

St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

www.stpaturbana.org

December 2020

A different sort of Christmas

Many of us are having a different kind of Christmas this year. How about you? It can be difficult but, with trust in our loving God, there are consolations too.

Perhaps you are missing someone.

Maybe this is your first Christmas after the death of someone close to you. Maybe your family

is not able to gather as it has in the past. Mary and Joseph knew this pain. They were far from family support when their son was born. At a time when a family should be together, they were alone, yet they brought us a Savior.

Maybe there is someone new in your life. New love and friendship can remind you of the riches that we have in family love, community ties, and the love of God. Or maybe there's a new baby, to remind you of the joy of new life, and to remind you just how fragile and dependent our Savior was willing to become for us. These experiences can give us hope for the future, hope in God's continued care for us.

Perhaps there is financial strain in your family; someone has lost a job or had to settle for a lower

income. Imagine how Joseph felt, being told to flee to Egypt to save his family. Do you think he had a sock full of cash in his bag? Probably not! He wasn't a wealthy man. But he did what God asked of him, and God took care of them.

Or there may be stress in your family. Someone may have had to move home, or chose not



to visit this year. Someone made a bad decision, or holds a political view different from yours, or is being loudly judgmental about it. Mary and Joseph understood this too. There were probably lots of cousins and neighbors who didn't buy that story about the angel and weren't reluctant to say so. God sustained them with the love of people who knew and trusted them.

Our life as a parish is different too. Fewer of us are able to gather. Masks make it harder to feel part of community. Our singing is muted, and we miss our choirs and instrumentalists. The sign of peace sometimes feels like a sign of distancing, and there's no place to gather after Mass.

See **A different Christmas** on P. 2

Welcome!

All people of good will are welcome here!

If you have been away, welcome back.

If you are living in darkness, come into the light.

If you come here regularly, it is good to see you.

If you have trouble believing in Jesus, look around you; the Body of Christ has come here today.

Everyone is welcome here.

Everyone belongs here.

You belong here.



Holiday Mass Schedule

Immaculate Conception, December 8

12:10 p.m. Mass (no music)

5:00 p.m. Reconciliation

5:30 p.m. Mass (with music)

Christmas Eve, December 24

4:00 p.m. Mass (tickets required)

6:00 p.m. Mass

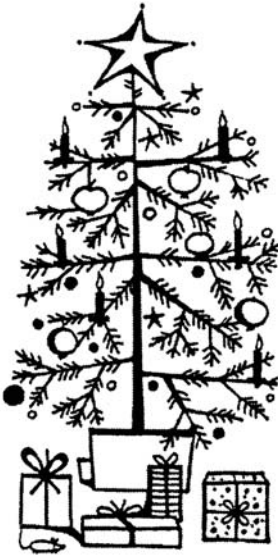
Christmas Day, December 25

10:00 a.m. Mass

Mary, Mother of God, January 1

12:10 p.m. Mass

Christmas Masses



Wondering when you might be able to attend Mass this Christmas? There will be two Masses celebrated on Christmas Eve, at 4:00 p.m. and at 6:00 p.m. The 4:00 p.m. Mass requires a (free) ticket to attend. The parish will send a link to families who have children in our Catholic schools or religious education programs. They will have one week to sign up before this Mass is opened to the rest of the parish. The 6:00 p.m. Mass is open to all; no registration or ticket is required.

There will also be one Mass on Christmas Day, at 10:00 a.m. This Mass is open to all, with no ticket or registration required.

A Different Christmas

Continued from P. 1

Yet we gather in the ways that we can: we've had Mass and parish activities online, we were able to provide many Thanksgiving baskets to those in need, and to collect winter wear for the poor. God helps us keep finding things that hold us together.

Our parish life has had to change and adapt. Our family customs have had to change too. That's okay. Our traditions are strong enough to take it because our Savior is part of them. He is with us when we grieve over the things we can't do this year. He helps us find new ways to be together and to serve others. He holds us always in his love. He knows our needs and our hopes. This is the feast of Emmanuel, God with us!

Did you know . . .

A new Book of Souls has replaced the notebook containing sheets that list family members who have died. A drop box in the gathering space has been provided for parishioners into which they may place the names of deceased family members. These names will be added to the book. Not having to touch the book is intended to protect individuals from contracting COVID-19.

Women of St. Patrick keep adjusting and adapting

The work of the Women of St. Patrick continues through pandemic times. The three pillars of the group are social, spiritual, and service activities. Although no social events are possible, the women continue to work at the spiritual and service components.

In response to a request from Susan Nagele, the Women of St. Patrick made their annual \$3,000 contribution to Maryknoll Lay Missioners in September. This gift is a long-standing tradition of support for Susan and Maryknoll. Susan specifically asked that the gift this year be designated for the Maryknoll Lay Missioners emergency COVID-19 relief fund. The by-laws of the group call for a vote of the general membership for expenditures of this amount. The vote was done via email (the group email goes out to about 225 women), and this year's gift was unanimously approved.

The women of the board, meeting via email, purchased one of the beautiful statues of Mary that the Knights of Columbus sold during October. Now when there are special Marian evenings, May crownings, or other events, there will be a small statue of Mary on hand.

Sadly, the very popular Cookie and Basket Sale will not be held this year. It will return in 2021 with cookies, baked goods, and beautiful gift baskets to please every taste!



Monthly emails continue to keep women of the parish up-to-date on what is happening with the group. The board meets via email as necessary and continues to handle whatever requests come our way. Things may look a bit different, ways of doing what needs to be done may change, but the spirit of the Women of St. Patrick continues.

If you would like to receive the monthly "Events and Opportunities" email from the Women of St. Patrick, please send your email address to: womenofstpatrick@gmail.com.

Remember, all women of the parish belong to this group. There are no dues or requirements for membership, and all are welcome!

Our lives during the pandemic:

Planning and carrying out a wedding

by Sarah Bonson Krueger and Russ Krueger

There are two main challenges that the pandemic brought us in planning our wedding: (1) testing and strengthening our trust that God's plan is superior to our own plans, and (2) re-envisioning what our wedding would look like – many times. Although when we first got engaged in November 2019, we were planning a wedding with about 150 guests, the COVID-19 pandemic caused us to develop an entirely new, more fluid plan with several backup plans.

Like many couples preparing for marriage in today's world, even until the week of our wedding we wondered: Would there be 50 people? Would there be 10 people? Would it be just Russ and Sarah with a priest and two witnesses? After praying and discerning how to plan a wedding during a global pandemic, we both felt that we were called to be married to each other and decided to proceed with the guidance of God and, of course, health authorities.

Throughout a planning process filled with ups and downs and plenty of uncertainty, Russ continually reminded Sarah that the most important part of the day was that, at the end of it, we would be married. Planning a wedding during the pandemic gave us the opportunity to remain focused on God and the sacrament of marriage above any worldly celebrations and details typically associated with a wedding.

The unique complications that the pandemic brought to wedding planning helped us to open our hearts fully to God's plan instead of simply pursuing our own, and God blessed us abundantly. God certainly guided us and took care of our needs as we planned, and all glory be to God that we are married now! After reflecting on our wedding day, we see that the pandemic gave us so many opportunities to fully trust everything

to God, reminding us that with God's grace anything is possible, and helping us to focus on the main purpose of the sacrament – our union in Christ.

We have gone through so much together: persevering in a long-distance relationship, buying a house together (and completing several home-improvement projects already!), and planning a wedding during a pandemic – and through all of that, we have grown closer to each other and to God. God continues to strengthen our relationship every day; our wedding day was God's abundant gift to us.

In the end, our wedding day was better than we could have imagined or planned because we were each forced to leave our own will behind and entrust everything to God's beautiful plan. The planning process for our wedding definitely strengthened our trust in God, and we are counting on God to continue guiding our relationship, our decisions, and our lives. We know that we need to rely on God's grace and help.

One unexpected blessing that God brought us through COVID-19 was the ability to live stream our ceremony. Thanks to Fr. Anthony's willingness to record and live stream our wedding and José's technical guidance, so many more people than could possibly join us in person (even without COVID) were able to join in the celebration of our wedding day, and that was an incredible blessing!

We are very grateful for the continual support of this parish community. From our first day here, we have been welcomed, inspired, and prayed for by this community. We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped us not only on our wedding day, but on our faith journey. Although there were many times it would have been easier to give up on planning a wedding until the pandemic was over, we have been so blessed by the flexibility and service of Patricia and the parish staff, the Knights of Columbus, our wedding

cleaning crew, and the entire parish community for lifting us up in prayer and encouragement. Thank you!



Pope Damasus I: Influential Pontiff

In 305 A.D., Damasus was born in Rome to a married priest. He became a deacon and priest in his father's parish.

The years around his selection as Bishop of Rome in 366 were filled with battles between Church factions that Damasus's allies won. As pope, he strongly advocated for orthodoxy and unity among the many Western and Eastern Christian sects.



The future St. Jerome was a secretary and advisor to Pope Damasus I. The pope encouraged Jerome's influential "Vulgate" (Latin) translation of the Bible and also the use of Latin as the main liturgical language. He presided at the Council of Rome of 382 that determined the official list of the books that make up Sacred Scripture.

Pope Damasus did much to promote the veneration of early Christian martyrs. He restored the Roman catacomb tombs and composed epigrams for their inscriptions, which survive to this day.

St. Damasus I died on December 11, 384, and December 11 has become his feast day.

Groups study the miracles of Jesus

By the time you read this, the fall Bible study, "Signs and Wonders: Encountering Jesus of Nazareth," will have concluded its six weeks. Participants in this study either ordered the book or found it online. The most difficult part of the study was to agree on a day and time to meet over Zoom.

Jim Urban reported that there were six independent groups participating in the study. They met during the day or in the evening using a Zoom app on their computers. One group consisted of members from a parish base community; another was a whole family who studied together.

This Bible study focused on six different miracles performed by Jesus. Each lesson was discrete from the others so if you missed a week, you didn't fall behind. Each group had a facilitator who, using instructions from the book, could stimulate discussions. There were even instructions for the participants so they could confidently respond to the questions. Participants said that they really enjoyed the sessions and were happy with the study.

The parish plans to do another study group during Lent. Please check the parish bulletin or website for information, which should appear in late January or early February.

For Advent there will be two free booklets available to parishioners at the main/east entrance of the church. One is "The Word among Us," daily meditations for November and December. The other is called, "Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas: Waiting in Joyful Hope," from the Liturgical Press.

Did you know . . .

In times past, Advent was viewed as something of a mini-Lent, a time of penance and self-denial, but with a tinge of joy in the background. As the Church's liturgy developed during the course of the past century or so, the predominant spirit of Advent is one of joyful waiting and hope. This theme clearly appears in the Scripture



readings for weekday and Sunday Masses, as well as in the other liturgical texts for this season. *With thanks to Fr. John Dietzen, former priest of the Peoria diocese and author of The New Question Box, for his insight.*

O Spirit of God,
be with us today and
in the days to follow.

Guide us, nurture
us, and increase our
love and gratitude for
you and for all your
gifts.

Arts and Environment team brings beauty to our worship spaces

The parish's Arts and Environment team has responsibility for providing elements to our worship space (make that "spaces" now with the pandemic) that are intended to enhance our worship experience. They approach this task from a liturgical standpoint, but also with an artistic eye, working with almost anything from fabric and other fibers to stained glass and elements of nature. Inspiration can strike any of them at any time, and they all pitch in to help in any way they can.

The group has needed to adapt their supply of prepared materials. Susan Reese, chair of the team, notes: "We had been building a good inventory of banners and other decorations for the various liturgical seasons. When we moved into the expanded church, we had to decide



what parts of our inventory we could use that would fit our new spaces. We've been able to use some items without having to make any changes, but others we've cut up or added something to create something new.

Now that two additional spaces are used for worship, the team has had to review their inventory yet again. Susan says, "We've been using our pre-made items in the new worship spaces. Because we're trying to limit our times together, we don't know how many new items we will be able to create in the near future, but we've tried to provide a display in front of the altar to reflect the season. We know that at Mass the cameras can show that area, enabling everyone viewing the Mass online to share in the enhancement of our worship together."

The team has also had the challenge of hanging finished products in the expanded church. They've been trying some temporary methods but look for safer, easier, and more permanent methods for the future. Without a source of money to fund their ideas, they hope for solutions to the problems they have in hanging banners and other items in the church.

Team member Tina Colombo explains: "We don't have a single hanging system that will accommodate our wide variety of banners and other items. We have wide, short banners and long, skinny banners, and just about everything in between. You can see now that we have three separate sets of hooks on the north wall, at varying heights and widths. We are looking into a system that



could be installed at the very top of that wall, with a rod wide enough for our widest banner. It would adjust up and down with cords and pulleys. One of the best features of a system like this is that we would be able to do all our installations while standing on terra firma, instead of sending our bravest member up a very tall ladder!"

Here are links to information about the options we're considering:

www.hangyourquilts.com/hang-with-pulleys.html

www.hangupscompany.com/store/p44/NoSeeUms%E2%84%A2_Custom_Pulley_System.html

www.hangyourquilts.com/quilt-hangers-for-everywhere.html

too-many-hobbies.blogspot.com/2007/03/quilt-hanging-system.html



"We truly enjoy what we do," Susan says, "and hope it enhances everyone's worship experience." She quickly adds, "We can always use more people in our group, especially for extra help at Christmas and Easter!"



Q: I believed in Santa Claus until I was 7 or 8 years old. But now I hear that parents tell their children there really isn't a Santa, and I wonder if the children aren't missing something.

A: They may indeed be missing something, something very big. Fantasies are doors to wonder and awe, a way of touching Something otherwise out of reach. Santa Claus, in a way, is like that.

In an essay years ago in the *Tablet* magazine, the noted British Catholic author G.K. Chesterton recalled that on Christmas mornings his stockings were filled with things he'd not worked for, or made, or even "been good" for. The only explanation he'd been given was that a being called Santa Claus was somehow kindly disposed toward him.

"We believed," he wrote, "that a certain benevolent person did give us those toys for nothing. And I believe it still—I have merely extended the idea. Once I only thanked Santa Claus for a few toys and maybe some nuts or crackers; now I thank him for stars and wine and the great sea. Once I thought it delightful and astonishing to find a present so big that it went only halfway into the stocking—now I am delighted and astonished every morning to find a present so big that it takes two stockings to hold it and leaves a great deal outside; it is the preposterous present of myself. As to its origin I can offer no suggestion except that 'Santa Claus' gave it to me in a fit of peculiarly fantastic goodwill."

Are we not blessed countless times over to have for our children (and for ourselves) such a fantastic and playful bridge to infinite, unconditionally loving Goodness, the Goodness that dreamed up the Christmas event in the first place?

We can call Santa Claus a myth, but in his name all of us who give gifts at this special time of year are putting each other in deeper touch with the "peculiarly fantastic Goodness" that is the ultimate Source of it all.

And it's fun!

*

Questions about Catholic practice or Catholic teaching may be sent to any Communications Committee member or left in care of the parish office.



Can you help *In Focus* happen?

Many people contribute their time and talents to help *In Focus* come out each month. We're happy to have all kinds of help, but we have two special needs right now.

Page Layout: Three or four times a year, you would receive files of edited articles and photos, lay them out using whatever software you prefer, and create a PDF.

Committee Member: We meet monthly (virtually, for now) to brainstorm articles for the next issue. Meetings are usually held on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7 p.m.

Interested? Contact Cathy Salika at 367-78761 or csalika@illinois.edu.

Vocation Prayer

Loving Father, thank you for calling us at Baptism to be your people. In response to your call we again say a joyful "Yes!" Keep us faithful to your mission and our vocation and bless with a renewed spirit of enthusiasm all who dedicate their lives in service to your people.

Did you know you can read *In Focus* online at the parish website? Click on the image of *In Focus*, or go directly to www.stpaturbana.org/focus/. From there you can

- read recent issues
- subscribe to receive an email when future issues are available
- review our complete archive of issues going back to 1981
- search the archive

It's a great resource for history buffs, genealogists, and people who love the story of our parish.

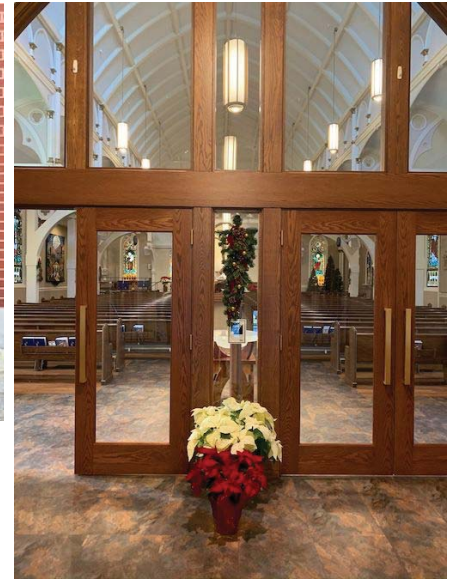
Safety is a large part of St. Patrick's plans as 2020 comes to a close

WARNING

RISK ASSUMED BY PARISHIONERS:

While our parish staffs will attempt to take appropriate precautions consistent with the advice of public health authorities, parishioners and guests should understand that they assume the risk of contracting COVID-19 anytime they enter a public space since such precautions do not eliminate the risk of infection.

God Bless You!



To attend mass, you will need to wear a mask. Also, if you are sick or do not feel well, please stay home.

If you would like to watch any of the live streams of these masses, you can click on the link below:
<http://stpaturbana.org/mass>



Quick Fixin's from the kitchen of . . . Lucille Salika

Jello for the Holidays

2 pkgs lime Jello
1 pkg lemon Jello
1 tub cottage cheese (large or small curd)
1 can pear halves
Maraschino cherries



Combine Jello into medium mixing bowl; add boiling and then cold water (see package instructions). Ladle into clear Pyrex or sturdy glass bowl until 2/3 full. Carefully spoon in cottage cheese, gently stirring it to disperse, taking care to keep the sides of the bowl clean. Refrigerate until Jello starts to set; the cottage cheese will form layers on its own. Remove from refrigerator, and gently place pear halves, core side up, on partially set Jello. Put a cherry in each pear half, and ladle reserved Jello slowly into bowl until full. Refrigerate until fully set.

If you have a recipe you'd like to share, please send it to Mary Lou Menches (344-1125, mmenches@illinois.edu). The only requirement is that it be easy and quick to prepare!

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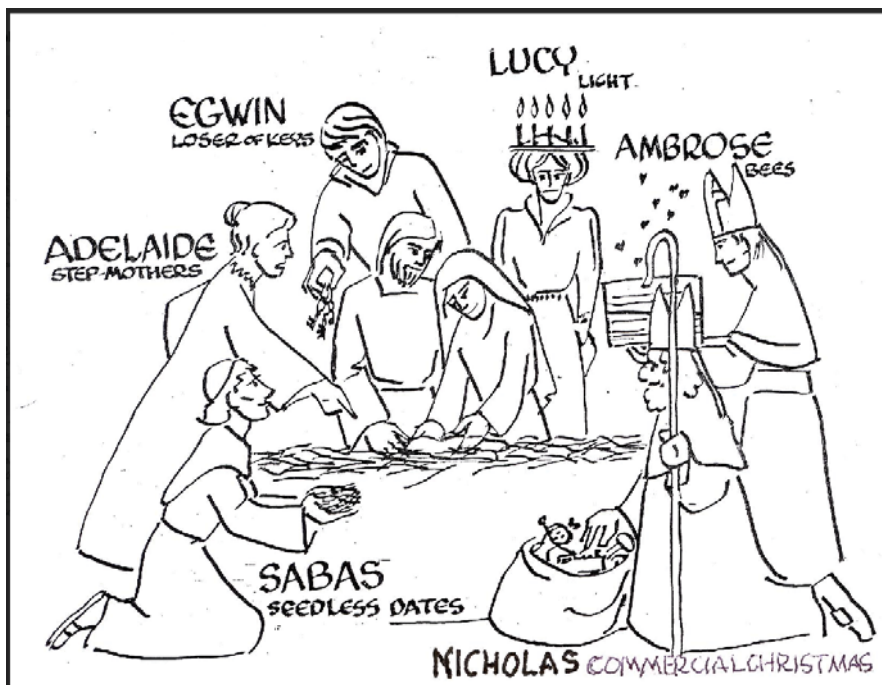
St. Patrick's Parish In Focus is published on the last weekend of the month in Urbana, Illinois. News items and information may be submitted by mid-month for the next issue. Materials must include the name and telephone number of the person submitting them.

Please send news items to infocusstpats@gmail.com. You may also send them to a Communications Committee member, leave them in the committee's mailbox in the parish center, or call a committee member. All submissions are subject to review and/or editing by the committee and staff. Bylines are generally omitted.

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Associates: John Colombo, Frances Drone-Silvers, Rachael McMillan, Nancy Olson, Rick Partin, Shirley Splittstoesser, Adam Smith, Jim Urban, and Jerry Walsh.

Articles, information, and photos for this issue were provided by Tina Colombo, Judy Fierke, Denise Green, Elizabeth Hendricks, Russ Krueger, Sarah Bonson Krueger, Mary Lou Menches, Nancy Olson, Marilyn Pollard, Susan Reese, Cathy Salika, Lucille Salika, and Mary Tate. Patron Saints by Fr. George Wuellner. This issue was edited by Rick Partin; page layout by Shirley Splittstoesser.



December Saints by Fr. George Wuellner

Robert (Bob) Haessly and Diane Hobin were inadvertently omitted from the November *In Focus* list of deceased members of St. Patrick's faith community. We pray for them and their families.