

December 2, 2007

Bicentennial Moments

Did you Know?

Each year a Bless the Baby Jesus Advent Prayer Service is held at the Cathedral Basilica of SS Peter and Paul and is one of the many programs and events sponsored by the Family Life Office. This beautiful tradition is based on the "living nativity scene" that St. Francis of Assisi created in Greccio, Italy. John Paul II began the practice of inviting children from all over Rome to bring their figurines of the Baby Jesus to St. Peter's for him to bless. Our Archbishop, Cardinal Rigali has introduced this Advent tradition to the life of our Archdiocese. The third annual Bless the Baby Jesus Advent Prayer Service will take place on Sunday, December 9, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. in the Cathedral Basilica. All are invited! It is a beautiful way to prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ and to ask God's blessing on all of our families.

The Family Life Office participates in the Archdiocesan commitment to create and nurture Christian Community in the domestic church, and by promoting a family perspective in Church and society. For more information call 215-587-5639.

December 9, 2007

Bicentennial Moments

Did you Know?

There is no greater devotion for Mexicans than their devotion to La Virgencita de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). In her, the people experience acceptance, dignity, love and protection. She appeared to the Indian Juan Diego in 1531 in the hills of Tepeyac, Mexico, bearing the likeness of a mestizo maiden surrounded by elements reflective of the native religion. She was and continues to be the symbol of God's love for the Mexican people.

Her feast day is December 12. Many of our parishes with Hispanic Ministry in the Archdiocese celebrate her feast day on whatever day it falls. Typically the day begins with the singing of the *Mañanitas* at 5:00 a.m. The church will be filled with Mexican families waiting to greet the Virgin with this song. In the evening, there will be a Mass with *Mariachis* in their Mexican attire, followed by typical Mexican food.

The Office of the Vicar for Hispanic Catholics addresses the pastoral needs of Hispanic Catholics so as to strengthen their participation in the life of our local church. For more information call 215-667-2822

December 16, 2007

Bicentennial Moments

Did you know?

1. That William Penn's "holy experiment" of religious toleration (1682) in his colony of Pennsylvania was a refuge for persecuted Catholics as well as for other religions.
2. That there were Catholics in the Philadelphia area from the beginning of its colonization and that Mass was celebrated publicly as early as 1707.
3. That the first Catholic Church in Philadelphia, Old St. Joseph's, was built in 1733 and that the Catholic population was about 40 people and grew to 8,000 people by 1790.
4. That in 1808 when the Diocese was established the Diocese of Philadelphia encompassed the entire states of Delaware and Pennsylvania and the southern half of New Jersey. At this time the entire diocese included about 30,000 people attended to by just 11 priests.

For more information about the Archdiocese and the Bicentennial go to www.archphila.org or call 215-587-5634.

December 23, 2007

Bicentennial Moments

This December will mark the 40th Year the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Office for Youth and Young Adults will sponsor Operation Santa Claus. Operation Santa Claus (OSC) is an annual toy drive that allows high school students to serve the less fortunate brothers and sisters in the city of Philadelphia and to truly live out the Christmas spirit. For three consecutive weeks, toys are collected from parishes, schools and local businesses. Thousands of toys are then sorted, wrapped and bagged by the students. On Christmas Eve, 175 groups of teenagers dressed as Santa and his elves personally deliver the toys to the families. The entire celebration of service, concludes with a beautiful closing Liturgy that all are invited to attend.

Did you know?

1. Operation Santa Claus started in 1967 by 12 high school students, along with the former director of the Office for Youth and Young Adults, the late Reverend Charles Pfeiffer. These students took it upon themselves to deliver toys to 10 needy families in their neighborhood.
2. Today Operation Santa Claus serves over 800 families and 6,000 children.
3. Operation Santa Claus officially opens on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8 with a Mass.

Want to become involved in Operation Santa Claus? Check out www.ooya.org or call 215-965-4636 for more information.

December 30, 2007

Bicentennial Moments

Did you Know?

Catholic Social Services provides help and creates hope for families throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. With Family Service Centers in every county of the Archdiocese, CSS offers individual and family counseling, assistance with obtaining the necessities of life, and guidance in accessing other services in the community.

Because the sanctity of the family is core to the mission of CSS, we offer programs for new parents, after-school programs for young children and adolescents, and other family-centered activities. Young mothers who have never managed a home for their children or are being reunited with them after a time of separation may access transitional housing and parenting education. For families who are fractured by poverty and violence, we offer services in the home, assisting parents, children and adolescents to strengthen their family bonds.

For further information and to learn more about the work of Catholic Social Services on behalf of families in the Archdiocese, visit www.css-phl.org.