

## ***From the Pastor's Desk***

Every day that we are a member of the Visitation Parish family is a day that we are looking up! We are a community filled with Advent Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love not only during of these four weeks of preparation for the Coming Lord both at the end of time and remembered at his humble birth in Bethlehem more than two thousand years ago; but also every moment that we have the opportunity to lift up our hearts, souls, bodies, and minds to God in the course of our daily lives. These holy weeks of Advent are a special time for us to exist in a mode of eager expectation of the new gifts that God will give up in Christ if we only give ourselves completely over to him. As I said last week, we cannot live as if life is without suffering, hardship, and disappointment; **however**, we can live in the certain faith that Christ is with us at every moment – embracing us with grace-filled compassion so that we can transcend these harsher moments and envision a world that is so very good, just as God created it. We, as the Visitation Parish Community, have been given the opportunity to shine as a light in darkness as we now, during these later Advent days turn our focus to the Coming Christ at Christmas who will **never** disappoint us or leave us abandoned. This is the meaning of the Christmas days we are anticipating – EMMANUEL – GOD WITH US! And so, we cry out at the end of Advent liturgy: MARANATHA – COME LORD JESUS.

This week the Lord has come into my life in so many wonderful and glorious ways! This past Tuesday, I met with my rheumatologist who continues to work with me to address the serious problem of my gout with increased success. On Wednesday, I met with John Fontana, our diaconal candidate, as we planned out the nooks and crannies of our working relationship in the coming months of his formation with us. As I said before, John is a fine man, and a lovely addition to our family. I also had the opportunity to finish a wonderful new book that I am reviewing for the College Theology Society (a professional group of which I am a member) entitled: **Be Transformed: A Biblical Journey toward a More Just World**. To be succinct, this text is revolutionary. It is a much-needed monograph that examines, through the use of Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching, how we Catholic Christians must take up the responsibility to be agents of justice in a world dominated by greed, arrogance, division, self-centeredness, and violence. It made me realize how much my conversion needs to be ongoing – AND THAT IS GOOD NEWS! I also had my weekly privilege of reading an summarizing Pope Francis Wednesday Audience which you will read about in the main portion of today's bulletin. On Thursday, I meet with the Jubilee Committee and we fleshed out several ideas regarding the Jubilee Year 2025 including the promotion of diocesan events as well as creating several unique opportunities of how we could incarnate the spirit of Jubilee uniquely here in our parish. I am full of hope that all of you will have a palpable degree of excitement of this event that we celebrate as a universal Church every 25 years. There is no hiding that I am exuberant with joy about all the possibilities that accompany the



celebration of this momentous time. I also met on Thursday with members of my Christian Initiation team. Although at the time of this writing (which is Thursday evening) we have no potential catechumens or candidates, I do have hope that some person or persons may come forward during our "Come and See" inquiry period. Once again, I am counting on you, if you have anyone who has any interest in becoming Catholic or completing their initiation by celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation, please encourage them to come to one of our "Come and See" sessions after Mass over the next two weekends. Friday has yet to happen, but I am looking forward to a fruitful meeting with my friend, who is also the Vicar General of the Diocese, Fr. Alan Thomas. We had scheduled this meeting for November but had to reschedule due to inclement weather. SO, as I said, things are always looking up here at Visitation Parish. Share the good news with someone who has not prayed with us for a while, or maybe someone new who is looking for a parish to call home! Everyone is always welcome!

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#### Jumpstarting Jubilee 2025 – Advent Joy

The third candle of Advent symbolizes Joy. Jubilee joy comes from our journey toward the fullness of God's Kingdom. The upcoming Holy Year offers occasions for this through opportunities for pilgrimage and through communal liturgies. On December 29, 2024, Bishop Mark will open the Jubilee here in the diocese with a special Mass at 2 PM in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

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**Anyone interested in joining the Saint John Gualbert Conference of the Saint Vincent DePaul Society** to minister to individuals who need physical, financial, or spiritual assistance are invited to attend a meeting that occurs on both the first Saturday of every month at 9:00 AM and the third Thursday of every month in the Saint Joseph Room of the Saint John Activities Center in downtown Johnstown. If you are aware of anyone in our community who needs assistance, please call the Saint Vincent De Paul contacts number (814-421-4344) on Mondays and Fridays to request assistance. For assistance on Tuesday through Thursday, you may reach out to the Human Needs office at 814-535-8521.

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**The Office of Lay Ecclesial Ministry** will be offering two courses that will be taught by Deacon Michael Russo by way of ZOOM. They are:

-**SACRAMENTS**: Tuesdays from 6:00-8:00 for 8 weeks, beginning Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>.

-**US CATHOLIC CHURCH HISTORY**: Thursdays from 6:00-8:00, beginning Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>.

The cost for each course is \$35.00 and a \$20.00 material cost fee that can be turned in with the registration form.

To register, please visit the diocesan website at [www.dioceseaj.org/laay-ecclesial-ministry](http://www.dioceseaj.org/laay-ecclesial-ministry) or contact Jessica at the Office of Adult Enrichment at 814-361-2000 or at

[jgramling@dioceseaj.org](mailto:jgramling@dioceseaj.org)

**The parish will pay the \$35 cost of participation for the first 3 people to contact Fr. John, with the hope that you will use your newfound knowledge to minister to our parish in the future.**