

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM FATHER BOGDAN'S DESK

Dear friends and visitors

As we gather to celebrate Christmas, another year has passed with many events, public and private, touching our lives and those of the people in our parish community in various ways. No doubt, 2019 has brought its joys and sadness in different measures to each person: all colouring our memories of this past year. Let us strive to open our hearts to others, especially being aware of those who have lost a loved one since last Christmas, or the many over-burdened by worries, sickness and family problems or for any other reason. This year, we are invited to be instruments of mercy, which means that we have to open our hearts to those living on the outmost fringes of society. We are called to believe that no one is ever beyond hope, past the point where God's grace and love applies to them. God does not give up on his people, even if they give up on themselves. This Christmas, may we reflect on the Incarnation as God's invitation to us to see Him in our brothers and sisters who are hurting.

Christmas is an opportunity to thank so many parishioners who give abundantly of their time and talents in making our parish the vibrant, faith-filled community that it is. To all our volunteers who are the heartbeat of the parish, I am truly indebted. May I take this opportunity to thank all our parishioners and friends here at St. John Fisher for helping us along the journey; a special thank you to the Parish Council for their support throughout the year. To all parishioners, for your prayers, gifts, cards, and good wishes and for all that you do in actively revealing Emmanuel - God with us: let this Christmas be a time of true conversion to God's total self-emptying in Christ and his audacious identification with those on the periphery. As we approach this Christmas season, let it be a time in which we as the Church reclaim the powerlessness of Christ and the fundamental ethos of care for the weak and justice for the excluded. Then the Church can truly stand with confidence as the conduit of mercy and the sign of hope for all. God bless you all.

FATHER BOGDAN

**MASS INTENTIONS:** 21/12 18H00 † Leon Myburgh 2<sup>nd</sup> Ann.  
22/12 07h30 † Leon Myburgh RIP 24/12 † Aldo Buffa

### STATISTICS FOR 2019

We have had numerous baptisms (70), 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communions (34), Confirmations (42), funerals (28) and weddings (10) that have kept us busy and thank you to all who made these sacraments as successful as they were.



## CAKE RAFFLE WINNERS:

Christmas cake:

Turkey:

Gammon:

The draw will take place  
22/12/2019 @ 9h30 Mass



## TEACH THE CHILDREN~A Christmas Story

One Christmas Eve I had a dream of Santa Claus. He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot just as the poem described him, but he was not the "jolly old elf" of Christmas legend. The man who stood before me looked sad and disappointed. And there were tears in his eyes. "Santa, what's wrong?" I asked, "Why are you crying?" "It's the children," Santa replied sadly. "But Santa, the children love you," I said. "Oh, I know they love me, and they love the gifts I bring them," Santa said, "but the children of today seem to have somehow missed out on the true spirit of Christmas. It's not their fault. It's just that the adults, many of them not having been taught themselves, have forgotten to teach the children." "Teach them what?" I asked. Santa's kind old face became soft, gentler. His eyes began to shine with something more than tears. He spoke softly. "Teach the children the true meaning of Christmas. Teach them that the part of Christmas we can see, hear, and touch is much more than meets the eye. Teach them the symbolism behind the customs and traditions of Christmas which we now observe. Teach them what it is they truly represent." Santa reached into his bag and pulled out a tiny Christmas tree and set it on my mantle.

"Teach them about the Christmas tree. Green is the second colour of Christmas. The stately evergreen, with its unchanging colour, represents the hope of eternal life in Jesus. Its needles point heavenward as a reminder that mankind's thoughts should turn heavenward as well." Santa reached into his bag again and pulled out a shiny star and placed it at the top of the small tree. "The star was the heavenly sign of promise. God promised a Saviour for the world and the star was the sign of the fulfilment of that promise on the night that Jesus Christ was born. Teach the children that God always fulfils His promises, and that wise men still seek Him." "Red," said Santa, "is the first colour of Christmas." "He pulled forth a red ornament for the tiny tree. Red is deep, intense, vivid. It is the colour of the life-giving blood that flows through our veins. It is the symbol of God's greatest gift. Teach the children that Christ gave his life and shed his blood for them that they might have eternal life. When they see the colour red, it should remind them of that most wonderful gift." Santa found a silver bell in his pack and placed it on the tree. "Just as lost sheep are guided to safety by the sound of the bell, it continues to ring today for all to be guided to the fold. Teach the children to follow the true Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep." Santa placed a candle on the mantle and lit it. The soft glow from its one tiny flame brightened the room. "The glow of the candle represents how people can show their thanks for the gift of God's son that Christmas Eve long ago. Teach the children to follow in Christ's footsteps...to go about doing good. Teach them to let their light shine before people that all may see it and glorify God. This is what's symbolized when the twinkle lights shine on the tree like hundreds of bright shining lights, each of them representing one of God's precious children's light shining for all to see." Again Santa reached into his bag and this time he brought forth a tiny red and white striped cane. As he hung it on the tree he spoke softly. "The candy cane is a stick of hard white candy. White to symbolize the virgin birth and sinless nature of Jesus, and hard to symbolize the Solid Rock, the

foundation of the church, and the firmness of God's promises. The candy cane form's a "J" to represent the precious name of Jesus, who came to earth. It also represents the Good Shepherd's crook, which He uses to reach down into all ditches of the world to lift out the fallen lambs who, like all sheep, have gone astray. The original candy cane had three small red stripes, which are the stripes of the scourging Jesus received by which we are healed, and a large red stripe that represents the shed blood of Jesus, so that we can have the promise of eternal life.

"Teach these things to the children." Santa brought out a beautiful wreath made of fresh, fragrant greenery tied with a bright red bow. "The bow reminds us of the bond of perfection, which is love. The wreath embodies all the good things about Christmas for those with eyes to see and hearts to understand. It contains the colours of red and green and the heaven-turned needles of the evergreen. The bow tells the story of good will towards all and its colour reminds us of Christ's sacrifice. Even its very shape is symbolic, representing eternity and the eternal nature of Christ's love. It is a circle, without beginning and without end. These are the things you must teach the children." I asked, "But where does that leave you Santa?" The tears gone now from his eyes, a smile broke over Santa's face. "Why bless you, my dear," he laughed, "I'm only a symbol myself. I represent the spirit of family fun and the joy of giving and receiving. If the children are taught these other things, there is no danger that I'll ever be forgotten." "I think I'm beginning to understand." "That's why I came," said Santa. "You're an adult. If you don't teach the children these things, then who will?" — Author Unknown

**Loving God  
During this holy  
season of  
Christmas, we ask  
for your blessings  
on all families.  
Let Mary's  
openness to your  
wondrous ways be  
an inspiration to  
place all our trust  
in you.**

**Let Joseph's  
courage provide  
hope during times  
of anxiety and  
uncertainty.  
Let Jesus' life  
ignite all families  
with a spirit of light  
and love.**

**May the grace that  
encircled the Holy  
Family widen and  
embrace all  
families.  
Amen**

To all our new parishioners,  
welcome to St. John Fisher we  
hope your stay with us will be a  
happy and spiritual one.

I wish you all a very blessed and  
Holy Christmas and a wonderful  
and successful New Year.

I will be away from 13-24 Jan 2020.



Yours in Christ  
Father Bogdan Wilkaniec  
AND THE PARISH COUNCIL