

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

As I mentioned last year the Latin word for advent means – *advenire* means “to come toward.” As we arrive once again at the season of Advent we cherish the fact that we understand the love of God in this way. God is the one who comes to us, not to scold us or berate us, but rather to be near us and to share himself with us. The reading for Christmas morning is from the beginning of John’s gospel. In it we hear “The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). This grace is the very life of God that Jesus comes to give us, this truth is the “truth that sets us free” (8:32). *God gives us his life and truth so that we can experience true freedom.*

We continue to count our blessings for the good things that take shape each year in our parish. Last Christmas we continued our tradition of helping those in need in our community through our Social Ministries’ Giving Tree. We helped 72 children receive 2 gifts apiece for a total of 144 gifts; 34 families received food certificates totalling \$2,093.00. In April we had a night of family fun with The Magic Guy. In July we had another joint picnic and mass uniting the parishes of the 5 Saints West planning group (which includes St. Mary of the Assumption, Scottsville, St. Christopher, North Chili and St. Vincent DePaul, Churchville).

August brought us another successful Vacation Bible School - about 30 children attended and loved it. We moved our parish picnic to September this year and though the weather was similar to last year’s, we had a well over a hundred people there. A good time was had by all – baskets were raffled, white elephants given away and many participated in our outdoor games. This summer we also saw the launching of the parish website. It’s still a work in progress, and there’s a lot we have yet to get on there (such as pictures of our events), nevertheless, please visit it (www.stcolumba-stpatrick.org) and let us know what you think. Any helpful ideas are welcome.

There is a couple who is very interested in buying St. Patrick’s Church. We will continue to pursue a buyer one way or another. It is costing the parish thousands a year to keep it running as a not-so-popularly used, second-hand clothing outlet.

Leading up to the holidays can be very frenetic. Taking time for ourselves to stop and listen to God is a challenge. This Advent we will have a **parish retreat** led by Fr. Bill Gaffney. Fr. Bill is a old friend and inspiration as a priest. He used to direct Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua in the 1980’s. Please take time to slow down and join us **Dec. 16-19** for a beautiful and inspirational preparation for Christmas. The retreat will culminate in a **communal Penance Service Dec. 19 at 7 PM.**

The schedule for the Advent season is below. For your convenience, an envelop to support the parish is enclosed. You may use this one or your normal weekly envelop. You may mail it in or bring it with you to Christmas Mass.

It is a powerful way to experience the love and grace of God and to better prepare our hearts for the Lord Jesus at Christmas.

May peace be yours this Christmas,

Fr. Mickey McGrath

The calendar of events for the third and fourth week of Advent are on the reverse side.

