

NOTES FROM FR. SEÁN

December 20, 2020

In Today's Gospel

This week, we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Advent; we begin our final week of preparation for Christmas. Advent is a time for us to reflect on our relationship with Jesus and to clear away the obstacles in our hearts that prevent him from entering our lives. In today's gospel, the angel Gabriel greets Mary with a dramatic announcement. He tells her that she has found favor with God and that she will conceive a child who will be called the "Son of the Most High."

The gospel tells us that Mary was "greatly troubled" by the angel's greeting, but Mary did not hesitate to be obedient to God despite her troubles. Although she did not know how it would be possible for her to conceive a child since she had "no relations with a man," she responds to the angel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (Lk 1:38)

As we enter this final week of Advent, let us reflect on these words of Mary and make them our own. Let us be obedient to God and seek to do all things according to his word.

Families of Parishes Update

Last week, the Archdiocese of Detroit released the family groupings and wave assignments for the next step in the *Families of Parishes* reorganization of the dioceses. In addition to St. Mary and St. Richard, our family group includes Ss. Simon and Jude, St. Mary Cause of Our Joy, and St. Thomas the Apostle. We will be a part of the first wave of parishes that will consolidate into family groupings. We will begin the process in January and will officially be grouped together in July 2021.

Many of you may be asking: "So, what does this mean?" Right now, the only answer that I have for you is: "I'll let you know." *Families of Parishes* is still very much a work in progress. I can tell you that our parishes are not merging. We will continue to be five separate parishes. These five parishes, however, form one family working together to Unleash the Gospel. In the weeks and months to come, I will keep you informed about what is happening, and we may be looking for volunteers to help make this progress go smoothly.

For additional information about families of parishes, go to: familiesofparishes.org.

Champions

Since we had to make the painful decision to close St. Mary School, we have been looking for a charter school to rent our school. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, those plans have been put on hold. We are still hoping to find a charter school, but in the meantime, we are looking for other opportunities to use our facilities.

Recently Champions approached us to rent several classrooms. Champions provides latchkey and other childcare services in the Wayne Westland Community Schools (WWCS). When the WWCS buildings are completely closed, Champions is unable to operate in those buildings. The need for childcare, however, does not go away.

When they cannot use WWCS facilities, Champions will be renting space from us. They will be here during the Christmas break and during winter break in February. They will also be here throughout

the summer. During Christmas break, they are planning to have between 50 and 70 children in our school.

Christmas Collection and CSA

As we approach Christmas and the end of the year, many parishioners are considering their End of Year contributions. Many people regularly give during the year but wait until Christmas to make their big donations. They do this because they know that donations designated for Christmas made to the parish during the two weeks before and the two weeks following Christmas are not subject to the 7% surcharge by the AOD that funds the archdiocese's business operation. This extra 7% really helps our parishes.

Another way to donate to the parish and avoid the 7% surcharge is to donate to the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA). St. Richard has already reached its CSA goal. St. Richard has received pledges and donations totaling more than \$20,000, or 136% of our goal. This means that St. Richard will be receiving a refund from CSA of more than \$5,000.

At St. Mary, we are almost there. As I write this, we have received pledges and donations of just under \$64,000, or 98% of our parish goal. We are almost there; I know we can exceed our goal by the end of the year. This will be the first time in years that we have completed CSA before the end of the year.

For those of you considering contributing from your IRA or other retirement accounts with a required minimum distribution, you should donate directly from your account to avoid having to pay taxes on the distribution.

Whether you are making a special Christmas donation or donating to CSA, or just making your regular contribution, I thank you for your generosity. Sometimes I feel that I spend much time talking about money, but money is necessary to operate our parishes. Without your generosity, we would not be able to continue to serve the people of God; we would not be able to Unleash the Gospel in our community. Thank you.

View this full bulletin on the *Parish Life* tab on our webpage.