



# Holy Cross Connections

## Celebrating 175 Years - Jubilee 2008



## O Come, All Ye Faithful

Throughout the Gospels Christ emphasizes the importance of childlike faith: “Unless you become like children...it is to just such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs... (Mark 10:15)

Children experience security when they are loved. We experience security in the unconditional love of God for us. Children are playful, enjoying their toys and games, enjoying life in the com-

*A Christmas Message from Fr. Jerry Stluka*

pany of friends. It is sometimes said that Christmas is for children –and, indeed, all of us are children of God.

Christmas celebrates God’s coming into this world as a helpless and homeless child who is secure and at peace in the love of God communicated through Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the magi. As children of God we celebrate God’s coming

into our world through our sharing and enjoying the wonderful gifts of Gods creation—especially through the gifts of each other.

The three DeGuzman sisters (Bernadette, Anna and Isabella) kneeling at the Christmas manger illustrate the Church receiving and sharing the Gift of God coming into the world through the children of God.

*See Fr. Stluka’s Message on pg. 2*



# Christmas Memories By Sister Pat Pieper

My fondest memories of Christmas center on the joyful family traditions of my childhood and later in life, the awesome sense of the mystery of God's love.

In days before freeways, the annual trip to Cincinnati for Christmas with our paternal grandmother seemed interminably long for my two sisters and myself. But the boredom and fatigue were quickly forgotten as we mingled with our cousins from Atlanta and Louisville. The adults gathered around the dining room table to play cards while we enjoyed ourselves upstairs playing and vying for a place for the night on our grandma's giant feather bed. Santa's visit was always an eagerly awaited

"surprise" and we marveled at how he managed to find us all away from our homes. Morning Mass in Grandma's big church felt a bit strange but familiar carols and being all together was comforting. Sadness followed our traditional chuck roast dinner as we said our goodbyes and consoled ourselves with talking about seeing each other again in the spring.

The most profound experience of childlike awe occurred on my first Christmas in Congo. The Advent time was truly a preparation for Christmas, no commercialism, very simple gift-giving focused on preparing small bags of rice, sugar and salt for the workers on our mission. The manger scene was the center of our

decor and the community family time spent preparing the meals, at table, working together and at prayer was such a comfort for me, being so far from home for the first time. But I felt the highlight, the tremendous sense of God's nearness and the awesomeness of the mystery we celebrate, walking to the parish church for Midnight Mass. It was pitch black, except for the brilliance of the myriads of stars and the tiny flashlight guiding our steps on the gravel path. I stopped to stare, to allow God's presence and love to permeate my being. I felt myself and all those I loved and held in my heart gathered into the embrace of our loving and good God. I was overcome with gratitude for a truly Blessed Christmas.

## SPREAD THE WORD – Important Dates at Holy Cross:

- Dec. 24, Mon. - Christmas Eve Mass - 5:00 p.m.
- Dec. 25, Tues. - Christmas Day Masses 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.
- Dec. 30 Sun. - Annual Open House in Rectory
- Jan 1, 2008, Tues. - Feast of Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God - Mass 10:00 a.m only
- Feb. 3, 2008, Sun. - Annual Pancake Breakfast
- Feb 6, 2008, Wed. - Ash Wednesday Masses 8:00 & 11:30 a.m.



*2From Fr. Stluka's Message on pg. 1*

As a parish community we are celebrating our 175<sup>th</sup> Christmas this year. We cherish the great gift of Faith that has been received, lived and handed on to us by our ancestors in the parish. We honor the memory of the thousands of faithful parishioners who have lifted high the cross and proclaimed the Love of Christ by their generous lives.

We enjoy the gifts entrusted to us : the gifts of each other and our families, our beautiful, historic church building, a monument to the hard work and responsible stewardship of previous generations. We commit ourselves to living and sharing the gift of faith we have been given. We pledge our support to maintain, strengthen and grow our parish family as we welcome newcomers and reach out in loving

service to our neighbors in need.

As children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, we celebrate the gift of God with us, coming into the world through each of us. We thank God for the priceless gifts of each other, our faith and our parish.

May God bless you, your family and our parish as we celebrate our 175<sup>th</sup> Christmas as a community of faith.

## *"We call it Sunday School."*

Debi Matthews and Mary Ann Scholl work with the Kindergarten through 4th graders.



If you've ever wondered why children were coming out of the sacristy behind St. Joseph's Altar before 11 o'clock Mass on Sundays - here's the answer - Holy Cross is still educating children.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur taught at Holy Cross School for 105 years - from 1856 until the school closed in 1961 - now under the leadership of Debi Matthews and Mary Ann Scholl the Holy Cross Parish School of Religion teaches our Faith to young parishioners.

According to Debi Matthews, a diocesan certified instructor, the teaching sessions began in 2003 when Frank and Dorothy Shirey approached Fr. Jerry with the hope of education their grand daughter Rachel Rice. The classes began that year and evolved with Debi teaching 2nd through 4th graders and Mary Ann Scholl, who is also certified with 23 years of teaching experience at St. Cecilia's, working with the Kindergarten through 1st graders.

Interestingly enough, Debi converted to Catholicism after being raised Lutheran in her home town of Toledo. She said that her Lutheran upbringing gave her "a strong love of scripture." "Much of what I do with the (Holy Cross) children, people did with me, when I was that age - I consider that an advantage," she added. She said that she likes to "lead off with scripture because the Bible stories are so important." "We call it Sunday school." And, now, preparation for the Sacraments follows the bible study.

When asked what benefits she derived from this ministry at our church she replied "a teacher always has to learn twice, so you learn it the first time and then when you're teaching it, it's a leaning process for you all over again. So if you can learn it and teach it, then you really know it - so it's learning it twice, for me that's so wonderful. It's also the opportunity for me to give back to people who helped me along, it's like I get that whole concept of paying forward and it's the way that I can love God - in teaching the children reverence and teaching them about scripture - it gives me more depth in my own spirituality.

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Sister Patricia A. Pieper, SNDdeN, Pastoral Associate  
Michael P. Agriesti, Administrative Assistant

**Liturgy Schedule**

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.  
Daily: 11:30 a.m. Monday - Saturday

**Confessions**

Every Friday: 11:00 a.m.  
Every Sunday: 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

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