



Magazine Drive

The Aquinas magazine drive is under way with this year's goal set at \$50,000. Prizes to be awarded top salesmen include Aquinas belt buckles and AQ duffelbags and a Hog Table (all the pizza and coke that the top selling homeroom can devour), portable color TV set. The drive will continue until Oct. 29. Coordinating the event are: Bill Howell, drive coordinator; Mrs. Kathy Berger, Mrs. Pat Bell, Mrs. Florence Reeves, Mrs. Rita Zapf, and Mrs. Gloria Walther.

Insights in Liturgy

By Pam Schaeffer

Preparing For Christmas

It may seem to some that talk of preparing for Christmas, when we haven't even said goodbye to the month of October, is akin to the "secular world" of Christmas. However, neither joining nor attacking what "they" do to Christmas is in any way intended. Rather, the purpose is to give parish liturgists time to reflect on their plans for the Christmas season and to give them some pointers on where to begin.

Our journey towards Christmas begins with our first steps into the season of Advent and continues through the feast of the Lord's Baptism on the Sunday after Epiphany. Christmas is a season, not just a day!

Great care should be taken by parish planning teams to allow the delicate balance of Advent's flavor and flow to be preserved. Advent liturgies, based upon the abundance of images provided in the Scriptural texts of the season, urge a fearful, hope-filled people forward in their journey. Advent, with its anticipatory nature, gradually building through four weeks, allows the fullness of the joyous festivity of Christmas to be revealed. What was longed for and promised is, at last, fulfilled! Through this action we learn that we must wait for some things or they will never be. A fact that most people, particularly in our

fast food, drive through, instant everything culture, have problems dealing with.

Adding extra frills to the Christmas liturgies, without paying proper attention to what comes before (and after), reduces this feast to mere sentimentality. Elation is soon replaced with empty disappointment. Proving, again and again, that we cannot "create" Christmas. The intangible "spirit" of Christmas gradually evolves in each of our hearts over a period of time, and if we don't let this "happen", it will never be.

Preparing for Christmas as a season, not just a day, helps us to see more clearly that Advent doesn't just end on the Fourth Sunday. This is not a signal for Christmas to begin. Some of what we experienced by sight and sound on our Advent journey must carry over into our Christmas liturgies. Candles that lit the advent wreath can be used to light various areas around the creche. The colors, textures, and shapes of Advent do not totally disappear. Banners, hangings, tapestries can be adorned with bright ribbons, trim, and bells. The sound of the refrain "Rejoice, Rejoice" from the now familiar strains of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" can become the antiphon to the responsorial psalm. Or, melodies that previously have only been hinted at instrumentally, especially during the last days of Advent, can be heard and participated in by all.

Planners should keep in mind that Christmas liturgies do not have to be complicated to be festive. We should train ourselves to evaluate what occurred during our liturgies and learn to sort out the extras that complicated the ritual action. Look back on past Advent/Christmas liturgies. What did the community reveal, through their responsive participation, that said this experience was good? That this experience helped lead them closer to sharing more deeply in the whole mystery of Christ?

Along these same lines, we need to remind ourselves not to be afraid of repeating something we felt was successful. Too often we feel compelled to "out-do" last year's celebration. Or, we fall into saying, "That has already been done." Be mindful of the fact that we are a people rich in tradition. We feel nourished and supported by our traditions. Individual households, especially during Advent/Christmas, hold annually repeated events dear. They look for them year after year. It would not be Advent/Christmas without them. The same holds true for our parish "household."

Alert to this fact during the sorting process, planners can begin to let this happen in their communities. Begin is the key word here! We can not manufacture traditions any more than we can manufacture Christmas! Seeds of tradition, planted now and cultivated over the years with patient watching and waiting, will eventually take root. A sense of belonging and security, as well as an identity will slowly surface as fruitful evidence of our parish Advent/Christmas keeping.

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