

Stewardship is a way of life.
Tithing is God's Plan for Giving:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Tithing Income: December 21, 2008 | \$ 7,543.75 |
| December 23, 2007 | \$ 7,923.30 |
| Children's Offerings | \$ 15.50 |
| Immaculate Conception 2008 | \$ 1,471.25 |
| Immaculate Conception 2007 | \$ 1,625.00 |

Next week's tithing: On the weekend of January 11 & 12, 2009, the Diocese of Harrisburg will take up its annual collection to assist the Church in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa. Your generosity will enable those serving in these countries to continue the work of evangelization by building bridges to spread the Word of God, support catechetical and lay leadership training programs, provide for the formation of priests, deacons and religious, as well as assist needy families both materially and spiritually. The work made possible by this collection allows all the Catholic faithful to reach out in solidarity to brothers and sisters in faith around the world.

From the pastor: The three Kings brought Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh. It was a one-shot gift for their King. But you give your time, talent and treasure to the King every week here at Sacred Heart. Your tithing and service in ministry are a constant reminder that His message lives on. Because of your outstanding generosity, we are able to meet our increased expenses while budgeting in maintenance items that will always be ongoing.

Comments on Tithing from the pews: "Giving a present to my church was not part of my Christmas list last year, Father, and yet, after much hesitation, I gave in my bonus gift from my job to the parish. I can't tell you what I received in love and peace that Christmas week and all this past year. I truly learned that His generosity cannot be outdone. I will give my bonus every year from now on!"

My Good Deed for the Week: Here's what several of our young people offered as their tithe, in addition to their financial gift: A 7th grader said: "I helped give the animals hay." A 5th grader said: I dried dishes." A 1st grader said: I played with my brother." A few 4th graders said: "I cleaned for my Mom, I made a tent for Nicholas, I watched the birds." A kindergartner said: I helped get Christmas decorations out." A pre-K said: I put my older brothers clothes in the hamper."

FROM THE PASTOR

Weekly Reflection: Few of us has the luxury of time and means to begin a trip with no destination in mind, spending however much time we wish meandering about at will. For almost all of us, whether we begin a journey either for pleasure or for business, we find security in having our route clearly laid out. We have a specific destination in mind and we use AAA or some travel website to plot out exactly how we are going to get there. The Gospel today recounts a journey, too – that of the

Magi who traveled from the East (they "saw his star at its rising") to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem to find the "newborn king." The Magi began their journey searching for this king in a most unorthodox way: they followed a star, rather than a map. They allowed themselves to be led not by human plotting of routes but by Divine guidance. Nor was the Magi's route always clear: when they arrived at Jerusalem, the star disappeared, leaving them in darkness and uncertainty. Ignorant of the political ramifications, they sought out the most logical source for clear direction: King Herod. He pointed them to Bethlehem, but when they resumed their journey the star once again appeared to lead them on their way. Their journey ended when the star "stopped over the place where the child was," they entered, and offered homage and gifts.

Lessons from the Magi remind us how faithfully they followed God's lead, how diligent they were to complete their journey, how prepared they were by bringing appropriate gifts, how humbled they were to stoop to this tiny Baby and offer homage. But we also learn that God leads even in darkness, even when we have lost our way, and even through the machination of those who intend evil. *WE* are the Magi today: still searching for the "newborn King," still following the light along an uncertain journey, still being surprised by what God reveals along the way and how God reveals it. What is manifested to all of us on this feast is the *mystery* of God's presence to us in the newborn King, but also the mystery of God's presence in the loving and caring way God leads us to life eternal. We have only to do as the Magi did: surrender ourselves to God's guidance and God's surprises.

MANY Thanks to so many who sent Fr. Thoms and me cards and delicious goodies for the rectory. Also, thanks to all who sent goodies to the office for the staff. We've all enjoyed your treats and are grateful for your expressions of love and support. May God grant you all a blessed, holy and happy new year!

About Liturgy: *Liturgy and Universality:* Both the Christmas and Epiphany celebrations at first glance focus on this newborn King – at Christmas we celebrate His birth and at Epiphany we celebrate His manifestation to the nations. Jesus' birth marks a whole new in-breaking of God's presence among humanity and manifests God's desire for salvation for all. One of the hallmarks of the liturgical renewal is that liturgy is not something done *for us* by the priest alone, but requires our full, conscious and active participation so that liturgy truly is our communal celebration of salvation. By giving ourselves over to the ritual celebration, we make a public sign that we are concerned not only for our own salvation, but for others' as well. Liturgy is never a "private act," but is always the

celebration of the whole Church for the salvation of the entire world.

Liturgy has a number of places where we appropriately pray individually and personally; for example, we prepare to surrender ourselves to God's transforming actions during the silent time in the act of penitence; we pray for the grace we desire at Mass during the silent time in the Opening Prayer (or Collect); we give thanks for the gift of Eucharist in the silent time after Holy Communion. At other times during the liturgy, the prayer has a clear universal character about it; for example, the prayers of the faithful are never simply focused on the needs of the local community, but always remind us to reach out to the whole Church, to pray for the salvation of the world, to be attentive to the needs of the poor and suffering. When we respect this universality of the liturgy, we form ourselves into the unity of the Body and Christ and in solidarity with all the people of the world.

Epiphany Blessing of Homes: In this week's bulletin you will find an insert which will help you to celebrate, with your family, the traditional blessing of homes on the Feast of Epiphany. The Church's celebration of Epiphany ("manifestation), the "twelfth night of Christmas," apparently originated in Egypt sometime during the third century, thus the Church's celebration of this feast predates even the celebration of Christmas itself. Epiphany is traditionally celebrated in honor of Christ's birth, of the adoration of the Magi, and of the baptism of Christ's (also celebrated on the first Sunday following Epiphany), three manifestations of the Lord's divinity. Because the Magi came from the Orient, many of the traditional foods served on this day are spicy. Spice cake is often baked for dessert, and entrees may include curry powder or other pungent spices.

Several lovely family customs are associated with Epiphany. It is on Epiphany that the Christmas *creche* is finally completed, as the figures of the three wise men at last arrive at the crib. In many families, the wise men are moved a bit closer to the crib every day from Christmas Day until Epiphany. Also, recalling the gifts to the Infant Jesus, many families exchange small gifts. The **blessing of the home** is also a popular Epiphany custom. Many households mark their entrance door with the year and with the inscription CMB, the initial Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, the names of the three wise man in legend. The inscription also stands for *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, which means "Christ, bless this home." The popular form the inscription takes is **20+C+M+B+09**. It remains above the doorway until Pentecost.

PARISH NEWS & ACTIVITIES

The Parish Advocacy Committee will meet on Sunday, January 18, at 5:30 p.m. in the Church. The committee is open to everyone interested in sharing ideas and developing plans to help create a more inclusive parish

community in regard to persons with disabilities. We need your help in determining an action plan for the Parish. The meeting will end no later than 6:45 because St. Monica's Prayer Group meets at 7:00 for recitation of the Rosary and other prayers.



Thursday, January 8: Baptism – Infant Baptism and the Sacraments: God uses the material world to sanctify us.

LITURGICAL NOTES

Memorialize the Sanctuary Lamp: The following dates are available to memorialize the Sanctuary Lamp: Dates available: January 25.

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: January 11, 18, 25.

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

January 11 – Mel Reed

January 18 – John Potts



Sunday, January 4 (Epiphany)

7:30 AM The People of the Parish

11:00 AM For the health of Sr. Marie Luu's parents

Monday, January 5 (St. John Neumann)

7:00 AM Thomas McFadden

Tuesday, January 6

7:00 AM Frank Ross

Wednesday, January 7

7:00 PM Marie D. Sabo

Thursday, January 8

7:00 AM Mid Rocco

9:00 AM Madeline Wear

Friday, January 9

7:00 AM Helen Berich

Saturday, January 10

8:00 AM Deceased of the Battista family

4:00 PM Kay Smith

Sunday, January 11 (The Baptism of the Lord)

7:30 AM Marjorie Kaufman

11:00 AM Agnes Parks McMillen

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January

6 – Bible Study / 6:30pm / office

7 – Adult Enrichment Class / 7:30pm / office

- 8 – RCIA / 7:00pm / office
- 11 – CCD / 9:00am
- 11 – St. Monica Rosary Prayer / 7pm / church
- 11 – Parish Advocacy Meeting / 5:30pm / Church basement
- 12 – School Board of Education / 6:30pm / school

Check out our parish calendars online at
www.SacredHeartLewistown.com
 Click “parish calendars”

EDUCATION

The Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA): A Radical Attempt to Prematurely End Debate Over Abortion (by Denise M. Burke, AUL Vice-President of Legal Affairs): **What Does FOCA Say?** FOCA provides that “[i]t is the policy of the United States that every woman has the fundamental right to choose to bear a child, to terminate a pregnancy prior to fetal viability, or to terminate a pregnancy after fetal viability when necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.”

Further, FOCA would specifically invalidate any "statute, ordinance, regulation, administrative order, decision, policy, practice, or other action" of any federal, state, or local government or governmental official (or any person acting under government authority) that would "deny or interfere with a woman's right to choose" abortion, or that would "discriminate against the exercise of the right . . . in the regulation or provision of benefits, facilities, services, or information."

Clearly, its reach is very broad. This single piece of legislation would apply to any federal or state law “enacted, adopted, or implemented before, on, or after the date of [its] enactment.”

What is the Legal Impact of FOCA? FOCA creates a new and dangerously radical “right.” It establishes the right to abortion as a “fundamental right,” elevating it to the same status as the right to vote and the right to free speech (which, unlike the abortion license, are specifically mentioned in the U.S. Constitution). Critically, in *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court did not define abortion as a “fundamental right.” And with the exception of one justice’s attempt in 1983 to distort the Court’s abortion jurisprudence by framing the abortion license as a “fundamental right,” the Court has not subsequently defined abortion as a “fundamental right.” Thus, FOCA goes beyond any Supreme Court decision in enshrining unlimited abortion-on-demand into American law.

FOCA would also subject laws regulating or even touching on abortion to judicial review using a “strict scrutiny” framework of analysis. This is the highest standard American courts can apply and is typically reserved for laws impacting such fundamental rights as the right to free speech and the right to vote. Prior to the Supreme Court’s 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (which substituted the “undue burden” standard for

the more stringent “strict scrutiny” analysis), abortion-related laws (such parental involvement for minors and minimum health and safety standards for abortion clinics) were almost uniformly struck down under “strict scrutiny” analysis. If enacted, FOCA would retroactively be applied to all federal and state abortion-related laws and would result in their invalidation.

The Adult Bible Study group will begin studying St. Paul’s letter to the Romans on January 6, 2009. We will meet every Tuesday from 7pm until 8:30pm in our new office building – 9 North Brown Street, Lewistown. The winter session will run from January 6 until Holy Week.

Adult Enrichment classes will be held on the first Wednesday of every month starting January 7, 2009 after the 7pm Mass, in the church basement. Each month we will discuss a new topic. January’s topic will be End of Life Issues and the Church’s teaching. Questions, comments and suggestions on topics will be welcome. Contact Fr. Bateman at the parish office or Daniel Swigart at 899-6278.

COURTESY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Day of Prayer for Christian Unity: Each year, the Christian faithful gather toward the end of January to pray for the unity of the Church and that our separated brothers and sisters come home to the fullness of the faith. This year there will be two events: an afternoon prayer service at 3pm (at which Fr. Thoms will preach) and an evening concert at 7pm featuring the Gospel Choir “Essence of Joy.” More information will follow.

SACRED HEART SCHOOL

What is 4th Grade Doing? In Social Studies they learned all about the ways in which PA led the way in the 1700’s. WE talked about the French and Indian War and the troubles that led to the Revolutionary War. In Science they studied living things by talking about life processes, including organ systems and animal survival.

In Math they worked on time, data and graphing and then began work on collecting and organizing data. They took surveys, found mean, median and mode and read different types of plots.

In Language Arts the literature helped students see how learning and working together can help them achieve their goals. As they work toward these goals, students also learn valuable lessons in sharing, cooperation and compromise. (Miss Buchanan)

Sacred Heart School will host a **Business After Hours Event** sponsored by the Juniata Valley Area Chamber of Commerce on January 20, 2009 from 5:30 – 7:30pm. Chamber members are invited to see displays and activities throughout the evening. Members of the parish are invited to join us as well.