

January 1, 2011 The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

St. Stephen's Church	Rev. Tom Kuffel	207 N. Union Ave.	Exeter, NE 68351
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Date	Time	Place	Intention	By	Feast Day
Mon. Jan 2	7:30 AM	Exeter	Susie Perkins	Richard Perkins	
Tues. Jan 3	7:30 AM	Exeter	Frank & Virginia Sudrila	The Family	
Wed. Jan 4	6:30 PM	McCool	Private Intention		
Thu. Jan 5	10:30 AM	Care Center	Arnie Geiger	Glenn & Denice Kovanda	
Fri. Jan 6	7:30 AM	McCool	Theo White	Ron & Marcia Clark	
Sat. Jan 7	8:00 AM	McCool	Theo White	Carol Smith Family	
Sat. Jan 7	5:00 PM	Exeter	Lori Walford	Ruth Ekeler	
Sun. Jan 8	8:30 AM	Exeter	Susie Perkins	Richard Perkins	
Sun. Jan 8	10:00 AM	McCool	For the Parish		

January Ministers

Sat 7	A-Mark	L-Pat	S-Evan & Theron	U – George & Kathy	G-George & Kathy Erdkamp
Sun 8	A-Brad	L-Kathy	S-Cameron & Eli	U – Doug	G-Kent Manning Family
Sat 14	A-Gerry	L-Children	S-Kirby & Jack	U & G – Children's Mass – Children will be assigned	
Sun 15	A-Rusty	L-Doug	S-Spencer & Caleb	U – Darleene	G-Doug Papik Family
Sat 21	A-Ron	L-Rick	S-Elliot & Mitchell	U – Gail & Barb	G-Gail & Barb Heffelfinger
Sun 22	A-Brad	L-Denice	S-Sam & Max	U – J.J. Dinneen	G-Ray & Jeanette Franzen

Pray For: Ricardo Andres Izquierdo 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: Dick Snell, Dan Grant, 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 12-25-2011 (Includes Christmas Offering)

Adult Envelopes	\$1987.00	Loose Plate	\$150.00	Children	\$3.00	Total	\$2140.00
Number of Envelops	\$1 - \$5 [3]	\$6 – 10 [8]	\$11 - \$20 [12]	\$21 - \$40 [25]	\$41 & Up [14]		

** 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 \$38,661 and we should be at \$42,640.**

Announcements

Birthdays: Elliot Erdkamp – Jan 3rd, Agnes Anderson – Jan 7th, Mark Becker – Jan 7th, Stephen Ruhl – Jan 8th

CCD: Jan 1st – No Class. **Jan 8th** – Class Resumes. Youth Choir Practice after class at church. **Jan 15th** – Regular Class.

CYO: There is NO CYO January 4th. CYO Resumes January 11th starting with Mass at 6:30 PM in Exeter.

Altar Society: Connie Horne & her girls donated the December Basket – A Winter Safety Kit. The January Basket is a \$150 gift certificate to Greg's Grocery donated by Ruth Ekeler and her daughters.

Holy Hour: Sunday January 15th at 5PM.

Catholic Lawyers Guild: all attorneys, law students, law enforcement, and government officials and their families join Bishop Bruskwitz in the **annual Red Mass** on Saturday, January 7th at Blessed John XXIII Center beginning at 8:30 AM. A complimentary breakfast will follow. Legal education seminars will also be given for MCLE credit afterwards. A twenty dollar fee is requested for those seeking MCLE credit. RSVP by January 6th catholiclawyersguild@gmail.com.

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

Prayer: Another fresh New Year is here; another year to live! To banish worry, doubt, and fear; to love and laugh and give! This bright New Year is given to me, to live each day with zeal. To daily grow and try to be, my highest and best me. I have the opportunity to right wrongs, pray for peace, and plant a tree, This New Year I will sing more joyful songs as I know I belong to Thee!

Quote:

Your success and happiness lies in you. Resolve to keep happy, then your joy shall form an invincible argument against difficulties throughout the year. --Helen Keller

Character Building: God's sign is simplicity. God's sign is the baby. God's sign is that He makes himself small for us. This is how He seeks to capture our hearts. He does not come to us with power, majestic in splendor and with all of the trappings of overpowering greatness. He comes as a baby – defenseless and in need of our help. He does not want to overwhelm us with fear of His strength. He takes away our fear of his omnipotent greatness. He simply asks for our love as does a little child.

He wants nothing other from us other than our love and in the simplicity of that love we learn to enter into His feelings, His thoughts, and His will. We learn to live with Him and to practice with Him that humility of setting aside of our egos. That belongs to the very essence of love. God made Himself small so that we could understand Him, welcome Him, and love Him.

When we look upon a mother holding a baby in her lap and nurturing it we see something that we do not otherwise see. In all of its simplicity we see the beauty of unconditional love, love without all of the complications we humans might otherwise attach to it.

God comes to us in smallness, as a baby being loved by its mother. This is so that we might see the way God loves us. He loves us with a mother's love, a love that we can understand in its simplicity, a love that we need not fear, a love that we can all experience.

Please do not put any salt on the new steps.

You are not your sin; sin is no longer the truest thing about the man who has come into union with Jesus. Your heart is good. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you" (Ezek. 36:26). The Big Lie in the church today is that you are nothing more than "a sinner saved by grace." You are a lot more than that. You are a new creation in Christ.

Pope Benedict

In glorifying the Son one honors the Mother and in honoring the Mother one glorifies the Son. The title of “Mother of God” which the Liturgy highlights today, stresses the unique mission of the Blessed Virgin in the history of salvation: a mission that is at the root of the worship and devotion which the Christian people reserve for her.

Indeed, Mary did not receive God’s gift for herself alone, but in order to bring him into the world: in her fruitful virginity, God gave men and women the gifts of eternal salvation. And Mary continually offers her mediation to the People of God, on pilgrimage through history towards eternity, just as she once offered it to the shepherds of Bethlehem. She, who gave earthly life to the Son of God, continues to give human beings divine life, which is Jesus himself and his Holy Spirit. For this reason she is considered the Mother of every human being who is born again through grace at baptism. We therefore call Mary, Mother of the Church and Mary the Mother of God, Jesus Christ.

It is in the name of Mary, Mother of God and of men, that since 1 January 1968 the World Day of Peace has been celebrated throughout the world. Peace is a gift of God, as we read from Scripture: May “the Lord... give you peace” (Nm 6:26). It is a messianic gift par excellence, the first fruit of the love that Jesus gave us; it is our reconciliation and reunion with God. Peace is also a human value to be achieved at the social and political levels, but it is rooted in the mystery of Christ.

I would like to express my daily commitment to promote peaceful coexistence among the peoples and arouse an ever deeper awareness of peace in the Church and in the world. In this light, the Church is ever more committed to working, to provide a reliable spiritual foundation of values and principles in our quest for peace.

The world needs God. It needs universal, shared ethical and spiritual values, and religion can offer a precious contribution to their pursuit, for the building of a just and peaceful social order at the national and international levels. I therefore stressed that “religious freedom... is an essential element of a constitutional State; it cannot be denied without at the same time encroaching on all fundamental rights and freedoms, since it is their synthesis and keystone.

Humanity cannot appear to be resigned to the negative power of selfishness and violence; it must not become accustomed to conflicts that claim victims and jeopardize the future of peoples. Before the threatening tensions of the moment and, especially, before the discrimination, abuse and religious intolerance that today are striking Christians in particular (cf. *ibid.*, n. 1), I once again address a pressing invitation not to give in to discouragement and resignation. I urge everyone to pray so that the efforts made by various parties to promote and build peace in the world may be successful. For this difficult task words do not suffice; what is needed is the practical and constant effort of the leaders of Nations, and it is necessary above all that every person be motivated by the authentic spirit of peace, to be implored ever anew in prayer and to be lived in daily in all relationships.

May the Virgin Mary give us her Son, may she show us the Face of her Son, the Prince of Peace. May she help us to remain in the light of this face that shines upon us, in order to rediscover all the tenderness of God the Father; may it be she who supports us in invoking the Holy Spirit, so that the Father will renew the face of the earth and transform hearts, dissolving their hardness in the face of the disarming goodness of the Child who was born for us. May the Mother of God accompany us in this New Year; may she obtain for us and for the whole world the desired gift of peace.

Homily: Chapter 3 – Is Jesus Still Relevant?

The debate between Christianity and Secular Philosophy rages. Jesus gives us the simple philosophy to love our neighbor, including our enemy. He explains his philosophy with the Golden rule: do good to others as you expect them to treat you. He goes on to explain that we have to forgive others and ask for forgiveness, fast, pray, and give alms. This simple lifestyle contradicts the philosophies of the world: Individualism, Hedonism, and Minimalism. But both claim to offer health, happiness, and holiness. Which one is true?

As explained by the ancient Greek Philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, happiness is innate. Everything we do, we do because we believe it will make us happy. As these thinkers taught, there are levels of happiness, which Fr. Robert Spitzer easily categorized into four. First is happiness caused from possessions, pleasures, and things. It is material happiness. This happiness is based on externals. They are short lived and ultimately it does not create true happiness. We call this type of happiness hedonism. This happiness level is found in children, but we know that children need to mature.

The second type of happiness is the comparative advantage. It is the high school mentality. I am better at something than you are. It is the envy and jealousy notions that if I am not popular or talented I am degraded. This is happiness based on powers or talents, or looks, or something that gives you a better advantage than others. The first type of happiness is based on a pleasure; this happiness is based on dominance. From our talents, we have certain powers that give us an advantage over others. Money is a common notion of this happiness. We have money; we have power over things and people. We think we are happy if we have power which is a step up from pleasures. This is individualism.

The next type of happiness is blessedness or goodness. It is the fulfillment of the Golden Rule. Doing good to others makes others good. It empowers them to be better. It is not about seeking pleasure or being better than others, but creating and sharing goodness with others in which everyone can enjoy according to their abilities. This is familial love. This is other centered not self-centered.

Finally, we have sublime happiness or heavenly happiness. This is different than all the rest as it is based on happiness in doing God’s will. It is a self-donation to something transcendent. It is the willingness to lay down your life for your friend, or your enemy. This happiness is called by the early Church Agape Love: the love of Jesus.

As we see, each different type of happiness is a philosophy or a way of living. The first two levels of happiness are governed by the modern philosophies of our day: individualism, hedonism, and minimalism and their fruits which are so common today in our culture: greed, lust, laziness, gluttony, and a host of other vices based on selfishness and narcissism. St. Paul explains this mentality in contrast to the philosophy of Jesus, the Golden Rule, in his letter to the Galatians (5:22 – 24):

For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

Jesus is relevant because He changed the world. He changed people’s focus from being centered on false worldly happiness to seeking true happiness which is love. Only in love are we happy and only when we discipline ourselves from self-centered philosophies will we be able to have the freedom to love others and God.

Jesus is relevant to us for He asks us the hardest philosophical question: What makes you happy? His answer is self-donating love. What is your answer? Power (individualism), pleasures (hedonism), possessions (minimalism)?

Humor: I have six locks on my door all in a row. When I go out, I only lock every other one. I figure no matter how long somebody stands there picking the locks, they are always locking three.