

## CHURCH 101...

### *Why is Mary so important to Catholics?*

From the Bible we hear these words about Mary: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Believers have treasured these words throughout the ages. At the center of our faith is Jesus, who is the blessed fruit of the womb of Mary. Close to Jesus and inseparable from him is Mary, his mother. It makes sense that those who confess Jesus as their Lord also show honor and respect to his mother, Mary.

From the cross Mary is given to all believers and so we call her, "Mother of the Church." She is the model, the archetype of all believers. Generations of believers have expressed their devotion to Mary in many different ways. Shrines of places where reported visions of Mary have been reported are visited yearly by millions of people. Most notably at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, Fatima in Portugal and Lourdes in France. The Catholic Church does not require belief in such appearances, but simply says they are not contrary to doctrine and are worthy of belief.

In praise of all that God had done for her, Mary prayed in her Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) "Surely from now on all generations shall call me blessed."

## CHURCH 101...

### *What are the symbols that we see in a church?*

**Altar:** is the central symbol of Christ's presence. During the Mass the communion bread and the chalice or cup of wine are offered from this table.

**Crucifix:** The processional cross that is used at St. Bonaventure is called the San Damiano Cross and is a replica of the cross that spoke to St. Francis with the words, "Francis, go and rebuild my church." An explanation of the symbols on this cross were printed in a recent bulletin.

**Fountain:** At the West Alcove is a fountain of water that flows all year except during Advent and Lent. It is a reminder that through the waters of Baptism we have been washed clean of sin

**Gospel Book:** The book that contains only the Gospels for Mass is carried into the church by the reader and placed on the altar with special reverence.

**Holy Water:** Blessed water by the doors of the church are used by Catholics to make the sign of the Cross as a reminder that it was Baptism that brought them into the church.

**Intention Book** Before the Tabernacle there is a kneeler with a small table with a book where prayer intentions can be written by anyone.

**Lectionary:** The book that contains all the readings for the Mass. It holds a special place on honor below the symbol of God's Word.

**Paschal Candle:** The large Easter Candle is lit whenever the people of God gather as a sign that where two or three are gathered, God is present. The candle is blessed and presented at the Easter Vigil and is not used during Lent.

**Reconciliation Room:** A room arranged for the Sacrament of Penance or confession either face to face or anonymously depending on the choice of

the person

**Sacramentary:** The book of prayers that are used during Mass

**Sacristy:** a room used for the preparation of liturgical services where the ministers vest.

**Sanctuary:** This is the area of the church that holds the altar, the ambo (or lectern) the Tabernacle and the songleader's podium

**Sanctuary Lamp:** a constantly burning candle near the tabernacle that reminds people of Jesus presence in the Eucharist reserved there.

**Stations of the Cross:** A series of fourteen images on both side walls depict the suffering and death of Jesus

**Statues:** On the wall behind the Altar is the figure of the Risen Christ. On either side of the altar are two statues of Mary and Joseph. In the cry room there are four statues of saints: The Blessed Mother, St. Jude, St. Francis and St. Anthony. On the wall over the tabernacle is the symbol of the Eucharist and over the Lectern that holds the Scripture is the symbol of God's Word.

**Tabernacle:** The special designed receptacle where consecrated Eucharist is reserved and venerated. Since Catholics believe that Jesus is present to us in the Eucharist they bow or genuflect when passing it.

**Votive Candles:** In the Cry Room there are candles used by people wishing to externalize their prayers of petition before the Lord.

## CHURCH 101...

*What is the difference between a "sermon" and a "homily"?*

The words "sermon" and "homily" are often used interchangeably. A sermon is generally understood as a doctrinal or moral discourse. A homily is an informal explanation or commentary on the passage of scripture for the day. The homily is generally a reflection on how we might follow God's Word in our daily lives. A sermon, in contrast, takes the form of a lecture which is meant to provide religious instruction.

## CHURCH 101...

*Is Sunday Mass still an obligation?*

Catholics have an obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. The Sunday Eucharist (Mass) is the foundation of all Christian practice. The Third Commandment is "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day." Catholics fulfill this commandment by refraining from unnecessary work on Sunday and participating in the Mass, our chief form of worship. The first of the seven precepts of the Church is to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. From the earliest days of the church, Christians have understood that being a Christian isn't a private matter. We are called as Christians together. Private worship of God is certainly laudable but our primary worship is public and communal which is why Sunday Mass is so important.

## CHURCH 101...

*There is a cry room in the church. Why don't people use it?*

By Baptism we all have a right to worship with the faith community. I love to see children with their parents in church. We should welcome children with open arms and thank the Lord that their parents are bringing them to Mass. It is often difficult for parents to focus on Mass and also be attentive to the behavior of their children.

A Cry Room is a place for parents to bring their child when the child is having one of those difficult days. When? Think of being at a restaurant. If you would take your child out of a family meal in respect for other patrons, then do the same for church. Sometimes all a child needs to do is to wander – and then simply return. You can do that in the Cry Room or the Sacristy. Remember children pray differently than adults. But we believe that God hears our prayers and just as surely God hears the cries of a child.

### CHURCH 101...

*Some churches use the color purple during Advent. Why do we use the color blue?*

The color for the season of Advent can be blue or purple. In order to distinguish the season from Lent, blue is sometimes used to signify hope. The source of this can be traced back to Medieval times in Sweden and England. The color is often referred to as “sarium blue.” The color purple is often associated with somberness or solemnity which is why it is used during Lent. Ask any seamstress or painter and they will be quick to say that there are dozens of shades of blue or purple.

### CHURCH 101...

*Is there some reason the church does not talk about indulgences anymore?*

The church is much more careful in speaking about indulgences today, largely because this area of our faith has been so badly misunderstood and abused in the past. An indulgence is a remission of temporal punishment due to sin. This concept is also the reason for prayer, fasting and good works. The history of indulgences is complicated but perhaps the important thing to remember is that it is not “deal making” with God. In all that we do, the effort is to live holier and more useful lives by following the Gospel.

### CHURCH 101...

*What is the difference between a brother and a father?*

Franciscans are all brothers. Some are called to be ordained priests and some are called to be brothers. Brothers can have a ministry as a teacher or administrator or manual labor. Priests minister the sacraments. . Someone asked why Chris could not take Fr. Richard’s place to say Mass when he was away. Brother Chris is a brother who chose to be a permanent deacon which means he can preach, officiate at a marriage or a baptism. There are not many brothers who are deacons. At present, there are five brothers and nine priests in the friary at St. Bonaventure.

### CHURCH 101...

*Do you need to have made your First Communion to be an Altar Server?*

The rule for when someone can make their First Communion varies from parish to parish. When someone can be an altar server is the same. Here at St. Bonaventure, we have set the time for First Communion at the end of the Third Grade. During that year the children learn about the Eucharist and the important place it has in the life of a Catholic believer. It seems somehow appropriate that servers should be able to receive Eucharist

when they minister at the altar and so that is why someone only serves after First Communion. Some parishes also have adult servers. Here at St. Bonaventure we have adult servers at funerals.

### CHURCH 101...

*What is the significance of the Jesse Tree?*

In the Alcove is the Jesse Tree. This is an ancient Advent custom that depicts in art the ancestry of Christ. It is the family tree of Jesus. The name is taken from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11:1) in which Jesus is referred to as a shoot coming from the stump of Jesse, the father of King David. There are 7 symbols on our tree: 1) An apple (representing Adam) 2) The tablets of the law (representing Moses) 3) A Harp (representing David) 4) A Crown (Representing the role of the Messiah) 5) A Star (representing the city of Bethlehem) 6) The Greek Letters Chi Rho (Representing Christ the Anointed One) 7) Lily (representing Mary).

### CHURCH 101...

*What does "Adoramus Te Domine" mean?*

On the choir loft are the words "Adoramus Te Domine." The words are Latin for "We adore you, O Lord!" The same words are used as a Eucharistic refrain during Advent. This refrain comes from the Taize Community in France. Brother Roger who founded this ecumenical community gathered young people who spoke many different languages and so he used songs that had refrains in Latin and then verses in many different languages.