

Mass Intentions ~ December 17-23, 2018

Monday @ 7:30 am — Francine & Bubba Gilmer (RIP)

Tuesday @ 7:30 am — Henry Ziemianski (RIP)

Wednesday @ 6:00 pm — Tommy Autrey (RIP)

Thursday @ 7:30 am — Nolen Hughes (RIP)

Friday @ 7:30 am — Clois Braswell (RIP)

Saturday @ 5:30 pm — Hehir & Lawson Families (RIP)

Sunday @ 8:00 am — People of the Parish

Sunday @ 10:30 am — Terry Wray Sr (RIP)

New Prayer Requests

Special Intentions:

Lois Deane

Marty Thomas

Kim Brown, daughter of Ken & Zena Lowrey

Larry Temple, former parishioner

Repose of the Soul:

Edith Granger, mother of Joe Granger

Adoration this week: Monday—Friday 8am-12noon **Sacrament of Reconciliation:** Sat 4:30-5pm

— — — Announcements and Reminders — — —

December 16 — Religious Ed Classes meet this Sunday! All Classes will be on Holiday break after this weekend.

Big Deal Youth Group will resume on Wednesday, January 9th.

Sunday morning classes will resume on January 13th.

— **Angel Tree gifts** due by Sunday after 10:30 Mass. Help needed to move gifts to the FLC after all Masses.

— **Women's Guild Christmas Party @ 2-4pm** in the FLC. All ladies are welcome to join us with a guest. Good food, music, and fun for all! Wishing all a very Blessed and Joyous Christmas Season!

World Marriage Day 2019 will be held Sunday, February 24, 2019 at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle in Jackson. Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz at 3:00 pm, with a reception immediately following. **All married couples celebrating their 25th, 50th, and 60th anniversaries, or any significant anniversary are asked to call our church office so you can be included in this wonderful celebration.**

Offertory Envelopes are ready! Pick up your 2019 set on the way out today. If yours is not there, contact the Church office.

2019 Calendars are available on the tables. Please feel free to take one per family.

Altar Flower & Blessed Flower 2019 Sign up is now open on our website. Please call the office if you need assistance.

Church website: www.saintpaulcatholicchurch.com
Office phone: 601-992-9547



**Advent
Restoration
Service**

**Monday, December 17th
6:00 pm**



Christmas Mass Schedule

Vigil @ 5:30 pm
Midnight Mass (choir begins @ 11:30 pm)
Christmas Day @ 10:30 am

December 16, 2018 Third Sunday of Advent ~ Gaudete Sunday

IS IT A PENANCE SERVICE? IS IT A RECONCILIATION SERVICE? OR, IS IT SOMETHING ELSE?

As we prepare for our Annual Advent Service, how do you perceive it? Is it about Penance or Reconciliation? Naturally, there are those who might say, “Who cares? Just let me go to Confession and get on with it!” Still others might be inclined to say, “Look, forget all the talk! Just give me the Absolution and I’ll be on my way!” Every now and then, throughout my years of priestly ministry, parish members have asked me, “Which is the correct term, *Penance* or *Reconciliation*?”

These past few weeks, as I have participated in a number of these communal services for both schools and parish communities, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the above questions.

The Church has, over a period of time, used the words almost interchangeably — it may be swayed by the bishop’s perspective in a local diocese, or the pastor’s perspective in a local parish. The year before I was ordained, (1975) The New Rite of Penance became available, promulgating the beautiful reflections of the Council Fathers (Vatican 2).

The opening decree in it’s introduction says :

“In this new rite, besides the Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents, a Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents has been drawn up to emphasize the relation of the Sacrament to the Community.”

This was a significant departure from the days of yore, where there was an inordinate emphasis on the individual expression of personal sins, penance to be undertaken by the individual, and then absolution — all done in private usually in the confessional-box.

Thankfully, things have changed..... greatly. It is as if we have brought the sacrament out of the darkness and into the light. What a great sacrament it is! Sadly, it is one of our ‘best kept secrets.’

Alcoholics Anonymous has captured the value of that practice since their inception in 1935. They believe that the only way to freedom from faults, failings, and sins is ‘an honest inventory of self. Then freedom comes through a sharing with myself, my God, and one other living human being.

The secret was out! But it was enormously challenging work, and not all were built for such challenging work, or willing to risk such vulnerability in order to have freedom.

(continued on next page)

In truth, this was really nothing more than what Jesus was inviting each of us to in the first place. But we were afraid. Check the first book of the Bible Genesis! God appears to Adam in the garden.

“Where are you?” He asked. “I heard the sound of You in the garden,” he replied. “I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” “Who told you that you were naked?” He asked. Nakedness before God is not a bad thing — before people it can be really bad, because it can be used against you.

With God it is radically different. He desires my restoration, not my demise. Every time I am reconciled, God restores me to the Grace of my Baptism, my likeness to Him, and my Communion in Him.

God is all about restoring me to Sonship / Daughterhood, every time I choose to be reconciled with Him. That is why we sometimes are invited to sprinkle ourselves with the Holy Water after Reconciliation, to celebrate that He has once again restored us to our original innocence and likeness to Him.

Perhaps we should call this the Sacrament of Restoration. Then, our gathering would be known as our “*Advent Restoration Service*.” Why not? It sure appears to be much more in keeping with His Plan! We offer Him what He most wants from us the gift of our Sin!

How can my sin be a gift to God?

I can gift my sins, placing them before Christ — like the Magi gifted gold, frankincense, and myrrh — box them, own them, name them, offer them with my whole heart to Him in the humble stable. This is what He wants. He wants us to give Him what weighs us down so that He may free us of those burdens. He is not going to wrestle them away from us. He merely invites us to let go of them, and be aware of the fact that He has taken them on Himself.

Our Savior, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace chose to come into the world — to come to us — as a tiny baby, humble and vulnerable, needing His mother’s loving care to grow Him. Because He came, lived, and died as man, our sins may be born anew in the Christmas stable. These are gifts because He desires abundant goodness for us. He does not want us to be weighed down dwelling on our sins. If I cling to them, He will not take them from me. When we offer them to Him freely, He lovingly releases their hold on us. He refreshes us with His infinite Mercy and goodness.

Let us take the Examination of Conscience to heart. Really search our lives and bring to Him our sins as gifts to be born into newness, so that we are ready for His coming. Can I allow Him to be born in *my* stable? We have been studying and pondering this past week, that it is good to prepare for His coming to us at Christmas, but it is especially good to prepare for being with Him for eternity.

To prepare for this Christmas Gift Exchange at our Advent Restoration Service, let us first prepare a list. Check it twice. Let’s offer that to Him this Season!

Use the Examination of Conscience on the next page will help prepare your list!

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Revisiting the Two Sides Of The Coin

- *When might I have brought Life to a situation, but instead brought a culture of Death?*
- *When did I turn away from a spirit of Love, and respond instead with Apathy?*
- *When did I forgo the path of Goodness, and rather choose the road of Revenge?*
- *When did I refuse to see the Light, and choose to dwell in Darkness?*
- *When did I transfer my hurt to others, rather than Transforming that hurt?*
- *When did I provoke Suffering, when I could have offered Joy?*

Revisiting our Questions For The New Year

- *Have I provided opportunities for Jesus to manifest Himself as Lord over my life?*
- *What opportunities to grow my relationship with Him have I not chosen or availed of?*
- *Have I consciously chosen to read/study materials, or participate in courses of study, community gathering, faith sharing that would help grow my relationship with Him?*
- *Have I failed to give appropriate time to Him in order to grow our relationship?*

Thank you all for your responses. Keep them coming!

Dear Fr. Gerry,

The homilies over the past few weeks along with the questions you pose to us have lead me to ask myself, "Who I Am?" I think when life presses in on me I tend to forget who I really am. The busyness of the holiday season, the rushing about, the invitations to parties all seem to blot all thought of who I am and exactly what my relationship to my Father is really about. There is a song by Hillsong that I hear on K-Love radio station almost every time I get in the car called "Who You Say I Am - A Child Of God" and I think it is playing just for me. I would like to share the words to this song in hopes that it reminds us all that we are first and foremost children of God, and no matter what is going on in our life, He is for us and not against us!

"Who am I that the highest King would welcome me? I was lost but He brought me in, oh, His love for me. Who the Son sets free, oh, is free indeed. I'm a child of God, yes I am. Free at last, He has ransomed me. His grace runs deep. While I was a slave to sin, Jesus died for me, yes, He died for me. Who the Son sets free, oh, free indeed. I'm a child of God, yes I am. In my Father's house, there's a place for me, I'm a child of God, yes I am. I am chosen, not forsaken. I am who You say I am. I am a child of God, yes I am."

The Gospel Reading one recent morning was about the shepherd leaving the 99 to go in search of the one lost sheep. What parent wouldn't leave the other children responsibly, and go in search of the one lost child! Our Father does this and more for us. May we all remember the reason for this season of the year and give glory to Our Father!

Cecilia Carlton