St. Athanasius Parish Reading, MA December 25, 2011

From the Pastor

Our Lord has invited all humanity to gather around the manger at Christmas. The call went out to lowly shepherds no less than to highly regarded wise men. Indeed all of creation is represented in Bethlehem: in the humanity of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, the angels in song, and even the animals. Like the Heavenly Hosts, all are drawn to the mystery of "Emmanuel," the God who is with us in Jesus Christ.

We, too, are drawn by diverse reasons to acknowledge God on this most holy day of the year. Crowds flock to St Athanasius Parish in great numbers each Christmas. Some are used to attending Mass once a day; others will arrive only once this year. All are called to enter into communion with God and one another.

I would like to once again provide an excerpt of Cardinal Sean's recent Pastoral Letter *Jesus' Eager Desire: Our Participation in the Sunday Mass*. A copy has been inserted in this bulletin for each of our consideration, regardless of the frequency with which we pass through the parish doors: no person is left out of God's plan of salvation. I hope that his words will motivate us to prayerfully consider the meaning contained in the invitation to Bethlehem:

> *Jesus instituted the Eucharist and founded the Church to foster communion with Him, and through Him, communion with each other.*
>
> *Some have drifted away from the Church and have been waiting for a good time to return. Some have made a choice to stop coming to Church because you have been hurt or because of a difficulty with a Church teaching. Please do not let [anything] separate you from the love of Christ or prevent you from receiving the grace of the sacraments.*
>
> *We recognize that many struggle to reconcile Church teaching with social norms in American society today. We want you to know that you are part of our family. We want to assure you that God loves you and waits for you at Sunday Mass.*
>
> *We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. An inability to fulfill all aspects of Christian worship or to receive Communion should not keep you from Mass. In fact, the habit of being faithful to the Sunday obligation can provide the actual grace, if you cooperate with it, to give you the strength to overcome current obstacles and find paths of reconciliation. We stand ready to help you.*

Our Lord can speak to us in his actions no less than his words, but sometimes we get too used to the story to know what He is saying. A manger is a place of nourishment. At that first Christmas the great and small alike were invited to adore the God who gently came to us not just *for* communion, but *as* Communion. That Christmas invitation remains open every year and every week. In fact, this is the deepest meaning of the phrase to "hold Christmas in our hearts every day the year."

Mass Schedule and Intentions for December 24 - January 1

Saturday, December 24 (Nativity of the Lord/Holy Family)
4:00 p.m. Mass *(upstairs and downstairs)*
6:00 p.m. Mass
10:30 p.m. Mass

Sunday, December 25 (Nativity of the Lord/Holy Family)
10:00 a.m. Christmas Mass

Monday, December 26
No Mass

Tuesday, December 27
9:00 a.m. Mass

Thursday, December 29
9:00 a.m. Guy Grande, 3rd Anniversary Mass

Friday, December 30
9:00 a.m. Pro Populo

Saturday, December 31 (Nativity of the Lord/Holy Family)
4:00 p.m. Elizabeth Byrne, Memorial Mass

Sunday, January 1 (Nativity of the Lord/Holy Family)
9:00 a.m. Francis Antczak, 10 Anniversary Mass
11:00 a.m. Pro Populo

Scripture for the week of December 25, 2011

25	**SUN**	Vigil: Is 62:1-5/Acts 13:16-17, 22-25/ Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25 Midnight: Is 9:1-6/Ti 2:11-14/Lk 2:1-14 Dawn: Is 62:11-12/Ti 3:4-7/Lk 2:15-20 Day: Is 52:7-10/Heb1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18or1:1-5,9-14
26	**Mon**	Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Mt 10:17-22
27	**Tue**	1 Jn 1:1-4/Jn 20:1a, 2-8
28	**Wed**	1 Jn 1:5—2:2/Mt 2:13-18
29	**Thu**	1 Jn 2:3-11/Lk 2:22-35
30	**Fri**	Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3 or Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19/Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40
31	**Sat**	1 Jn 2:18-21/Jn 1:1-18
1	**SUN**	Nm 6:22-27/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21

Welcome

Congratulations to the newly Baptized members of our parish:

• William Peter LeCam

Prayer Corner

Please pray for our military and civilians who defend our freedom, especially:

•The 26th "Yankee" Brigade •Zachary Johnson
•Brian Casey •Lt. Col. Rich Harries
•Sgt. Shane R. Cormier •Brian P. Lally

Remember those in need of our prayers, especially:

•Brian •Jackie B. •Baby Abby •Brenda C. •Bridie
•John & Sandra Cadigan •Joanne C. •Lou D.
•Frank DelGreco •George Gaboural
•Ann Marie Gillespie •Lenny H. •Rosemary I.
•Jane •Catherine Johnson •Martha K.•Karen
•Kevin Kelly •Bill L. •Janet Leger •Maryann Lucerto
•Beth Martin •Jen Murray •Marion Murray
•Bryan Murray •Shirley N. •Colleen O'Brien •Kristin P.
•Fran Packer •Judy Perry •Stefanie & Connor Pleasant
•Elinor Rogers •Karen S.•Joseph Santo •Scott
•Robert Silva •Larry Yetman •Alice Z.

Upcoming Meetings and Events

Religious Education Classes will resume on January 3

The Office will be closed on December 26, 2011 and January 2, 2012

JANUARY'S OFFERING FOR THE READING FOOD PANTRY

Fruit and Vegetable juices and juice boxes
6 packs of Applesauce or other fruits

Supermarket Gift Cards are always welcome.

Last Week	Weekly offertory goal to meet our budget requirements, which is independent of the Deficit Reduction Collection, is $7,700.00 per week	Attendance	Weekly Collection
		720	$7,558.00
		Christmas Collection is for the Clergy Benefit Trust	

St. Athanasius Parish

"Our Parish, Our Future, Our Responsibility"
Capital Campaign

Last weekend, our pastor Father Colarusso announced the inauguration of the parish Capital Campaign *Our Parish, Our Future, Our Responsibility* with a goal of raising a minimum of $600,000 for the restoration of our parish facilities, especially our church ceiling. Tending to these needs will ensure our parish vibrancy for the foreseeable future.

St Athanasius Parish was founded in 1961 to serve the growing spiritual needs of the Town of Reading. Originally 250 families, we have happily grown to over 1900 households. Our church is known for its landmark appearance that combines the contemporary design of a "Hyperbolic Paraboloid" with a traditional interior arrangement ordered toward the worship of God.

Now in our 50th Anniversary year, our community continues to thrive, but as with all things, our parish and its buildings require tending. In fact, securing our facilities will ensure our parish vibrancy for the foreseeable future. Our gifted Building Committee has prioritized the projects and estimated the costs of a modest but necessary restoration program for St. Athanasius. As you can imagine, this is a most important and challenging task and now is the time to come together as a community to address these needs.

There will be more information about the Capital Campaign after Christmas. Watch for a special invitation to be sent to all registered parishioners in January. You and your family will be invited to attend a special Campaign Reception hosted by Father Colarusso.

The St. Athanasius/St. Agnes RCIA program provides instruction for adults who would like to be baptized into the Catholic Church and for baptized adult Catholics who would like to receive the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and/or Confirmation. RCIA candidates and the RCIA team meet every Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m. through April. (We alternate each month between St. Agnes and St. Athanasius) The program is also open to anyone who would like to review the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church. This would include any Catholic, not just those who have been "away" from the Church.

The RCIA team will not meet during the week before Christmas and New Year's. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 3, at St. Athanasius in the PAC. Please feel free to join us.

For more information call Fr. Colarusso at the Office or Roc O'Connell (781-944-3106).

High School Youth trip to Washington DC for the March for Life

January 22-24 there will be a pilgrimage to Washington DC for the 39th annual National March for Life. This Pilgrimage will be led by Cardinal Sean O'Malley. This is a great opportunity for youth to stand up for what they believe in, learn about our legal system, and freedom of speech. It will help the youth grow spiritually by praying with thousands of other youth, celebrating Mass with Cardinal Sean, opportunity for Reconciliation, and Adoration. Each day we are away the group will process this experience. The cost is $125.

If anyone, young or old, is interested in going, please contact Jennifer Campagna at 781-944-0330 or jcampagna@parishmail.com.

In Word & Deed

Feast of the Holy Family

People live family values every day, often heroically, helping one another achieve greatness and success. *The* family value is love. It carries us through, and helps bring us together as one. It supports and affirms, it heals and nourishes, and it forgives and accepts. This is why our celebration of our Lord's Nativity at Christmas is also a good time to remember the role of the Holy Family. Joseph, as husband and father, protects and guides. Mary, as wife and mother, nourishes and supports. Jesus, as a son, obeys and grows in holiness and wisdom. Despite their unique roles in salvation history, the members of this family are pretty much like the rest of us: living together in faith, hope and love.

There was once a TV show called "Kids Say the Darndest Things". It featured young kids being asked questions about themselves or their friends or their families, especially their parents. Inevitably, one of the kids would say something that would reveal a secret, misinterpret events or cause parents a bit of embarrassment. The comments were especially funny when we knew that the same things could be said of our families.

The family is the school of life and faith. We learn about God, how to live our faith, how to love and accept others, how to share, forgive, get along, be hopeful. We learn about sin and grace, about triumph and defeat. We learn how to trust and be trusted. The people we call our own teach us who we are and who we can become. They celebrate our strengths and support our weaknesses. They keep our secrets and trumpet our successes. In good times and in bad, through thick and thin, family needs to be together, one for all and all for one.

The Christmas Season gives us many opportunities to express our love and appreciation for our family. Time spent together is so precious and we should try to include everyone, even those who over time and events have grown a bit distant. Pray for the grace of the Holy Family and let others know how much they are loved.

~James Gaffney, © 2008 Karides Lic. to St. George Publishing

jim@stgeorgepublishing.com

2012 "Sights of Reading" Calendar

Give yourself the gift of beautiful photos of Reading for all of 2012 while also helping the Reading Teen Girl Scouts earn the needed monies for their community service project as they pursue earning the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award in Girl Scouting.

Contact info@calendarofreading.com, visit www.calendarofreading.com or call 781 944-3620 for further information. Your support of the Girl Scouts initiative is much appreciated.

DOES SOMEONE'S DRINKING BOTHER YOU?
Al-Anon Family Groups of MA holds an ongoing discussion group on Wednesday nights at the Parish Activity Center across the parking lot at St. Athanasius Church. The meeting runs from 7:30 - 8:45 pm.
Come share our experience, strength & hope.

www.ma-al-anon-alateen.org

Spiritual Direction

Do you long to nourish your hunger for God?
Spiritual Direction is a professional ministry within the Church providing **guidance and exploration** for growing in relationship with God. All that is required is that you take time to reflect on **how Our Lord is working in your life** with a Spiritual Director and share this in conversation. These conversations begin right where you are and help you to **experience the presence of God more deeply in your life**. In a recent announcement Pope Benedict XVI said that "Anyone who wants to live their baptism responsibly should have a Spiritual Director"
For more information call or email Jean Garofoli, Certified Spiritual Director
Garofoli@comcast.net or 617-584-2332.
All information shared is kept in strict confidence.

Saint Athanasius Church

300 Haverhill Street, Reading MA 01867

Parish Office Hours: Monday - Friday
9:00 am -12:30 pm 1:30 - 4:00 pm
781-944-0330 Fax: 781-944-1266

Parish Web Site: www.ReadingCatholic.org
Parish email: stathanasius@parishmail.com

Pastor **Reverend Darin V. Colarusso**
frcolarusso@parishmail.com

Permanent Deacon **Deacon Neil Sumner**
nsumner@parishmail.com

Director of Faith Formation
(Confirmation/Youth, Young Adult) **Jennifer Campagna**
jcampagna@parishmail.com

Director of Religious Ed. **Nancy MacAllister**
nmacallister@parishmail.com

Music Director **Marcia Cutlip**
mcutlip@parishmail.com

Administrative Assistant **Susan McIntyre**
smcintyre@parishmail.com

Worship Schedule

Lord's Day Masses:
Saturday 4:00 pm Sunday 9:00 am & 11:00 am

Daily Mass:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 9:00 am
Preceded by Morning Prayer at 8:45 am

St. Agnes Daily Mass:
Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday at 9:00 am
Tuesday & Thursday at 7:00 am

Sacrament of Reconciliation:
Saturday 3:15 - 3:45 pm or by appointment

Sacrament of Baptism
Celebrated communally and publicly on the third Sunday at 1:00 pm. Please call the Parish Office to register and obtain information about required Preparation session which is scheduled on the second Sunday of the month.

Sacrament of Marriage:
Please contact the Parish Office at least six months in advance of your wedding date

Anointing of the Sick
Please notify parish staff when a person is seriously ill. The sacrament is celebrated communally twice a year. Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion are available to bring the Eucharist to the homebound. Please call the Parish Office.