

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time



News You Can Use...from Fr. Steve

John Williamson, Jr. - "Requiescat in pace"

As the renowned English metaphysical poet John Donne wrote: "No man is an island..." trying to capture the great but often elusive truth that we are all interconnected in our humanity and mortality, so that the death of one person diminishes us all. For all of us here within our St. AJ family, especially among our university students, and, in particular, our Drexel community, the sadness and diminishment of us by death is not a poetic or philosophical reality – it is very real and poignant. The tragic and untimely death of John Williamson, Jr., in the early hours of January 25th, certainly diminishes us all.

The fabric of our lives interconnects in so many ways, among so many individuals and groups. John Williamson was a local boy from Broomall, a suburb of Philadelphia. He was a part of so many "families" in addition to his own parents and siblings. His high school and neighborhood friends, his Drexel classmates and friends, his fellow Newman Center leadership team, his worshipping community at the 10 PM Mass, and his choir mates at 10 PM; all are diminished by his death. But for us Catholic Christians, we know we can pray in our diminishment and sorrow; we can commend our friend John to Jesus, the Lord of Life, who loves John more than we ever could, in ways that we can never imagine.

Whenever death moves close to us, as it has this past week, we feel the unique kind of pain that only death can bring; the pain of final separation. But death is also a time of faith for us as well. Our faith allows us to look directly at death, and then, through death, to the light and life of the Risen Christ. Our faith assures us that death, no matter how it comes, does not have the last word. God has the last word and He has spoken that word in Jesus His Risen Son, who has prepared a place for us in His father's house,

Our St. AJ family gathers for the 10 PM Mass, which will be offered for John, please remember his family in your prayers, and the family of Ian Alexander, the other boy who died, and those who still remain in serious condition. **John Williamson, Jr. - "May he rest in Peace."**

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord:

Candlemas: Blessing of Candles

If you have candles used in your home or dorm room and want them blessed, please bring them with you to any of the daily masses on Monday, Feb. 2, and they will be blessed along with the church candles that are used during the year.

This feast day has a long and interesting history in the Church. At the end of the 4th century, a woman named Etheria made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Her journal, discovered in 1887, gives an unprecedented glimpse of liturgical life there. Among the celebrations she describes are: the Epiphany (January 6), the observance of Christ's birth, and the gala procession in honor of His Presentation in the Temple 40 days later —February 15.

The observance spread throughout the Western Church in the 5th and 6th centuries. With Jesus' birth celebrated on December 25, the Presentation was February 2, 40 days after Christmas. Early in the 8th century, Pope Sergius inaugurated a candlelight procession; at the end of the 8th century, the blessing and distribution of candles became part of the celebration, hence the popular name: Candlemas.

This Week at St. AJ

Saturday, January 31

9:00AM Mass
4:00PM Confessions
5:30PM Vigil Mass *Arthur and Josie Canone*

Sunday, February 1 Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

10:00AM Mass *Rose & Joseph Candeloro & Maryann DeMarco*
11:30AM Mass *John Small*
5:00PM Mass *Friends & Benefactors of St. AJ*
10:00PM Mass *John Patrick "Johnny" Williamson, Jr.*
(Drexel Student Killed in Car Crash 1-25-09)

Wednesday, February 4

12:30 to 2:00 PM - Church open today for prayer and/or tours.

Friday, February 6

1:00PM Mass – *Members of St. AJ Perpetual Memorial Society*

Saturday, February 7

5:30PM Vigil Mass *Gertrude and Thomas Noonan*

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship

A full day workshop on the USCCB document, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, is scheduled for Saturday, February 7, 2009, at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary. This workshop is designed for clergy, music ministers and anyone interested in the document. The new document replaces the previous documents, *Music in Catholic Worship and Liturgical Music Today*. The new document gives theological and liturgical directives on who, what, why and how to sing the Sacred Liturgy. Pastors, parish music directors and music ministers are encouraged to attend.

SAINT OF THE WEEK: ST. BLASÉ AND THE BLESSING OF THROATS: THIS TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Blessing of throats through the intercession of St. Blasé will be offered at all the daily Masses on Tuesday, Feb. 3. The blessing will take place within the Mass where it is properly located and not afterward.

Blasé is a saint who enjoys a very well-known and widespread devotion, yet little is known about him personally. His feast is observed as a Holy Day in some Eastern Churches. The Council of Oxford in 1222 prohibited servile labor in England on Blasé's Feast Day. The Germans and Slavs hold him in special honor and for decades, many US Catholics have sought the annual St. Blasé blessing for their throats.

Bishop Blasé was martyred in the Episcopal city of Sebastea, Armenia in 316. The legendary *Acts of St. Blasé* was written 400 years later. According to the *Acts*, Blasé was a good bishop, working hard to encourage the spiritual and physical health of his people. Despite the Edict of Toleration (311) granting freedom of worship in the Roman Empire, persecution still raged in Armenia. Blasé was forced to flee to the forest where he lived as a hermit in solitude and prayer among the wild animals. One day a group of hunters seeking wild animals for the amphitheater stumbled upon Blasé's cave. They found the bishop kneeling in prayer surrounded by wolves, lions and bears. As the hunters hauled Blasé off to prison, legend has it; a mother came with her young son who had a fish bone lodged in his throat. At Blasé's command, the child was able to cough up the bone. Agricolaus, governor of Cappadocia, tried to persuade Blasé to sacrifice to pagan idols. Blasé refused and was first beaten, then tortured, and finally beheaded.