

King of Kings



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Lord of Lords

CHRISTMAS 2009

Parish Directory

We welcome all who seek to know, love and serve God in the Roman Catholic Church. We invite you to come and join us in worship, learning, and building our community of faith.



Guía Parroquial

Les damos la bienvenida a todos los que buscan conocer, amar y servir a Dios en la Iglesia Católica. Los invitamos a que asistan a la Santa misa y a construir nuestra comunidad de fé.

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978-826-7502

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Monday – Friday; 9 A.M. - 4 P.M.

or by appointment

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**Parish Email or Bulletin Submissions by
Thursday at 10:00am— 10 days prior to:**

wdeleon@parishmail.com

For parish information and to read bulletins online go to:

www.stjohnspeabody.com



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A Blessed Christmas to All!

Speaking for all the staff at Saint John the Baptist Parish and School, we want to extend our prayers and best wishes for a happy Christmas to you and your loved ones. During this Year for Priests we are particularly mindful of the privilege we have to celebrate the Eucharist and the sacraments with you and for you. As we gather around the altar for Christmas mass it is our special joy to be the human instruments God uses to make the Lord Jesus truly present among His people. We take this opportunity to thank you for your prayers and the support you show us and our parish in so many ways. We ask God to bless the new year that awaits us in 2010. May it be a time of grace and blessing for us and for the world we live in!

Fr. Charlie

Fr. Frank

Fr. Paul

Fr. John



Una Bendita Navidad para Todos!!!

Hablando en nombre de todo el personal de la Iglesia San Juan Bautista y La Escuela, queremos extender nuestras oraciones y mejores deseos de una Feliz Navidad para ustedes y sus seres queridos. Durante este El Año de los Sacerdotes, estamos particularmente concientes del privilegio que tenemos de celebrar la Eucaristía y los sacramentos para ustedes. Al reunirnos alrededor del altar en la misa de Navidad es un gozo especial el ser el instrumento humano que Dios usa para que el Señor Jesús este verdaderamente con su pueblo. Tomamos esta oportunidad para agradecerles por las oraciones y apoyo que ustedes nos dan a nosotros y a nuestra parroquia en tantas maneras. Le pedimos a Dios que bendiga el año nuevo que nos espera en 2010. Esperamos que sea un tiempo de gracia y bendiciones para todos y para el mundo en que vivimos.

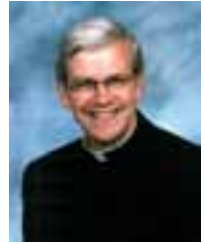
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This Christmas, Listen to the Story in the Song



Ever since my college years I have loved listening to Handel's magnificent musical score: the Messiah. In this masterpiece that still draws and inspires crowds at this time of year, the composer George Handel set to music several of the greatest passages of the bible that contain the core of our belief as Christians: that Jesus is our Messiah, foretold by all the prophets.

Recently I was invited to hear Handel's Messiah. It was being performed in a church that has excellent acoustics and provided a very appropriate sacred space for this extraordinary musical work. The pastor who invited me led me into the choir loft where we could appreciate both the sight and sound of the chorale and instrumentalists. Sitting beside us was a woman who at first was very engaged by the music. She moved her hands to keep pace with the tempo, and seemed familiar with the lyrics. After a while, to my surprise, she took out a few envelopes and began to open and read the contents: some bills. After that she took out a paperback book and read that for a while. Occasionally she would look up and listen, but only momentarily. I couldn't help but conclude that for this person, the splendid music and texts of the Messiah which captured her attention for a short while soon became little more than a background for other activities that she had in mind to do that night.

As I thought about this experience later, I began to wonder if this woman's behavior gives us a kind of metaphor for our own behavior. Could it happen that what Handel's Messiah became to this woman, Christmas itself could become to any of us? For a while we enjoy Christmas carols, maybe even most of all, the ones that tell the story of the first Christmas. Songs like The First Noel, O Come All Ye Faithful, O Holy Night... But then we forget that these were written not just as pretty songs but as hymns of faith and praise. They tell a profound story. But are we still listening to the words?

So here is a question to ponder: Is it only the lovely music of Christmas that captures our heart today, or is it also the event behind the music: our Messiah and his birth? Christmas can become nothing more than what we call "musak," the bland, easily forgettable music that you hear in elevators and waiting rooms. What a sad commentary on us and the way we celebrate this feast, if we love the music of Christmas, and yet do not listen to the words that tell its wondrous story.

Most of us, I think, love to hear Christmas carols. They connect us not only to the first Christmas but so many family Christmases in our past. We look forward to hearing them sung beautifully in church. We listen to them at home or in the car, where they help to fill up the voids in our day. But with frequency and repetition, the words get lost. We hear the music but pay little or no attention to the words.

To appreciate with fresh ears those beautiful carols that ring with religious resonance, we need to remember that the centerpiece of Christmas is none other than the person of Jesus. Jesus is a man of many titles: Messiah, the Christ, Savior, Lord, Son of Man, Son of God, to name just some of the gospel words which have found their way into songs we learned long ago. For all their familiarity, these titles signify an incredible reality, the incarnation of God. Christmas celebrates the fact that this astonishing truth is humbly concealed in an infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger.

The message of the Christmas story carried to our ears in well-crafted music is at once calming and moving. We need to be calmed. And we need to be moved. We need to slow down, to put aside the hectic pace of life, to stop and breathe the spirit of God. We need to remember that the God who once breathed his life into the little child of Bethlehem is the same One who gives life to every human being, from its fragile beginning until its last breath. How easily, and at what peril to our world,

do we fail to recognize that in every song that sings of the infant in the virgin's womb, we are paying homage to the creature who is sacred in every mother's womb.

The music of Christmas also moves us and stirs us not only to rise up in praise of God's grace and mercy, but also to stand up for those whom Jesus came to save. This of course means all of us, the whole planet, a world so aptly described in these striking lyrics of O Holy Night: "Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till he appear and the soul felt its worth." Jesus was born to save what was lost and what was counted as worthless. Today, do we even know how lost we are? Or do we know our own worth? Do we care that so many of us are lost in worthless things? What is their worth in a world that measures people by what they make, or what it costs to make them well?

The message of Christ and Christmas is everywhere around us. In one sense we do not need to put Christ back into Christmas. He is still there. He is everywhere to be heard. But like the lady in the choir loft, opening her bills and reading a novel during Handel's Messiah oratorio, we so easily turn a deaf ear to the majesty and meaning of the birth of Jesus. Why do we light the candles, dress the tree, hang the wreath, and, of course, and pass the gifts to those we love? Is it just to "get through" winter? Or it is because God has broken through the noise and din of our hyperactive existence. He made his angels raise an anthem with words we want so much to believe, but fear we will never see, glory and peace. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

Behind many a Christmas carol lies a story. Not always the story of great composers like Handel, but often a tale of simple men and women of faith. One such story has to do with a Catholic priest named Josef Mohr. In December of 1818, Father Mohr faced in a horrible predicament: his church organ was broken and Christmas was just a few days away. That night, after attending a performance of the story of Christ's birth in the Church of St. Nicholas, Father Mohr found himself taking a long walk. From a hillside he paused to look down on a peaceful snow-covered village. As Mohr gazed down at this wintry scene, his thoughts about the Christmas play suddenly made him remember a poem he had written a few years before. It was a poem about the night when angels announced the birth of the long-awaited Messiah to shepherds on a hillside. Mohr decided those words would make a good carol for his congregation the following day at their Christmas Eve service. He went to see the church organist, Franz Gruber. With only a few hours to compose a melody and with no organ to play, Gruber came up with music for Father Mohr's poem that would be sung with the help of a guitar. On Christmas Eve, Father Mohr and Hanz Gruber sang their new composition for the first time, with only the gentle strings of Gruber's guitar. This was the first time that the carol, Silent Night, was ever sung. Today that song has been translated into more than 100 languages. But regardless of the language, whenever this carol is sung, the accompanying musician must play softly, lest the music drown out the poetry of the words.

There is beauty and truth in the simple words of Silent Night, words we may have heard hundreds or even thousands of times. Listen to this marvelous verse: "Silent Night, Holy Night, Son of God, Love's pure light, Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace. Jesus, Lord at thy birth. Jesus, Lord at thy birth." It would be hard to listen to Silent Night and words such as these and still try read your business mail or a novel. Why try? Why not, instead, put the business and pettiness of the world aside. For a while tonight or tomorrow, do this. Pay attention to the words behind the music of Christmas. Stop and listen. Listen and remember. Remember why you came today to honor the infant in a manger. Remember and believe. And then let the story of the Christ child's birth become truly music to love and a song to live by! **Have a holy Christmas!**

Fr. John

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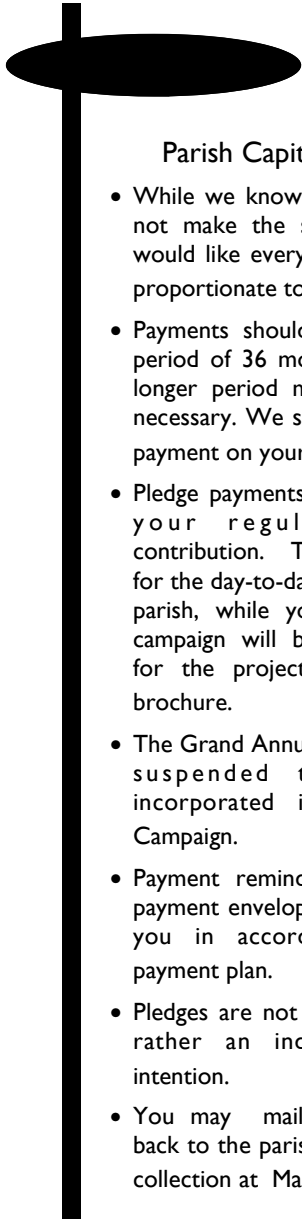


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Peabody, MA

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- While we know that everyone can not make the same size gift, we would like everyone to make a gift proportionate to their means.
- Payments should be made over a period of 36 months (3 years). A longer period may be arranged if necessary. We suggest a 10% down payment on your pledge.
- Pledge payments are in addition to your regular Offertory contribution. This collection pays for the day-to-day operations of the parish, while your pledge in this campaign will be used specifically for the projects outlines in the brochure.
- The Grand Annual collection will be suspended this year and incorporated into this Capital Campaign.
- Payment reminders and a special payment envelope will be mailed to you in accordance with your payment plan.
- Pledges are not legally binding, but rather an indication of your intention.
- You may mail this pledge form back to the parish or place it in the collection at Mass.

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\$7,500	\$750	\$2,250	\$563	\$188	\$6.15
\$5,000	\$500	\$1,500	\$375	\$125	\$4.10
\$4,000	\$400	\$1,200	\$300	\$100	\$3.30
\$3,000	\$300	\$900	\$225	\$75	\$2.50
\$2,000	\$200	\$600	\$1150	\$50	\$1.65
\$1,000	\$100	\$300	\$75	\$25	\$.80