

Have you finished your Christmas shopping? As you read my column, at best only five shopping days remain. And if the weather forecast holds, it really is feeling a lot like Christmas; at least our Southwest Florida version. While you are finishing up your last minute shopping, please do not forget those that may not be as fortunate this Christmas.

Did you receive a green envelope in your bulletin this past weekend? This envelope is to be used for our annual Christmas Spiritual Bouquet. Your donation will furnish the Sanctuary with flowers (Poinsettias) during the Christmas season and your loved ones will be remembered in the Christmas Spiritual Bouquet during the Christmas Masses. Your intentions will also be published in the parish bulletin. If you did not receive an envelope, you may pick one up in the narthex before or after Mass.

If you have ever wondered about what a vibrant parish family community we have here at St. John the Evangelist, the Night in Bethlehem event held on December 11th was a magnificent testament of our families in action. Below is a recap of the night's events.

St. John's Family Ministry and the Men's Club combined efforts to bring Bethlehem to over 300 participants on Friday night at "A Night in Bethlehem." The evening started out with guests traveling from different shops, tasting bread, making a leather bracelet, painting wooden tops, making a clay pot, using a pestle and mortar to grind herbs and spices, making head dresses, eating pizza and visiting Santa! The highlight of the night was when the shepherd proclaimed that an angel had appeared and all needed to come see the sight. All guests processed by candle light out to the courtyard to share in the First Christmas.

Have you glanced at the Catholic Faith Appeal statistics in the collection summary? As of December 15th, we are just over \$71,000 short of our goal. Many of our parishioners have heeded my advice and made a substantial year end gift to give us a realistic shot of reaching our 2009 goal. We still have a long way to go with exactly one month remaining but we have made great strides recently. I know everyone must be exhausted reading my weekly pleas to contribute to this very worthy cause. Everyone must know by now that the CFA is the single most important component of our annual budget. The experts suggest that if you want full participation, you must constantly remind the congregation of the importance of your cause. This is why I constantly mention the Catholic Faith Appeal. Many individuals are dreaming of a "White Christmas" and others only want "their two front teeth" this holiday season. I am dreaming of a successful Catholic Faith Appeal for Christmas. As a continual reminder; if you are a seasonal resident or visitor, please make your check payable to the Catholic Faith Appeal with St. John the Evangelist in the memo line. You may also contribute directly to the Diocese of Venice via credit card or in the form of a stock donation. Thank you so much for your continued support. With your help we can make my Christmas dreams come true.

As many of you remember, we replaced the carpeting, refinished the pews and replaced the pew fabric and cushions in 2007. After this extensive and expensive process, the carpet we chose was deemed defective. As a result, we replaced the carpet again with an upgraded version (at no cost to the parish) this past summer and now have an aesthetically pleasing and functional carpeted surface. Over the course of this past year, we noticed that the pew fabric was beginning to wrinkle and the cushions were developing "lumps" throughout the length of the pews. We brought the installer back on several different occasions to try and repair the pews. After three attempts, it was determined that the fabric was "breaking down." The manufacturer's representative flew down several weeks ago to see the pews firsthand. After inspecting the pews, he agreed with the installer that the fabric was defective. The manufacturer has agreed to replace all of the fabric on the pews as well as installing an upgraded cushion on the seat also at no cost to the parish. This work will take place in September of 2010. In the interim, we will be selecting a new fabric that will hold up well for many years to come. Please accept our apologies for the inconvenience you may experience this coming September, but feel confident that we are being good stewards of the contributions you make in ensuring that we get what you paid for.

The Parish office will be closed on December 24th & 25th. The Parish Life Center and Claussen Family Center buildings will also be closed on the 24th and 25th of December.

In His work together,

Scott Schlossberg, MBA
General Manager