



# Stewardship Newsletter

December  
2013

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## *Letter from the Pastor*

Dear Parishioners,

“Blessed is she who trusted that the Lord’s words to her would be fulfilled.” We will hear these words from the Gospel of Luke at Mass a couple of days before Christmas. They are words Elizabeth spoke to Mary at the Visitation. They speak of Mary as one who trusted in God’s promise to her. Mary’s trust in God was rewarded.

The Gospel of Luke tells the story of Jesus’ birth from Mary’s perspective. The Gospel of Matthew tells of our Lord’s birth from Joseph’s perspective. Joseph too, is asked to place his trust in what God is asking of him. Joseph trusts in God and takes Mary into his home to be his wife instead of divorcing her as he had planned to do. Joseph’s trust in God is also rewarded.

While we often think of God the Father’s love made incarnate in Jesus Christ as the center of the celebration of Christmas, trust is also a big part of this feast. God’s love shown in the gift of a Savior may be at the heart of Christmas, but we also celebrate because of the trust that was shown by others in God’s promise of a Savior. We celebrate the trust of Mary, the trust of Joseph, and the trust of all those who believed in God’s promise and kept it alive through the centuries. We see in the celebration of our Lord’s birth that their trust in God is rewarded.

*continued on back cover*



# Most Holy Redeemer

## Steve and Barbara Lascola: Christifideles Award Winners



Congratulations to Steve and Barbara Lascola, who have been chosen as Most Holy Redeemer's 2013 Christifideles winner. The archdiocesan award is given to Catholic laypeople who have, "by participating in parish life, demonstrated the personal and ministerial renewal called for by the papal exhortation Christifideles Laici, calling the laity to the 'vocation of responsibility for the church's life springing from the gift and mission of their baptism.'"

On Sunday, November 3, Steve and Barbara traveled to Holy Name Cathedral, to be honored for their willingness to serve their parish through a variety of ministries designed to help others. Steve and Barb and family members were privileged to join other honorees and their families from throughout the archdiocese and observe the ceremony as the award winners were recognized by Cardinal Francis George for their service to the Catholic Church in the Chicagoland area.

**"They choose to be thankful for their gifts by giving back to their parish and the wider community in any way they can.."**

For the past 35 years, Steve and Barbara have been members of the Most Holy Redeemer community, raising their four children—Dominic, Gina, Anne and Richard—in Evergreen Park. As the years went by, the Lascolas added eight grandchildren (with another on the way) and an increasing number of ministries to their life.

Steve serves as a Eucharistic minister, lector and usher. He also recently finished a term on the Parish Council, but he then joined the Spiritual Life Commission. In addition, he teaches in the School of Religion, is a member of the Chapel Committee, and a men's group which assists at a PADS shelter on a regular schedule. For the past 13 years, he has also been part of the Pilgrim Virgin movement, inviting people to pray in homes where the Pilgrim Virgin is displayed each Saturday. Steve enjoys serving in all his ministries, but says he "feels incredibly honored" at the privilege of being allowed to be a Eucharistic minister. He also loves sharing the doctrines of our faith with his students in the School of Religion.

Barbara compliments Steve's work with her own set of ministries. Seventeen years ago, she initiated the St. Michael League for policeman and fireman and organizes a Mass for these first responders and their intentions on the third Tuesday each month. For the past 24 years, she has also led a prayer group at her home each Monday, and she has sponsored the noted British layperson Tony Hickey's retreats for the past 12 years. In addition, Barbara is and has been the force behind the Divine Mercy activities at MHR -- the nine days of prayer beginning on Good Friday and culminating with the joyful celebration the first Sunday after Easter.

The Lascolas' commitment to service and Stewardship began in the early '80's when Barbara returned from Medugorje and was so inspired by the message of the Blessed Mother that she determined the whole family must visit the shrine. In 1988, the whole family did travel to the site in western Bosnia to pray to the Blessed Mother. In fact, their son Dominic received the sacrament of

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# Most Holy Redeemer

## Join the Celebration of Giving, Here at Most Holy Redeemer

I had the pleasure of collaborating on this article with Sharon Gainer, who has been volunteering with the Catholic Charities' Annual Celebration of Giving here at MHR for five years now. The Catholic Charities' Annual Celebration of Giving, now in its 66th year, is a concerted effort to collect holiday gifts for children and families served by Catholic Charities' wide array of programs. At Most Holy Redeemer, we are proud to participate in this wonderful project!

There are two components of the Celebration of Giving. Your participation in one or both of these giving options will truly bring great joy to someone this Christmas! You can participate in Sponsor a Family by purchasing gifts for a family, who, without our help, will have no Christmas this year. Last year, over 500 families experienced the joy of Christmas through this program; 60 of those families were sponsored by MHR parishioners. You can stop by after all weekend masses until December 1 to select a family. With many of us feeling the effects of the slow economy ourselves, consider sponsoring a family with the help of



a friend. Reach out to your extended family, neighbors on your block, bowling team, co-workers, or Bible study group to work together to sponsor a family.

You can also participate by donating one or more new, unwrapped toys in the \$10.00 to \$15.00 range as part of the Toy Shower. Toy Shower collection boxes will be placed in the back of church and outside the school office until December 12 to drop off your gift.

Looking at the lists provided by the sponsored families is a humbling and enlightening experience. Bed sheets and blankets, t-shirts and socks, hats and gloves are the items they request to make their Christmas bright. When we participate in this Celebration of Giving, we make a positive and lasting impact-- helping a family in need, which makes an impact on our families too. When we serve others, we have a chance to step outside of ourselves and appreciate our own lives more. This is an excellent way to encourage our children to give back. Participating as a family builds compassion, love and the Christmas spirit in all of us.

It is amazing what we can accomplish when we work together to serve others. One of Sharon's favorite memories is "seeing the vans when they have collected our donations - great big vans piled high and deep with tons and tons of gifts - you see firsthand what Christmas is really all about... amazing!"

If you wish more information on these projects, please contact Sharon Gainer for more information at 708-423-0138.

By: Sharon Gainer and Colleen Klimczak

# Most Holy Redeemer

## Advent, More than the Chocolates in a Calendar

I was shopping for Halloween candy a few weeks ago and was amazed to see a section reserved for Christmas candy. Chocolate kisses, candy canes, foil wrapped jingle bells and, tucked away in the corner of the display, was a stack of those brightly colored cardboard boxes with the foldout windows. I experienced a mix of feelings. First, I was thinking, "What? It's not even Thanksgiving! Advent Calendars already?" and then, "Oh, I should pick these calendars up now to make sure we have them for Advent!" I tossed the boxes into my cart without another thought, but, later that night, I found myself looking at them on the kitchen table. I wondered, what will Advent be like, in this the eighth year of my twins' lives? What will they experience with this year's magic of Christmas? I found myself feeling excited about the coming holiday and the joy that comes with being a parent of young children.

My kids find excitement in every aspect of the Christmas season. They like putting up the tree. They like poring over the toy catalogues. They even seem to like going to Mass on Sundays more than during the rest of the year. Raising them Catholic, we have seen the evolution of their understanding of the holiday over the years. They manage to mix that sense of wonder at the commercial side of the holiday (i.e. Santa Claus, twinkling lights and presents under the tree) with the spiritual side (celebrating with our church community the coming of Jesus).

The Advent calendars help children mark down the coming of the highlight of kid-dom: Christmas. This is what every child looks forward to each year. For my kids, there is BC and AC: Before Christmas and After Christmas. This is what their yearly calendar has come down to. They anxiously await the Christmas season with fevered excitement all year long. As their parents, we wait too. We wait for the sales, and then we wait for the bills. Actually, as the parent of Catholic children, I've come to wait for the new experiences they have each Christmas. Each year, my children have grown in their faith in Jesus and understanding of Christmas. I love seeing that deepening understanding that occurs in each of them regarding Jesus. I love the

stories they share about what they have learned in school about Jesus and His birth. I love seeing Christmas through their eyes. And so, we wait.

Advent means to wait. Specifically, "The coming or arrival, especially of something extremely important" (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/advent>). And, for Christians, it means "The period beginning four Sundays before Christmas and observed by some Christians as a season of prayer and fasting" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advent>). We prepare for the coming of Christ. We remember the story from the Bible, and we remember what it means to make room in our everyday lives for Jesus. We are hopeful. We are waiting for the coming of our Lord, both in scripture and as our salvation.

At church, we see the changes weekly that helps us remember what Advent is. According to *Our Sunday Visitor*, the colors of Advent are significant in our remembrances. The purple or dark blue is a symbol of royalty that anticipates the coming birth of Jesus. It also reflects a spirit of penitence and the need to prepare our hearts. Pink is a secondary Advent color that symbolizes the joy of the season. The evergreens in the Advent wreath signify eternal life that comes to us through Jesus (<http://www.osv.com/>).

During Advent, we may spend our days making shopping lists and preparing our homes. We find ourselves in a frenzy of baking and preparing for holiday feasts. We find ways to bring joy to others. Hopefully, we find ways to share our blessings with those less fortunate. We count our blessings and thank God for all that he has given us. But mostly, we wait. We wait for the celebrations to begin. We wait for that miracle that provides all Catholics with the renewed faith that sustains us. We wait for the quiet in our hearts to help calm our busy days. We wait for our Lord Jesus Christ. We wait for Christmas.

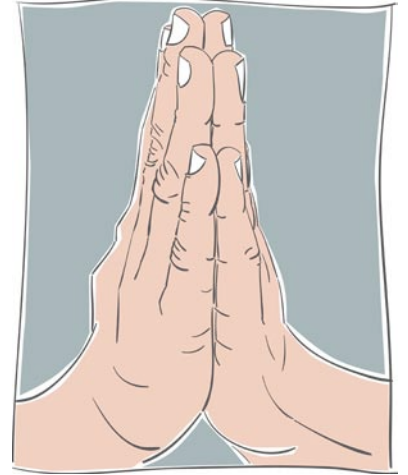
By: Lisa M. Downey

# Most Holy Redeemer

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Holy Eucharist there for the first time. They too were inspired by the message. Since that visit, they began their journey of sharing their faith with their community. Steve points out that his family has been blessed by God in many ways, so they choose to be thankful for their gifts by giving back to their parish and the wider community in any way they can-- especially spiritually.

The Lascolas feel deeply honored by this award even though they told me they don't feel they deserve it since they feel there are so many others working for good each day. They do, however, promise to pray for all of us to reflect the goodness of God. We are grateful for the work the Lascolas do and have done in the parish in their practice of Stewardship, and we congratulate them on this recognition of their service to others.



By: Jan McAuliffe

## Weekly Advent Wreath Lighting Prayer

### First Week

All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, forever and ever.  
~AMEN.

### Second Week

God of power and mercy open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy so that we may share his wisdom and become one with him when he comes in glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.  
~AMEN.

### Third Week

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
~AMEN.

### Fourth Week

Father, all-powerful God, your eternal Word took flesh on our earth when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan. Lift our minds in watchful hope to hear the voice which announces his glory and open our minds to receive the Spirit who prepares us for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
~AMEN.

*From <http://www.loyolapress.com/prayer-for-lighting-the-advent-wreath-candles.htm>*



# Most Holy Redeemer

## Schedule of Events

December 1st	City Lights Orchestra Concert	7:00 p.m. in Church
December 8th	Sacred Concert	7:00 p.m. in Church
December 15th	Family Mass	9:30 a.m.
December 17th	Taize Prayer Service and Reconciliation	7:30 p.m. in Church
December 21st	Private Reconciliation	3 p.m. in Church
December 24th	Christmas Eve	Regularly Scheduled 8:30 a.m. Mass Christmas Eve Masses at 4:00, 6:00, and 10:00 p.m.
December 25th	Christmas Day	Christmas Masses at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 a.m.
December 31st	Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary	4:30 p.m. Mass
January 1st, 2014	Solemnity of Mary	Masses at 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.

### Newsletter Volunteers:

Managing Editor: Lisa Downey  
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Contributing Writer: Colleen Klimczak  
Design: Ellie Menke



## Merry Christmas

The Stewardship Committee and the Newsletter Staff would like to wish you and your family a Blessed and Merry Christmas.

# Most Holy Redeemer

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U.S. POSTAGE  
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Permit No. 2955

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Address Service Requested

Mass and Reconciliation Schedule:

Weekday Morning Masses:  
Monday-Friday 6:30 and 8:30

Weekend Masses:  
Saturday: 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.  
Sunday: 8:00 a.m. 9:30 a.m. 11:00  
a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Reconciliation:  
Saturday 4:00 p.m.

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Trust in God is also a big part of the practice of Stewardship. While recognizing everything in our lives as a gift from God and giving back generously in gratitude for all we have received is at the heart of Stewardship, we also have to trust in God to be good stewards. We have to trust that if we give generously to God of our time and talent, we will still be able to fulfill our work and family responsibilities and other obligations. We have to trust that if we generously share of our treasure, God will still provide us with enough to care for the material needs that we and our families have. It takes a lot of trust in God to practice Stewardship. If we are not practicing Stewardship, we should ask ourselves if a lack of trust in God is the reason. Even if we are practicing Stewardship, do we trust in God enough to share generously?

I hope that the upcoming celebration of Christmas will be a joyous one for you, your family, and your loved ones. As we celebrate God's love made visible in Christ Jesus, let's also keep in mind the trust in God that is also a big part of Christmas. May that same trust mark our practice of Stewardship in the New Year.

In Christ,

*Fr. Jim Hyland*

Fr. Jim Hyland, Pastor