Twelfth Day of Christmas

Dear Friend of Annunciation Parish & School,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We are fortunate to not only have Twelve Days of Christmas, but even more! The Christmas Season in our Church continues through the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which will be celebrated this Monday, January 9th.

This Sunday, January 8th, we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord. While in our country the Church now celebrates Epiphany on a Sunday, traditionally Epiphany was celebrated on January 6th, as is still the case in many parts of the world. This merriest day of the Christmas Season is a day of gift-giving.

In many cultures, especially those with Hispanic populations, January 6th is El Día de los Tres Reyes, or Three Kings’ Day. It is on this day that people commemorate the Magi bringing gifts to the newborn Christ child. In these cultures, rather than Santa bringing children gifts on Christmas, it is the Three Kings who bring the gifts on Epiphany! (Today, in some places, both Santa and the Three Kings visit the children.)

And in Italy, it is the Christmas “witch”, Befana (whose name comes from the word “epiphany” and who legend says wanted to join the Magi in their search for the infant Jesus), who now goes door to door bringing gifts at Epiphany. May we, too, continually search for Christ in our midst!

Sincerely,
Dr. Sandi Chakeres
Director of Faith Formation

Celebrate - It’s Carnival!

The celebration of Carnival traditionally begins on the Twelfth Day of Christmas, the traditional date for Epiphany (January 6). Carnival spans winter Ordinal Time, the time between the Christmas Season and the Season of Lent. The word carnival is derived from two Latin words, one meaning flesh or meat, and the other meaning farewell. In Lent, which is a penitential season, we will practice such disciplines as fasting, and abstaining from meat on certain days. So before we say farewell to the flesh in our fasting of Lent, we’ll do a lot of feasting and celebrating during Carnival!

Special points of interest:
- Monday, January 9 is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord and the last day of the Christmas Season. Tuesday, January 10 we enter a period of time in our Church Calendar called Ordinal Time, or Ordinary Time.
- Catholic Schools Week 2017 is coming soon! It begins January 29!
- Follow us on Facebook to get all our latest news and see all our latest photos!
Elizabeth Ann Seton: Our 5th Grade Patron Saint

January 4 is the feast day of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, a very influential woman in the Catholic Church in the United States. She is the first canonized saint to be born in what is now the United States of America.

Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born in New York City on August 28, 1774. She was born into a wealthy Episcopalian family, and that is the Christian denomination in which she was raised. Elizabeth grew up understanding the importance of Church and prayer. Her father also taught her the importance of helping those less fortunate.

On January 25, 1794, Elizabeth Bayley married William Seton, a successful businessman. They had five children. Elizabeth continued her outreach to the underprivileged, even founding the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. After the death of William Seton’s father in 1798, the family business began to suffer financial problems, and by 1801 the company was bankrupt. Then William became ill with tuberculosis. In 1803, Elizabeth and William, and their oldest daughter, traveled to Italy, hoping the warm climate there would help William recover. However, due to the illness, the family was quarantined at the Italian port for a month. William died in Pisa two weeks after the quarantine ended. An Italian businessman who had been a business colleague of William and his father reached out to the young widow, Elizabeth, and her daughter. This man and his wife were devout Catholics, and this is where Elizabeth was first influenced by Catholicism. When she returned to the United States, Elizabeth decided to become Catholic, and made her profession of faith in 1805. Many of her Episcopalian relatives were unhappy about this decision.

Elizabeth, now a poor widow, needed to find a way to support her family. She moved to Baltimore, Maryland in 1808, where she opened a school for girls from poor families. This was the first Catholic parochial school in the United States. Elizabeth went on to found the first religious community of women in the United States, the Sisters of Charity. She knew both great joy and great sadness in her life. Three of her five children died in their youth. Yet she kept her focus on God and serving others. Elizabeth died on January 4, 1821, at the age of forty-six years. She was beatified in 1963 and canonized in 1975. She is buried in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where a National Shrine dedicated to her is located.

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Upcoming Events

- Friday, January 6: School Christmas Party
- Sunday, January 8: Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord; Second Sunday Social (Meet & Greet) follows Masses
- January 8-14, 2017: National Migration Week 2017. This year’s theme is “Creating a Culture of Encounter”; Find resources here.
- Monday, January 9: Feast of the Baptism of the Lord - Last Day of the Christmas Season; Mass at 8:15 a.m.
- Wednesday, January 11: NCEA IFG ACRE Assessment administered to grades 5 & 8 at Annunciation Catholic School.
- Wednesday, January 11, 7:00 p.m.: Holy Hour
- Thursday, January 12, 9:30-10:15 a.m.: Morning Prayer & Liturgical Catechesis

Flowers of the Holy Night

Numerous poinsettias decorate our church here at Annunciation each Christmas Season. Chances are good that you may even have a poinsettia in your home this time of year.

The legend is told of a little girl in Mexico who was very poor and had nothing to present as an offering to the Christ Child at Midnight Mass in her village. Her cousin tried to lift her spirits by telling her that any gift, when given with love, was special to Jesus. So she gathered some weeds to make a small bouquet. When she placed these by the nativity scene in her church, the bouquet of weeds turned into brilliant red flowers. All who saw this knew they had witnessed a miracle. Each year at Christmas, these bright red flowers bloom, and were called “Flowers of the Holy Night.” We know them as poinsettias because they were brought to this country by Joel Robert Poinsett, the first United States Ambassador to Mexico.