

in focus

708 West Main Street Urbana, Illinois 61801

vol. 3 #2

Waiting for the Lord

Advent is that curious season that celebrates both the presence and the absence of God, God-with-us and He-who-is-to-come. I offer these reflections by Ralph Kiefer, a noted liturgical scholar, to help us make Advent less a time of preparing for Christmas, more a time of preparing for Christ.

Fr. Doug Hennessy

"... we live in a less than confident world. There is something paradoxical in celebrating a festival of God's presence in a world in which the absence of God is so vividly felt. We are troubled by things which never troubled our ancestors with such intensity. Faith is something that can no longer be taken for granted. And evil in the world is felt as a threat to faith in a way that it once was not. Often, our ancestors could cope with suffering, sickness, and disaster as 'visitations from God.' We are outraged by the pain of the world, and 'It is the will of God' is replaced by 'Where is God in all this?'

"Advent approaches our question--not with an 'explanation,' but with an affirmation: God's presence often comes under the cover of darkness and defeat. We are

met with a paradox--God is often most present when he seems most distant. The very mood and color of the liturgy grapple with this paradox--songs of rejoicing in garments of mourning, looking to the light in the darkness of winter. It is a dominant strain in the biblical readings. The Old Testament prophecies of hope and deliverance which are the heart of the season did not come at Israel's hour of triumph. They were wrung out of defeat and exile. The Baptist comes from the desolation of the desert to proclaim the way of the Lord. And the Lord of the earth is born in poverty and obscurity in a backwater province.

"It is unfortunate that we are more inhibited (and less faithful to the Gospels) than our medieval ancestors, whose statues of Mary often portrayed her as pregnant. There is something to be said for that kind of blunt iconography. Pregnancy isn't a very comfortable thing. Its hope is tinged with nausea and awkwardness and anxiety. You can't see the face of the one who is to come. And that is what Advent is about. The splendor of God's presence is hidden in the fragmentary untidiness of our lives, and lies beneath the pain of this world. The season, like the pregnant Virgin, is short on explanation and heavy with meaning."

The Parish responds to Stewardship

There were 296 Stewardship Thank-Giving cards returned, with a total commitment of \$3,909.93 per week. Although the Stewardship Committee was disappointed that only 27% of the 1,095 registered parishioners responded, they were pleased with the generosity shown--an average of \$7.50 per week per family. It was encouraging

to see that many parishioners returned cards even when they could pledge only a small amount. These small amounts are the backbone of the collection when they are consistently given. The committee thanks all for the support demonstrated by this response.

WELCOME 90 NEW PARISHIONERS

Since mid-summer 53 new members have "signed on" at St. Patrick's, and it is a pleasure to welcome you. We hope you will not wait for personal invitations to participate in the many programs and activities described or listed in the Sunday bulletin. All it takes is a phoned inquiry to the parish office, or a visit with someone after Mass or at the Coffee Shop to get into the rhythm of life in this active parish.

Most parish groups welcome the stimulation that new members and new viewpoints

bring, yet recruiting is difficult because it is hard to know about specific interests and talents of newcomers. Too often it may seem as if we "old hands" do everything, when in fact we would be grateful for new participants--if only we knew who would be interested!

We hope that other members of St. Patrick's parish will make it their business to get acquainted with you. Meanwhile, we happily greet you and welcome you to our parish community:

Lloyd & Janet Lipska
Lester & Marilu Lundeen
Joseph & Margo Pachhaiser
Michael Pankau
Danielle Posner
Cindy Rondag
Steve & Deb Savageau
Rosemarie Sisco
Katherine Childs
Sue Cooke
Kathy DalSanto
Jeff & Norine Dawson
John & Cyndie Kimball
Ronald & Lupe Smith
Lisa Lynch
Cornelius & Doris Marcusiu
John & Diane Marlin
Pamela Onate

Maurice & Charlotte Pescitelli
David & Chris Miller
James & Joan Fox
David & Kay Ghabow
Christopher Freidhof
David Groh
James & Kathleen Lewis
James & Valerie Bock
Joseph & Judy Burns
James & Nancy Ducey
Don Fagerman
Anthony & Kathleen Ferrara
Jay & Cathy Foster
Jacqueline Gassman
Eugene & Marcia Hall
Patrick & Karen Kane
Karl Kennicker
Robert & Gerri Kirchner

Ronald & Lilia Peters
Brad Sargent
Joseph & Kathy Schroedel
Suzanne Wambach
Richard & Anita Tempest
Greg & Cheri Tingley
Richard & Barbara Van Lear
Edward & Linda Vaza-Kaczynsky
Dennis & Valerie Werner
Gary & Joyce Whitaker
Bernie & Gayle Whitt
Paul & Marty Wilson
Hartmut & Julia Zabel
Arthur & Kathleen Zangerl
Theodore & Joan Zernich
Steven & Margaret Lindars
Glenn & Elizabeth Saccone

Children's Corner Why an Advent Wreath?

Christmas is a very special time of year and part of the reason is the special customs we have. One of the more interesting is the advent wreath. The advent wreath is a circle of evergreen twigs with three purple candles and one pink candle. One candle is lighted each week during Advent.

The wreath is made in a circle because it has no beginning or end--just like Jesus, who has always been with us and always will be. The evergreen twigs are used because they are a sign of life and growth since they come from a tree that always stays green. The burning candles give us light the same way Jesus shines on us, and the pink candle stands for the joy of Jesus's coming soon.

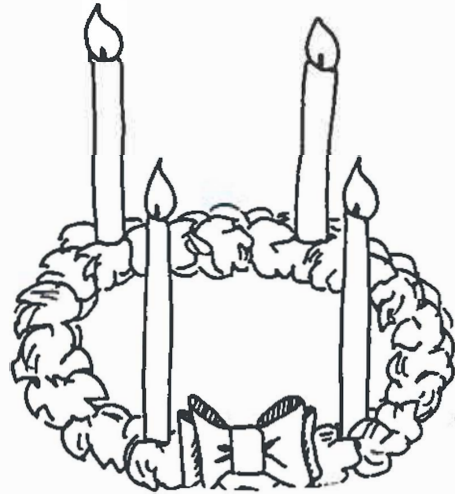


Illustration by Pat Fonner

CHRIST IS THE ONLY ANSWER



Advent Reflections Set

Father Hennessy's popular program for Catholic as well as non-Catholic inquirers, *The Way of Roman Catholicism*, will include two offerings for Advent which all members of the parish are invited to share. These will be reflections on key Advent themes of Christian hope and Christian involvement. On November 30 the topic will be "Christ Will Come Again!" and on December 7, "Christ Has Come!"

The group sharing "The Way" together this year has been both stimulating and responsive, making the winter and spring segments of this program something for all to look forward to.

In late January and February, three or four sessions will be devoted to "The Catholic Heritage." On March 14 the five-part "Ashes to Easter, the Lenten Journey" will begin.

Food For Thought

Grace, the sharing of the intimate life of the Godhead, is not a reward for services rendered but a free gift to which we have no title.

--Aelred Graham, O.S.B., The Love of God

Living the Christ-life means that we are given the power of Christ's love. We are not only trustees of God's love, entrusted to give it out second-hand, but miraculously, our love IS His love.

--Caryll Houselander,
The Passion of the Infant Christ

We are asked to offer only what we have, what we are today. That it is so little means nothing; it is our wafer of unleavened bread.

--Caryll Houselander,
The Passion of the Infant Christ

God desires our independence--which we attain when, ceasing to strive for it ourselves, we "fall" back into God.

--Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings

The basis of community is not primarily our ideas, feelings, and emotions about each other but our common search for God. When we keep our minds and hearts directed toward God, we will come more fully "together."

--Henri J. M. Nouwen, Genessee Diary

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

--John 15:10-12

God's glory in you can bring out God's glory in the other when you have become more conscious of this shared gift. God speaks to God, Spirit to Spirit, Love to Love. It is all a gift, it is all grace.

--Henri J. M. Nouwen, Genessee Diary

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Christ Renews His Parish

Wrestling with God

The following reflection on the recent Renewal Weekend for men of the parish was written by one of the men who chose, after participating in a weekend last year, to become part of a team that made the same opportunity available to others. He shares some of his insights on this experience with us.

The men's Christ Renews His Parish weekend took place October 22-23 at St. Mary's School, three miles east of Pesotum. It was given by eleven people (including Fr. Doug Hennessy and Sr. Rosemarie Tomlianovich), who committed themselves to several months of preparation, spiritual growth, and prayer to evolve specific ministries for the Renewal Weekend.

The five participants who joined them for the weekend thought of the experience as a good way to get away from the rat race of everyday life to think about things that are really important and to reflect on thoughts provoked by talks given by some of the team members.

Father and Sister took time from busy schedules to be there during the daytime meetings and to share their own experience of Christ. They saw this as an opportunity to share the group's spiritual life and adversities and to see the effects of the parish community's prayers on the response of men trying to renew their faith. Sister said she felt her own faith renewed by the honesty and humility of the men's witness.

Many other parishioners expressed their prayers and love in service, providing wonderful meals and making the environment beautiful despite the somewhat remote location and stormy weather.

The Renewal Weekend is like the Genesis story of Jacob, who wrestles with a mysterious being all night and then insists that the being tell his name. The mysterious being refuses but says, "I will give you a name." The name given Jacob tells him who he is wrestling with--Israel, "he who wrestles with God." This "wrestling

with God" is the deepest mystery of who we are and who God is. Out of this struggle comes a strengthened, deepened self. The story has meaning for us as individuals and as the community of the people of God. Really, the whole Bible is a story about this wrestling.

As Christians, our own life stories are linked to the story of Christ. He came to wrestle with the meaning of being human and to transform that struggle into a loving embrace of life. We are Christ's storytellers, each of us expressing some element of it in whatever ways He has called us.

During the Renewal Weekend team members tell their own stories, and new friends are made. In the atmosphere of spirituality we come to see our friends through the "eyes" of God, seeing their goodness, their faults, and their struggles as God might.

The Renewal Weekend is a personalized re-evangelization of practicing Catholics. It is a way for the parish community to help its members find renewed faith through an intense experience of community. Hopefully, people will feel called afterward to a deeper development of their own spirituality and discernment of what their ministry should be in the world and the Church. For many of us, this weekend has changed the direction of our lives.



Photographs opposite were taken during the Renewal Weekend for women of the parish, held at St. Thomas School in Philo on September 24-25.



Banners prepared by earlier CRHP teams help set the tone and focus of the Renewal Weekend.



A quiet place for prayer and reflection is an integral part of any Renewal Weekend setting.



Leslie Risatti sorts HELP letters for Renewal Weekend participants.



Leslie Risatti, left, and Ann Tully deliver HELP letters to participants.

JESUS + changed CHRIST | my life

Growing through Base Communities

Base communities, an extension of Sunday worship services and fellowship, are gaining in popularity at St. Patrick's.

There currently are four base communities in the parish, ranging in size from seven to sixteen adults. Two have been established in the last year, while the oldest one was formed over two years ago.

Most members of St. Patrick's base communities were attracted to them because of their experience with the Christ Renews His Parish program and their desire to continue the spiritual development and personal sharing with others begun on Renewal Weekends.

"I enjoyed the CRHP program, and I did not want that process to end," said Tom Kacich, a member of a base community comprised of eight married couples, all of whom have children. "With this, we're able to share our joys and problems, tell of our experiences, and inspire each other. It's been very successful."

"We formed in order to support each other and to share our faith journey," said Pat Fonner, a member of the oldest active base community in the parish. This group is comprised almost entirely of single adults.

Nearly all of the base communities function in the same way. They meet regularly, every other week or every third week or once a month, and discuss a topic chosen by the host at whose home the meeting is held. The meetings last for an hour or two and involve a dialogue among members of the community about the topic.

One of the most important aspects of base communities is that all members of the group are encouraged to share, with no one member dominating the conversation.

Nancy Delanty, member of one of the recently formed base communities, mentioned that topics discussed at meetings have included prayer, the Eucharist, friendship, and time and money.

Jeff Hately indicated that his base community has discussed the Bible, love in marriage, inspiration, and children.

Although the base-community movement is in its infancy in the United States, it is very popular in Central America and in other remote areas where access to Mass and community worship is very difficult. Central Americans have become particularly dependent upon their base communities for support and prayer because of the war and poverty in that area of the world, according to the Rev. George Dorsey, former co-pastor of St. Patrick's and now involved in Central American justice programs.

Anyone interested in joining or establishing a base community at St. Patrick's is encouraged to talk with Jeff Hately, Nancy Delanty, Pat Fonner, Pat Bryant, or Fr. Doug Hennessy.



We truly become our real selves by living for others in Christ. In living for Christ and His Church, we are at the same time living for others and for ourselves.

--Thomas Merton, The Living Bread

God is the hub of the wheel of life. The closer we come to God, the closer we come to each other.

--Henri J. M. Nouwen, Genesee Diary

Parish Advent Celebration Back by popular demand



The annual Parish Advent Celebration is sure to be enjoyed by all parishioners, from the young to the young at heart.

At 6:30 p.m. on December 11, festivities will begin with dramatization of the tale that never grows old--the story of the first Christmas. The singing of selected Christmas carols by children from the Sunday morning Religious Education classes will help to re-create this timeless story.

The celebration will continue with families sharing treats (A-G: 1 gallon apple cider; H-L: cheese balls, logs, spreads, assorted sliced cheeses, etc.; M-P: crackers; Q-V: holiday breads; W-Z: fresh fruit).

A movie will also be shown: "Martin the Cobbler," the story of an old cobbler who learns that where love is God is.

Instead of receiving the customary candy stuffing for their shoes, children are asked to bring canned foods for those less fortunate than themselves as a way of sharing the spirit of Christmas in the community.

So "come, all ye faithful" to our parish's annual celebration of the season of Advent and Christmas.

Introducing St. Patrick's Sampler

If you are looking for a unique but practical Christmas gift, this year your search need take you no farther than your own parish. A committee of more than a dozen parishioners has been busy for the last six months compiling recipes into St. Patrick's very own cookbook, *St. Patrick's Sampler*, released just in time for the holiday season!

A collection of favorite recipes of parishioners and their families and friends, *St. Patrick's Sampler* is a first-class cookbook of approximately 250 pages, with 466 recipes submitted by several hundred men and women. Its attractive graphic design was created by parishioner Jerry Barrett. The classic 3-color cover introduces the sampler theme, carried throughout on the section divider pages.

One of the goals of the committee was to produce a cookbook that members of our parish would be proud of but also one that they would find functional in their kitchens. The type style was chosen for its readability. Titles in large print help the reader locate a specific recipe while thumbing through the pages, and ingredients are printed in bold type for ease in reading. The spiral binding allows the book to lie open on countertop or table for ready reference. And the laminated cover will help keep the book in excellent condition through years of use.

St. Patrick's Sampler has a number of features that point up the distinctiveness of our parish. One of these is the section "Dishes with International Flair." Recipes in this section include such diverse international varieties as Mom's Golobki, Harisseh with Almonds, Rogaliki Butter Horns, and Hungarian Spaghetti Sauce.

Helpful hints, submitted by parishioners who have found them useful, are interspersed throughout the book and accented by the use of graphics.

A comprehensive index to facilitate quick access to recipes by title and subject is located at the back of the cookbook, and each section has its own table of contents printed on the section divider page.

Of course, the most outstanding feature of the cookbook is the recipes themselves. The collection includes such delicious family pleasers as Peanut Butter Cupcakes, Cantaloupe Pie, New York Cheesecake, Dave's Homemade Chicken and Noodles, My Mom's Best Chocolate Icing, Aunt Marie's Holiday Dessert, and Father Doug's Seafood Lasagne!

Education, n. That which discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding.

--The Devil's Dictionary

Craft Bazaar and Bake Sale Held

This issue of in focus was in press at the time of the Craft Bazaar and Bake Sale.

After weeks and weeks of labor, St. Patrick's craft committee, aided by many other talented parishioners, showed their handiwork at the Craft Bazaar and Bake Sale on November 19 in St. Patrick's Parish Center.

There was something for everyone: for football fans, a special Illini section; for those with a green thumb, plants; for the home decorator, pictures and Christmas wreaths and ornaments; for the holiday cook, homemade bakery items and the very first copies of the new parish cookbook, *St. Patrick's Sampler*. Many beautiful afghans, the work of nimble fingers, were for sale, and a Navajo afghan created by Joni Hicks was raffled off.

There were lots and lots of good things for sale and lots of good spirit on all sides--a real community venture in sharing the fruits of creativity.

The Eucharist is the Sacrifice of the Lord made present in its eternal reality, not reenacted in a ritual drama that revives the past.

--Thomas Merton, Seasons of Celebration

Browsers Welcome!

Are you looking for a good book to fulfill your Advent resolve to do some spiritual reading? How about some leads on a topic mentioned in the Sunday homily or by one of our parish catechists? Did your Renewal Weekend spark an interest in deepening your spiritual life? Are you looking for good books to share with a young child? These kinds of books and many others are available in the parish library.

The library is a modest collection of books on a variety of topics of interest to people growing in their faith. Topics range from sin to saints, epistles to ecclesiology, prayer to picture books. Inspirational tapes are also available for loan.

The library is located at the southwest corner of the main hall in the Parish Center. It is staffed on Sunday mornings during Coffee Shop and during weekday office hours (8 a.m.-5 p.m.). If you have questions about the library or a particular book, call Barbara Adams (328-3980).

Parish generous in giving blood

For the fiscal year ending August 31, 182 units of blood were given. And that means that many more went to the Blood Bank but were unable to give at the time. This kind of community-mindedness is something to cherish, for it helps others as well as ourselves. Our next official "day" for blood donors to go the Bank is Monday, December 19. However, it should be emphasized that parishioners may make their contributions whenever they can do so. Don't wait for the 19th--especially if you're leaving town for the holidays or expect to be caught up in holiday busyness.

Cellar-To-Garret Sale Sets New Record

It started on Sunday. By Tuesday morning any rational person would have said, "It's a disaster getting ready to happen." That's how it was the week of October 23, those first days, before the Never Say Die Crew, headed by a small team of parish stalwarts, attacked the mountains of stuff, things, and disposables contributed to the Cellar-to-Garret Sale.

So what happened? By 5 o'clock on the 27th when the advance sale started, the Parish Center was filled wall to wall with items carefully sorted and tagged. What's more, those people who should have looked haggard and done in practically sparkled as they greeted the first visitors and kept right on till it was over. (Maybe there was a fountain-of-youth ingredient in the fresh-baked rolls that appeared each day.) Every leftover item was routed to other agencies, and the Center cleared by 2 p.m. Monday after the sale.

Long a Guild tradition at St. Patrick's, this year's main fund-raiser was a joint effort of the parish at large and the Guild. To date, records show that it topped our best previous performance both for quantities donated and funds earned, more than \$4,700. The great part about the Cellar-to-Garret Sale is that the proceeds benefit everyone from needy buyers and get-rid-of-it homemakers to parish budget balancers--the "community" at work.

No names are mentioned here because there's no way to list or properly thank all the parishioners who made this success story possible. Maybe they are content to know that it's people like themselves who make St. Patrick's a one-of-a-kind parish.