

## December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Third Sunday in Advent

<b>St. Stephen's Church</b>	<b>Rev. Tom Kuffel</b>	207 N. Union Ave.	Exeter, NE 68351
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Date	Time	Place	Intention	By	Feast Day
<b>Mon. Dec 12</b>	<b>7:30 AM</b>	<b>Exeter</b>	<b>Judy Geiger</b>	<b>Dean &amp; Kathy Due</b>	
<b>Tues. Dec 13</b>	<b>7:30 AM</b>	<b>Exeter</b>	<b>Lori Walford</b>	<b>Ruth Ekeler</b>	
Wed. Dec 14	7:30 AM	McCool	Connie White		
Wed. Dec 14	6:30 PM	Exeter	Gene Ruhl Family		
<b>Thu. Dec 15</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>Care Center</b>	<b>Libbie Yeck</b>	<b>Diane Zeleny</b>	
Fri. Dec 16	7:30 AM	McCool	Connie White		
Sat. Dec 17	8:00 AM	McCool	Gary Otoupal	Jan Otoupal	
<b>Sat. Dec 17</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b>	<b>Exeter</b>	<b>Shelly Billerbeck</b>	<b>Marge Bonta</b>	
<b>Sun. Dec 18</b>	<b>8:30 AM</b>	<b>Exeter</b>	<b>Adolph Kreinert</b>	<b>Edward &amp; Kimberly Menke</b>	
Sun. Dec 18	10:00 AM	McCool	For the Parish		

### December & January Ministers

<b>Sat 17</b>	A-Gerry	L-John B	S-Elliot & Mitchell	U – Peg B.	G-Matt Harre Family
<b>Sun 18</b>	A-Roger	L-Kathy	S-Spencer & Caleb	U – Doug & Dacel	G-Doug Thomsen Family
<b>Sat 24</b>	6PMA-Mark	L-Pat R.	S-Evan & Jack	U – Don & Elaine	G-Don & Elaine Krejci
<b>Sat 24</b>	11PMA-Brad	L-Rick	S-Theron & Cameron	U – Marion	G-Angels
<b>Sun 25</b>	A-Rusty	L-Doug	S-Sam & Max	U – Darleene	G-Roger Johnson Jr. Family
<b>Sat 31</b>	A-Ron	L-Bob	S-Elliot & Mitchell	U – Joe & Sharla	G-Joe Dinneen Family
<b>Sun 1</b>	A-Roger	L-Denice	S-Stephen & James	U – Agnes	G-Gene Ruhl Family

**Pray For:** Stephen Leonard Graeve from St. Peter, Lincoln, NE. He is in Theology 1 and is studying at St. Gregory the Great. He graduated HS in 2007 from Pius X.

**Prayer Intentions:** Richard Perkins, Bill Hays, Joanna & Daniel Webster Family, Ann Pospisil, Jean Hoffman, Irene Petrucek, Dawn Welch, Kelley Champion, Bernard & Lorene Zeleny, J.J. Dinneen, Taylor Thomas, Steve Lawson, Tim Becker, Joe Huber Jr., Patrick Hoarty, Carol Smith, Cindy Hogman, Zach Johnson, Lauren Dick, Stephanie Salyer, Mark Thomsen, Noah Lambrecht, & Military Personnel Jason & Lacey Hood, Rob Coffey, Jacque Erks, Zac Hartmann, Anthony & Alex Due.

### St. Stephen's Church Support 12-04-2011

Adult Envelopes \$1037.00      Loose Plate \$41.00      Children \$2.00      Total \$1080.00

Number of Envelops \$1 - \$5 [ 0 ]      \$6 – 10 [ 10 ]      \$11 - \$20 [ 8 ]      \$21 - \$40 [ 11 ]      \$41 & Up [ 8 ]

\*\* The actual budget for collections is \$85,305 for this fiscal year. It includes envelopes, loose plate, children, and special collections (i.e. Christmas, Easter, etc). On average, we need to collect \$1640 weekly in order to balance our budget. Check here weekly to see the actual collections compared to the budget. **Fiscal Year-to-Date we are at \$33,418 and we should be at \$37,720.**

### Announcements

**Birthdays:** Deidre Stevens – Dec 11<sup>th</sup>, Layla Whitford – Dec 11<sup>th</sup>, Nichole Ruhl – Dec 12<sup>th</sup>, Logan Zeleny – Dec 12<sup>th</sup>, Jacy Schlueter – Dec 13<sup>th</sup>, Jane Dumpert – Dec 14<sup>th</sup>

**CCD: Dec 11th** – Class at Church to Practice Program. Children's Mass. Christmas Program at 4PM at the church. Potluck to follow at Hall. K, 1<sup>st</sup>, & 2<sup>nd</sup> – Veggie & Fruit dishes. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> – Desserts. 5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup>, & 7<sup>th</sup> – Meat dishes. Remember your \$1. **Dec 18<sup>th</sup>** – Class Parties at Hall. Angel Practice at church after class. **Dec 25<sup>th</sup>** – No Class.

**CYO: Dec 14th** – Starts with mass at 6:30PM in Exeter.

**Altar Society:** Connie Horne & her girls donated the December Basket – A Winter Safety Kit.

- Meeting/Christmas Party will be **Wed, Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> at 7PM**. Shut-in gifts will be available & we will play bingo.

**Christmas Flowers:** If you would like to donate in memory or honor of a loved one, please put your intentions and donation in the collection plate or give to Kathy Erdkamp (Altar Society).

**Dec 11<sup>th</sup> Penance Service:** 3-4PM at the church. The CCD Christmas Program will follow.

**Dec 11<sup>th</sup> CCD Christmas Program:** 4PM at the church. Covered dish to follow at the Hall

**Donations for Birthright:** The Altar Society is collecting baby items for Birthright. Please leave your baby items in the back of the church. Thank you for donating to this very worthy cause.

**Everyone should have received a letter explaining our building project. During this Month please reflect on you commitment to our building project. I ask everyone to return their pledge cards signed, by Jan 1<sup>st</sup>.**

*Prayer: Gracious and Holy Father, for Christmas, please give me an intellect to understand you, reason to discern you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, a spirit to know you, a heart to meditate upon you, ears to hear you, eyes to see you, a tongue to proclaim you, a way of life pleasing to you, patience to wait for you and perseverance to look for you.*

**Humor - Christmas Rum Cake Recipe: Before you start, sample the rum to check for quality. To be sure rum is of the highest quality, pour one level cup of rum into a glass and drink it. Repeat as necessary, until you forget about the cake.**

Please do not put any salt on the new steps.

## Pope Benedict

In writing to the Ephesians, St Paul reminds them that before embracing faith in Christ, they had "no hope and were without God in the world" (2: 12). This appears an especially apt description for the paganism of our day: in particular, we might compare it with the contemporary philosophy that corrodes the hope in man's heart, inducing him to think that within and around him unbelief prevails: nothing before birth and nothing after death. In fact, if God is lacking, hope is lacking. Everything loses its "substance". It is as if the meaning of life was missing and everything were flattened out and deprived of its meaning.

At stake is the relationship between existence here and now and what we call the "hereafter": This is not a place in which we end up after death; on the contrary, it is the reality of God, the fullness of life towards which every human being is, as it were, leaning. God responded to this human expectation in Christ with the gift of hope.

Man is the one creature free to say "yes" or "no" to eternity, that is, to God. The human being is able to extinguish hope within himself or herself, eliminating God from his or her life. How can this be? How can it happen that the creature "made for God", intimately oriented to Him, the creature closest to the Eternal One, can deprive himself or herself of this richness?

God knows the human heart. He knows that those who reject Him have not recognized his true Face, and so He never ceases to knock at our door like a humble pilgrim in search of hospitality. This is why the Lord grants humanity new time: so that everyone may come to know him!

This is also the meaning of a new liturgical year which is beginning: it is a gift of God, who once again wishes to reveal Himself to us in the mysteries of the written Word and the Sacraments. He wants to speak to humanity and to save his people of today through the Church. And He does so by going out to meet them in order "to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19: 10).

In this perspective, the celebration of Advent is the answer of the Church symbolized as the -Bride to the ever new initiative of God symbolized as the Bridegroom, "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rv 1: 8). God offers to humanity, which no longer has time for him, further time, a new space in which to withdraw into itself in order to set out anew on a journey to rediscover the meaning of hope.

## Homily: Catholic Identity

If you go out into the Internet and search for thoughts from notable people about Christmas you will find lots of uplifting and heartwarming thoughts about the holidays, thoughts from people of faith as well as thoughts from people of no particular faith at all rejoicing over the coming of Christmas. Here are but just a few of them:

- "Christmas is a necessity. There has to be at least one day of the year to remind us that we're here for something else besides ourselves."
- "Our hearts grow tender with childhood memories and love of kindred, and we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmas-time."
- "This is the message of Christmas: We are never alone. God is with us"

Our Church reminds us Advent is the time of the coming of God into our humanity, into your personal lives, and into mine too. It is that mysterious time of the year when we recognize the tension between what already IS and what is yet to be; between what we ARE and what we CAN BE; between what has been accomplished and what remains unfinished in our life.

The birth of Jesus Christ empowers us to move beyond what has been, and to move into God's kingdom here on earth. We are, after all is said and done, called by God not only to enter heaven after we die, but to usher in His kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. To say it quite simply, we are to be concerned about creating our heaven here and now, not just what we hope will happen when we die.

For us, as Christians, we see that a little Child gives us a vision of heaven and heaven, in the birth of that Christ, stoops to earth. The message of Christmas is that the visible material world is now, by the birth of God's Son among us, bound to the invisible spiritual world. What humans regard as merely material is now invested with the presence of God. It is God's world, not just ours.

"Happiness is something to do, someone to love, and something to hope for." If you and I can live lives dedicated to making the lives of others a little bit better than they once were, if we can find ourselves in the reality of what is transcendent in life, giving love to the loveless, and being loved in return, and if we can live each day fully in the Presence of Christ, or rather with His Presence reaching and touching others through us, that is no small thing to have happened to any man or woman.

Here are some personal qualities that should identify who we are and what we are as Catholics who celebrate the Birth of Christ and who receive Him in Holy Communion:

1. We are known for attending Mass and receiving Jesus Christ into our souls every Sunday, and perhaps even known to celebrate daily Masses from time to time.
2. We are known to be moral persons, respected for having high standards. There should be plenty of evidence by which others could identify us as persons of principle and goodness in the way we conduct our affairs, our businesses, and in the way we treat others. People should be able to take us at our word, without really needing a contract to enforce our agreements and commitments.
3. We are known to be prayerful persons. I don't mean that we ostentatiously pray in public so that we will be seen, but rather that being prayerful persons we have a certain aura about us - an atmosphere of serenity and peace surrounding us - a spirit of peace and calmness that people recognize as coming only from being a deeply prayerful person.
4. We have an attitude, a habit of being, that is kind, gentle, respectful, sensitive to others, compassionate and caring toward others. We have an attitude that can be seen in the eyes of Mother Theresa of Calcutta, a face that reveals the presence of the heart of Christ, a smile and a tone of voice that can only come from being close to Christ.
5. We are known as persons who are sensitive to the presence of God in all things, in events, and in the seeming coincidences that occur in our lives and in our worlds, coincidences that point to the activities of God in our lives and in our world.

We all have an identity, John the Baptist's had his identity, Christ's has his identity, as well as you and I have our identities. John the Baptist had a firm grasp of who he was not, as well as an inspired grasp of who he was and what his life was all about. He was a prophet telling of the coming of the New King. As did John have his identity from the Holy Spirit so do we. We should read the prophet Isaiah knowing that this is our true identity: *The spirit of the Lord has been given to me; for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor.*

Jesus didn't have much of an identity problem. Nor should we. After all, He suffered and died for you and me in order that we might see and understand ourselves in an entirely new way, in a radically different way than the world sees us. Because of Jesus Christ we now know that we are loved and being saved sinners. Because God the Son was born into our humanity we are endowed by our Father in heaven with certain gifts and characteristics that no power in the heavens or on earth can take from us. To whom, then, is your life dedicated? To what is your life dedicated? What part do you play in the great scheme of things? Would the people who know you succeed or would they fail in identifying who you are, what you stand for, and what your life is all about?

Perhaps in all of your gift-giving this forthcoming Christmas you could give the Christ child a gift He would treasure forever, namely a healthy self-awareness and a healthy self-identity, one in which the presence of Jesus can be found in you!

**Sunday 3:00 – 4:00 PM Confessions and Holy Hour: Fr. Tom Walsh and Fr. Dave Bourek will be here to hear confession.**

We must forgive those who hurt us. The reason is simple: Bitterness and unforgiveness are claws that set their hooks deep in our hearts; they are chains that keep us held captive to the wounds and the messages of those wounds. Until you forgive, you remain their prisoner. We must also forgive ourselves and ask for forgiveness from God.