To Hear the Gospel and Make a Difference

WEEK AT A GLANCE

**Sunday, 12/20**
- No RE classes
- Simbang Gabi, Church 4 pm
- Confirmation, 6 pm - 9 pm

**Monday, 12/21**
- Simbang Gabi, Church 6:30 pm

**Tuesday, 12/22**
- Simbang Gabi, Church 6:30 pm

**Wednesday 12/23**
- Simbang Gabi, Church 6:30 pm
- St. Vincent DePaul, Min. Ctr 7 pm

**Thursday, 12/24**
- Centering Prayer, Min. Ctr 9 am
- Masses 3:30 pm & 5:30 pm, Church
- Masses 3:45 pm & 5:45 pm, GYM
- Mass 8 pm, Church
- Mass 11:30 pm, Church

**Friday, 12/25**
- MERRY CHRISTMAS!
- Masses 8 am, 9:15 am, and 10:45 am

**Saturday, 12/26**
- No RE classes

**Sunday, 12/27**
- No RE classes

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**CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES**
- 3:30 & 5:30 pm Mass with children
- 3:45 & 5:45 pm Mass in the gym
- 8:00 pm & 11:30 pm Masses in Church

**CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES**
- 8:00 am, 9:15 am, 10:45 am
Dear Friends,

Today we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The Gospel passage turns its attention to Mary and Elizabeth. The Christmas story is about two women, who were blessed by God and invited to share His plan of salvation for the world. It is the story of two women who opened their wombs to God’s Spirit, so that God could become one with man and man could become one again with God. And so, the mystery of Incarnation is about how God blesses women, who are open to receive his gifts of love.

Every womb is a sacred tabernacle, where life is conceived and housed. Women are blessed because they are partners with God in bringing about life and nurturing that life. “From the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.” (Lk: 44). Do the unborn have a life of their own? Do they communicate? Do they have feelings? Are they fully human, able to understand and communicate, while they live in the womb? When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the child in her womb kindled the unborn in Elizabeth’s womb. And the child leaped for joy, in recognition of salvation, so close and near. Elizabeth, a woman who lived life becomes sought after by a teenage mother who finds herself pregnant. And she responded with great love and compassion. And her home in the hill country became a shelter for two mothers-to-be, and they shared with each other the secret of their womb. This is a wonderful story within the Christmas story; that you can become a refuge of strength and comfort to women who are bearing life within them and are in situations of hardship and pain; that we as a society and individuals should bestow blessings upon blessings upon expecting mothers and their unborn; that we are called to recognize the full humanity of the unborn, who are endowed with feelings and emotions and their abilities to communicate their feelings, even before they are born.

In the spirit of the Christmas story as it unfolds in Mary and Elizabeth, I would invite you to do an act of kindness to expectant mothers, especially those who need our prayers and assistance. I would like to wish Phyllis Gurnett our Music Director, who is expecting her seventh boy, our blessings and prayers.

I would like to share with you an update I received from Fr. George Fitzgerald this week. Please do keep him in your prayers. We will be welcoming Fr. Daniel O’Connor (Donie) from England and Fr. Thomas from India to help us at CTK after Christmas. Fr. Donie will be celebrating the 3.30 pm and 5.30 pm Masses in the GYM on December 24th. Let me take this opportunity to wish each and everyone a Merry Christmas.

From Fr. George Fitzgerald, csp

Many of you know that I was expecting to return to help out at Christ the King during Fr. Paulson’s planned visit to India in January. Unfortunately I won't be able to be present with you. Fr. Paulson has been gracious in understanding my situation. He looked ahead to a day when the tiny city of Bethlehem, where David had been born, would bring forth a new shepherd, a good shepherd, who would unify the people and bring peace.

Reflections on Sunday Readings:

First Reading: Micah 5:1-4

The prophet Micah, writing some 700 years before Christ, attacked the social injustices of Israel. He looked ahead to a day when the tiny city of Bethlehem, where David had been born, would bring forth a new shepherd, a good shepherd, who would unify the people and bring peace.

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

The Letter to the Hebrews constantly looks to the Old Testament and shows how Jesus surpassed its laws and sacrifices. In Old Testament times the people offered animal sacrifices over and over in atonement for their sins. But this could not compare to the God-made-flesh who gave his life once for the sins of all.

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FROM FR. GEORGE FITZGERALD, CSP

Many of you know that I was expecting to return to help out at Christ the King during Fr. Paulson’s planned visit to India in January. Unfortunately I won't be able to be present with you. Fr. Paulson has been gracious in understanding my situation. For the past three months I have had a problem with vertigo and unsteadiness in my equilibrium and haven’t been able to celebrate mass or be active in ministry. It’s a recurring problem over the years. Right now I’m planning on some special physical therapy designed specifically for that problem and hope for some results. But it will take time. I will miss being with all of you and send blessings for a joyful Christmas. I am still at 5 Park Street, Boston, MA 02108, enjoying balmy weather for December. Seeing all the college students walking around in shorts makes me feel that I am back in California. Stay well and enjoy the (hopefully) rainy months of winter to ease your drought!! Warmest and loving good wishes,

Fr. George Fitzgerald

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Fr. George Fitzgerald
Save the Date! CYO Crab Feed will be held Saturday, January 30th from 6:30 - 11:30 pm. Tickets are $55 each and will be available soon. New to the menu - tri-tip! Crab feed is open to all parishioners, not only CYO families. For more information, contact Allen Brezacz at allen.brezac@comcast.com.

Save the Date! “Mercy and Compassion through the Lens of Les Miserables” - Al Garrotto will compare Pope Francis’s call for a Year of Mercy with major themes of Victor Hugo’s timeless story and apply them to the lives of Christians today. Friday, January 8th at 7 pm in the Parish Hall.

Centering Prayer Workshop. Sundays: Jan. 10, 17, 24, 31 from 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm. Join us for our introductory workshop which familiarizes participants with the method of Centering Prayer. The workshop consists of four presentations led by Eileen Halliburton: 1. Prayer as Relationship; 2. The Method of Centering Prayer; 3. Thoughts and the Use of the Sacred Word; 4. Deepening our Relationship with God. Register at: 2sail621@gmail.com or call Sharon at 925-943-3190. Suggested donation $50.00.

Save the Date! The 2016 Men’s Retreat will be held Feb. 26-28 at San Damiano Retreat Center. For more information or to register, call Blaine Carter at 925-963-6168 or Heinz Weitrich at 925-930-6548.

Monday, January 11, parishioners are invited to hear a presentation on the Family Synod by Aaron Bianchi. Aaron was one of the observers in Rome this fall. Save the Date! Monday, January 11 at 7:00 pm. All are welcome.

Carolining with LifeWorks! Join us in spreading Christmas cheer to the residents at the Chateau 3 in Pleasant Hill on Tuesday, December 22 at 6 pm. Bring your singing voices, simple instruments and cherubic children. Please RSVP to Kristin at lifeworksctk@gmail.com.

Thank you to all members of our Altar Society for their efforts to make the 2015 Holiday Boutique a huge success. We thank the members who priced each donation and those who made the baskets. Thanks to Sr. Maureen and Joan Smits for all their help, also to our school principal Chris, and to Helen and Robin in our parish office. Thanks especially to Dan Bajuk, Bill Savignano and Rey DeBorja, Sr. who helped with all the preparations and clean up. Congratulations to the many raffle winners! - Violet, Pres. Altar Society.

Our 11th annual women’s retreat will be January 8-10th at San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville. The theme is “Pray it Forward During the Year of Mercy”. It will be directed by Sr. Carol Quilivan, CSJ. Registration can be completed at the Parish House. The last day to register is January 4, 2016.

Thank you, landlords. We are grateful to Fr. Paulson, who hosted the Housing for Contra Costa Veterans meeting and to the landlords who attended and offered advice to the Multi-Faith Action Coalition’s Zero 2016 program. Since January 2015, 180 of the 237 homeless Contra Costa Veterans were provided housing with needed services. CTK was one of the first eight congregations to host a one hour presentation. This program will continue to reach out to all congregations of the Interfaith Council and other groups.

Many Catholic men have asked themselves: Should I consider the priesthood? Discernment retreat weekend, Jan. 15-17, 2016. Must be a single male, 21 years or older and sponsored by a priest. For more information, contact: discernment.retreat@stpsu.org or 650-325-5621.

Our spring grief workshop will be lead by Sr. Joanne Gallagher and a team of peer ministers who will facilitate a 7 week workshop to help you begin the healing process of losing a loved one, whether the loss was recent or years ago. Dates are Monday evenings, Feb. 1 - March 13, 2016. Please call 925-682-2486 to register.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society, on behalf of their clients, thanks you for your on-going generosity for the 5th Sunday collection taken up on November 29th.

Total Church Support 12/13/15 $23,425.00 (Plate Collection $16,695.00 + Online Giving $6,730)
TREASURES FROM OUR TRADITION

Many of our most treasured traditions link the liturgy of the church with the hearth of the home. The food on the table at certain feasts and fasts helps to extend the mystery into everyday life. Tonight, for example, many families of Italian heritage, especially those with links to the south of Italy, will settle down to the "Feast of the Seven Fishes," or La Vigilia. It is a command performance for the whole family, as the saying goes: Natale con I tuui, Pasqua conchi vuoi, or "Christmas with your family, Easter with whomever you wish." Seven different fish, some say one for each day of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, others say one for each sacrament, or one for each day of creation, are served. Eel and shrimp, lobster and crab, calamari, pasta with clam sauce, flounder and hake all abound, but most especially baccala, dried salted cod. Why? Many say that it is a way to pay homage to the beasts of the stable who witnessed the holy birth and relinquished their manger to make way for God. Tonight, if someone asks you to "pass the shrimp," you'll be able to shed a little light on a menu that is a delicious treasure in our tradition!

--Rev. James Field, Copyright (c) J. S. Paluch Co.

PRAY FOR THE SICK
IN OUR PARISH:

Dioscoro Rodolfo, Judy Munson,
Patty Gross, Franz Villena, Sharron Torre, Anthony Schmidt.

Father of goodness and love, hear our prayers for the sick members of our community and for all who are in need. May these special people find lasting health and deliverance. We ask this through the Lord Jesus who healed those who believed. Amen