



EPHPHATHA

Issue 11
December 2011

DECEMBER IS DEDICATED TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Friends,

As I write this it is Thanksgiving. Where does the time go? We always say that, but in fact, time goes at the same pace, it is our perception that changes. When we were younger verses older, time changes at different rates. It is said:

Time is free, but it's priceless.
You can't keep it, but you can spend it.
Once you've lost it you can never get it back.



Recently functioning as Director of Stewardship I was giving a talk on time. I suggested that there were many inequities in the world, but one thing we all have in common is time. Every one of us has been given the same amount of time each day: twenty four hours.

As we rush through the Advent season and come to an abrupt halt on Christmas Day, instead of wondering where the time went, give thanks to the Lord for the precious gift of time. Whether it feels like it is going slow or fast, it is a gift, wrapped up with grace, for each one of us. Use it wisely and appreciate it!

Hope to see you all at the Signed Mass in January at my new home, the Spiritual Life Retreat Center! Have a blessed Christmas!

Father Ken Van Haverbeke

Thoughts to Ponder

God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say "thank you?" (William A Ward)

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice. (Meister Eckhart)

Gratitude is the memory of the heart. (Jean Baptiste Massieu)

Don't use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved.

TIME IS LIKE A RIVER—IT FLOWS BY AND DOESN'T RETURN (CHINESE PROVERB)

ADVENT 2011

Week 1 WAIT

Advent is a season of **waiting**. Is anyone waiting to hear from you? Say "hello" to a friend, neighbor, relative.

Week 2 WATCH

Advent is the season of **watching**. Watch for signs of God's love for us all week long. Watch for signs and symbols of holiday cheer.

Week 3 EXPECT

Advent is a season of **expectation**. What are you expecting the holidays to be filled with this year?

Week 4 GET READY

Advent is a season of **getting ready**. How can you get ready for a special time of celebration with family and friends at Christmas? Talk about the things you hope will be a part of your holiday gatherings.

Remember those who might be alone or less fortunate.





SPECIAL DAYS IN DECEMBER

- 03-St Francis Xavier
- 04-2nd Sunday of Advent
- 06-St. Nicholas
- 07-St. Ambrose
 Pearl Harbor Day
- 08-Immaculate Conception
 Holy Day of Obligation
- 09-St Juan Diego
- 11-3rd Sunday of Advent
- 12-Our Lady of Guadalupe
- 13-St Lucy
- 14-St John of the Cross
- 18-4th Sunday of Advent
- 21-St Peter Canisius
 Winter Begins
- 23-St John of Kanty
- 25-Nativity of Our Lord
 Holy Day of Obligation
- 26-St Stephen
- 27-St John, Apostle
- 28-The Holy innocents
- 29-St. Thomas Becket
- 30-The Holy Family
- 31-Pope St Sylvester I
 New Year's Eve

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO

- 15-Todd Shepherd
- 16-Ryan Hoheisel
 Sister Eula Linnebur
- 17-Kaleb Alexander
- 18-Sylvester Ribaudō
- 25-JESUS CHRIST

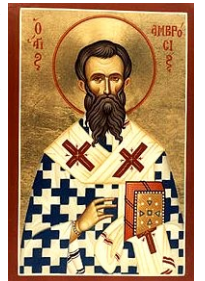


Happy Wedding anniversary to—
Michael & Marilyn Sanders 12/18



Dec 3rd— St Francis Xavier met Ignatius Loyola and became one of the seven who in 1534 founded the Society of Jesus—the Jesuits. He preached in many countries and was on his way to China but died before reaching the mainland. He was proclaimed patron of all foreign missions by Pope Pius X.

Dec 7—St Ambrose was a passionate little man with a high forehead, a long melancholy face and great eyes. He was of aristocratic heritage and learning. He was a fighter and was sent to Milan as Roman governor and chosen while yet a catechumen to be the people's bishop. His sermons, writings and personal life reveal him as an other worldly man involved in the great issues of his day. He was influential in converting Augustine. Ambrose exemplifies for us the truly catholic character of Christianity. He was a man steeped in the learning, law and culture of the ancients and of his contemporaries.



Dec 30-the feast of the Holy Family celebrates the family unit and the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary & Joseph. The feast usually falls on the Sunday after Christmas. If Christmas is a Sunday, which it is this year, then the feast is celebrated on Dec. 30th. Scripture tells us very little about the Holy Family. Several Popes promoted the feast as a way to counter the breakdown of the family unit.

The feast of the Holy Family is about our own families. Its main purpose is to present the Holy Family as the model for all Christian families. Our family life becomes holy when we live the life of the Church within our homes. This is called the "domestic church". How to live out the Church in the family is by: reading scripture regularly, praying daily, attending Mass, at least on Sundays and Holy Days, frequent confession, etc. all done as a family unit. Take time on this feast to reflect on the value and sanctity of the family unit and to evaluate your own family life.

A pious practice among Catholics is to write "J.M.J." at the top of letters, etc.



Dec 9—St Juan Diego was canonized by Pope John Paul II on July 31, 2002. He is praised for his simple faith nourished by catechesis and is a model of humility. His story is that of Our Lady of Guadalupe who appeared to Juan asking for a church to be built and as proof she told him to gather flowers he would find growing in frozen soil. These he took to the bishop who was amazed at the image of Our Lady imprinted inside Juan's cloak. He deeply loved the Holy Eucharist. He died at the age of 74.

Making a Space for God



Things always change dramatically around the house whenever parents utter the telling words: "Company's coming!" We quickly make room for our guests by picking up toys, clearing the table, and "putting away" bad manners. Advent is like that. It is a time to clear our homes and hearts for extraordinary company, a wondrous and transforming visit from Emmanuel, "God with us."

The worst thing a weary traveler can encounter is a flashing sign that says, "No Vacancy!" Mary and Joseph were turned away because there was no room in the inn. Sometimes our homes and our lives are also very full. We fill up our attics and closets, our heads and our hearts, until there is no space for anything else. We put up clear signs that we are too busy or preoccupied for God or others.

The coming of Christ is not just an historical event. God continues to be born in our world, but often comes to us in the disguise of human ordinariness. The Lord visits us in the poor, the lonely, the sick, and in our own loved ones, but we fail to recognize him: "He was in the world...yet the world did not know him." This Christmas and throughout the New Year, we welcome the Lord who taught us: "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

SAINTS FUN FACTS

by John Sheppard

A staunch defender of the Church against reformist Protestants in Europe.

He was an educator and opened colleges for the Jesuits.

He also spread the findings of the Council of Trent to the European Archbishops.

Born: 1521
Died: 1597



St. Peter Canisius



St. John of the Cross—Dec. 14th.

John's father gave up wealth, status when he married a weaver's daughter. After the father died they lived in destitution. Even after the family found work John still went hungry. It was out of this poverty and suffering that John searched for beauty & happiness in God.

John joined the Carmelites and helped Teresa of Avila to reform the Order. Many members felt threatened by this reform. Some of John's own members kidnapped



him. He was locked in a cell 6X10 feet and beaten 3 times a week by the monks. There was only one tiny window high up near the ceiling. He had nothing left but God and God brought John his greatest joys After 9 months, John escaped by unscrewing the lock on his door, crept past the guard and climbed out of the window using a rope made of strips of a blanket. He followed a dog to civilization and hid in a convent where he read his poetry to the nuns. Instead of being bitter he gave birth to a compassionate mystic. John left us many books of practical advice on spiritual growth and prayer: **Ascent of Mount Carmel, Dark Night of the Soul, & A Spiritual Canticle** .



St. Lucy—Dec 13. Her name means “light”. This does not match as shrouded in the darkness of the times all we really know is that she lost her life in the persecution of Christians in the early 14th Century. Her veneration spread to Rome so that by the 6th Century the whole Church recognized her courage in defense of the faith.

Lucy’s name is also connected to statues of Lucy holding a dish with two eyes on it. This refers to a legend in which her eyes were put out as part of torture. Lucy’s name plays a large part in naming Lucy as a patron saint of the blind and those with eye-trouble.

Dec. 26—St Stephen

Stephen’s name means “crown”. He was the first disciple of Jesus to receive the martyr’s crown. He is often shown in art with 3 stones and the martyrs’ palm. He was stoned to death and is the patron of stone-masons. You can read about him in the Acts of the Apostles in Chapters 6,7,8. In this picture he is wearing a deacon’s vestments.



Pearl Harbor—December 7, 1941

Let us pray that this never happens again. Pray for the safety of our country and those now serving in the military.

Pray for Peace!!

Christmas 2011



Dear Friends

Most of us can easily get caught up in the frenzy of the holiday season. I spend a lot of time buying and wrapping presents, cleaning and decorating the house, mailing cards and letters, preparing food, and spending time with family and friends. These are all wonderful activities but I am trying to “train” my brain-and my heart-to keep the true meaning of the season imbedded in everything I do. Mother Teresa said we cannot all do great things but we can all do small things with great love. Therefore, I can buy and not resent the amount I am spending, I can wrap the present with care rather than haphazardly, I can clean and decorate with enthusiasm instead of thinking of it as an inconvenience or drudgery, I can take time to write special notes to friends and loved one instead of watching a ballgame, I can fix the foods my family loves rather than the ones I prefer, I can enjoy the presence and essence of my family as gifts from God. To do these small things with great love, I have to focus on the sacrifice Jesus made for me and do likewise. The sacrifice began to be offered the moment He was conceived. Should I do any less?

I wish all of you a beautiful Christmas season of many small things filled with great Love!!

Thomas Racunas

This month has an unusual number of saints. Not pictured are:

* John of Kanty born in Poland. He was a professor at the University of Cracow. He was a serious, humble man. He was well loved and for years his doctoral gown was worn by graduates receiving advanced degrees at the University of Cracow. He is the patron of Poland.

* Thomas Becket— No one becomes a saint without struggles. Thomas knew he must stand firm in defense of the truth and right even at the cost of his life. He butted heads with Henry II who insisted upon usurping Church rights. Four knights slew Thomas in the Canterbury cathedral.

*Sylvester was born in Rome where he later became Bishop. He filled the See of Rome at a very important era in the history of the Catholic Church but little is known about him. He did not attend the First Council of Nicaea in 325 but he did approve the council’s decision.

* Nicholas—we all know about him!!!