



## Tids 'n Bits: Advent & Christmas

### Various Blessings & Rites

The seasons of Advent and Christmas offer various opportunities for us to invoke blessings from God: upon crèche and tree; upon house and home; upon people seeking spiritual gifts of light and peace. Visit [www.StMaryNY.org](http://www.StMaryNY.org) and discover various rites & rituals under "prayer".

### Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary—a holy day of obligation—will be celebrated on Saturday, December 8th. Join us for Mass at 8:30am in the Church.

### Advent Reconciliation Service

Prepare to commemorate the birth of our Savior by preparing your spirit and being reconciled with God and the Church: empty yourself of sin and open yourself to the joyful new life of Christmas! A communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be held on Monday, December 17th beginning at 7:00pm. There will be several confessors at your service.

### The Nativity of the Lord: Christmas

Celebrate the Birth of Christ by joining with us for Christmas Mass: on Monday, December 24th Masses will be celebrated at 4:30pm & 8:30pm; on Tuesday, December 25th at 10:00am.

### Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God—a holy day of obligation—is an opportunity for us to gather together and pray for the gift of God's peace throughout the new year. Join us for Mass on Monday, December 31st at 4:30pm or Tuesday, January 1st at 10:00am in the Church.

## Parish Mission Statement

The Church of St. Mary is a Catholic Community united in faith and Eucharist with the Diocese of Albany, New York, and the Church throughout the world.

As a Catholic Community, we believe in and model our lives on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are committed to active worship and prayer, life long faith formation, and the physical and spiritual support of those in need. All are welcome into our community.

Because of our belief in God's abiding presence, and with the support of the Holy Spirit, we share a common commitment to Stewardship which invites disciples of Jesus Christ to acknowledge their gifts from God and to share those gifts of time, talent and treasure justly and charitably in the service of the parish community and the local and global community.

*St. Mary's Blessings*

7.2 December 2012



## Church of St. Mary at Clinton Heights

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# St. Mary's Blessings

Quarterly Newsletter of the Church of St. Mary at Clinton Heights  
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## The YEAR OF FAITH

Pope Benedict XVI has declared this year to be a YEAR OF FAITH, during which time, people of faith strive to greater know, understand, appreciate and live our Catholic faith.

This YEAR OF FAITH is a "summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world" (Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei* 6). In other words, the YEAR OF FAITH is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion – to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The "door of faith" is opened at one's baptism, but during this year Catholics are called to open it again, walk through it and rediscover and renew their relationship with Christ and his Church.

Closely linked with the New Evangelization, this YEAR OF FAITH is intended to stimulate and strengthen all Catholics and their living faith. The New Evangelization is a call to each Catholic to deepen his or her own faith, have confidence in the Gospel, and possess a willingness to share the Gospel. The New Evangelization is first and foremost a personal encounter with Jesus Christ; it is an invitation to deepen one's relationship with Christ. It is also a call to each person to share his or her faith with others. The Year of Faith, just like the New Evangelization, calls Catholics to conversion in order to deepen their relationship with Christ and to share it with others.

Here at St. Mary's, new programs like the "Catholicism" series and our introductory year of Scripture Study are but a few of the many opportunities to respond to this YEAR OF FAITH.

*A Blessed Advent and  
a Merry Christmas!*

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### "Catholicism" series

① Thursday, Dec 6 at 7:00pm

#### Scripture Study

① Tuesday, Dec 11 at 6:30pm

#### Christmas Masses

① Monday, Dec 24 at 4:30 & 8:30pm

① Tuesday, Dec 25 at 10:00am

### DID YOU KNOW?

The YEAR OF FAITH logo contains several significant graphic elements:

The logo is composed of a square, bordered field on which a boat, symbolizing the Church, is represented as sailing on a graphically minimal representation of waves. The main mast of the boat is a cross from which sails are displayed in the form of dynamic signs which compose the trigram of Christ (IHS). The background to the sails is a sun which, associated with the trigram, refers also to the Eucharist.



# Rekindling the Light of Faith

by Megan Calnan

My husband Jim and I recently came back to the Catholic Church after being away for several years. We were both raised Catholic, but only attended church into our early teens, and neither of us ever had a good grasp of our faith. Shortly after we were married ten years ago, we both developed a desire to deepen our faith and understanding of God. We began attending Mass again, after being away for many years. Unfortunately, even after attending Mass for a couple of years, we still didn't understand the faith, and we didn't see the significance of the Mass or appreciate the beauty of the Liturgy. I started reading some Protestant materials and had a lot of questions, like why do Catholics venerate Mary while Protestants don't? Why are the sacraments necessary? And why does the Church claim to have authority? We also didn't feel a strong connection to our local parish, and probably couldn't even name any of our fellow parishioners.

At the same time, we had recently met several evangelical Protestants who were passionate about their faith and lived it well by serving others. Their faith seemed to inform every part of their lives and they could articulate their beliefs and biblical teachings, and were able to answer our questions. Jim had a coworker who encouraged us to visit his non-denominational Protestant church, and after mulling it over for a few months, we decided to attend a service there. Although we were taken aback by the contemporary music and the stage in place of an altar, the other parishioners were friendly and welcoming, and eager to answer questions. It was exactly what we had been looking for, so we stayed. We reluctantly told our families that we were no longer Catholic, and packed away any sacramental items we had around the house. In time, we came to love our new church. We joined bible study groups and made several close friends. We volunteered regularly and our kids looked forward to the Sunday school program every week.

Yet, as time went on, I had a sense that something was missing. Holidays, especially Easter and Christmas, left me with kind of an empty feeling. The church was not liturgical, and so there was no acknowledgment of Lent or Holy

Week, and no Advent season. I was also feeling unsettled about the scriptures study we participated in. There were so many different interpretations and opinions on almost every aspect of the scriptures, so trying to discern the truth was confusing and frustrating.

Earlier this year, Jim and I began noticing Cardinal Dolan in the news. He was clearly committed to the teachings of the Church, and so joyful at the same time. He seemed to be everywhere, from political talk shows to his Twitter feed. Then we stumbled across Father Robert Barron's *Word on Fire* website and were surprised to see a Priest engaging the culture this way, and we found ourselves wanting to find out more about the Church. We soon saw advertisements for the Catholics Come Home campaign and looked into their website, we read books by Scott Hahn and Francis Beckwith, both Protestant pastors who became Catholic. After these experiences and more, we felt encouraged seeing Catholic clergy and lay people who were passionate about their faith. Before we knew it, the Holy Spirit had drawn us back to the Catholic Church.

Thankfully, joyful and faithful Catholics aren't found only on the internet and in books. We joined St. Mary's in the spring after exploring their website, then attending Mass, and finally meeting with Father David, who happily welcomed us back into the church. The parishioners here are faithful, caring, friendly and welcoming, and share their gifts and talents to help the church thrive. It is a joy to be a part of this prayerful community. Although we chose to leave the Church for a time, we are so very grateful that the Catholic Church never left us.

*(Megan Calnan—pictured above with her family—is married to Jim, and together they have four children: Luke, Samuel, Gabriel and Mae.)*



## Opportunities in Your Own Home for a New Evangelization

**Blessing of Advent Wreaths** (Dec 2). Before lighting the first candle on Sunday, have your family gather for a simple prayer ritual.



**Celebrate St. Nicholas' feast day** on December 6th. Not only will we have a parish celebration, but at home—on the evening of Dec 5th, once children have gone to sleep, put some coins and candies in their shoes so that when they wake they'll recall Nicholas' generosity!



**Celebrate St. Lucy's feast day** on Dec 12th by lighting blessed candles at your home and reducing your electrical consumption for the night...maybe enjoy a family game night.



**Blessing of the Christmas Tree & Crèche** (Dec 9) and **Blessing of the Bambinelli** (Dec 16). Bring your infant Jesus figurine from your crèche to Mass with you on Dec 16th and we will bless the child to be placed in your crèche on Christmas morning.



**Blessing of the Home on Epiphany** (Jan 6) is a wonderful tradition that remains throughout the year. On Jan 6th, light a candle, gather with the family in the home, and using chalk, pray and bless the doorways of your home & rooms with the traditional blessing of the Magi:



20 ✕ C ✕ M ✕ B ✕ 13



## Welcome New Parishioners

Just last month, we welcomed new families and many new members to our parish:

Shakir & Chau Cannon; Julain Clarke; Steven & Colette Connolly; Jackie & Craig and Scarlett Dickert; Brian & Maria Dyer and Grace & Maggie; Bill & Nancy Jordan and Stephen & Mary Rose; Michael & Jodie Krulikowski and Ryan; Brian & Karyn Murphy and Brendan & Colin; Paul Onyon and Kaitlyn Frangais; Damien & Susan Pagones and their children James, Kaelyn and Claire; Andrew & Theresa Rodrigue and Madelyn & Michael; Gloria Salisbury; and John & Joanna Thornton.



## ANNUAL GALA & AUCTION

a huge success, thanks to:

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**And THANKS, too, to:**  
the Gala & Auction Committee; all of our volunteers; to parishioners, friends and businesses who donated items for our auction; to our benefactors and to all who joined in our celebration!

**Save the Date:**  
Next year's Gala & Auction will be  
**Saturday, November 9, 2013**  
at the Hilton Garden Inn, Troy

