



The Belltower Beacon

A publication to inform, welcome and inspire the spirited community of St. Christopher.

Volume 20: Issue 80

December 2020

DON'T SANTA-TIZE CHRISTMAS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Christmas	1
Livestreaming Mass	2
Pet Blessing	3
Christmas Masses	4
Web-based Growth	4
School Retreat	5
Youth Ministry Partnership	6
Virtual PSR	7
Centennial Park	8
Outdoor Mass	9
Sisters' Commitment	10
Music Ministry	11
Youth Group	12
Confirmation	12-13
First Communion	14
Church Chatter	15
Upcoming Events	16

In the 1983 movie *A Christmas Story*, the adult Ralphie Parker is reminiscing on one particular Christmas when he was nine years old. Ralphie wanted only one thing for that Christmas: a Red Ryder Carbine-Action 200-shot Range Model air rifle. Ralphie's desire is rejected by his mother, his teacher Miss Shields, and even a Santa Claus at Higbee's department store, all giving him the same warning, "You'll shoot your eye out!"



Christmas morning arrives, and Ralphie dives into his presents. Although he does receive some presents he enjoys, Ralphie ultimately is disappointed that he did not receive the one thing he wanted more than anything. After it appears all of the gifts have been opened, Ralphie's father, "The Old Man," directs Ralphie to look at one last present that he had hidden. Ralphie opens it to reveal the Red Ryder gun he wanted. While in bed that night, the adult Ralphie narrates that this was the best present he had ever received or would ever receive.

A Christmas Story gives us a holiday movie that acknowledges – even relishes – the "unbridled avarice," the commercialism, the disappointments, the hurt feelings, and all-around bad luck that, in reality, often define the merry holy season. In other words, what real Christmas is like in real families recalled through the eyes of a nine-year-old boy.

Is getting exactly what we wanted what makes the best Christmas ever? Every parent and child live with the expectations of what Christmas could be or should be. Often times, these expectations are based upon over-romanticized past experiences

and traditions. Can expectations of Christmas 2020 match our expectations? What is Christmas going to look like amid the COVID-19 pandemic? Christmas is messy!

The unassailable annual celebration of Christmas, the Incarnation of Jesus, remains ever-present within our Church and in our families. Nothing can ever take away from the Christian heart of faith the celebration of

Emmanuel God with us. This truth will always remain!

The first Christmas took place during a time of great upheaval in the Jewish world. The whole nation of Israel was on the move, each to their own hometown. It was there they could be counted in the national census. Inns were filled to capacity; roads were congested with travelers, and food was not easy to come by.

Our world again is in upheaval today. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has made a lasting imprint upon all our families. Still, we reminisce about our cherished memories and traditions of the past while wondering at the same time how we celebrate Christmas this year? Amid social distancing, masks, and small gatherings, the light of the Christ Child will still permeate our hearts. My immediate family of 84 are not gathering for a big Christmas meal. Our thoughts and hearts are joined together by our good memories, love for one another, aided by the glow of modern technology.

As Church we are faced with the ultimate challenge: How do we celebrate Christmas Mass at St. Christopher? For some families, Christmas Mass is the principal celebration, the most



CHRISTMAS (CONT.D)

meaningful of the entire year! However, 2020 is like no other year past. Because of the pandemic, our seating capacity in the church is limited to around 100 people. Clearly, this will be difficult for all our families to attend Christmas Mass. Maybe to help, keep in mind that Christmas is celebrated as an Octave (eight days)! There is no obligation attached to Christmas Mass attendance this year! Your family might consider attending Mass, at some point, over the Christmas Weekend.

All the Christmas Weekend Masses will be celebrated in the church and live-streamed to the Parish Center and your homes. Holy Communion will be distributed to those attending live streaming in the Parish Center! This is not ideal. This is a way for us to try and meet the needs of a parish with over 3,200 families. Stay informed through the parish website: www.stchrisparish.com. Also, you can follow us on our Facebook page.

Keep your household watchful amid the clamor of the world as you Santa-tize your home. Start preparing for Christmas early by augmenting the season of Advent. Together with family members, make an Advent Wreath for your dining table. Light the Advent candles. Remember the Advent longing for Christmas in your meal prayers, baking, and decorating. Create your own manger and use it to read the scriptures by. Tell family stories of past Christmas celebrations. Light the fireplace. Place a Christmas wreath on the front door of your home. This might be one of the most critical years to decorate your house not just for yourselves but invite others into the majesty of Christmas. Let neighbors, family, and passersby know that you are a Catholic household that celebrates in joyfulness the Festival of Christmas. Emmanuel God with us!

*Have a Blessed Christmas,
Fr. Tim*



LIVESTREAMING OF MASS TO BEGIN THIS ADVENT

As noted in many other areas within this issue of the Beacon, the pastoral staff has been working diligently to identify new ways of ministry and bringing people together in a time when “togetherness” can be difficult. Over the summer, members of our staff began inquiring about the use of livestreaming services for our parish community. We reached out to St. John Cathedral, as well as other area parishes who offered livestreaming services to their parishioners. Through these interactions we learned a lot about live production and the delicate nature of providing a livestreamed version of the sacred liturgy. This research proved fruitful as we moved to begin the installation of a new livestreaming system here at St. Christopher.

The St. Christopher livestreaming system will utilize the most recent and advanced equipment in livestream production. Four Minrray PTZ (pan, tilt, zoom) cameras will be situated within the nave to capture the Mass in its entirety. Ambient microphones as well as direct audio feeds from our sound systems will combine at a video/audio switcher for enhanced control of our cameras and audio sources. Our video-audio switcher and a dedicated iPad with controller software will enable cameras to be positioned efficiently, eliminating the need for the system to be manned at all times. The system will utilize BoxCast, a Cleveland-based livestreaming company, to distribute our liturgies to the parish Facebook, YouTube, and website. Integrated graphical overlays, document sharing, and donation platforms will provide viewers with details about the liturgy they are watching. As with any videography of the Mass, respect for the sacred liturgy will be of the utmost importance for our real-time streams.

Our system is in the process of being installed by Precision Multimedia based in North Royalton. They have installed livestreaming systems for other diocesan parishes (including St. Raphael) and have demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the industry as they have worked with us to capture the beauty of Mass at St. Christopher. As of the time of writing, the installation of the system is nearing its completion. We are hopeful that the livestreaming of Mass will begin this Advent. We ask for patience as we learn the capabilities of this new technology and how we can utilize it to the best of our ability to bring you closer to our community and Jesus Christ.

A special thanks to Logan Feldkamp (Pastoral Minister), Joe Williams (Business Manager), Robert McMurray (Music Director) and Kevin Tennant (Parishioner) for their work towards the installation of this new service.

Logan Feldkamp

PET BLESSING

It was a beautiful day for our annual Pet Blessing on October 4 as Fr. John prayed with those assembled with their various pets. Although it was difficult to count how many came to participate, as owners and pets moved around a lot, there were about 80 pets accompanied by their human family. Following the prayer he went to each pet and blessed them by name and sprinkled them with holy water. The pictures show just how happy the pets were to receive this blessing on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Those who brought them enjoyed the event as well. It was especially nice to be in our new Centennial Park with the beautiful new St. Francis of Assisi statue in the background.

Gayle Cilimburg



CHRISTMAS MASSES 2020

The Parish Pastoral Staff has spent a great deal of time discussing, consulting and considering many approaches to the issue of celebrating Christmas Masses in this COVID-19 era. I wish to emphasize that there is **No Obligation** to attend Mass on Christmas! I also want to point out that there is no way we could ever hope to accommodate the crowds that have attended the 4 p.m. Masses the past several years. There is simply “no room at the inn” for over 2,000 people at one time in these days of COVID-19!

Here is our plan for Masses as the church begins the celebration of the Christmas Season:

Christmas Eve: 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Christmas Day: 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Weekend of December 26-27: Saturday 5 p.m.; Sunday 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

- All of the Masses will be celebrated in church and livestreamed.
- People will be directed to the church and when it reaches capacity at any of these Masses, the church doors will be closed and people will be directed to the Parish Center where they can watch the Mass livestreamed AND receive Holy Communion.
- When the Parish Center reaches capacity, the doors will be closed and, for safety and health reasons, no one else will be admitted.
- We encourage families to consider celebrating the beginning of the Christmas season at any Mass during those days and not just on Christmas Eve/Day.

Hopefully this will provide a safe and prayerful time for those who attend Christmas Mass here at St. Christopher. Thank you for your understanding. Have a safe and blessed Christmas!

Fr. John Chlebo

PARISH WEB-BASED GROWTH

The beginning of September marked a period of transition as the St. Christopher web-based platform moved from coordination by a third-party company to “in-house” control. This shift enabled the parish to have greater access to our online publications as well as a more personal, pastoral touch to the content that is produced. Logan Feldkamp, St. Christopher Pastoral Minister, has facilitated the operation of most web-based St. Christopher platforms and is working closely with the pastoral staff to ensure smooth digital connections are built between the parish and parishioners.

The parish communicates digitally through three main channels: Facebook, YouTube, and our website. The following points of data indicate changes that have occurred between July and October of this year:

- Facebook likes and followers have grown by 6% and 7% respectively, demonstrating consistent results of providing information through Facebook. Nearly three quarters of our Facebook followers are women. We hope to use this foundation to grow a more diversified Facebook following.
- YouTube views remain incredibly consistent between videos and types of content. Our YouTube channel was created earlier this year in response to the pandemic and boasts 169 subscribers and nearly 25,000 total views. We regularly average 220-235 Mass views each weekend on YouTube (which houses the recordings on our website). We hope livestreaming will enhance our video production in the next quarter.
- Our Google analytics found that St. Christopher Parish has been “Googled” over 21,000 times in the past three months. That means St. Christopher is among the results of 233 searches a day! Nearly 500 people a month navigate to our website from Google. These statistics demonstrate that our parish’s search engine presence remains strong.

In the next quarter, we hope to improve our online data metrics across the board. Our recent investment into a livestreaming system prepares us to drive more traffic to our sites than ever before. We also hope to establish more detailed metrics on our website to identify which information is most valuable for parishioners and visitors and how we can make that information more readily accessible.

Logan Feldkamp

THE GIFT OF LOVE AND THE LIFE OF ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX



St. Christopher School's theme this year centers on St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (chapter 13) and the Gift of Love; particularly verse 13: "So faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." As a starting point in our examination of the Gift of Love, our students have been participating in grade level retreats to learn about the life of St. Therese, the Little Flower.

St. Therese was known for her love of nature and her desire to serve God. Believing that she was incapable of great deeds, Therese felt that she could still be like the great saints; despite her "littleness." She chose to follow the Little Way, that is doing little deeds or sacrifices with great love. By making her vocation Love and committing to the tasks and people she met daily, Therese believed she could serve God and attain the path to heaven. Her message especially resonates with young people, who like Therese often feel small or incapable of great things.

The retreats, led by music teacher Michelle Federico, began outside in Centennial Park with prayer. Activities were tailored to the needs of the grade level participating in the retreat. Prayer was followed by an outdoor adventure hunt which helped students to recognize

that everything is part of God's creation. An examination of leaves and subsequent discussion helped students to understand their own uniqueness in creation and their importance to the larger community.

After the adventure hunt, students moved indoors to Mary's Room to learn more about the life of St. Therese. Since she couldn't do big things, Therese attempted to do 10 little deeds or sacrifices daily to show her love for God and others. Students discussed ways in which they could serve others and then created their own flower of good deeds. These are now displayed in the hallway of the school. Students also made sacrifice beads or a decade rosary to help them to count their good deeds every day; just as St. Therese did. Students in grades K-3 created a smaller version of a decade rosary and students in 4-8 made sacrifice beads. Since prayer was a very important part of the life of St. Therese, each retreat concluded in the Prayer Garden of Centennial Park. Students learned how to use their sacrifice beads to say a decade of the Rosary.

The retreat and the example of St. Therese helped our students to understand the important role they can play in the community. By performing little acts with great love daily, they can live their faith more fully and build God's kingdom. We are very grateful to the St. Christopher Parish Community, whose generous support made Centennial Park possible. The outdoor space and prayer garden have been wonderful places to hold retreats and other learning activities.

Scott Raiff



YOUTH MINISTERS FORM TIMELY PARTNERSHIP



Undoubtedly one of the most challenging years in recent history, 2020 brought us unexpected difficulties that can be particularly confusing for our young people to process. Reaching our youth was foremost on the hearts and minds of St. Christopher Youth Minister Eric Perusek and Youth Director Steven Young of Rocky River United Methodist Church (RRUMC). The youth leaders felt called to address this year's unique obstacles by coming together to form a God-centered partnership. Together they coordinated an initiative to reach our youth through the message of Christ.

Sharing a strong faith, their personal stories and resources, Steven and Eric set out to provide our teens with a diverse and safe setting for discussing sensitive current affairs. The beauty of this partnership is that it presents an African American Protestant with a Caucasian Catholic professing a common Biblical truth – all of us are called to create a better today and tomorrow for citizens of all races, beliefs, and ethnicities. As members of the same family who pray to the same “Our Father” we know that we are indeed sisters and brothers made in the image of God regardless of background, skin color, customs and traditions. Part of God’s greatest commandment is that we love our neighbors as ourselves. We are all members of God’s one family and we are all neighbors.

Though our God-given differences enrich our lives in endless ways, these same differences are sometimes used to divide us. Bringing attention to our current racial and social divide was the impetus for bringing the youth groups together. While enforcing healthy distancing, the first step for Mr. Perusek and Mr. Young was a very successful outdoor Youth Group meeting at Centennial Park. The teens came together prayerfully as concerned members of our community. Complete with a campfire, live music and open conversation, students and leaders of both groups agreed that it was the perfect start to a meaningful conversation. The hope is that the discussion will lead to behavior that aligns itself with the Christian message of caring for one another. Specifically, we recall that after washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus left us this command: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)

Coming together as professionals who guide and influence the spiritual lives of teenagers, it is crucial that Mr. Perusek and Mr. Young have a strong faith and firm Christian foundation. When asked what drew him to youth ministry, Mr. Young recalls that his own youth ministers left a lifelong impact upon his life. The influence of those ministers left him with a desire to make a difference in the lives of youth. He prepared himself by earning a degree in Bible and a master’s in Practical Theology. Steven describes “the greatest gift” youth pastors gave him was “introducing me to Jesus.” This is also the lasting gift Steven hopes to leave his teens because “it is the relationship with Jesus that sticks forever.” Determined to instill the unconditional love of God into the spirits of young people, the Youth Director knows that one of their biggest obstacles will always be the world in which we live. “Youth are constantly battling the world around them which is always fighting for their attention,” explains Mr. Young. He is inspired by hearing from youth years later who recall the impact Steven had on their lives.



Eric and his family

Likewise, Mr. Perusek was motivated to enter youth ministry by his own powerful experience as a teen. Youth ministry provided a Catholic foundation for Eric that has stayed with him throughout his life. Even during his college years when he was not as devoted to his faith, Eric still had the influence of his earlier years. He explains further: “I always felt drawn to the people I met in my youth group days and the truths they taught me. Lifelong bonds and friendships were formed there, and I really looked up to the older teens and adult volunteers.” When Eric did return to church, he volunteered with his church’s youth group for several years. Eric prepared for his current profession by using his degree in communication to help parents and children, then working with young people in theater (Cleveland Playhouse). He has become an integral part of the St. Christopher youth education program as a Confirmation catechist and Youth Group leader. Eric would like to show teens that “faith is not a chore but an exciting adventure with a God who loves us more than we could ever imagine.”



Steven and his family

Putting on the armor of God, these youth ministers are passionate about sharing the lessons contained in the New Testament. Steven and Eric are dedicated to spreading a joint message of equality and social justice, with special attention to eliminating the marginalization of certain groups. The Bible is replete with accounts and instructions on how we are to treat one another with unconditional love and boundless kindness. God is the God of all and Philippians 3:20-21 tells us that “we are all citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives ...” We are to clothe ourselves in “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Col. 3:12). What God does for us we should do for others as we view the world through a lens of abundance, gratitude and love. In the prayer of St. Francis, we selflessly ask the Lord to make us instruments

of peace, love, pardon, faith, hope, light and joy to everyone we encounter. Youth ministry lays the foundation for a life of service to community and to one another.

To be more effective, it is important that youth ministers be aware of current events that concern the youth they serve. As Christians, the biggest concerns are those in direct opposition to what we believe as followers of Jesus Christ. From our pulpit to our pews, we continue to pray together fervently for racial equality, social justice and an end to violence. Open discussions are ongoing in the home, in our community and in our churches. As part of their commitment to ministry, Steven and Eric feel compelled to create a safe space for youth to address these issues without fear of bias, criticism or judgment. The teachings and commandments in the New Testament serve as the true foundation for Bible-based ministry such as theirs. Eric and Steven find that working with teens is full of unexpected rewards. They list as extremely rewarding a random expression of gratitude, seeing when something clicks, hearing one of them give a thoughtful answer, watching them engage in discussion, and potentially leaving a lifelong impact. Youth ministers serve as mentors, role models and leaders to their impressionable young Christians. We, too, can support their efforts by teaching and modeling appropriate Godly behaviors at home. Luke 14:1 tells us that Jesus was being watched “... and the people there were observing Him carefully.” Will our youth know we are Christians by watching our love for one another?

Carmen Everett DeHaan

VIRTUAL PSR

PSR started off this year on October 4, three weeks after we usually start. Although we are not in our classrooms on Sunday mornings, our dedicated teachers have found creative ways to continue religious education for our youngest parishioners. Each teacher has their own combination of Zoom meetings and filmed lessons. Creativity is the key to keeping students engaged and on task. It is amazing to see what they come up with each week. The second grade class, who celebrate two sacraments this year, has a special curriculum to prepare for this. Marilu Norena and Lindsay Barbicas have developed special lessons each week which involves the entire family. We want each of our students to keep up with their religious studies even in the height of the pandemic. The following teachers have gone above and beyond the call of a PSR Catechist during this time of great need in our community. Please join me in thanking them. If you see any of these teachers out and about, please let them know how much you appreciate their efforts. Thank you for the fantastic job, team!

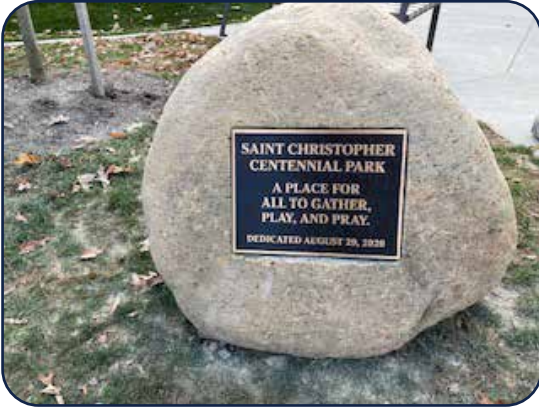
Sharon Armstrong

Lauren Clark
Susan Konopka
Adam DiIulio
Sabrina Rick
Laura Armstrong
Pat Roberts

Marilu Norena
Lindsay Barbicas
Johna Graziani
Jeanne Lytel
Craig Rimlinger
Amanda Klidas

Marilyn Kysela
Sharon Armstrong
Maria Owens
Angela Shovein
Bridget Troy
Bob Tablack

THE HISTORY “BEHIND” CENTENNIAL PARK



This past summer the parish dedicated Centennial Park which is located on the southern edge of the parish property. Initially conceived through the efforts of a group of parishioners to simply improve the playground for the children, their vision expanded to include much more than just some play equipment. A plan developed to memorialize the parish and especially celebrate the parish centennial in 2022. Centennial Park not only has a play area that children and families can enjoy but also space for liturgies and other gatherings. It is also an oasis for prayer and reflection in an atmosphere of calm and serenity. Nothing is more beautiful than to sit there on a warm summer evening with the sun setting to feel the presence of God.

But as wonderful as Centennial Park is, the area where it is located was not always that way. To appreciate the park and the land behind it, we need to go back in history – more than a century ago.

While people lived in the Rocky River area (then part of Rockport) since the nineteenth century, Rocky River was incorporated as a village in 1903 with Mark Mitchell as the first mayor. St. Christopher was established 19 years later in order to serve the growing population moving west from Cleveland. The church was built along Lakeview Avenue and is now the school. Eventually a larger church needed to be constructed (our current church). This was a problem based on the topography of our property.

In your imagination, remove all of the buildings on the property – the Church, the Rectory, the School, Trinity Hall, Mary’s Room and the Gym, and River Hill Condominiums to the west. What you would see is something like a large bowl. Today part of that bowl can be seen on the east side of the church leading up to the rectory. The bowl-like feature actually was a pond and it was fed by a small stream that ran from the south end of the property where Centennial Park is today. Both of these sources of water caused the church to be built four to five feet off the ground to keep the church building dry.

While this little snapshot of history may be interesting, what about the future? All of us know that a parish is a dynamic and ever-evolving entity and as times and needs change the parish may need to grow Centennial Park. Is there any land still available for an undertaking such as this? If you look over the back fence of the park you will see what looks like a depression in the landscape. That is what is left of the old stream. In years gone by it was referred to as “The Gully” and if you were a student at St. Christopher Grade School and decided it would be a great place to have recess, you would incur the wrath of the principal or another teacher. The parish owns a part of the old “gully” and currently it lies fallow.

So what does the future hold for this part of our wonderful parish resources? No one can tell. But as we approach the centennial of St. Christopher Parish we can be thankful for all the parishioners, both past and present, who listened intently to God’s word and prayed for God’s wisdom.

I leave you with this final question: Now, where should we place the Bicentennial Park?

Deacon Tom Long



Outdoor Mass



TWO SISTERS' LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO SERVICE INSPIRES US ALL



Many of us living in the Rocky River/St. Christopher community know that there is no place we'd rather live and be a part of a parish

community. Marie Leone and Therese Konrad who are sisters (née Michael), as well as two of their siblings and their mother, all relocated to Rocky River from Youngstown to be a part of this wonderful community.

Marie and Therese's brother David Michael, who is also a St. Christopher parishioner, was the first of their family to relocate to Rocky River in 1983. Marie also relocated here in 1983 to work with Dave's business. Therese relocated to Rocky River after graduating from college in 1988. Their sister Meg Hildebrandt, also a St. Christopher parishioner, moved to Rocky River in 1989. Their mother Nancy Michael relocated to Rocky River and joined St. Christopher parish about four years ago. When Nancy joined the parish, she wanted to be an active parishioner and was able to help the parish by counting collection money prior to the pandemic.

Both Marie and Therese have been active parishioners over the years; volunteering with both the school, when their children attended, as well as the parish. Among the four Michael siblings' children there were ten first cousins attending St. Christopher School in the 2001/2002 school year. There was a Leone, Michael, Konrad, or Hildebrandt child in each grade except for first grade that year!

Marie and her husband Denio Leone, who is also originally from Youngstown, raised their four children: Annie 31, Denio 29, Mary 28 and John 26 in Rocky River. After attending St. Christopher grade school, the Leone children went on to attend Magnificat and Saint Ignatius high schools. During their years in the parish Marie and Denio were part of the pre-Cana team and members of the Marriage and Family Life committee.

If you are familiar with the breakfast provided to the Moriah House on the fifth Saturday of a month, it is organized by Marie Leone. The Moriah House, which is part of the West Side Catholic Center, is a home for women and families who find themselves homeless and in need of emergency shelter. Residents of the shelter can stay for ninety days and are assisted in developing a plan for finding permanent housing, stable income, self-sufficiency, and education/training.

Marie began volunteering to help with meals for the residents of the Moriah House while her daughters were attending Magnificat High School. Groups like the one from Magnificat who volunteer to provide a meal for Moriah House are typically responsible for a particular day each month, for example the third Saturday of each month. After her youngest daughter Mary graduated from Magnificat, it occurred to Marie that while the Moriah House had volunteers to bring breakfasts on most weekend days, they probably didn't have an organization bringing a meal on the fifth Saturdays as they only occur about once per quarter. When she inquired, Moriah House told her they did not have an organization bringing a meal on the fifth Saturdays of a month. Marie, Therese, a group of St. Chris parishioners and former Magnificat moms formed a group to provide breakfast to the Moriah House on the fifth Saturdays.

While they used to bring, prepare, and serve food to the Moriah House residents, now they are only able to drop off prepared foods at the kitchen door due to the coronavirus pandemic. Marie and Therese hope they can resume this worthwhile ministry after the pandemic allows them to safely serve the women and families living at the Moriah House again.

Another change in Marie's life due to the pandemic is that she began working out of her home when Ohio shutdown many non-essential business locations in March. Marie has worked for Quadax, a healthcare reimbursement company, for the last 13 years. She trains her clients on the use of Quadax's proprietary software for medical billing reimbursement.

Many of you may know Therese Konrad because she is a teacher in the Rocky River School district. While attending the University of Dayton to earn her Bachelor of Science in Education with a certification for elementary education, she was asked by her advisor where she hoped to teach after graduating. Having visited her brother Dave, who was already living in Rocky River, she expressed an interest in teaching in Rocky River schools. She was hired and has been teaching in Rocky River schools for her entire 33-year teaching career. Therese has taught many grade levels during her tenure and has been teaching 6th grade at the middle school for the last 12 years.

The pandemic has caused this school year to be different than any other in which she has taught. Therese said that the challenging circumstances have made her adapt and grow as a teacher.

Therese and her husband Kevin Konrad, a life-long Rocky River resident, married at St. Christopher parish in 1997. They have two children: Katie 22 and Michael 20. Katie and Michael both attended St. Christopher School during their grade school years. Katie went on to attend Magnificat High School while Michael attended Rocky River High School.

Therese has put her teaching experience to good use for the parish over the years as she participated in the Children's Liturgy of the Word. This very worthwhile ministry, which is not able to be offered during the pandemic, allowed children ages 5-10 to leave 9 a.m. Mass before the first reading to listen to readings geared more to their level of understanding. The young participants would then rejoin Mass after the readings were completed. Therese also spent many years as the market day organizer and was able to meet many members of the parish by volunteering for this fundraiser.

Marie and Therese have been attending Mass virtually with their mother Nancy since the pandemic began. They are thankful for the stability Frs. John and Tim have been able to provide during the pandemic.

The parish and community thank you, Marie and Therese, for demonstrating on a daily basis what it means to serve God's children.

Annemarie Polito

ST. CHRISTOPHER MUSIC MINISTRY

Greetings from the choir loft! I hope that this finds you in good spirits and health and perhaps even finding some silver linings during this difficult time. For those of you who suffered and endured losses for any reason over the past year, my heart goes out to you. For most of us, life is very different. We simply cannot do many of the things we are accustomed to doing in hopes of keeping ourselves and those around us safe. Here are some suggestions I have found helpful to make the best of this time.

- Find more time to spend with friends and family, even if on the phone.
- Get outside. Look at nature with new eyes.
- Learn how to slow down, meditate, read the Bible and pray. Be still.

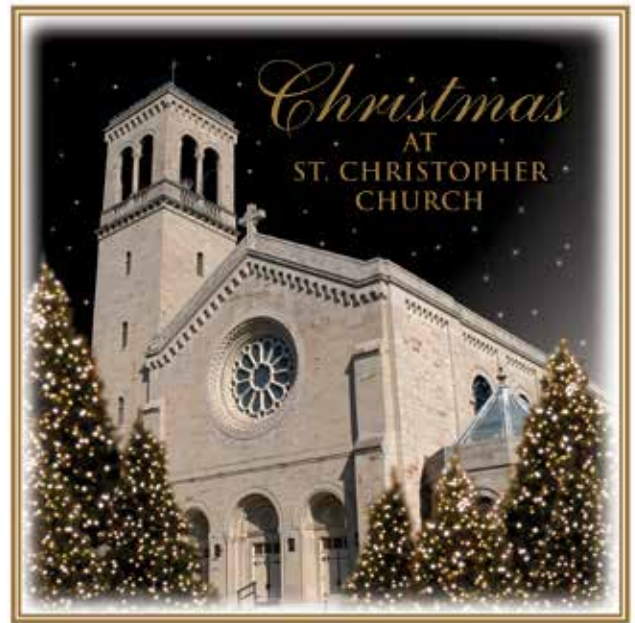
As you are likely aware, the act of singing has the potential of spreading the virus 10 times more than speaking. For this reason, we are reciting most of the responses at Mass and not encouraging anyone to sing. We have been blessed by the presence of our cantors who sing several selections during the Mass. The same will be true for Christmas. We will do unfamiliar verses of familiar carols, using the cantor and a solo violin. I am working hard to find interesting arrangements that will make Mass at Christmas feel as normal and as uplifting as possible. Please know that when we make it through this pandemic, it will be my goal to encourage your participation in the singing at Mass to a level that was unthinkable before! Just so you know ... this is TEMPORARY! Your participation is my primary goal under normal circumstances.

I hope that you have been able to listen to our music video releases on Facebook and YouTube. You can always visit the parish website to find links to these videos. Additionally, there is a YouTube playlist of all of our music releases. During the upcoming holiday season, we will be releasing several tracks from a Christmas CD we recorded here at St. Christopher Church in 2003. I am hoping that we can reach out to many of the people who were involved in that recording, whether near or far! To our adult and youth choir members, please be patient and know I will be so happy to be working with you all again when we can safely do so.

I would encourage all of you to follow the videos posted on the parish website, Facebook and YouTube. Play them and sing along at home, especially during the Christmas season. It will be fun to try to reconnect with all of these folks and see where they are and what they are doing 17 years later!

Please know that you all are in my thoughts and prayers in the coming weeks and months. Stay safe.

Bob McMurray



Robert P. McMurray, M. Mus., CAGO - Director of Music and Organist
Michelle Sears - Children's Choir Director

Cantors: Christopher Albanese, Michael Blackledge, Judy Grachanin, Rob Keshock, Kathy Popp, Michelle Romary, Michelle Sears, Lori Young

Youth Cantors: Laura Haazer, Daniel Joyce, Kristen Nichols, Nikki O'Callaghan

Youth Instrumentalists: Ralph Holzhauser, organ; Matt Greene guitar; Christy Illius, piano

Choir: Lois Agnelli, Sue Botos, Jim Biedinger, Dan Casoli, Rosemary Diemer, Dina Driscoll, Chris Durso, Maureen & Mickey Hanagan, Fran Gasper, Judy Grachanin, Bob Gregory, Michelle Romary, Tom Long, Sue Madala, Lucretia & Kevin O'Callaghan, Kathy Popp, Marc Ricker, Carolyn Rolan, Patrick Walsh, Candice Witt, Lori Young

Instrumentalists: Gayle Langarth, flute & piccolo; Tamara Barno, violin; Mike Wurtick & Gerhard Schermaier, trumpet; Pete Cumming & Jean Wroblewski, trombone; Dinesh Joseph, percussion

Children's Choir:
 Claire Anderer-Armstrong, Laura Anderer-Armstrong, Katherine Anderer-DiMichelle, Melissa Bero, Francesca Blair, Rebecca Blair, Teresa Blair, Elisabeth Cahill, Colleen Carroll, Mary Kate Carroll, Adrienne Copia, Claire Copia, Grace Corrigan, Claire Coyne, Mary Grace Downs, Carly Egan, Gino Fantozzi, Emma Flinn, Anna Franko, Cecilia Franko, Maria Franko, Sophia Franko, Cassie Hamker, Sydney Hamker, Caitlin Harvey, Megan Harvey, Kerstin Haack, Meredith Haack, Ashley Holzhauser, Eric Holzhauser, Ralph Holzhauser, Callie Jacobs, Clementine Jacobs, Natalie Kelly, Cella Kilbane, Christine Kilma, Katie Kilma, Jillan Krebs, Olivia Krebs, Callie Leonard, Erin Madden, Patrick Mackin, Halle McCoo, Hannah McCre, Moira McDermott, Halle McFadden, Kerry McGovern, Nan McGrail, Catherine McNally, Madeline Murphy, Henry Niszhinski, Alice O'Brien, Kristin Orlanti, Lauren Rhinehart, Beatrice Rudmann, Kathryn Rice, Alexandra Rugelesberger, Rachel Rudy, Colleen Saker, Veronica Selby, Colleen Shirley, Danae Shirley, Lauren Shirley, Amanda Skrzymski, Elizabeth Skrzymski, Claire Wilber

Third Grade Choir:
 Stephen Alexander, Katherine Anderer-DiMichelle, Thomas Biven, McKenna Bradence, Nora Beady, Daniel Broerman, Ian Canney, Brian Cannon, Kathleen Carry, Mary Kate Carroll, Jackie Delay, Jane Dieker, Rachael Duncan, Michael Feller, Antonia Foliano, Daniel Gaerener, Emma Gallagher, Patrick Gallagher, Christopher Laraca, Matthew Gerard, Michael Gentry, Andrew Goscke, Alec Gross, Jake Henders, Ian Hildebrandt, Isabella Hildebrandt, Kevin Hogan, Jessica Hollis, Daniel Horning, Clementine Jacobs, Brendan Kearney, Katie Kilma, Anna LaRue, Jack Livingston, Juliana LeDon, Steven Mack, Patrick Mackin, Erin Mann, Colin Marty, Madeline McDonough, Maureen Metzrek, Elizabeth Michael, Emily Mised, Dean Moore, Jack Myers, Ryan Norz, Morgan O'Connor, Erin O'Leary, Kelly Plagers, Mary Katherine Kamella, Molly Reising, Emma Ryan, Clare Schirmer, Patrick Simon, Amanda Skrzymski, Alexander Smith, John Sullivan, Ryan Sullivan, Eamon Walsh, Samantha Zubizarreta

Photography by Glen Kissel Copy by Dale Gray
 Sound engineering by "Zoo" Baker Production by Soundbytes Recording
 We deeply apologize if any names have been omitted or misspelled.
 Thanks to all whose hard work made this project possible!
 A special thank you to the bell tower, whose gratefulness made this recording possible.
 We dedicate this to all our faithful and grateful you now near in the Lord.
 Merry Christmas and Good Bless!
 Bob McMurray



A DIFFERENT KICKOFF

Living through a pandemic has forced all of us to adapt and take things one day at a time and our fall youth group plans have been no exception. After weeks of planning and adjustments, we were finally able to hold our Fall kickoff at the end of October! Normally, this would be a night filled with various games and food but, because of the current circumstances, some of our plans shifted. We still played a game (albeit a socially distanced version of Scattegories) and we safely served small snacks in individual packets. Teens got a chance to gather for prayer and fun and to meet our adult team as well.

Even though the night was different than we planned, I am constantly being reminded these days that “different” isn’t always “bad.” Sure, our evening was simplified but I could tell our teens had a good time and we received plenty of positive feedback as well.

In the days ahead, as we move into seasons of thanks and celebration, my prayer for our teens and our whole community is that we never lose sight of the good that God is doing. He is still good and He is still in control. At the end of our kickoff, we gathered around a fire for fellowship and enjoyed the outdoor air. Even in a pandemic, some things stay the same.

Eric Perusek

CONFIRMATION OCTOBER 2020

Our ninth graders started preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation in September of their 8th grade year, in efforts to shift Confirmation from ninth grade to eighth grade. They started classes and we were able to meet seven times before the pandemic hit and everything, including sacramental preparation, came to a screeching halt in March. We finished up classes and a retreat virtually. While nothing replaces in-person formation, we were able to prepare our 75 candidates to celebrate the sacrament at five Masses this October. Due to the pandemic, pastors were granted special permission by the Bishop to celebrate Confirmation in their parishes. Fr. John was thrilled to celebrate these Masses with this class, most of which Fr. John and Fr. Tim had baptized here at St. Christopher. While many families were disappointed that we couldn’t celebrate Confirmation as a large group, we were able to offer five Masses in small groups of no more than 20 families. The Masses took place in mid-October which offered a more individualized experience of the sacrament. Although this was a very stressful time in the life of the Church, we celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit to these students.

Sharon Armstrong





Confirmation



First Communion



CHURCH CHATTER

BIRTHDAY WISHES Fr. Tim Daw celebrates his birthday on December 2 and Eric Perusek, our Youth Minister, celebrates his birthday on January 9. Please shower them with salutations and prayers.

WRITE ON The Society of Professional Journalists recently awarded Mike McIntyre first place in Best Feature Reporting, large circulation category. Mike, and wife Elizabeth, are both in the Press Club of Cleveland Journalism Hall of Fame. They are long-time parishioners and the parents of two St. Christopher School graduates.

SCOUT PACK 390 Congratulations to four Pack 390 Scouts who recently received their Religious Medals. Dean Roth received the Light of Christ medal. Parvuli Dei recipients were Conor Bergquist, Evelina Roth and Stella Miyares.

PRINCIPAL'S AWARD The 20th Annual Rocky River Middle School (RRMS) Principal's Awards Reception was conducted virtually this year. The award is presented to students who earned all A's during their time at RRMS. Four of these scholars are St. Christopher parishioners and all four are altar servers! Dan Capka is now a freshman at Rocky River High School (RRHS), where he is a member of the junior varsity golf team, the marching band and the Key Club. Nicholas Hollabaugh, while at RRMS, played basketball, participated in the science Olympiad and was in the stock market club. Currently, he is a freshman at RRHS. Connor Kane is also at RRHS and is on the freshman football team. Stephen Tirpak is a freshman at St. Ignatius High School, where he plays football. He is an Ignatian Scholar recipient.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? Fr. Richard Bona, judge and promoter of justice for the Tribunal of the Diocese of Cleveland, was appointed administrator, St. Emeric Parish, and administrator, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish. Both are in Cleveland. He currently resides in the rectory at St. Emeric Parish.

Fr. Donald P. Oleksiak was appointed vicar general and moderator of the curia. He will assist Bishop Malesic in overseeing the day-to-day administrative operations of the Diocese of Cleveland.

Fr. Daniel F. Schlegel was appointed vicar for clergy and religious. He will assist in the recommendation of assignments for clergy and serve as a liaison for the women and men religious to the bishop.

EAGLE SCOUTS On October 22, Troop 605 held a rare double Eagle Court of Honor in which Eagle scouts, Aidan O'Neil and Frank Valencic, who are both parishioners, were awarded their Eagle medals. The ceremony



had been delayed due to the pandemic and large indoor gathering restrictions. However, with the completion of the new Centennial Park, the Troop families had a place to gather safely outdoors to honor the achievements of these two young men.

~ Brian Fehrenbach

Share your joyous events with us!
Please forward submissions for Church Chatter to
Roberta Trutko at (440) 263-7894 or
roberta32red@hotmail.com.



**St. Christopher
Catholic Church**
20141 Detroit Road
Rocky River, Ohio 44116
440.331.4255

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
CLEVELAND OH
PERMIT NO. 2907

www.stchrisparish.com

We welcome your ideas or comments.

E-mail: lmetro626@gmail.com Attn: Belltower

Newsletter Committee: Terry Martin (Chairman),
Lori Alexander (Editor and Producer), Amy Gressell (Publisher),
Carmen Everett DeHaan, Colleen McKenna, Annemarie Polito,
Roberta Trutko and Beth Van Horn

Contributors: Fr. John Chlebo, Gayle Cilimburg,
Sharon Armstrong, Fr. Tim Daw, Logan Feldkamp,
Deacon Tom Long, Bob McMurray, Eric Perusek and Scott Raiff

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 5

VIRTUAL PSR ADVENT FAMILY NIGHT

December 8

SCHOOL CHRISTMAS SHOPPE

December 10

LADIES NIGHT OUT (VIRTUALLY)

February 13

LENTEN FAMILY NIGHT

February 28

BLOODMOBILE

Christmas Mass Schedule

Thursday, December 24 4, 6, 10 PM IN CHURCH WITH
LIVESTREAMING IN THE PARISH CENTER

Friday, December 25 8:30, 10, 11:30 AM IN THE
CHURCH WITH LIVESTREAMING IN THE PARISH CENTER

New Year's Mass Schedule (Feast of Mary, Mother of God)

Friday, January 1 11:00 AM