



# The First Order

## St. Stephen's Parish

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DECEMBER 2020

Ben-Jesus

I've named him Ben since I don't yet know his real name. I saw him once on The Green at Park Square. The traffic light cooperated so I could roll down my car window and give him some money. Next time, I want to walk over from the parish office. I want to see if he is still there. I want Ben to take me on as his Advent/Christmas project. I know he could teach me a thing or two. My liturgical Advent lasts only four weeks, but of course, there will be more waiting going on - waiting for a vaccine, waiting to see family and friends in person, waiting for responsive government, waiting for justice and peace, waiting for cures to many human conditions. I suspect Ben's Advent has been going on for quite some time - maybe waiting for a handout, food, lodging, hope, a friend.

I want to ask Ben if I could come over each week and visit. Hopefully, it will be the same time each week so it could turn into a standing appointment. I look forward to seeing Ben again if indeed he's there. I look forward to getting to know him a bit better. Maybe we can become friends.

During Advent and Christmas and beyond, I want to take Jesus more seriously. According to Jesus and from what I can gather so far, Ben is part of his family and I'm supposed to see him, really see him. The reality I'm dealing with is this: . . . just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

One of the other realities I'm dealing with is life at St. Stephen's during this time of sorrow and pandemic. Since becoming your Bridge Priest a couple of months ago, I've become familiar with how things operate. My main ministry areas are worship, pastoral care and general administration.

That's mostly in-house business, and it's all good. God is being praised. We're taking care of each other. We laugh and cry and we remind each other that nothing can separate us from the love of God. We are resilient. We are flexible and adapting to these chaotic times. We're hoping and praying for better days. We're staying connected as best we can. We remind each other to wear a mask, to social distance, to wash our hands.

But I can't help looking outward. That's our mission - to get out of ourselves and the church to see what God is up to; to not be afraid to enter someone else's chaos. Isn't that what God did for us by giving us Jesus? Essentially, incarnation is about relationship and as far as I know, the only way to tell if those eyes on Park Square are Jesus's eyes is to look into them, to risk that moment of recognition that may break my heart, or change my mind, or make me mad, or make me fix my life. Ben-Jesus has got his work cut out for him.

I could give Ben-Jesus a few bucks, but charity is not relationship. Charity is not a substitute for kinship. As the Body of Christ, you and I are called into relationship with Jesus who resides in his family members. We are called to go out and be Christ who promises to be there where our eyes meet, and in that glance to teach us something we need to know.

I'm sure there's others out there that would agree to let you be their Advent/Christmas project. I'm sure they could teach you a thing or two that would transform your life forever. Give it some thought. Give it some prayer.

Keep calm and be the Good News.

Blessed Advent and Joyous Christmas to you and yours.

David

# Vespers Services

Dec 1, Dec 8, Dec. 15 and Dec. 22

Each Tuesday evening at 5 pm during Advent there will be a Vespers service which will include the lighting of the Advent wreath. The meeting will extend after the service to allow for some virtual socializing, too. Parishioners should email the office for the link: smorrison@ststephenspittsfield.org

## What's New?

We have added a feature to our virtual service: The Bulletin! You can now access a copy of the bulletin to go along with the Facebook service through a link on our Facebook page or the church website.

This year there will be one Christmas service with carols from Music Director Joy Mullen. You will be able to watch and sing along on Christmas Eve, Christmas or both. You may honor loved ones as usual with a poinsettia donation, please make sure your donation and names are received at the office by December 17.

## Message to My Friends, from Wendy Horton-Leigh

I never had the time, it happened so fast, to contact everyone. I am now at 12A Beach Street, #215, Westborough MA 01581. Email remains the same as does my phone. I have been here almost 8 weeks now. I moved here to help my sister care for our 99-year-old Mom. She still lives in her own apartment, fixes her own meals most of the time, though eating is a problem and personal care. She is very weak and frail. She has little appetite and is down to 98 lbs. I am working on that. I miss Pittsfield and all of you at St. Stephens. I will be attending St Stephens in Westborough as soon as I have a chance to contact them and ascertain their Covid plans. It is a beautiful little church in a beautiful town.

I have one note that may concern you, but want you to know I'm in good health. Very soon after I arrived, my car was hit by someone running a red light and was totaled. I was not injured and want to assure everyone that I am fine.

Would love to hear from anyone. Feeling a bit lonely. Hard to make new friends with Covid lurking around every corner. :-)

Blessings and love to all,

Wendy Horton-Leigh, wendstep@aol.com

# December

## Happy Birthday:

- 2 Suzanna Tourigny
- 3 Constance Biegel
- 4 Bill MacFarlane
- 6 Lindsay Devitt
- 7 Amada Beauilleu, Grace Garinther, Shane Hassan, Adrianna Meyette, Suzanne White
- 10 Laura Cookis
- 11 Tanya Reynolds
- 12 Dylan Thomas, Nancy Travis
- 13 Sharon Billetter
- 15 Jennifer Stetz
- 16 David Donavan, David Oakes
- 17 Mark Miller, George Stetz
- 18 Madge Buerger, Lois Staffin
- 19 Carol Gendreau, Gunnar Schroder
- 20 Ken Block, Brian Wells
- 23 Mabel Cheyne, Olivia Thompson
- 24 Gerald O'Connor
- 26 Jason Hassan
- 27 Jameall Hand, Brody Kaley
- 29 Susan LeBourdais

## Happy Anniversary:

- 4 Kristi & Michael LaMalfa

## Revenues and Expenses

During Administrator Sarah's medical leave in October, normal bill paying and processing was limited, but is being made up now. This has resulted in October's expenses being lower than average, and will cause November's expenses to be higher than average. Once all of the November numbers are in, I will give a full report that will account for both months and give a clearer overall picture. *Leah Luczynski, Treasurer*