Years ago, when I was pastor at Immaculate Conception Church in New Madrid, MO, the families of our parish would sometimes organize coat drives for the winter. A Saturday would be designated to distribute coats to all those in need. I joined with those distributing winter garments on that particular Saturday, and talked with individuals and families as they tried on the coats. At a certain point, I noticed a little boy standing nearby who was staring at me. Initially, I thought he might have been intrigued by my attire as a priest. I turned to speak to him after a minute or so, but he spoke first and simply said: “You gave me chocolate.” “What?” I inquired. “You gave me chocolate last year” he said with a thankful voice……Sure enough, I remembered that the year before I had given out some chocolate pieces to the children who had come in with their parents. I had thought nothing of it. It made me wonder if that had been the only chocolate he had received since the last time we met. I must admit, I wished I had a bag full of chocolate to give to him at that moment.

Oftentimes, we do not know what a simple gesture can mean to another person. A handshake, a pat on the back, a smile at the checkout counter, an encouraging word to a server at a restaurant, even a piece of chocolate can go a long way to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

Recently, I was paging through one of the books I used during college days when I found this poem I had pasted on the inside cover: “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” (Stephen Grellet)

Indeed, we shall not pass this way again. Christmas time reminds us to rekindle our faith in God and be of service to one another every day of our lives. Sometimes Catholics venture away from their faith. They may even question whether they are welcome back. Certainly they are! One of the websites I recommend to friends and parishioners alike is: www.catholicscomehome.org This is a wonderful website that offers personal testimonies and responses to questions Catholics have about their faith and current challenges in life. Check out this website for a family member or yourself and please let me know whenever I can be of support to you.

I want to express my appreciation for the words of encouragement I received this past year and the many ways you serve and support the parish family of Our Lady of the Lake and the larger community. In 2018, we were able to provide food, clothing, shelter, medicine and other supplies to those in need all around our area. We regularly worked in collaboration with other churches and community organizations to assist those less fortunate. May God bless you for all the good you have done! Continued on page 2
On Sunday, December 16, Our Lady of the Lake will celebrate the communal Sacrament of Reconciliation at 3:30 pm. I invite you to this sacrament of Christ’s own gift of forgiveness and peace. It is a beautiful sacrament in which our hearts are better prepared for Jesus’ coming. Joined by other priests, we will pray for one another and receive this wonderful gift of reconciliation with God and neighbor. (Matthew 5:23-24) If it has been a while since you have received this sacrament, don’t worry, the priest will guide you in celebrating it. Preparing our hearts through this sacrament is one of the greatest gifts we can receive to ready ourselves for Christmas.

As a little Advent / Christmas present we are distributing the book, Beautiful Hope, to all of our parishioners. I think the stories within will warm your heart and help us to be better prepared for this beautiful season. You can pick this book up at the Help Desk in church or at the Parish Office.

Finally, I want to joyfully invite you to our Christmas celebrations on December 24 and 25. Mass times are: 5:00 pm, 8:00 pm in Spanish, and 11:00 pm (carols at 10:30 pm) on Christmas Eve. Mass will be celebrated at 9:00 am on Christmas Day.

On behalf of Fr. Kelly, our deacons, and all those serving on our parish staff, I wish you God’s peace, comfort and joy. You will be particularly remembered in my prayers during this Christmas season.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Fr. David Hulshof

Tuesday, December 11

Rosary at 6:00 pm followed by, refreshments, reconciliation, blessing of articles
Mañanitas to Mary until 11 pm ~ Music by Oscar Cruz.

Wednesday December 12 bilingual mass 6 pm

Music by parish Bilingual Music Ministry & Mariachi Amistad
Blessing of religious articles.

Party Following in the Parish Center, 7-10 pm
Mariachi Amistad, Drawing, Featuring Folkdance Grupo Libertad
Food provided by local Hispanic restaurants!
Share our cultural richness and diversity as we honor Our Lady of Guadalupe!
Lord, in this holy season of prayer, song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angel’s song, for infant’s cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory, and are bathed in its radiance. Amen.

Parish Office Closed:
Christmas: December 24th at noon through December 26th
New Year’s: December 31st at noon through January 1st

**Immaculate Conception Masses**
*Holy Day of Obligation*
Vigil Friday, December 7th ~ 6:00pm
Saturday, December 8th
9:00am and Noon

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass**
Wednesday, December 12th at 6:00pm

**Communal Sacrament of Reconciliation**
Sunday, December 16th
from 3:30—5:00 pm in our church.

**Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Masses**
Monday, December 24th, Vigil Mass at 5:00pm
Christmas Mass in Spanish at 8:00pm
Christmas Mass at Night at 11:00pm
— carols at 10:30pm
Monday, December 25th at 9:00am

**New Year’s Masses**
*Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*
Vigil Monday, December 31st at 6:00pm
Tuesday, January 1st, 2019 at 9:00am

As we celebrate Advent please be mindful of how God has blessed you and your family.
In a few weeks we will begin our discernment of how we want to be good stewards in 2019. Take time now and examine how you and your family will use your Time, Talent and Treasure in the New Year.
Every year we get ready for Christmas and this year is no different! **Join our Parish Family on Sunday afternoon, December 23rd, after the 10:30am Sunday Mass** as we prepare the finishing touches on our House of Prayer for Christmas. Lots of busy hands are needed for testing lights and fixing the trees. We will have some great holiday food for everyone after the decorating is complete.