

# SJN *Insights*

Saint John Neumann Parish

ADVENT 2011

## ADVENT - Always An ADVENTURE!

By: Barbara Stokes

Some new things are happening at SJN this Advent season. We moved into purple and pink as the colors of preparation for the feast of Christmas. Blue violet is still around here and there but not as prominent as before- Advent is still a time of hope but now we join with the universal church in preparing a royal welcome for the King of Kings. The color also reminds us that the Mystery of the Incarnation cannot be separated from the Paschal Mystery of Lent. Penance is also part of the season as

we wait/prepare/ clean ourselves up to receive the Holy Child of Bethlehem. The color is not the important thing. Like always, what's important is what we do with the time.

Another tradition of remembering and waiting is the Jesse Tree. This family tree of Jesus is so named because of the writings of Isaiah who said that "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse was the father of King David and you know that Jesus came from the house of David, the royal family of the king. On the branches of the tree today we find symbols that call to mind the "spiritual ancestors of Jesus" from days of old. So beginning with Adam and Eve, we remember some important men and women of the Old Testament who helped us find our way to Jesus.

Some parishioners, under the direction of Jeff Jezerc, have fashioned a beautiful symbol for each of these Old Testament ancestors. Before mass begins on each Sunday in Advent we will call seven of our ancestors' names and add their symbol to the Jesse Tree. After four weeks our tree will reach to Mary and Joseph and finally to Jesus- the star on the tree and our Light for Christmas!

This Jesse Tree helps us to learn our history and the many qualities we build on to make a strong family system. To continue this learning at home, each week our bulletin insert will tell a little about the symbol and give a picture of the symbol that can be deco-

rated and placed on your own Jesse Tree. Of course, the Bible will help us learn more about these Old Testament ancestors so the Bible verses will also be given.

Now we are strong enough to move from our past into our present life with Jesus. So at Christmas, the Jesse tree symbols will be replaced with the symbols of Christ- the Chrismons (monograms of Christ's name). Again a page of symbols will be provided so we can all celebrate Christmas with a Chrismon Tree. White lights and stars also decorate the Christmas tree in honor of Christ- the Light of the World.

Colors and activities are important to this holy season but still prayer has the most important place. A very beautiful TAIZE prayer experience is planned for Friday, December 2 at 7 PM.

Music and chant and wonderful Scripture readings will lead us to benediction and adoration to prepare a special dwelling place for Christ to be born in our hearts this year.

The community centers on prayer. Come and help us honor Christ as the center of SJN.

Don't forget to check out the multitude of Advent resources available in the lobby. Select something for yourself, your family, special children in your life and maybe even neighbors and friends. Advent is a time to prepare. Good preparation always makes the celebration a treasure for all. Let's do it together this year. Make it an Adventure to remember!

### Important Dates!

#### **ADVENT PENANCE SERVICES**

*December 12 at SJN*

*December 14 at St. Alexis*

*December 19 at St. Alphonsus*

*December 20 at Sts. John & Paul  
all begin at 7 PM*

#### **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE**

##### **BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

*December 7 Vigil at 4:30 & 6:30 PM  
(note the time change)*

*December 8 at 9 AM & 7 PM*

##### **CHRISTMAS EVE**

*4 PM, 8 PM & 11 PM*

##### **CHRISTMAS DAY**

*9 AM & 11 AM*

*No 5:30 PM Evening Mass*

##### **BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOD (January 1)**

*Regular week-end schedule*

**FORGET THE STRESS,  
COME FOR THE SPIRIT!  
DECEMBER 2 AT 7:00 PM**

By: Rosemary McLaughlin

*Do you find yourself yearning for an evening of good old-fashioned Mission spirit? Your prayers will be answered when we will enjoy music in the Taize tradition, beautiful prayers, meditations, and song here at St. John Neumann. The brief service will begin at 7:00 and be followed by a social to help us get into the Christmas spirit—away from the mall, Santa and pre-holiday stress.*

*Many parishioners so enjoyed the Lenten Mission of last spring that they have been asking for a mission follow-up as part of the holiday preparation. An event as large as the mission requires time and teams of volunteers—both of which are in short supply as Christmas approaches. That doesn't mean, however, that we cannot have a lovely evening to think about the true meaning of Christmas, as we steep ourselves in the spirit of renewal we find every year with the birth of Jesus.*

**THE SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS  
DECEMBER 17 AT 3:00 PM**

*Join us this December as we gather for a very special Christmas event – the first of its kind here at St. John Neumann Church. Bring family and friends to enjoy “The Sounds of Christmas,” a Christmas concert brought to you by Daniel Ficarra and the St. John Neumann Church Adult Choir.*

*Don't miss the first chance to hear our beautiful new Yamaha Baby Grand Piano in concert. In addition, hear our Rogers/Walker hybrid organ in ways you do not get to experience at mass every week. Invite family and friends to join in the Christmas spirit!*

*Stay tuned for more information in the weekly church bulletin.*

## Prayer Ministry – Ways That You Can Participate

By: Rick Caruso

As a parish family, we are encouraged to respond to Christ's challenge to “Pray always and never lose heart” (Lk 18:1).

That powerful image from St. Luke's gospel is the theme of the St. John Neumann Prayer Ministry.

There are a core group of individuals who participate in this ministry. Your participation within this core group is welcomed!

As intentions come in through email at [sjnprayer@gmail.com](mailto:sjnprayer@gmail.com), a Prayer Partner from the Core group is assigned to do periodic follow-up with the person who entered the prayer request. That usually happens through a phone call to ask for any updates on the person's condition or anything else the prayer requestor might want to share about the person who is in need of prayer.

This group meets once a quarter, to share prayer and ensure that all of the

intentions are known and are assigned to someone on the Core group.

We'd love to have five more individuals on the Core group to reach out to those who are praying for their loved ones.

If this sounds like something of interest to you, please contact Kathy Buzard at (412) 366-0781 or Rick Caruso at (412) 369-5794.

If you don't feel called to this action, please do consider taking the list names published in the Sunday bulletin and putting that list on your refrigerator or on your kitchen counter. Then, please make an effort to pray for some portion of this list by name, on a regular basis.

You can also go to <http://stjohnneumannpghprayer.blogspot.com/> and see the list at any time.

May we all continue to hold one another in prayer as we do our part to share God's love, Here and Now.

## Rooted in Christ ...Growing in Love

By: Andrew James

*From Fr. Gerald, C.P., the retreat director's pen:* After much prayer and reflection, the retreat staff of St. Paul of the Cross has chosen “ROOTED

IN CHRIST...GROWING IN LOVE” as the theme for the 90th anniversary year. They were inspired by the words of St. Paul the Apostle in his Letter to the Ephesians: “Living the truth in love, we should

grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, ...builds itself up in love.”

It is by being rooted and centered in Christ that we grow spiritually in our love for God and in authentic love for others. During the retreat weekend, participants will thoughtfully consider some of the important dynamics that both foster and, at times, hinder spiritual growth.

Feeling drained, discouraged, beat down -- need a spiritual boost? Consider spending a weekend at St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center --- to retreat, to refresh, to re-connect with

God, with church and with family.

Contact our parish promoters, Sharon Wirtz at 412-

364-8568, Paul Crnkovic at 412-367-7481, Andrew James at 412-366-5885 x11 or call the retreat center itself at 412-381-7676 to ask any questions you may have about the retreat weekend experience. A \$50.00 deposit will hold a room for you.

Looking for a great Christmas gift idea for your spouse? Give a gift certificate for a spiritual weekend away!

**SJN Retreat for Women**  
January 13-15

**SJN Retreat for Men**  
March 9-11

# Lifeline Moments

By: Barbara Stokes

Thank God that His saving love surrounds us day in and day out. I'm so certain of it that I tend to take it for granted. Then I am reminded through a moment of grace that reveals the life line that God extends to us. In this lifeline of SACRAMENT His lovepower is so evident that the whole community rejoices with me. We celebrate Baptism as the first lifeline. God reassures us that we are family and nothing can ever separate us from His love. Bathed and beautiful, we are claimed for Christ. All of us cherished as we are anointed, clothed and named. Sharing in the very Light of Christ we are empowered to live a life worthy of this family of the Father. It's not just a baptismal date but a call to hold on and live always in family and love.

We know these important parts of Baptism from when we studied them awhile ago or prepared for a baptism. Sometimes we start to forget the importance-the living parts-and only concentrate on what we see in the sacrament.

Yet in spite of us, each sacrament can

awaken us to God's richness and care. Most of the seven we may have celebrated. Now time has gone by and we have an opportunity to REFLECT on these sacrament moments. Time has been given to go deeper and deeper into the mystery of a lifeline held out to us at a time of birth/belonging (Baptism), a time of nourishment (Eucharist), a time of forgiveness (Penance), a time of sickness (Anointing), a time of confirming growth (Confirmation), and a time of discerning our vocation-our daily work through Matrimony or Holy Orders. All of these important times become SACRAMENT when celebrated in Christ's community of faith.

Maybe it's time to reconnect the lifelines in your life and in our church. Spend five Friday mornings, February 3 to March 2 from 9 AM until noon, at St. John Neumann. Listen as Fr Al leads us through discussion, story, reflection and ritual to a new awareness of God's all surrounding love in our critical moments of this life journey. SACRAMENTS, a diocesan adult ed course, might give us a lifeline vision this Lenten season. To register, call the religious ed office.

## THE PERFECT ENGAGEMENT GIFT FEBRUARY 4

By: Sandy Jagus

*What is the perfect gift engaged couples can give to one another? How about a day of reflection, prayer, meaningful discussion, humor and even good food! Where would one find such a gift? Look no further! The SJN Marriage Prep Team led by Fr. Al and Barb Stokes are happy to provide all of these things and more to engaged couples seeking to get married in the Catholic Church. As one of the presenting couples, my husband and I are especially gratified to see couples who may be skeptical at first embrace the spirit of the day by allowing them to focus on their individual relationships and the gifts they bring to each other. Marriage Prep is offered twice a year at SJN and fulfills the diocesan requirement. Please call the religious education office at 412-366-5885 to register for the February 4, 2012 class.*

## ANNUAL SNOW BALL FEBRUARY 11 7:00-10:00 PM

*Want to treat your sweetheart to a special evening for Valentine's Day? Join your fellow parishioners and guests at the annual Snow Ball on Saturday, Feb. 11 from 7 to 10pm. The cost is \$25 and all types of music will be featured as well as a selection of microbrew beers and wine plus hearty appetizers and desserts. Tables of 8 can be reserved.*

*This year, proceeds will go to the Appalachia Workcamp while the Moms II group takes a brief hiatus.*

*Watch upcoming bulletins for info or contact Jennie Makuch at 412-635-8205.*



## Get In the Swing

By: Carole Shepard

If you missed it last year, save the date NOW – Monday, May 21, 2012 at Shannopin Country Club! Last year's golf outing was a great success! If you measure success by wonderful fellowship & fun shared among parishioners and guests, it would be hard to surpass the inaugural event but we are going to give it a try! If you missed the first annual St. John Neumann Golf Outing, come on board for the second annual St. John Neumann Golf Outing! Ask anyone in attendance – it was one of the most enjoyable and exciting evenings we have spent together as a parish family!

We have included a brochure within this mailing so please look it over. The hard-to-buy-for Dad/Husband/Mom/Wife would really appreciate a great Christmas gift! Putting GOLF on your calendar now would make the winter seem less intimidating! Finding a playful way to support St John Neumann Youth Ministries is like getting a hole-in-one!

If you would like to volunteer your time & talents to help plan the golf outing this year, join us @ our meeting January 10, 2012 @ 7:30 pm or contact Carole Shepard @ nunduke@comcast.net or call 724.935.8385.

# And the Last Shall be (as Good as the) First

By: Gary Fritsch

**F**ive kids, five First Communions. By the time I got to the last, I had seen and heard it all. Attend another class on First Communion? I could teach the class, for cryin' out loud.

Or so you would think...

What I discovered when I arrived for our First Communion/ First Reconciliation Parent meeting is the importance of our role as Parents in making this day special in a way that goes far beyond the new clothes and Communion parties. You see, the 'event' is the culmination of the 'getting to know you' process between your child and Jesus:

As usual, the Shepherd has already done his part by calling us by name from the very start. He extends his hand and words of introduction in the stories of the new testament. We,

as parents, have to put voice to those words for our children.

Your child gets to know Jesus personally through prayer. We, as parents, have to make introductions and sometimes help get the conversation going by praying with them. We also set the example of prayer in our daily lives.

In Reconciliation, our child can share their 'secrets', which of course only happens between the best of friends. We have to help to nurture that trust, and help them understand that as a friend, the Shepherd doesn't judge us, but only forgives. We sometimes have to demonstrate that type of forgiveness so that they know what it feels like.

Finally, they get to meet Him in the flesh. He becomes part of them and they become part of His Body. We help to build the excitement of this encounter as we talk of what the Eucharist means to us, and demonstrate this each week as we receive Him.

I am kind of embarrassed to say that despite having done this four times before, I didn't walk into that First Communion meeting with these

insights, or with this understanding of my role. I wasn't handed them on a sheet of paper when I arrived, either. It was only through the EXPERIENCE of praying and listening and reflecting with other parents that I came to this understanding. We also got a lot of practical ideas for ways to live up to our end of the bargain from Barb Stokes, who after 40 years of sacrament preparation, is quite decidedly the best resource you could find. Her approach makes things clear and understandable and leaves you with a desire to make this time very special for your child. Somehow, each time, there is an opportunity to deepen your understanding.

Makes me wish I had a few more children to go through the process.....OK I won't go that far, but hopefully you get the point. Let's set the example of the importance of Eucharist in our lives by setting aside the time to carefully consider our role in making First Reconciliation and First Communion the wonderful step in a relationship with Jesus that they should be for our children.

## Toddler Time

Sometimes you just need to have some time with another adult as you experience the wonder of toddlers and young children. Sometimes it is just nice to have a big empty warm place for little ones to play during the winter months. Sometimes good ideas grow into delightful friendships.

To work on these "sometimes" we are beginning two meeting times for any parents and little ones (birth to age 4ish) who want to come together. Coffee will be on and the Youth Room open for all on WEDNESDAY, November 16 and/or SATURDAY, November 19 from 10am till we need to go home! Bring some toys for the children, a book to share and an idea or two. Let's see what happens as we come together in faith and fun!

## All Fifth Grade Students

# An Invitation to Bible Enthronement

By: Barbara Stokes

I know that you know this. The Bible is a most important part of our faith development.

Our Catholic faith has two essential parts- Scripture and Tradition. Tradition we learn through experience and community. Scripture we learn through proclamation, recitation and education. Our education in Scripture grows through reading and praying the wisdom of the Bible. To do this we need to have the Holy Bible close by- maybe even in our room!

We call to mind the power of God's Word when we celebrate the BIBLE ENTHRONEMENT on Sunday,

January 29 after the 11:30 Mass for all our current 5TH GRADERS. At this time Fr Al will present a beautiful New American Student Bible to each fifth grader. This gift marks the official beginning of their preparation for Confirmation and a special time to read and reflect on the place of God's Word in their lives.

All fifth graders are invited whether they are in our religious ed programs or in a Catholic school. Many difficult decisions must be made by fifth graders and God's Word can lead and guide them along the paths of justice and righteousness. Receive the Word of God and treasure it every day.

# Parking Lot Palooza and Beyond!

By: Connor Flanagan

People of St. John Neumann, I would like to start by thanking you so very much for all of the support you have shown both myself, Josh and Krissy in the establishing of our parish's new youth ministry program. Whether you have helped us out directly by either cooking in the kitchen or coordinating events, or have been sending prayers our way... it all is very much appreciated. It is such a blessing that youth ministry here at St. John Neumann and Sts. John & Paul is approached as a parish wide effort. We truly could not be doing this without you. So thank you again.

Since our "Parking Lot Palooza!" kick-off event on October 9th, 2011, many other exciting Sunday night events have taken place. We started with an evening titled "What If", leading a discussion around the question "What if Jesus wasn't God?" This sparked many questions among the

youth and lead to a great discussion. We closed the evening focusing on the fact that ultimately we don't have to worry about this "What if?" question because Jesus is Lord and he is present and active in our lives today! Following that evening we have had Sunday night themes such as "Wonder Bread", a night focused on the person of Christ in the Eucharist (including Eucharistic Adoration), "Change", presenting the fact that in the midst of all the change we go through in life, Christ is and will always be our one constant, "Dis-Spelled", a Halloween themed evening discussing Angels, Demons, and the Occult, and last an evening titled "MASSIVE

Transformation", focusing on the changes that have occurred in mass with the introduction of the New Roman Missal.

This first semester has been such a blessing. I look forward to writing you again to share our updates as we plan our schedule for the spring! Please continue to pray for us and the youth of this Parish, as we will for you.

## Try it, Teens!

By: Tyler Pusateri

My name is Tyler Pusateri and I am a freshman at North Hills High school. I have been going to youth group for about one year now. I have had so much fun. I love it because you can have so much fun with kids your own age and connect with God at the same time. It also helps me to understand the scriptures and readings more. It is a time we can open up and explain our thoughts to everyone, and maybe even get help or help others. Josh and Connor have made the youth group events interesting, fun and spiritual and they make us all feel so comfortable that we can talk about anything. It has also been great meeting kids from Sts. John and Paul. Oh, and did I mention the dinners? The food has been awesome! Thanks to all the great cooks in the kitchen! Try it; I think all teens would really like it!

# Wednesday Evening Mass, Families Invited

By: Barbara Matera

Ever since Father Al changed Wednesday's daily mass to the evening, a community has formed around that mass. Beginning Wednesday, November 30 and continuing through early February, that community will grow considerably as our religious education students attend weekly with their families.

It's all part of what we're calling "Intersession," a break from our regular weekly religious education so that students and their families can gather for mass, the central moment in our shared faith life. Father Al has generously offered to say two masses each Wednesday to accommodate

busy family schedules. The new mass times for Wednesday will be **both 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.**

These "Family Masses" will not be elaborate, but will include meaningful involvement by children. We are even holding special training sessions for children who would like to serve as lectors and altar servers. Our hope is that the children learn to transfer the reverence and prayerfulness they have learned in the Good Shepherd atrium to church and the celebration of the mass.

We invite and encourage *all* St. John Neumann parishioners to join the children and their families for these joy-filled celebrations!

## Sharing Our Love

This year we mark the 26th year of "Sharing Our Love and Giving Hope" to those less fortunate so that their Christmas may be truly blessed. We have children's and adult's names from 10 agencies who are requesting our help. Please select a tag(s) from the tree & purchase a gift for that individual - sizes & "wishes" are listed.

Once gifts are wrapped, please affix the tag or a facsimile **SECURELY** to each gift. The gifts must be brought to church **NO LATER THAN 12:30 PM ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11.** If you have any questions, please call Cathy Vollmer at 412-635-6513 or the Parish Office.

# An Update and a New Ministry

My name is Rick Caruso and I am a candidate for the Permanent Diaconate in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

I wanted to first thank all of you for your support and for your prayers as I enter my fourth year of study in this program.

Since I last wrote, I have attended a 5-week course on the Letters of St. Paul and am in the midst of a 7-week course on Catholic Moral Theology. I have learned so very much about my faith and about the Catholic church. What a privilege to be considered by the Diocese as a person, charged in special way, to deliver this Good News to others.

In addition to class work, I have attended Days of Reflection whose focus has been on the church's teaching regarding Reproductive technologies (Hormone therapy, In vitro Fertilization), End-of-Life issues (Euthanasia), and Human Sexuality (Natural Family Plan-

ning and Contraception). The content of these days has given me a great deal of content for reflection and personal as well as spiritual growth.

If you read my article from last month's Insights, you'll recall that my summer assignment was at the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ).

What a blessing that experience was for me as I had the privilege of serving those inmates and bringing Christ to them through the sharing of time and the teaching of the faith. I learned a new appreciation for the power of an addiction, be it alcohol, drugs, gambling, or sex. Please pray for these men and women that God will give them the strength that they need to move their lives forward in a positive way.

Finally, to the title of this article. On September 18th, 2011, I was instituted by Bishop Zubik to the Ministry of Acolyte. The General Instruction of the Ro-

man Missal defines the responsibilities of an Acolyte. They include all those actions that are typically done by Altar Servers, distribution of Holy Communion, and following communion, the Purification of the sacred vessels. As I serve in this new capacity, there is a reverence for and a self-recognition of my actions which I, at times, fail to achieve. I become concerned about the mechanics of my actions than the awesomeness of what I am doing. I remain confident that with prayer and God's grace, that I will serve Him more faithfully in the future.

I am richly blessed to have a family, my wife Carol, and my two daughters, Anne and Gina, who continue to support me in my faith journey.

May you all be richly blessed in your vocation as you help make the church in the Diocese of Pittsburgh 'Alive in Christ'. Merry Christmas!

## Now Shine in the Spirit

By: Barbara Stokes

Filled and gifted in the Spirit by the call to the sacrament of Confirmation, these young people go forth now to shine! On September 16, in front of a church full of family and friends, Bishop Zubik prayed that the Spirit come upon them. They accepted the call with a loud individual AMEN- their YES to being sealed in God's Spirit with Holy Chrism. Our church is blessed that they are here. Now we are all challenged to support them so that the Spirit works more and more in our world. No graduation from the church! Just time now to do more, care more and pray more. Congratulations to them as they are fully initiated members of the church- gifted and graced and ready. Pray for them and watch the Spirit shine!

Anzenberger, Nicholas	Dorn, Kenneth	Immonen, Audrey	Nachazel, Zechariah*	Schweiger, Lydia
Beaver, Rachael	Duch, Sarah	Keelan, Erin	Neal, Peter	Schweiger, Olivia
Bollinger, Monica**	Ebbert, Christopher	King, Caroline	Neugebauer, Carra	Schwer, Stephanie
Burnham, Shannon	Foster, Maria	Kinzler, Brendan	Nichol, Matthew	Smith, Nathan
Burns, Nicole***	Franc, Katherine	Knobeloch, Carley	O'Sullivan, James	Sprys, Eric
Byerly, Caly	German, Richard	Knobeloch, Courtney	Pagano, Daniella*	Stroyne, Alyssa
Carmassi, Anthony	Gnalian, John	Konopka, Dewey	Powers, Donovan	Tabaka, Nicholas
Cavanaugh, Cory	Goehring, Benjamin	Kress, Patrick	Pritchard, Tyler	Tagliaferre, Kelly
Constantakis, Blake	Gumash, Christopher	Leahy, John	Puntill, Ronald	Tambellini, Michael
Coran, Sean	Guzzardi, Megan	Leard, Isabella	Pusateri, Tyler	Thieret, Robert
Cottone, Giovanna	Hartigan, Julia	Lennon, Joseph	Rahenkamp, William	Tunney, Clare
Cottone, Isabella	Herrle, Jennifer	Littlefield, Mark	Reasner, Kevin	Vanerstrom, Gregory
Dauer, Maddelin*	Hogan, Emily	Michaels, Alaina	Root, Margaret	Washabaugh, Claire
Donley, Griffin	Hopkins, Daniel	Moore, Natalie	Rudzik, Kara	Weber, Courtney

\*Confirmed @ St. Alexis

\*\*Confirmed @ Sts. John & Paul

\*\*\*Member of Sts. John & Paul

# Great Service Comes From the Heart

By: Laura Juran

There are about 12 groups who travel to Preston County, WV to participate in the Summer Home Repair Program, but the SJN group is unique. What makes us unique is our ability to fundraise. Most groups are from parishes supporting schools, a combination of parishes and schools or they choose not to. Consequently, they have a limited budget which puts constraints on what can be accomplished.

We have some very talented people in our group; from Paul Hlasnik, our construction manager, who runs his own construction company and Mike Hebor, who does commercial construction, to a number of talented weekend warriors. The rest of us are eager to learn and help in any way. But the most important gift this group brings to West Virginia is its heart.

This summer we met Neoma. She had two wishes- to have her trailer painted and to have a bigger front porch. She had a large family and they tended to congregate at mom's. We made our plans based on our site visit in early May. When we arrived in late June, we learned that Neoma was terminally ill. We were faced with a big decision. Should we scale back our project? None of us had the heart to do that. In fact, the porch actually increased in size just a little. This may have not made sense from a dollar and cents prospective, but it did from the heart. The joy received from the finished project was immeasurable. It made a difficult time just a little easier for this family who said that their mother had never had anything this nice in her whole life. She died in September, but the trailer will now be home to another family who will enjoy the added living space.

You made that joy possible by supporting our efforts. Our budget is over \$45,000 each year of which \$20,000-\$25,000 goes toward building materi-

als. We attempt to fundraise at least half of that amount. When you come to our Wine Dinner, Art Auction, buy an Enjoy or Entertainment coupon book, or donate or buy from our two garage sales, you help us go the extra mile. Your additional tax deductible donations are also a blessing.

In addition to these events, which we hope provide social gatherings for the parish and a service to help you recycle your unneeded household items, each member donates \$300 to help defray the cost of accommodations at the 4H Camp, food and rental vehicles.

Our ability to fundraise isn't the only thing which makes us different. Our members go out of their way to try

and make a memory for our families. Alanna Foran painted unique house numbers to compliment Neoma's newly painted house and the crew painted her picnic table to match. Shirley's toilet developed a leak. It wasn't on our list, but the leak was fixed and she received a new toilet and vanity.

So far, two extra trips in the months following our week in June have occurred to finish work that either was added on or we didn't quite finish. One more is likely in the spring. We take our commitments seriously and finish all work promised.

We thank you for helping us achieve our goal of great service from the heart. We couldn't do it without you.

## *The Immaculate Conception*

By: Father Al McGinnis

During this past summer a parishioner from St John Neumann was doing some work in Africa and had a painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary commissioned by an artist she worked with. We had the painting framed and will be placing it into the Narthex of the church on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8. Since the anticipated Mass for this feast falls on a Wednesday this year and our new program with the Good Shepherd Religious Education has Masses at 4:30 and 6:30, we will keep that schedule for the eve of the Holy day. Before each of those Masses we will have a small blessing service around the new painting, then all process into the Church together to begin the Liturgy. We hope this addition to the Church will be well received and appreciated by all.

“To welcome the graces that the Feast of the Immaculate Conception brings, we ask you to recall the words in the Book of Genesis: “The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself’ (Gen 3: 9-10). Sin affects us. We often think that we can avoid the unhappy effects of sin by convincing ourselves that what is wrong is right. This strategy never frees us from sin. Such useless rationalizations only force us to try and hide from God. When we try that, we sink more deeply into sin. In order to break this vicious cycle of sinning, God sanctified Mary in a way altogether unique. We call this grace her Immaculate Conception. Because she is conceived without sin, Mary shares beforehand in the merits of her Son's sacrifice. Since she has been given to us as our spiritual mother, Mary communicates to us her holiness. So we say in the Hail Mary, “pray for us sinners.” This means that we no longer need to look for a place to hide from God (which is impossible to find in any case).”

*The Magnificat Advent Companion*



**VISIT SJN'S NEW, IMPROVED WEBSITE WITH CALENDAR UPDATES DAILY**  
[www.stjohnneumannpgh.org](http://www.stjohnneumannpgh.org)

## You Are Invited To These Saint John Neumann Events

- ✦ FAMILY BONFIRE “LIGHT FOR ADVENT”  
Sunday, November 27 from 6:30–8 PM
- ✦ TAIZÉ ADVENT PRAYER SERVICE AT SJN  
Friday, December 2 at 7 PM
- ✦ SCRIPTURE STUDY  
Thursday mornings from 10–11:30 AM
- ✦ MASS WITH ANOINTING OF THE SICK  
Saturday mornings, 12/3, 1/7, 2/4, 3/3
- ✦ CENTERING PRAYER  
Tuesdays at 9:30 AM  
Wednesdays 12/7 and 12/21 at 7:30 PM
- ✦ FAMILY MASS  
Wednesdays at 4:30 and 6:30 PM  
11/30 through 2/1
- ✦ ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE  
Monday, December 12 at 7 PM
- ✦ MEN’S BREAKFAST  
Saturday, December 17 at 9 AM
- ✦ CHRISTMAS CONCERT  
Saturday, December 17 at 3 PM
- ✦ SJN WOMEN’S RETREAT  
January 13-15  
St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center
- ✦ “SACRAMENTS” COURSE  
Fridays, February 3–March 2 from 9 AM–Noon
- ✦ “PROPHETS” COURSE  
Wednesdays, February 22–March 28 from 12:30–3 PM