



January 2012

Pastor's Musings

As I am writing this column fifteen days before Christmas 2011, I am mindful that it will not be read until the beginning of 2012. It will be at a time when many of us will have begun the New Year by making resolutions that they hope will lead to a more healthy and happy life. Each year, we do this knowing that more often than not, despite our best intentions, some of our resolutions will not be as long term as we had hoped. However, I believe that it remains worthwhile for us to make them because we become aware that no matter how old we are, there is still room for growth. Perhaps an alternative term to "making resolutions" is to say that we are "making goals for ourselves."

It is in this spirit that I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the goals that I have formed as pastor. I have already shared many of them with the Pastoral Council and with the Finance Council. Before doing so, I want to assert at the very outset that these goals will only be attained with the participation of the entire parish community working together and being willing to share their Time, Talent and Treasure.

The terms "Time, Talent, and Treasure" remind me of a goal that I believe is quite important for our parish. This is the goal of seeing our parish community as a setting for Stewardship. All too often when we hear or read that word, we think of financial issues and things like the Offertory Collection or Fund Drives, etc. True Stewardship is not simply the sharing of material resources or money. This is the third of three aspects of real stewardship. The first two, Time and Talent, are as important as the third. In our world, time is so precious. Our lives are so hectic and busy. How much of our time are we willing to sacrifice in an

altruistic way, whether it is for our parish or other efforts? The same thing can be said of our Talents. Each of us has been gifted with some ability or another. How willing are we to share these with the larger community? It is with these things in mind that I would like to rejuvenate a Stewardship Committee to help us to become aware that true Stewardship is a lifestyle to which each Christian is called.

I would also like to continue opportunities for Adult Faith Formation. This has been identified by the Church as one of its primary needs. No matter how old we are, we are always invited to grow in our appreciation of the nature of our relationship with Christ and come to a better understanding of the teachings of the Church. I am continually amazed by the stories that I hear about what some believe to be Church teaching on a particular issue. I recently attended a presentation on the future of Catholic education and learned that 55% of Catholic school age children and young people are not participating in any type of faith formation programs, whether it is in a Catholic School or School of Religion. Most receive no faith formation beyond Confirmation. This has been true for several generations of Catholics.

In relation to this, I would also like to look into some sort of process of reaching out to alienated Catholics who have chosen to distance themselves from the Church or the parish for one reason or another.

I would also like to re-institute a Welcoming Committee. This group would work with the Parish Office Staff in making the process of registering in the parish and being oriented to Saint Cecilia Parish life in as personal a way as possible.

Another goal is to form a Parish Health/Wellness Committee that would hopefully be composed of those in the medical, health, nursing, and

emergency services fields to share information on health related issues. In the last two parishes at which I was pastor, we had volunteers from these fields who also would check pulses and blood pressures every few weeks after Masses.

I am also planning to ask that parish organizations and/or committees that formulate Minutes from their meetings submit a copy or a synopsis of their Minutes for publication in the *News from the Pews* publication.

I am very grateful that our Parish Pastoral Council has been rejuvenated. I see the Council as the consultative body that is the glue of the parish and is most mindful of larger picture of the parish and all its elements. Liaisons to or from the Parish Council have been appointed so as to be a conduit of information to all parish organizations and committees. These liaisons do not run the organizations or committees but provide a sense of connectedness, if you will, to the larger whole that is Saint Cecilia Parish.

I am also very grateful to those who, at my request, have been working on a Parish Master Calendar that includes all events connected with Saint Cecilia on it. This calendar will soon be available on the parish website. It includes everything that is scheduled on a particular day. All organizations have been asked to submit their schedules and events to the Parish Office to be placed on the calendar.

As we begin 2012, it is no secret that we are facing some fiscal and physical plant challenges. As the newest facilities (church, parish activity center, pre-school areas) are reaching their 20th Birthday, we are faced with having to replace roofs, HVAC equipment, some furnishings. There are also some capital needs on the school part of the building and on the rectory building.

You have recently received the Financial Report for the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year and a request that you submit a Sacrificial Offering Pledge Form so that we can plan to address the many needs we have by gaining some idea of what we can anticipate in terms of Offertory Income. I am very grateful that the Finance Committee and the Facilities Committee have been working together to proactively address these issues by prioritizing needs, working with diocesan offices and planning to meet the needs. I know that there is information circulating about a capital campaign. This is one option that is being pursued at this time. I will keep you apprised of what is going on in this regard.

I am very grateful that we have been able to begin EDGE and LIFETEEN for our Middle School and High School students and I ask that all parents of students in Grades 6-8 and 9-12 urge your family members to participate in these programs.

I realize that there are some things that I may have missed in this article in terms of what has happened and what can happen. However, it was not intentional.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I ask that after having read this article and if you are interested in helping in any way with any of the efforts that I have mentioned, please feel free to contact the Parish Office (878-5353) with your name and best contact number or e-mail me at frconnolly@saintceciliachurch.org.

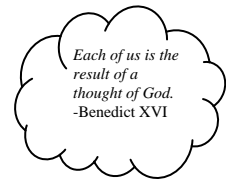
God's blessings in the New Year!

Father Leo Connolly



ABORTION

“God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.” (2258, Catechism of the Catholic Church)



Some more statements from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* concerning abortion:

- From its conception, the child has the right to life. Direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, is a "criminal" practice, gravely contrary to the moral law. The Church imposes the canonical penalty of excommunication for this crime against human life. (2322)
- Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person—among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. (2270)
- Endowed with "a spiritual and immortal" soul, the human person is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake." From his conception, he is destined for eternal beatitude. (1703)
- Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law: "You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish."

God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes. (2271)

- The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death.

The moment a positive law deprives a category of human beings of the protection which civil legislation ought to accord them, the state is denying the equality of all before the law. When the state does not place its power at the service of the rights of each citizen, and in particular of the more vulnerable, the very foundations of a state based on law are undermined. . . . As a consequence of the respect and protection which must be ensured for the unborn child from the moment of conception, the law must provide appropriate penal sanctions for every deliberate violation of the child's rights. (2273)

- Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being.

Prenatal diagnosis is morally licit, "if it respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed toward its safeguarding or healing as an individual. . . . It is gravely opposed to the moral law when this is done with the thought of possibly inducing an abortion, depending upon the results: a diagnosis must not be the equivalent of a death sentence." (2274)

- One must hold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but are directed toward its healing, the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival. It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material. (2275)

COMMUNITY BILLBOARD

LENDING A HELPING HAND: *Coats and Candles Drive:* New coats and sweaters for Christmas? Want to free up some closet space? The St. Vincent de Paul Society is collecting coats, candles and any cold weather outerwear before all Masses the weekend of January 14-15th, 2012. Candles can be any type, new or used, but please keep them separate from the clothing. Volunteers will be outside before all Masses collecting them to deliver to the homeless through our free clothing store downtown.

This is a "five Sunday" month, so on January 28 & 29, the St. Vincent DePaul Society will be at the church doors after each Mass. Monies collected will support the needs of our community. We hope you will be generous.

BABY BOOTIE TREE Our annual project culminates each year with the donation of gifts for the moms who choose life for their unborn children. We will pass your donation of the much needed "baby items" listed below to the first organization of its kind in Columbus, Birthright. This organization aids their clients in several ways, one of which is they offer layette items, available from donations, to those moms in need who come to their program. Last year we gave them your generous donations of items and cash for which they were very grateful!

We will accept your gifts during the weekend Masses of the Feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 7 & 8 in the Gathering Space.

Desired items include: disposable diapers (newborn and small); diaper wipes; baby washcloths and towels; baby blankets (receiving and crib); crib sheets; plain bibs; bottles; diaper bags; pacifiers; small stuffed animals; baby lotion, shampoo and soap; clothing (12 months and under): onesies, t-shirts, booties, socks, sleepers, gowns, and outfits.

Please do not wrap the items, as they will be combined with other items to complete a baby layette. If you prefer, a monetary donation may be made. Checks should be made out to Birthright of Columbus.

BLOOD DRIVE: The Knights of Columbus will be sponsoring a Blood Drive on Thursday, January 19 from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM in Meeting Room A & B. Prospective donors should be at least 17 years old (a 16 year old may donate with parents consent). The Knights will be at Masses on Saturday, January 14 and Sunday, January 15 to register donors and answer any questions. You can also register by calling Mark Hunter at 614-871-8467. One lucky donor at the St. Cecilia Drive will win a \$25 Gas Card, provided by Knights of Columbus 5899.

TAX STATEMENTS - Due to changes in IRS laws, starting with contributions made in 2007, people who itemize their tax returns cannot deduct charitable contributions made to the parish unless they maintain a bank record OR a written contribution statement from the parish. Bank records which are acceptable include cancelled checks.

Our parish tracks contributions made using monthly envelopes and will, upon your request, produce a written statement of your contributions. Please call the Parish Office at 878-5353 to request your statement. We will also include your Bishops' Annual Appeal statement which the diocese sends to us.

BINGO TEAM SCHEDULES

Help is needed! We always have room for new workers - no experience needed! If interested in volunteering as a Bingo Team Member or Substitute, please call Barb at the Parish Office (878-5353). Teams work every five weeks, about 4 hours an evening. Each team works 10 or 11 times in one year. We have a critical need for several new workers! This is a great way to help support the parish and to meet other parishioners at the same time.

	Sunday	Tuesday
Team 1	(No bingo Jan. 1), February 5	January 3, February 7
Team 2	January 8, February 12	January 10, February 14
Team 3	January 15, February 19	January 17, February 21
Team 4	January 22, February 26	January 24, February 28
Team 5	January 29, March 4	January 31, March 6

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

PSR CLASSES – We are now in the second half of the program year. Coming home this month is the first of the Pupil Progress Reports! Please sign and return them by the following class session.

A reminder to parents: we DO have Sunday classes on January 15. Since the Monday sessions had a shorter Christmas Break this year, they will have a vacation day for Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 16. If you have misplaced your calendar, you may obtain a replacement from the office or download it from the parish website (www.saintceciliachurch.org).

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS FOR RELIGION STUDENTS – Please mark your calendars with the dates for programs which pertain to your family, as attendance at the preparation sessions is a parish requirement. Also, we remind you that many of the sacramental information papers and forms may be found on the parish website (see above).

The *Parent Meeting for First Reconciliation* will be held in the church on Thursday, January 12 at 7:00 p.m.. Parents of second graders are reminded that participation in this program is expected as part of the preparation for First Communion. The *Penance Service for First Reconciliation* will take place on Tuesday, January 24, starting at 7 p.m. Families should sit together in the church.

Another element in our First Communion preparation program is the “*Take Home Retreat*.” The materials and instructions for the projects were part of the packets given out at the Parent Meeting I in the fall. The completed projects should be brought to religion class by Monday, January 23.

The *Jesus Day* morning retreat for second graders will be held on Saturday, February 11, from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. This day includes fun events, prayer time, Scripture stories, and a music session. Permission and/or volunteer forms for the day should be turned in at the January 12 Parent Meeting.

Confirmation – The *Parents and Candidates Meeting II* will be held in the church on Thursday, February 9. It begins at 7:00 p.m.

The *Confirmation Retreat for Candidates and Sponsors* will be held on Saturday, March 10. The Permission Forms were due, along with the sacramental fee, the Confirmation Name Form and, if needed, Baptismal Certificate, in December. If your child has not submitted the above, please send them in to religion class. Thank you!

PARENT BAPTISM CLASS - Parents who wish to have an infant baptized at St. Cecilia must attend one of our Parent Baptism Classes. The class meets at 1:15 p.m. in Meeting Room A (in the Parish Center, use the east side doors on the lower level to enter). The next scheduled classes will be January 8 and February 12. Families must be registered in the parish prior to attending the Baptism Class, and should call the Parish Office (878-5353) to pre-register for a session.

Knights of Columbus Free Throw Shoot

The Knights of Columbus will be sponsoring their annual Free Throw Shoot on Saturday, January 28 from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM in the Parish Center. This event is for Girls and Boys ages 10 - 14. Each Participant will shoot 15 Free Throws. Shoot-offs for ties will be done at 1:00 PM. Winners in each age (Girls and Boys) category will advance to the District Free Throw Shoot in February.

Breakfast for Vocations

The Knights of Columbus Council 5899 will be hosting a Breakfast for Vocations in the School Hall on Sunday, February 5 from 8:30 to 11:30. The breakfast will include:

Pancakes - Plain or Blueberry

Egg Strata - Vegetable or Ham/Cheese

Sausage, Hash Browns, Sausage Gravy & Biscuits, and Coffee / Juice.

Cost is: Adult - \$5.00, Child - \$3.50, and Family - \$19 (2 Adults and up to 4 children).

IMPORTANT APPEAL TO ALL PARISHIONERS

As we begin a new calendar year, I would like to take this opportunity to make an URGENT APPEAL. Recently, every family registered at Saint Cecilia Parish was sent a Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2010-2011 and an appeal to fill out a Sacrificial Giving Pledge Card. This mailing was preceded by a talk given by Karry Ellis of our parish on what Sacrificial Giving is truly about. For the past several weeks, a report has appeared in the Sunday Bulletin as to exactly how many pledge cards have been returned and what percentage of the budgeted weekly need has been pledged.

I fear that there are many families who, for some reason or another, may have delayed in filling-out the card as they may have put it aside thinking that they would do it later. There may have even been some families who have lost the card. I also suspect that there are some families who believe that they can leave it to others to financially support the parish. Others might believe that they have nothing to spare to give to the parish.

In response to this, I would like to respectfully suggest that the principles involved in Sacrificial Giving, as well as those involved in Stewardship, show us that there is no gift that is too small and that giving something is our call. The call is to give of ourselves to God in time, talent and treasure in a spirit of generosity. I cannot help but be awed by the spirit of giving that was most evident during the Advent Season with both the Giving Tree Program and the Christmas Basket Program. Members of the Saint Cecilia Community have always responded generously to those in need whether it is with their time/presence and/or with their material goods. I am also aware that when the Saint Cecilia Parish Community was told that it could not raise the funds necessary to build our present church and Parish Activity Center by some fundraising professionals, the Community proved them wrong by paying off the debt in record time.

There is no doubt that the people of our parish are generous. Please do not fall into the temptation that generosity necessarily means giving large amounts. I am very aware that at present there are some families who might only be able to pledge a few cents or a dollar or a few dollars per week and that there are others who are able to give more substantially. The spirit and principles of Sacrificial Giving call us to remember that ALL of us are called to give something. I cannot help but remember from the Gospel the poor widow who gave a penny at the Temple from her need who was seen as the true giver, as opposed to the man who judged her as he gave from his surplus.

I cannot emphasize enough that once again our parish is in need of your generosity and Sacrificial Giving. Those who read the Sunday Bulletin each week know that it is extremely rare that we take in the amount needed from the collection to meet weekly expenses. When we do not meet those expenses from the weekly income, we have to take them from the Parish Reserves. These Reserves will not last forever.

I can assure you that we are doing everything possible to keep expenses and spending at a minimum and that the Finance Committee is working very diligently.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE fill out your pledge card indicating an amount that you are able to give each week. If, by chance, you have lost your Pledge Card, some are available by the Bulletin Board in the Gathering Space. Consider this as a resolution for this New Year. Members of the Finance Committee will be making calls to follow-up on unreturned pledge cards.

Thank you for your generous response!

Father Leo Connolly

