

EAGLE'S WINGS

December 2010

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Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Mondays 5 - 5:30pm
Alumni Chapel

Weddings & Baptisms
Alumni Chapel

Call Fr. John Maher, C.M.
286-8415

Mass Intentions:

\$10/ Mass

Call 286-8400 / stop by the office.

Check out our website:
www.niagara.edu/ministry

Check us out on FACEBOOK
"Campus Ministry Corner"

Finding your Advent GPS

Well, it's started and is in full swing. Not just the crush of end-of days (oops, I mean)-end-of semester papers and tests; not lovely "Lake Effect Snow", so entrenched here that Buffalo has a diner by that name; not just the Senior Class "Ugly Christmas Sweater Party" (redefining fashion disaster!); but what I call the Great Commercial Christmas Phenomenon, or GCCP for short.

What is GCCP, you ask? It has three goals: to get you to need more, buy more, want more. Merchants and media conspire to convince you that you need "stuff" you don't really need. And if you're clever enough to see through that, they switch their tactic to make you think those you love need that stuff, and by providing them with said "stuff" you'll be loved all the more. And finally, even if you have stuff and give stuff, you need new stuff. "New and improved" is the Madison Avenue mantra that for more is better.

That's why the Church gives us the season of Advent as a spiritual oasis in the midst of chaotic and crass commercialism. Advent is an antidote of quiet expectation and hope in an age of anxiety and ennui. Its scriptural readings and hymns call us to a deeper reality: namely, that our God came among us as one of us. In the person of Jesus, God has entered humanity in a unique, irrevocable way. In Jesus, God as "other" becomes our "brother", one like us in all things but sin. Advent is not a past but a present reality, a call to accept Christ now, allowing his transforming love to influence all we say and do.

Campus Ministry provides many Advent programs in this newsletter to help you make the most of this holy season. In the midst of all your demands, perhaps you can join us to escape the GCCP and ready yourself to embrace Christmas' true meaning: "The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of an only Son coming from the Father." (John 1:14). In the words of an old movie title said, Christ's coming among us is still the "Greatest Story Ever Told" or GSET for short.

The Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem has only one entrance, and you cannot pass through it without bending down. Some said that it was built this way so Bedouins could not enter seated on their camels. But there is another explanation given containing a deep spiritual truth. This entrance reminds pilgrims that in order to penetrate the deep meaning of Christmas it is necessary to humble oneself and become little. If God has descended "from the starry skies," should we not also come down from our pedestals of superiority and power and allow Christ to live among by treating one another with love?

May this Advent season help each of us to climb down from the camels of commercialism and selfishness to enter into the silence of the stable of Bethlehem.

Let's make this the year we switch from GCCP to the GSET, a change that will direct our minds and hearts, guiding our days better than any brand new GPS!



Fr. John T. Maher, C.M. '76
Director, Campus Ministry
University Chaplain

Finding the Christ Child in Building the Kingdom...

Some years back when I was teaching high school, my students adopted a family for Christmas on the lower eastside of Buffalo very close to where my Dad grew up. My high school religion teacher had called me inquiring whether my class could adopt a family for Christmas. Sr. Katherine Marie told me the story of a hard working woman with three young children who was abandoned by her husband in the past year and was determined to stay off public assistance. I readily agreed.

A group of sophomore girls trekked off with me on a very snowy afternoon in a 15 passenger light blue van up Bailey Avenue and down the snow laden East Delevan Avenue to the narrow Schuele Avenue. I wearily led the group of enthusiastic students up the tight narrow staircase bearing gifts and food galore. After entering the upper flat, a perky, curly haired seven year old boy named Joey patted my arm and back as if I was going through security. I looked down at him and was curious to understand what he was doing to me. Joey said to me in a stage whisper, "Lady, are you real? I thought you were maybe an angel or something sent from God..." I replied, "I am very real and I am no angel..." Joey then quipped pointing to the girls, "I take it they are real too!" I responded, "They are." "Do you work for Santa Claus?" Joey asked. "In a way, I do..." I replied. "They must be elves! They are a lot prettier than what elves are supposed to look like and that one looks a bit like me." Joey added as he ran to the window. "Quite clever with the van... My Mom said that Santa doesn't like to go down East Delevan with a sleigh so he wasn't going to come to our home for Christmas! I told my Mom that she needed more faith and that she had to believe that God would help Santa figure things out. I told all that to Fr. Joe about what my Mom said and he told me to say a prayer and Christmas would work out... It is not for me but for my little sisters and for my Mom." Joey said very assured of himself.

I knelt down and looked into Joey's big brown eyes and said, "You are such a good boy!" Joey then whispered into my ear and asked me if God gave me the message that his Mom needed gloves and his little sister Rebecca needed boots. I let him know that I got the message. With a big smile Joey exclaimed, "I know you got the message about the food and how I wanted to have enough to share with the family downstairs!" My eyes started to fill-up..."Joey I know there are presents for you and you too like your sisters have a new outfit to wear to Christmas Mass!" Joey then with a soft smile suggested, "Since you are a real lady and they are real girls, can I hug you?" "We would certainly like that. As I hugged him he uttered a prayer, "Thank you Jesus!"

Joey left an imprint on my heart. There are many Joeys out there! The challenge is can we put aside our own personal hustle and bustle to let the Christ Child into our hearts as we build the Kingdom of God? **Heartfelt thanks to all of you who have taken tags off the Giving tree and to the Residence Halls who have adopted families as well as the Sports teams who are fixing food baskets for the families and delivering them...** may this Advent Season help us build the Kingdom of God one person at a time....



Monica Saltarelli,
Campus Minister

“Advent’s Search”

The Advent Season represents much more than the time of year when we anticipate Christmas, and our search for the “perfect” gift in stores. Advent reminds us of our continual search for God in our lives and in the world about us. This search is not just for what many consider a short liturgical season but truly a life-time. Perhaps one of the best examples of this modern day search for God is that of Thomas Merton. He was born in 1915 and lived a significant portion of his life as a Trappist monk at the Abbey of the Gethsemani, in Kentucky. He died of a tragic accident while attending a spirituality conference in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1968. Some readers may be familiar with the nearby Trappist monastery, the Abbey of the Genesee, in Piffard, New York, where campus ministry offers a retreat each year. Both abbeys belong to the same Cistercian Order and contemplative way of life.

Merton’s epic story of his search for God is told in his autobiographical account entitled Seven Storey Mountain. Through many twists and turns reminiscent of the prophet Isaiah’s descriptive and poetic sojourn of Israel in the desert (see Isaiah 40:1-5), Merton realized just how empty his own life had become. There were failed relationships, career paths leading to dead ends, and a general malaise due to an ache for the living God, although Merton did not realize the latter till later in his life. Despite these failures, he began to recognize the depth of his longing as he spent time in church and at daily mass in New York City. Interestingly enough, his story resembled another prominent figure of his day, Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker in New York and elsewhere.

Their searches revealed how they each gained the gift of wisdom and insight into their lives as they chose to no longer ignore their inner yearnings even though this meant rejection by others once close to them as well as deep-seated pain and confusion. Their yearnings evoke the “O Come” antiphons of the hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” so familiar to us during the Advent Season. Thus, their search and ours do not mean that we necessarily go elsewhere but instead make the search from within for the living God.

It is my earnest prayer that this will be true for each of us as well. In many respects Merton and Day’s lives are not much different from our own. Of course, the circuitous paths we take might be different, but hopefully the outcomes will be the same – lives united with the living God. I believe that Psalm 63 describes well this ardent longing:

“O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water. Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary to see your power and your glory, for your kindness is greater good than life; my lips shall glorify you.” (Psalm 63:1-4)

Pray, then, for this gift of wisdom both in and outside the classroom so that the joys of the season may fill your hearts now and always. Come, Lord Jesus!

It’s the most **BUSIEST** time of the year!

November 28th marked the beginning of a new year on the Church calendar. So, happy new year! What will your resolutions be? The Church gives us four weeks to settle down and refocus, a special time to recommit ourselves to God in prayer and love of neighbor. We find ourselves now in the midst of the beautiful, joyful season of Advent, a time of spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ’s birth. While the commercial world is telling us we have gifts to buy and cookies to bake and the academic world is telling us we have papers to write and exams to study for, the Church tells us we have to watch and pray. And that’s it. Jesus doesn’t want our money or our A’s; he wants us ready—spiritually—to welcome Him back into our hearts.

In the midst of all the busy-ness, please make time to stop and pray, and resolve to make this new year the most spiritually fruitful of all. Let us help you. Join in any of our Advent services to enter more fully into this beautiful season!



Fr. Bruce Krause, C.M.,
Campus Minister



Kristina Schliesman,
Campus Minister



Lord of Heaven & Earth
Retreat November 2010
Abbey of the Genesee



LIFT - Living In Faith Together
Thanksgiving Dinner November 2010



Celebrate Advent

Sunday 12/05

Masses 11 am and 10 pm
(Birthday Blessing & cake
10 pm Mass Chapel)

Monday 12/06

Christmas Tree Lighting,
4:30 pm outside Gallagher

Tuesday 12/07

Advent Prayer,
Lessons & Carols,
7:30 pm Chapel

Wednesday 12/08

Holyday, Feast of the
Immaculate Conception
Masses 8:15 am, 12:15 & 5:05 pm

Thursday 12/09

Advent Penance Service,
7:30 pm Chapel

Sunday 12/12

Mass at 11 am
Pre-Christmas Mass 5:00 pm,
Christmas Carols at 4:45 pm,
Christmas Dinner in Clet Hall,
after 5 pm Mass
NO 10 pm Mass

Weekdays:

Mass on Mon- Fri. 12:15 pm

A blessed Advent from
the Office of Campus Ministry

SUNDAY MASS ALUMNI CHAPEL

11:00am & 10:00pm

Daily MASS ALUMNI CHAPEL

Monday to Friday @ 12:15pm

Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Monday's 5 - 5:30pm - Alumni Chapel



Join us for Mass - Everyone is always WELCOME!!