



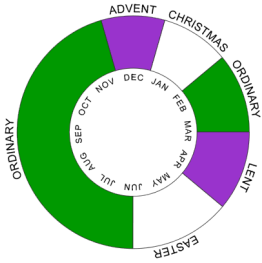
# “The Canticle”

Archdiocese of Boston — Dracut, Massachusetts



Vol. 5, Issue 1

Advent /Christmas 2007



### Liturgical Year Calendar

We are in the Season of Advent

#### Prepare Ye, The Way of The Lord...

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventur*, which means “arrival”. How will you prepare for the arrival of Jesus?

- ✦ **Reconcile** - use this preparation time to examine your conscience and experience **renewal** through the sacrament of Confession.
- ✦ **Reflect** - on the meaning of Christmas through the Eucharist.
- ✦ **Rejoice** - in the true meaning of the season!

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By Debbie Hovanasian

St. Francis *Canticle* Staff Writer

As the Advent wreath takes its place of honor on the altar of St. Francis, symbolizing our expectation and preparation for the birth of Christ, those from St. Francis who recently took part in a 10-day pilgrimage to Italy are likely to experience the season with a deeper spirituality.

Led by Corrinne Grise of Holy Pilgrimages, Father Chris Casey and Deacon John Hunt, the pilgrimage proved to be a unique blend of faith building, spiritual healing, awe, bonding and fun. More importantly, it presented a chance to immerse oneself in the life of Christ and the saints.

Beginning with a three-day stay in the ancient village of Assisi, we walked the same streets and stood in the square where St. Francis, our patron saint, shed his wealth to begin the Franciscan order in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We saw the San Damiano cross from which God said to St. Francis: “Go and repair My house which, as you can see, is falling into ruins.” And we prayed at the tombs of St. Francis and St. Clare.

On All Saints Day, we attended Mass at the imposing Basilica of

## Beginning Advent... After A Holy Pilgrimage

St. Francis. Concelebrated by Fr. Chris and Deacon John and said in Italian by the local pastor, the Mass was one highlight of a trip. The beauty of the basilica, the reverence, the magnificent choir, the blending of clergy, religious and lay people from all over the world and the feeling that we are indeed one global church were awe-inspiring.

In Loreto, we attended Mass in the Holy House of Loreto, the Nazareth home of Our Lady preserved within a beautiful marble shrine. Historic records indicate that in 1294 the Angelo family saved the stones of the Holy House from destruction by the Moslems, and transported them by ship to Loreto for rebuilding. We touched the stones, knowing that the Holy Family may have done the same in the first century.

In Lanciano, we observed the first Eucharistic Miracle. Taking place in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, as a divine response to a Basilian monk’s doubt about Jesus’ Real Presence, the host was changed to live flesh and the wine changed into live blood. Today, the host-flesh is displayed in a silver ostensorium and the coagulated blood in an enclosed rock crystal chalice, each authenticated by scientific experi-

ments.

In San Giovanni Rotondo and later in Pietrelcina, we learned more about St. Padre Pio, the Italian Capuchin friar who endured the pain of stigmata for over 50 years, read minds in the confessional, and was bi-locational – in two places at once. Revered by the Italians for decades, St. Padre Pio became more widely known upon his 2002 canonization by Pope John Paul II, who often went to Padre Pio for confession.

Special moments in San Giovanni were Mass at the tomb of St. Padre Pio, celebrated by Fr. Chris and Deacon John, seeing the cross from which Padre Pio received the stigmata, receiving a blessing from Fr. Chris with one of St. Padre Pio’s brown fingerless gloves, and venerating a small cross that Padre Pio once kissed and slept with each night.

In Pietrelcina, we toured his birthplace and relished the beauty and serenity of this little Italian village that seems to have been untouched by time and which

(Continued on page 6)

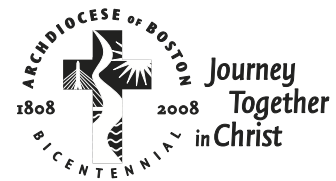


## 200 Years and Counting

By

Rev. Robert L. Connors

Pastor; St. Francis Parish



By the time you receive this issue of *The Canticle*, the Bicentennial Year of the Archdiocese of Boston will have begun. As many of you know, I have had the privilege of being the Chairperson for the event. Over the past two years, a committee representing the diversity of the Archdiocese has met on a regular basis to prepare for this year of celebration. It has been a wonderful experience. I have been asked to share with you some reflections as we begin this year.

Committees can be boring and challenging; meetings can be interminable. That wasn't our experience.

Some of our most exciting meetings were those at the beginning, brainstorming all the ideas. Of course, reality set in quickly. The most "fun" meeting was the one choosing the logo. After Cardinal Sean approved the theme: "*Journey Together in Christ*" we wanted a logo. We enlisted the services of a *Hats Design*, a team of two women from Wellesley — and it was a pleasure working with them. After an initial meeting to share with them the "concept" for the bicentennial, they came to one meeting with over 25 possible designs. Spread out over the huge conference table, twenty-two people circled and circled the table, making notes, and voting their favorites. We then tallied the scores; picked the top five and the "battle" began. Actually, it was exciting to share subtle changes. The team returned within a month with the final design and it has been overwhelmingly received.

As we focused on events, Cardinal Sean was clear that the anniversary should be an opportunity for pride in the past and evangelization, healing and renewal for the future. He wanted us to balance the incredible history of the

Archdiocese and its contribution to the area, country and world — with the realities we have faced in our recent history. With gratitude and renewed commitment to the mission of the Church is the way he desired that we journey together in Christ. As a result, the Committee developed programs that would be a catalyst to jumpstart the parishes and agencies of the Archdiocese and support their efforts throughout the year. The year has begun; let the celebration begin.

Our Bicentennial Year will encompass the Liturgical Year. The Opening Mass at the Cathedral is on December 2, the First Sunday of Advent. The theme of the Liturgy is "leadership", recognizing the importance of all the leaders within the Archdiocese that lead us forward. Leadership people from all levels of the Archdiocese have been invited from Bishops and Agency directors, to Pastors and their Pastoral Council members and Finance Committee members. The year ends on the Feast of Christ the King, with a Closing Liturgy on November 23, 2008. The liturgy will take place at the Boston Convention Center and will bring dignitaries and religious leaders from Church, government and religious denominations in the area and beyond together with the People of the Church of Boston to rejoice as we move into the next 100 years.

Prayer is an essential component of the year. On the local level, every parish in the Archdiocese has been asked to hold three days of prayer during the Season of Advent to ask the Lord's blessing upon our 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Both St. Francis of Assisi Parish and Ste. Marguerite d'Youville Parish will hold their prayer nights on December 3,4,5, 2007 at 7PM. We hope many will come to join us.

During the coming year, many parish events will have a bicentennial theme. The logo will be prevalent in banners, programs and on the bulletin. Various programs will stress the "journey" theme. On the Archdiocesan level, a program of evangelization and outreach, called RENEW, will be introduced on the parish level. This is an opportunity for small groups of parishioners to gather together with the Scriptures in prayer and learning and grow in their faith and increase their involvement in the Church. The theme is "*Arise: Together in Christ*" — echoing the bicentennial theme. Cardinal Sean is excited about the possibilities arising from this program. Both parishes will participate and more information will be forthcoming right after the first of the new year.

I am excited about the Bicentennial Year. A lot of effort and work has been done to enable parishes to use this event as a catalyst and I look forward to how it grows. There will be a Youth and Family event in July sponsored by Proud 2B Catholic. There are special programs at the local Catholic colleges and universities and monthly recognition of the various ministries in the Archdiocese. An important affirmation and accolade will be shown to the many religious orders of men and women whose contribution to the Church of Boston has been invaluable and essential. For ongoing information on the Bicentennial, please check out the webpage at [www.boston200.org](http://www.boston200.org). This is an excellent vehicle to keep well informed. Above all, I ask for your prayers for the Church of Boston and all its members as we journey together in Christ. May Jesus lead us forth to bring glory to God in all we do.

### BICENTENNIAL PRAYER

*All loving and gracious God*

*We thank you for the Gift of your Son, Jesus Christ.*

*For two hundred years*

*We have journeyed together*

*As members of his Church*

*In the Archdiocese of Boston.*

*We have tried to live the Gospel message  
in service to one another.*

*Continue to walk with us as we seek to be receptive  
to your grace in Word and Sacrament.*

*Send us your Spirit to enlighten our minds, strengthen our wills*

*And open our hearts. By our witness may others know you.*

*Through the intercession of Mary Immaculate,*

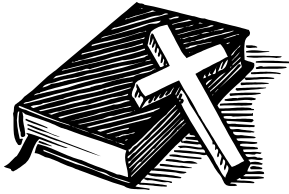
*may the Church in Boston*

*Journey together in Christ with courage, joy and peace.*

*Amen.*

## A Look at Scripture Study

By: *Marcia Dumaresq*



Bible Study classes have just been completed at St. Francis. Just what are these classes? Well, a Bible study class could be compared to a visit to a national park. The park is so vast that it is helpful to have a guide along the way so that the visit, although brief, will be enjoyable and worthwhile because it is carefully planned. The guide points out noteworthy details and explains what we're looking at so we can appreciate things for ourselves.

Here are some comments from those in the class:

"What a wonderful way to spend an hour!"

"I just love the class! I look forward to it tremendously. When I return home, I meditate on the insights I have gained. Kathy Long is an excellent guide."

"I wanted to learn more about the Bible, and in participating in St. Francis's program, that has certainly been addressed. Moreover, the class has provided me with a time to share my faith, to listen and learn from others, to laugh, and make friends for a lifetime."

"I'm 75 years old and taking a Bible study class, which I have never done before. The last religious education I was involved in was CCD with Fr. Sherman on Wednesday evenings in the church basement. The Bible was rarely mentioned. Now here I am studying the Bible (Old Testament included) in a Roman Catholic church in New England (hardly the Bible Belt). Our Lord surely does work in wondrous ways. How about coming to join us and witness what's happening? Besides, I'm the only guy in a class with twelve (twelve!) women. I have to confess that when my wife and I first joined the group last year, I was ready to turn tail and run. Luckily, I didn't. My classmates

have taught me so much about how to study our faith and its origins. In addition, Kathy Long's plans for us sound extremely interesting. Once again, come and enjoy!"

This "term", we have studied, prayed and reflected on the Book of Job. This is the Bible's most vivid and profound examination of the meaning of suffering. It has led us to reflect on how suffering should be borne, how comfort to the suffering should (and should not) be given, and how comfort should be received.

Perhaps Venerable John Henry Newman best captured the lesson to be learned from the Book of Job when he prayed: "God has created me to do him some definite service...I have my mission; I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next...therefore I will trust him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him; in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain; he may prolong my life, he may shorten it; he knows what he is about. He may take away my friends, he may throw me among strangers, he may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me—still He knows what He is about."

***Our next study will be "The World of the Bible", to include the geography, political and religious life of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. The Scripture Study class will be held on Wednesday mornings beginning November 28th from 9:30am-11am, or Monday evenings beginning January 7th at 7pm. Call the Parish Office at (978) 452-6611 to sign up. Join us!***

### **"The Canticle"**

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## SPOTLIGHT ON...

### The Marriage Preparation Program

By

Ellen Anstey



#### Preparation for Married Life

Planning for a wedding takes a lot of work. Planning of photographers and music, flowers and dresses, tuxedos and food, are all important parts of a wedding day. However, planning a marriage, and for a life after the wedding day, is so much more important.

"...to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part..."

Wedding vows often include the words above, as we are reminded that a marriage takes a lot of work. But just how can an engaged couple plan for it?

When Jesus performed his first miracle of turning water into wine, it was at a wedding. This took place at the wedding of Cana in Galilee. "This was the first of Jesus' signs: it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11) Every wedding is a miracle of joining two into one. To prepare for the miracle of marriage, engaged couples take part in Pre Cana programs, also known as the Marriage Preparation Program. St. Francis Parish has prepared a wonderful program for all engaged couples.

Four married couples from St. Francis Parish

provide guidance and expertise to engaged couples through the Marriage Preparation Program. These couples are: Jessica and Tim Smith, Ray and Kathy Laferriere, Marc and Maryanne Gauthier and new additions this year: Scott and Stacy Dolliver. These couples plus the clergy at St. Francis have created a rich and inviting program for engaged couples.

According to Marriage Preparation Program organizer Jessica Smith, it is so important to provide couples with real life experiences so they can fully understand marriage. When asked what the Marriage Preparation Program provides she said, "It's all centered on making sure the couples 'engage' in discussion. We provide for them a forum that aids them to discuss things such as communication, Christian sexuality, living a sacramental marriage, moral decision making and the theology of marriage. Our married couples give talks to demonstrate our own personal experience with being married. We also attend Mass together and share a meal at the end. Above all, we have a LOT of fun and create great relationships!" In the past, the program has included anywhere from 8 to 22 couples.

In addition to the support of experienced married couples and our clergy, engaged couples will know they have the support of the entire parish behind them during the preparation. Parishioners are asked to be prayer partners with our engaged couples. "It's a wonderful help and not much work!" says Jessica Smith. Watch the bulletin for details!

**Marriage Preparation Program sessions for this year are beginning soon. There will be 4 sessions in February/March: Feb. 22 from 7-9:30pm, Sunday Feb. 24 from 10am-2pm, Friday, Feb. 29 from 7-9:30pm and Sunday, March 2 from 10am-4pm. The couples must attend all 4 sessions in order to receive credit. For more details and to sign up for the Marriage Preparation Program, please call the Parish Office at: 978-452-6611.**



### "Why Do Catholics Do That?"

By

Kristin MacCauley

On a recent Sunday, we were asked to bring up the gifts before Communion. After we agreed, I leaned over and whispered to my son (9) and my daughter (6) that after giving the gifts to Father, we will need to bow. "Don't I get to curtsy?" my daughter replied. My princess!

Bows are peppered throughout the Mass and are meant as a sign of reverence. For example, at the processional, the priests, deacon, altar servers, Eucharistic ministers and readers all bow to the altar. They then turn and genuflect to the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. Genuflecting, by the way, is bending the right knee to touch the floor as an act of worship. This is what we do before entering the pew. It's only been since 1973 that a "single genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament, whether reserved or exposed, is called for." (The

Catholic Source Book, p. 289).

During the Nicene Creed, (We believe in one God...) when we reach "by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man." we also bow to acknowledge this great mystery of our faith. You'll see the altar servers bowing as they bring items to the priest. They are bowing to the altar and the relic (.the body, a part of the body, or some personal memorial of a saint, martyr, or other sacred person, preserved as worthy of veneration) that it contains.

#### Oh Christmas Tree

Did you know that "Medieval mystery plays employed fir trees decorated with apples to symbolize the Garden of Eden with its tree of life and forbidden fruit.?" Years later, the Germans recalled these plays and modified the decorations to the tree. As time passed, additional decorations were added besides apples including oranges, colored balls, angels, stars, and other shaped cookies. *The Catholic Source Book, p. 277*

## “Quick Look” Events Calendar

### December

1-Jr. High Youth Group, Conf. Room, 5-7pm  
 2-9th Grade Retreat, 12:30-5:30pm  
 2-9th Gr. Confirmation Class, 5:30pm  
 3-Spiritual Life Commission Mtg., 7pm  
 3-Evening Scripture Study, 7pm  
 3-Prayer for Bicentennial, 7pm in Church  
 4-Parish Council Meeting, 7pm  
 4-Prayer for Bicentennial, 7pm in Church  
 5-Prayer for Bicentennial, 7pm in Church  
**7-Immaculate Conception Mass, 7pm**  
 7-First Friday Novena, 7pm in Church  
 8-Generations of Faith, 4pm  
 9-Generations of Faith, 10am  
 9-Peer Leader Meeting, 5pm  
 10-Evening Scripture Study, 7pm  
 11-St. Vincent de Paul Meeting, 7pm  
 11-Generations of Faith, 5:30pm  
 12-Pastoral Council Meeting, 7pm  
 12-Bereavement Support Group, 7pm  
 13-Generations of Faith, 5:30pm  
 15-Widow & Widowers Christmas Party, 11:30am  
 15-Jr. High Youth Group, 5pm  
 16-Rectory Open House, 2-5pm  
 17-Evening Scripture Study, 7pm  
 17-Reconciliation Service, 7pm  
 22-Jr. High Youth Group, 12:30-4pm  
 23-Baptisms, 1pm in Church  
**24-Christmas Eve Masses (See Pg. 7)**  
**25-Christmas Day Masses (See Pg. 7)**

29-Jr. High Youth Group, 5pm  
**31-Mary, Mother of God Mass, 5pm**

### January

**1-Mary, Mother of God Mass, 9am**  
 4-First Friday Novena, 7pm in Church  
 6-10th Gr. Confirmation Class, 5:30pm  
 7-Religious Education Classes begin  
 8-St. Vincent de Paul Meeting, 7pm  
 10-Gr. 4-8 Parents Meeting, Church  
 12-Jr. High Youth Group, Conf. Room  
 13-Peer Leader Meeting, 5pm  
 13-10th Gr. Confirmation Class, 5:30pm  
 18-Peer Leader Movie Night (TBA)  
 22-Mass for Life, 9am  
 26-Jr. High Retreat, 10:30am-5pm  
 27-Baptisms, 1pm in Church  
 27-10th Gr. Confirmation Class, 5:30pm  
 27-Peer Leader Meeting, 7pm

### February

1-First Friday Novena, 7pm in Church  
 2-Jr. High Youth Group, 5pm  
 3-10th Gr. Confirmation Class, 5:30pm  
**6-Ash Wednesday**  
 9-2nd Grade Penance Service, 11am  
 9-Generations of Faith, 4pm  
 10-Generations of Faith, 10am  
 10-Peer Leader Meeting, 5pm  
 12-Generations of Faith, 5:30pm  
 12-St. Vincent de Paul Meeting, 7pm

14-Generations of Faith, 5:30pm  
 16-Day of Prayer for Ministers to the Sick & Homebound, 9am in Hall  
 16-Jr. High Youth Group, 5pm  
 22-Pre Cana Classes, 7pm in Hall  
 23-Men's Spirituality Breakfast, 7:30am  
 24-Baptisms, 1pm in Church  
 24-Pre Cana Classes, 10am-2pm in Hall  
 24-Peer Leader Meeting, 5pm  
 29-Pre Cana Classes, 7pm in Hall

### ONGOING EVENTS

#### Bereavement Support Group:

Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month

#### S.P.A.R.K.S. Program

Every Wednesday from 9:30-11:00am

#### Scripture Study

Every Wednesday morning @ 9:30am

#### Choir rehearsals

8am Choir: Tuesdays @ 6:30pm

10am Choir: Wednesdays @ 7pm



At the time of this publication, our Editor-in-Chief, Michael Cockrell, has been hospitalized with serious health problems. The Canticle Staff dedicates this issue to Mike and sends all of our love and prayers to him and his family. God bless you, Mike!

### Reconciliation Service for Advent

**-Monday, December 17,  
 2007 at 7pm in the  
 Church-**

**Join us as we prepare our  
 hearts for the birth of our  
 Lord and Savior during  
 this holy season!**



*"Beginning Advent...After a Holy Pilgrimage"*

*(Continued from page 1)*

was beloved by the saint.

The last leg of our journey was a three-night stay in Rome, where we toured the awe-inspiring St. Peter's Basilica, the Vatican Museum, the Sistine Chapel, and attended Mass at the altar of St. Michael inside the Basilica.

On the lighter side, we shopped, ate gelato, took horse and buggy rides, climbed the Spanish steps, threw coins into the Trevi Fountain, toured the Pantheon and Coliseum, ate pasta at Italian cafes, and sampled Italian wines.

The best, however, was saved for the last day – a Papal Audience under brilliant sunshine and clear blue skies. We found seats along the center aisle, and as the Pope passed by, he was just a few feet away. An American bishop later announced the presence of a group of pilgrims from "St. Francis Parish in Dracut, Massachusetts". We stood and cheered as Pope Benedict waved in our direction. The experience was no less than incredible.

Now as the pink candle is lit on the third Sunday of Advent to symbolize joy, I, for one, will reflect back on the joy this trip brought to a couple dozen pilgrims on a spiritual journey through the Italian countryside -- deepening bonds, faith and friendships.

**The St. Francis Spiritual Life  
Commission presents...**

**The Stations of the Nativity**



**Monday, January 7, 2008  
7pm in the Church**

**Join us as Fr. Chris Casey leads us through a ritual beginning and ending with prayer and hymn. For each station there is a short responsory, a scriptural reading from the nativity accounts, a short meditation, a prayer, a second responsory and a poetic reflection.**

**All are welcome—please join us for this prayerful event.**

**Looking for a way to be of service to others?**

St. Francis has a new program called "The Martha Ministry". The Martha Ministry is a group of people who provide meals on a short-term basis to families in need; whether they have a family member hospitalized, have a new baby, or just need some help. Volunteers would be called upon to cook and deliver occasional meals. If you would like to volunteer, please call the Parish Office at (978) 452-6611.

*Thank you!*

**Mark Your Calendars now!**

The next Generations of Faith will be held on:  
February 9 from 4-7pm; February 10 from 10am-1pm; February 12 from 5:30-7:30pm and February 14 from 5:30-7:30pm.

*All religious*

*Education*

*Students must*

*Attend one session!*



*Stay tuned for  
more details!*

**"See, I Make All Things New"**

*A program about chastity for the parents of students  
in grades 4-8*

**Thursday, January 10 at 7pm in the Church**

How can I speak with my child about chastity? How do I explain what our faith upholds? How can I instill morality in my young child?

**Join us for this informative evening and find out!**

**Don't Forget!...**

Religious Education Classes begin again on **Monday, January 7, 2008** for grades K-6. 10th Grade will resume **Sunday, January 6, 2008 at 5:30pm**. 9th grade classes will resume on **Sunday, March 2, 2008 at 5:30pm**.



# St. Francis Parish Christmas and

## *Christmas Masses*

**Monday, December 24, 2007**

4:00pm, 6:00pm, 10:00pm  
*(Children's Pageant & Children's Choir  
at 6:00 p.m. Mass)*

**Tuesday, December 25, 2007**

8:00am and 10:00am

## **Mary Mother of God**

**Monday, December 31, 2007**

5:00pm

**Tuesday, January 1, 2008**

9:00am

**Rectory Open House**  
**Sunday, December 16th, 2007**  
2pm-5pm  
All are welcome!

# *Is The Gift Worth the Waiting?*

## **GENERATIONS OF FAITH FESTIVAL**



*Saturday, December 8th from 4-7pm*

*Sunday, December 9th from 10am-1pm*

*Tuesday, December 11th from 5:30-7:30pm*

*Thursday, December 13th from 5:30-7:30pm*

***\*All religious education students are required to attend!\****

***-Call to reserve your space!-***



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