



Dear Parishioners,

If you have not already done so, I encourage everyone to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for Christmas. This week on Tuesday evening we will have our Advent Penance Service at 7:00 PM. Also, please see the schedule in the bulletin this week for other confession times as I have scheduled many extra times for confession. Of course, you can always go to another parish to go to confession. Included in this week's bulletin is an insert with an examination of conscience on it for your use in preparing for confession. We celebrate at Christmas that Jesus came as our Savior to save us from our sins, so it is in the sacrament of Reconciliation that we experience that he does this for us.

Once again, I invite you to stop by the rectory this Sunday evening between 6:00 and 9:00 P.M. for the annual Christmas open house. The decorations this year will be those of Advent and you can learn about these Advent customs. Appetizers and drinks will be available. Bring the whole family. Visit with your fellow parishioners.

Have a blessed and grace-filled week.

God bless, Fr. Gutowski

LECTOR, EMHC, & SERVER SCHEDULES

The new schedules were e-mailed to each of you on Thursday morning. If you did not receive one please e-mail or call Sharon VanTassell. Please print and keep your schedule handy. Remember it is your responsibility to find a substitute if you cannot keep your scheduled time.



MASS INTENTIONS

DECEMBER 17 THRU DEC. 23

Monday	Priest's Intention
Tuesday	Robert Masters, Jr.
Wednesday	Ann Boro
Thursday	Priest's Intention
Friday	Kara Bender
Saturday	Lloyd Royal
Sunday	People of St. Joseph

MIDNIGHT MASS SINGERS

If you would like to sing for Midnight Mass, please meet for practice after Sunday morning masses.



We are having "Christmas in Germany" with the first session students on Wednesday, December 19 from 6-7:30. Several of the children have been preparing for a skit that they will perform that night. All are welcome to join us for an evening of fun and German treats.

There is NO RE for 2nd session students on December 19, because of the "Christmas in Germany" celebration for the first session students.

No RE for all grades on December 26 and January 2.

HOLY FAMILY SHRINE EVENTS

The Holy Family Shrine is honored to have Archbishop Lucas celebrate Mass for the Feast of the Holy Family on December 30th at 2pm. Please come early to get the best parking and seating.

Later the same day at 4pm Jim Nailon will be in concert, at the Shrine, with the St. Thomas More Youth Choir and Soprano Carmen Schweiger. This concert promises to delight all who attend. A reception will follow the concert. All free will donations go to support the Shrine.

RECONCILIATION:

Below is the schedule for Reconciliation times prior to Christmas.

Tuesday, December 18, 7:00 p.m. Penance Service (2 Priests)

Thursday, December 20, after morning Mass until 9:15 a.m. & 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Friday, December 21, after morning Mass until 9:15 a.m., noon - 1:00 p.m. & 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 22, noon - 1:00 p.m., 3:00 - 4:45 p.m., after 5:00 p.m. Mass - 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 23, after morning Mass until 11:30 a.m., , 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Monday, December 24, after morning Mass until 10:30 a.m.

THE REAL FISCAL CLIFF

The news every day now has some kind of analysis about the progress that the two parties in Washington are making toward resolving the so-called "fiscal cliff." Not all analysts agree that there is a cliff at all. There are some who say that it is nothing more than a political construct meant to frighten constituents or at least prod Congress to act (something that *doesn't* seem to be happening). There are even some in Congress who cheer the budget cuts, and want to see even more, while there are others who are ready to reenact most (if not all) of the Bush tax cuts and leave it at that.

Most financial analysts say that if negotiations break down in the next week or two there will actually be very little effect, aside from reactions in the bond and stock markets. They indicate that it could take at least a month, if not longer, before problems begin to surface in the economy. However, all agree that a long-term stalemate will likely lead to another recession, with companies uncertain about whether to invest and hire, and consumer confidence

plunging as they see even less in their paychecks.

The most recent development is that [President Obama and House Speaker John Boehner have been holding talks](#) in an effort to move the process along. Whether they will come to terms remains to be seen. All sides seem to be grappling with what should be done. While they each have their positions, they do not seem to have found a way forward to reach a final agreement. There are many voices suggesting what action should be taken, but no clear will on the part of those involved to come to a resolution.

The religious milieu in first-century Judea had a lot of voices speaking at cross purposes as well. Sadducees and Pharisees had their disagreements. The religious jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin was challenged by sects like the Essenes who withdrew to the Judean desert. Messianic hopes were sparked by those who rose up in rebellion against Roman rule. It is no wonder that the crowds that heard John the Baptist asked him the question, "What should we do?"

The question is a very real one for anyone who is looking for direction in one's spiritual life. But John's answers are not some kind of ethereal religious double-speak. As we heard last Sunday, John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. But the actions he expected of people had consequences in the real world. If you have two, he said, give one away to the person who has none, whether it's a cloak, or food, or maybe something else.

With Christmas coming, how much are we ready to employ the kind of justice that John the Baptist proclaims? Many people talk about Christmas as the season of giving, or even the season of sharing. Maybe it is a season in which we ask ourselves how our gifts reflect the saving power of God. Does what we share at this time of year help people who are near the edge? Does our generosity and kindness help to bring them back from the brink of despair? Can we give hope to those who fear the darkness at the bottom? While we may be consumed by news about the "fiscal cliff," we should be more taken up by those who are already at the cliff's edge. We can use the power and commitment of our community of faith to help them feel secure in the arms of God.