



THE GOOD STEWARD

St. Jane Frances de Chantal Parish Stewardship Council Newsletter

Celebrating the Gifts of Time, Talent and Treasure

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LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear Parishioners of St. Jane de Chantal,

Each year as I write the letter for the winter edition of *The Good Steward*, I am filled with appreciation for your generosity during the Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season. You will read elsewhere about the phenomenal success (and effort!) of the Sodality's Giving Tree project. Your gift to the collection that helps support our retired religious sisters, brothers and priests was \$11,817, while your Christmas offering to the church was \$79,082.58. Those of you in our choirs were an inspiration, and those who helped decorate the church outdid themselves. Our parish and community are truly blessed with the outpouring of time, talent and treasure by so many of you.

The last two weeks of January and the first week of February focused on the Archbishop's Appeal. Last year our parish contributed just over \$308,000 to this effort, so I am very confident that we will exceed this year's goal of \$289,450.70. I am especially grateful to Leo Kane and Tim Kraus, our co-chairs. If you have not yet made your Archbishop's Appeal pledge, please do so. Many in our Archdiocese depend upon the programs the Appeal funds as their lifeline.

Lent comes early this year; Ash Wednesday is February 6th. I have written you a letter outlining the myriad opportunities for prayer, fasting and almsgiving which characterize this season. Here I wish to highlight our celebration of Solemn Eucharistic Adoration (Forty Hours) on February 11, 12 and 13. On those days, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed in the monstrance from 8:30 AM to 8:30 PM. On each of those three evenings there will be a special service at 7:30 PM. On Monday and Tuesday nights Fr. Kyle Ingels will be the homilist; I will preach on Wednesday. If you have not done so, please put those dates on your calendars. You will also be invited to sign up for periods of adoration throughout those days. Our Lord asks "Could you not watch one hour with me?" I beg you to say yes.

I close by offering you my prayers and thanks as we prepare for the great feast of Easter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Msgr. Donald S. Essex, Pastor 

SAVE THE DATES

Solemn Eucharistic Adoration

February 11-13, each day following 8 a.m. Mass until 7:30 p.m. evening liturgy.

All are invited to join in these three special days in the life of the parish.

CHRISTMAS WRAP-UP: WHAT'S BEHIND THE GIVING TREE PROJECT

For those of us who walked into Church the first weekend after Thanksgiving, there was irrefutable evidence that the gift-giving season was upon us. Faced with several very tall trees beautifully decorated with die cut Christmas tags and labels, we were compelled to carefully select a tag that, in our hearts, we knew represented the true gift giving side of Christmas. We knew that for so many less fortunate people, that tag represented the only present that they would receive. What most of us didn't realize was the process by which those gifts would find their way to over 1,000 recipients in our archdiocese and beyond.

The de Chantal Giving Tree is a parish tradition that began in the early 1980's under the auspices of the Sodality. The members of the John Neumann unit spearheaded the first few trees; eventually the project was taken on by the Regina Coeli unit, which has been in charge for the past number of years. This year, Barbara Coppola and Terri Smith were assisted by Denise Sintetos and Christy Mooney along with numerous volunteers to spread Christmas joy throughout the city.

Christmas plans begin in October for these ladies when they send out letters to about 20 organizations in the archdiocese. The Sisters of Charity of Greensburg, PA., are also included in the list as a remembrance of all of the time that they gave to our parish and school over the years. A follow-up phone call is made to each of the organizations to be sure that assistance is still needed.

After receiving the wish list of each institution, the sodalists die-cut each ornament and type up two sets of wish labels – one for the ornament and one for a master list to keep everyone organized. There is a labeling meeting that is held in November to finish the ornaments, which are then hung on the trees when they are put up in the narthex the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Two weeks later, the work (and a fair amount of chaos) really begins when the gifts are returned to church. Some of the more organized among our parishioners return gifts even before the deadline, which necessitates a daily sweep of the church to collect the early gifts and place them in a secure spot. On the actual weekend that they are due, an army of eighth graders and sodalists collect all of the gifts and bring them to

the central sorting area in Caulfield Hall. A process of sorting and matching gifts to organizations then ensues, and the organizers are often found late into the night making sure that each label has the exact gift that has been requested. While many people's hearts are in the right place, deadlines can be overlooked and so

inevitably there is a lengthy list of labels without matching gifts. Undeterred, these ladies with their incredible organizational skills call on their group of volunteer shoppers, who take the unfulfilled lists and fan out across the metro area to purchase the missing items.

Finally, on Wednesday, the gifts are tagged, bagged and ready to be turned over to an army of drivers, coordinated by Mary Laux who take them to their final destinations. For some drivers, the joy with which these gifts are received

inspires them to find other ways to help these organizations. For others, like Patti Bubar, who delivers the gifts to the Sisters in Greensburg, the trip has become an important part of their own Christmas tradition. For everyone involved in the Giving Tree, the spirit of Christmas is always enhanced not only by the opportunity to help others but by seeing the spirit of volunteerism that exists among the parishioners of de Chantal.

When asked about how the Giving Tree operation can be improved in the future, Barbara and Terri had a few requests. All of the items listed on the Giving Tree tags are meant to be new (not used) gifts since these are the only gifts that people receive. The timing too is important and gifts that come in a few days or even weeks late are not able to be included with the parish Giving Tree. Generally these gifts are turned over to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Finally, they request that if you take a tag please try to bring back a gift with that tag attached. While the volunteer shoppers fill in missing items, their Christmas would be made easier if they didn't have to do quite so much extra shopping and they would bless you.

Barbara and Terri and all of your helpers thank you for making this past year's Giving Tree such a success. We are all grateful. 🏠



Santa's Helpers Christy Mooney, Denise Sintetos, Barbara Coppola, and Terri Smith

DE CHANTAL'S LIVELY, BUSY 'TWIN' PARISH OFFERS BRIDGE TO FAITH

On a cold January Sunday afternoon, when much of Washington is hunkering down indoors, the Shrine of the Sacred Heart is coming to life. Outside, a street market is selling colorful clothing, produce and prepared foods. Inside, as Mass-goers of different cultures fill the church's stately pews, its hall and basement are abuzz with activity. A steady stream of people arrive to take seats at long tables in the church's Gavan Center and wait as a music band sets up its sound system. Others pass time browsing in the basement religious shop, or simply stop in to escape the cold for a few moments. A number of homeless people come and go; on cold nights, many will return to sleep in the church's basement. A sign on the wall reads, "Welcome to the Shrine of the Sacred Heart Dinner Program. ... God bless you. Rules: No fighting, no weapons, no foul language."

The vibrant downtown parish might seem like a world away from St. Jane de Chantal, but there is a special bond linking the two parishes. Sacred Heart and de Chantal are sister parishes, linked together in a relationship known as "twinning" that allows one parish to provide support and assistance to the other. Twinning relationships have been part of the Catholic Church for many years. It has been used on a more global scale to link parishes in one part of the world to another, with valuable benefits for both sides. A 1997 report published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops states: "These bridges of faith offer as much to U.S. parishes as their partners. We are evangelized and changed as we help other communities of faith."

Indeed faith is strong at Sacred Heart – the faithful come in droves from all over the area and all walks of life. The priests at Sacred Heart celebrate seven Masses in four different languages over the course of a Sunday – one each in English, Haitian and Vietnamese and four in Spanish. The parish, located in Washington's Mount




The Shrine of the Sacred Heart at 16th and Park Streets in Northwest Washington is more than 100 years old, yet its mission remains current.

Carter, pastor of Sacred Heart, said he's seen his parish change a great deal in the three short years he's been there. It's been growing rapidly, with about 2,700 members currently on its list. Unfortunately that doesn't translate to larger basket collections that would help keep church programs going. "It's a large community, but a poor one," he said. "We've seen an influx of new immigrants and people moving around from other neighborhoods. A lot of parishioners come to us needing help."

Father Carter spoke sadly of seeing so many people in need, and being limited in the help his parish can provide. The downturn in the economy has left many parishioners out of work and struggling to cover rent and feed their families. Others come seeking help because they are new to the country and trying to fit in with a new culture and customs. One mother came to Father Carter desperate because her son was about to be deported — two other sons had already been sent out of the country. "All we can really do is write a letter verifying that they're part of the parish," Father Carter said.

And yet the parish and its parishioners put forth a mighty effort to serve the poorest of the poor. The parish has very limited space, and yet they still find room for the people who come needing shelter at night or one of the hot meals they offer five times a week. So many with nothing to give still find ways to donate to the offertory basket each week, or to volunteer their time to help those with even less. The parish's Dinner Program for the homeless and needy is run by volunteers who help transport the food, set up and serve the meal and clean up every weekday evening from 4:30 to 6:30. With an increasing number of people coming to the table, more and more help is needed each week from volunteers serving the meals, Father Carter said.

It's interesting to note that Sacred Heart has another important link to de Chantal: long before Monsignor Donald Essex arrived to take on the pastorship of St. Jane de Chantal, he spent four years as a young priest at Sacred Heart. It seems fitting that things have come full circle, with the "twinning" relationship providing a bridge to faith between the two parishes. 



Families convene in the church's Gavan Center on a recent Sunday afternoon. The center houses everything from parties and parish events to dinners for the needy and overnight shelter for the homeless.

Pleasant neighborhood, sits in the heart of a predominantly Hispanic community, and many of its programs are aimed at fulfilling this population's needs.

Father
Stephen