

Beautiful Christmas Liturgies

Merry Christmas to all! I must take this opportunity to thank everyone who in any way offered themselves to make our celebration of Christmas at OLPH such a beautiful and meaningful spiritual experience. To all those liturgical ministers and others associated with the work of liturgy in our parish who worked so hard to make our liturgies such magnificent experiences of prayer; to all those who worked so hard to decorate our church and our campus, both inside and outside; to all those who worked behind the scenes to make sure everything went so smoothly; to all those who offered so much time and energy to serving the needy through our Advent giving trees, either by buying gifts, or sorting them, or distributing them; to those who work to keep our church and campus clean and in good working order; to all who went out of their way to support us financially this Christmas: to these and to all, I offer a heart-felt and deep **THANK YOU** for enfleshing Christ this Christmas in your life through your offering of yourself.

My gratitude includes the beautiful celebration of Lessons and Carols that took place on the Third Sunday of Advent. Our parish musicians and readers provided us with a beautiful evening of prayer and song (and it was indeed both prayer and song). I received many, many positive comments about the evening. People were impressed by the beauty of it all and were moved by the sense of spirituality. They were amazed at both the breadth and depth of talent in this parish and were captivated by the diversity of our music groups coming together so beautifully to be coordinated into a magnificent whole. A great spirit of cooperation and service was in evidence.

Truly YOU, all of the great parishioners of OLPH, are the reason that this is such a wonderful, wonderful parish. I am so pleased and privileged to be your Pastor!

Christmas Time

We are now in the days of Christmas Time, a liturgical time that continues until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on January 12, 2014; it is not until Monday, January 13 that we return to Ordinary Time. Don't be so quick to take down your Christmas tree and decorations;

enjoy the length of the season, which is now, and lasts until January 13. These are the days for us to ponder the incomprehensible meaning of Emmanuel, "God-with-us," the Word made flesh.

Indeed, our understanding of Christmas must bring us beyond sentimental images of the baby Jesus and instead lead us to contemplate the fullness of the mystery of God becoming human. There are three options for the Preface (the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer, after the Introductory Dialogue and before the Holy, Holy) that can be used during Christmas Time, and each one reveals a different facet of the fuller meaning of what we are entering into as we celebrate the mystery: one Preface focuses on Christ as the Light of the World and as the visible image of the invisible God; another highlights the mystery of the Incarnation and speaks of the "awe-filled mystery" of the One who was "begotten before all ages," so that all that was cast down is raised up; another emphasizes the "holy exchange that restores our life" as human nature is assumed by the Word. Listen for these themes at Mass, and let them inform and inspire your prayer and reflection throughout all of Christmas Time.

Holy Day of Obligation January 1

This Wednesday, January 1, is a Holy Day of Obligation: as the Octave (8th Day) of the Nativity of the Lord, it's the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. As a Holy Day of Obligation, Catholics are required to attend Mass, as with Sundays. Please see our schedule of Masses for Tuesday night, December 31, and Wednesday, January 1, as printed elsewhere in the bulletin. We look forward to seeing you at one of those Masses.

Epiphany Proclamation

Next Sunday, January 5, is the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. This Solemnity celebrates the manifestation ("epiphany") of the Lord to the nations, as noted by the Magi who followed the star to find the newborn King.

There is an ancient practice of the Church that on the Epiphany of the Lord, after the Gospel at Mass, the dates of the moveable feasts of the current year are announced. We are

going to follow that custom here at OLPH, so at all the Masses next weekend this Proclamation will be chanted by the Cantor after the Gospel, before the homily.

We hope this practice will bring to the forefront the importance that the rhythm of the liturgical year, with its various feasts and seasons and cycles, should hold in every Catholic's life. Just as the Epiphany is all about the manifestation of the coming of God in the flesh, so too do we acknowledge, with this Epiphany Proclamation, how the Paschal Mystery is manifested in the various feasts and times throughout the entire year. Listen for this Proclamation next weekend at Mass!

Epiphany Blessing of the Home

Another wonderful tradition associated with Epiphany is the blessing of homes. It is customary to mark the doors of the home following in the steps of the Magi who, according to tradition, are named Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. Inscribed in chalk over one or more doors are the numbers of the new year, along with the initials of the Magi: 20+C+M+B+14.

Next week we will have available special cards which can be used for this Epiphany blessing of your home, a card that gives not only a prayer of blessing, but also the numbers and initials, such that, if desired, this card can be affixed as a placard above a doorway to serve as the blessing of the house.

I urge every family to take one of these blessings and use it at home as a moment of family prayer and Christmas Time devotion.

Sale of 272 Wellwood Avenue ("Gray House")

I wish to announce to you that a short time ago I closed on the sale of the house at 272 Wellwood Avenue, the "gray house," that was most recently the location of our St. Vincent de Paul offices. The Village of Lindenhurst has bought that house and that location will be the new site of the Village Museum, which is moving across the street in order to make room for the expansion of the Fire House. The revenue realized from this sale will be a help to us not only in terms of giving us a cushion for cash-flow problems, but also for continuing to pay off our debt and for beginning to prepare for future

large expenses such as expected boiler repair, and the diocesan Non-School Assessment to support Catholic education, which we will have to begin paying next year.

Of course, as helpful as this money is, it is a one-time sum, and we will eventually go through it. Thus, the crucial factor still looming on the horizon is getting the Convent rented so we can realize regular monthly rental income. We are working hard on this, but while there has been much interest from potential lessees, nothing has materialized yet.

So, you'll soon begin to see changes at 272 Wellwood Avenue, changes made by the Village; the property is no longer ours.

Happy New Year!

I take this opportunity to wish one and all a happy and healthy New Year. Be safe on New Year's Eve! May 2014 bring you an abundance of graces and blessings. May we, as a parish, continue to face the challenges which lie ahead with grace, wisdom, compassion, understanding and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of humor. May we continue to go forward in our discipleship as we follow the One who came among us to bring us life. May we continue to grow together as the one Body of Christ in the year ahead.

In conclusion...

Together, let's aim high in Christ. Together, let's bring out the best in each other. Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,