

SS. Edward & Lucy News

SS. Edward and Lucy Parish is a Catholic community in Eastern Geauga County

DECEMBER 2017

RECESSION, RECOVERY AND REVIVAL IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

by Fr. Burkley

Over recent years we have experienced a decline or “recession” of religious activity. Since the year 2000 infant baptisms are down 33%. And fewer infant Baptisms leads to fewer students in Catholic schools in the future. Americans, including Catholics, are having fewer children altogether. And Baptism is no guarantee of lifelong practice of faith anymore. Now 2/3 of those raised as Catholics remain as Catholics as adults. Ours is a religious “recession”. We also know that fewer Americans, including Catholics, are marrying and are choosing to do so later in life than before. Among Catholics, fewer are choosing to marry in church. Catholics make up 23% of the adult population of the US, but only 8% of US marriages happen in church. First Communions and Confirmations are down 10%. 80% of baptized children are making First Communion and 57% are being confirmed. One out of ten parishes that were open in 2000 are now gone, more than 1900 parishes in all, while new parishes are opening in the West and South. Surveys indicate 11% of school-age children are in Catholic schools and 21% are in religious education programs. 68% of Catholic children are not in any religious education program or youth ministry so the burden of passing on the Catholic faith to the next generation falls on their parents who may or may not accept this role.

In economics, a recession often ends before anyone knows it is over. So,

are there any hopeful signs in this religious recession? Yes. The number of young men choosing the priesthood as a viable and desirable vocation in life is up and the number of ordinations has risen steadily since 2010. The number of Permanent Deacons has risen 41%. Lay Pastoral Ministry has begun to flourish with 20,000 presently preparing and being trained for ministry in our parishes. Another factor is that those who leave the church eventually come back. Millions of these “reverts” make up about 10% of our Catholic population. Religious recession is unpredictable, but so is recovery. We pray each week for the “return of our absent brothers and sisters” and for the deeper, richer evangelization of us all.

WORKS OF MERCY DURING THE SUMMER OF 2017

During our Confirmation Rite-of-Enrollment class, we students were asked to demonstrate ‘works of mercy’ during the summer of 2017. While money isn’t required to show mercy, we were each provided with \$5.00 and asked to use it towards our own selection of a work of mercy and also to write about ours choices and experiences.

Jasmyne Whitman: With the \$5, I bought 5 bracelets to support my principal who is a husband and father of 2, who was diagnosed with cancer last school year.

I chose to spend the money this way because I knew it would be used directly for his medical bills. I also knew that it would be appreciated by

him and his family. This made me feel good because I knew I was helping others.

Sara Cook: I used my \$5 to donate my hair to Wigs for Kids. It cost exactly \$5 to mail it to the place it needed to go.

I chose this project because I think that the last thing people should have to worry about when they have cancer is their appearance. I know that people get self-conscious when they lose their hair and everyone always complimented mine so I decided to make someone else happy about how they looked. I think that more people should donate their hair when they get it cut because it’s a really good cause.

Jacob Kronauer: I gave my \$5.00 to St. Jude because I feel bad for the kids that have cancer.

Parents shouldn’t have to worry about paying for their children’s medical bills. That’s where we come in. We should be grateful that we are not diagnosed with cancer.

Paul Vaught: I went to the local Amish store since their prices are lower and I am supporting local business, I could get more for my money. Also, I asked family members to donate to the cause.

I decided to donate food to the local Food Cupboard because there are hungry people everywhere, even in my own community. During the summer months, children are most affected by hunger since they are out of school. It is easy to donate food, since there is a food donation box at the library. Doing works of mercy helps those in need.

Gabby Zajko: I donated my money towards Hurricane Irma and tried to get other donations.

I wanted to help people who got hurt. They need lots of help to get back on their feet. People don't know how a little bit of money can go a long way. It helped buying medicine for people, water and food, because water was contaminated, and housing for people and animals.

Works of Mercy: The traditional Catholic term for good deeds. Mercy means "kindness and compassion". Works of mercy put that compassion into practice by bringing blessing and relief to others.

**MEGAN MADDOX,
SERVER AT ST.
LUCY'S CROWNED
2017 HUNTSBURG
PUMPKIN FESTIVAL
QUEEN**

by Linda Talboo



Megan Maddox is a Huntsburg resident, and has been a server at St. Lucy's for ten years. She is a senior at Cardinal High School, where she is a member of the National Honor Society. Megan is the captain of the Cardinal Marching Band. She also runs cross-country on the track team.

As president of her 4-H Club, Totally Dogs, she shows dogs at the

Geauga County Fair.

Megan was crowned the Huntsburg Pumpkin Festival Queen on Oct. 7. Megan will reign until Oct. 7, 2018. She will attend numerous festivals in this role.

**HEAVEN'S PEACE
PLAN**

by Joan Spangler

Almighty God tells us in Holy Scripture that the Blessed Virgin will defeat the devil, his followers and plots. (Gen.3:15) In her appearances at Fatima, the Mother of God solemnly promised us final victory over the forces of evil in our own time. The Fatima Message from Mary is a unique Heaven sent opportunity for all people everywhere to work for a real, lasting peace in our homes, churches and nations.

Our Lady's Peace Plan is founded on three simple, but powerful requests. The first is a request for prayer, most particularly the rosary and the devotion of the Brown Scapular.

Like the Fatima secrets revealed at different times you will have to wait for the next edition of The SS.

Edward and Lucy Newsletter to learn Fatima request two and three. I hope all you good Catholics know these requests, but if not they will remain secrets till the next newsletter.

The SS. Edward and Lucy Women's Club hosted a Mini Fatima Retreat several months ago. We were so pleased to see so many fellow parishioners shared our enthusiasm and helped us celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Miracle in the Sky at Fatima Portugal.

The Retreat took many months of preparation and one of the side events was making Mission Rosaries. The Rosary making team members gave away their labors of love to our guests at the Retreat.

Making Rosaries then took on a life of its own and rosary makers wanted to share their devotion to Mary. The Rosary Makers offered to teach any and all parishioners to make Mission Rosaries at our Annual November Craft Night.

Now, for the REALLY EXCITING GOOD NEWS. Father Fernandes has sent us an Email.

"How have you guessed that we need rosaries here-----we encourage the people to recite the rosary daily. Because There are so many dialects and variations of the same language it is difficult to have written information.-----but the rosary is easy in their own language or French. We are so happy the Rosary Makers are willing to share their handmade rosaries with us. "The first shipment had 100 rosaries sent to Cameroon-Afriqie care of Father Fernandes.

If you would like to join our humbled and honored to serve and make rosaries group call;

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**THE REAL 12 DAYS OF
CHRISTMAS**

by Edwin and Jennifer Woodruff Tait

Sometime in November, as things now stand, the "Christmas season" begins. The streets are hung with lights, the stores are decorated with red and green, and you can't turn on the radio without hearing songs about the spirit of the season and the glories of Santa Claus. The excitement builds to a climax on the morning of December 25, and then it stops, abruptly. Christmas is over, the New Year begins, and people go back to their normal lives.

The traditional Christian celebration of Christmas is exactly the opposite. The season of Advent begins on the

fourth Sunday before Christmas, and for nearly a month Christians await the coming of Christ in a spirit of expectation, singing hymns of longing. Then, on December 25, Christmas Day itself ushers in 12 days of celebration, ending only on January 6 with the feast of the Epiphany.

Exhortations to follow this calendar rather than the secular one have become routine at this time of year. But often the focus falls on giving Advent its due, with the 12 days of Christmas relegated to the words of a cryptic traditional carol. Most people are simply too tired after Christmas Day to do much celebrating.

The “real” 12 days of Christmas are important not just as a way of thumbing our noses at secular ideas of the “Christmas season.” They are important because they give us a way of reflecting on what the Incarnation means in our lives. Christmas commemorates the most momentous event in human history—the entry of God into the world he made, in the form of a baby.

The Logos through whom the worlds were made took up his dwelling among us in a tabernacle of flesh. One of the prayers for Christmas Day in the Catholic liturgy encapsulates what Christmas means for all believers: “O God, who marvelously created and yet more marvelously restored the dignity of human nature, grant that we may share the divinity of him who humbled himself to share our humanity.” In Christ, our human nature was united to God, and when Christ enters our hearts, he brings us into that union.

The three traditional feasts (dating back to the late fifth century) that follow Christmas reflect different ways in which the mystery of the Incarnation works itself out in the body of Christ. December 26 is the

feast of St. Stephen—a traditional day for giving leftovers to the poor (as described in the carol “Good King Wenceslas”). As one of the first deacons, Stephen was the forerunner of all those who show forth the love of Christ by their generosity to the needy. But more than this, he was the first martyr of the New Covenant, witnessing to Christ by the ultimate gift of his own life. St. John the Evangelist, commemorated on December 27, is traditionally the only one of the twelve disciples who did not die a martyr. Rather, John witnessed to the Incarnation through his words, turning Greek philosophy on its head with his affirmation, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14, KJV).

On December 28, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Innocents, the children murdered by Herod. These were not martyrs like Stephen, who died heroically in a vision of the glorified Christ. They were not inspired like John to speak the Word of life and understand the mysteries of God. They died unjustly before they had a chance to know or to will—but they died for Christ nonetheless. In them we see the long agony of those who suffer and die through human injustice, never knowing that they have been redeemed. If Christ did not come for them too, then surely Christ came in vain. In celebrating the Holy Innocents, we remember the victims of abortion, of war, of abuse. We renew our faith that the coming of Christ brings hope to the most hopeless. And, in the most radical way possible, we confess that like the murdered children we are saved by the sheer mercy of Christ, not by our own doing or knowing.

In the Middle Ages, these three feasts were each dedicated to a different part of the clergy. Stephen, fittingly, was the patron of deacons. The feast of John the Evangelist was dedicated to the priests, and the feast

of the Holy Innocents was dedicated to young men training for the clergy and serving the altar. The subdeacons (one of the “minor orders” that developed in the early church) objected that they had no feast of their own. So it became their custom to celebrate the “Feast of Fools” around January 1, often in conjunction with the feast of Christ's circumcision on that day (which was also one of the earliest feasts of the Virgin Mary, and is today celebrated as such by Roman Catholics).

The twelve days of Christmas saw similar celebrations of the topsyturvy and the unruly. A “Lord of Misrule” was often elected at Christmas and ruled the festivities until Epiphany. A schoolboy was traditionally chosen as bishop on December 6 (the Feast of St. Nicholas) and filled all the functions of bishop until Holy Innocents' Day. The Christmas season also sometimes saw the “Feast of the Ass,” commemorating the donkey traditionally present at the manger. On this day, people were supposed to bray like a donkey at the points in the Mass where one would normally say “Amen.”

It is easy to dismiss all these customs as pagan survivals (which many of them are), or at best as irrelevant and harmless follies. Indeed, the medieval church frowned on most of these practices, and the Reformers of the 16th century finished the job of suppressing them. But perhaps there's a message here worth pondering—that in the words of the horrified pagans of Thessalonica, the message of Christ turns the whole world upside down. In the birth of Jesus, God has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

Nothing will ever be safe or normal again. In the words of Michael Card, we are called to “follow God's own

fool.” And yet, paradoxically, this greatest of revolutionaries was not a rebel. The one who revealed the surprising meaning of God's Law and turned the tables on human traditions nonetheless submitted to be circumcised according to the teaching of Moses.

Finally, on Epiphany (January 6), the celebration of Christmas comes to an end. “Twelfth Night” (as all lovers of Shakespeare know) is the ultimate celebration of Christmas madness (Shakespeare's play features one of his many “wise fools” who understand the real meaning of life better than those who think they are sane). Epiphany commemorates the beginning of the proclamation of the gospel—Christ's manifestation to the nations, as shown in three different events: the visit of the Magi, the baptism of Jesus, and the turning of water into wine. In the Western tradition, the Magi predominate. But in the Eastern churches, Jesus' baptism tends to be the primary

theme.

In the Bucharest subway, children leading lambs walk through the trains in commemoration of the Lamb of God to whom John pointed. Orthodox Christians traditionally have their homes blessed with holy water on or around this day. Nowhere is Epiphany celebrated more joyously than in Ethiopia. Pilgrims from all over the country converge on the ancient city of Aksum, where they bathe in a great reservoir whose waters have been blessed by a priest.

Epiphany is often a forgotten festival (although, by the accident of Edwin's mother's birthday falling on January 5, his very un-liturgical family preserved the ancient tradition of keeping the Christmas decorations up until Epiphany). As the true end-point of the Christmas season, however, Epiphany sends us into the world to live out the Incarnation, to witness to the light of

Christ in the darkness. Following Jesus, we have been baptized into his death and resurrection. Whether we are called to martyrdom, or to prophetic witness, or simply to faithful living in the joys and sorrows of our daily lives, we live all of our days in the knowledge of our dignity, redeemed through Christ and united to God.

We are part of the strange society of people whose world has been turned upside down, and we go out to witness to this topsy-turvy truth: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us: and we beheld his glory ... and of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:14, 16).



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