

# PASTOR'S CORNER

## ADVENT – A TIME OF SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

This weekend as we gather to celebrate the gift of the Holy Eucharist we will begin our new liturgical year with the holy season of Advent. The First Sunday of Advent begins this year with the vigil Mass on Saturday evening, November 26. At each of the Masses on the First Sunday of Advent we will bless our Advent wreath which will burn throughout the entire Advent Season. During Advent we will use the Chant Mass in Latin (except for “Lord, Have Mercy”, which is Greek). It may be found in our “Today’s Missal - Music Issue” hymnal. As a reminder, the *Gloria* is not sung or recited on the Sundays of Advent. This is to help us anticipate the coming of Christ, for whom the angels sang the first *Gloria*. The liturgical color for Advent is purple. The meaning of the word Advent is *coming*. The season of Advent has a two-fold character as a season of preparation for Christmas when the first *coming* of God’s Son to humanity is recalled. Advent is also a season when our minds and hearts are directed by this memorial to Christ’s second *coming* at the end of time. The holy Season of Advent thus is a period of devout and joyful expectation.

As we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of Christ’s coming – Christmas – it would do us well to make sure that our preparations are first and foremost spiritual. An Advent wreath should be displayed as a focal point of every Catholic family’s holiday decor. It should be in a place that allows the family to gather in meaningful prayer. While in many homes it has become a custom to light it and say prayers at mealtime, it should not be relegated to this use alone. Complete Advent Wreath kits (\$10.00) and replacement candles (\$5.00) are available after all Masses this weekend, or from the parish office during the week.

Another spiritual activity that will be offered in our parish during the holy season of Advent as well as the Christmas Season (except for Christmas Day) is Sunday Vespers or Evening Prayer. They will take place in the church at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday. Vespers is a collection of psalms, prayers, songs, and Scripture that is part of the official worship of the Church. The Vesper service lasts approximately twenty minutes.

Along with an Advent wreath, a Jesse Tree will be displayed in the gathering space to assist us in our celebration of Advent at Holy Name Parish. The Jesse Tree is a way of remembering the Jewish roots of the Messiah. Jesse was the father of David from whose house the Messiah would come. Each day of Advent an ornament depicting a symbol of God’s saving activity will be displayed on a small tree in front of the ambo. At the end of Mass the ornament will be processed to the Jesse Tree in the Gathering Space during the recessional hymn.

A spiritual devotion that I have prayed for many years during Advent is known as the “St. Andrew Novena.” It is not a true novena because it is prayed more than nine days. It is piously believed that whoever prays the following prayer fifteen times a day from the feast of St. Andrew, November 30<sup>th</sup>, until Christmas will obtain the favor asked. “Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. In that hour, vouchsafe, O my God to hear my prayer and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and His Blessed Mother. Amen.”

I hope that all of us will have a blessed Advent filled with a greater spiritual awareness of God’s tremendous love for us. Resolve now to take advantage of this season of *coming*, and joyfully and devoutly prepare for Christ’s birth. I will be out of town with my parents on vacation the first week of Advent, Monday, November 28 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass until Friday evening, December 2. Fr. Pat Malone, one of our retired priests will celebrate Mass on Tuesday and Wednesday and Fr. Paul Oborny, another of our retired priests will take my place on Thursday and Friday. There will be no confessions before Mass on those four days.