



# St. Pius Calling...

November- December 2016

## Singing Praise

The Youth Choir at St. Pius has 30+ talented singers and musicians this year ranging from pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This is my second year directing the choir, but I'm no rookie to the bunch! I've grown up singing in the youth choir for Christmas and Easter since around the age of 8. That's almost 20 years! With such an array of ages in our group, some of my "big kids" feel that they're just too big to be still singing with the "little kids." I love to tease them that I'm the biggest big kid of them all, so there's no need to feel embarrassed. I promise them that sharing their gifts with God is cool no matter what.

As a singer, I've always felt it was my honor to share my gift of music with God and the church, because my gift comes from Him. Without a formal background in music, I was hesitant when asked to take on directing the youth choir two years ago. I didn't feel qualified to be conducting a large choir and instrumentalists. I pondered and prayed about it, and God answered me. He helped me realize that I could offer the children a part of me besides a technical music background—confidence in performing and a love and appreciation for sacred music in a fun environment. In our choir, every child that wants a solo gets a solo. I work with the kids on their parts and their stage presence so they feel confident and can truly glorify God with their talents.



I can't tell you how rewarding it is when I see the children smiling, having fun and pouring their hearts out to the Lord. A favorite moment of mine is when I hear them sing Silent Night. We sing the final verse a cappella. It's such a sweet, simple and beautiful lullaby. Hearing their voices echo in the church and knowing that Jesus is present with us, it brings

## Pious Thoughts

from our Pastor, Fr. Pius



November, Month of the Holy Souls in Purgatory. As we pray and give thanks for our loved ones who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, may our prayer for them be a source of hope for our salvation.

Gratitude is a gift and an invitation to a life of communal joy. In everything, the Bible invites us to show gratitude for that is God's will for us. Selinsgrove Center is a place where gratitude is seen in its perfection. I will encourage more of our brothers and sisters to be participants with the generosity of their time and talent in the Center.

Just smile and have a Happy Advent!

tears to my eyes. Their absolute favorite song to belt out is, *One Child* by Mariah Carey. It's become a staple for us year after year. I see them close their eyes and become passionate and emotional singing, "One child can change the world. Christmas morn', the king of all kings was born. He reigns forever more. Let us worship and adore. Christ the Lord." It always reminds me that that's why we sing... to worship and adore our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ's Love, *Chelsey (Pagana) Davis*

If your child is interested in singing or playing an instrument with us for Christmas and/or throughout the year, please contact me at [chelseyp11@gmail.com](mailto:chelseyp11@gmail.com) or 570-809-2400.

## Expressing Gratitude

### At our First Annual Thanksgiving Dinner

each of us added our thank you for our abundant blessings with a leaf or a feather from our EDGE kids.

We were able to serve over 100 meals (sit down, take



out and helpers). Many, many volunteers helped make everyone feel welcome.



**Oplatki: a Christmas tradition** ... the sharing of the white wafers stamped with images such as Nativity scenes and the Blessed Mother holding Baby Jesus. Like bread (the symbol of life) made from flour and water, Oplatki, (pronounced O-pwaht-kee), dates back hundreds of centuries to Poland. Also widely practiced by Slovak, Czech and Lithuanians, this custom is still practiced today. And the reason for the custom takes us back to Biblical times: The time when God provided manna, bread, for his people as they wandered the desert; the words Jesus spoke himself: "I am the bread of life." And just think about it, the town where Jesus was born, Bethlehem, means "House of Bread" in Hebrew. [www.aquinasandmore.com/catholic-articles](http://www.aquinasandmore.com/catholic-articles)

Traditionally, as the family gathers around the table on Christmas Eve, the Oplatki is broken by the eldest family member, or the head of the family, and passed on to each member. Each member then breaks off a piece and passes it to the next person. Prayers may be recited, blessings given, and scriptures read. The family comes together to unite, show forgiveness, and share their love for each other. The traditional words may be exchanged: "I wish you much health, happiness, and good fortune, and after this life an eternal crown in heaven." (Located on the Oplatki packet along with an abridged devotion from Christmas Wafers Bakery.) The Vigil Meal is then shared and enjoyed by the family.



Oplatki  
Christmas  
wafers

And why are some of the wafers pink? There are other important "members" of the family who may partake in the Oplatki. Ask yourself this question: Who, besides Mary and Joseph, were present in the manger during the birth of Jesus? (Ask your favorite preschooler!) The animals of course. Remembering the animals present at Christ's birth and the important role that animals and pets play in our lives, our family pets can partake in the Oplatki tradition as well.

[www.catholiccompany.com/content/Oplatki-Christmas-Tradition.cfm](http://www.catholiccompany.com/content/Oplatki-Christmas-Tradition.cfm)

Let the Oplatki tradition remind us of the reason for the season, the birth of Christ and His love for us, and as we unite at Mass as one sharing the Eucharist, may we also unite as families sharing the Oplatki this joyous Christmas season.

~Edna Cravitz

## Doubly blessed

There's a group of 60 people who belong to St. Pius that you likely won't see in our church every weekend. They live just around the corner at a facility called Selinsgrove Center. They are the most loving, happy, kind, unassuming people you will ever meet. Some have lived there, or at a facility like SC, their entire lives. Their ages range between 28 and 90. Not only are they wonderful, but the staff and volunteers that work with them are amazing too!

Every Wednesday afternoon at 3:30, Father Pius has Mass for the residents. Because of the severity of the developmental disabilities of some, it can be challenging to bring a large group over to church. Currently, a few volunteers from St. Pius come into the Center to visit with and assist in bringing some of the Individuals to the Mass in The Chapel of Faith, Hope and Love. One is a Susquehanna University student who will be graduating in May but has been coming for about two years. The others are people you likely know or see at Mass every weekend! All of our volunteers say being there has changed their lives! We are grateful beyond words for the help of our volunteers and are always hopeful that God will continue to provide the help we need to help the people to Mass. Often, we will see a staff person pushing two wheelchairs while supporting two or three people walking with them at the same time. When you think about how our church community bridges people's lives whose paths may never cross otherwise, it is truly beautiful and extraordinary!

My role, along with Felicia O'Brien and Angela Gennaria, is in Spiritual Support. The state contracts

chaplains to be available to walk with the SC residents on their spiritual journey. We support the 60 Catholics along with two Protestant Chaplains who work with the Protestant residents. Along with supporting Father Pius at the Wednesday Mass, we create programming for the people there. Some of the programs are Ecumenical. The Rosary Prayer Service is one that it is not uncommon to have several Protestants attend for prayer. When they are sick and in the hospital we visit and pray with them, request the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick from the hospital Chaplain, and update their SC family/staff on the visit. Once a month there is a program called Spirits in Motion where we have a seasonal activity, bible story, and music. Twice a year, St. Pius participates in the Thursday night Hymn Sing where some of the parishioners and music ministry members sing for the enjoyment of the SC community. We also work with Susquehanna University's Theology students to organize a Peace Festival each November for an annual tradition of activities and Holiday Music that includes SU's music sorority. We share joyful birthday celebrations, but we also mourn with the families and friends at their funerals.

Our parishioners are welcome to attend the Wednesday 3:30 Mass at SC. It's a noisy Mass, unlike Mass anywhere else. The people there assist Father as cross bearers, readers, and altar servers. And we are always happy to learn of a parishioner who would consider making the commitment to volunteer every Wednesday and bring the people to Mass. To me, it is the ultimate gift that I can give to a person, allowing them to experience the Eucharist and hear the word of God. -Marcia Labant

