

St. James NewsNotes Advent 2021

Message from Fr. Tom

The feathery pampas grass outside my office window is again tall and dancing in the wind after being beaten down by the four inches of snow that fell three days ago. While I'm excited by how it sprung back to life, I know that soon its time will be done and it will dance no more. Wow, that sounds more depressing than I meant it to be! But it's true. This time of the year is a time of letting go.

There's an evocative phrase that I'm sure many of you have heard, "Let go, and let God." I've found that this sentence means different things to different people—all valid, beautiful and meaningful. It speaks to me of surrender. When I find a quiet place and reflect on those words, it's like everything falls away—my worries, certainly, but more profoundly even the sense that I have anything to worry about in the first place. It all falls away and I simply enjoy resting in God who loves me. It reminds me of that prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola, "Take Lord, receive, all I have and possess. You have given all to me, now I return it. Give me only your love and your grace; they are enough for me."

That kind of prayer is like a vacation for me. I know I'll have to come out of it and engage in all the stresses of life, but it's necessary and renewing to "get away" for a time.

If you feel up for it, I recommend experiencing this Advent season as some "spiritual vacation time." This could be a challenge, since the days leading up to Christmas can be so full of activity. There is cooking, gifting, snow removing, party attending, event planning, and my very least favorite—driving in all that traffic near shopping areas. But, you know, all those activities can be done with an anxious heart **or** with a restful, contemplative heart. Though it might seem impossible, even driving in congested areas and waiting through two or more changes of lights can be done with a peaceful and recollected soul. Really, it can! Let go, and let God. Trying to control what is not in our control—like stoplights, for example—is a recipe for an anxious heart.

We might ask ourselves, "What's more important: getting through that green light or having a peaceful heart? Making a perfect meal, or giving loving attention to everyone who shares that meal?" Let go, and let God.

As always, I want you to know how much I enjoy being your pastor, and how grateful I am for all of you who have weathered the adversity of these Covid months and stayed in vital communion with the people of St. James. I don't think it has been easy for anyone. I pray that amid all the commotion and difficulty of life, you can feel deep peace in your heart and look forward to the joy of that day when we hear proclaimed, "Great joy for all the people, for unto us this day a child is born." Grass withers and dies, but the life of God is eternal and seeks to be born in us again and again. Blessed Advent/Christmas, everyone.

Keep your lamps burning





Christmas Sale in Gathering Space

Christmas Items from L'Arche, a community including people with intellectual disabilities, and a gift shop in Bethlehem. Items include: olive oil, wool, ceramics and olive wood items. All proceeds go to support them. Items will be available in the Gathering Space after weekend Masses from November 14, and in the parish office during the week, until sold out.



Prayer Exchange

We are exchanging names for Christmas!!

Receive the name of a person or family to pray for over the Advent season.

At the end of Advent share with that person or family who was praying for them!

Its a Secret Santa with Prayer instead of Presents!

Presence instead of Presents.

If you would like to be part of this prayer exchange, please contact Beth Cerny at elizabethcerny@hotmail.com



Word and Music for Days of Holy Darkness

Our annual Advent service with readings, songs, and periods of silence to relax into the days of holy darkness. The service will be live streamed and in person.

Dec. 21 at 7 PM.



Mass for Immaculate Conception

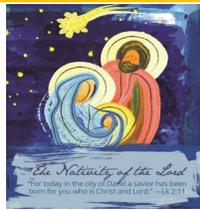
The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is Wednesday Dec. 8th. We will have mass on Wednesday at 9 AM (school mass) and 6:15 PM (Religious Education mass with plenty of space for parishioners).

Christmas Mass Times:

Christmas Eve: **2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 9 PM**

Christmas Day: **9 AM**

Feast of the Holy Family: **8 and 10 AM (no 4:30 Mass)**



The 9 PM mass will be live-streamed.

To accommodate different preferences regarding social distancing, as well as larger attendance:

The 2:30 and 4:30 Masses will have **all pews available**.

The 6:30 mass will have **all pews socially distanced**.

The 9 PM and 9 AM will have our **normal half and half**.

Advent Communal Reconciliation!

Tuesday Dec. 7 at 7 PM, at St. James. Communal prayer with opportunity for individual confession.

Strategic Planning

St. James the Greater began a 2022-2025 Strategic Planning process in March 2021.

Paula Winter, Pastoral Council chair, gathered information from an all parish survey, individual and group meetings with parish staff, individual meetings with Father Tom, and completing a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats) process with the Social Concerns Committee, Parish Council, Music Ministry Team, Religious Education personnel, the PCCW (Parish Council of Catholic Women), and Parish Finance Council.

To see the results of the strategic plan, join Paula for her presentation after all of the masses Dec. 11/12.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Join us for mass on 12/31 at 5:30 PM.

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at St. James

With Good Shepherd.

Tuesday November 23, 6:30 PM.

Please bring a food item for the pantry.

Sojourner House will be the charity for donations.

Hospitality will follow (Covid rates permitting).



Advent Drive:

Snow Gloves for school kids (waterproof only) and homeless adults. Bins will be at the entrances.

Scandinavian Bake Sale



The PCCW is again offering Scandinavian treats for pre-order: rosettes, krumkake, sandbakkels, and pizzelles. Prices are \$11 a dozen or \$1 for individual cookies.

All orders must be placed by Friday, December 3. Pick up after all of the masses December 11-12, until 1 PM, under the canopy by the Gathering Space. The dozen can be a mixture of the 4 choices or just one kind. We can also make gift packages. Order forms are available online, at the parish office, and in the back of church. Payment should be made at the time of ordering. Make checks out to St. James PCCW. Orders can be returned to the parish



office. Any questions, please call Connie Bushman, co-chair of the bake sale. 715.429.0703