

Chaplain's Bulletin December 25, 2022 & January 1, 2023



Dear Folks,

Merry Christmas! As the rest of the society is finishing their Christmas season, we are just getting started, and there is going to be a lot going on.

December 26th will be the Feast of St. Stephen. December 27th is St. John the Apostle and Evangelist. December 28th will be the Feast of the Holy Innocents. Holy Family is December 30th; Mary the Mother of God is January 1st; Epiphany is January 8th and Baptism of the Lord is January 9th, ending the Christmas season.

These feasts weave together the themes of the celebration of family, marriage, children, sacrifice, the hostility of the world, and the proclamation of the Gospel.

A key part of learning the faith is learning how all the parts weave together; everything is connected to everything else. Jeff Cavins, in his Great Adventure Bible series, mentioned how people finish faith formation with “a heap of Catholicism.” They know tidbits, but there is no connection between them. I suggest this has a lot to do with why the faith doesn't make as much sense or seem as important as it should.

The Christmas story already has foreshadowing of the Cross in the story of Herod and the slaughter of the Holy Innocents.

The essence of the Gospel is the gift of self. The Lord gave Himself completely for our salvation in the perfect act of love and invites us and enables us to receive that gift and give ourselves in love to Him. All of learning about Christianity is learning how to receive Him and how to give ourselves. Marriage, family, parenthood, and martyrdom are all ways in which people give themselves in love.

In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist's big job is introducing Jesus, and he uses two images for Him: The (Passover) Lamb (John 1:29) and the Bridegroom (John 3:29). John (the evangelist, we must keep our Johns straight) will tie these two images together at the end of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 19:6-9; 21:9). (If you haven't read Brant Pitre's books *“Jesus the Bridegroom”* and *“Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist”* you are in for a treat.

From our family comes our first lessons in relationships, service, sacrifice, and vocation. Baptism of the Lord celebrates Jesus beginning His public ministry, as we, children of God, are called to go forth into the world to transform it. So, December 25 to January 9 lays the foundation for what will follow in the rest of the liturgical year.

Christmas is a celebration of the greatest gift ever given, Jesus Himself. For nine months in mystery, He grew (they didn't have ultrasound machines back then), and was revealed, first to Mary and Joseph, then shepherds, then magi, later the world. This is a time to consider God's work of salvation throughout history, much of it hidden, then in the fullness of time revealed. It is also God is at work in our lives in mysterious ways, and we shall often see that only later looking back. I hope you have a blessed Christmas season, and I hope you ask the question, “How is God at work in me to make me a better disciple and missionary?”

Blessings,

Fr. Jim