

St. Luke's Parish

Epistle

December 2009 Bladensburg, Maryland

My Dear Flock,

Thanksgiving Day is over, and that can only mean one thing...let the madness begin. Shop and shop until you drop. No doubt, you are caught up in the hustle and bustle of the Christmas shopping season, searching for that perfect gift. The retail industry has been more successful in influencing American culture than has the Church. If you think that is not the case consider the follow: Which has been more successful in promoting their Christmas season?

The retail industry has convinced us the Christmas season begins with "Black Friday," the day after Thanksgiving Day and runs

through Christmas Eve. Many people, even Christians, put up their Christmas trees and decorations weeks before Christmas and take them down several days after Christmas Day, if not sooner. The fact is the birth of our Lord is to be observed and celebrated for twelve days, beginning with Christmas Day. The retail industry has been successful in extending the season to include the whole month of December, and the last few days of November. In fact, The retail industry has been so successful in transforming the Christmas season, that it now does not need "Christ" or the Christian meaning of Christmas to be profitable; the



season has just become a commercialization of a mesh of a variety of holidays-Happy Holidays!

As Christians we must never forget Christmas begins with the celebration of the Birth of our Lord on Dec. 25, and is to be celebrated for twelve days. The significance of the birth of Jesus is so grand, the Church has set aside the month preceding Christmas Day as a time of preparation and anticipation for our Lord's coming; this is known as the Advent season. While we tend to get caught up in the hustling and bustling of shopping, we Christians must never forget we have already received the perfect gift, and to receive Him properly we must prepare.

Therefore, it is my hope you

Mark +

enjoy the spirit of the shopping season, and I invite you to take time out from your already busy schedules to prepare for the greatest gift ever given to man-God incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. May we prepare our hearts and homes to receive Him, for by doing so, and only after doing so, can we truly come to adore Him.

The retail industry may trick our minds, and take our hard earned money, but only Jesus Christ can fill our hearts.

It is my hope and prayer that all Christians throughout the world, have a holy and blessed Advent season, for in preparing our hearts to receive Him, the Church can once again be successful in influencing our society.

O come, Let us adore Him!

Christmas is indeed a season for families to gather, eat, reminisce, and share their love. These family gatherings are not of human invention, but rather an imitation of us being invited and called into God's holy family. Every Sunday, and particularly during the season of our Lord's Incarnation, we are invited and called, by our Heavenly Father, to come home, to gather as adopted members of His family, to reminisce and hear the stories again, to eat of His meal, and to share in His love. Indeed, this is the Christmas story, God has become man in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ we become part of God's family.

Here at St. Luke's we will celebrate our Lord's birth on

December 24, with midnight Mass, beginning at 11:00 pm. Christmas Day Mass will be celebrated at 10:00 am. I extend a special invitation to all friends and members of St. Luke's to come home. Let us come and bask in our Heavenly Father's love, hospitality, and generosity. And let us receive again the greatest gift ever given to man, the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In receiving and accepting Him we become heirs of what is rightfully His alone.

Let us come home again this Christmas season and fall to our knees to worship the new born King.

Vickey and I wish all of you a very Merry and Blessed Christmas!

O come, Let us adore Him!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 5 - The Second Sunday of Advent
Dec. 12 - Monthly Requiem 10:00am
Dec. 13 - The Third Sunday of Advent
The Annual Christmas Concert 5:30 pm
Dec. 16 - Vestry Meeting 7:00 pm
Dec. 20 - The Fourth Sunday of Advent
Dec. 21 - St. Thomas the Apostle, Mass 6:30 pm
The Greening of the Church immediately following the Mass
Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve, Mass 11:00 pm
Dec. 25 - Christmas Day, Mass 10:00 am
Dec. 27 - The First Sunday after Christmas Day
Dec. 31 - New Year's Eve, Mass 9:30 pm
Pot Luck dinner immediately following the Mass
We will pray in the New Year at Midnight
Jan. 1, 2010 - The Holy Name; New Year's Day - Mass 10:00 am

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible study is on a winter break. It will resume again after the New Year.

Thursday Night Bible Study

We are presently working our way through Vernon Staley's book entitled, The Catholic Religion: A manual of instruction for members of the Anglican Communion. We are discussing the catholic faith, and our understanding of it as Anglicans. Staley does this by providing Biblical citations as well as teaching the traditions of the faith. It is of utmost importance for a Christian to be Biblically literate and to have a good grasp of the faith of the church; failure to obtain such allows one to be carried away by false doctrine, and the prevalent winds of society. Please come and join us.

Men's Fellowship

Mr. Elenilson Ayala and Mr. Sam Onakoya are asking for all men of the parish to be active participants of this fellowship. The gatherings, (note, they are not meetings), are to provide a place of good Christian fellowship and growth in Christ. We aim to know one another better by hearing each other's story-what has brought us to this place?-what has led to our faith?-and most importantly, what role our faith, (in Jesus), plays in our daily lives? Mr. Brian Chambers will be our next speaker. Our next meeting will be in January 2010.

Wish List Items

A Nativity Set is still needed - The Parish is in need of a much larger, nativity set. The nativity set presently used is for home use, not to be used in a large facility, such as our church. The Anglican tradition is that the "Bambino"

is carried from the altar in procession to the crèche, where it is placed in the crib. We are unable to do this because our figurines are too small. Having a larger nativity set will also make it much more visible in the church. The total cost of such a nativity set is around \$2,000. However, each piece of the nativity can be bought separately at a cost of around \$200 per piece; therefore we do not have to raise all of the money at one time

Christmas Concert

The annual Christmas concert, given by the St. Luke's singers, will be presented on December 13, 2009 at 5:30 pm. Please mark your calendars, invite your family members, friends, neighbors, and workmates. Let us fill the church for this concert.

La-Verne Williams will be coordinating the preparation for the reception following the Concert. She will need all of our support. As you may recall, this reception takes the form of a Pot Luck dinner; Please let La-Verne know what you plan on preparing and bringing to this event.

Though this concert is free, it is not without cost. We ask for every parishioner to make a donation to offset the cost of this event.

The vestry, at its workday retreat, has committed to pray for the Rector, Wardens, Vestry, and people of St. Luke's twice a day at 9:00 am & 9:00 pm. We invite you to join us in these prayers.

Stewardship

We have received 32 pledges as of 1 December. The pledged amounts are:

Pledged amount for Offerings -	\$86,906
Pledged amount for Improvement Fund -	\$9,395
Pledged amount for Furnace Fund -	\$9,060
Pledged amount for Misc. Memorials -	\$1,200
Pledged amount for SHARE -	\$240
TOTAL	AMOUNT PLEDGED
\$107,041	

Many still have not pledged. We need your support! The following Scriptures were used in the sermon for Thanksgiving Sunday, the day we collected pledge cards. I invite you to read them, and pray on them. Then fill out your pledge card in bring it to the altar of God.

+Genesis 4.2b-5 Able gave God the firstlings from his flock, the fat portions - THE BEST PORTIONS.

+Gen. 14. 17-20 Abraham, the great patriarch of the Hebrew people gave a tithe of all the spoils gained from victory in battle.

+Deut. 26. 1-4 The land we have inherited, God's promised land, is His kingdom-everlasting life in His Son. Does our giving reflect the fruit of the land we have inherited?

+Malachi 3. 1-12 Do not rob God! Put Him to the test; give what He expects from you.

Does the financial support you give to St. Luke's reflect a belief that all one possess is a gift from God? Does the financial support you give to St. Luke's

reflect the thanksgiving you have in your heart for all that God has given you? Does the financial support you give to St. Luke's reflect how much you love Jesus?

**IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO PLEDGE
OR INCREASE YOUR PLEDGE
TODAY!**

We all should be giving at least 10% of our income to the parish; if we were, this parish would not be experiencing financial hardships.

I invite you to join Vickey and me in experiencing the joys of tithing.

**NEW YEAR'S EVE
MASS**

We will bring in the New Year with Mass at 9:30 pm, followed by a "Pot Luck" dinner. We will then return to the Church to pray in the New Year. Please make plans to join us for Mass and fellowship. It is a wonderful way to ring in the New Year.

Capital Campaign

The vestry of St. Luke's needs your support. The aging furnace and its controls are constantly failing; they have now reached a point where repairs are no longer an option. We are now in the process of obtaining several bids for the replacement of the boiler and controls. It appears as though the cost of replacement is going to be around \$50,000. The church has no funds to pay for a furnace replacement; we need your support.

Please find enclosed the Capital Campaign envelope, and make the most generous donation you can. All donations are tax deductible.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2010. This is going to be a very important meeting, as we discuss the future of St. Luke's. It is of the utmost importance for all parishioners to be present. We need to hear your voice. There will only be one Mass this day. The Annual Parish meeting will begin immediately following Mass and lunch. Please make every attempt to attend!

**Please keep the following
people in your prayers:**

Warfield Keene, Uche Ifeacho, Malcolm Parkinson, Charles Sommerkamp, Chet & Espie Stewart, Lester, Shonda Frost, Auburn Traylor, Joclyn Jacobs, Robert Bowman, Alliette Jones, Amy, Guadalupe Alonzo, Vivian Murphy, Phyllis Donnelly, Joel Hooper, Mack Paschal, Lynn King, Princess Deigh, Floridalma Alonzo, Jason Orellana, Mary Jarvis, Wanda Maske, Mona Rowland, Gloria Pellegrini, Anthony Grailor, Patty Fitzgerald, Kimberly Stafford, Janet Kiawu, Elizabeth Bert, The LeBlancs, Betty Christopher, Fr. Frank Bober, Lisa Beach, Ginny Mcknew, Moses Alusi, Anthony, Catherine Jones, Rimisa Williams, Jean Ashman, Nadene Howard, Juliette Scott, Ju-Ming Chiang, Victoria Olunlade, Judy Kaiser, Al Vermillion, Darlene, Alice Moore, Micah Shandand and Fr. Zera.