



# St. Mary's Newsletter

## December 2011

### Message from Fr. Jim

December 3rd is the date we plan to move the classrooms back into the school building. We continue to be appreciative of the hospitality extended to us by the Presbyterian Church for classroom space these many months.

As we begin the new church year with the Advent Season on Nov. 26 & 27 we are invited to watch and wait and be alert and continue to work. Waiting often seems to be a waste of time. When I was in Bolivia I remember the long lines we had to be in just to pay our electrical bill. It could mean waiting for thirty minutes or an hour or more! If I know I will be waiting and have time to plan ahead then I bring something along to read. This Advent season is a good time to read and reflect on the Gospel of Mark. Mark will be used during this church year. It is the shortest of the gospels and the closest to the original message. Read the gospel as a family or get a small group of people together and make your way through the gospel with study and prayer and reflection. Invite myself or one of the deacons to come and share a session with you if you have questions.

This year we are celebrating 175 years as an Archdiocese. The Archdiocese of Dubuque traces its roots back to 1837 when it was established as the nation's 14<sup>th</sup> Roman Catholic diocese. The original diocese included America's heartland of Iowa, Minnesota, and portions of the Dakotas that are east of the Missouri River. Its first bishop was Matthias Loras. There are 168 parishes in the Archdiocese with more than 200,000 members.



On Saturday, November 26, Ramón Ochoa, a Catholic charismatic preacher spent the day with more than 200 people in our school gym, giving an advent retreat. He calls himself a "soldier of Christ the King" and is truly a gifted man. Sunday evening he presented a concert to a full church, engaging not only the adults who were present, but dynamically and joyfully involving the children.



The CCW Fall Rummage Sale was held in October in the school gym. Because of the help of many volunteers over \$2,100 was raised for CCW projects.



# STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

## The Magical Season

by Pat Fowler

What a wonderful time of year. For my family, Christmas has always been a magical time. My dad always use to say that he was dreaming of a “White” Christmas. He wondered why the 40 days before Christmas always went by so much faster than the 40 days before Easter. I think that many people remember their childhoods more than ever during this special time of year. Families come home and reminisce about days gone by and share stories, memories and traditions. In my family, our faith was always the center of these traditions. The perfect gift was a baby who was born to save us from our sins. May your holidays be filled with warm memories and many laughs as you come together.



Christmas seems to bring out the best in us. There are many ways to show our better selves to the people we share our time with. We are given opportunities to be stewards in our church, our work and in our community. From the Giving Tree to the Salvation Army kettle, we give of ourselves more during this season. We do not have to look very far to find the people who need us. Yes, this is the real reason for the season. And as happy of a time that this is for many, it is not a happy time for all.

This past year has been tragic for three families close to me. The death of their young adult children has left them beyond sadness. I cannot imagine the emptiness that they feel and know that this Christmas will be especially difficult for them. I will not forget them this Christmas. They have been in my thoughts and prayers a lot this past year. Sometimes being a good steward in our faith means taking the extra time to remember those who are struggling. Time does not cost anything. Giving the gift of ourselves is the best gift of all. The Prince of Peace helps us to bring His peace to those who find none. This is the real perfect gift. Take the time to share yourself with those who need you more than ever this holiday season.

Good luck finding those perfect gifts for your family and friends. May we all find the warmth and love that this season brings. And just maybe your acts of generosity will bring you that inner peace that follows you into the new year. He promised us that whatever we do for the least of our brother and sisters, we do for him. Merry Christmas St. Mary’s family. May God give us the wisdom to do his work during this holiday season and the coming year. We are so blessed to have each other. We are called to be stewards of our parish and to take care of those in our lives. Take advantage of the many opportunities given to you to do so.

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## “(YOU are) A Reflection of Love”

On Saturday, Nov. 12th, 64 women gathered at St. Patrick’s in Tama for the third annual Archdiocesan Hispanic women’s retreat. People came from New Hampton, Dubuque, Tama and Marshalltown to share in a day that was spent in an atmosphere of

joy, sharing and prayer. The theme of the day was centered on three phrases that can change the world. Reflections were given by Irlanda Helgen (“I Love You”), Gisella Schadle-Aitken (“I Need You”) and Sister Chris (“I Forgive You”), followed by time for personal and group reflection. There were lots of prizes given away, and Rosa Vargas led us in very animated singing. The day was truly a gift for



all who were able to be there – away from the routine of work, housework, cooking, kids, husbands, bills, etc. – and we are already looking forward to the fourth annual retreat!





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# St. Mary's Newsletter

If you receive this newsletter and are no longer a member of St. Mary Parish, please notify the Parish Office so you can be taken off the membership list.

## **Celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe 2011**

Beginning on Saturday, December 3rd, the Guadalupe novena will be prayed each evening at 6:00, unless it is after Mass. On Sunday, Dec. 11 the day will begin with the mañanitas, the morning praise to Mary. Several different groups will participate in this event from 4 to 7 a.m. in the church. The main Eucharistic celebration will be the 11:30 a.m. Mass, in which a group of folkloric dancers will bring up the gifts in a special offertory procession. The Mass will be followed by a (free) meal in our parish hall, to which all are invited. We hope that many people from our entire parish community will be able to join us for some of the celebration!

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- December Parish Calendar
- Stewardship in Action: The Magical Season
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**Newsletter articles are due by the 12th of each month.  
Please email them to Anne Franck: [stm-sec@marshallnet.com](mailto:stm-sec@marshallnet.com)**