

SPIRIT + LINK

Volume 21 - Number 4 • Winter 2017

Becky and Joe Tometich Serve Christ, Following in the Footsteps of Others

by Sherry Wachtler, Parishioner

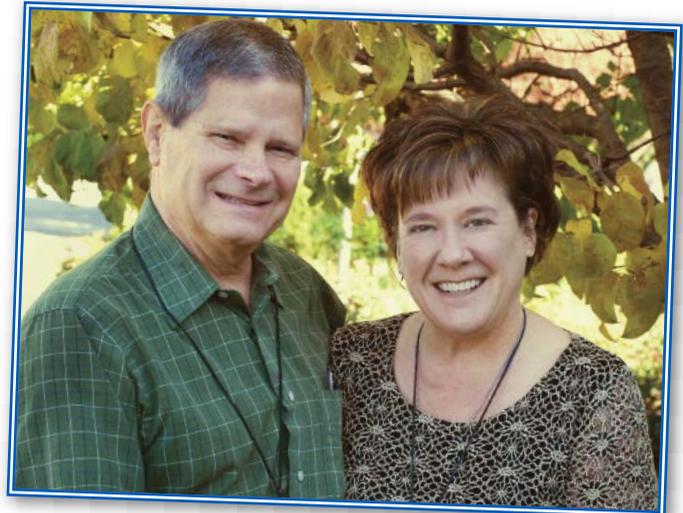
Becky and Joe Tometich found out early in their married lives just how caring St. Gerald parishioners are. Nearly 25 years ago, after their baby boy Alex received a devastating diagnosis - SCID (Severe Combined Immunodeficiency Disease), commonly called Boy in the Bubble disease, neighbors and St. Gerald friends pitched in to help. They babysat the Tometich's 3-year-old daughter Callie, brought meals, prayed and ran errands. It wasn't just a week or two. The support from the compassionate friends lasted several years while Alex had a bone marrow transplant and through long months of rehabilitation.

Their family was in need and the parish was there in a big way. "Our parishioners played a huge part in our healing by their constant prayers, love and support during those worrisome years," Becky said. "They were an example to us of what we are called to be, the Body of Christ, helping each other. God made sure we had a support system." Today Alex, 24, is enjoying much better health.

Maybe that's why they are called to help in so many capacities at St. Gerald now. Maybe they help so much because Becky grew up in a large, close-knit supportive family or maybe they're following the example Joe's family set by being very active in the church. Becky insists they are just following in the footsteps of so many who have gone before them at St. Gerald. "Those people have helped to build our parish into what it is today, a welcoming community, a place where we 'belong' and can worship God with joy as His family."

Reluctant to talk about themselves, they would much rather focus on all the wonderful ministries and caring people at St. Gerald. But watch closely and you'll find them at the church several times a week.

Sunday evenings are very special times for them as they're at Alpha meetings with an extraordinary team where wonderful bonding and camaraderie take place. Becky has been instrumental in overseeing The Rosary Rally celebrating the 100th anniversary of the



Fatima miracles as well as bringing the Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima to our parish. When you see requests from the Women's Community Service group for diaper drives or donations for shelters, you know Becky is behind the scenes working again.



Joe, who is in his 39th year working in sales, is on the Parish Council and has been at the helm of the "That Man Is You" series since it started about seven years ago. A lector on Sundays, he's also part of the Night Security team that checks the churches at night. Both he and Becky serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. One of Becky's favorite places is the Adoration Chapel and she is recruiting others to join her and Joe for Perpetual Adoration.

"I have such a strong pull to be in that Adoration Chapel. It's made such a difference in my life," she said.

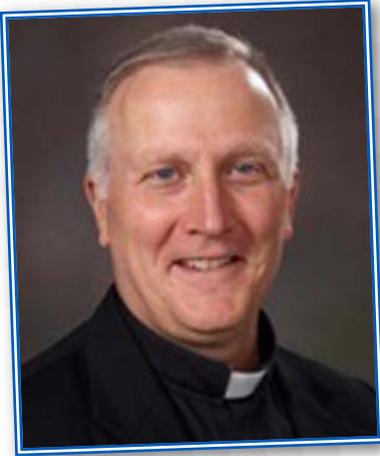
"We just wanted to be involved in whatever we can do to bring people to Christ," Becky said. "Giving back to God is our Number 1 priority," Joe said. "He's always there for us and you'll get more back than you ever give. God won't be outdone in generosity."

St. Gerald Parish Mission Statement

We are a Catholic faith community devoted to becoming a dynamic center of worship.

We challenge ourselves to lead lives patterned after Jesus.

With gratitude we share our faith, talents, gifts, and resources so that more people experience God's love.



ADVENT: It's All About Getting Ready

by Reverend Mark Nolte, Pastor

Advent: It's All About Getting Ready. The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival". The season of Advent, similar to the season of Lent, is a time of preparation through prayer and penance. The preparation for the coming of the Christ Child during Advent, however, has a two-fold character in that we celebrate two comings: the coming of Christ at His birth, and also the coming of Christ at His second coming in glory. This is evident in the Mass readings for Advent. St. Bernard speaks of three comings: Christ's first coming at His birth, His coming in the present, and His coming in glory at the end of time. So, Jesus' coming (His birth) is not merely an historical or past event that we merely recall during Advent and Christmas, but it is a present reality, a living Mystery, that we are invited to deeply contemplate and experience within our own hearts even now. God's desire is to be born again and again within each of us! St. Augustine said that "God became man so that man might become God". He longs to share with us His very Life! Jesus said, "I came that you may have life, and have it more abundantly". He longs to incarnate Himself again in each of us, so we might share in His divine life, and the unimaginable joy and peace that it contains.

THE WORD "ADVENT" MEANS "COMING" OR "ARRIVAL"

The preparation for the coming of the Christ Child during Advent . . . has a two-fold character in that we celebrate two comings: the coming of Christ at His birth, and also the coming of Christ at His second coming in glory.

The Church calls this the "marvelous exchange". This is the greatest of all gifts of Christmas: the gift of God Himself to each of us! So let us take Christ's coming and our faith in Him seriously, especially during Advent! Advent is a reminder that God's coming into our world is always in hiddenness and darkness. It is only by the light of expectant faith and prayerful vigilance that we are able to recognize Him in each other, in the Sacraments, and in creation. He comes in the midst of our busy lives and unexpectedly. We know neither the day nor the hour.

So let us take advantage of this beautiful season of Advent and make room in our hearts for Him to be born again. One way we can prepare a place for Him to be born again is by going to Confession. For those of you who no longer practice your Faith, or perhaps irregularly or only occasionally, come back to Christ and His Church before it is too late! Missing Mass (without good reason, and sporting events don't count) on Sundays and Holy Days is a violation of the third commandment (i.e., Keep holy the Sabbath) and is a mortal sin - a very serious sin! Therefore, it is a sin which can only be absolved (forgiven) through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession).

We cannot receive Him with mortal sin in our hearts! So, please, repent and come to Confession this Advent before receiving His Body and Blood in Holy Communion at Christmas. Don't let shame or fear keep you away from Him. Our priests will help you with Confession if you have forgotten how to make a good Confession. Jesus is so in love with you! He misses you and He seeks you out (just as He is doing now through this letter) and He awaits (with great and joyful anticipation) your return to Him in the Sacraments. He longs to embrace you and extend to you His warmth, His love, His peace, His joy, His affection, and His mercy. He longs to give you the best Christmas ever!

Merry Christmas,

Fr. Mark

Teresa Paal, St. Gerald's New Director of Music Ministry

by Eric Olson, Parishioner

Teresa Paal's long-winding path to becoming St. Gerald's Director of Music Ministry began when she was 5 years old and her seven older brothers and sisters would show her the basics of navigating a piano keyboard.

By eighth grade she was an organist at one of the Sunday Masses at her childhood parish of St. Peter's in Fullerton, Nebraska. She went on to major in voice at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, earn a master's degree in music performance from UNO and work as a music educator from the pre-kindergarten to college levels.

Sacred music has remained her primary interest through the years. She's been involved in music ministries in leadership and volunteer positions at churches as far away as Alaska, where her now-retired Air Force husband Dave once was stationed.

Teresa was a full-time home school mom to son Stephen, 19, and daughter Sophia, 18, before she came to St. Gerald in July. The Paals had been members at Immaculate Conception, where she volunteered as children's choir director, sang in the adult choir and directed both when they performed together at Mass.

Immaculate Conception is Omaha's Traditional Latin Mass parish, and the Gregorian chants, Sacred Polyphony and traditional Latin hymns deepened the worship experience for her.

At the request of St. Gerald Pastor Father Mark Nolte, Teresa is introducing more organ and traditional music into Masses. Parishioners may have noticed a gradual move in this direction. She noted that the 16th Century hymn, "Christians Let Us Love One Another," was sung at a Mass this fall.

"When I would teach a choir 'O Come O Come Emanuel' or teach some Gregorian chant, I could tell the kids, 'It's very likely Christopher Columbus sang this very hymn,'" Teresa said.

The faith has not changed. It's something that links to the ages instead of always having to have something new. Otherwise, it's as if you had to keep feeding the beast with something new.



Strong families have traditions they pass on. Church music is the same thing. There are times at Mass I think, 'Wow, I lose track of time, what century are we in?' And you are supposed to do that. When you link with the eternal, when you are at Mass, you are linking with heaven, and with God it is always 'now.' "

Teresa said she is grateful to the people who encouraged her musical exploits throughout her life - the elderly woman in Fullerton who was her first teacher when she was eight; her pastor at St. Peter's, Monsignor Richard Wolbach (now retired), who allowed her to practice on the church organ any time she pleased; and, of course, her mother.

"My mother was a pianist. She was a nurse and she worked the night shift, so she didn't have a lot of time for the piano," Teresa said. "But she made sure we had lessons. Sometimes there were five of us that took lessons. My mom had this philosophy that if the first two got to have it, I better give it to all of them or they'll say, 'They got it but I didn't.' "



ST. GERALD'S ROSARY RALLY

A huge crowd gathered at noon on the corner of 96th and Q, on Saturday, October 14, to pray the Rosary and honor Mary on the 100th Anniversary of her appearance at Fatima. Fr. Mark led the prayers and St. Gerald choir members led hymns. Over 22,000 other Rosary Rallies were held at the same time at sites across the United States.

Family Formation Finds a New Leader *by Amy Cunningham, Parishioner*



Deb True
Director of Family Formation
St. Gerald Parish

Family Formation is designed to help parents respond to the Church's call to be the first and foremost educators of their children and to help families grow in the transforming love of God by understanding and living the Catholic Faith. The Family Formation program at St Gerald recently hired a new director. Parishioner Deb True was happy to accept the challenge. She thinks the families at St Gerald are "really amazing," and the way they strive to raise their kids in the Catholic Faith inspires her.

Deb grew up in a Catholic family in Northern Virginia. She has served her faith throughout her career. After completing her degree in Theology at Steubenville, she worked as a high school theology teacher, served as a youth coordinator, campus minister and has done work with youth evangelization. Her Master's in curriculum and instruction has prepared her for her new position in the Family Formation program here at St. Gerald. Outside of work Deb enjoys taking pictures and scrapbooking. She laughingly admitted that she attempted the crocheting group but was "a terrible failure at that."

She and her husband Steve have been married for 17 years. They joined St Gerald Parish in the summer of 2013, the parish Steve grew up in as a child. Deb fondly remembers the family's first experience with St Gerald at the annual Parish Festival. Her kids (Katie, Dominic, Joey, Mary Therese, Danny) thoroughly enjoyed all the games and entertainment. The festival enabled all of them to get to know other parishioners and school kids. They are thrilled to be living near their parents (Ken and Pam True), and believe being able to see them often is a blessing — but note they do miss living by the ocean.

Deb stated that "My hope for the Family Formation program is that families will enter fully into their call as parents to bring up their children in the faith." She continued, "My hope is that we as a parish give them the tools to do so. With the sacramental preparation, I am hopeful that the children will be ready when it is time to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation."

When asked for her favorite saying Deb quoted St Francis de Sales: "Be who you are and be that very well."

Around the Parish



Grounded in Faith
GROWING TO SERVE



A. Current parish Knights shared the mission of the Knights at the annual Stewardship Fair.



B. Also at the Stewardship Fair, parishioner Deb Bennett explained how we help the Sienna Francis House.



C. Knight Verl Squire collected donations and hands out Tootsie Rolls®.

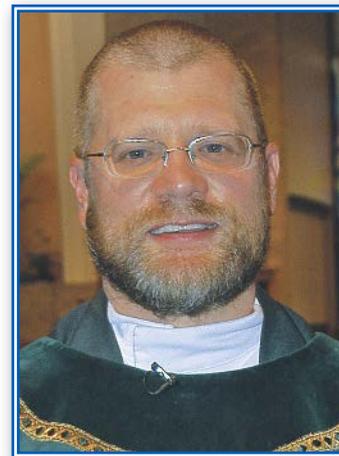


D. With a grant from the Archdiocese, 90 Google Chromebooks were added at St. Gerald School (page 6).



E. November 2, family members lit candles for their loved ones from St. Gerald who died during the past year.

An Invitation from Father Michael Voithofer: SPEND AN HOUR WITH THE LORD



In the garden Jesus said to his disciples, "Could you not watch one hour with Me?" When we participate in Eucharistic Adoration that is exactly what we do, we spend one hour with the Lord. In the Eucharist Jesus is truly present — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity! During the Mass at the moment of Consecration the "gifts" of bread and wine are transformed (transubstantiated) into the actual Body and Blood of Christ. The elements retain the appearance of bread and wine, but are indeed the actual Body and Blood of Christ. This is what is meant by the miracle of the Real Presence.

After Mass consecrated hosts, the real Body and Blood of Christ, are reserved in the tabernacle. Since the earliest years of Christianity, consecrated bread would be brought to those not able to be present at the liturgy because of illness. In about the fourth century monasteries began to reserve the Eucharist, and by the 11th century reservation was a regular feature of churches and Eucharistic devotion become common. At St. Gerald, Eucharistic Adoration takes place in the chapel at 96th and Q.

people stop praying because they say, "I just don't get anything out of it . . . ?"

My answer to you is, Good prayer is **SHOWING UP**. The distractions in our heads are because we are afraid to not perform well in prayer. Therefore, think of it as going through a sort of spiritual withdrawal. Remember, your mind doesn't know how to stop and be still. We need to learn that we are loved **NOT** because we perform well . . . , **BUT** because we simply are! We are loved because we exist.



You may ask, "What do I do during adoration?" Adoration is a time to simply be with God. "I look at God and God looks at me."

We live in a very busy and noisy world. Often, we don't make much time for silence. Being an adorer is such a blessed opportunity to invest in eternity. Your hour provides you with the commitment to care for your soul. During adoration, you can pray the rosary or read some scripture or a good spiritual book. It is also **VERY IMPORTANT** that

you take some time during your hour to be silent. God speaks to us in the silence. Think of adoration as a time to linger or "waste" time with your Lord.

DO NOT GET DISCOURAGED. Successful prayer is **SHOWING UP!** Prayer has absolutely nothing to do with performing. Prayer is **BEING WITH GOD**. So, next time you're distracted and tempted to get discouraged . . . I invite you to praise the Lord. Don't live in defeat! Live in the victory which God is winning in you. We don't need any more performance-based love in this world. What we need is **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**. This is why you are here — to learn how to receive unconditional love. Then, you can give this love to others, your spouse, kids, coworkers, even your enemies.

Here at St. Gerald we would like to set up a schedule for Perpetual Adoration. That means that someone needs to be in the chapel 24/7. Ideally 2 or 3 people will commit to each hour and then if one of those 3 can't make their hour the chapel is not empty. The hours after midnight are the most challenging. Please consider those hours or another time that works for you on a regular basis.

Contact **MaryAnn Munchrath** to schedule your hour: mam5817@gmail.com or 402-331-0926.

ST. GERALD PARISH GUARDIAN ANGEL AUCTION FEATURING



A Night in Havana

ST. GERALD CATHOLIC CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL 96TH & Q

Save the Date!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2018

Join us for the 20th Anniversary Dinner & Silent & Live Auctions. Dress the theme or cocktail attire & enjoy an unforgettable evening of dinner, fellowship & cocktails! For donor, volunteer, & attendee information visit www.stgerald.org/guardianangel or contact **TJ Ernst 402.331.1955**

St. Gerald Welcomes New Students *by Jen Tselentis, Parishioner*



A St. Gerald pre-kindergarten class.

St. Gerald Catholic School is pleased to announce that the enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year is 364 students in grades kindergarten through 8th grade. Additionally, 21 pre-kindergarten students are also enrolled. This is the second year that St. Gerald has offered the pre-kindergarten program and it is almost at capacity.

St. Gerald School welcomed 35 new students this school year, 16 in grades 1-8 and 19 in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. St. Gerald School continues to offer new students who are transferring from any public or private (non-Catholic) school or a home schooled student a Welcome Tuition Grant of up to \$1,500 per student.

If you have questions about the Welcome Tuition Grant contact School Principal Mrs. Christy Keenan, ckeenan@stgerald.org or 402.331.4223.

St. Gerald School Growing with Funds from Ignite the Faith Campaign

by Jen Tselentis, Parishioner

During 2014, all parishes in the Archdiocese of Omaha participated in the Ignite the Faith Capital Campaign. St. Gerald received permission from the Archdiocese to run a dual campaign: funds for the Archdiocese and additional funds that stayed at St. Gerald. That campaign netted pledges of \$2.5 million from St. Gerald parishioners that are being remitted over a five-year period. Approximately \$1.3 million of this pledged amount is owed to the Archdiocese to fulfill the goals of the larger Church with the remainder of the amount to remain with St. Gerald to fulfill our parish goals. The Archdiocesan Ignite the Faith Campaign was designed to support priests, strengthen all archdiocesan Catholic schools and invest in faith formation programs.

Among the many benefits of the Archdiocesan campaign that parishes may utilize are needs-based grants. St. Gerald School has applied for and received two needs-based grants from the Archdiocese Campaign funds.

1. At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, St. Gerald School applied for a technology grant from the Archdiocese and received \$40,000. With this, the school added 90 Google Chromebooks and upgraded additional wireless technology within the building to further enhance classroom technology usage. We now have five Chrome Carts, each housing 30 Chromebooks, for a total of 150 Google Chromebooks. The Chrome Carts make up portable computer labs that can move from classroom to classroom throughout all of St. Gerald School for the use of all students. The five fully

functioning carts allow St. Gerald students to use and integrate technology into everyday curriculum.

2. During the 2015-2016 school year, St. Gerald applied for a grant to start our pre-kindergarten program and received \$120,000. With this grant, we were able to cover all costs associated with starting the pre-kindergarten program (remodel costs, furniture, materials, etc). St. Gerald School opened our pre-kindergarten program in the fall of 2016. We offer a morning and afternoon five day program. Our class size maxes at 12 students each session and we have one fulltime teacher and a teacher assistant. The morning session is full and the afternoon session is nearly full with 21 total students in our pre-kindergarten program.

In summary, St. Gerald School has received a total of \$160,000 from Archdiocese of Omaha Campaign dollars, money that St. Gerald pledged and remitted to the Archdiocesan portion of the Ignite the Faith Campaign.

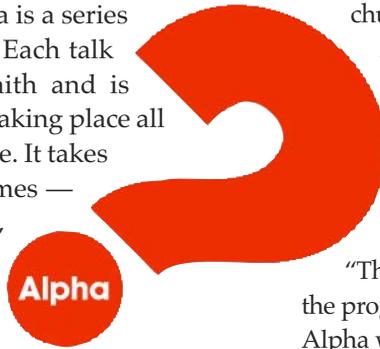
Christy Keenan, Principal of St. Gerald Catholic Schools says, "We feel so blessed to reap the generous benefits of the Archdiocesan Ignite the Faith campaign."

Parent Jen Tselentis notes that she "believes it is important for parishioners to know that we have received dollars back from the archdiocesan campaign and that our school has wisely used the grants to truly enhance the quality of education and opportunities for Catholic education. We are very proud of these accomplishments."

More about St. Gerald School on the next page

What Is Alpha? *by Bonnie Pulte, Parishioner*

According to the Alpha website, "Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is taking place all around the globe, and everyone is welcome. It takes place in cafes, churches, universities, homes — you name it. No two Alphas look the same, but generally they have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation."



Alpha started at St. Gerald in the spring of 2017 with a pilot program of 12 participants. That was followed by the current program which has about 50. I spoke with Tim Mundorf who leads the meetings on Sunday evenings and asked him the following questions:

What is the primary message of "Alpha"?

"God loves you. It is that simple for people that have grown up in the church as well as people who are unchurched and have no concept of faith."

How would you describe Alpha to someone who has never heard of it?

"Basic introduction to Christ that progressively brings you nearer to God."

Is there a Catholic version?

"Yes — we chose not to do it. Instead we decided to use the faith neutral version to evangelize to the non-

churched. The direction of Alpha is coming from Archbishop Lucas based on the book *Divine Renovation* by Father James Mallon. The goal is revitalizing our church and making disciples of all people. The emphasis is on people in the pews and the people they meet."

Why the mystery with the question mark?

"The mystery is on purpose to get people to ask about the program." When The current session is completed Alpha will be offered again.

How long is the course?

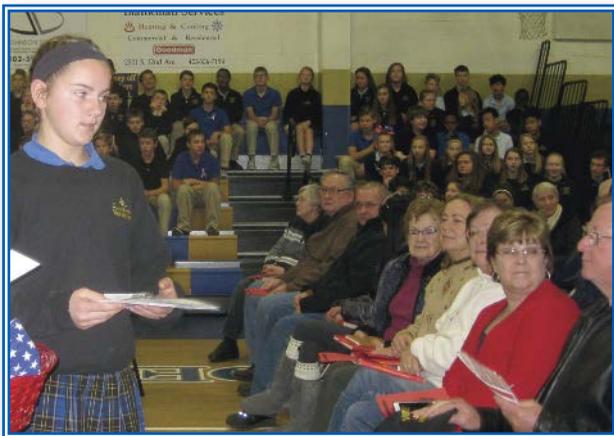
"12 weeks where we meet for two hours on Sunday evenings, share a meal, watch a video and break into small discussion groups".

At the end of the course, what expectation or hope do you have for those who complete the course?

"That people will be connected or reconnected to their faith in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and at the end feel the direction of the Holy Spirit in the their life and what they will do next. The program offers friendships and connections. When God brings someone into your life who needs spiritual direction, you will have the tools through this program to offer guidance in a light and non-threatening way. The next step might be RCIA."

For more information about Alpha contact Tim Mundorf at tmundorf@midwestlabs.com

stgerald.org - Visit our website for news, Mass times, and information on how you can get involved in parish life!



Students Honor Veterans at Nov 10th Mass and Celebration

Parish veterans and their guests attended a special Mass on November 10 in the school gym. Eighth grade students led the Mass with hymns and the readings. After Mass, each grade shared patriotic songs, a slideshow featured parishioners in uniform, and Vets were photographed with their families.

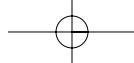
Save the Date!

**St. Gerald Catholic School
Open House & Breakfast
Sunday, January 28
8AM-12PM**



You are invited to enjoy a welcoming spirit of friendliness and fellowship as we showcase our school. Families with children interested in attending St. Gerald School (pre-kindergarten thru 8th grade) will have an opportunity to tour the school, meet with teachers and talk with current school families.

The St. Gerald Home and School Association is offering a free breakfast to all potential school families and to parishioners interested in seeing the school.



Teresa Paal
Director of Music Ministry
See page 3

Deb True
Family Formation Leader
See page 4



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ST. GERALD CATHOLIC CHURCH

Regular Mass Schedule

Church - 96th and Q Street

Sat: 5:00 pm

Sun: 8:00 am, 10:00 am, 12:00 pm

Daily 12:15 pm (M-F), Rosary begins at 11:45 am

Holy Days: (day) 12:15 pm, 7:00 pm

Chapel - 78th and Lakeview

Sun: 7:00 am

Daily: 8:15 am (M-Sat), Rosary begins at 7:45 am

Holy Days: (eve) 6:00 pm,

(day) 7:00 am, 9:00 am (children's)

Advent Reconciliation Times

Mon-Fri: 8:00 - 8:15 AM (Lakeview)

Mon-Fri : 12:00-12:15 PM (96th and Q)

Thurs, Dec.7: 4:30-5:30 pm (Lakeview)

Fri, Dec. 8: 5:30-6:30 pm (96th & Q)

Sun, Dec. 17: 7:00-8:00 pm Penance Service (96th & Q)

Fri, Dec. 22: 10:00-11:30 am (Lakeview)

Mon, Dec. 18 to Fri, Dec. 22: 11:45-12:15 pm (96th & Q)

Saturdays of Advent: 3:00-4:30 (96th & Q)

Christmas/New Year's Mass Schedule

Dec 23 and 24: Regular Sunday Masses

Dec 24: Christmas Eve: 4, 6 & Midnight (96th & Q)

Dec 25: Christmas Day: 7am (Lakeview)

Dec 25: 8am & 10am (96th & Q)

Dec 30 and 31: Regular Sunday Masses (see above)

January 1: New Year's Day: 9am (96th & Q)



Check the entire schedule online at <http://stgerald.org>

