

BULLETIN – DECEMBER 18

Join us in praying for a friend. As far as we know, no one in the parish knew Sherry Lee Collins. She was born in 1949 and grew up and went to high school in the Flint area, worked for a while in real estate and then developed her own State Farm business as an independent insurance contractor out in California. In 2013, she married Larry Adams, who also worked for State Farm. Sherry died September 12 after dealing with cancer for 5 years. She was buried from Sacred Heart Church in Palm Desert, CA, in the Diocese of San Bernardino.

We wouldn't have known anything about Sherry Lee Adams if it hadn't been for a letter received a few weeks ago from the trustee of her estate. Sherry had named our parish as a recipient of a cash distribution from her trust. A check for \$50,000 was enclosed. We have no explanation for this generous and completely unexpected gift. When I inquired at Chase Bank to make sure it was legit and by cashing it we were not going to become the subjects of the potentate of Kookoostan or some such scheme, they assured me that it was indeed free and clear. Apparently there were also numerous other such beneficiaries, all over the place. I did not ask anything further.

I wrote a letter thanking the trustee for his service in distributing such wonderful gifts on behalf of Mrs. Adams. I also informed him that we would be dividing the money into several accounts: \$25,000 into our education fund to support our scholarships and subsidies for Catholic education, \$12,500 into our improvement fund, and \$12,000 into our general checking account to help us with winter heating bills and repairs. The remaining \$500, I asked the trustee to tell Sherry's husband and family, we have placed in our stipend fund for Masses to be offered for the repose of her soul. So if you notice her name appearing among our Mass intentions in the bulletin over the next few months, join us with your own prayer for a kind and dear friend we never met. Let's remember her and all our benefactors with a little prayer this Christmas, thanking God for all those we hope to meet, perhaps for the first time but always forever, in his eternal Kingdom.

Sherry's gift arrived just as we opened a bid from one of the few local tuckpointers. Months ago, when the Buist Sheet Metal crew was up in their lift working on some problem areas on the church roof, they told us that we had quite a bit of crumbling mortar and loose brick up in hard-to-reach places, and that the church should be inspected to be tuckered and pointed. This brickwork is highly specialized. Our bidder's price came in at just over \$11,000, so our designation of \$12,500 for our improvement fund from Sherry's gift proved to be a snug insurance policy of its own. Such gifts give us a breather, but please remember that we rely on the regular generosity of all of our parishioners to pay our bills and meet our obligations. If you haven't been regular about your stewardship as a contributor this year, you still have a couple weeks to catch up and credit it as a charitable deduction on your 2016 Form 1040.

Christmas confessions. Many people get into the habit of making a good confession just before Christmas and again just before Easter. Those intent on growing in their spiritual life will likely be more frequent about it, but Christmas and Easter is far better than nothing at all. Christ left his Church the magnificent gift of a sacrament by which we can be concretely assured of his forgiveness of even those things of which we

are most ashamed. My experience over more than 40 years is that many people each year are moved to make a new beginning, some after a long time completely away, or at least after a time of not availing themselves of the sacramental celebration of God's mercy. The opportunity awaits. This week, we shall have one or more priests available at the following hours:

Thurs., Dec. 22	7-9 p.m.
Fri., Dec. 23	3-5 p.m.
Sat., Dec. 24	9-11 a.m.

Please note that there will be **NO** confessions scheduled on Saturday afternoon, Christmas Eve.

We are now in the portion of the season referred to by the Church as “**late Advent.**” There is a distinctly different liturgical feel to the weekdays in these final nine days, which form a sort of Novena leading up to the Solemnity of the Incarnation. Please join us for weekday Mass on one or more days if you can. It will make a wonderful Advent practice, as well as helping you enhance your own *spiritual* preparation for Christmas. In the midst of last-minute shopping, wrapping, and decorating, do yourself the favor of taking those few minutes out for some tranquil refreshment with Our Lord.

What you will notice is that the Scripture readings, and particularly the Gospels, tell the “backstory” of the birth of Christ: the Annunciation, the Visitation, Joseph's dream, the Canticle of Zachary, and so on. The Scriptures go to great lengths to show us how God is faithful to his promises by sending us his Son. The magnificent event of the Anointed One of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us has made the world a different place in a way that nothing else ever has. We are truly in the end times, no matter how long they last. Pondering the mysteries of Christ's coming to earth should inspire us to renew our enthusiasm as his disciples and as missionaries of his joyful proclamation of God's gifts of justice, mercy, and eternal life.

Just so we're clear on the concept: The so-called “Million Women's March on Washington” planned for Saturday, January 21, 2017, the day after the presidential inauguration, has NOTHING to do with the Right to Life march which will take place on Sunday, January 22. In fact, quite the opposite. One of the downtown G.R. churches is organizing a bus trip for the January 21 date, but we should be clear that this has NOTHING to do with the annual pro-life rally in our nation's capital.

And just so you know . . . For Christmas, we'll have our usual 4 p.m. Mass Saturday afternoon. We're adding one Mass to our schedule, our “midnight” Mass at 10 p.m. Saturday evening. There will be just one Mass on Christmas morning, at 9:30. Whichever Christmas Mass you decide on, gently invite someone who hasn't been in a while. Perhaps they can't receive Communion because they haven't been to confession. They can still worship with us. God loves them, and we need them! Since January 1 falls on a Sunday (the octave of Christmas), our schedule for the weekend after Christmas will feature our regular times for confessions and Mass. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child Himself” (Charles Dickens, English author, 1812-1870, in *A Christmas Carol*.)