

## *From the Pastor's Desk:*

**Mary, Mother of God:** This weekend we celebrate a holyday on the Church calendar: the Feast of Mary, Mother of God. It's the oldest feast of the Virgin Mary in the Catholic Church, dating back one thousand, six hundred years. However, it didn't happen without a fight. In the year 431 a Church Council was convened in the city of Ephesus in what is now the country of Turkey. At the time, the Church was divided over whether the Virgin Mary gave birth to the human Jesus only, or whether she had actually given birth to the divine Christ as well. Was she simply the mother of Jesus? Or was she in fact the actual Mother of God? Those claiming that she gave birth only to the human nature of Jesus believed that *"a true mother should be of the same essence of that which is born of her, for no one can give birth to One older than herself."* Their theory said that Jesus received his divine nature when the Holy Spirit descended upon him at his baptism and God said, "You are my beloved Son." On the other side were those who believed that the Son of God could not be separated into parts: *"A union of two natures has taken place, thus we profess one Christ, one Son, and one Lord. The holy Virgin can only be Mother of God, for God the Word became flesh at the moment of his conception."* Things got ugly and Christians chose sides. Riots broke out. The Council of Ephesus settled the issue and declared that *"the one and the same Lord Jesus Christ lives in the man Jesus of Nazareth."* Hence we rightly refer to the Virgin Mary in our prayers as the Mother of God.



**Fire Safety Developments:** Our parish undergoes routine safety inspections from the Michigan Catholic Conference, through whom we are insured. However, recently our church was inspected by Isabella County. They gave us the maximum seating capacity for the main body of the church (354) and for the gathering area (177) and also made sure that we knew the width of aisles and walkways when setting up extra chairs. The difficulty arose when the upstairs balcony was inspected. As you know, there is only one exit from the upstairs. That is, there is only one set of stairs to leave the balcony. This presents a problem. With only one exit, and keeping in mind the necessary widths of aisles and walkways, our official seating capacity for the upstairs balcony has been significantly reduced. The total number of people we may have upstairs for any event (Mass, Christmas program, etc.) is now forty-nine. That's the *total* number, including the choir. Consequently, all metal chairs have been removed from the balcony to comply with the fire code, and I've already begun letting the ushers know that once the 49 chairs upstairs are filled, no one else may go up. There is also a sign at the bottom of the staircase to let people know of this development. If we had a second exit for the balcony things would be different, but alas, there is only the one set of stairs.



At our recent ushers meeting we realized that the only fire extinguisher for the church is in the main sacristy (the room behind my chair.) Fortunately, someone has already offered to purchase a second fire extinguisher for the ushers room.

**Parish Survey:** As we continue the process of Planning Tomorrow's Parishes, we're including a survey in the bulletin for parish families to fill out. As the number of priests grows smaller, we need to plan now for ways that our parish can adapt. Thus the reason why all parishes are evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. We're examining ways that parishes could work together. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey and bring it back to the box in the gathering area by January 22<sup>nd</sup>. That's three weeks away. In the meantime, our parish core team will continue to meet and evaluate areas of our parish. We'll finish by writing a summary of St. Joseph the Worker, and recommend to the Diocese ways that we think we could work with other parishes, sharing resources, facilities, or even personnel. And every week I'll devote part of my bulletin letter to this process. Remember, you can always find out more by going to the website of the Diocese at [www.saginaw.org](http://www.saginaw.org) and click on "Planning Tomorrow's Parishes" on the right hand side.

## *Planning Tomorrow's* **PARISHES**

**Christmas Masses:** Things went quite well at the Christmas Masses this year. The first Mass on Christmas Eve was not as hyper-crowded as the 5 pm Christmas Mass was last year. All the chairs in the gathering area were filled, and there were only 49 people upstairs, of course, but there weren't any people standing. The 10 pm Mass was filled, as was the 10 am Mass on Christmas Day. The music was beautiful and the choir did a great job. However, it will take us a while to get used to the Gloria, which, like a lot of the other Mass prayers, has been revised. After some time, though, things will be a lot smoother. Thank you again for your generosity at Christmas. I'm hoping to be able to take a week in the summer and rent a cottage near Sutton's Bay with my parents.

### **10 Exercises We'll Be Better Off Without in 2012:**

Passing the buck.  
Wading through paperwork.  
Running around in circles.  
Pushing our luck.  
Throwing our weight around.  
Adding Fuel to the Fire.  
Beating our head against the wall.  
Dragging our heels.  
Fishing for compliments.  
Beating our own drum.

May God bless our New Year.

*Fa. Patch*

