



The Parish Press

Newsletter Of Saint Ann Parish Family
Milford, Connecticut



Special Edition 2013

From the Pastor's Desk

In the summer of 2008, presented with the idea of doing a monthly column for *The Parish Press*, Father Shaw was a bit reluctant and the entries were quite brief. As he warmed to the notion, however, the columns expanded, reflecting a broader reach. Recently he had begun to talk about printing some of his favorites in a calendar book which would include photographs of "beautiful downtown Devon." The book, of course, was never published, but these *From The Pastor's Desk* entries had been under consideration. We are happy to share them with you.

September 2008



Saint Ann Parish is beginning a whole new era of growth and development. We have all the potential to become one of the finest parishes in the state of Connecticut. Our resources, people and location all point to a parish that will become a model in the Archdiocese.

You can feel our parish spirit in the number of volunteers, in the pleasant atmosphere and in the financial support. As we go forward, all of these assets will work together to produce a wonderful religious, educational and social experience for all.

I personally find Saint Ann's to be a very enjoyable place.

Fr. Shaw

October 2008

In recent months Saint Ann Parish has been experiencing a new spurt of growth and development. The entire structure of the school has been revised, updated and streamlined. As a result, we were able to cut tuition costs. Our school has one of the highest academic standings in the Archdiocese of Hartford. With this new model we expect the school to grow and achieve as never before.

The church will have a new sound system (desperately needed) and the water damage will be repaired with financial assistance from our insurer. Extensive repair work has been taking place in the rectory with emphasis on the walls, the roof and the chimney.

I appreciate the wonderful support and participation of you, the parishioners, and hope that I am able to show good stewardship.

Fr. Shaw

November 2008

On the weekend of October 12 we brought out the third quarter financial statement of Saint Ann Church Corporation of Devon Connecticut. I emphasize the full legal title so that we are always aware that our family of faith has a legal and financial component. Like every other institution the rules and laws must be strictly observed in order to remain compliant and legal in a modern society. Failure to do so results in conflict, confusion and complicated situations.



Aristotle once said, "You can't begin speculation until the crops are in." (Speculation means abstract philosophical thinking.)

By analogy we are able to progress intellectually, spiritually and socially because we are making Saint Ann parish a good and orderly home for the higher things. Our ability to bring about beautiful Masses, Christian learning and social action are all based on a balanced and normal management of practicalities.

Your support is well-used and well-managed. Thank you.

Fr. Shaw

December 2008

As we enter into the Christmas season having passed through the somber month of November, which ends on the joyous note of Thanksgiving, we look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ. Our looking forward season (Advent) is a time for recollection and growth in virtue.

VIRTUE Every Advent we should single out a particular little fault we have and seek to eliminate it or control it. This is done by focusing upon the problem area in our behavior and meditating on the opposing virtue. We should review how well we are doing in this spiritual exercise. This meditative process is called the "Particular Examine" and has been used for centuries by the Church. It is a simple exercise that can produce notable change for the better in our lives. Advent is a perfect time to start.

Fr. Shaw

May 2009

Our Holy Week Liturgies were absolutely exquisite done precisely in accord with Roman ritual. Many thanks to all of the people who made this Easter observance so beautiful: we thank the musicians, altar servers, ushers, lectors, Ministers of Holy Eucharist, liturgy committee and all the people who came forward to decorate the church and make it so beautiful. Saint Ann Parish is becoming known for its excellence in all things, especially liturgy, music, stewardship, finance and education.



The Archbishop has taken a special interest in our new school model and has demanded we bring the school to the next level. Archbishop Mansell is known for his foresight and profound understanding of the current needs of the Church. He realizes that the greatest instance of Catholic philanthropy is in education. His mandate to develop our new system of education constitutes the major direction the parish will take.



PLEASE KNOW THAT THE SCHOOL HAS TESTED THREE GRADES ABOVE GRADE LEVEL ON THE IOWA TEST THIS YEAR. ONE STUDENT IS OPERATING ON A HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR LEVEL AND ANOTHER ON A COLLEGE FRESHMAN LEVEL. (The Archbishop knows what he is doing.)

Fr. Shaw

(The column below has a focus on “three things,” a trademark of Father’s homilies. How appropriate, and definitely one the staff had to include!)

January 2010

New Year's Resolutions

Everyone loves new beginnings and New Year’s Day, though it comes at the beginning of winter, is really looked upon as a fresh start in life.

Somehow there is a relief of the old passing and the new beginning. From time immemorial people would use this fresh start to improve their lives and they did so by making “New Year’s Resolutions.” I would like you to make New Year’s resolutions employing the following three principles.

- 1) Make the goal realizable (not some fantastical idea that is unachievable)
- 2) Choose a goal that is something very practical and usable in your life.
- 3) If you fail the first time, keep on going until the goal becomes habitual in your daily living (one or more slips does not spell an end to the process)

A happy New Year is when 365 days later you have produced an improved version of yourself. Good Luck!!

Fr. Shaw

August 2009



August marks the beginning of the end of summer. The days get shorter and sometimes hotter than July, but the evenings get a little cooler and we get a sense on those August evenings that the peak of summer has passed. The fishing improves and the beaches are slightly less crowded from the July peak. The gardens are coming in to full produce and people are getting ready to send the children back to school.

Saint Ann School is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, one of the finest Pre-K through Junior High institutions in the entire area. The placement in the IOWA standings overall was ahead 3 years from the national average. People in the parish who do not take advantage of this for their children are absolutely foolish. The tuition cost of \$3,900 is small compared to the \$8,700 - \$14,500 for comparable private institutions. The program at the school is cost efficient and forward looking; especially in areas of math, science and technology. It actually costs about \$75 per week to send a child here. As a parishioner you should consider it for your children or grandchildren.

Fr. Shaw

(Despite the innovative school model and the litany of impressive test scores and student achievements, declining enrollment forced Saint Ann School to close its doors on June 30, 2010. It was a “difficult and painful decision” for Father Shaw.)

July 2010

July, the seventh month of the year, is named after Julius Caesar. It marks the beginning of the second half of the year. It is a time for vacations, picnics, the beach and all of the summer activities which make life so enjoyable in New England.



It’s also a time for working outdoors in the yard and getting all of those projects done on the house that were cheerfully put off during the winter and spring.

Most of the crops in New England are just starting to come in and everyone is experiencing the height of summer as the past winter’s cold, dampness and snow are forgotten.

Reflecting on this month gives us an illusion of permanent well-being, but the deeper part of the mind reminds us that in the Northern climate this summer bliss does not last forever. We draw a spiritual lesson from this: Enjoy the bounty of what is good, save whatever we can of it and use present advantages to prepare for harder times which will surely come.

Enjoyment coupled with prudence produces a balanced life which has its first fruit in contentment.

Fr. Shaw

March 2011

March roars in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. The leftover cold winds and snows of winter time still persist in early March, but the days get longer, the sun higher and warmer and the earth pokes its way through the remaining snow with new signs of life. Greens and crocuses start to appear and by Saint Patrick's Day there are twelve hours between sunrise and sunset. The Spring Equinox occurs on March 20th. While there may be some leftover snowstorms and icy rains, the sun will eventually conquer them all.



In March Lent begins and will go on in the church calendar for forty days (a highly symbolic number). If you count carefully you will find that Sundays are not included in the count because each Sunday is celebrated as a "little Easter."

March is a time when the dreariness of winter is driven away by the overwhelming power of the sun and new life springs up. It is a reflection in nature of the irresistible power of God that burns its way through human failure and depression to inspire new dimensions of life that once seemed worthless and a failure.

No matter how difficult or foolish a person has been, if they open themselves up to the infinite presence of God and cooperate with his saving grace, a whole new vista and life will emerge. The way of nature is a sign and a symbol of the way of God. Nature teaches us constantly how God operates if we are open, sensitive and perceptive to his creation.



An interesting case: the powerful leaders of the time killed a young rabbi on April 7th of the year 30 (adjusted to our calendar). All seemed lost and everything was dismal until 3 days later when the power of God burned through the gloom and Jesus returned in greater force. Let that be a lesson to all of us.

Fr. Shaw

February 2012

February, the second month of our calendar, has its origins in the Latin word *fumare* which means to smoke or to steam. This was the traditional Roman month for housecleaning, fumigating and freshening up. Spring and warmth were around the corner even though mid-winter in the Northern Hemisphere is on the 14th day of the month. Spring comes earlier the more southerly your location. February in New England is often marked by slightly warmer days and cold nights; with snowstorms and inclement weather tempered by longer hours of sunshine and daylight. At the beginning of the month the days last approximately 10 hours and 21 minutes, but by the end of the month they have lengthened to 11 hours and 12 minutes.



The 14th of February, mid-month, is also mid-winter and is often celebrated as Saint Valentine's Day. Saint Valentine's Day is traditionally a time when people show love and affection and warmth and cheer in the dead center of winter. This is an ancient tradition in the Catholic Church and is meant to be a custom to highlight warmth, tenderness and

appreciation in the interior of our lives in contrast to the cold, snowy climate outside. It is marked by gift-giving with a special emphasis on women and children because giving a gift is a symbolic way of giving something of yourself for the sake of another. The break from the ordinary on mid-winter's day is a welcome relief from winter which can produce a boredom and a dullness which, for some people, seems to go on forever. A beautiful present, special cards and a bright red décor are just the right medicine to offset gray skies, gray ice and snow.

These ancient customs woven into our religious way of life are like bright threads and cords woven into a bland tapestry that give it life, boldness and enjoyment. Catholic wisdom goes far beyond the book and the altar and is woven into the great tapestry of human life.

Fr. Shaw

April 2011

April is the great month for new spring growth after the spring solstice of March 20th, and a few short-lived reminders of winter. April breaks forth in New England with a full confirmation that spring is really here. The sun is higher in the sky, the days are longer, the climate is warmer, the trees begin to bud, the grass starts to green and nature is fully awake from her winter sleep.

Spring was the lambing season in the Middle East. *Lamb* in Latin is *agnus*, hence the old acclamation in the Mass, *Agnus Dei*, or *Lamb of God*. This appellation was always applied to our Lord, Jesus Christ. In ancient times the lamb was slain and eaten in the celebration of Passover (*Pascha* in Greek), hence the term, *Paschal Lamb* – a symbol for Christ.

It is extremely fitting that Easter, which celebrates the dying and rising of Christ, takes place in the spring – the



the lambing season. Christ is the sacrificial victim, slain, who rises again in greater glory on the third day. The dying and rising of Jesus is a sign and a symbol that, once created in the image and likeness of God, there is existence on a personal level after the death experience. The whole point of Jesus, the Paschal Lamb, the sacrificial victim, dying a complete death in every aspect, is to prove through the resurrection that he still exists as Jesus the individual after the death experience.

As nature shows new life as it springs forth under a warmer sun, Jesus proves there is new existence after death by virtue of the warmth of God's love.

Fr. Shaw

From the Pastor's Desk
Revisited

In response to many requests, *The Parish Press* is pleased to present this special edition of popular columns from Father Shaw's series *From the Pastor's Desk*.



Rev. Dr. Brian Shaw
1939-2013

We've included his first entry, from September 2008, and his last, from this past September. He wrote often about the weather, the seasons and of the customs, both ancient and modern, which the Catholic Church has woven into the "great tapestry of human life." We hope you enjoy this special edition.



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September 2013

As you know September comes from the Latin word *septem*, meaning seventh because it was the seventh month in the old calendar. In New England it is an extremely beautiful time that still has the warmth and the light of summer and the coolness of a fall night. The days get shorter and the angle of sunlight changes and produces a kind of a softness with the leaves and grasses swaying in gentle breezes with just a hint that their color will change.

It's harvest time, especially for corn, hay and products from the orchard. Apples pique everybody's interest as well as getting in the last of the garden's fresh vegetables. It is also a time when we become more watchful for tropical storms, especially along the seacoast.



The beauty of the month of September, making that easy transition from late summer to early fall, can be easily disrupted when violent storms come ashore from far distant places.

There is a lesson to be learned from this. While we are in a comfortable and pleasant zone,

going about our daily lives and businesses, we can never be sure that we are in an environment where everything is controlled and orderly.

Despite our best efforts to use those principles of the gospel to make our lives as pleasant and balanced as possible, there are things beyond us and out of our control that force their way into the sphere of our lives. Like an unwanted fall storm they come ashore and into our families, businesses and lifestyles.

The trick is to enjoy the good things as fully as possible, sipping as it were, a glass of fine wine and seeing these unwanted incursions as an incentive to respond, to conquer and to grow in another dimension.

Problems will arise and are meant to be solved. In the solution there is growth and development and a refinement of our intellect through experience. Always remember that problems, like everything else, have a beginning, a middle and an end. They are finite, not infinite. They are solvable and in the long run they provide a new vista of experience that will make us sharper and keener, if we handle them head on.

Fr. Shaw

*May the peace and love of Christ
fill your hearts at Christmas
and throughout the New Year.*