



DIOCESAN DIGEST

for Central Pennsylvania

December 5, 2011

FROM THE DESK OF.....

BISHOP NATHAN BAXTER

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ:

This week I did my annual "Saint Nicholas" visit with the students of Saint Stephen's School, Harrisburg. It's always fun to interact with these bright and precocious children as one never knows what wonderful things will happen, especially given their anxious excitement anticipating Christmas. This year I focused on Nicholas as a bishop of a Cathedral. We talked about how a caring bishop might help children of his church in caring for other children in need. I was particularly impressed that a project in the school focused on the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and their concern for children in need and their families. I then asked, somewhat in passing, what personally excited them most about Christmas, hoping to hear what they expected for Christmas; and hoping to share that I too hoped for nice gifts under the tree. Hands shot up and I picked a little boy whose big anticipatory grin matched mine. He blurted out "I look forward to celebrating Jesus' birth!" I was surprised by his statement and his spontaneity and I muddled something about that being true but what about gifts. As I tried to re-group my thoughts, another child said aloud, "Jesus is the reason for the season". Others chimed in the little jiggle. Then there was lively laughter around the cathedral nave that the bishop had been caught off guard. And I couldn't help but laugh with them!

I have no question that these children were anticipating gifts, big meals, gatherings of family and friends. But I also realized in that moment how easy it is to assume that children nurtured in the faith aren't being religiously formed--the assumption that affirming secular ideas enhances our rapport with them. We should assume that formation is happening as our children experience religious education classes, share in the liturgical rhythms of worship, and interact with the art and symbols of our faith. The message to me this Saint Nicholas Day was to remember that the children under my spiritual care assume, even expect, that their bishop's foremost assumption is that holidays are Holy Days. So, pray this Advent that your bishop will keep focused on the spiritual truth of the season. For while there may be more articulate ways of saying it, "Jesus IS the reason for the season".

Wishing you continued Advent blessings,

+Nathan

UPCOMING EVENTS...

December 2011-February 2012

- Dec 11** Bishop Visits Nativity, Newport
- Dec 18** Bishop visits St. Paul's, Harrisburg
- Dec 23 noon—Jan 2** *Diocesan Office Closed for Christmas*
- Jan 8** Bishop visits All Saints, Hershey
- Jan 12** 12:30 General Convention Deputies mtg at Dioc. office
- Jan 15** Bishop visits St. Andrew's, Harrisburg
- Jan 19-20** Diocesan Staff Retreat
- Jan 22** Bishop visits St. Edwards, Lancaster
- Jan 22** 5pm LARC Vespers
- Jan 26** Commission on Ministry meeting (location tbd)
- Jan 29** Bishop visits Trinity, Chambersburg
- Feb 5** Bishop visits Mt. Calvary, Camp Hill
- Feb 6-8** Winter Clergy Conference, Harrisburg East Holiday Inn
- Feb 10-16** Bishop leading Barbados Diocesan Service and Clergy Reflections
- Feb 18** Council of Trustees Budget hearings (location to be confirmed)
- Feb 19** Bishop visits St. Paul's, Manheim
- Feb 25** Council of Trustees Budget hearings snow date
- Feb 26** Bishop visits St. John's, Bellefonte

If you have an event of interest to the Diocese that you would like to have listed on the Diocesan website calendar, please contact the Diocese at officemailbox@diocesecpa.org or 888-236-5959

IMPORTANT DATES TO NOTE IN 2012

Diocesan Clergy Conference

February 6, 7 & 8, 2012

Harrisburg East Holiday Inn

Wardens & Vestry Leaders' Conference

Saturday March 31, 2012

location to be announced

Renewal of Vows

Tuesday April 3, 2012

St. Stephen's Cathedral, Harrisburg

2012 Diocesan Convention

Friday June 8 & Saturday June 9

Ramada Inn & Conference Center

State College

MAILING ADDRESS
PO Box 11937
Harrisburg, PA 17108

DIOCESAN CENTER
101 Pine Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101

PHONE (717) 236-5959
FAX (717) 236-6448
TOLL FREE (888)236 5959

WEBSITE www.diocesecpa.org
EMAIL officemailbox@diocesecpa.org
FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/diocesecpa
TWITTER www.twitter.com/diocesecpa

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS...

Sara Oldberg, Susan Hinton's mother, who has been in hospital in California with ongoing health problems.

Carol Anne Oldberg, Susan's sister, who is undergoing treatment for lung cancer in Chicago.

Darcie Ann, daughter of Father Will Lawbaugh, who is recovering from injuries sustained in a recent car accident.

Rayelenn Casey as she continues her recovery following a car accident.

The Rev. Deacon Barbara Hary, continues doctors' care for heart-related issues.

Thomas Kerr, father of The Rev. Lauri Kerr, continues in care for lung cancer.

The Rev. Tom Gregg, father of The Rev. Rowena Gibbons continues in care for brain cancer.

Maddie Letsche, Acolyte at St. Luke's, Altoona, who continues treatment and physical therapy for Image Negative Transverse Myelitis.

Bob Rose continues his cancer battle.

HARRISBURG CONVOCATION'S HEIFER PROJECT ARK

Working together and responding the needs of others, the Harrisburg Convocation is inviting every congregation in the Convocation (and beyond!) to purchase an "ark" animal during Advent. Resource materials and more information can be found on our website at www.diocesepa.org.

During the Sundays of Advent (Nov 27-Dec 18) invite, include and encourage others to participate in this awesome adventure. All money needs to be in by January 1st. A flyer with more specific project details is attached with this Digest and available on the website.

What a wonderful Christmas present!

São Paulo Youth to Visit Diocese

This Christmastide will bring many gifts to the Diocese of Central Pa. One gift we are presently preparing for is to welcome 8 teens from São Paulo and their two youth leaders.

The teens will be staying with families of various parishes in the diocese, starting with St. Andrew's State College, where they will spend Christmas. They will then travel to St. James, Mansfield and then on to St. John's Lancaster, for a great News Year Eve party. Finally, they will visit Mt. Calvary, Camp Hill before they return to Washington/Dulles to travel home. In addition to the hospitality of each congregation, Dr. David Myers and the Partners in Mission Commission along with the Youth Committee are supporting this adventure.

Please watch for more information on our website, www.diocesepa.org, for times and events for your participation! **We are inviting all the Senior High teens of the diocese to join us for the ultimate New Years Eve Party at St. John's Lancaster.**

Shelter from the Stormy Blast: Theological Reflections on The Events of 9/11

A "Faith in Focus" Prayer Breakfast At St. John's, Bellefonte

The Rev. Dr. Stuart Hoke, former Missioner to St. Paul's Chapel and Assistant to the Rector of Trinity, Wall Street, will be at St. John's, Bellefonte, on Saturday, January 7, 2012 to present "Shelter from the Stormy Blast: Theological Reflections on the Events of 9/11." Father Hoke was leading a service in Trinity Church, Wall Street, while the World Trade Center was crumbling just a few blocks away. After helping to evacuate Trinity's pre-school and the staff from the Trinity office building, he was forcibly evacuated to Staten Island. As Missioner to St. Paul's Chapel (a nearby mission of Trinity Church), he helped transform the space into a place of respite and refreshment for rescue workers and the police and fire departments as they worked at Ground Zero for months following the attacks.

Hear in depth what it was like to be caught up in the extraordinary events of that day from someone who lived it, and who was able to find grace in the midst of so much horror.

Father Hoke served as rector of parishes in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. He received his Th.D. from General Seminary in 2000, where he later served as interim Chaplain. Now retired, he does supply work, and teaches a course on 12-step recovery each fall at General Seminary. He lives in North Carolina and has two grown sons.

Please join us at St. John's, Bellefonte, for breakfast, prayer and to hear a remarkable story of spiritual strength in a time of crisis from one of the Episcopal Church's most dynamic speakers. There is no charge for this event, but space is limited; please call or email the church to reserve your place:

stjohnsepiscopal@comcast.net, 814-355-0497.



United Thank Offering

Time is running out to make sure that monies collected are included in the distribution for 2012.

Please send Ingatherings to:
Bonnie Chambers, UTO Coordinator,
242 W Walnut St., Palmyra, PA 17078.

Bonnie thanks you for all your efforts and support of UTO and puts a few dollars in gratitude in her blue box!