



## Christmas Greetings

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

**"The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us."** With these words the Church announces the completion and fulfillment of our Advent preparation. The Christmas season of grace and rejoicing begins Thursday, December 25 and extends throughout the octave [eight days] until Thursday, January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and continues to the following Sunday, the Feast of the Epiphany. As we enter into the solemn celebration of this holy season of birth of the Savior, the priests and staff of St. Agatha-St. James and the Drexel and Penn Newman Centers extend to all of you and your loved ones, a happy and holy Christmas Season. Please know that your needs and intentions are remembered in our prayers and Masses during these Holy days.

The Priests and Staffs of St. Agatha-St. James  
And the Drexel and Penn Newman Centers

**Do not be afraid.** (Luke 1:30) God is telling us that He is in control and that there is no need for anxiety.



## HOLIDAY SCHEDULE ALERTS

- **December 24, Christmas Eve: Vigil Mass at 8 PM**  
This year, St. Agatha-St. James will celebrate the Vigil Mass of Christmas at **8:00 PM** instead of a Midnight Mass.
- **December 25, Christmas Day: Mass at 10 AM**  
This is the only Christmas Mass of the day at St. Agatha-St. James.
- **10 PM Sunday Mass is suspended for three weeks during semester break.**

On three consecutive Sundays: today, December 21 [4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent], December 28 [Holy Family], and January 4 [Epiphany], there will be **NO 10 PM MASS. There will be Mass those Sundays at 10 AM, 11:30 AM, and 5:00 PM.**

- **Daily Masses. The 7:30 am Daily Mass will be temporarily suspended for three weeks.**

From Monday, December 22 until Friday, January 9, 2009, there will be no 7:30 AM Mass. 7:30 AM Mass will resume Monday, January 12. The 12:05PM Masses from Friday, December 26 through Friday, January 9, will be held in Church.

## NEWMAN CENTER NOTES

**Penn Newman Center** 3720 Chestnut Street  
[www.newman.upenn.edu](http://www.newman.upenn.edu)

**Drexel Newman Center** 30 South 33<sup>rd</sup> Street  
[www.drexelnewman.org](http://www.drexelnewman.org)

### Daily Mass

Mon-Fri 12:05pm Penn Newman  
St. Bede Chapel – Upper Level  
Mon-Fri 1:00pm Drexel Newman  
St. Katharine Drexel Chapel – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available at Drexel Newman on a weekly basis on Wednesdays 12:30-1:00pm.

Weekly Eucharistic Adoration is offered at Drexel Newman Center on Thursdays, after the 1:00 pm Mass until 4:00 pm.

### Drexel Newman: Christmas Holiday Schedule

In observance of the Christmas Holiday season the Drexel Newman Center will be closed from **Monday, December 15** and reopen at 10 am on **Monday, January 5** when the Winter Term begins.

### Drexel Newman: Prayer Group

As the Winter Term begins, come, pray with us on **Monday, January 5 at 7:00 pm**. Our prayer group session guided by the meditation process of **Lectio Divina** will explore the gospel for Sunday, January 11, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which liturgically closes the Christmas season.

### Penn Newman: Christmas Break Schedule

The Penn Newman Center will close on Thursday, December 18 at 1:00 pm and reopen at 10:00 am on Monday, January 12.

### Penn Newman: Spiritual Mentoring/Direction

Spiritual mentoring/direction is an opportunity to meet one-on-one with a professional minister to speak about your life. Several mentors are available to Penn undergraduate and graduate students. See [www.newman.upenn.edu](http://www.newman.upenn.edu).

### Circle of St. Bede

The Circle of St. Bede invites interested faculty and professionals to join us on **Tuesdays 8:10-8:50 am** in the lower level of Penn Newman. If interested, please contact Dr. Peter Dodson: [dodsonp@mail.vet.upenn.edu](mailto:dodsonp@mail.vet.upenn.edu).

### Scripture Study

We gather at **8:00 am on Wednesdays** in the lower level of Penn Newman. New members are warmly welcomed. Contact Charlotte Ethier at [ethiercc@aol.com](mailto:ethiercc@aol.com).

The Drexel and Penn  
Newman Centers wish you a  
Merry Christmas!

## Fourth Sunday of Advent



News You Can Use...from Fr. Steve

## MERRY CHRISTMAS

Yes, MERRY CHRISTMAS! Dare we say it to one another: "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" And to the world, the poor, waiting world: "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" Who would have thought that such a hope-filled, joyous greeting for peace and good will to all would be the occasion of such contentiousness in our present society and culture. So many people claim to be offended by the words "Merry Christmas" – offended by Christmas trees and Christmas Carols, and Christmas gifts, anything really that points to who and why we are celebrating - Jesus Christ. Santa Claus, the commercial icon of consumer America, is acceptable, but Christ, for whom Santa [Saint] takes his meaning and purpose, is off-limits in so many areas today. This calls out for a deeper reflection.

First, consider the Scriptures themselves. In the infancy narratives that begin the Gospels in Luke and Matthew, there is an unmistakable note of haste. Mary is in haste to give birth, certainly because it is her time and the baby is pressing, and as yet, they have found no suitable place. But more than any physical haste, there is a much more profound spiritual haste in Mary - she is hurrying to finally give birth to HOPE, to all that was promised her and to her people by the majestic heavenly messenger, Gabriel, who stands at attendance before God. Gabriel told her that her child "**will be called son of the most high, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever and his reign will have no end.**" [LK 1:31-34]

The shepherds also are in haste; they run through the night darkness and the cold, to witness the birth of the new-born child, sensing that here is born their own hope for something new, something more that is not yet present in their world or their hearts. The Magi are in haste to complete their long journey of seeking and to finally witness the fulfillment of their dream for something new and greater.

Next consider the world at the time of Jesus. Pagan antiquity had become bankrupt spiritually and intellectually by the time that God became Emmanuel. The great kingdoms of Greece and Rome, who had produced the glories of a philosophical approach to truth and meaning, and the dynasties of the Roman Caesars that presided over the "Pax Romana," have given way to raving lunatics and madmen such as Nero and Caligula, who now inhabit the chiseled palaces of promises and trust gone bad.

A cold wind and moral despair blew through the so-called civilization of classical antiquity. Those early Christians, who inherited the hope and promise of Bethlehem, were not embarrassed by the name "Christ," for they knew Jesus was the only true alternative to the sad and somber world that surrounded them.

In this Christmas Season, our world still needs an infusion of light and love and hope which is why we are committed to "Merry Christmas." We know that the Christ of Christmas remains our only real hope for abundant life and love.

**Christmas Generosity to Your Parish – Please  
Please remember to be generous to your  
parish in your Christmas offering. Thank you.**

### This Week at St. AJ

#### Saturday, December 20

9:00AM Mass  
4:00PM Confessions - **No Confessions on Christmas Eve**  
5:30PM Vigil Mass *Nicholas Pipino*

#### Sunday, December 21

#### Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:00AM Mass *Rose, Jos. Candeloro & Maryann DeMarco*

11:30AM Mass *Fr. Chuck Pfeffer*

5:00PM Mass *Raffaella Evangelista*

No 10:00PM Mass

#### Monday, December 22

No 7:30AM Mass until Monday, January 12

#### Tuesday, December 23

12:05PM Mass *Eileen E. Gannon*

#### Wednesday, December 24

#### Christmas Eve

12:05PM Mass - Church closed from 12:30 to 2:00PM today

8:00PM Mass Vigil of Christmas *People of St. AJ*

#### Thursday, December 25

10:00AM Mass *People of St. AJ*

#### Friday, December 26

12:05PM Mass *Holy Souls in Purgatory*

#### Saturday, December 27

5:30PM Mass *Michael Bond*

### **Advent Christmas Flowers – Thank you**

Throughout Advent, we have been treated to a thoughtful and spiritually enriching program of liturgical art and environment that captures the inner spiritual attitudes of Advent. We are grateful to Fr. Vince Morabito for his creative gifts to provide such simple yet tasteful ways of decorating our Church for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. He has made use of fresh flowers, candles, plants and greens to establish a rich liturgical environment for worship with the help of his able assistant Palma Marinas. We are especially grateful to those parishioners who have made use of the special "Christmas Flowers" envelopes to provide the extra funding to support this art and environment initiative. Your special intentions will be remembered over the Christmas season. We certainly welcome anyone who wants to help towards the financial support of our holiday art and environment expenditures. Your support gives us more freedom and flexibility in how we decorate the sanctuary and worship space, which certainly enhances our overall appreciation and celebration of the sacred mysteries.

### **Consider a "spiritual" Christmas Gift...**

1. Offer someone the Christmas gift of having a Mass here at St. AJ for that person's intentions during the year. It could be a Mass celebrated on a person's birthday, anniversary, during Lent or Easter, or any particular date or non-specific date. [Offering \$10.00]
2. Enroll a deceased loved one in the **St. Agatha-St. James Perpetual Memorial Society**. Persons enrolled in this Society share in the spiritual benefits of special Masses and prayers offered throughout the year, every year. The enrollment list is posted on the parish website and is accessible any time. Each memorial is presented in a handsome leatherette folder [7x9 3/4] containing an enrollment card where the name of the person remembered is inscribed, along with the person who enrolled the deceased. [Offering \$30.00]
3. Purchase a set of **five note cards with the design of the Holy Child Shrine**. [\$5.00].

**2009 Calendars Available:** Please take a St. AJ 2009 Calendar with you as you leave Church – a gift of the owners of the New Deck Tavern, 3408 Sansom St. again this year.