

Sunday, December 22, 2013
4th Sunday in Advent



Sun. 22 Dec. Fourth Sunday of Advent, I Class

8:30 am John Patch
 10:30 am Pro Populo
 1:00 pm James Vickerman & family

3:00 pm Vespers & Benediction

Mon. 23 Dec. Greater Feria of Advent, II Class

7:00 am For poor souls
 12:15 pm Dr. George Stote

Tues. 24 Dec. Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord, I Class

7:00 am Paulette Brady
 12:15 pm Intentions of Our Lady

Wed. 25 Dec. The Nativity of Our Lord, I Class

12:00 am Special Intention
 8:30 am Special Intention
 10:30 am Pro Propulo
 1:00 am Special Intention

Thurs. 26 Dec. St. Stephen, Deacon & Protomartyr, II Class

7:00 am Unborn children
 7:00 pm St. Stephen Guild

Fri. 27 Dec. St. John, Apostle & Evangelist, II Class

7:00 am Grace (Nino) Quinlan & family
 12:15 pm Miss Mary Dart & family
 6:30 pm †Feliciano Robles

Sat. 28 Dec. Holy Innocents, II Class

7:00 am Giovanni William Solari & family
 9:00 am Mr. Spence

Sun. 29 Dec. Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, II Class

8:30 am The Watts family
 10:30 am Pro Populo
 1:00 pm Dr. George Stote

3:00 pm Vespers & Benediction

Sick Calls

If anyone is in need of the Sacrament (i.e. homebound) please call the parish office. If it is an **emergency**, outside of office hours, dial (916) 455-5114, then press 1, leave a message, and the priest-on-call will be paged immediately.

...In Memoriam

†Ray Keller, †Elin Frances Terra, †Martha Robison, †Gabriel Vargas, †Olympia Gonzalez, †Forrest Long, †Jenna Telles, †Bernard Beronio, †Georgia Munsill, †Patricia Greco, †Draga Kozina, †Doug McNeely, †Louis Solton, †Rhoda Bowen, †Mary Margaret Mantsch, †Teresa Reali

Important Upcoming Dates

Dec. 24—Office of Prime following 7:00 am Mass
 Dec. 26—St. Stephen Guild Mass & Medal Ceremony
 Dec. 27—Feast of St. John—Blessing of wine after each Mass
 Jan. 4—Epiphany Around the World—Parish party
 Jan. 5—Blessing of Epiphany Water
 Jan. 6—Epiphany
 Jan. 25—Walk for Life
 Feb. 2—Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 March 26—Confirmation
 May 3—May Procession & Solemn Mass at the Cathedral
 May 10—First Holy Communion
 June—21-28—Camp Sacred Heart

The Mystery of the Incarnation

God is Love; everything He does, both in Himself and outside of Himself, is a work of love. Being the infinite good, He cannot love anything outside of Himself from the desire of increasing His happiness, as is the case with us; in Himself He possesses *all*. Therefore, in God, to love, and hence to will creatures, is simply to extend, outside of Himself, His infinite good, His perfections, and to communicate to others His own Being and felicity. Bonum diffusivum sui, St. Thomas says. Thus God loved man with an eternal love and, loving him, called him into existence, giving him both natural and supernatural life. Through love, God not only brought man out of nothing, but chose him and elevated him to the state of divine sonship, destining him to participate in His own intimate life, in His eternal beatitude. This was the first plan of the immense charity of God with regard to man. But when man fell into sin, God, who had created him by an act of love, willed to redeem him by an even greater act of love. See then, how the mystery of the Incarnation presents itself to us as the supreme manifestation of God's *exceeding* charity toward man. "By this hath the charity of God appeared toward us, because God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him. In this is charity. . . He hath first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." After having given man natural life, after having destined him for the supernatural life, what more could He give him than to give Himself, His Word made flesh, for his salvation?

God is Love. It is not surprising, therefore, that the story of His benevolent action on behalf of man is all a poem of love, and of merciful love. The first stanza of this poem was our eternal predestination to the vision and to the fruition of the intimate life of God. The second stanza relates, in an even more touching way, the sublimity of His mercy: the mystery of the Incarnation.

The sin of our first parents had destroyed God's original plan for our elevation to a supernatural state; we had forfeited our claim, and we could never atone for the sin. God could have pardoned all, but it was becoming to His holiness and infinite justice to exact an adequate satisfaction; man was absolutely incapable of providing this. Then the most sublime work of God's mercy was accomplished: one Person of the Blessed Trinity, the second, came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Behold the Word, God's only-begotten Son, "who for us men and for our salvation, descended from heaven and became incarnate." The merciful love of God thus attains its highest manifestation: if there is no ingratitude and misery greater than sin, there can be no love greater than that of Him who inclines over so much ingratitude and abjection to restore it to its primal splendor. God did this, not by the intervention of a prophet or the most sublime of the angels; but He did it personally: all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity acted in the Incarnation, the end of which was to unite a human nature with the Person of the Word. In this mystery, the immensity of the love and mercy of God for man appears and shines forth.

"Divine Intimacy" by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, (OCD)

Christmas Mass Schedule

Holy Day of Obligation

11:15 P.M. Hymns and Carols
12:00 Midnight Solemn Mass
8:30 A.M. Low Mass
10:30 A.M. Solemn Mass
1:00 P.M. Low Mass

Light Refreshments Following Mid-Night Mass

There will be a small reception in the gym after the Mid-Night Mass. Mulled wine and hot chocolate will be provided. Please bring a savory or sweet finger food, such as cheese & crackers or cookies, to share.

Feast of the Holy Innocents Candlelight Procession

On Saturday, December 28, the annual Feast of the Holy Innocents Candlelight Rosary Procession will meet at 6:00 pm at the steps of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament (11th & K) and pray for the sanctity of life as we walk to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. This March commemorates the infants who were killed by decree of King Herod, as well as those innocent unborn babies lost by abortion today. For more information call Leticia at 916-519-0417)

David's Town

.....By this time, after seeing so much of shepherds and sheep, angels and annunciations, the Virgin and her Visitation, you should be ready to take God at His word when He says: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." think of all the thought, time, and attention He had to give so that you could be called a child of Mary, and have your Mother standing now on the threshold of your soul laden with grace and anxious to give Him to you! You have seen that it took aeons to shape the cave in Bethlehem's chalk hills. But have you ever thought of all the concern it cost God that Bethlehem be in the land of Juda, that Jesse's root be sunk in the soil of the little town, and that David should be watching flocks there when Samuel came with the oils for Israel's second and greatest King? Men, you know, are not puppets who dance to the pull of the strings in the hands of God. They are free agents, with a freedom like unto God's own freedom. Secondary causes, of course, but real causes. Hence, if every word that God had uttered through the mouths of Patriarch and Prophet concerning His only Word, was to be fulfilled before the fullness of time had come, He had to be on the alert, as it were, as history unrolled and tribes fought over the land that was to be the Promised Land. He had to watch closely after the Chosen People had crossed the Jordan and the battlements of Jericho had been blown down by the blasts of trumpets; He had to listen to Josue and have His sun and moon stand still that His men might pursue the Amorrites; He had to be patient as countless kings, singly and in alliances, were conquered and killed by the Israelites; then He had to be watchfulness itself as the Tribes portioned out the Promised Land by lot. For Bethlehem had to be within the confines of that territory which fell to the lot of Juda. Then when the lovely Ruth won the heart of Booz, God had to exert His influence to see that Obed was born in Bethlehem and that there he would father Jesse, the man who was to have seven stalwart sons before he begot the immortal David. God was thinking of His only Son and His ancestors for centuries before that shepherd you have seen began to chip away that stone which would be Christ's crib—and during all that time God was thinking of you.
 (taken from "Love Does Such Things" by Fr. Raymond, O.C.S.O.)

Epiphany Around the World

Mark your calendars!
 You are invited to an international potluck to celebrate the Great Feast of Epiphany at St. Stephen's. The festivities will begin at 5 o'clock, Saturday, January 4th, 2014

Share your family's traditional culinary specialties with your fellow parishioners. If you prefer to bring other needed items such as utensils, cups etc. please contact Pat Feldman at FeldmanPat@ymail.com or (916)383-2231

Our celebration would not be the same without you!

~Christmas Gift Ideas~

Our book and gift store at St. Stephens is filled with beautiful and meaningful gifts which would be perfect for Christmas! Everything from statues to our St. Stephen Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Mystic Monk Coffee, sterling & gold filled medals, just to name a few things. The shop is open several hours every day, so be sure to stop in and check things out. For more information call 916-223-3112

Gift Certificates are available too!

Registration for First Holy Communion

For children who will be at least 7 years old by January

Please pick up a registration packet in the office or bookstore for First Communion classes. Completed forms and copy of your child's Baptism certificate can be returned to the office or bookstore. Classes will begin January 11, 2013.

Mass Intentions

Our Mass intentions for next year are almost half filled, therefore we are asking that families request no more than 10 Masses during the year.

We now have a calendar which will allow for requesting special dates from June forward as they are available.

New to St. Stephen's?

Please stop by the office or bookstore and pick up a registration form. It is very helpful for us to have contact information for your family, even if you cannot come to St. Stephen's every week.

If you do not have envelopes and would like them you can pick up a box in the bookstore. The use of envelopes is very helpful for our bookkeeping system.

Save the Date!

Save the date—**Saturday, January 25, 2014**. Tenth Annual Walk for Life. Contact **Mike (916) 335-4553** or **Kathleen (916) 204-9125** to make bus reservations.

Please Keep in Your Prayers ...

Mike Hayes, Jim Carlson, Kaehler Family, Mike McGrath, Barbara Graichen, Munsill Family, Sister Marie Jeanne, Charles Cantoni, Mitzi Vandenburg, John Reyes, Dr. Gerald Foy, Cindy Yumoto, Carlos Aldana, Liliana, Luz & Ceasar Morales, Mark Garcia Family, Richard Corbin, Philip Rutschow