

# At Your Parish . . .



## 15th Anniversary

The Women's Club at St. Mark's parish, Greece, presented Father Joseph Donovan, pastor, with a hand embroidered stole and chalice veil recently. The presentation was in celebration of the 15th anniversary of the parish, located at 54 Kuhn Rd. Bishop Matthew H. Clark was on hand to celebrate an anniversary Mass. Shown here is Father Donovan receiving the stole from Women's Club president Kay Dunn, as other members look on.

## St. Francis of Assisi

Msgr. George Cocuzzi will celebrate a Mass, said in Italian, at St. Francis of Assisi Church on Whitney Street at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 20. Confession in Italian will also be heard, beginning at 1:30 p.m. prior to the Mass. The special Italian Mass fulfills the Sunday obligation, according to Father Dennis Shaw, pastor at St. Francis.

## Good Shepherd, Henrietta

Good Shepherd parish's sixth grade Social Studies class will present a "Medieval Faire" from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 19, at the school, 3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Henrietta. Parents and friends are invited.

Fr. Joseph M. Champlin



Our Church Family

## God's Love, Compassion

In an exceptional keynote address at the national convention for separated and divorced Catholics in Notre Dame, Mrs. Patricia Livingston, a divorced mother of three, clarified for me the notion of a myth.

The use of that term in connection with scriptural studies, theological speculation and religious education always has left me feeling uncomfortable. Myth, in common parlance, implies a fable, a fictional story, a figment of people's imagination. I found that usage in these contexts objectionable.

Mrs. Livingston, however, pointed out that, quite on the contrary, a myth in its very ancient roots meant the story of something which happens all the time in life. The tale thus contains certain universal truths or experiences with which all or most hearers can identify.

The story that follows appears to be one of those myths. Readers can judge at its conclusion if such is the case.

More than three decades ago after the rehearsal for her next day nuptials, "Mary," then age 22, went to confession with other members of the wedding

party. She knew well and liked her parish priest. Under the pressure of those circumstances, the young woman deliberately concealed an embarrassing sin of some seriousness.

The marriage took place, children soon came and her life moved on, but a gnawing guilt over this "bad" confession remained.

After 20 years or so her marriage started to fail. In those black, lonely hours, Mary felt an additional burden. She needed guidance and courage, would like to have turned to God for some light and support, but judged her prayers, in view of that long-ago mistake, would prove useless.

Mary began watching Sunday morning religious programs on television six years ago. She appreciated the preaching abilities of Billy Graham and other evangelists, even sensed a stirring of hope within her as they spoke of God's love and Jesus' saving grace.

For some reason Dr. Schuler touched her in a special way one weekend, revealed to this grey-haired lady an image of the more kindly Lord she couldn't believe truly existed.

That prompted a return to Mass on occasion. Unsatisfied there, Mary then tried a few fundamental bible churches, only to

## St. Francis, Phelps

Msgr. John F. Duffy, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi parish, Phelps, will mark the 35th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a Mass of Thanksgiving at 11 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 28. A public reception, hosted by parishioners, will follow Mass in the Church hall.

discover their approach was not for her.

She once again sought out Catholic liturgies, this time growing more comfortable, sensing some of her doubts had dissolved and wanting to join the vast majority as they walked to the altar for communion.

But there was still that block, that ugly moment in a dark confessional way, way back.

Recently, Mary heard about a charismatic group in the parish and went to several meetings. She wasn't at ease with some aspects of that style prayer, but found their understanding of God helped.

Eventually Mary confided in one member, telling her story of the still remembered sin, her desire for healing forgiveness and her fearful confusion about what to do. The confidante recommended a priest she knew, reassuring the anxious woman about what kind of reception to expect.

Mary made one call, but no contact for a day or two. She almost gave up then, yet persevered, arranged an appointment and soon was in his office.

She unfolded her sad tale before him and within moments knew the forgiveness of Christ which had been there all along.

## Insights In Liturgy



By Father Robert J. Kennedy

## Advent: A Season of Hope

Advent is often described as a season of waiting. But the question is appropriate: waiting for what? for whom? The answer that comes back: we are waiting for the coming of the Lord. But, you respond, he has already come among us, almost two thousand years ago. Yes, but he will come again in glory to judge heaven and earth: we await that coming. Yes, but, you say, he is already here among us working to bring to completion the promise of the Father. Yes, but . . .

If Advent is a season of waiting, what are we waiting for? The Lord has come among us, shared our life, died and rose for us, and now lives among us in the power of the Spirit so that we might live in him. What more could there be to wait for? The "what more" is the glorious finale to what the Lord has done and is doing for us.

We wait for the fulfillment of what we already see.

Our waiting then is not the idle waiting of a man on a park bench, nor the bored and agitated waiting of people at a bus station or airport. Ours is a joyous waiting, if at times uncomfortable, like the waiting of an expectant mother who has an experience of her unborn child, has shared life with him/her, but has not yet fully seen the object of her care and concern. There is a joyous expectation.

This joy is not a giddiness, a superficial happiness that denies the pain and doubt and emptiness of life, or a dewy-eyed idealism about the future. This joy is deep and confident because it is based on what has already been experienced of the saving presence and activity of God. Even if we have only seen it in brief and fleeting glimpses, it is a solid enough basis for us to wait in joy for its fulfillment. The pain and doubt and emptiness of life may not be lessened, but they do not overwhelm us or destroy us because "we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

For example, we have already seen swords beaten into plowshares (Isaiah 2), and the lion content with the lamb (Isaiah 11), when we have seen efforts of making peace in families, neighborhoods and nations, when the stranger is welcomed, and when people are enabled to help themselves rather than to be dependent upon others. We have already seen the desert bloom with abundant flowers (Isaiah 35), when a word or a touch

gives strength, encouragement and comfort, when doubts and questions are resolved, or when those who are troubled or afflicted find the help they need.

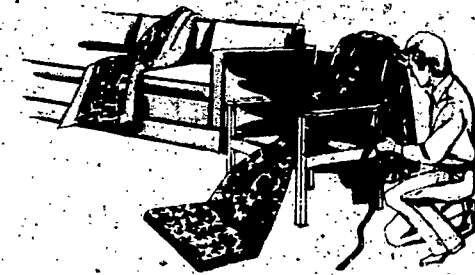
We look around and see that "the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them." (Matthew 11). Yes, there are many who still need healing and who hobble along, many who are blind and deaf to the activity and word of God, many who are victims of injustice and have only

bad news fill their ears. But we also see that justice is a band around the waist of the Messiah and he does not judge by appearances or hearsay but according to the truth (Isaiah 11).

The Christmas prophecy (Isaiah 9) is fulfilled in our time, and continues to be fulfilled: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." We ourselves have seen it, we walk by it, it is our joy. Despite the darkness that surrounds us, the darkness of the world in which we live, we have seen the light which warms us, comforts us, and guides us. And we joyfully look forward to the day when that light will dispel all darkness, and "the night shall be no more. They shall need no light from lamps or the sun, for the Lord God shall be their light and they shall reign forever." (Revelation 22).

Let us rejoice in the Light!

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