

§ Reflections on the Gospel

Some words never grow old or die. A story, song, or prophecy can continue to give life and hope as it is proclaimed over and over again in new circumstances. The comforting words of Isaiah were beautiful music to the ears of the exiles in Babylon. God was no longer angry with them. Their exile was coming to an end. God was going to show his power in a dramatic way that would be apparent to all. A sort of celestial corps of engineers was called upon to fill in valleys, level hills and prepare a wide and level highway for the Lord to lead the exiles back to Jerusalem.

These same words would sound melodious once again to the people of Judea several hundred years later. The Jewish people were still an oppressed people; only their oppressors had changed. This time it was the Romans and John the Baptist the voice crying in the wilderness. Isaiah's words find a second life on John's lips as he baptizes the people in the Jordan and frantically strives to prepare them for the coming of the Lord.

John wants to stir their hearts, raise their hopes and expectations and even uses fear to press the point that time is short and the world altering event is already on the horizon. Just as the exiles in Babylon, so now the people in the time of Jesus firmly believed that their own situation and the world in general had become so mired in sin, chaos and injustice that only God could put things right.

John's baptism is one of repentance and the forgiveness of sins, and repentance will be among the first words proclaimed by Jesus as he begins his public ministry. But what does it mean? The Greek word that is used, *metanoia*, mean a change or transformation of the mind, an inner revolution, a new way of thinking.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus makes it clear that he is not there to tweak and patch the old religious order, but to usher in an entirely new age with a new world view and way of imaging God. There will be many surprises from Jesus: different notions of purity, holiness and human relationships. But most of all, the coming of Jesus means that God is taking direct control of a rebellious world, and people must decide once and for all whom they wish to serve.

We don't live today with the same expectations of sudden cataclysmic intervention by God. Most of realize that the world has slogged on for 2,000 years in much the same state. The Lord is slow in returning, and the world is slow to change. The costumes and names change, but the script is distressingly familiar: oppression, violence, injustice and fear.

Jesus left an indelible imprint on the world and in our hearts and minds. God does not enter the world unbidden, and in our own time we have seen what can be accomplished when we do repent and change the way we think and the way we view the world.

There are signs of hope. Through the urgings of a few courageous and inspired souls, we have begun to shed prejudice and discrimination. More and more people are concerned with economic justice, human rights and the protection of the environment. We struggle to understand our religious traditions in ways that reconcile and heal rather than cause hatred and violence. There is also the beginning of a "spiritual globalism" in which we have a far greater sense of the oneness and interconnectedness of the earth and of humanity.


We have only just begun our transformation. We should not be discouraged but inspired to contribute our small but important part to the realization of God's reign. We prepare the way for the Lord when we give one another hope and when we are inspired to look for and expect the best in ourselves and others.

Holy Day of Obligation:

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Holy Day of Obligation for all Catholics! This holy day falls on Monday, December 8th! The Mass schedule at St. Matthias will be as follows: **On Monday December 8th: 7:30am, Noon and 7:30pm Masses.** Please mark your calendar so as not to forget this special holy day honoring the special grace and dignity bestowed by God upon our Blessed Mother, Mary.

Stewardship Report:

Revenue



November 24:	8,260.41
Faith Direct:	1,609.25
Total Offertory:	9,869.66
Last Year:	10,530.90
Poor Box:	163.68
Every Penny Counts Box:	143.65

Number of Adult Envelopes: 274; Number of Children's Envelopes: 16; Number of Faith Direct donors: 36 Number of Registered Households: 649

Dec 1:	7,562.15
Faith Direct:	1,609.25
Total Offertory:	9,171.40
Last Year:	8,867.10
Poor Box:	529.60
Every Penny Counts Box:	150.70
Thanksgiving Day:	4,100.00

Number of Adult Envelopes: 221; Number of Children's Envelopes: 7; Number of Faith Direct donors: 36 Number of Registered Households: 655

Advent Coin Folders for the Poor Box: Our annual special Christmas appeal for our Poor Box begins again with the appearance of the Advent Coin Folders. From November 17th through Christmas Day, each working household or individual is asked to set aside twenty-five cents a day (one quarter) so that by time December 25th arrives, each folder will contain a \$20.00 gift to the Poor Box. God bless you for your continuing generosity!

Special Poor Box Collection: Please help the Vietnamese Sisters of our parish support their community's efforts to open new schools and orphanages in Vietnam and to build an expansion onto their Houston facility. The Sisters will be at the doors of the Church after each Mass during the weekend of December 13/14th to receive your offerings. Checks should be made payable to St. Matthias Church.

Building and Maintenance Fund: Our **second** collection **this** weekend is for our regular **Building Fund**. This monthly collection enables us to make continuing repairs, upkeep and improvements to our parish and school buildings as well as our parish grounds. May we suggest a minimum of \$10 per household. As always, we thank you for your continuing generosity!

Retirement Fund for Religious: Our **second** collection **next** weekend is for the continuing care of our elderly religious. This collections is an opportunity to thank them for their faith, service and dedication to the church and our communities.

An Evening of Thanksgiving & Praise

Our Youth Group production was an outstanding success thanks to the participants, the guests and the Lord! With a packed parking lot and standing room only, we were so blessed to be joined by so many supportive people during this special evening created to give thanks to God for all of the blessings He bestows on us.

I would like to take this time to thank Mr. George Stewart, our Director of Music; Mr. Kenneth Louis our guest Director; the Musicians; Miss Sherrie Durand our Choreographer; Zachary Thomas our Cellist; Kendall Givens-Little our Mime; Kelly Collins, Wilbert Lewis, & Morris Cobb our Vocalists; the members of Elizabeth Seton Gospel Choir and the members of the Ft. Washington Seventh Day Adventist Youth Choir for their participation in a Blessed Evening with the Lord. Special thanks also to the numerous others who donated their time and talent to make this evening a success. We all left with a greater sense of "WHOSE WE ARE" and certainly a more profound understanding that "HE IS GOD!" I am so glad that we were not asleep when the MASTER came!

Youth Ministry collected \$2275.24 in offerings thanks to the generous support of our family and friends who came to join us on that special evening!

Continued blessings to all,
 Donna Stewart-Moore
 Director of Youth Ministry

Other Items of Note:

School Subscription Raffle Tickets: Tickets are \$50 and only 1,200 tickets will be sold so that you have a better chance to win!! Weekly winners receive \$300 and the seller of each winning ticket receives \$50. You can win as many as 35 times, as your ticket is placed in the Lottery pool every week for the 35 week Lottery. Please contact Ms. Vivian Mason at 301-577-9412 with any questions, or E-mail her at vmason@stmatthias.org.

Christmas Giving Tree: The Christmas Giving Tree has returned this year to the front right side of the Altar in the church. The tree is decorated with ornaments bearing the name of an organization and a requested gift. Please take an ornament and return it along with the unwrapped gift requested by **December 14th** to the church or rectory. The gifts will be distributed to patients at Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Springfield Hospital Center; PG County Hospital Pediatric Unit; Mt. Washington Pediatric Unit; and Gift of Peace. Thank you for making the season special for those in need!

LOC 2009 Holiday Sales: The Ladies of Charity will be selling Missals, Christmas cards and other seasonal items after Masses each weekend to support their charitable works including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for the needy. Items available include the following: 2009 Sunday Missals for \$3.50; Advent Calendars for \$1.00 and a set of 4 Advent Candles for \$7.00.

No Christmas Trees This Year! While Christmas will be celebrated with all her seasonal trimmings on December 25th, there will be one noticeable absence in our parish holiday preparations. After examining the last three years of sales of fresh Christmas trees on our parish property I decided, along with the Parish Finance Council, to terminate this event. The risk of losing money was becoming a greater possibility in the light of our current economy. In short, it is a tremendous amount of work for a minimal profit. Thank you to all who did assist in years past, and please share this news with your neighbors and friends who may have faithfully come to support our efforts.



Mass Intentions for the Second Week of Advent

Monday, December 8: Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary– Holy Day

7:30 am Lena Jacobs
 Noon Kay Mullany
 7:30 pm Willie (Bill) Moore

Tuesday, December 9: Saint Juan Diego, hermit

8:30 am Doris Lane

Wednesday, December 10:

8:30 am Emmanuel Amanyiwe (living)

Thursday, December 11: Saint Damasus I, pope

8:30 am Kathy Lewis & Family

Friday, December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe

8:30 am Kathy Lewis & Family

Sat., December 13: Vigil– Third Sunday of Advent

3:30 pm to 4:30pm—Confessions

5:00 pm Kathy Lewis & Family

Sunday, December 14: Third Sunday of Advent

8:00 am Eileen Flanagan
 9:30 am Lillian Ekowski (living)
 11:30am Annie Cmos

Please Pray for: †The Sick and Homebound In Our Parish:

Phil Ates; Virgie Azarcon; Ann Benson; Leslie Berkey; Barbara Brink; Audrey Brown; Margaret Carr; Fidel dela Cuesta; Eleanor DeMarco; Lisa Farland; Don Falls; Francis Greenfield; Leslie Hand; Joseph Harrison; Charles Henry; Lena Jacobs; Anne Mbimi Ifouini; Charles Jones; Rev. Patrick Keeny; Paula Kelly; Robyn Kirby; Laura Elaine Kiessling; Ray Krok; Nancy Maimone; Joe Makowski; Albertine Mandzo; Luke Martellotti; Willie (Bill) Moore; Bernadette Murphy; Larry Murphy; Rosemarie Nardozi; Mary Nelson; David Obi; Peter O'Neill; Joseph Otero; Alice Parker; Dawn Pearson; June Provini; Joe Sico; Walter Stewart; Margaret Zanin; Ryan Zawada†

For Our Deceased: Josephine A. Yodichkas†
Names will be placed on our prayer list for three weeks. To add a name or to request continuing prayers, contact Tara Guevara by phone at 301-459-4814 or email tguevara@stmatthias.org.

Faith Formation

NO CLASS SCHEDULED: There will be no Faith Formation classes TOMORROW, Monday, December 8th. Families are encouraged to observe this *Holy Day of Obligation* by participating in the parish liturgy at 7:30pm.

Last Session Information: Our last session for 2008 will be next Monday, December 15. Classes will be held as usual. Remember, according to the Archdiocese of Washington policy in order to move on to the next level, one must attend at least 85% of classes. Extra-curricular activities such as sports, music and dance lessons do not count for an excused absence.

Music Ministry: Youth Choir

Due to unforeseen circumstances, **all Youth Choir rehearsals are cancelled** for December. There will be follow-up information regarding reconvening in January. Have a wonderful Christmas season and may God continue to bless you and your families.