

THE GABRIEL



CHRISTMAS
2019



FROM THE DESK OF FATHER TOM

Dear Friends,

We rejoice to hear the angelic greeting, “Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy.” “Behold.” I was amazed to discover that the word “behold” is used one hundred and eleven times in Scripture! Why, I mused, does that word appear so many times? Perhaps because all around us and certainly within us, there are countless hints, whispers, and wonderings, an infinite number of invitations, movements and ponderings, an abundance of tidings, manifestations and promptings in which we are invited to “behold.”

One hundred and eleven usages of the word in scripture, sent me to the dictionary. My favorite definition found there of “behold” is “to observe with care.” Scripture – and the Advent season – beckon us to “observe with care” all that is put before us here and now. The very One who spoke in the beginning, when the world was still a formless mass, continues to come among us, and even today longs to take on our flesh while wondrously saying “Behold, I make all things new!” God dreams within us!

The Advent stories we’ve again heard are not only the stories of Mary and Joseph, Jeremiah and Elizabeth. They are launching pads for our own “beholding.” Yes, observe with care the delights of the God who dreams within us. In putting ourselves into the familiar stories and making them our own there clearly is much to behold. St. Paul put it this way, “You are God’s work of art created in Christ”. Where does the Christ come? In those hints, whispers, wonderings, invitations, movements, tidings, manifestations and promptings which, at times, we do not behold!! Hence the one hundred and one injunctions to “behold” what God is doing!

The Advent season we just completed is designed to help us do more than just “careful observing” of the One making all things new. Advent invited us to allow God to bring newness into our lives. What might be new in your life this Christmas? In the coming year? How might you join the many, many Apostles of Hope here in SSPJ, who, very much like Mary, Joseph, Jeremiah and Elizabeth, in marvelous “bite-sized” ways, have enabled the One who has a long history of doing the impossible to do just that – making the “impossible” become, in fact, not just possible, but real in the here and now?

I invite you to “behold” in this issue the stories and faces of the ever incarnating God who sees and loves in us what has already been seen and loved in Jesus and in those who continue to follow and enflesh Him. Our God continues to make things new by prompting and impelling us to behold, that is, to observe with care. This is Emmanuel – God with us - who teaches us to recognize and embrace the many Godly possibilities we can birth with each other.

What might you “behold” this Christmas?

Merry Christmas!

Father Tom



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FROM THE DESK OF FATHER TOM...P1

FROM OUR EDITOR...P3

MUSIC MINISTRY IN A HOLIDAY MOOD...P5

STATE OF THE PARISH...P6

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK...P7

NEWS FROM SSPJ SCHOOL...P9

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES...P15

RCIA NEWS...P19

MEMORIES OF SSPJ...P20

NATIONAL CATHOLIC YOUTH CONFERENCE...P21

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ACTIVITIES...P23

A CHRISTMAS STORY...P25

THOUGHTS OF CHRISTMAS...P26

FROM OUR EDITOR

ELENA ATKINS MINGIONE

I'm not sure where TIME goes these days. I am sure of one thing, the days, the weeks, the months, the years, go by faster and faster as we grow older. They become a blur.

It never seemed that way when I was young. It never seemed that way when my children were little. The days were certainly longer, as were the summers. I'm certain of that.

TIME moved more slowly. I couldn't imagine my children getting on a school bus or going to high school. College was eons away and their leaving the nest was incomprehensible.

But somehow all those things occurred and much, much more.

I've come to realize, with TIME, all things change. My children grew up and they had children. I have grandchildren. I have wrinkles on my face. Possibly the roadmap of a warrior.

Sometimes it's an eternity, that thing called TIME. Sometimes it just needs a second to change lives. What we learn is, TIME stops for no one. On occasion it can be measured by what we do with it.

But here we are again. Wasn't it summer yesterday? It was Christmas 2018 a few months ago. But it's Christmas 2019 today.

The lights, the trees, the joy fullness, the children, the manger, the tastes and smells of Christmas surround us.

I recall with clear memory being a student at Our Lady of Loretto R.C. School in Hempstead. At Christmas Monsignor Gillick sat in (what appeared to be) a gargantuan red velvet chair in the auditorium. All the children would line up to greet Monsignor Gillick one by one. The choir sang. He would hand each of us a box of hard candy, an orange, and a religious momentum. It was a tradition we students loved. TIME: I thought of Monsignor Gillick this Christmas season. In doing so, I found this in the NY Times archive.

HEMPSTEAD, L.I., Dec. 4, 1970 Msgr. Aloysius H. Gillick, pastor emeritus of Our Lady of Loretto Parish in Hempstead, died today in Mercy Hospital, Rockville Centre, after a long illness. He was 86 years old.

He studied at St. John's Preparatory School and St. John's College, where he received a B.A. in 1906. He won his Ph.D. after graduate studies at Fordham University in 1906-08. He studied also at Capranica College and was ordained in 1913.

What struck me was this. At that TIME going to college was somewhat extraordinary. But Monsignor Gillick received a PHD in 1908. 1908 was 110 years ago. TIME

Note: 8.6 percent of people had advanced degrees in the year 2000. 13.1 have advanced degrees today. Extraordinary man

This Christmas take TIME. It passes too quickly. Cherish it. Look at the snow. Enjoy the lights. Sit in silent prayer. Have a conversation with God. Commit that in the New Year of 2020 you will cherish every day because your TIME will come. And when that occurs the Son of God will judge what you did with your days and with your nights. It's called TIME. Spend it with those you love this Christmas season and do better with it in 2020. It's a proven scientific fact.

There's no better gift.

TIME: How would you like that wrapped?

Merry Christmas.

Adeste, fideles, laeti triumphantes

Venite, venite in Bethlehem.

Natum videte Regem angelorum.

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus, Dominum.

Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,

Parturit virgo mater,

Deum verum, genitum, non factum.

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus, Dominum.

Cantet nunc hymnos chorus angelorum,

Cantet nunc aula caelestium

Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo;

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus, Dominum.

Ergo qui natus die hodierna,

Iesu, tibi sit gloria

Patris aeterni verbum caro factum:

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus,

Venite adoremus, Dominum.

MUSIC MINISTRY IN A HOLIDAY MOOD

By MARGARET ADAMS

Special music was in the air this Advent. Our gathering Hymn “Come and Set Us Free” by Trevor Thomson, awakened our hearts with different ways of freeing us to see God’s light.

Christmas music resounded through the many liturgies and events at SSPJ Parish.

The tree lighting was a beautiful tribute to memorialize our loved ones. Carols sounded in the night as the tree was lit.

The Music Ministry continued their traditional gift to the parish and community with the presentation of the annual Christmas Concert. Many hours of rehearsals take place before the Concert. How about thinking of Christmas in July? That’s exactly what I do. The result was an evening of Christmas music that put everyone in the spirit.

For the many parishioners and guests that were in attendance, the church was filled with the beautiful sounds of hymns and holiday music. The traditional hot chocolate and cookies was the perfect ending to an enjoyable evening for all. What will next year bring?

The Christmas Masses were joyous and spiritual as well. The Music Ministry did a great job singing and playing for all our liturgies. All their time, talent and dedication help make the season so special. Thank you to all members for a job well done.

Thinking about the New Year? Have you made any resolutions?? What about joining the Music Ministry? Consider all the fun you could have while praising God through music. There are so many ways to serve. Some only require bite size pieces. Stop by the choir loft or the baby grand piano to see me for more information.



**The preparations for Lent and Easter will soon begin.
Maybe you’ll consider being a part of it.
See you on Sundays.
And remember to praise God through music.**

**MARGARET
ADAMS**



State of the Parish

by Virginia Portanova

Thank you for your continued generosity. In November the Finance Committee presented our positive fiscal year-end report for both the parish and school. We are in the final year of our Capital Campaign and happy to report that all pledges continue to be honored. In the new year we will complete the template for the Book of Memorials which will be placed in the Old Church/Bethany Center.

Many repairs, renovations, replacements and upgrades have been addressed in all buildings and the grounds of the parish campus. The cost of upgrading our heating systems and lighting are paying off with lower utility bills. Our aging buildings and campus need ongoing maintenance and attention just as our own homes are always in need of TLC.

We need to maintain funds for emergency repairs, as well as costly repairs we see on the horizon. Earmarking these funds will afford us the ability to address these costs without taxing our already tight operational budget. Perhaps you have completed your campaign pledge and are able to continue making payments, please earmarked them as repair / maintenance fund.

The maintenance of the blue stone on the steps and entrance to the Church is costly and ongoing. We have had a few vendors recommend replacement of all the blue stone. The brick walkway to our school has shifted and many of the paver/bricks have deteriorated. We have been advised to lift and reset the entire walkway in a better suited method. Our elevator seems to be out-of-service at the most inopportune times. We would like to address much needed upgrades to this system. We have been addressing our alternate parking lot cosmetically; however, it really needs to be repaved.

Your contributions have enabled us to maintain our property, perform needed upgrades and repairs, and beautify our buildings and grounds. We have been able to continue to meet the many needs of individuals and families within our parish community. Programs and services for our parishioners continue to be offered. Your commitment to SSPJ and your generosity of time, talent and treasure make it all possible - thank you! Together, may we continue to meet the needs of our parish community.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU...

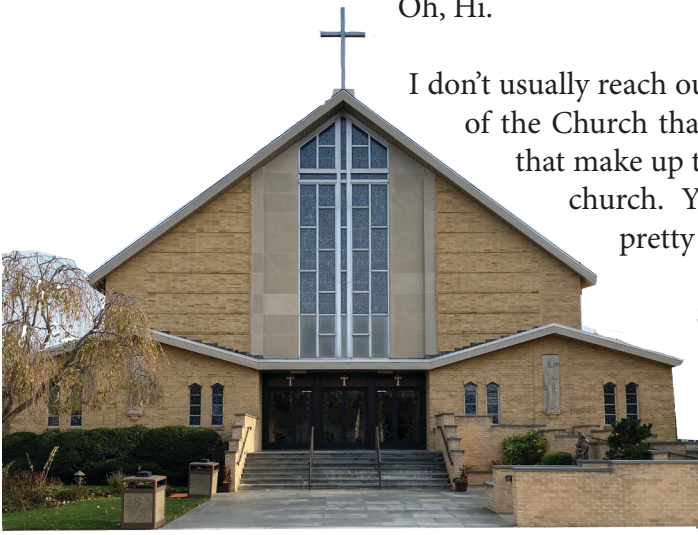
The staff of the Gabriel works hard to make each issue interesting and meaningful.

We would like to know what you think. If you have a criticism, a comment, or a suggestion, let us know.

Send your comments to: **sspjgabriel@gmail.com**



IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK



Oh, Hi.

I don't usually reach out like this.. I'm your church. No, not the universal body of the Church that includes about 1.2 billion Catholics. The 4000 families that make up the parish of SSPJ? No, not that either. No, I'm just your church. You know. That big building on Clinton Ave.. Tall ceiling, pretty windows, altar up front...you know...your church.

So, I've seen a lot through the years. I replaced that old Church over there on 25A. Nice building, but couldn't do all the things I can, so its time was up.

I have a lot of memories. I've soaked in the sights and sounds of all the Christmas, Easter, and Lenten liturgies. The rich colors of the ceremonies, the meaning of the prayers and readings will stay with me forever.

I also learned to appreciate the quiet times. No special feast day, no liturgical pageantry, just those quiet days when folks would come in and spend time alone, thinking, praying, finding needed solace.

I'll always remember my first Christmas Midnight Mass. Of course, that was back in the days when Midnight Mass was actually held at midnight. It was so beautiful, so solemn, so celebratory. I can still feel the sounds of the choir resonating off the ceiling. I can still smell the fragrance of the pine trees on the altar mixed with the scent of incense. That was the first night that I realized what I really was. I'm just a building; bricks, mortar, beams, the usual stuff. But that night I realized how lucky I was. I could have been a McDonalds, or a gym, or God forbid a Starbucks. But somehow, someone, made me a church.

Buildings don't always stay the same. Over time they change; just like humans. The late 80s was a rough time for me. I was originally built with nice smoked white windows. I thought they were fine. But in the 80s they started ripping them out. Ouch! What's going on here? It seemed like it took forever, but when the dust settled, I was all dressed up with new windows. Pretty, aren't they? I'm very proud of them. Most people don't pay much attention to them; sort of take them for granted. But you should look around. They're really nice.

Oh, and the people. So many people in and out over the years. Pastors, associates, parishioners, students, visitors. I can't remember them all. It seems to me that they come and go, but I'm always here. I could tell you so many stories about the people. But I won't. I'll tell you just one.

I remember one person in particular. I don't want to tell tales I shouldn't, so I'll just make up a name for this person. Let's call him John.

I first saw John at his Baptism. It was a wonderful day. His parents were so proud and happy. His aunts, uncles, and family members were all there. John himself? Well he looked a little confused. He was wearing what looked like a dress. His face was all screwed up most of the time and he certainly did not appreciate being doused with water.

As with many folks baptized here, I saw a lot of John after that. He and his parents were regulars at Sunday Mass. I remember his first Holy Communion. He seemed a lot happier than on his Baptism day. I guess it's because he didn't have to wear a dress again.

When the SSPJ school kids came in for special events or a special Mass, he was always there. He didn't really stand out in any way. He was just one of the kids. But I always noticed him.

Then one day in Lent a few years later, John came in with his mom in the middle of the week. It was a quiet day here. I remember them walking down the center aisle, genuflecting, then moving into a pew on the front left. Mom was praying. John was watching her. I heard him ask, "Mom, why did dad leave? Will he come back?" She hugged him, and whispered something to him that I couldn't hear. They both sat for a while in silence. Each with their own thoughts. Each praying in their own way.

After that I saw John now and then. He didn't come to Mass with his mom as frequently as before. At his Confirmation, his uncle was his sponsor. Besides the uncle, his mom was the only one in attendance.

The years went by and I didn't see John at all. Then one day, there he was. He was a young man now and there was a beautiful young woman at his side. I couldn't be entirely sure, but it looked like they both were wearing wedding rings. I'm sure they weren't married here; I would have remembered that. So, I guess they were married in her church.

They must have moved here to St. James because they became regulars at Mass. Just like John and his mom had been years before. Although, I never saw his mom again.

Eventually John and the young lady arrived at Mass accompanied by their children. And, just as I had seen John in earlier years, I was fortunate to see this new generation Baptized and Confirmed.

In time, the inevitable happened. Funerals in novels and on TV are often associated with dark and dreary days. But it's not always like that. John's funeral was actually on a bright and cheery day. His children were in attendance along with their mom.

I thought back to that first Christmas Midnight Mass when I realized what I was. I thought back to John's Baptism, when his parents were so young and so happy. And I thought of all the years and events in-between.

It was then that I realized my true reason for being what I am. Yes, I'm just a building. Yes, I could have been a McDonalds. But, I'm not a McDonalds; I'm a Church. I house the Holy Eucharist; the very presence of Christ on Earth. And I am the only one that was here for John throughout his life. I am the only one that was here at his Baptism and also here at his funeral. I am the only one that was here when he came in alone in the middle of the week to sit, and think, and pray.

by Peter Rooney



Sts. Philip and James Academy

The Mission of Sts. Philip and James School is alive and in action! With the help and support of our dedicated faculty and staff, parents and parish community the Academy students are responding to their call of being Apostles of Hope.

The 2019 - 2020 school year is off to a great start and has already been filled with many new opportunities and long standing traditions. It has been a blessing to watch the students take on new leadership roles, excel in their academics, and become active participants in their church community.

I am honored to share with you the following happenings that outline some of the SSPJ Academy students accomplishments thus far.

Mr. Anderson, Principal

8th Grade Lunch Monitor



Being in the 8th grade, the Academy, I am fortunate enough to be given special privileges that the younger students are not given. One privilege is being a lunch monitor. Lunch monitors have been at SSPJ for my tenure here and they are important to help the children behave themselves at lunch. I monitor the 1st grade and I help them behave. It truly is a privilege to monitor and to be in the Academy.

Joe Carlino 8th grade

The SSPJ Academy has given me the privilege to monitor the Pre-K class during lunch. I look forward to seeing my brother Connor everyday along with the other Pre-K students. I am thankful I was given this opportunity to monitor children and help them to learn manners and socializing skills. SSPJ Academy has blessed me with so many opportunities including Odyssey of the Mind, CMSSA Sports, and growing closer to God.

Daniel Regan 8th Grade



SSPJ Student Council



I am a member of the Saints Philip and James School Student Council. We meet about once a week and talk about the ways our school can be improved. I think a student council is a great tool, since we have already made a big difference. We give our advice on the things we think should change from our point of view and Ms. Anderson sees what she can do about it. I enjoy being on the student council and hope that this continues for a long time. I love being a part of the SSPJ Academy. It gives me so many new privileges now that I am older.

Elyse Wor 7th grade

I have been going to SSPJ School since I was five years old. I now have the privilege of being a part of the Academy. I have also been granted the opportunity of being part of the Student Council. Being a Student Council member is an awesome thing that I get to do. Although Student Council is a commitment, I commend our principal, Ms. Anderson for giving me this opportunity that I greatly appreciate.

*Kate Nicastro
Grade 8*

Lectoring

As being part of the SSPJ Academy, I have gained many privileges to improve myself. One of the main privileges I am involved in is lectoring. This is very important because I can improve from it. Some of the ways lectoring has improved me is it has taught me confidence. It takes a lot to walk up to the stand and speak in front of everyone in the crowd. After I read, I feel exhilarated and excited which has helped me to be more confident. Other qualities and improvements I have gained from lectoring is public speaking, being more social, and understanding the readings about Jesus with other biblical words. For this reason it is a major privilege to be part of the Academy.

Aidan Conzalez Grade 8



Morning Announcements



Being a part of the Academy has changed who I am. There are many more responsibilities and privileges. This year, I was given the responsibility of morning announcements for the month of November. This has taught me many things. It has taught me how to be on time and follow directions. It is a privilege to be able to inform the whole school about daily events and to lead the school in prayer. This opportunity has boosted my confidence so it is easier for me to speak in public. It is an honor to be in the SSPJ Academy.

Maevie O'Connor 8th grade

For the past two weeks I have been going over to the Main building to do morning announcements. This has taught me to be on time and to know the job on task. For example, I have to leave the Monte building at 8:45am to start announcements at 8:55am. When doing the announcements, I say prayers, the Pledge of Allegiance, special announcements, birthdays and the joke of the day. This is a special privilege of being in the SSPJ Academy.

Dayana Mayorga 8th grade

Being a part of the SSPJ Academy is great and since I am in 8th grade i get privileges like morning announcements. I did announcements for one month. I loved it so much. This job taught me how to speak and read clearly, and to be on time. It has been such a privilege to be in the Academy these past 3 years.

Courtney D'Agostino 8th grade

It is a privilege to be a part of the SSPJ Academy. I, as an 8th grader, get to perform morning announcements. From this I have learned to be a clear reader, specific and on time. I enjoy this privilege very much. Many more luxuries come from being part of the SSPJ Academy.

Emma Ryan 8th Grade



Prayer Buddy



I enjoy having a Pre-K prayer buddy. It gives me more responsibility and it reminds me how to behave in church and not to talk. I am grateful to be a part of the SSPJ Academy.

Meagan Walsh Grade 7

When we have school masses we go to church during the school day. We head over to Pre-K and pick up the students. We call them prayer buddies. When we go to church we sit with our buddies and teach them to pray before mass starts. My buddy is very calm in church which shows responsibility in me. Being in the Academy gives me joy everyday.

Ashley Rubensthumk Grade 7

I am happy to have the opportunity to be a Prayer Buddy. A prayer buddy is when 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade take Nursery, Pre-K and Kindergarten to mass. We help our buddies pray, listen to the priest, stand and kneel and to be quiet. It has helped me to get closer to God by showing the little kids how to act. It is fun and a way to prepare yourself for kids when you are older. Being in the Academy has given me a bunch of responsibilities.

Craig Williams 7th grade

Every full school Mass we take our Pre-K buddies to church. We must be responsible so if they need a tissue, need to use the bathroom or even if they are not feeling well we must do something about it. Having a prayer buddy kind of makes me feel like a parent. It is hard but yet a happy task. I am happy to have my Pre-K buddies and thankful for the opportunity.

Matthew Williams 7th grade

Cantoring

In the SSPJ Academy we are gifted with many opportunities everyday. Some of the opportunities are CMSAA sports, Drama club, Stained Glass club and Cantoring. Cantoring is when you sing for the church. We love to cantor because we love to sing for Jesus. Being a cantor is an amazing experience that we all love. When you are on the altar you can not help but feel a rush of happiness.

Madeline Bennett 6th grade

Nicole Lo Castro 6th grade

Madison McCulloch 6th grade



ODYSSEY of the Mind



This year our school has an Odyssey Club. I am very thankful and proud of having this opportunity. The meetings are so much fun and pushes your mind more than you think it can. Ever since I was little, I dreamed of being an inventor so this is so cool and interesting to be able to make stuff. This year I am going to be part of the Balsa Limbo Team. We have to make a tower that folds down to hold over five hundred pounds. Thank you so much Ms. Anderson and the Academy for letting this happen.

Victoria Caputo 7th Grade

The Odyssey Team is a fun and learning filled club that makes you think outside the box. The club teaches you new ideas related to Science and Math. In the club you work with your team to solve a long term problem. The club teaches you new things which can help you throughout the school year. Being a part of the Odyssey Team gives me an opportunity to deepen and strengthen my learning and is a lot of FUN!

Rylan Baxter 7th grade

I enjoy being on the Odyssey Team. I like Odyssey because it is a fun time to hang out with my friends while thinking creatively. Odyssey helps me to stay more on task and handle situations from different aspects. Odyssey is helping me with my future and at the same time it also helps me with the present. I enjoy thinking creatively and being involved with hands-on- situations. I am very happy to be in the SSPJ Academy and to be able to have such amazing experiences.

Katelynn Sandbichler 7th grade

Being in the SSPJ Academy has given me the opportunity to be on the Odyssey of the Mind Team. It is a privilege because it is a fun academic club. You get to compete on Long Island and if you win you go on to compete at Binghamton University and if you win there you get to go to Michigan. The Odyssey club teaches me responsibility and leadership.

Christopher Fiore 8th grade

The Odyssey Team has given me the opportunity to work with a group of amazing individuals. We learn to work as a team and think fast. We perform experiments that further our knowledge on multiple topics. We problem solve and learn different ways to think. It is a privilege to be part of the SSPJ Academy.

Ronan Shortell 8th grade



CMSAA Soccer



Being an Eighth grader, I have gotten privileges that I am fortunate enough to have. One of these privileges is being on the CMSAA Soccer team. I have been able to meet so many great people in other classes and also strengthen the bond between my peers. When I began on the team, I felt misplaced but that weirdness soon disappeared. I learned a valuable lesson, I learned that I have to work as a team member. Our last game is nearing and I hope that we can work together this last time and win.

Michael Radabaugh 8th grade.

Being a part of the SSPJ Academy has given me so many opportunities to represent my school. I am most honored to be on the CMSAA Soccer team. The Soccer team so far is 3-1-2 so we are doing really good. Our final game is Thursday, November 14th and we are facing the team we lost to. It is going to be a good game.

Sebastian Cheeseman 8th grade

While being in the SSPJ Academy you get many privileges. My favorite part is the ability to play on the CMSAA sports teams. I have been on the Bowling team since the 6th grade and this year I joined the Soccer team. SSPJ provides a lot of sport activities.

Andrew Kaiser 8th grade



CHRISTMAS

I have always loved Christmas.... not for the gifts...but for the memories. As a child I recall going to Midnight Mass, coming home, looking for Santa's footsteps in the powdered snow (if there was any) and opening gifts with my brothers and sisters... gifts that varied according to my Dad's employment status each year. I remember the dark and the cold and the lights on the tree that my mother so creatively decorated with strips of cotton resting on each branch, so we would see snow, even when there was none. It was always a very late night and fortunately Santa reached our house while we were away at Mass. I just never understood why it took Dad so long to join us in the car. Didn't he know Santa was on his way and we kids were huddled together in the back seat trying to keep warm?

I have other memories imprinted on my mind too, like the Christmas when all the grandkids were told they had to bring a hand-made puppet to Grandpa's house. The stage was provided by a large cardboard box, script was mostly unscripted, the 14 puppets performed perfectly in front of grandparents and parents..... lots of laughter, lots of noise and lots of cleanup when the stage collapsed!

Then there was the Christmas when all the family brought gloves and hats to be donated to the homeless. The Christmases when we had fake-snowball fights. And I remember our first Christmas without Grandpa, when my brother brought a life-sized print of him, wearing his red suspenders, to be part of our family Christmas.

And although kids today want all the latest electronics, my own children, in their 40's and 50's will still tell me that the best Christmases were the ones when we had less, when we went to Christmas Concerts, when we made our own ornaments and gifts, when we held the newest baby born into the family, when we made cookies together and made Christmas dinner together....and sang Silent Night in the darkness around the parish Christmas Tree.

- by Judy Contrino

Judy Contrino has been a SSPJ parishioner for approximately 9 years. Judy's previous parish was St. Joseph's in Kings Park where she taught CCD, sang as a soloist and was as part of St Joseph's Folk Group. Judy has four adult children and four grandchildren. She is a local artist and the current President of the Strathmore Gate Community Association in Stony Brook. Judy currently serves our parish as a Lector. We are grateful for Judy's service to SSPJ and for her submission to the Gabriel.



MEMORIES

Christmas was always a very special time for our large family. The four Sundays of Advent were extra special. After attending Mass and having a delicious pasta dinner at Mom and Dad's house, we would light a candle on the Advent wreath and say a prayer. The table was then cleared and out came numerous craft items. Using glue, glitter, lace, popsicle sticks, pine cones, etc., we created angels, snowmen, managers, snowflakes, and so much more. There was love, laughter and family fun. My parents, Rose and Joseph Patalano have passed away, but these ornaments still make us smile every year. We cherish the memories of times gone by and the importance of family which defines the true meaning of Christmas.

I would like to share a little background of my family as they have all helped to provide me with wonderful Christmas memories. I lived in a one-family house in Woodside, Queens. It was a beautiful neighborhood. Our neighbors would sit on our stoop and chat (a stoop is outside steps of a residential house). People would sit and talk, and just generally hang out on the stoop. The steps (stoop) were also used for playing stoopball. I've defined the stoop since nobody on Long Island seemed to know what a "stoop" was.

After meeting my husband and getting to know each other for a few years, we were married at St. Sebastian's in Woodside. We have been married for 51 years. Robert and I have 5 daughters and 2 sons, a daughter-in-law and sons-in-law. We have seven grandchildren. 7 seems to be a lucky number as my father also came from a family of 7. As our own family grew, we moved from one apartment to bigger apartments in the Boulevard Garden, Woodside area.

In 1976, my husband and I moved from Woodside, Queens to Smithtown where we also became part of the SS Philip and James family. Our children received their first Holy Communion and Confirmation at SS Philip and James. In addition, some of our children were married at SS Phillip and James.

I also had the privilege of teaching religious education with some of my children and their classmates.

A few years after we moved to Smithtown, my parents sold their house in Woodhaven and moved to Smithtown. Our siblings soon followed. With our large family of brothers, sisters, spouses, and all the children, there has been a constant flow of celebrations such as Baptisms, Holy Communions, Confirmations, weddings, and funerals at SS Phillip and James.

I am extremely grateful that I was brought up in the Catholic religion as I have learned so much about love, forgiveness and true gratitude. I feel blessed by my beautiful family.

Christmas is the perfect time to reflect on the meaning of love and compassion.

Merry Christmas!

-by Maria Glavin

Love Was Born at Christmas....

We see this phrase written in Christmas cards and we hear it sung in songs of praise throughout the Christmas season.

God is love.... love was born at Christmas....for whom was love born? You!

Love was born at Christmas for you and me.

When Jesus was born love entered human history in a new way.

Mary and Joseph were far from home, alone, not surrounded by family and friends but by barnyard animals. Jesus was born in a stable, wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a manger. There were shepherds in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks. An angel appeared to them, they were terrified. The angel said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

Imagine that, the first to be notified of the birth of Jesus were shepherds. Probably considered the peasant society, with poor reputations and not welcomed by the townspeople. Could it be because God's Son was born to be the Good Shepherd?

God did not first notify the noble, affluent and wise. He chose the simplest of man, the broken and scarred. If he loved the shepherds so much to give them the honor to be the first to witness the birth of Jesus, imagine how much he loves each of us. He sent His Son, His love to us, just as we are.

If we love and follow Jesus' teachings, love is birthed in each of us in a new way with every encounter, every experience, every joy, every sorrow, every laugh, every tear, every sunrise and sunset, every prayer we offer to Him.

We spend time reading books, searching high and low for our purpose in life - I know I do. What am I here for? What will be my legacy? What inheritance will I leave for my kids? What I have come to realize is that our purpose is to love. It's that simple. We hear the message over and over, yet we search. Not grand love, with trumpets blaring or posted on billboards. Simple love, acts of kindness to strangers, a helping hand offered to someone in need. Nonjudgmental, unconditional love. That's what God offered us through the birth of His Son, Jesus. Not a love that was meant only for heaven - but a real love of this earth.



For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

May this Christmas and your New Year be filled with the love of God, the light of Christ Jesus and the kinship of family, friend and neighbor.

Oh, Come Let Us Adore Him... Christ the Lord



Virginia and Peter have been married for 36 years. She has been an active member of SSPJ parish since 1991 when she and Peter moved from Valley Stream to St James to raise their two sons, Thomas and Peter.

In July 2015 Virginia took on the role of Business Manager for SSPJ. Virginia loves gardening and can often be found tending to the gardens around our parish. In her free time, she enjoys kayaking and exploring north fork beaches and trails.

We are grateful for all Virginia does to enhance parish life.

CHRISTMASTIME IN PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

Christmas preparations were well under way for several months prior to Christmas in the Parish Social Ministry Office. Special thanks go to Deb Phillips, Noelle Ciminiello, Elizabeth Wheeler and their Religious Education students for the work they did in readying our stars for the tree. They cut, hole-punched, tied ribbons to them, and met in Church to decorate the tree.

The spirit of Christmas is the Christ Spirit. It is the spirit of love, generosity, and goodness. It directs our hearts and minds to Him and illuminates the window of the soul, so we can look out and become more interested in people than in things. As ever, the community of Sts. Philip and James demonstrated this to the fullest with an outpouring of gifts for those in need. Your donations went to the women at the Learning Center at St. Joseph's in Brentwood, to the young men at Hope House and Pax Christi, to the SCO Family of Services (aka St. Christopher Ottilie), Sr. Michelle CSFN for her work in the Prison Ministry, and Echo Arms Adult Home. In addition, you helped some of our SSPJ campus organizations. Most touching is the fact that you supported 24 local families, right here in St. James, to feel some joy amid their pain and struggles.

As a thank you I would like to share this Christmas Prayer by Paula D'Arcy,

We pray to find stillness within our busyness,
And rest in the midst of our celebrations and activity.
Show us how to walk more gently, more patiently, on the Earth.

Let kindness be born within all hearts.
Teach us to draw together as one people.

One humanity.

One heart.

One spirit.

One longing.

May our prayers rise up like fire and be Light for a troubled world. This we know, something is trying to be born in us. Take our hand as we set out anew.

By Lynn Sisti



RCIA News

(Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults)

I am sure that you are all familiar with the saying “If Mohammed won’t come to the mountain, then the mountain must come to Mohammed.” Well, to bring this quote to life, the RCIA Team has brought the mountain to the Mohammed’s of our parish.

Let me explain. At the time when the new RCIA process was to begin this year, we did not have anyone signed up to be baptized or complete their sacraments. What do we do? We’ve spoken at all the Masses, invited people to join us and yet our table was missing some guests. There is strength and wisdom in numbers and challenges. So, the wisdom of the group decided to present themselves where the people were – in church. We would have the opportunity to enrich the faith life of those who were participating fully.

Happily, we began our journey by giving a ‘Tour of the Church’ after each of the Masses. Would anyone come? This is the chance we took. Another saying comes to mind “Build it and they will come!” and they did come, or should I say stayed afterwards and took advantage of learning more about what is in our church.

The following weeks’ presentations were offered after the 8 AM Mass as well as the noon Mass. People have stayed and learned. It just proves that all of us are hungry for knowledge of our faith. We just need the right opportunity to find it. Our prayer as a RCIA team is that we can continue to nourish our parishioners as well as reach out to those who may wish to join the church or complete their sacraments. We keep in mind that “All things are possible with God”.

**HAVE A MERRY
CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY, HOLY, AND
HEALTHY NEW YEAR**

SISTER THERESITA



MEMORIES OF SSPJ

BY DR. THOMAS VIGILANTE

Saints Phillip and James has been front and center in my life and in the upbringing for me and all my 5 siblings.

My Mom was class mother in the school for 25 consecutive years. I think she set a record.

The SSPJ faculty were not only my teachers, they served as an extension of my family. They set examples relative to discipline and morality. Along with my Mom and Dad, the teachers at SSPJ set the bar for who I would become as a person. The faculty lived their faith and stressed the importance of faith that my parents instilled in us at home. I attended Mass with my class weekly while in school. On Sunday my family always attended Mass. You always had a real sense of community because the parents of your fellow classmates were involved in school functions. Additionally, you witnessed people living their faith. My friends from school were at Sunday Mass also.

Msgr. Guarino, Mary Monte, Patricia Ayers, Arthur Dunne, Grace Ehmann, Ruth Testa, Kathy Esposito, Sandra Crivello, Joan Stensland, Joan Murray, Lee Gallegher, Ronnie Jensen were a team with a common goal. Their goal was to make us the best that we could be scholastically, spiritually and morally.

Our school was not only a place to learn but a place to meet smart, wise, friendly, warm people. We had fun and we learned more each day, each week, each year. The foundations of learning from SSPJ were the bedrock of my education. Those very methods were what I used during my academic career and through dental school. I sincerely thank them for that.

As amazing as this may sound, I'm still close with my childhood friends from SSPJ. It's been more than 30 years since I was a student at SSPJ. While that makes me feel old, it is in and of itself a living testament to the relationships I made there.

I give thanks to God for the wonderful gifts he has provided to me. Now that I have become a dentist with an office a block away from SSPJ, I am even more thankful for the life ahead of me. I look forward to starting a family. I look forward to becoming an active member of the SSPJ community and parish that helped me become who I am today. I hope, therefore, to pay it forward.

As for my work, in my office I do try to make everyone feel at ease and comfortable. After all, I'm making smiles, building confidence and eliminating insecurities. There is nothing better than making someone intrinsically happy by restoring their smile. Because of my faith I find myself praying daily for health and happiness not only for myself and my wife Christine, but for my family and friends. In fact, I pray for all those around me. Being a part of a community that cares and supports one another in good times and in bad is a manifestation of God's work. It lives in us.

When I attend 10:00am Mass on Sundays I can see the youth of the community actively taking part in the parish. That gives one a sense of belonging which is refreshing and heartwarming. Seeing families come together in faith reminds me of my own upbringing and what made it so special.

I can see that Ms. Anderson, Fr. Tom and the staff at SSPJ understand and instill values and believe we should all strive to be **Apostles of Hope**. All of that, and all that we have sets us apart from other places.

I wish all of you and your families a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with health and happiness.



This edition of the Gabriel is sponsored by:
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THOMAS VIGILANTE, DDS
SSPJ ALUMNUS

Thank You SSPJ for Supporting Our Journey to the National Catholic Youth Conference Nov. 21-24

By Sister Theresita

SSPJ Youth has been truly blessed by the support and encouragement of the parish. Thanks to their generosity 4 of our young ladies, Arin Peykar, Genevieve Talento, Kristen Sheridan, and Hailey Sheridan, were able to attend the event. The theme of the Event was “Blessed, Broken, Given”.

The keynote speakers, workshops, music, prayer and sharing times were dynamite! It is amazing to watch over 20,000 young people move from place to place shouting chants, hugging each other and praying all in Jesus’ name. There is hope for our church.

The emcees, Katie Prejean McGrady and Fr. Agustino Torres, CFR kept them engaged until the powerful speakers addressed the group. Friday, Immaculee Ilibagiza, a Rwandan American author and motivational speaker, shared with them her story of surviving the Rwandan Genocide. She was moving and spoke of how we need to forgive others along with her struggle to forgive those who killed her family.

She is just one example of the many powerful and dynamic people who addressed our youth. Events like this help young people learn that the church is larger than their home parish and hopefully the experience leads them to even more involvement back in their home parish and/or school. We were fortunate to connect with four young ladies from Holy Trinity School, and their two chaperones. Connections were made and promises of prayer for each other was shared.

“God is good all the time. All the time God is good.” “We are Blessed, Broken and Given”

STUDENT REFLECTIONS FROM NCYC

The National Catholic Youth Conference was a truly spiritual experience. Over the past four days, my faith has grown to levels I thought weren’t possible. Speakers from across the country helped me to see what God has planned for me and how much God truly cared for us. Simple phrases like, “find God with skin on” and “God made you uniquely you”, left a lasting impact on how I viewed God and changed my perspective. Seeing over 25,000 young people in a stadium to worship our Savior Jesus Christ was a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget. As we leave NCYC, I will continue to incorporate small prayers throughout my day. One-line prayers such as, “Jesus, I love You, help me to love You more.” and “Come, Holy Spirit”, can be used to deepen your faith and find that connection to God. My experiences here at this conference strengthened the connection I had with God and taught me to how to include prayer into daily life.

Overall my NCYC was experience was very amazing. I’ve never experienced something like seeing 20,000 teens like me worshipping, crying, laughing and going through the emotions like a roller coaster. It was beautiful. In the beginning there were some rough patches like half my things being taken by airport security, but we made it through. This whole experience has made me feel closer to God and see things from a new point of view. All the talks were amazing and the people have inspired me to reach out in new ways to be closer to the Lord. A quote that really stood by me was, “burn the ships”. The ships were memories that you need to get past and live in the future. So, burning the ships means to keep going. I was taught how to read the Bible properly which was super helpful. I met amazing people that made this trip so much fun. Being able to come here was amazing but even though this is my only conference, this memory will last a lifetime.

I came into this weekend not really knowing what to expect. I had heard about how great of an experience NCYC was from many people but didn't really know what was so special about it. Coming here, I just hoped it would be a way for me to grow closer to God and become stronger in my faith and maybe even make some friends to share my faith with. This experience turned out to be so much more than that. My favorite part was adoration. It was my first time ever doing it and it really moved me. I just fell to my knees and my arms flew up as if to surrender it all to God. Tears flooded my eyes. I can't even put into words how powerful it was for me. During adoration, I felt God's presence stronger than ever before. I felt Him physically take out my dirty, dark, sinful heart and just wipe it clean before giving it back to me. From that moment on without even realizing at first, my hands covered my heart and I would not bring them down. I just felt so much of Jesus in my heart and my hands needed to be as close to Him as they could get. Adoration was such a powerful experience for me. Additionally, I came into this weekend with such a heavy heart. I had so much pain inside of me. I went to confession but walked out feeling even worse because I realized there was more I had needed to say. It weighed me down for the whole day. Later I got to go to confession again with after night prayer. I managed to say the things that have been holding me down for years now. After that moment I felt so free. I was changed. I prayed to God and I just said, "I am Yours." and finally those words meant something to me. I completely gave all of myself to Jesus Christ. He healed me. I'm a new person. It's sad to leave this wonderful place filled with thousands and thousands of peers who share my faith, but I'm excited to go home closer to God than I've ever been. I learned a lot from some of the breakout sessions I attended. I learned that I can't set goals that are too high to be sustained. I need to start small. There are some small changes that I know I can incorporate into my daily life back home that will help my relationship with God stay strong. I plan to journal daily because that really connects me to God. I also plan to start saying the rosary. In addition, I made some new friends this weekend who have already become some of my closest friends who I can count on to pray for me when I need it and I plan to pray for them as well. I am going to leave NCYC in a much better place than I was when I came. This weekend I felt Jesus at a whole new level that I never thought was possible. I am changed. I am a child of God.

"I am so grateful that four of our young women were able to attend this year's NCYC event. Together with over 20,000 youth we were able to listen, pray, and share the Good News that God loves us and will always be there for us."

SISTER T



I am so fortunate to have been able to attend this year's NCYC (the National Catholic Youth Conference) in Indianapolis. It is something I have been looking forward to for years after hearing about all the fun and faith-strengthening it brings. While this was not totally the experience I was expecting, I am so happy with how everything went. We happened to run into the Holy Trinity group at the airport which ended up being such a blessing because we were able to merge with them for the weekend. Going away to college next year, one of the things that scares me the most is not being able to maintain a good faith without the support of weekly youth group and my parents' reinforcement to go to Sunday mass. This trip encouraged me though. I mean I was in a packed NFL stadium with people praising Jesus! I met so many amazing people who care so much about doing good for the world and growing their faith. This experience helped me realize that even though I'll be away from home on my own next year, no matter where I go, there are people from all over the country who have the same beliefs as me and are working on growing them. I am so blessed to have had this opportunity and am thankful for everyone who helped me get here. I fully believe that all 20,000 people at this conference were here because God called us to be and I am ready to go home and spread the word of God!



WHAT HAPPENED IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THIS SEASON?

First and Second Grade Religious Education Advent Celebration by Charlotte Czujko

In their religious education class prior to Advent, the children learned about Advent and colored an Advent Wreath picture.

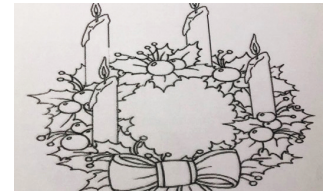
On December 4, our Communion I and II Religious Education Apostles of Hope and their parents were welcomed into the Church for a beautiful Advent Celebration.

The children were enlightened as they learned about the Advent Wreath with an explanation of the candles, and the Advent Calendar.

At the end of the celebration, each child was given an Advent Calendar to use during this season as they awaited Jesus' Birthday.

From all the 1st and 2nd Graders on behalf of all the students in the Religious Education Program, we wish everyone in the parish a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

The students
colored this
advent wreath



6th Grade Religious Education by Barbara Luna

The 6th Grade Religious Education students participated in a craft to make pumpkins for Thanksgiving and then donate them to Meals on Wheels. They talked about all the things that they are grateful for and then added those ideas to each of the parts of the pumpkins. They talked about those less fortunate and talked about those who might not have family around on the holidays. They discussed how Meals on Wheels provides the less fortunate with food and companionship demonstrated by the people that deliver the meals. The pumpkins made one of their meals more festive!

As Jesus told us “Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me.”

Merry Christmas from the 6th Grade Religious Education Class!

PICTURES ON NEXT PAGE: **Top left:** Reagan Murray, Liam McGovern; **Top Right:** Jake Rathgeber, Zack Satchwill, Christian Stack, Jake Diaz, Devon Saxon; **Bottom Left:** Bottom Row: Stella Kiladitis, Sarah Feeney, Santino DeLeon, Lilliana Miniutti, Troy Rees, Dylan Donato, Drew Nucci, Jack DeRosa; **Top Row:** Brandon Zarnitz, Brady Bruckbauer, Joseph White, Liam Kessler, Jake Nichols, Sean Gaine, Andrew Geyer; **Bottom Right:** Gabriella DiConza

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION KIDS LEARN...

...PRAYER ROCKS!



A Christmas Story

It was a bitter cold Christmas Eve in Philadelphia many years ago and Dr. Wiseman was on call for patients being admitted to the inpatient psychiatric unit at Temple University Hospital. This busy unit temporarily housed several dozen folks with every degree of mental illness. Some were suicidal, others delusional.

As one of the Jewish psychiatrists on staff, he frequently volunteered to cover Christmas holidays so that his colleagues who would be celebrating, could be with their families. It was a kind and genuine gesture and encompassed the type of gentleman he is. Dr. Wiseman continues to take care of these patients who need significant support and assistance.

Early on this particular evening, a call came from the emergency department for the admission of a man claiming to be Jesus Christ. On its face, the man deserved psychiatric evaluation. He was disoriented and probably acutely psychotic, possibly even a threat to himself or others. After buttoning up some issues on the locked down unit, Dr. Wiseman found himself at the bedside in the ER interviewing the patient.

The doctor took pride in taking a careful history from the patient while demonstrating empathy and understanding. A very non-judgmental fellow, Dr. Wiseman listened carefully as the man told his story. The unkempt patient was too lightly dressed for the winter night. The dirt under his fingernails and on the palms of his hands told a story of someone who hadn't showered in some time. In spite of this, the patient was reasonable, soft spoken and non-threatening. He just insisted that he was the Son of God. It had become clear to him that he was Jesus Christ and a concerned neighbor brought him to the hospital for psychiatric evaluation.

After asking all the pertinent questions, Dr. Weisman gently confronted the patient with the fact that he may be in a delusion. How could he be Jesus Christ?

Without missing a beat, the patient declared: It's Christmas Eve and I am here at the Temple, talking to a wise man. What's delusional about that?

Can't argue with that logic.

***BY DR. JOSEPH
FRANCO***



***Wishing you and your family a Merry Christmas and
may all of God's blessings be upon you in the New
Year.***

Thoughts of Christmas

Christmas time is almost here,
And hearts are filled with thoughts of good cheer;

We think of visiting with family and friends,
Delicious, fattening, meals and snacks without end;

Days and weeks have been spent in making this day the best,
Shopping, planning, cooking, there is just no time for a rest;

Wrapping presents and decorating the house at a feverish pace,
It is almost like everyone is competing in a race;

Did we select the perfect size and shape Christmas tree,
What about the lights? Do you think there are enough for everyone to see?

What should we buy for the kids this year?
We must outdo last year and buy even more gear;

The food and all it involves must be sublime,
Time must also be spent in selecting the perfect wine;

All of this is done to celebrate this wonderful day,
Is this how it was on Jesus' birthday?

Quite a different scene and change of pace,
When to us was born the Savior of the whole human race;

His parents traveled by foot and by donkey for many miles
She was heavy with child and this was not a journey mild;

There was no special festivity or holiday plan,
They were just struggling to get to Bethlehem;

Did they have a beautiful room all decorated swell,
We all know they did not fare that well;

In a humble bed made of straw the Christ Child lay,
He received no special party or gifts on that day;

Yet, with nothing but one star shining bright,
Jesus gave us all the wonderful gift of His Light;

He is the reason why Christmas Day we celebrate,
And enjoy a fabulous meal and gifts that are first rate;

So, as we enjoy this wonderous day,
We should first give thanks to Him for showing us the way.

BY RITA BYRNE

*"Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing
you good news of great joy for all the people:
to you is born this day in the city of David a
Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.*

Luke 2: 10-11

Father Tom Haggerty, Father Patrick Osei-Poku, and
the entire staff of SSPJ wish you a very
Merry Christmas and all the Blessings of the season.

