



# the evangelist

NEWS & EVENTS OF THE CHURCH OF S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

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### Church of S. John the Evangelist

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## December 2009

*My Dear People,*

December begins with the Church already in the Advent; and, I can't begin to tell you how happy that makes me! Lest you think I've lost my mind, let me expand a bit on that first sentence. There is always something refreshing when Trinity-tide ends and the Church Year begins anew. In the daily Office, the Hymns change and we get to sing or say that lovely evening hymn, *Creator of the stars of night*. The austerity of the church, though not as severe as in Lent, allows us time to reflect upon the meaning of this important time in the Church's year.

What does Advent mean? If we were to take our cues from the world around us it means endless rounds of parties, overindulgence, and frantic shopping! Sadly, this atmosphere of commercialism and superficial sentimentalism has permeated all facets of Western culture, and it appears that many Church folk have fallen in with the trend. I'm not condemning anyone, as even the clergy have been affected by the secularization of society. However, if we can at least make every effort to mark Advent the way it is meant to be observed, we stand a very good chance of enjoying Christmas when it arrives.

Advent is, first and foremost, about preparing for the return of Our Lord at the Second Coming. We know that the expectation of the Apostles and their generation was that Christ would return very shortly and bring an end to all the suffering of this world. He would usher in the New Jerusalem, as it was seen by our Patron and recorded in the Book of the Revelation or Apocalypse. Everything would be wrapped up and we would be judged by the King of Glory on the Last Day. As that time of return seemed to get farther and farther away, we were exhorted by S. Paul to be ready, echoing the Lord himself, for the end could come at any moment. As the Church Year developed it was felt that a semi-penitential season should precede the celebration of the Mysteries of the Nativity and Epiphany of the Lord. This season would eventually evolve into four weeks of subdued liturgical observances, with the exception of the Third Sunday of Advent, wherein we are reminded time and again, most notably by S. John the Baptist, that we are to "make straight the way of the Lord...to prepare an highway for our God." The end is coming, or more accurately, the Lord is coming. Will we be ready for his return? Not to be morbid, but did you know that the sequence hymn of the Requiem Mass, the *Dies irae* (Hymnal #468), is actually an hymn meant for Advent?

This is not to say that there is no recalling of that First Coming for we do find some preparation for celebrating the Nativity, in Advent. After Advent II, our focus begins to shift from the coming of the End to that first coming in Bethlehem. By the last week of Advent, many of us will be hard pressed to continue our Advent practices in the face of rampant secular Christmas mania; but, I hope we can keep as much of that at bay as possible. After all, the less time we anticipate Christmas, the more we'll be able to celebrate the Nativity in all the glory of The Twelve Days (December 25 - January 5).

I am told that we traditionally decorate the church after the Sung Mass on Advent IV, this year December 20<sup>th</sup>. I hope many of you will help decorate our lovely building, thus making it an enjoyable and not an onerous task. This is a good opportunity to work alongside your fellow parishioners from both Mass times, and thus strengthen the bonds of affection which already exist at S. John's.

The schedule for Christmas is printed in this number of *The Evangelist*, and will again be sent to you closer to the time along with your Christmas Offering and Christmas Flower envelope. Like other Anglo-Catholic parishes, we will celebrate three Christmas Masses, one the night before, a Sung Mass called the "Midnight Mass" although it begins at 11.00 p.m., the Low Mass of the Dawn, sometimes called the "Aurora" Mass, which is at 8.00 a.m., and a Sung Mass and Sermon at 10.00 a.m., which is the Mass of the Day. These are the three proper Christmas Masses. The Crèche service at 5.00 p.m. on December 24 is more appropriately a Vigil Mass, an anomaly at best. It is my expectation that all parishioners will avail themselves of the Christmas Masses. Indeed, all Catholic Christians may make their Communion both at the Midnight Mass and again at one of the Masses on Christmas Day (as happens with the Easter Vigil and Easter morning masses.) The Christmas Eve Sung Mass and the Sung Mass of the Day have different hymns and carols, a different mass setting, and a different sermon. Times for Christmas Confessions will also be sent to you, and these may also be scheduled with me.

The Sunday after Christmas, December 27<sup>th</sup> is S. John's Day. However, due to its proximity to Christmas, we are forbidden, from celebrating what would be our Patronal Feast in its fullness which would include an observed Octave. It is for that reason that we celebrate May 6<sup>th</sup>, S. John before the Latin Gate, as our Patronal Festival. However, we will mark our Patron's primary feast day with pomp and joy, adding a little more to our Christmas celebration, if that's possible.

Before you know it, 2009 will be ending and we'll be praying that God will bless us anew in 2010. I'll be looking forward to welcoming Father John Lancaster, SSC, as our preacher for Epiphany and welcoming all of you to the Rectory for an Epiphany party.

With all that ahead of us, it remains to me to express my hope and prayer that all of us will take full part in this season of Advent, the season of waiting, preparation and penitence. It should be plain to us with the use of purple vestments and a bare unadorned church what our behaviour and practice should be for most of this month. Father Peter Laister, whom I had the honour and pleasure of getting to know from his frequent visits to Philadelphia to see his former curate, my boss (!) used to say: If your homes are decorated for Christmas and your lives are adorned with parties and entertainments, but your church is bare and plain and waiting, then your life is out of tune with Christ and his Church, and that is no way to be as we prepare to celebrate his Birth. If we are constantly going on about "keeping Christ in Christmas" then jumping into secular celebrations when we should be keeping Advent, and forgetting all about Christmas when the feast has come, what kind of an example are we setting for the very people we seek to convince? So then, my Christmas prayers and wishes will come to you just before the feast, and for the Twelve Days thereafter. What comes now is simply an exhortation for all of us to strive as best as we can to keep a good Advent together.

*Affectionately, your Friend & Pastor,  
Fr Trent Fraser*

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### ***THE GREAT 'O' ANTIPHONS***

*These antiphons are of ancient composition and were sung before and after the chanting of The Magnificat at Vespers from December 16 – 23. These antiphons, suppressed at the Reformation, were translated and included in the first edition of The English Hymnal (1906).*

**December 16**    *O Sapientia*        O Wisdom, which camest out of the mouth of the Most High, and reachest from one end to another, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.

**December 17**    *O Adonai*            O Adonai, and Leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst in the bush to Moses in a flame of fire, and gavest him the Law in Sinai: Come and deliver us with an outstretched arm.

**December 18**    *O Radix Jesse*        O Root of Jesse, which standest for an ensign of the people, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, to whom the Gentiles shall seek: Come and deliver us, and tarry not.

**December 19** *O Clavis David* O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel; that openest, and no man shutteth, and shuttest, and no man openeth: Come and bring the prisoner out of the prison-house, and him that sitteth in darkness and the shadow of death.

**December 20** *O Oriens* O Day-spring, Brightness of Light Everlasting, and Sun of Righteousness: Come and enlighten him that sitteth in darkness and the shadow of death.

**December 21** *O Rex gentium* O King of the Nations, and their desire; the Corner-stone, who makest both one: Come and save mankind, whom thou formedst of clay.

**December 22** *O Emmanuel* O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Desire of all nations, and their Salvation: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

**December 23** *O Virgo virginum* O Virgin of Virgins, how shall this be? For neither before thee was any like thee, nor shall there be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery.

## **CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2009**

**Thursday, 24 December**

**10.00 a.m. Low Mass of the Vigil of the Nativity**

**5.00 p.m. Crèche Service / 10.30 p.m. Carols ~ 11.00 p.m. Procession & Midnight Mass**

**Friday, 25 December, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

**8.00 a.m. Low Mass (of the Dawn) ~ 10.00 a.m. Procession & Sung Mass (of the Day)**

**Saturday, 26 December, S. Stephen, M.**

**9.00 a.m. Low Mass**

**Sunday, 27 December, S. John, Ap.Ev.**

**8.00 a.m. Low Mass ~ 10.30 a.m. Sung Mass & Sermon**

**Monday, 28 December, Holy Innocents, MM**

**10.00 a.m. Low Mass**

### ***Stewardship Update***

*Dear Friends: I am happy to report that the initial returns of pledge cards have yielded strong results – but we are far from home free.*

*At our discussions after the 8 and 10:30 masses on 15 November, we presented the following challenges to the S. John's family – to add nine new pledging units over last year's total of thirty-six, and for all renewed pledges to raise their 2010 gifts by 10% over those of 2009. If we can meet these challenges – and I have faith that we can – we will realize pledge income of more than \$87,000 for 2010.*

*Our faith in the providence of almighty God is never misplaced – by the end of our talks on 15 November, we had gathered in four new pledging units, almost half of the challenge presented.*

*In this issue of The Evangelist, you will find a pledge card for 2010. We ask that you prayerfully consider your gift for the ongoing work of the Parish, and return the pledge card by mail, in the offering plate, or by giving it directly to me, Fr. Fraser, or Ed Carnes before Christmas Eve. Feel free to fold and seal the card – your pledge amount is confidential, and known only to the Treasurer. Finally, it is important to remember that participation in the Annual Parish Meeting requires a recordable gift of support to the Parish in the preceeding year.*

*If you have questions about our Pledge Campaign, or stewardship in general, please don't hesitate to call or speak to Fr. Fraser or a member of the Finance Committee. I remain*

*Yours in Christ,*

*Jono Babbitt, Stewardship Chair*

**AGENDA: Services and Events in addition to our regular schedule.**

- December 2<sup>nd</sup>: **Advent Lessons & Carols** at 6.00 p.m. with Reception to follow.
- December 5<sup>th</sup>: **Christmas Bazaar** from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m., sponsored by the Women's Guild. Swanhurst Chorus Concert featuring Bruckner's *Mass in f minor*: 8.00 p.m.
- December 8<sup>th</sup>: **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, BVM (Holy Day of Obligation)**. The Rector will be preaching at Church of the Resurrection, New York in the evening. Fr Spencer will celebrate Low Mass at 12.15 p.m.
- December 13<sup>th</sup>: **ADVENT III**. Father Douglas Burger will celebrate & Preach at the 10.30 Mass to mark the 43<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood earlier this month.
- December 15<sup>th</sup>: **Vestry Meeting** at 6:30 p.m.
- December 20<sup>th</sup>: **ADVENT IV**. Decoration of the Church following the 10.30 Mass.
- December 24<sup>th</sup>: **CHRISTMAS EVE**. Crèche Service at 5.00 p.m. Carol Service at 10.30 p.m., Procession & First Mass of the Nativity of Our Lord beginning at **11.00 p.m.**
- December 25<sup>th</sup>: **CHRISTMAS DAY**. Mass of the Dawn at **8 a.m.**, Sung Mass of the Day at **10 a.m.**
- December 26<sup>th</sup>: **S. STEPHEN, M.** Low Mass at 9.00 a.m.
- January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010: **CIRCUMCISION OLJC**. Sung Mass at 10.00 a.m.
- January 3<sup>rd</sup>: **HOLY NAME OF JESUS**: Low Mass at 8.00; Sung Mass at 10.30
- January 6<sup>th</sup>: **EPIPHANY OLJC**. Procession & Sung Mass at 6.00 p.m. Guest Preacher: The Rev'd Fr John A. Lancaster, SSC. An Epiphany Party will follow at the Rectory.

***ROMEWARD BOUND?***

I have been asked a number of times by different folk, about the Holy See's announcement of an Apostolic Constitution on Anglicans becoming Roman Catholics. I am going to quote my good colleague, Canon Swain, of Resurrection, New York City, since what he says is also my own position in this matter. This is reprinted with his permission from *Pascha Nostrum*, Church of the Resurrection's Parish Newsletter.

The publicity surrounding this I find surprising. It is essentially the same arrangement as has been in place since the Pastoral Provision was unveiled by Pope John Paul II in 1980. It still involves re-ordination of clergy without condition, there are liturgical arrangements for Anglican Rite masses, and the possibility of Anglican Rite congregations, which was already the case. (They exist already in Houston, Fort Worth, Boston and other places. Some own church buildings, most do not.) The new announcement was made after a few years of talks with The Traditional Anglican Communion, a church not in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Church of England, but which nonetheless maintains Anglican traditions. Most of their clergy and people are former members of an official Anglican Church. As with all 'Continuing Churches', each parish has undisputed title to its property, and therefore it would be easy for them to make a corporate decision to join the Roman Catholic Church under the provisions of the Apostolic Constitution. One assumes this was the reason they initiated these conversations with the Vatican. When the decree came out, it was very graciously extended to include all Anglicans whether in communion with Canterbury or not. It seems unlikely that many whole parish churches will take advantage of its provisions either in this country or in England. The clergy would still have to be re-ordained, which for most of us is a grave step, as it denies our priestly ministry up till then. Although many if not most parishes in our Church would

claim to own their own property free and clear (as indeed most legal deeds testify), Dioceses in the Episcopal Church have a history since 1979 of bringing suit against congregations desiring to leave on the theory that property is held by parishes in trust for the dioceses, and indeed now the national church has begun to assert the same claim in relation to diocesan property being held in trust for the national church. Since we're not in that situation and I'm not a lawyer, my opinion is of little value, but this means that property is very unlikely to be taken along with a parish desiring to join the Roman Church. Without a church building or accumulated funds, it is difficult to keep a congregation together, and meeting in rented space or space lent out by a Latin Rite Roman Church means that the future of such congregations seems rather limited. Having said all this, we must remember that this is a pastoral response by the Holy Father to a pastoral request from the bishops of the Traditional Anglican Communion (which was then graciously extended to all Anglicans), and should be regarded as nothing more or less than that. Any suggestion that the Roman Catholic Church, with more than a billion members and comprising 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the world's population, is somehow desperately interested in poaching Episcopalians (with fewer than 2 million members now – fewer people than live in the Borough of Queens) to swell its ranks is clearly absurd.

## NOTICES

### CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

The Women's Guild will hold their annual Christmas Bazaar on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, from 10 AM - 2 PM, this year featuring some additional vendors who will have their wares on display.

### S. JOHN'S 2010 PLEDGE DRIVE

Pledge Cards will be accepted throughout the Advent Season . Your "estimate of giving" is vital to the preparation of a realistic budget for the church, which will be presented at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 24th.

### ST. JOHN'S E-MAIL LIST

The Internet has become an efficient and cost effective form of communication. If you have not been receiving periodic notices from St. John's (coming from [lbabbitt@gustavewhite.com](mailto:lbabbitt@gustavewhite.com)), please be sure to get your e-mail address on the list by writing to [office@st.johns.org](mailto:office@st.johns.org). Please put "Add Me toSJE List" in the subject to be sure the message is received.

### DECEMBER SOUNDS

We are blessed at S. John's with a truly magnificent space in which to worship – both visually with beautiful architectural details, woodwork, and artwork; and acoustically as the spoken and sung word echoes remarkably within these stone walls. December offers a few opportunities, in addition to our weekly Sung Mass, to experience the joy of the sung word in this place:

#### *Advent Lessons & Carols*

The *Schola Cantorum* of St. John's will offer its Annual Festival of Advent Lessons & Carols, Wednesday, December 2nd at 6:00 PM. The service is patterned after that presented at King's College, Oxford and made popular in the US during the early part of the 20th century.

#### *Swanhurst Chorus Concert*

Swanhurst Chorus will offer "An Evening with Anton Bruckner" under the direction of conductor Jonathan Babbitt, Saturday, December 5th at 8 PM. The evening will feature Bruckner's stunning *Mass in f minor* as well as Three Gradual Settings for the Church Year. Advance tickets are \$20, and \$22.50 at the door. Full-time students are \$10. All ticket income goes to support the operating expenses of Swanhurst, a non-profit Arts Organization. See any member of the *Schola*, call 401-682-1630, or visit [www.Swanhurst.org](http://www.Swanhurst.org).

Additionally, the Annual "Messiah and Carol Sing", hosted by Swanhurst, is Saturday, December 19th at 7 PM at Emmanuel Church. Bring a score to sing along or just sit and be immersed by this master-work.