

BULLETIN -- DECEMBER 17

Christmas confession schedule. Please note that we shall have at least one priest available for confessions on each of the three days before Christmas: **Friday 7-9 p.m., Saturday 2-4 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m.-1 p.m.**

Thank you, ausiukie makers! Our enterprising crew of Lithuanian pastry artists has turned over the tidy sum of **\$693** from the sale of their Thanksgiving-time creations. This more than pays for the annual Health Dept. permit for the operation of our parish kitchen. Thank you to all those who make such delicious use of it!

Church employment opportunity. St. Anthony's parish in Saranac is looking for a part-time bookkeeper-bulletin editor-parish office secretary. If interested, please submit a resumé to ST ANTHONY CHURCH, 3936 JACKSON RD, SARANAC MI 48881. You may also call St. Anthony's parish office on Wednesdays for more details, (616) 642-6119. E-mail: stanthonysar@att.net.

Roll over, but don't play dead! Did you know that Congress retroactively reinstated the ability to make charitable gifts from your Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA)? Did you know that your parish or other favorite non-profit organizations may qualify for these charitable rollovers? If you are 70½ or older, you can transfer as much as \$100,000 from your IRA directly to a non-profit entity without having to count any of the transfer as taxable income. This charitable rollover will also benefit you in that it would count toward your required minimum distribution for 2017.

The good news is that there still is time to take advantage of this opportunity for 2017. For those who take mandatory distributions in December, 2017, you can donate that money to the diocese or parish or organizations such as Holy Family Radio, and not have the distribution subject to tax. If you are considering making such a gift, please contact your accountant or financial adviser for further information on how you could benefit from making a charitable rollover to support the mission of your favorite charities.

Marriage need refreshing? Being in a troubled or unhappy marriage at any time is difficult. Through the holidays it's even harder. Divorce filings soar in January because people tend to wait till after the hustle and bustle of the season, for a whole variety of reasons. You can do better than that. Rediscover healing and love, and find hope by attending Retrouvaille (reh-troh-VYE). The program offers tools needed to rediscover a loving marriage relationship. You had it once. Why not rekindle it instead of snuffing it out? The next Retrouvaille weekend in our area begins March 23, 2018. The next will begin on September 28. For more information, to register, or to sponsor a couple, call (616) 752-7004, or e-mail retrograndrapids@gmail.com, or visit the website, retrovaille.org.

If you can't lick 'em . . . A devout parishioner went to the post office to buy stamps. "I'd like 50 stamps for my Christmas cards, please," she told the clerk.

“Certainly, ma’am,” the clerk replied, “what denomination?”

“Why, I’m Catholic, but I didn’t think the Post Office would care!”

“Uh, so you mean, Forever?” the embarrassed clerk asked, trying to be helpful.

“Well, of course,” the lady replied, “and I have no intention of changing!”

Whence our joy? The Third Sunday of Advent has for centuries been called Gaudete Sunday, from the first Latin word of the Entrance Antiphon of the Mass, *Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico, gaudete: Dominus prope est* (“Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say, rejoice: the Lord is near”) (Philippians 4:4-5).

Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We’re speaking here about *genuine* joy, a profound joy, not the surfacey, giddy kind of joy that we get when we hit the Daily 3 or get something we wanted for Christmas. The joy that the Holy Spirit bears cannot be dimmed by trial or misfortune. This deep joy in the Spirit can be maintained through the death of loved ones, through our own illnesses or those of family members, through difficult times in marriage or at work, through discouraging challenges at school, even through the “dark night of the soul” when our prayers seem to go unanswered. It is a joy that can come in part from trying to do the right thing in spite of routine, drudgery, or tremendous obstacles. That is because in doing so we are leaving ourselves open to the power of the Holy Spirit, who transforms us like the dewfall subtly brings dry blades of grass to glisten in the light of dawn.

True joy in the Lord cannot be extinguished by external forces alone, because it radiates from within us, independent of what we see or hear or experience in the world around us. Turmoil in the Church, the world, the country, the neighborhood, or the family will not snuff out the light of our joy. Indeed, these problems might well bring our joy to shine through the darkness ever brighter, because like all the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, it is not given to us for ourselves alone, but for the encouragement and edification of those around us.

Joy will often manifest itself in a pleasant smile or in gracious laughter. When those would be inappropriate to the situation, our joy might help us to radiate composure and confidence to strengthen others, as in a time of crisis or emergency. We should not confuse joy with happiness, which we as citizens consider we have a right to pursue. Joy does not rely on the quality nor quantity of our possessions or relationships.

Some would say that they lack joy not because of external influences (sad state of the world, oppression by others, and so on) but from within. They cannot have joy, they believe, because of longstanding guilt over past sins, feelings of self-loathing, bitter memories, and other reasons. Note God’s words spoken through the prophet Isaiah (58:5-6): “Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke, Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke.” God goes on to enumerate what we would call the corporal works of mercy and stresses keeping the sabbath holy. Get busy with these things, he says, and don’t think I’m impressed by your looking sorrowful, even if you’re repenting of sin. Jesus repeats this theme when he instructs his disciples about fasting: “When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to

others to be fasting. . . But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face” (Matthew 6:16-17).

The point is that God wants our joy to radiate even when we are making just reparation for our sins. He forgives us so we can get up and move on. And the prime mover of forgiveness is the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus breathed upon his apostles for the forgiveness of sins (John 20:22-23) -- the one and the same Holy Spirit who is the source of true joy. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: Some of our habits have to change with age. Since prostate surgery, I’ve learned that it’s better to have a drier sense of humor. If I get to laughing too hard, the tears run down my leg. *Gaudete*, anyway! 😊