



# FIAT

## *Faith in Action Today*

**Annunciation Parish, Clifton**

**Cincinnati, Ohio**

## Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Since December 2nd, the first Sunday of Advent this year and the beginning of our new Liturgical Year, we have been keeping the Season of Advent and preparing for the coming of Christ. Our preparation and waiting is almost complete. At sundown Christmas Eve, December 24th, the Season of Advent comes to an end and we begin the Christmas Season.

Christmas, the celebration of Christ's birth, is obviously directly related to our Parish Patronal Feast - the Annunciation of the Lord. Traditionally celebrated on March 25th, there is exactly nine months between the announcement of Christ's conception and the celebra-

tion of his birth. (Sometimes, due to the dating of Easter, the celebration of the Annunciation is transferred to another date. That is the case this Year of Grace 2008, when March 25th falls during the Octave of Easter. This year the Annunciation of the Lord will be celebrated March 31st.)

The connection between the Annunciation of the Lord and the Nativity of the Lord is depicted in the beautiful mural above our sanctuary. The central scene in the dome is the Annunciation to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel. And, when facing the altar, if you look up to the far top right corner above the Apostles, you will see the

Nativity scene.

So, as we celebrate the birth of Christ this Christmas, we celebrate Christ's birth in each of us today, and Christ's birth in our parish community today. This is indeed Good News! Christ is born! Glorify Him!



**Nativity of the Lord  
7th Century: Sinai  
St. Catherine's Monastery,  
Mt. Sinai**

**December 25, 2007**

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## The Five Major Feasts of Christmas



We celebrate a number of Feast Days during the Christmas Season, such as the Feast of Saint Stephen, the Feast of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist, and the Feast of the Holy Innocents. The list goes on, so keep your Liturgical Calendar handy!

A good way to remember the five major feasts of Christmas is to picture a five-pointed star. The first major feast of Christmas is the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord. Next comes the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Then there is the

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. The fourth major feast of Christmas is the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. And finally, the Christmas Season concludes with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Turn the page to find out more!

### Special points of interest:

- Christmas is an entire Liturgical Season, not just one day.
- The Christmas Season begins at sundown Christmas Eve and continues through the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.
- There are five major Feasts during Christmas, and many other Feast Days, as well!

# The Nativity of the Lord

On December 25th we celebrate the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord. By the fourth century, the birth of Christ was already being celebrated on this date in Rome. The birth of Christ comes at the time of year when we celebrate the winter solstice. Each day now our daylight hours get a little longer. Christ the Light of the World is born! This is why, as Christians, our Christmas lights are so meaningful. They dispel the darkness of our cold, dark winter nights, just as Christ dispels the darkness of sin in the world and in our hearts.

Christmas is often referred to as the

birthday of Jesus. Yet we really aren't celebrating his *birthday*, we are celebrating his *birth*.

Listen carefully to the wording of some of our most traditional and popular Christmas carols...*Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning ... (O Come, All Ye Faithful); Christ, the Savior, is born... (Silent Night, Holy Night); Jesus Christ is born today... (Good Christian Friends, Rejoice).* The ac-



**Nativity of Christ**  
Mid 16th Century: Cretan  
Iconographer:  
Theophanes the Cretan  
Stavronikita Monastery,  
Mt. Athos

tion is happening now.

The Latin word *hodie* translates to *this day*, or *today*. So it is more than remembering an event that happened over 2,000 years ago. Christ is born today. Let us open our hearts and minds and entire beings to bringing forth Christ today in our homes, our parish community, and our world. Practice awareness...

Christus natus hodie!

Christ is born today!

# The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

The Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is usually celebrated on the Sunday within the octave of Christmas. This year we celebrate this feast on Sunday, December 30th. At Annunciation Parish, we have a lovely icon of the Holy Family in our parish church. It is located on the front right wall, as you face the altar.

In celebrating the feast of the Holy Family, it is good for us to remember that our families, too, whatever their

make up, are holy families. We are all called to holiness. As we live faith in our own homes, our *Domestic Church*, we remember that Jesus, too, was born into a family, and that it was in his family home where he grew and was nurtured and was formed in faith. By his

**At Annunciation Parish, we have a lovely icon of the Holy Family in our parish church.**

incarnation, Jesus shares our humanity.

*For he is our childhood's pattern,  
Day by day like us he grew;  
He was little, weak, and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us he knew:  
And he feels for all our sadness,  
And he shares in all our gladness.*

(Once in Royal David's City, Verse 4,  
Text by Cecil Frances Alexander,  
1818-1895)

# The Blessed Virgin Mary, The Mother of God

*Holy Mary, Mother of God...* These words roll so easily off our tongues in prayer. They are some of the earliest words of prayer we memorized in our childhood. But how often do we really stop and reflect upon what it is we are stating in these words?

The Greek word *Theotokos* literally translates as *God-bearer*. This is the title Eastern Christians still use today in referring to Mary, the Mother of God. It is also the title of Mary that was at

the heart of a great controversy at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431. Mary was the Mother of Jesus, but could she be called the Mother of God? Saint Cyril of Alexandria's position won out, and Mary was affirmed as the *Theotokos*.

On January 1st, the



**Theotokos Enthroned**  
Iconographer: Emmanuel Tzanes  
1664 - Heritage: Cretan

octave day of Christmas, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. This feast, a holy day of obligation, provides us with a wonderful opportunity to come together at Mass as a people of faith to keep the Feast! Our Holy Day Masses will be at 5:00 p.m. December 31st, and 11:00 a.m. January 1st. *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!*

# The Epiphany of the Lord

The word *epiphany* has its roots in the Greek word *phania*, which means appearance or manifestation. Traditionally celebrated on January 6th, in our country the Solemnity of the Epiphany has been transferred to the Sunday between January 2nd and January 8th. This year the calendar has favored us, as that Sunday actually is January 6th!

In many cultures, especially those with Hispanic populations, January 6th is *El Día de los Tres Reyes*, or Three Kings' Day. In some of these cultures, rather than Santa bringing children gifts on Christmas, it is the Three Kings who

bring the gifts on Epiphany!

When we think of Epiphany, perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is the visit of the magi, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, to the Christ child. Yet we celebrate two other manifestations of Christ, as well. On Epiphany we celebrate not only the visit of the magi, but also the bap-

tism of the Lord, as well as his first miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana.

A wonderful hymn with which to celebrate these manifestations at Epiphany is *Songs of Thankfulness and Praise* (text by Christopher Wordworth, 1807-1885). Raise your voice in thankfulness and praise on this merriest day of the Christmas Season - Epiphany!



**Nativity of Christ**  
Early 14th Century  
Saint Catherine's Monastery,  
Mt. Sinai

## Carnival Begins!

Carnival begins on Epiphany. Carnival is not a liturgical season, but does have significance in the life of a Christian.

The word *carnival* comes from two Latin words, one meaning *flesh* or *meat*, the other meaning *farewell*. The carnival season begins during Christmastime, and continues through Winter Ordinal Time, concluding on Shrove Tuesday, or Mardi Gras - the day before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent.

Carnival is a time of storytelling and partying and making merry. It is the feasting before the fasting of Lent. It is said that the better we celebrate Carnival, the better we keep Lent! Carnival can provide us with a foretaste of

**Carnival is a time of storytelling and partying and making merry. It is the feasting before the fasting of Lent.**

heaven, where we will spend eternity celebrating at the Banquet Table of the Lord.

Celebrate the carnival season well in your homes, then join us at Annunciation Parish on Tuesday, February 5th (Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras this year) from 5:30-8:00 p.m. for our first annual Annunciation Parish Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and family-friendly Mardi Gras Celebration!

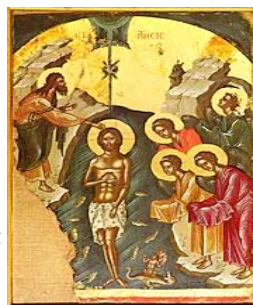
## The Baptism of the Lord

The last major feast of the Christmas Season, in fact - the last day of the Christmas Season - is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This feast is usually celebrated on the Sunday after Epiphany Sunday, which is January 13th this year.

The baptism of Jesus is a significant event. Mark's Gospel, the earliest Gospel written, begins with the preaching of John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus. (It is interesting to note that the

earliest Gospel written does not include an infancy narrative, the story of Jesus' birth.)

In all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), at the Baptism of Jesus the spirit of God descends like a dove upon Jesus and a voice from heaven



**Theophany of the Lord**  
Mid 16th Century  
Iconographer:  
George the Cretan  
Dionysiou Monastery, Mt. Athos

pronounces Jesus to be *my beloved Son*.

Baptism is a significant event for us, as well. In baptism we, too, become children of God. So as we come to the conclusion of this Christmas Season, let us celebrate not only Jesus' baptism, but our own. And let us continue to remember and celebrate our baptism each and every day as we follow Jesus this new year.

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### It's Happening at Annunciation!

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## It's Happening at Annunciation!

There are many Christmas Season liturgies being celebrated and new Faith Formation initiatives happening at Annunciation Parish! Don't miss out—mark your calendars now for some of our upcoming events and celebrations...and for more information read our weekly Sunday Bulletin!

- ◆ Sunday Mass is celebrated weekly at 5:00 p.m. Saturday (Vigil), and at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday.
- ◆ Christmas Eve/Day Masses will be celebrated at 5:00 p.m. December 24th (Vigil), and at Midnight, 9:00 a.m., and 11:00 a.m. December 25th.
- ◆ Holy Day Masses for the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, will be cele-

brated at 5:00 p.m. December 31st (Vigil) and at 11:00 a.m. January 1st.

- ◆ Weekday Mass is at 8:00 a.m. (Please note there will be no 8:00 a.m. Mass on December 24th.)
- ◆ Registration is currently being accepted for Sunday Morning Lectionary-Based Catechesis for Children. These gatherings, which focus on the assigned Scripture readings for Sunday Mass, will be held on Sunday mornings from 10:10-10:50 a.m. Gatherings for 6-8 year olds will begin January

6th, and gatherings for 3-5 year olds will begin January 27th. Contact the Parish Office for registration information.

- ◆ Our next Baptism Preparation Evening for parents anticipating the baptism of an infant or young child will be January 7th at 7:00 p.m.
- ◆ Family First Communion Preparation begins January 28th at 7:00 p.m.
- ◆ Mark your calendars for Annunciation Parish's 1st annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Mardi Gras Celebration on Tuesday, February 5th from 5:30-8:00 p.m.!



Annunciation Parish  
Photo courtesy of Diocesan Publications