



Outreach

Winter
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THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH, BROOKLYN NY

@stfxbrooklyn

St. Francis Xavier Family Celebrates 25th Santa Breakfast

This December 17, the St. Francis Xavier religious education community comes together to celebrate the Holiday Season with a very special event—the 25th annual Santa Breakfast. The morning’s event features Holiday songs by religious education classes, a performance of the Nativity, an exciting raffle with prizes ranging from sporting event tickets to restaurant dinners, holiday

baskets and everything in between. And of course, a visit from Santa Claus—who takes time from his very busy schedule to visit the good girls and boys from the St. Francis Xavier community.

Outreach took a moment to speak with Noreen Axon, lifetime SFX parishioner who started the Santa Breakfast 25 years ago, and continues to organize it today.

a special Breakfast on December 17th. This will be the 25th year that Santa has come to visit us at St Francis Xavier. This year promises once again to be a lovely morning where our children will be excited at the sight of Santa, and have the opportunity to take a lifelong treasured photo with him.

SFX: What else will be happening this year?

Noreen: Each class will perform, and Sister Dolores’s class will perform the Nativity Play, which is always a big hit. Last but not least we will announce the winners of our Raffle prizes. All of our prizes are donated by family and friends of our religious education program. The revenue from this event will support the Religious Education of our Parish Children, keeping the cost at a minimum and insuring that the program is financially independent from the Parish.

SFX Outreach: Noreen, our first question is—any news from Santa Claus? Were you able to book him for this year’s event?

Noreen: It gave me great pleasure last Saturday morning at religious education to announce to the group of parents, teachers and especially the children that I had in fact spoken to Santa earlier that morning and he confirmed that he will be joining us for



The Axon Family

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SFX: You grew up in this neighborhood. What has changed for you? What remains the same?

Noreen: We live in an incredible neighborhood. I grew up here and have marveled at the wonderful changes. But one thing remains constant, "Faith and the Church." As a young girl I volunteered at religious education at the nearby St Thomas



Ali Axon meets Santa, 1998

Aquinas on 8th Street down the block from where I lived. I think I was born with my arm up, always ready to volunteer. I'm a big proponent of "givers always gain." And it's important to stand up and support the youth of our Parish, teaching them to believe in goodness like Jesus and Santa.

SFX: We're always amazed at the range and quality of raffle prizes. How are you so successful getting so many successful items?

Noreen: Since its inception, breakfast with Santa has been sustained by the generosity of our neighbors. I remember when I first came to Sister Helene with this idea, she knew it would take a lot of work. It took going out and asking for help. Family parishioners like The McFeelys offering Dinner at Santa Fe, and Dixon's Bike Shop, and the YMCA saying yes, and The NBA.

SFX: How can volunteers help to make the event a success?

Noreen: It takes a team. And we have had a great team; not as exciting as Sister Helene's Mets but we are grateful to longtime members like Anne Bell, Margaret Doherty, Hannie, Vivi

an, Shirley, Theresa, Kathleen, Mireya, Kate, Maureen and The Gonzalves Family, it's all been possible. And it's been a pleasure!

The 25th annual Santa Breakfast will be held on December 17th. There will be singing from the religious education classes, the Nativity play, raffle prizes, and a visit from Santa. We hope to see you there!



The Parish Planning Council: Recent Events and Activities

Even as the leaves were falling off of the trees and the weather was turning colder, the PPC was busy planning a few events to warm the hearts and spirits of the parishioners of St. Francis Xavier!

With the help of Fr. Bill, the Spirituality Committee was able to obtain a movie license for the Parish. As a result, SFX will show films periodically throughout the year. The first movie was *The Lady in the Van*, which is a film based on the life of St. Teresa of

Calcutta. It was shown on November 6th at 2pm in the Rectory. Please watch for future movies in the weekly bulletin.

As in prior years, the Community and Social Outreach Committee organizes Jack's Sandwich Project. On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, parishioners and their friends gather in the Rectory to make meals for the homeless. Those meals, consisting of a sandwich, drink, fruit and a dessert, are then distributed on Thanksgiving

Day morning. Participating in Jack's Sandwich Project is a wonderful way to celebrate Thanksgiving with fellow SFX parishioners!

Finally, the Operation and Coordination Committee is busy working on the memorial brick project that it started in June. Details of this initiative will be forthcoming.

The PPC prays that you have had a fun and faith filled Fall!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

For years, St. Francis Xavier Church's Prayer Shawl Ministry has provided parishioners, friends and family with unique gifts: hand-made shawls and blankets, created with the prayers of their makers for the well-being of the recipient. Members of the SFX Prayer Shawl Ministry knit and crochet shawls or lap blankets while pray for the recipient. Members work at home and/or join other members at a monthly meeting, working together in the rectory. Prayer shawls can be given for all occasions: birthdays, holidays, as a comfort after a loss or in times of stress, while undergoing medical treatment or other challenging life moments.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry is a nationwide movement that was created as a ministry in 1998. Janet Severi Bristow and Victoria Cole-Galo, two women graduates of the 1997 Women's Leadership Institute at the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, were inspired by Professor Miriam Therese Winter's program in Applied Feminist Spirituality. Since then, they have published a number of knit and crochet pattern books (Taunton Press) specifically for the ministry. Churches across the country have adopted programs.

Marge Danser took over as the coordinator of St Francis Xavier's Prayer Shawl Ministry about 4 years ago. She explains the process: "making a shawl involves thoughtfully selecting a pattern and yarn; then I spend a period of time each time before I begin knitting praying for whomever the recipient may be. As I gently wash and lay out the shawl, I say a prayer as well."

"Shawls are available to everyone," Marge says. "They are meant to be a reminder of God's comfort in time of need provided to individuals through the church." For the past sev-



Prayer shawls created by members of the Ministry

eral years between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the ministry has laid out our shawls in the back of the church, making them available before and after each mass. Parishioners as well as non-parishioners have requested shawls at other times, for ill relatives or friends, or for themselves for comfort and warmth.

"The gift of a shawl can be celebratory," Marge points out. "Several parishioners are working on baptismal blankets that we'll have available shortly. I just put together a reference booklet that's on one of the tables in the vestibule with pictures of available shawls and contact information for anyone who may want to join the ministry or who would like to request a shawl. With each prayer shawl we include a special card with a printed prayer. We accept donations for each shawl to support the ministry."

"The ministry is made up of a group of interesting, wonderful and generous women ranging in age and

knitting/crocheting experience levels. We meet once a month, generally on the third Sunday, between masses in the rectory to knit and crochet together, with coffee and cookies provided." Membership, Marge adds, has its benefits. "For the past several years, I've also arranged for any interested members in the ministry to take a bus trip together to the Rhinebeck Sheep and Wool Festival that takes place every fall."

Parishioners, and non-parishioners, who haven't attended meetings have donated lap blankets and shawls, knitting and crochet needles, and yarns. No experience is necessary to join the group. The ministry has all the supplies available to create shawls, and can teach anyone who has an interest to learn and participate. Men are welcome to join too.

To find out more about the Prayer Shawl Ministry and how you can get involved, please call the rectory.

What you might not know about the Advent wreath

The Advent Wreath is a long-standing tradition of our Holiday Season, in our homes and in our church. Have you ever stopped to consider the wreath's origin and meaning? An article on the Catholic Education Resource Center's Site, *The History of the Advent Wreath* by Rev. William Saunders, shines light on the possible origin and meaning of this tradition. According to Rev. Saunders, the Advent Wreath is a long-standing Catholic tradition which may have evolved from pre-Christian Germanic and Nordic customs of a pine wreath with candles, lit during December as a sign of hope for the return of the sun. By the

Middle Ages, Catholics had adapted the tradition to ward off the darkness of sin and celebrate the light of God.

Another interesting aspect of the Advent Wreath is its intricate design: a traditional advent wreath involves four different types of evergreens, each with a symbolic meaning: Laurel (victory over persecution and suffering); Pine and Yew (immortality); Cedar (strength) and Holly (the prickly thorns remind us of the crown of thorns).

To learn more about the Advent Wreath, please visit <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-history-of-the-advent-wreath.html>.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Dear Parishioners,

As we celebrate the Advent/Christmas Holy Days, St. Francis Xavier Parish is joyful about the many events we have planned for this wonderful time of year.

Our Santa breakfast is a terrific experience for our young children (and parents), as they re-enact the Nativity story of the birth of Jesus and celebrate His presence in our lives.

The Parish Planning Council has been engaged in various activities to straighten our faith, and to develop future growth for our parish.

Many of our parishioners have also been engaged in meaningful prayer, as can be seen with our Prayer Shawl ministry.

Entering Advent, all of our parishioners are asked to participate in the program *Best Advent Ever*. All you have to do is sign up on the website "Best Advent Ever" and you will get a daily email during Advent to help you get into the true spirit of Christmas.

All this, and more, is reflected in the articles presented in this issue of our newsletter. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do, and I wish all of you a blessed Advent and Christmas.

Sincerely,

Fr. Bill Rueger

Fr. Bill Rueger
Pastor



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