

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota



November 27, 2022

Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Musings on the Season of Advent: This Sunday we begin the season of waiting for the Lord. With the mournful yet hopeful song of "O come, o come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel" we plead with the Son of God to visit us and free us from all sorts of bondages and patterns of sin and alienation. We join all those through the centuries who longed with a burning desire for the coming of Jesus the Messiah into their lives.

This season of Advent is something like the time before the wedding. The couples have to prepare for the wedding by sitting down and talking about all kinds of things connected with their marriage and have heart-to-heart conversations. They also need to make all sorts of spiritual, liturgical, social preparations for the day of the wedding. How will the wedding ceremony be? Who will do what? Where will the reception be and what food will be served and who will make the speeches? What songs to dance to? Where will the newly-weds go for their honeymoon? And so many such details of preparation! Jesus in the Gospels refers to himself as the bridegroom who comes to meet the bride represented by God's people. The Advent season is exactly like these various preparations we need to make in order for the Christmas day and the whole Christmas season to become a source of pure joy and blessing.

We cannot put Christmas already in Advent any more that we can put the wedding day into the phase of preparation for the wedding. Therefore, let's put on the spirit of Advent, which is readiness, vigilance, awareness, waiting, expectation, longing, penance, rearranging our lives, listening to God more deeply, reassessing our relationships, making room for love. When we do all these, then when the Christmas season dawns, it would truly be like the overflowing joy of a wedding, when Jesus will be united with the Church and the whole creation in an ecstasy of intimacy and union. Are we ready to do what we need to do at Advent in order for us to get ready to do what we need to do at Christmas? Let our longing be crystallized in this simple prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

First Sunday of Advent, the Word of God: In the Gospel this Sunday, we are warned: "Stay awake. For you do not know on which day your Lord will come...you must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." Reminding us of the apocalyptic end of time and all the destruction that would happen at that time, Jesus calls us to be ready, watchful, and prayerful. When the great deluge happened in the time of Noah, people were completely overtaken by crisis; there was no time to do anything at the eleventh hour by way of preparation. So too now when the Lord will come suddenly, we need to be ready and alert to meet him. In view of the end of time, there are things we could be doing. In Isaiah, as people are going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the temple, they could be working for peace: "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again." Do we seek peace in our hearts and in the world? Paul, too, in the Letter to the Romans instructs us "to throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light..." because "our salvation is nearer now than we first believed, the night is advanced, the day is at hand." In short, the Word of God invites us this First Sunday of Advent to be prepared, ready, and alert. Working for peace and arming ourselves with light against all forms of darkness are what we are called to do as we wait for Jesus to be born in our lives once again.

Thanksgiving Day Mass Collection: On your behalf, I shall be forwarding your Thanksgiving Day 9:00 a.m. Mass offerings to "Cross Catholic Outreach." It is a Catholic charitable organization and ministry that "partners with bishops, priests, religious and lay workers to provide food, water, housing, education, orphan support, medical care, microenterprise and disaster relief---and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ---to the poorest of the poor in over 30 countries around the world." The past two years, we had donated the Thanksgiving Day Mass collection to St. Anthony's Dining Room in SF and Catholic Relief Services.

Parish Advent Retreat: I'll be giving three talks on the theme of "To Know Jesus, To Love Jesus, and To Follow Jesus" on Saturday, December 03. The Retreat starts with 8:30 a.m. Mass followed by "coffee and donuts/bagels." We will have singing at the sessions and reflections and plenty of time to socialize and renew friendships. After the sessions are over, we will have lunch. Contact Sharon and/or the Parish Office. Do come join, if you are able to.

Parish Advent Confessions: On Saturday, December 17 at 10:30 a.m. as a way of preparing ourselves for Christmas.

Simbang Gabi Masses: At the regular 8:30 a.m. Masses from December 16 through 24, Simbang Gabi tradition will be followed. Do come join! As we will be busy with the external preparations such as gift-buying, decorations, food, etc., it would be highly beneficial to prepare ourselves internally, spiritually, for the Birth of Christ at Christmas. I'd like to thank all those who have begun the preparations for making this tradition a success in our parish as in the past.

Humor: Johnny had been misbehaving and was sent to his room. After a while he emerged and informed his mother that he had thought it over and then said a prayer. "Fine," said the pleased mother. "If you ask God to help you not misbehave, He will help you." "Oh, I didn't ask Him to help me not misbehave," said Johnny. "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

Wishing you a hope-filled Season of Advent,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota