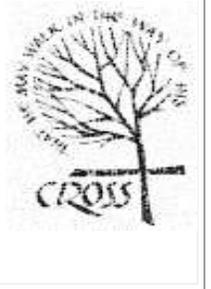


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NEWSLETTER OF THE SAINT BONAVENTURE FRATERNITY SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA 15940
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CALENDAR

Jan 1	New Year's Day – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Jan 3	Holy Name of Jesus
Jan 6	Feast of the Epiphany
Jan 7	Blessed Angela of Foligno
Jan 10	January Gathering
Jan 12	St. Bernard of Corleone
Jan 13	Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
Jan 14	Blessed Odoric of Pordenone
Jan 16	Saints Bernard and Companions
Jan 24	Saint Francis de Sales
Jan 27	Saint Angela Merici
Jan 30	Saint Hyacinth of Mariscotti
Jan 31	Saint John Bosco

FRATERNITY GATHERINGS

Fraternity gatherings are held the second Sunday of each month. Our January gathering will be held virtually on **Sunday, January 10, at 1:00 P.M.** (Watch for your email invitation).

Please call in if you can't join by video. **If you are not able to attend please contact Mary Jo beforehand.**

During our gathering we will be doing the candle ceremony at home. Please refer to the sheet attached with this newsletter. We will also have ongoing formation by reflecting on

questions from the Lamb's Supper reading.

ONGOING AND INITIAL FORMATION **Gaye Boyer, OFS Formation Director**

Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year!!

A friend texted "Merry Weirdest Christmas ever", this brought both laughter and deep thought as I realized this Christmas was exactly what the world needed to bring us to the true meaning on this Holy season. In other years I celebrated what joy this season brought to my earthly family, but this year I realized my focus should be on the Holy Family. As I spent Christmas without my biological family, due to COVID and COVID exposure, I found true joy in meditating upon what this time truly meant for Mary, Joseph and Jesus. It was true joy, peace and love for me to embrace this fully. I hope each of you found peace, love and joy!

For formation please read **Chapter 4 of The Lamb's Supper**, "Taste and see [and hear and touch] the gospel of the Lord" and reflect on the following questions:

1. Do you sense a dramatic "flow" or development in the way the Mass proceeds? If you had to outline your experience of the Mass, what parts would you highlight? Why?
2. In what ways does the Mass engage your body and senses? What does it do for your spirit?
3. What does it mean to "consecrate the world itself to God"? How might this take place in the Mass?
4. What is your attitude toward ritual? What is your attitude toward spontaneity? Can a healthy spiritual life incorporate both? Should it?

A "NEW" CHRISTMAS EVE TRADITION Heather Meck, OFS

This year, recognizing that many of us could not come together for the Eucharist, Fr. Allen Zeth shared the following Polish Christmas Eve tradition called "oplatki" with the members of our parish.

The *oplatek* (singular of oplatki) is a wafer bearing a simple design commemorating Christ's birth and is meant to remind families of the Eucharist bread at Mass and makes a further connection between Christmas and the gift of the Eucharist, the Real Presence of God among us (He noted that the wafer is blessed, NOT CONSECRATED! Just like the communion wafer, it is flour and water only).

Traditionally this takes place on Christmas Eve before the evening meal as the family awaits the first star in the night sky, as the star of Bethlehem shone the way and announced the birth of a new King. The word Bethlehem means "House of Bread".

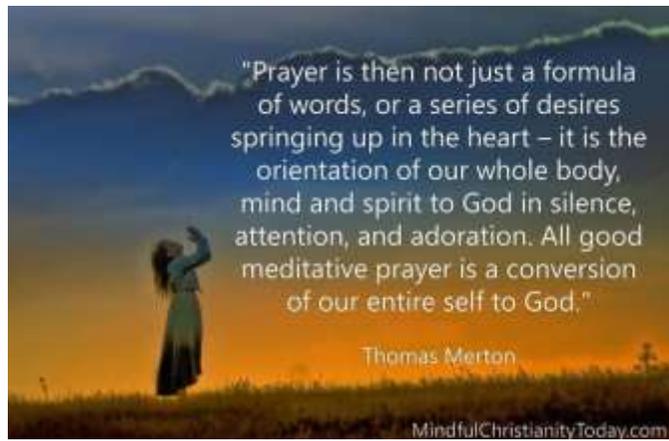


The oldest member of the family, usually the father, begins by taking the *oplatek* and breaking off a piece of the wafer, giving it to his wife. When he does so, he may give a blessing simply consisting of what you desire for your loved one in the upcoming year – good health, growth in God's grace, happiness; or to say what he is thankful for, or wish her good health. It also might be a request for forgiveness and a desire for reconciliation.

The Christmas wafer is then passed from person to person around the table until all have had a piece and all have been given blessings. Each person then consumes their piece of the *oplatek* as a special display of love and

solidarity between the whole family.

Fr. Allen had suggested in his letter to our parish that this may be a great way to ask God's blessing for the members of our family who couldn't be with us and also for our parish family. ☺



ADMONITION...Mary Jo, OFS

The Twelve Days of Christmas is a popular hymn we all know. Many in retail use this as twelve days before Christmas sales strategy. For the retail world Christmas is done and over December 26th, and the Valentine items begin to appear. Traditionally the twelve days of Christmas begin on December 26 and end on January 5th. As Catholics we can use these 12 days Catholics to remind us that Christmas day is just the beginning of the Christmas season and we can continue to celebrate. For us Christmas begins on Christmas day and ends on the Epiphany.

Epiphany comes from the Greek which is translated as "to manifest" or "make known." The Catechism of the Catholic church observes that "The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, Son of the God and Savior of the world" and that the magi's coming to Jerusalem, in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews, shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations."

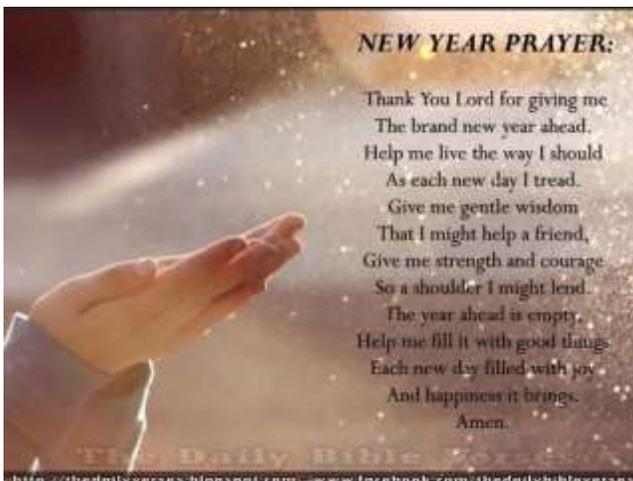
As Catholics we also celebrate many feast days of saints During the Christmas season. The

feast days to be celebrated are:

- St. Stephen, the First Martyr (December 26)
- St John the Evangelist (December 27)
- The Holy Innocents (December 28)
- The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
(First Sunday after Christmas Day)
- Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the
Mother of God (January 1)
- Epiphany (January 6th)
- The Baptism of the Lord (January 10, 2021)

I for one will celebrate the most holy season of Christmas into the new year. It is a family tradition to not display the three wisemen in the nativity scene until the Epiphany. We keep them out of site and my daughters would take turns moving them every day closer to the scene. Only now that task falls on my husband and me. This was the first year our son-in-law celebrated with our family. On Christmas eve he saw the wisemen behind the stable and got a very puzzled look on his face. We all smiled and laughed and filled him in on the story. My daughter, his wife of 4 months laughed the loudest. Her wiseman are also hidden at their house and he had not even noticed. I smiled, knowing Christmas will continue to be celebrated in their home well into the New Year also.

As this Christmas season continues, I will be leaving my decorations up and lights on at least until the Epiphany. I may even leave them until February 2nd, Candlemas Day. This is 40 days after Christmas, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.



UPCOMING EVENTS



2021 NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE

January 29, 2021
Washington, DC

THEME: TOGETHER STRONG: LIFE UNITES!

“The right to life is a human right. Our defense of that right is a joyful witness to the beauty and dignity of every human person.”

For information visit <https://marchforlife.org/>

OFS Summer Seminar St. Francis University
July 8-11, 2021 (tentatively)

The Q possible date: Summer 2022 or 2023

COMMON FUND REMINDER

Just a reminder that even though our fraternity has not been meeting face-to-face, we are still obligated to contribute as our means allow to the common fund.

Please send your monthly contribution to Patricia Serotkin, OFS, Fraternity Treasurer at 1072 N. Center St. Ebensburg, PA 15931.

ST. BONAVENTURE FRATERNITY FACEBOOK PAGE

Our Fraternity has a Facebook page! Anyone can find this group.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/652880388194184/?ref=share>

Watch for Fr. Kevin's minute meditations!