



St. Mary
of the
Assumption

TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE
EST. 1925

Pastoral Council *update*

Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2009

‘Hope’ Emerges as Common Theme Throughout Parish Life This Advent

Every year, a great deal of activity radiates throughout the St. Mary of the Assumption community during the season of Advent, and this year is no exception. As the faithful prepare their hearts and minds for the coming of Christ, a common theme emerges throughout parish life—hope.

When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present the ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for His second coming (CCC 524). This expectation manifests itself in many ways throughout parish life; through special liturgical practices and customs, by communal acts of charity, and through renewed focus and dedication to one’s faith in Christ.

“Christmas is the convergence of the longing of our ancestors for a Savior, our fond recollections from the past, and the yearnings we share for enduring peace. One word summarizes all these desires—hope!” said St. Mary’s Pastor Fr. William Foley.

Heritage of Hope Signals Brighter Future

St. Mary’s has been a beacon of hope for the Upper Marlboro community for 185 years, so it is no coincidence that this word is a central

theme of the current parish capital campaign. Just as we hope for Christ’s coming throughout Advent, so too do we hope for a brighter future for St. Mary’s—a future in which more effective facilities on the church and school properties will enhance our mission of proclaiming Christ Jesus.

As the *Heritage of Hope* campaign hits full stride, donations of more than \$2.2 million have been pledged—representing 40 percent of the goal—but more help is needed. “If you have not yet made your decision, I ask you to pray and consult once again as a family,” said Fr. Foley. “As my beloved predecessor, Monsignor Hughes said to me two years ago, ‘the best days of St. Mary’s are ahead of us’ and the

success of our capital campaign will be an important and vital manifestation of this hopeful vision.”

Seasonal Works of Charity Reflect Parish Hope

The hope parishioners have in Christ is reflected in many works of charity that are underway this Advent season. For example, the parish St. Vincent de Paul Society once again is joining forces with

GIVE HOPE!

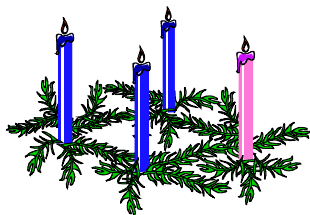


The Capital Campaign for St. Mary of the Assumption



Fr. Foley (above) is shown blessing last year’s Angel Intention Tree that the 2008-09 Eighth Grade students helped set up at St. Mary’s school. Each year, ornaments on the tree become gifts for loved ones during the Christmas season.

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Pastoral Council
2009-2010

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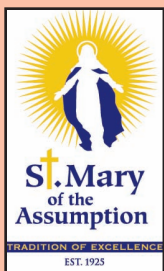
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St. Mary's school to prepare Christmas baskets of food, clothing, and gifts and for needy families.



Caring Tree ornaments help three groups.

Another Advent tradition continuing this year is St. Mary's Caring Tree. The tree, located inside the front of the church, contains red, green and gold ornaments which suggest gifts for parishioners to give for the retired Sisters of the Immaculate Heart (green), Forestville Pregnancy Center (red), and local Homeless Shelter (gold). Individuals are encouraged to select an ornament from the tree, purchase the suggested gift, and return the gift with the ornament attached by Sunday, Dec. 13th.

Yet another St. Mary's tradition is the school's Angel Tree, on which ornaments are placed to become special intentions and gifts for loved ones during the Christmas season. Still many other charitable acts are performed by individual parishioners as well as members of the Knights of Columbus and Ladies Auxiliary and other parish groups.

Liturgy Committee Plans and Implements Numerous Activities for Advent Season

Advent yields many liturgical gifts and St. Mary's Liturgy Committee is devoting great energy in helping the parish prepare for Christ. From decorating the church campus to planning activities at the various Masses, this group is dedicated to helping the outward expression of public prayer mirror the inward disposition of faith.

One conspicuous sign of the season—the parish Advent wreath—is quite unique to St. Mary's of the Assumption. Located at the center of the church, the traditional parish wreath rests on top of a tobacco basket which is suspended from a ceiling rafter. The arrangement is a historic reminder of the agricultural heritage of the Upper Marlboro community.

The four candles nestled on the wreath represent the four weeks of Advent. Three candles are purple and one is rose. The purple candles in particular symbolize the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices and goods works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, when the priest also wears rose vestments at Mass; Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over and they are close to Christmas. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of his second coming to judge the living and the dead.

Another expression of faith this season is St. Mary's new *Lessons and Carols* event, to be held Sunday, December 20. The *Festival of Lessons and Carols* is a service of Scripture and song that dates to late 19th century England. In this service, nine Scripture lessons recount the Fall, the promise of a Messiah, the Incarnation, and the Great Commission to preach the Good News. Each lesson is followed by a carol or other song that reflects on the lesson's message and a brief prayer.

The Festival, which is being organized by Dot Ridley, will employ the musical and oratory talents of the parish and student ministries. It is also intended to have an ecumenical spirit, with members from other Christian communities in the area being invited to attend. It is just one of the many ways that St. Mary's is working to make ready the way of the Lord this season!



**The Festival of
Lessons & Carols**
Sunday, December 20

Please join us for a service of
Scripture, Song and Fellowship!

3:30 PM - Community Gathering & Carols
4:00 PM - The Festival of Lessons and Carols
Reception and Fellowship Following
"Prepare your hearts and minds for the
coming of our savior Jesus Christ!"