“Light Up for Christ”  
Parish Supper  
By Carol Herb

On Wednesday, December 7, the Cathedral Parish along with the Knights of Columbus, Post 631, held the annual “Light Up For Christ” blessing of the crèche ceremony outside the front window of the Cathedral Parish Center. Knight Walt Harper explained that the crèche used to be set up over at the Council building on Liberty Street but it seemed more appropriate to have it here at the Cathedral, so it was moved several years ago.

Fr. Schreck conducted the prayer service and blessing of the crèche at 6:00 PM in front of the Parish Center on Abercorn Street facing Lafayette Square. Cathedral parishioners Joe Ryan and Tom Kerns, along with two friends, led the attendees in a spirited Christmas Carol sing-a-long.

The covered dish supper followed at 6:30 PM. The Knights of Columbus, brought the ham and the Cathedral provided the chicken. Parishioners brought their best culinary side dishes for all to enjoy as well as some delicious desserts.

We had a large turnout and the ladies of the CCW did a great job decorating the hall for the holiday season.

In keeping with the season of giving, our parishioners brought an abundance of canned goods which were donated and delivered to the Social Apostolate in an effort to make a brighter Christmas for those in need. This was a great way to begin the Christmas Season!
Every year, Angel Trees and Giving Trees are set up in the back of the Cathedral, allowing parishioners to participate in making Christmas a bit brighter for the many needy here in Savannah.

This year, the Christian Services Committee and the Council of Catholic Women, partnered in decorating the two trees and delivering the donated items to the Social Apostolate. One tree was laden with red stockings while the second tree offered tags, each designating a specific item of need. The committee members, counseled by Sr. Julie, generated a list of gifts and items that would provide both a meal and gifts for clients at our only Catholic relief service in Savannah, The Social Apostolate.

As always, the good people who attend St. John the Baptist Cathedral responded generously. Volunteers from each committee manned the trees after each Mass, answered questions and found themselves searching for additional tags and stockings as parishioners selected one or more from the trees. Each weekend, both the tags and stockings were depleted and replacements had to be hung on the trees for the next week.

By December 18, the final weekend of the Angel and Giving Tree Drive, it was beginning to look a lot like Christmas at the Social Apostolate, prompting this reaction from Sr. Julie Franchi, Director of The Social Apostolate:

“Over 200 soup kitchen clients received a stocking with goodies, hygiene items, a card and a gift card redeemable at a fast food restaurant. Everyone, clients and volunteers had a wonderful time. Besides the stockings, we received a very generous supply of groceries for the food pantry, which were given out to the many families who came needing groceries for the two or three weeks before Christmas. The canned hams and boxed cookies, as well as all the trimmings, helped to make the season festive for many families!”

While the beautifully decorated trees made a lovely addition to the seasonal splendor of the Cathedral, their purpose was much more than that. They offered an opportunity for parishioners to participate in what the Church teaches us is the essence of Christmas. We are to be gift bearers, shelterers, caretakers of the needy and the weak. And again this year, Cathedral members unhesitatingly approached the trees, selected a gift, and gave from the heart.
Every year the Cathedral’s Crèche makes the Christmas experience warm and meaningful to our spiritual journey here on earth. In the last decade of creating and designing the crèche at the Cathedral, I have been inspired and ponder deeply on the sacred Scriptures and the saints’ writings to make the history of salvation and the Christmas story come alive. This year the viewer will be taken through time from past to present and into the future.

The story begins with the creation of Adam. Then Adam and Eve are shown in the Garden of Eden. The Fall of Adam and Eve is represented next to the tree of knowledge with serpent near the forbidden fruit. The Virgin Mary, the untier of knots, is shown undoing the knots of Eve’s sinful disobedience. The Book of Genesis is a wonderful story on the creation of the world, nature, human beings, love and marriage, the fall and future redemption of the human race through a promised Messiah.

Moses with the tablets of the divine law coming down from Mount Sinai is the prefiguration of Jesus in the Old Testament.

The pregnant Virgin Mary rides on a donkey with Saint Joseph on the journey to Bethlehem. The birth of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph and the animals found in a humble grotto. In the nativity grotto, one will find four cherubs each symbolic for the seasons Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.
Angels brought the good tidings to the shepherds in the fields. The journey of the Magi following the star to Bethlehem. The flight to Egypt foreshadows the events in Jesus’ future life and sufferings. Jesus’ passion, suffering and sacrifice clearly represented on the crucifix. The descent from the cross and the resurrection of the Lord are represented through a white cloth. This white cloth drapes in and out the crucifix, which is symbolic of the risen Jesus.
Saint Nicholas Family Breakfast  
Article and Photos by Carol Herb

The Knights of Columbus, Post 631, and the Cathedral Parish hosted a Saint Nicholas Breakfast in the Parish Hall on December 4 after the 10:00 AM Mass ushering in the festive family events of the Christmas season.

The Knights prepared pancakes, sausage, and fruit for the breakfast and the Ladies Auxiliary of Post 631 provided hands on art and craft Christmas activities for the children.

The children made a variety of Christmas ornaments, colored Christmas scenes and had the opportunity to visit individually with Santa himself, giving him their Christmas wish lists.

Santa handed out bags of candy and coloring books detailing the life story of Saint Nicholas. Many thanks to the men and women of the Knights of Columbus for making this Christmas so special for their families as well as the families of the Cathedral Parish.

Serving Seniors Team Assemble Baskets  
By Melanie Brooks  
Photos by Carol Herb and Melanie Brooks

Members of the Serving Seniors team met on Saturday, December 17 to assemble fruit and goodie baskets for people in our parish who have difficulties getting to church. These people, bound to their place of residence, are often overlooked.

Many are long-time Cathedral members and the Serving Seniors team is happy to share the joy of the holiday with them. Several team members contributed home-made goodies and a Special Education CCD class of learning or physically disabled students in the Philadelphia area made personalized cards for each basket.

Seventeen baskets were delivered on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning and were met with smiles, tears, and grateful hearts.
CCW Bake Sale, A Holiday Tradition
By Alizon McLaughlin, Photos by Carol Herb

The Cathedral Council of Catholic Women (CCW) Holiday Bake Sale has become a holiday tradition. Over the years the CCW sponsors a bake sale prior to Christmas offering a variety of baked goods to parishioners and visitors. The most popular are our signature pound cakes and rum cakes, along with homemade cookies and brownies.

CCW members gathered at the Parish Hall on Saturday, December 17 for a “bake day.” With our mixers, bowls and Bundt pans ready, we prepared 19 rum cakes. Throughout the day, CCW members stopped by to drop off donated baked goods.

We split into bake teams, wrapping and prep teams, and kitchen duty teams. Each member contributed her time and her best talent. All of the cakes, cookies, and brownies were festively wrapped and decorated, ready for giving or receiving.

We were joined by CCW member Melanie Brooks and her team who prepared Christmas Fruit Baskets and goodies for the elderly and shut-ins. The Parish Hall was busy all day with parishioners volunteering their time in preparation for the Christmas Holidays.

The annual bake sale was a great success. Although the day started out a bit overcast, the rain held off and the sun was shining all morning. Our members had a great time meeting and sharing holiday greetings with our friends and parishioners as well as visitors to the Cathedral. All baked goods were sold.

The CCW members are so very grateful for the support we receive from the Cathedral parish for our bake sale every year. We are overwhelmed by the spirit of giving and generosity shown by our parishioners and visitors.

For the CCW, this is more than just a bake sale. It is a time that we come together in friendship and fellowship, working to further the growth and development of our council and our initiatives. The funds raised by the bake sale go to the CCW treasury, and are used throughout the year to support contributions and expenses. Many thanks to our members who donated their time, talent and treasure.
The crèche scene and Christmas decorations at the Cathedral are a marvel to behold. Whether you are a parishioner or one of the thousands of visitors to come to see it every year, it is the highlight of the holiday season.

But few of us realize how much work it takes to make it happen. All the staging and statues have to be brought up from the basement where they are stored. The Knights of Columbus 631, led by Walt Harper, has faithfully shown up every year to lead the rigorous work of moving the large platforms from the basement to Mary’s altar. Then everything must be artistically arranged to tell the Christmas story. Orlando Cuadra has taken over this job from Brother Robert, who still comes over to check up on him.

An army of volunteers adorns the rest of the Cathedral with flowers and greenery to give it a festive look. Jack Novak assisted by his mother Moira and Sandra Traywick and others helped set up the beautiful poinsettia tree. And Lynne Everett plus Jan Curran and Debbie Dickson worked to get the Reredos floral decorations just right.

Many volunteers contributed, some for a few hours, some for several days. Despite the hectic schedule of the season, they gave of their time to make this beautiful display possible.

It may be a lot of work but everyone agrees it is worth it.

Behind the scenes
Article by Bart Traywick and Peter Paolucci
Photos by Bart Traywick
The Christmas season provides many opportunities for service to the unfortunate or those in need. Our Cathedral ministries responded generously and often as the requests came to us.

The Feeding the Hungry (FTH) team was very busy with the return of the Blackshear Christmas Celebration and a new project, Adopt a Grandparent with our P.A.C.K partners. We were provided a list of residents from Riverview Nursing Home. Each resident had provided the home social worker with a need and a want.

Our generous team members adopted a resident and purchased the “need and the want,” gaily gift-wrapped the presents, and delivered them to the parish hall. While many of the “wants” were clothing articles, some particularly touching ones included candy canes, a teddy bear, sparkly holiday jewelry, and an Atlanta Braves baseball cap.

Several team members helped Joe and Mary Moriarty deliver the gifts to the Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 13 and led the group in Christmas carols. Many of the residents have little or no family and are very lonely. They were happy to receive visitors and thrilled with the gifts.

The Second Annual Blackshear Christmas Celebration on Sunday, December 18 was a huge success. Working with the good folks of Immanuel Baptist Church, they provided a holiday meal with lots of cookies and other treats. Stockings were filled with toiletries and specific members received gifts to meet previously identified needs.

One particularly touching story was of a man who had been grabbed off the street, tied up, viciously attacked, and robbed by a gang of young men. He had just been discharged from the hospital and was still recovering but concerned about how he was going to make a living since the brutes had stolen all of the tools he used in his handy-man business.

A collection of hand and electric tools had been gathered and were given to him. The tables were gaily decorated and Joe Moriarty played Christmas carols on his guitar while the group sang. It felt like a family Christmas. Cathedral parishioners had provided supplies, cooked food, donated gifts, served the meal, talked with Blackshear residents and distributed goodies. Everyone enjoyed the festivities.
People Helping People (PHP) is a multi-denominational group serving the homeless and low-income population of Savannah each week in Forsyth Park. We have received numerous requests for activities to serve children but have not been able to find a suitable match until now.

After several weeks of watching and assisting the PHP team with activities in the park, the FTH team decided to offer to help with planning for the children’s Christmas party.

By law in Georgia, children are not “allowed” to be homeless but must provide a residential address (can be a shelter) or they will be moved into foster care. The children who come to the park on Sundays are often from the housing projects, occasionally from a shelter or from a non-custodial guardian.

With the good people of PHP, we planned a fun Children’s Christmas Festival for Sunday, December 11 with lunch and the Christmas story followed by games, crafts, Santa, and a shop where they could “purchase” a gift for their mom.

Cathedral volunteers made and staffed four games including Ring-A-Reindeer, Snowman Slam, Fill Up Frosty’s Hat, and Jingle Bell Toss. The Reindeer Food Bar allowed the children to fill a container of “magic” food that would lead Rudolph and Santa directly to their front door. The Lollipop Shop, staffed by all members of the Mortimer family, was a big hit. Children used their turn there to select a gift from the array of items offered. The item was wrapped in tissue and put in a gift bag for the child to take home.

Access to the festival area was controlled and children were admitted one at a time and introduced to their guide who would be responsible for their safety and remain with them throughout the festival. Volunteers from many churches including a group of deanery youth acted as guides. Each child received a large re-usable shopping bag (donated by TJ Maxx) and a punch card which allowed them to visit each of the 25 stations one time.

The guide and child made their way through the area until all stations had been visited. Prizes, toys, and candy were distributed at each game and the craft activities produced take-home items. Everything went into the large bags so the children could take them home.

This Christmas project supported by many Cathedral volunteers filled our hearts with Christmas joy as we shared our time and talent with friends living through less fortunate times.
January 2017

Address Service Requested

The Caring Cards Ministry mailed over 250 Christmas cards to parishioners over the age of 70 as well as those on our prayer list. This team routinely sends cards to parishioners who are ill, recovering from surgery, having a new baby, celebrating an anniversary, grieving the loss of a loved one, or have given service to the Cathedral in a major way.

Join us. Call 233-4709.