greet Christ's Mass eagerly and in expectation as we grow more in love with Him.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

Ponderous Perceptions on Parish Pledging

By now, everyone should have received a letter outlining the importance of your parish pledge, as well as a pledge card for the coming fiscal year.

I won't repeat the key points of that letter but I do want to say a bit more about the purpose of pledging to this parish church. Since I wrote that letter, we have all experienced something of a meltdown in the markets and may find it particularly challenging to be generous in our 2009 pledge. So here are a few additional points to ponder.

First, when we make a commitment or a pledge to the parish, we are exercising spiritual discipline and developing virtue. When we look at pledging in the larger spiritual picture, we can see that in all our actions we are either sliding into vice or building up virtue. In fact, within the discipline of spiritual direction, one will often come across the list of the seven deadly sins along with their corresponding contrary virtues. For example, we might struggle with the particular vice of greed or avarice. We may find it difficult to part with our financial resources, believing that we have worked hard for them or planned carefully to preserve them. Whenever we recognize an entrenched vice in our lives, we should work to militate against it. In the case of greed, we endeavor to exercise the virtue of liberality or generosity. Liberality is the golden mean between the excess of prodigality and the deficiency of avarice. How much is prodigal and how little is avarice? This is where prayer comes in. No pledge should be made without first spending some time (and if you're married, spending time together) in prayer about your commitment. The Holy Ghost will reveal

Kudos

To Didi McConnell for cleaning the Holy Water urn provided generously by **Eric Rodenhauer**.
To Deacon John Needham for installing the new statue of the Blessed Mother.

what that mean should be.

Second, the thoughtful reader will note that I did not specify that the pledge should be 10% or a tithe of one's income. And the thoughtful reader will be only partially correct. Although I didn't mention that the Biblical record is clear on the proportion of our income that we get to keep, I also recognize that for many Christians, it takes time to work up to the Biblical standard of giving. But let me be clear on this point. Scripture speaks of both "tithes and offerings." There are some scholars who view the tithe as applicable only under the Old Covenant. But the tithe (10% of income) actually seems to predate the Law of Moses as we read about it in the book of Genesis, and in the Law the tithe is called "holy unto the Lord." While we often get bogged down with the 10% that goes to God, we often forget that He allows us the remaining 90% to do with as we will, remembering however, that we will have to give an account of how we used the talents God gave to us (S. Matthew 25:14-30). This is where the concept of "offerings" comes in. In the New Testament, we see the early Christian community spread throughout Asia Minor sending "offerings" (over and above the tithe, which was used in the local church) to the Church in Jerusalem when they were in need.

Lastly, it all comes down to trusting God. He has called each of us to this parish church for a reason. It seems to be His will that this parish continue and that it grow into what He would have it become. But that means that we must trust in His Providence not only concerning our parish, but we must also trust in His care for us, as we endeavor to give to the work of the Kingdom of God that takes place through the parish of S. John the Baptist in Marshall, Virginia. May God bless us richly for our faithfulness.

Transitus

Lionel Dickinson is in the Lynn Care Center, Front Royal and **Dorothy Duryee** is recovering from stroke.

A Look at the Liturgy

Anyone who has recently been inside our church has probably noticed a recent addition. Where once an icon of the Blessed Mother was affixed to the wall above the rank of votive candles, there now appears a carved wooden statue of the Blessed Mother and Child. It may be helpful to explain several aspects of this statue.

First, the statue depicts both the Blessed Mother and the Holy Child. This is, of course, very Scriptural. Our Lord's Mother understood her role as pointing to her Son. "Do whatever He tells you," she says at Our Lord's first "sign," the changing of water into wine at Cana of Galilee. She is always intimately connected to the witness and ministry of her Son, from that first miracle at Cana to her station at the Cross, when Our Lord gave His mother to the Church in the person of the beloved disciple S. John.

She is also depicted wearing a crown. This makes reference to several theological points. The first is that the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed into Heaven after her death. One fascinating historical detail is that there has never been any reference to the burial place of the Blessed Mother nor has there been any evidence of any relics, such as bone fragments. Being taken up into Heaven as the Mother of the Incarnate Word, one of her titles is Queen of Heaven, a reminder of the important role of queen mothers in the Old Testament (the role of Queen Bathsheba comes to mind here). The other point is that each Christian is promised a crown, for all who share in the promises of Christ will share in his Kingship as well.

Finally, some may object to the presence of these visual depictions within a church building. But we may recall that in the Old Testament, God directed that the Ark of the Covenant be adorned with figures of angels. Those who have visited the catacombs in Rome have seen figures depicted over the tombs of the faithful departed. More importantly, who of us has not visited a friend's home and not seen portraits of his ancestors or at the very least framed photos on the piano. The same applies to our churches. These figures depict our family members, and what more important member of our family could there be than our mother, given to us by Our Lord on the Cross.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Christian Formation: Sundays, 9:30am

In Advent, we will finish our examination of the ancient Creeds of the Church. This class is strongly recommended for all who are new to the parish or who would not be prepared to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." *1 Peter 3:15*

Weekly Bible Study: Wed, 10:30am

Our Bible Study meets after Morning Prayer at 9:30am and Mass at 10am. Please join us for our study of S. John's Gospel and bring your friends.

Wednesday Night at the Movies:

On Wednesday, 10 December, we will meet at 7pm to watch and discuss "Babette's Feast," a film that depicts the rightness of Catholic sensibilities in the face of dour Protestantism.









Nativity of Our Lord:

We will celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord with Lessons and Carols at 6pm on December 24th, a Carol Sing at 10:30pm and the First Mass of Christmas at 11pm. The Second Mass will be celebrated at 8am Christmas Day and the Third Mass will be celebrated at 10am Christmas Day.

BCP Feast Days in December:

S. Andrew's Day falls on Monday, 1 December and will be kept with a Mass at 7pm. The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary falls on 8 December and will be kept with a Mass at 7pm. The Feast of S. Thomas (transferred to Dec 22) will be kept with Mass at 7pm. Please make an effort to join us as we give thanks to Almighty God for these Saints.

December 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 THE BRUISED SERPENT	1 <i>S. Andrew, Ap (Transferred)</i> Low Mass 7pm MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	2 <i>Feria</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	3 <i>S. Francis Xavier, C</i> Bible Study 10:30am MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	4 ✠ <i>S. Clement of Alexandria, C</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	5  <i>S. Sabas, Ab</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	6 <i>S. Nicholas, BC</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM
7 ✠ ADVENT II MORN. PRAYER 9AM SCF 9.30 MASS 10:30 AM	8 <i>Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i> Low Mass 7pm MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	9 <i>Of the Octave</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	10 <i>Of the Octave</i> Bible Study 10:30am MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	11 <i>Of the Octave</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	12  <i>Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	13 <i>S. Lucy, VM</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM
14 ✠ ADVENT III <i>Gaudete Sunday</i> MORN. PRAYER 9AM SCF 9.30 MASS 10:30 AM	15 <i>Octave Day of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	16 <i>Feria</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	17 <i>Ember Day</i> Bible Study 10:30am MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	18 <i>Feria</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	19  <i>Ember Day</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	20 <i>Ember Day (Vigil of S. Thomas, Ap)</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM
21 ✠ ADVENT IV MORN. PRAYER 9AM SCF 9.30 MASS 10:30 AM	22 <i>S. Thomas, ApM.</i> Low Mass 7pm MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	23 <i>Feria</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	24 <i>Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord</i> Less. & Carols 6 pm Carol Sing 10.30pm Midnight Mass 11pm MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	25 ✠ NATIVITY OF OUR LORD MASS 8AM & 10.30AM MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	26  <i>S. Stephen, M (Of the Octave)</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	27 <i>S. John, ApE (Of the Octave)</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM
28 ✠ HOLY INNOCENTS (Of the Octave) MORN. PRAYER 9AM SCF 9.30 MASS 10:30 AM	29 <i>S. Thomas of Canterbury, BM (Of the Octave)</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	30 <i>Of the Octave</i> MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	31 <i>S. Sylvester, BC (Of the Octave)</i> Bible Study 10:30am MORN. PRAYER 9.30AM EVE. PRAYER 5.30PM	 CHRISTMAS	 S. STEPHEN	 S. JOHN

Ab=Abbot; Ap=Apostle; B=Bishop; C=Confessor; Dn=Deacon; D=Doctor; Ev=Evangelist; K=King; M=Martyr; P=Pope; Pr=Priest; Q=Queen; V=Virgin; W=Widow; SCF = School of Christian Formation

ACW NEWS

Christmas is just around the corner all social and community services are anticipating help from local organizations and churches. The call for help has not gone unheard at St. John's. As you know part of our outreach this year has been helping the Fauquier Food Distribution Coalition with volunteering at the distribution (in July) and with food drives, such as the one currently in progress. Please mark your calendars for 21 February when we are hoping for as many volunteers from our church as possible to help at the Warrenton United Methodist Church, where the Distribution takes place.

In addition, we will be once again helping the Fauquier Family Shelter. I have already been in touch with the Shelter. As we have done in the past, we will "adopting" a family from either the Haven or the Transitional Shelter - information on their wishes and needs of the family we "adopt" will be coming the first week of December. Gifts for this cause can be placed under the Jesse Tree that will be up at the beginning of Advent. Please hold a space in your plans to take part in our annual gift giving to the shelter and to help out a family in need.

Thank you for the food drive items. Please keep them coming. We have a basket to store them in the community room near the kitchen, and a large blue tub under the table for the overflow. Please have all food items to the church by Thursday 18 December.

Also, if you would like to participate, we are also collecting shoe box gifts for children at the Fauquier Food Distribution to be handed out on the same day as the food (20 December).

This is what you do:

1. Find an empty shoe box or a plastic shoe box
2. Fill with gifts which can include:

School supplies

Hygiene items - toothbrush/paste, combs

Toys that will fit in box such as cars, balls, dolls, stuffed animals, harmonicas, toys that light up or make noise (with batteries)

The Dollar Store has small Bible books that can be included

Hair clips, socks, flashlight(w/batteries)

Anything you want, although guns are a no-no.

3. Wrap box and put on a tag that includes boy or girl, and age...2-5, 6-8, 9-11, 12-14.
4. Drop off at St. John the Baptist Church.

Please have the shoebox gifts to the church no later than Wednesday 17 December. (While we can get the food items to the WUMC for the Distribution up to 19th December, they must have the shoe box gifts by the 18th, hence the earlier deadline.)

Please keep the Fauquier Food Coalition Distribution and the Family Shelter in your prayers.

If you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you!

Susan Knutsen
(540) 349-2728