

Stewardship is a way of life.

Tithing is God's Plan for Giving:

Tithing income: November 23, 2008	\$6,731.00
November 25, 2007	\$7,257.25
Children's Offerings	\$10.75

Tithing income: November 30, 2008	\$7,322.00
December 2, 2007	\$7,889.00
Children's Offerings	\$12.00

Next week's tithe will be the annual Retirement Fund for Religious. See the article on this collection in this bulletin.

From the pastor: Did Mary tithe? If she didn't, it was only because from her first moment she was 100% God-directed. She and Joseph took the risk from the beginning. They understood nothing of what God was asking of them as they accepted her pregnancy, went to Bethlehem for the census, escaped to Egypt, gave the gift of the poorest at the Child's presentation in the temple. Joseph died, Jesus went off impelled by the Spirit. What was left to Mary but soon to stand at the foot of the Cross?... She was sinless from the outset. We are not. She gave that 100% every moment. We do not. With all God's poor, thank you for growing in our Lady's example. The sacrifice of the first 10% of the riches God entrusts to us leads us on the journey of dedicating all God's bounty to God.

Comments on Tithing from the pews: "I have been tithing for many, many years. Lots of good has come from it in my life. Things that seemed very bad turned to very good happenings. I could tell of any number of good things from business, family, to health and then some! Keep up the good work, Father!"

My Good Deed for the Week: Here's what several of our young people offered as their tithe, in addition to their financial gift: Several 4th graders said: "I helped my Mom clean the house for our guests, I helped pick up sticks for fire starters, I helped move furniture." A 1st grader said: "I played with my brother so my Mommy could clean." A 5th grader said: I got my Mom medicine when she wasn't feeling well." A 7th grader said: I helped do extra things around the house when my Mom was sick."

FROM THE PASTOR

Weekly Reflection: Sometimes when I read the Gospel one or more words leap off the page and lodge themselves in my heart. The last two words of today's Gospel – Holy Spirit – do just that. St. Mark recounts the mission of John the Baptist: he appears in the desert, clothed in camel's hair and girded with a leather belt; he preaches a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; people respond to his message, allowing him to plunge them into the water of the Jordan River; they emerge from the water inwardly cleansed. John makes it clear that the "plunge" of repentance is but a beginning. He proclaims that One mightier than he is coming after him. While John plunged people into water, Jesus would plunge them into the

purifying fire of the Holy Spirit. Already on the 2nd Sunday of Advent, the Church looks toward the passion of Jesus, His resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit gushes from the pierced side of the Crucified in a stream of blood and of water. The Holy Spirit is the very breath of the risen Christ. 50 days after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit will fill the Church on the morning of Pentecost. Year for Christ, then, and await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit! Come, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and of St. John the Baptist. Plunge me into your cleansing fire, and prepare my heart for the coming of the Son of God.

About Liturgy: *The Immaculate Conception:* On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX promulgated the infallible dogma of the Immaculate Conception. This *ex cathedra* statement made official the eternal sinlessness of Mary, showing that from the moment of the creation of her soul she was granted a unique grace from God to be excluded from the stain of original sin, enabling her to carry Jesus Christ in her womb. This is a teaching that had been widely believed throughout the Church for at least 250 years before being declared, and it was forbidden to teach to the contrary, but once the doctrine was declared infallibly it became a teaching that all Catholics are bound to believe by faith. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception states that "The Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." At Lourdes, France in 1858 – just four years after the dogma was proclaimed – Mary herself confirmed this to St. Bernadette during one of her 18 apparitions, telling Bernadette "I am the Immaculate Conception." This aspect of Mary has become one of the most popular Marian devotions, and many dioceses and churches consider Mary the Immaculate Conception their patron. She is the patroness of the United States with this title, declared so officially by the first Council of Baltimore in 1846. The patronal church of the United States is the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, dedicated to the patroness of the United States and located in Washington, DC. It is the largest Roman Catholic Church in North America, and one of the ten largest in the world. It is an often-visited pilgrimage site for Americans, being the largest Marian shrine in the United States. The Immaculate Conception is an important title and aspect of Our Lady, and one very special to the United States (and many other countries, cities, and locations). The feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, is a holy day of obligation in the United States and some other countries including Ireland, and has a vigil attached to it.

Altar Server Training: Fr. Thoms has scheduled three training sessions for our altar servers, old and new – each server MUST attend two of the three. Only one date remains: Saturday, December 13, 9:30am-12noon. If you have any questions please contact Fr. Thoms.

Retirement Fund for Religious: In a recent document from the Congregation for Institutes of Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, a beautiful description of the life of religious sisters, brothers, and priests is offered. “Consecrated life, called to make the characteristic traits of the virginal, poor and obedient Jesus visible, flourishes in the ambience of this search for the face of the Lord and the ways that lead to Him.” (*The Service of Authority and Obedience*, #1) This document proposes that each religious woman and man, having embraced the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, makes Jesus visible for the world to see.

When we think of the religious women and men that we have known in our life, those sisters, brothers, and priests who have served in our parishes, schools, hospitals or have lived in cloisters serving us by their life of selfless prayer, we easily recognize Jesus in them. We can say that they have made Jesus visible to us by their longing to see Him and by their serving Him. Each year we have a special opportunity to express our gratitude to these exemplary women and men. In the annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious, we can offer a heartfelt “Thank You” to these followers of the Lord Jesus. They have given their life to God and His Church and now we can give them something in return.

Please consider making a generous contribution to the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious which will be taken up in the parishes of the Diocese of Harrisburg on December 13 and 14. We have benefited and continue to benefit from their wisdom, their selfless service and their unfailing prayer. In their humility and love they will respond to us by a continued pledge of their prayers.

We must not forget to thank God for having called them to follow Him closely and for their generous response. Let us ask the Holy Mother of God, who offered her *Fiat* and who undoubtedly inspired countless religious to do the same, to pray for retired religious and to bring vocations to their congregations. May our *Fiat*, our “Yes” to God’s invitation to reach out to our retired religious, find its inspiration in Mary’s generous and trusting offering of herself to God in service to His plan of saving love.

PARISH NEWS & ACTIVITIES

Christmas Food Baskets: The St. Vincent dePaul Society will be giving out Christmas food baskets to the needy of our parish and



community. If anyone receives a free turkey from Giant or Weis and would like to donate it to our basket program please bring it to the rectory. If you know of anyone who may benefit from this project, please call the parish office. We are collecting non-perishable foods such as peas, corn, green beans, cranberry sauce, boxed stuffing, boxed cake mixes, frosting, pie crust and pie filling, canned fruit. We will also be collecting monetary donations to purchase turkeys, rolls, & bags of potatoes. Please place your donations in the left sacristy or church basement and bring them by December 12. Thank you for your generosity and kindness.

The School Board of Education will be meeting tonight, Sunday, December 7 at 6:30pm in the school. The date was changed due to the Holy Day tomorrow. All members of the parish are always welcome to attend.

Christmas Pie Fund-raiser: St. Vincent DePaul Society Pie Sale has been cancelled.

Advent Penance Service: Next Sunday, December 14 at 6:30pm here at Sacred Heart St. Jude (3:30pm at St. Jude in Mifflintown). There will be several priests here to assist in the celebration of Reconciliation in preparation for Christmas. If you plan to celebrate the Sacrament before Christmas, please make use of this opportunity when there are several priests available. Thank you.



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Thursday, December 4: Church: *Dispenser of the Mysteries.*
What are Holy Orders?: Salvation & Redemption; Holy Orders.

March for Life – January 22, 2009: Citizens Concerned for Human Life Mifflin-Juniata, Inc invites you to attend the 36th annual March for Life to witness to the dignity and sanctity of human life from the very first moment of conception. With the coming inauguration of President-Elect Obama – we MUST make a STRONG statement to him declaring our belief in the sacredness of life. President Obama has pledged that his first two acts as President will be to provide public funding for abortions (our tax money) and allow further destruction of embryos for stem cell research. **YOUR PRESENCE AND WITNESS IS VITAL!**

A bus is already scheduled (and more can be added): 3am departure from Sacred Heart; visit to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (weather/time permitting); Rally for Life at the VERIZON Sports Arena; the March for Life from the Mall to the Supreme Court building. For students, this is an excused absence for a religious event (with the proper notes from parents). Cost

is \$46 per person for transportation. Meals will be on your own (approximately \$25). Registration with a non-refundable, non-transferrable \$35 deposit is required at the time of reservation. Contact Frank Cunningham at 667-9334 or fcunning@embarqmail.com with questions. Deposits may be dropped in the parish office or collection basket. Registration is required by December 21, 2008.

LITURGICAL NOTES

HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION Monday, Dec. 8: the Immaculate Conception of the BVM. The schedule at Sacred Heart is: 7am, 12 noon and 7pm. (At St. Jude in Mifflintown: 9am & 7pm.)

Memorialize the Sanctuary Lamp: The following dates are available to memorialize the Sanctuary Lamp: Dates available: December 21, 28.

Memorialize Flowers : If you would like to memorialize flowers at the altar or ambo (podium) please call the parish office to schedule. You order the flowers from the florist of your choice. The following dates are available: December 14, 21.

The flowers for Immaculate Conception are in honor of the birthdays of Shannon (Getz) Bishop and Mary (Storm) Baranyai from Betty Hackett and Tom Storm.



Sunday, December 7

7:30 AM People of the Parish
11:00 AM Richard Quilter

Monday, December 8 (Holy Day: Immaculate Conception)

7:00 AM Frank & Angeline Ross and Marie Meloni
12noon Mrs. Amalanathan
7:00 PM Shannon (Getz) Bishop & Mary (Storm) Baranyai

Tuesday, December 9 (St. Juan Diego)

7:00 AM Agnes M. Hooley

Wednesday, December 10

7:00 PM Brother Joseph Ziegler

Thursday, December 11

7:00 AM LeRoy Peachey
9:00 AM Richard Quilter

Friday, December 12 (Feast: Our Lady of Guadalupe)

7:00 AM Stella Fisher

Saturday, December 13

8:00 AM Special Intention
4:00 PM Judith Gers

Sunday, December 14

7:30 AM Michael & Vera Helwig
11:00 AM Richard Quilter

Van Transportation to Mass: The following is the van schedule for the next several weeks:

December 14 – John Potts
December 21 – Dave Kaniecki
December 28 – Russell Krug

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

7 – CCD / 9am
7 – St. Monica Rosary Prayer Group / 7pm / church
7 – School Board of Education / 6:30pm / school
8 – **HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION – IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY**
9 – Parish Bus Trip to Allenberry / 9:30am departure
10 – Choir Practice / 7:30pm / choir loft
11 – RCIA / 7pm / church basement
14 – Advent Penance Service / 6:30pm / church

Check out our parish calendars online at

www.SacredHeartLewistown.com

Click “parish calendars”

EDUCATION

Pornography: What’s the Problem? by Mark J. Houck
The Dignity of the Human Person. Continued...

Addressing Porn Addiction on a Supernatural Level:

Thus far, we have addressed the healing of pornography addiction through natural means only. If grace truly builds on nature, as the Catholic Church teaches, then the five-step process outlined above is only the necessary primer for those seeking freedom from pornography addiction. Thanks be to God that we have Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium as sure and certain guides on our journey of recovery from addiction.

To address a pornography addiction applying the tools given to us by our Catholic faith, I offer these next steps as a means of obtaining lasting freedom from habitual sins against purity:

6. Go to confession and receive Holy Communion frequently. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states: “Holy Communion separates us from sin.... For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins...” (n. 1393). Likewise, reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation must be a continual part of the recovery process (as often as is needed), so that the Eucharist may indeed preserve us from future mortal sins (n. 1394).

7. Develop a daily prayer life. This may include any of the following: frequent fasting, receiving spiritual direction, morning, evening and night prayer, praying the Divine Office, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, reading Sacred Scripture, and praying the Holy Rosary or other authentically Catholic devotions, meditations and readings.



8. Seek education and formation in the human, cardinal and theological virtues. Frequent examination of conscience will aid in the discovery of the roots of sin and allow one to begin to apply a corresponding virtue. To defeat pride, for example, practice humility; to defeat sensuality, practice temperance. Pride is the root sin of many people addicted to pornography. Philosopher Peter Kreeft advises that when striving to conquer lust, one should focus less on lust and more on pride: "Only when we are truly humble does God give us the grace to conquer lust."

9. Practice patience and perseverance! It is imperative to understand that "self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life. The effort required can be more intense in certain periods..." (CCC, n. 2342). St. Augustine understood this growth process, and reminds us in his *Confessions* that often "the bridle put upon the throat must be held with moderate looseness and moderate firmness" (10, 31).

10. Finally, replace the images and past behaviors that inevitably torment one during recovery with God's love. Use the near occasions of sin in daily life as grace-filled moments. In those moments of weakness, when one ordinarily might be tempted to mentally objectify and exploit someone, STOP! Take advantage of that moment and choose to use it for a good end. Pray for that woman or man whom one may be inclined to objectify, in reparation for the damage that one may have caused that person. These images and thoughts do not have to be times when we fall. Rather, allow them to be portals into God's amazing transcendent grace, which can carry the repentant addict past sins and draw him or her to a deeper level of intimacy with God. *To be continued...*

The Sanctity of Life: "Pope John Paul II begins his great encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* with: *"The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message... it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as "good news" to the people of every age and culture."* (#1) The Holy Father makes it clear throughout this teaching that there is only *one* Gospel—"the Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person **and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel.**" (#2) The Gospel of Jesus Christ *is* the Gospel of life! Every deacon [individual], therefore, is called to believe, teach and practice the Gospel of life." Priests for Life - 2008

COURTESY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Marriage Annulments: The Tribunal of the Diocese of Harrisburg will be giving a presentation in your area concerning divorce and annulment from the Catholic perspective. This presentation will be helpful for divorced Catholics, those divorced who wish to marry Catholics, those parish leaders involved in the RCIA process and any others who may have a vested interest because of family

or friends. This session will be held December 11 at 7pm in the Cardinal Keeler Center of the diocesan office building in Harrisburg. No prior registration is required. For further information please call 657-4804 x304 or email tribunal@hbgdiocese.org.

Thank you – I would like to thank everyone in the parish who prayed for me, sent cards and flowers, baskets or thought of me in any way during my recent surgery. I have now returned to work and I'm very glad to be back. Knowing that so many people cared really makes healing a lot easier. Thank you again and God Bless you all.
Marie Bender

Christmas Cookie Walk at St. Jude Mifflintown: The Women's Guild is sponsoring a Christmas Cookie Walk on December 13th in the Church social hall from 9am to Noon (or while supplies last). Purchase an empty container for \$8.00 and fill it with your choice from a wide variety of homemade Christmas cookies. Each container will hold 3-4 dozen cookies, depending on the size and shape of the cookies selected. Homemade candies, raffle tickets for an edible gingerbread house, and other Christmas articles will be on sale as well.

SACRED HEART SCHOOL

What is 4th Grade Doing? November will be an exciting month in fourth grade. Not only will we begin practicing for the musical, but we also have a lot of learning to fit in there as well! In Social Studies, we will finish up our study of elections with a presidential debate and election on Election Day. We will then learn about the early people and settlements in Pennsylvania. In Science, we will continue our study of plants by examining how plants grow and develop. In Math, we will begin a new unit on time, data, and graphing. We will first focus on understanding time, which includes telling time, elapsed time, and elapsed time on a calendar. Elapsed time can be a tricky concept, so please work with your children on this difficult task. Finally, in Language Arts, we will wrap up our unit on A Wider View. We will also be doing lots of writing about the things for which we are thankful.

Sacred Heart of Jesus School will present its Christmas Musical, "The Last Noel," on Friday, December 19 at 10:00AM and 7:00PM in the church. Snow date is Monday, December 22. Please join us for this beautiful Christmas presentation by our school children to remind us about the true meaning of Christmas!

