



The Columbian Gazette

Of Ashburn

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ASHBURN, VA

A Message From Deacon Renzette

It's Not Christmas Yet ... Why Advent Matters



When we think of Advent, we often picture the candles on the Advent wreath, Advent calendars with their little Scripture passages – or chocolates! – behind the little daily flip up panels, and, of course, the countdown to Christmas. But the Church has always understood this season as more than simply a warm-up to the holidays.

Advent is a time of preparation – and not only for Christ's birth in Bethlehem – but even more importantly for us, it is a time for contemplating His triumphant return and when we will face Him at our final judgment. This is why Advent has often been referred to as a "little Lent" – a season, albeit a shorter one of reflection and penance. And like Lent, Advent invites us to slow down and take a step back from the frenetic nature of our modern world so that we can examine our lives and our spiritual health and thus focus on turning our hearts fully toward our Lord.

This spirit of a "little Lent" is reflected in the liturgies of the Church during the season of Advent. The violet vestments worn by the priest and deacon, the omission of the "Gloria," and the more subdued tone of the hymns and décor of the church are part of the Church's effort to remind us that Advent is not merely the preamble to the celebration that is Christmas.

The days of December are not just a countdown to parties and gifts; they are sacred days, inviting us to step outside the rush of the world and reflect on eternity. To live Advent well is to recover the sense that these weeks are not about doing more but becoming more - more faithful, more hopeful, and more attuned to God's presence.

During Advent we are called to exemplify the words of

Deacon Renzette (Continued on page 2)

From our Grand Knight

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High."

Luke 1:30-32

The Christmas season is a time for reflection, contemplation, and spiritual renewal. Here are some ways to reflect on Christmas as a Catholic. These are not my words but succinct areas you might focus on this Advent.

Consider the Christmas story

Reflect on the Christmas story and the everyday lives of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Contemplate the mysteries of Jesus

Consider the mysteries of Jesus Incarnate and how he came to be King of All Nations.

Reflect on the Holy Family

Consider the lives of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, and how they showed patience, self-sacrifice, and love.

Consider the Father's words

Consider the words of the Father, "You are my beloved child," and how he is pleased with you for being his child.

See the hope in others

Look for hope in the faces of your family, friends, and coworkers.

Practice self-examination

Consider what you're thinking and where you need God's grace to grow. You can journal your thoughts and reflections to help with this.

Practice charity

Participate in charitable activities, such as donating food or

Grand Knight (Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1) Deacon Renzette

John the Baptist in our daily lives, “Prepare the way of the Lord” – we are called to repentance and conversion. In an age when December seems to be designed solely for the practice of unbridled consumerism, recovering the penitential roots of Advent will help us rediscover its true meaning.

Recovering the spirit of Advent doesn’t require drastic changes – small, intentional practices are all that is required to prepare your heart for Christ:

Be Prayerful – if you cannot attend daily Mass, join the Church in Her Advent journey by praying along with the daily readings, pray the Rosary, or add time for meditative prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Be Sacrificial – as with Lent, small sacrifices during Advent – limiting social media time, giving up desserts, fasting during a day each week – can help remind us of the Savior who was born for each one of us in that manger in Bethlehem.

Be Generous – acts of charity during Advent such as giving food to our local food pantry, giving your time to someone who is alone or isolated, infuse us with Advent’s call to love and prepare us to welcome Christ in those we serve.

Advent, like Lent, reminds us that joy is deepest when rooted in the love of self-donation. By embracing its spirit of prayer, sacrifice, and generosity, we ready ourselves not just for the celebration of Christ’s birth but for His presence in our lives here and now and in the life to come.

- Deacon Renzette

Breakfast with Santa Held on December 8, 2024

We had a fantastic Pancake Breakfast with Santa event this past Sunday, December 8. It coincided with the Festival of Trees weekend and was very well attended by parishioners. We collected over \$2,400 in cash and online donations.

The breakfast was organized and led by brothers Mike Zavala and Jim Mosesso. Santa’s visit and activities were coordinated by brother Mike Purcell. Thank you to all three for a great job!

A heartfelt thank you also to all the brothers who volunteered to make this breakfast a resounding success!

Profits from this breakfast will benefit Devine Mercy Outreach.

Our next Pancake Breakfast is 12 January 2025. Please look out for the sign-up in the next couple of weeks. We will need your help!

(Continued from page 1) GK

toys, or providing company to those who feel alone.

Celebrate with family

Gather around the table for a special meal, exchange gifts, and enjoy time together.

I hope you have a wonderful Christmas with your families. “God bless us, everyone!”

Mike Boyle, GK



Spotlight on New Council Members

In this issue, we are launching a new feature to better introduce newly recruited Knights into our council. Five knights who have joined within the last year are included in this edition. We are hoping by sharing some brief introductory information as well as a photo, that other Knights will reach out to these brothers at meetings and other activities to wish them a warm welcome and to include them in the good works of the council. Welcome brothers!



Meet: Allen Hockenbury
Hails from: Wilkes-Barre, PA and raised in the Delaware County PA area.

Family: Allen and his wife of 47 years, Mary, were blessed with three sons and four grandchildren.

Work: Served in the USAF before attending Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and then The George Washington University School of Business. Allen's career has spanned serving many Government agencies providing aerospace engineering to IT consulting.

Hobbies or interests: Genealogy, wood working, gardening, cooking, and puzzles.

What prompted you to join the Knights of Columbus? Allen joined the Knights simply to help build a stronger parish and to offer a helping hand to fellow parishioners. He was formerly a member of Saint Joseph's Catholic Parish in Herndon, joining Saint Theresa's Parish in 2019.



Meet: Chester (Chet) Starowitz
Hails from: Elba, NY (the Onion Capital of the world!)

Family: (Married, three children - a son and two daughters, and six grandchildren/step grandchildren).

Work: Retired in 1999 from a 33 year career in Education -- the last 13 years as High School Principal at Canandaigua Academy, Canandaigua NY.

Hobbies or interests: Golf, furniture refinishing and being a fan of the Buffalo Bills and Cleveland (Indians) Guardians

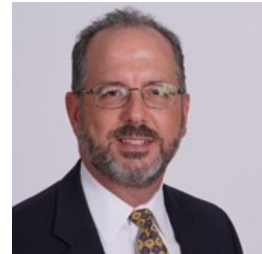
What prompted you to join the Knights of Columbus? We moved to Ashburn in July of last year. I have been a Knight for over 40 years and have always tried to give back to my community. The Knights at St Theresa give me the opportunity to meet new people, serve our church community, and grow my faith.



Meet: Daniel (Dan) Nguyen
Hails from: Falls Church, VA
Family: Single with a dog
Work: Special Education Teacher for Fairfax County Public Schools
Hobbies or Interests: I enjoy coaching, this will be my 4th year as a head wrestling coach and 14th year coaching football at the high school level. I enjoy the outdoors

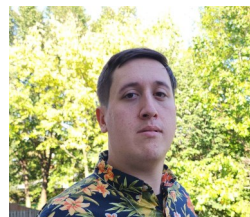
like going to the beach and camping. When I have free time, I also enjoy woodworking.

What interested or prompted you to join the Knights of Columbus? My dad. He was a 4th degree member and Past Grand Knight of KofC Council 9655. I want to live up to my dad's legacy. He taught me at a young age to give back to the community. I was a Boy Scout growing up and also joined a co-ed service fraternity (Alpha Phi Omega) in college. He passed away this year on Easter. I joined soon after meeting with the field agent that dealt with my dad's life insurance. He talked me into joining the Knights.



Meet: Kevin White
Hails from: Omaha, Nebraska
Family (Married to spouse Christina for 35 years and with 3 adult children, two sons and one daughter)
Work: Contract Director for REI Systems

Hobbies or interests: Sings in the parish choir
What prompted you to join the Knights of Columbus? Get more involved in the parish, develop relationships with other men of the parish, and volunteer in charitable works with other Knights



Meet: Rhys Donan
Hails from: St. Joseph, MO.
Family: (Single)
Work: College Student (Univ of Southern New Hampshire) considering a vocation.

Hobbies or interests: Anything outdoors, hiking, puzzles and reading.

What prompted you to join the Knights of Columbus? I was motivated by the work of Mother Theresa and want to help others in my parish and community in any way I can.

The Best Day of My Life

By Doug Smith

As the last Honor Flight of the year was preparing to leave Dulles to head home to Milwaukee, one of the veterans told me “This was the best day of my life.” He was one of 85 Vietnam veterans on this flight. For many of these soldiers, their return to the United States was one of the worst days of their life. Finally, after many years, these veterans were honored for their service and sacrifice. Coming off the plane in the morning, you could see their uneasiness of what lay ahead of them for the day. The smiles started when they saw and heard the 170 people cheering them. When they returned in the evening, even after a day of visiting their memorials, they were energized and happy. They had completed their “best day”.

For that one veteran, the generosity and attention of others made their day. Yet when we look at our own lives, how often can we say that our actions and/or words “made someone’s day”? We tend to get caught up in our own world, focused on ourselves and our families. We become disconnected and sometimes oblivious to those around us.

We are all familiar with the song “The Very Best Time of the Year”. We think of the Christmas Season as a time for decorations, lights, gifts, family gatherings, parties, and other festive things. Some of us even think that the season isn’t complete without snow. It’s the “season of giving”! But after its all over, we go back to our usual way of life ... our safe and comfortable world. It’s not that way for everyone.

As Knights, we are called to serve. There are so many opportunities in our area, or around the country, that warrant our attention. As an example, take the placement of wreaths at Arlington Cemetery. It’s big news when hundreds of volunteers place the wreaths at the headstones. But do you realize that there are 155 other National cemeteries in the United States where many, many headstones of fallen soldiers go unadorned with a wreath? At the time of this writing, Wreaths Across America had only 4200 wreaths sponsored.

When you are out and about, open your eyes and ears and be aware of your surroundings. Pay attention to the potential that you could be the one who makes someone’s “best day” possible. That applies to your spouse and fami-

ly too. The simple courtesy of a “Thank You” might brighten someone’s otherwise dismal day. Even sharing a smile or holding open a door are good first steps. Signing up to regularly volunteer where there is a need will help throughout the year ... not just at Christmas. Being a Knight isn’t a seasonal thing. We need to serve others every day of the year.

Handyman Crew Update

The handyman committee continues to do excellent work in supporting the parish community, in particular helping those that are disabled and widowed, with repairs and maintenance. Recent projects included repairing a leaky water valve, assembling a walker, hanging clocks, repairing closet doors, repairing a reel lawn mower, replacing drywall, and replacing toilet parts.

If you are interested in volunteering for this rewarding ministry, please contact Dale Stucke (dalestucke@outlook.com).

Upcoming KOVAR Collection



Since
1971

We will be collecting for KOVAR after all Masses on January 18 and 19, 2025. We need volunteers for each Mass for only a few minutes. Family members are most welcome. This is our 1st collection of the calendar year!

KOVAR is a Virginia KofC Charity that aids people with intellectual disabilities. Over the past 8 years, our Council has raised over \$70,000 for KOVAR. This is a great opportunity to volunteer for this worthy cause. Please use the online sign-up below or send a text or email to Don Smaltz - 703-955-6896.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090B4FA8A82BAA8-53174996-kovar>



Book Review:

Confessions by St. Augustine

By ROBERT N. BORGHESE

Every Catholic gentleman who wants to be considered “well-read” needs to read “*Confessions*,” an autobiography by St. Augustine, who was a philosopher, theo-

logian, Doctor of the Church, and Bishop of Hippo Regius in Roman North Africa from AD 396 until his death in 430 at the age of 75. This book is a masterpiece and has been a classic and best-seller since it was written between AD 397 and 400.

I'd like to focus on just three topics within the book that I found memorable.

Augustine's Adolescence: He realized he had a lust problem but was reluctant to give it up. He prayed: “Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.”

Augustine's Conversion: Augustine heard a child's voice repeating, “Take up and read; Take up and read.” He picked up scripture nearby and read Romans 13:13-14: “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” Augustine realized that this reading from St. Paul was a call for him to convert from his lustful life.

Augustine's Relationship with His Mother Monica: What we know about St. Monica is largely from what is written in “*Confessions*.” Augustine's mother Monica famously prayed for 17 years for Augustine's conversion and continued praying for 30 years until her husband was converted, making St. Monica the “go-to” saint for intercession to convert family members.

There was a rare dual mystical experience when Augustine and Monica both had the same vision while looking out of a window in Ostia, Italy. “Our minds were lifted up by an ardent affection towards eternal being itself.” In this powerful spiritual connection between mother and son, they experienced a complete union with God and a vision of the joy of eternal life. Shortly after this experience, Monica said that she didn't need to be buried with her husband in Africa but could be buried anywhere because she belonged with God.

I'll close with this famous quote from St. Augustine's “*Confessions*.” “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

Simeon's Faith

Poem by Robert N. Borghese

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The Holy Spirit told Simeon in a promise clear,
He would not die until the Messiah did appear.

Within the Temple's walls so vast,
Simeon waits, his faith steadfast,
Years have passed, his heart upright,
Within the Temple's sacred light.

The light of dawn begins to spread,
A promise kept, as prophets said.

The Child appears, pure and divine,
In Simeon's arms, the holy sign.
The Child he cradles, the Savior born,
A light to rise, to shatter the morn.

In the Temple's solemn space,
Simeon spoke with tender grace,
To Mary, young and full of light,
Of future sorrows, veiled in night.

"A sword shall pierce thy tender soul,"
His prophecy a weighty toll,
The Child you love, both joy and pain,
In His journey, loss and gain.

In silent strength, she'll bear the load,
The path of love, a shadowed road.

This, the first of Mary's seven sorrows,
Yet, in the darkness, hope always follows,
For in her sorrows, faith is born,
A light to comfort the forlorn.

In quiet reverence, Simeon's plea,
His life's purpose, at last, set free,
With gentle faith, he sees the way,
As night gives way to eternal day.

Now he can depart, his soul content,
The Messiah found, the heavens' sent,
A life fulfilled in sacred sight,
Simeon's faith, the guiding light.

Food Drive Update



The November Food Drive was a strong finish for the calendar year! We collected, sorted, and delivered 6,496 pounds of food from our very generous parishioners, a record for our program. This completes the food drive for the year 2024 with 53,876 pounds of food delivered.

We can't stress enough the importance of this program. As you may have seen in the bulletin insert from Catholic Charities from November 24, the filled requests for food assistance have been steadily increasing over the past 3 years from 49,394 requests in 2022 to 69,733 requests in 2024. Your ongoing support from preparing the famous blue bags, to staging them for pickup, sorting the food by category and expiration date, and delivering the food to the pantry is so important and very much appreciated.

A very special Thank-You goes to Paul Dwyer and Erich Stephanyshyn for their dedication to this program. Brother Paul organizes the Youth Group and does a lot of the preparation work. Without the Youth, we would not be able to sort the food which saves the Pantry about 2 weeks of work. Brother Erich ran the program for 4 years(!) until June 2024 and we can still count on him to jump in whenever there is a need.

We wish you a blessed Advent and Christmas season and we are looking forward to seeing you all back in January for our next Food Drive.

- Torsten Koehler



CURRENT COUNCIL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS (2024 -2025)

Chaplain	Father Hudgins
District Deputy	Jay Hallam
Grand Knight	Mike Boyle
Deputy Grand Knight	Eric Ciliberti
Chancellor	Dan Brendes
Financial Secretary	Jim Bonfils
Warden	Steve Shields
Recorder	Stephen McLaughlin
Treasurer	Mike Lang
Advocate	Cole Slattery
Trustees	3 Yr. John Hegarty
	2 Yr. Rob McNamee
	1 Yr. Miguel Rodriguez
Primary Alt. Sate Del.	Miguel Rodriguez
Secondary Alt. State Del.	William Lehner
Programs Director	Mike Boyle
Lecturer	Bill Lehner
Inside Guard	Garth Griswold
Outside Guard	Savio Thomas
Faith Director	Jack Hayes
Vocations Chairman	Vince Tranchitella
Community Director	Stephen McLaughlin
Life Director	Eric Ciliberti
Public Relations	Rudy Flores
	Dave Schreder
	Eric Ciliberti
	Robert Borghese
Family Director	Torsten Koehler
Membership Director	Dan Brendes
Recruitment Committee	Jack Hayes
Retention Chairman	Jack Hayes
Construction Team Lead	Dale Stucke
KOVAR Team Lead	Donald J. Smaltz
Fraternal Benefits Field Agent	Ben Turner
Technology Team	Anthony Gizzi
Parish Picnic	William Lehner



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