



# Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## JUBILEE CHRISTMAS

*A Great Way to Give to Those in Need*

Christmas is a time when we celebrate God's love and His gift of His Son by spreading joy and giving gifts to our loved ones. Throughout this season, we spend a lot of time and money choosing the perfect gifts to give one another. It is also one of the times of the year when the spirit of the season stirs in us the desire to be most generous to those in need. In our parish, we have seen this every year with the gifts that we provide for Jubilee Christmas.

Jubilee Christmas is facilitated by the local organization Connections. They receive referrals of children and families in need throughout all of Daviess County. They go through and vet all of the families that have been nominated to receive gifts. After that, gift tags are provided to local churches, businesses, and organizations. Here at Our Lady of Hope, we provide gifts to roughly 150 area children.

Teresa Joyce has been organizing our parish's involvement in Jubilee Christmas for many years.

"The generosity of our parishioners is just amazing," Teresa says. "These gift tags have a gift suggestion with a price point on them, but our parishioners routinely bring gifts that far exceed that dollar amount. People will bring in bikes, scooters, and much bigger gifts. We also provide a very large number of gifts for the program which is such a blessing for these families."

This program provides gifts for children in a unique way. Once the gifts are collected from the churches and businesses, they are organized and set out at Bethany Christian Church here in Washington. For children ages 0-10 years old, gifts are donated and the parents are invited to come and "shop" for their children. They choose three gifts for each child.



For children ages 11-15, gift cards to Walmart are donated. The children come to the church for a pizza party. After the party, they get on a bus and go to Walmart where they get to spend their gift cards on items of their choosing. These children are assisted by a mentor who helps them find the right sizes of clothing, keeps track of the cost of their items, and compares prices, all while making the

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## Jubilee Christmas *continued from front cover*

outing a special and fun time. The program serves over 350 children in the area, and it takes over 400 volunteers to make it possible.

“This is the perfect time for parishioners to come together for those in need,” Teresa says. “We can show them our capacity for love and compassion for those who are in need.”

Our Lady of Hope has a storage area for the gifts while they are being collected. Parishioners volunteer to load and transport the gifts to Bethany Christian Church. Many parishioners also volunteer for the event where parents pick gifts. Collin Worland is one parishioner who has been volunteering for many years.

“I like to help people in any way that I can,” Collin says. “Sometimes it can be hard to know what people actually need. With Jubilee Christmas, everything has

been taken care of so it is easy for me to come in and know that I am actually serving others in a way they need. Their needs are truly being met.”

Helping these families — especially children — celebrate the Christmas season is a gift for those who volunteer.

“Helping others makes for a happy and merry Christmas,” Collin says. “I may not know them personally, but it is great getting to make others happy.”

There are a variety of ways for parishioners to be involved in Jubilee Christmas. You can take ornaments off of the trees that are set up in November and return unwrapped gifts to the church. Volunteers are also needed to load and transport the gifts. Parishioners can also help the event days when parents “shop” for gifts for their children.

*To find out more about getting involved with this special program, contact Teresa Joyce at the parish office, 812-254-2883.*



*A Letter From Our Pastor*

# Remembering the TRUE ESSENCE OF CHRISTMAS

Dear Parishioners,

As we approach the joyful season of Christmas, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the true meaning of this holy celebration. Amid the hustle and bustle, the shopping, the festive decorations, and the excitement, it is easy to lose sight of the profound significance of Christmas.

Christmas is not merely a time for exchanging gifts, indulging in delicious feasts, or enjoying the company of family and friends, though these are certainly important and beautiful aspects of the season. It is a time when we come together to commemorate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is a reminder of the profound love of God, who sent His only Son into the world to save us from sin and darkness.

To truly remember the true meaning of Christmas, let us take the following to heart:

- **Prayer:** Begin and end each day with prayer. Reflect on the significance of Jesus' birth and thank God for the gift of His Son. Spend time in prayerful contemplation of the Nativity scene and ask for the grace to appreciate the miracle of Christ's incarnation.
- **Read the Scriptures:** Dive into the story of Jesus' birth as described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Reading and meditating on these passages can deepen our understanding of the Nativity and its significance.
- **Advent Preparation:** Take part in the Advent season leading up to Christmas. Advent is a time of anticipation, reflection, and preparation. Lighting the Advent candles and participating in Advent services can help us focus on the spiritual aspect of the season.



- **Acts of Charity:** Christmas is a season of giving, as a reflection of God's ultimate gift to humanity. Consider participating in acts of charity and kindness, whether through donations to those in need, volunteering, or simply showing love and compassion to others.

- **Attend Mass:** Of course, attending Mass on Christmas Day is essential. The Eucharist is a profound way to commemorate the birth of Jesus, receive His blessings, and be united as a faith community.

- **Simplify Traditions:** While traditions and festivities are essential, consider simplifying your celebrations to emphasize the spiritual aspects of the season. Make time for reflection, caroling, and perhaps a Nativity play.
- **Family Devotions:** Incorporate the true meaning of Christmas into your family celebrations. Share the story of Jesus' birth with your children and encourage them to contemplate its significance. Together, create a manger scene to remind everyone of the central event.

Remember, the essence of Christmas lies in the miracle of God becoming man. Let us open our hearts to the love and hope that Jesus brings, and may we share that love with others. As we celebrate this beautiful season, let us keep our faith at the forefront, and may the joy of Christ's birth fill our homes and hearts.

Wishing you all a blessed and meaningful Christmas. May the presence of Christ be felt in your lives and homes.

In Christ,

*Fr. Paul Ferguson*

Fr. Paul Ferguson  
Pastor

## A Look at the **DECORATING MINISTRY** *Parish Ministries Bring B*



*The damage to this figure is evident.*



*Chips and missing appendages have been restored.*

During the holidays, and indeed, anytime we attend Mass throughout the year, Our Lady of Hope Church is beautifully decorated and kept clean and tidy. Two of our ministries — the Decorating Ministry and the Martha Society — work separately and in tandem to make it so. Their giving of their time and talents serves as a prime example of living in stewardship.

With the approaching Christmas season, the Decorating Ministry prepares to move into action once Fr. Paul notifies the leaders. What comes next is an exercise that comes from expertise and experience.

Robert “Beeb” Graham cites the past work of the late Floyd Tuggle and Fred Schwenk for the inspiration the ministry draws upon each year. He also cites the past work of emeritus ministry members Bill Mangin and Jim Templin, who sometimes will join the decorating team.

“Our work goes back to Floyd and Fred,” Beeb says. “They had done it for years, and they asked many of us to join them. Floyd was a natural leader. Bill and Jim also worked tirelessly on the committee. We always think of all of them and honor them.

“We have 19 artificial trees, ranging from four feet to 12 feet, all on stands and platforms,” Beeb adds. “They are stored one mile away from the church in a separate building. We have a diagram that shows where each one goes, and each tree has an identifying letter.”

When the date is set for the decorating, Shelly Deem, Bonnie Graham and the calling committee notify the 20 or more helpers who arrange themselves in teams of two to four people. Those with pickup trucks and trailers meet at the storage building to move the trees to the church.

Besides the artificial trees, the ministry brings in 11 fresh wreaths to the church from a local farm market.

When the trees arrive at the church and are positioned according to the diagram, the women in the ministry begin placing the lights on each.

“It was decided that it is best to take the lights off for storage and put them back on each year,” Beeb says. “They are all white lights, and we use a few spotlights. A crew also hangs the wreaths inside and outside the church.”

Once the trees and greenery are in place, the crew then bring the church’s Nativity pieces to the sanctuary for setup. This year, the figures in the Nativity will be an example of the stewardship practiced by Christmas Decorating Ministry member Chris Palmer. He has researched and carefully restored and conserved the figures so they may be enjoyed for many more years. They will have their debut this Christmas.

During his research on the origin of the Nativity set, Chris found

# MINISTRY and MARTHA SOCIETY

## *Beauty and Care to Church*

conflicting information on the maker. The initials “CS” are inscribed on the statues, but he could not determine if they stand for Catholic Statues or Columbia Statues. He contacted a Catholic supply business in St. Louis to inquire if there was a catalog. There are none available.

“I would love to see the original catalog,” Chris says. “But it’s been a dead end on the history. I hope someone can help. I’d love to know the age, but if I had to guess, they are from between the 1930s up to perhaps the 1950s.”

The statues are made of plaster and are very delicate. Some are more than two and one-half feet tall and are very vulnerable to scratches from the slightest impact.

“No matter how carefully they have been handled, a lot of the damage came from being placed into and out of storage,” Chris says. “It’s obvious that the people over the years have tried to treat them with respect.”

As Chris helped move the statues in the past, he noticed how detailed they are. They were carefully hand-painted. But he also noticed the chips in the pieces, and that several were missing extremities, noses, or ears.

“Brenda Sobecki, a ministry member, called and asked if I could do the work,” Chris says. “I said, ‘I’ll try.’ I felt it was something that could be and needed to be done. I started the second week of January. I worked first on the donkey. It turned out okay, so I went from there.”

Chris used plaster to rebuild some of the missing parts, but there were places where he used his modeling tools to reshape the plaster. Once the missing parts were restored, Chris then used water-based paint to bring back the original colors. His work on the statues was completed right after Easter.

Once the work was finished, Chris then began building storage boxes for the statues so they would be protected when not on display.

However, there was one other project to be completed — the wooden stable, or manger. The item is 40 inches tall, and

60 inches wide, scaled to the figures. Chris was able to make its needed repairs.

When the Decorating Ministry has completed its work — whether it’s Christmas, Easter, or other special times — the Martha Society works to make sure everything is kept clean in the church.

“We come in after all the weekend Masses and get the church ready for the week,” says Carol Killion, ministry chair. “We touch up around the sacristy and vacuum the foyer and make sure the restrooms are clean and supplied.”

During Christmas and Easter, the Decorating Ministry turns the tasks over to the Martha Society, whose members make sure the flowers and poinsettias are watered and cleaned of dead blossoms.

“A lot of people don’t realize, and they expect the church to always look this way, that there are people behind the scenes who make sure it’s tidy and put back in order,” Carol says.

The Martha Society has 12 members. The crews will rotate through the weekends so each crew works once a month.



*The repairs made to the figure of a flutist are visible before painting.*

*New members are always welcome. Those interested in the Decorating Ministry may contact Shelly Deem at 812-881-8182 or Bonnie Graham at 812-617-0233. Those interested in the Martha Society may contact Carol Killion at 812-617-4250.*

## THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER: ..... A MODEL OF MISSIONARY ZEAL

The Feast of St. Francis Xavier, celebrated on Dec. 3, commemorates the life and work of one of the Church's most revered saints, St. Francis Xavier, a missionary and co-founder of the Society of Jesus.

St. Francis Xavier was born in 1506 in the Kingdom of Navarre (modern-day Spain). He studied at the University of Paris, where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola, with whom he co-founded the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. St. Francis Xavier is particularly known for his missionary work during the Age of Exploration. He traveled to India, Japan, and other parts of Southeast Asia to spread the message of Christianity. His tireless efforts and dedication to sharing the Gospel earned him the title "Apostle of the Indies."

St. Francis Xavier's life and work are of profound importance for Catholics for several reasons:

- **Missionary Zeal:** St. Francis Xavier's unwavering commitment to evangelization and the spread of the Christian faith serves as a model of missionary zeal. His journeys to distant lands to share the Gospel inspire Catholics to be proactive in their faith and to reach out to those who have yet to hear the Good News.
- **Compassion and Service:** St. Francis Xavier was known for

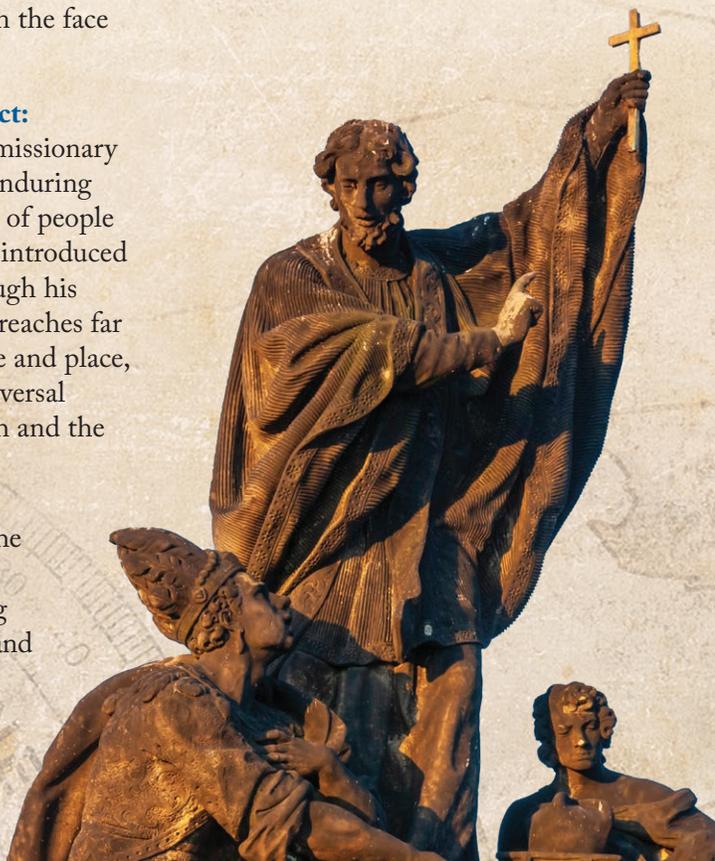
his deep compassion for the marginalized and the poor. He worked tirelessly to alleviate suffering and bring comfort to those in need. His example reminds Catholics of the importance of service and charity in the Christian life.

- **Faith and Sacrifice:** The saint's life was marked by sacrifice and selflessness. He endured significant personal hardships and challenges in his missionary work, all while remaining steadfast in his faith. St. Francis Xavier's dedication teaches Catholics the value of faith and commitment, even in the face of adversity.
- **International Impact:** St. Francis Xavier's missionary efforts have left an enduring legacy, with millions of people in Asia having been introduced to Christianity through his work. His influence reaches far beyond his own time and place, emphasizing the universal nature of the Church and the Catholic faith.

Catholics can celebrate the Feast of St. Francis Xavier by attending Mass and reflecting on the saint's exemplary life and legacy. Prayers and novenas

dedicated to St. Francis Xavier can be offered, seeking his intercession for missionaries and those in need.

St. Francis Xavier's feast day is a time to rekindle our own missionary spirit, whether through personal evangelization, supporting missionary efforts, or engaging in charitable works. It is a day to be inspired by his dedication to the faith, his selflessness, and his commitment to serving others. His legacy continues to influence the Church and inspire Catholics to live out their faith more deeply, by reaching out to others, helping the less fortunate, and spreading the message of Christ with fervor and dedication.





JOIN US FOR THE  
**Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration on Dec. 8**  
*A Faith Family Honoring the Mother of All Humanity*

On Dec. 12, the Church honors Mary under the title Our Lady of Guadalupe. This feast day commemorates Our Lady's apparition to Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in Mexico. There, she introduced herself to him as the Mother of God and the Mother of all humanity.

On Dec. 8, we will come together as a parish family to celebrate this feast day. Beginning with a bilingual Rosary at 9 a.m. in the church, the celebration will continue with a 10 a.m. bilingual Mass, and it will conclude with time together in the middle school gym.

"We will have dancers and music and food," Fr. Juan Ramirez says. "This is a great opportunity to come together as a parish to celebrate our faith. Mary is very

important, especially in the Advent season. She brings us to her Son. Celebrations like this remind us that we need to follow Mary's example, we need to follow Jesus."

Additionally, Fr. Juan believes that our annual Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration builds the community within our parish.

"This offers us an opportunity to come together and see the unity within our parish," he says. "That's the main goal — for us to be united as one family. We come together to celebrate our faith and our culture."

For Fr. Juan, this feast day is particularly important.

"I grew up in Mexico always celebrating this feast," he says. "Mary was key in my vocation to the priesthood.

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## Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration on Dec. 8

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I was always praying and asking for her intercession and her guidance. This feast day is a reminder for me to pray and ask for Mary's intercession."

Yet, Fr. Juan is quick to remind us that Mary is, in fact, the Mother of all humanity — as such, she cares for every one of us. She wants us all to come to her.

"The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe reminds all of us that we have her as our mother, and she intercedes for us all," Fr. Juan says.

Join us for this great celebration on Dec. 8!

"There is room for everyone to help out," Fr. Juan says. "It is a beautiful way to come together and share our gifts. Everyone is welcome!"



*If you would like to help coordinate the day's festivities,  
contact Kande or Fr. Juan at the parish office, 812-254-2883.*