

## Stewardship Bulletin Inserts for December 2008 / January 2009

December 7, 2008 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

John the Baptist's call to repentance is echoed in the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship: "Christians must beg God for the grace of conversion; the grace to know who they are, to whom they belong, how they are to live – the grace to repent and change and grow, the grace to become good disciples and stewards.

December 21, 2008 (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

It is through Mary's "Yes" – "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." – that the promise of God's Kingdom enduring forever is fulfilled. Do you say "Yes" to God?

January 4, 2009 (Epiphany of the Lord)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

The three wise men who came from the East to pay homage to the infant Jesus brought Him rich gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh as part of their worship. What gifts have I brought to this celebration to offer to the newborn Savior?

January 18, 2009 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

In today's first reading, we hear Samuel respond eagerly, "Here I am!" each time the Lord calls him. May we, too, be listening for the call of God in our lives and be ready to say like the Psalmist, "Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will."

December 14, 2008 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

All the people in today's readings- the prophet Isaiah, St. Paul, St. John the Baptist – seemed to understand clearly and rejoice in what God was calling them to be and to do. Do I?

December 28, 2008 (Holy Family)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

"Whatever you do," says St. Paul to the Colossians, "...do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him." And so it is that we offer our gifts in the Eucharist "through Him, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit..."

January 11, 2009 (Baptism of the Lord)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. The U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship reminds us that Baptism gives all of His disciples a share in His priestly work and calls them "to offer up the world and all that is in it – especially themselves – to the Lord.

January 25, 2009 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

There is certain urgency in today's Gospel as Jesus calls His first disciples – Andrew and Simon, James and John. Each one follows Jesus *immediately!* To what is Jesus calling me – at *this* moment, in *these* circumstances?



**Advent 2008  
Lectionary Cycle B**

**The Gifts of Advent**

You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1: 7)

**First Sunday in Advent**

1 Corinthians 1:3-9  
Mark 13:24-37

Keep awake! Stay alert! Advent is the season of the church year when we focus on Christ's coming into our lives and are called to fully engage in that coming.

The disciples can't seem to stay awake in this gospel text. They keep falling asleep. Perhaps they weren't stimulated enough in that garden or were genuinely tired after the ministry tasks alongside of Jesus. For us, the challenge might be just the opposite. We are bombarded by hoards of information and entertainment. There is always noise, and it's easy to become a spectator, instead of a participant.

But Paul reminds the Corinthians (and us) that they have indeed been given the gifts to actively wait for Jesus' coming.

What experiences have alerted you to Christ's love and presence in the world?

What gifts have you been given that you can use in your personal and social life to awaken Christ in others?

**Second Sunday in Advent**

2 Peter 3:8-15a  
Mark 1:1-8

Keep watch! Be on your guard! Sometimes the greatest gifts we receive come through people. Disguised in camel's hair and behind that breath of locusts, John the Baptist is a gift that announces the coming. He prepares people's hearts and minds to experience the message and person of Christ.

John is watchful, scanning the horizon for both lurking danger and tremendous promise. His proclamation draws from the traditions, history, and scripture of the church. John points to Jesus. He boldly tests everything, using the Lamb of God that he announces as his lens.

What people have announced Christ's coming in your life?

What resources (traditions, scriptures, scriptural readings) help you in encountering the lurking dangers and tremendous promises in everyday life?

### **Third Sunday in Advent**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Clear the path! Point to Jesus! Life in Christ is both rich in metaphor and specific in practices of faith. John the Evangelist draws upon the image of Christ as light.

Light helps us to see everything that is present, from obstacles in the road to clearings in the path. Spiritual light allows us to move beyond illusions to trust the truth that is both in Christ and in ourselves. Living in the truth of Christ, we are moved to action.

Paul instructs the Thessalonians in the concrete ways of faith. The light of Christ allows us to give thanks in all things, rejoice always (even when the path seems dark), and refrain from evil. When we actively participate, we clear paths that point to Jesus.

Where are the places that seem the darkest to you?

Where are the places that are most full of light (physical and spiritual)?

### **Fourth Sunday in Advent**

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Behold! Don't fear! When Gabriel greets Mary, he addresses her as "favored one." This name is not given in isolation, it is in deep relationship with God. Mary is most favored as she receives the precious gift of Jesus.

Mary doesn't gloat upon receipt of this gift, nor does she withdraw from community in unworthiness. She responds with great humility and remains always the handmaid of the Lord.

Our life in Christ is never in isolation. We remain in relationship and are named Children of God, Handmaids of the Lord. The gifts we have been given are to be used for the proclamation of Christ now. Keep awake. Keep watch! Clear the path! Behold! Our active participation does indeed proclaim Christ among us.

How do you feel, knowing that you are favored in the sight of the Lord?

When you receive a gift that you really like, how do you respond?



**Respect Life Bulletin Quotes**  
**December 2008**  
**USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities**

**December 7th**                      **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Chastity is the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to live self-giving, free from any form of self-centered slavery. This presupposes that the person has learnt how to accept other people, to relate with them, while respecting their dignity in diversity. The chaste person is not self-centered, not involved in selfish relationships with other people. Chastity makes the personality harmonious. It matures it and fills it with inner peace. This purity of mind and body helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one capable of respecting others, because it makes one see in them persons to reverence, insofar as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ. ...

*Pontifical Council for the Family, "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality," December 8, 1995*

**December 14th**                      **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

At Christmas we contemplate God made man, divine glory hidden beneath the poverty of a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger; the Creator of the Universe reduced to the helplessness of an infant. Once we accept this paradox, we discover the Truth that sets us free and the Love that transforms our lives. On Bethlehem Night, the Redeemer becomes one of us, our companion along the precarious paths of history. Let us take the hand which he stretches out to us: it is a hand which seeks to take nothing from us, but only to give.

*Pope Benedict XVI, Urbi et Orbi Message, Christmas 2005*

**December 21st**                      **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Today, this very day, Christ comes once more "unto his own," and to those who receive him he gives "the power to become children of God"; in a word, he offers them the opportunity to see God's glory and to share the joy of that Love which became incarnate for us in Bethlehem. Today "our Savior is born to the world," for he knows that even today we need him. Despite humanity's many advances, man has always been the same: a freedom poised between good and evil, between life and death. ... And, in this post-modern age, perhaps he needs a Savior all the more, since the society in which he lives has become more complex and the threats to his personal and moral integrity have become more insidious. Who can defend him, if not the One who loves him to the point of sacrificing on the Cross his only-begotten Son as the Savior of the world?

*Pope Benedict XVI, Urbi et Orbi Message, Christmas 2006*

**December 28th**                      **THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH**

Our Savior is born for all. We must proclaim this not only in words, but by our entire life, giving the world a witness of united, open communities where fraternity and forgiveness reign, along with acceptance and mutual service, truth, justice and love.

*Pope Benedict XVI, Urbi et Orbi Message, Christmas 2006*

**Office of Pro-Life, Marriage and Family Ministry  
Diocese of Youngstown  
Natural Family Planning Bulletin Quotes**

**December 7th                      SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

I feel like Natural Family Planning really works in harmony with the way that God designed our bodies to work. In contrast with the pill, which works by altering and suppressing our natural systems, NFP works by supporting those systems in harmony with their functions. It goes with the flow, so to speak. There is a wisdom and a rightness to that which I really appreciate.

*Phaedra Taylor*

**December 14th                      THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

After decades of division over issues surrounding fertility and the moral issues inherent to procreation, many protestants are now turning away from the contraceptive culture and towards the scientifically-based Natural Family Planning (NFP), a completely natural method, that allows couples to "space" children without the use of artificial contraceptives.

*<http://www.physiciansforlife.org/>*

**December 21st                      FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Couples using NFP accept their fertility not as a nuisance or even a disease, but as a gift.

*Mary Shivanandan*

**December 28th                      THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH**

Couples who practice NFP find that by discussing and prayerfully discerning their aspirations and concerns about the size of their family, they find it more easy to discuss and handle other issues in their marriages: finances, "in-law" strategies, how to rear their children, etc.

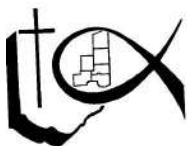
*Couple to Couple League, <http://ccli.org>*

# Word, Worship & Service

*Connecting Parishes with the Diocesan Offices of Catholic Schools, Worship and Catholic Charities*

**“The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable.”**

— *Pope Benedict XVI*  
*Deus Caritas Est*



*Word, Worship & Service* is a new publication to be distributed quarterly through *Communiqué* and on the web at [www.cathdoy.org](http://www.cathdoy.org). Its purpose is to provide information on how the Diocesan Offices of Education, Worship and Catholic Charities are serving you— our parishes, Catholic Institutions and friends in the Diocese of

## Tuition Assistance Available for Needy Families

Since May of 2000, the Office of Catholic Schools awards annual tuition assistance grants to needy students. The fund from which these grants flow is the Diocesan Scholarship Endowment that was originated by the Mary Ellen Cushwa-Wolsonovich Scholarship gift. Today the Diocesan Endowment includes not only the Cushwa- Wolsonovich gift, but also that portion of the recent “Today’s Sacrifice. . . Tomorrow’s Church” Diocesan Capital Campaign designated to support Catholic School tuition assistance. These two major sources, plus some smaller endowment amounts made it possible for the scholarship fund to assist 304 of the 585 applicants during the 2008/2009 academic term.

All applications are sent to and managed by Private School Aid Service (PSAS) to assure that claims of financial need are documented and that the Scholarship Committee has valid data upon which to make awards. In the first round of awards the most needy applicant from each school is served (\$500 for elementary students and \$1,000 for high school applicants).

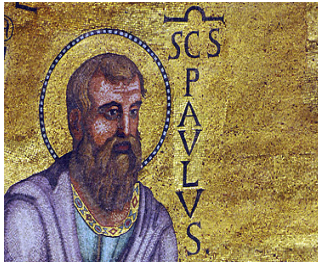
In the immediately following award round, the Scholarship Committee goes back to the ranked-by-need list provided by PSAS



and continues to identify recipients until all the available money is encumbered. Since the scholarship fund is embedded within the Diocesan Endowment, the interest generated by this designated investment constitutes the available funds. For 2008/2009, the documented need among the 585 applicants is \$662,000. Approximately \$198,000 was awarded.

However, we know that many genuine needs went unmet. The financial sacrifices of our Catholic School parents are admirable and their passion to secure a Catholic School Education for the next generation deserves our continued support.

During the month of December, applications for tuition assistance for the 2009/2010 school-term will be available. Call 330-744-8451, ext. 290 for more information.



## Prayer for the Year of St. Paul

June 28, 2008—June 29, 2009

St. Paul, As once you acknowledged the way of Christ, help us to answer his continuing call to conversion. As once you led the churches at Ephesus and Corinth, guide our bishops and pastors. As once you preached the Gospel with fervor and fearlessness, inspire those who teach and preach. As once you suffered scorn and persecution, give us courage to bear insult for the sake of the kingdom. As once you brought the Good News to the Gentiles, help us never to rest until all know of the salvation won by Christ. Amen.

## A New Year

For us as Catholics a new year is about to begin. It is not that we are rushing the season, but that we begin a new liturgical year on the first Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2008. The liturgical year unfolds through a cycle of seasons and feasts that celebrates the Paschal Mystery of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This year we have the gift of focusing predominantly on the Gospel account of Saint Mark during our Sunday liturgies. Mark is the shortest of the gospels and scholars consider it the first Gospel written. To let the entirety of Mark's message settle in as we begin this liturgical year we might consider reading through the sixteen chapters of the Gospel.

Another thing to consider during the first half of this new liturgical year is that we are currently observing the Year of St. Paul declared by our Holy Father Benedict XVI to commemorate the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St. Paul. The observance will conclude on June 29, 2009, the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. Many of the second readings from scripture proclaimed at our Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist are from St. Paul's letters. During Ordinary Time in this year of St. Paul we will hear semi-continuous readings of his first and second letters to the Corinthians as well as his letter to the Ephesians. These letters are also a good source for our reflection this year.

As we begin the new liturgical year with the season of Advent the Church calls us to look forward and backward. The season, through its prayers and readings from scripture, calls us to look ahead to the second coming of Christ in glory and to look back to the first coming of Christ at Christmas. In the beautiful season of Advent let us join the Church in praying: "May the coming of the Son of God bring you the light of his holiness and free you with his blessing."

## A Nativity for Modern Times

A family of three travels to Ohio from Louisiana in search of work. The couple—Carl and Jill—arrive with a very ill six week-old daughter. They are not sure where to go for treatment, as they do not know the area. They have no money left from their journey and no health insurance.

They find Catholic Charities. A caring caseworker arranges for their daughter to be seen at the immediate care center of the local Catholic hospital. Catholic Charities agrees to pay any fees that cannot be waived and for any necessary medication. The caseworker also connects Carl and Jill to other local services, including those that can help them obtain employment.

With the Christmas season fast approaching, stories like that of Carl and Jill remind us of the Holy Family, who, after traveling far from home, could not find a place to stay in Bethlehem. Mary gave birth to our Savior in

a barn, and was forced days later to flee with her husband and newborn son to avoid the wrath of Herod.

Families throughout the millennia have been faced with adversity. Many of our client families at Catholic Charities struggle each day, not only to obtain the basic necessities of life, but also to build a better future for their children.

This Christmas, as you surround yourself with the comfort of your own family, please keep in prayer those families who rely on Catholic Charities. Our job as followers of Christ is to recognize and respond with compassion to the needs of those among us looking for help and hope.

