

ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – JANUARY 7, 2018

Dear Parishioners and Families,

God gave many signs regarding the importance of this child born to Mary and Joseph. They were not the signs you might expect or to the persons of note in the Israelite society of that day. Mary herself was an unknown person chosen to be the mother of Jesus. Shortly thereafter, Elizabeth, her cousin, received a visit from Mary and the Good News. When Jesus was born, it was shepherds, unwashed and disheveled, who were invited by angels to see the newborn Son of God.

Today we celebrate that the message of Jesus birth was transmitted to a group of stargazers who were not even Israelites and had to travel perhaps weeks from their home in the Tigris Euphrates Valley. Herod, the ruler at that time, also heard the message but then took a wrong path and did nefarious deeds to erase the knowledge of Jesus from his mind and his kingdom.

God the Father makes the knowledge of his Son known to each one of us in his own way. Those who listen positively receive growth in faith and joy. Some even travel a long distance in response to God's word. On the other hand, others turn their back and become apathetic and the Good News is lost or forgotten. As you read this message, thank God that you heard the Good News and like the shepherds and the Wise Men traveled to see Jesus and believe.

Sending Gift to Diocese of Jeremie, Haiti

The men from the East brought gifts to honor Jesus. This parish has been most generous during the Christmas vacation. On January 18th I wish to send another gift to Bishop Gontrand, S.J., the head of the diocese of Jeremie in Haiti, to assist in the continued recovery from the massive hurricane of October 2016. We have already sent to this diocese over \$20,000 in the past. I expect to wire approximately \$5,000 to the Bishop on January 18th, the first day of the Week for Christian Unity.

The Parish Receives Multiple Calls for Assistance. The major call is the Bishop's Appeal supporting Catholic Charities. Each year we have met the goal. The parish continues to be a significant force in the Food Shelf helping the local people. It is important for us to reach out locally but also across our own borders to others.

We cannot support every cause and make an impact. It seems to me it is better to focus on 1 or 2 areas. I am following the lead of your former pastor, Fr. Ed. He began the Haiti initiative and we have followed that in selecting a diocese of Haiti that was hard hit. If any wish to add to the sum to be sent, please use one of your Haiti envelopes next week. The Portage Community Bank has promised to wire the money without any charge to the account of Bishop Gontrand, head of the Jeremie Diocese.

Youth Initiative Begins to Take Shape

Mrs. Missy Campbell, the Director of our Youth Program, has placed the announcement of our first meeting of 2018 in the bulletin. The Grotto Store becomes the physical focus of a clubhouse. This clubhouse is in the shadow of Mary's Grotto. It was she who was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and conceived Jesus. May she prosper our efforts with the youth as they meet together in the shadow of her Grotto.