

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

December 3, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Advent: We have arrived at this spiritual season of Advent. The First Sunday of Advent ushers us into the time of waiting for Christ at Christmas. The hauntingly melodious and meaningful hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel" captures the spirit of longing and sadness --- and an expectation of joy. We'll be very busy this season of Advent with many external preparations for the upcoming Christmas. Amidst all the hectic activities, the Church invites us to prepare the heart and mind for the Lord's coming. The focus is Christ and his coming into our lives and the world. All that we do this season should really be related to welcoming Jesus into our hearts and families. Remember there was no room in the inn some 2000 years ago? Is it possible that there is no room in the inn for Christ in our times? Christianity is Christ and the intimate connection with him and one another. Advent brings us to the center of Christianity: Christ. Our continuous and constant prayer this season will be: "Come, Lord Jesus." The season of Advent is also a semi-penitential time. An indication of this is the violet colors and the muted decoration in the church and the non-singing of Gloria. These are reminders --- liturgical hints --- that we are to be engaged in a penitential preparation for the coming of Christ, so that when he does come at Christmas, purified of our selfishness and sinfulness, our hearts would burst with joy.

Advent Quotes: "At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God's own love and concern." - Mother Teresa. "The word advent means 'expectation.' What advent can do for us is create a sense of hope." - Louie Giglio. "The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord." - Henri Nouwen. "It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope." - Pope Benedict XVI. "A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes - and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent" - Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Immaculate Conception, a Holy Day of Obligation, Masses at 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.: As you know, Friday, December 08th is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a holy day of obligation. We love, esteem, and honor Mary our mother. We think of the mystery of Mary's glory as connected with Advent. Because Jesus was coming into the world, his mother Mary had to be prepared right from the moment of her conception, that is, when Mary was conceived in her mother Anne's womb. Mary was protected from any tainting of sin because she had to give birth to the Son of God. This is the belief that we celebrate in the Immaculate Conception. William Wordsworth celebrates it in his poem "The Virgin": "Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrossed / With the least shade of thought to sin allied; / Woman! above all women glorified, / Our tainted nature's solitary boast..."

Parish Advent Retreat on Saturday, December 9, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. Mass: Theme: Spirituality. If you are able to, please do come join the retreat that starts at the 8:30 a.m. Mass followed by light breakfast and three sessions and lunch. This may be one of the ways to prepare ourselves for the season of Advent and Christmas. Please Register!

The Word of God---The First Sunday of Advent, Year B: "Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved" is the responsorial psalm. This frames our mood and expectation as we begin the exquisite season of Advent. We have turned away from God and it's time to turn to see his face---and even for that effort of ours we need God's help and grace. Hopefully this season of Advent and at Christmas, we will truly be able to turn away from all sorts of things that do not belong to God and turn toward God's loving and forgiving face, embracing his ways and values. In order to be able to do that, our state of mind and heart needs to be alert, watchful, prepared, engaged, ready! There's a sense of suddenness, surprise, and urgency about God's coming into our lives, and we need to be high on the alert to receive him: "May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping." In the poetic rendering of a confession of a guilt-laden people from Isaiah, there is an intense yearning for God's presence and an acknowledgement of our sinfulness and straying from God, but "you, Lord, are our father, our redeemer you are named forever....rend the heavens and come down...O Lord, you are our father, we are the clay and you the potter: we are the works of your hands."

A Story to Ponder: In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi tells how in his days in South Africa he became deeply interested in the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount. He became convinced that Christianity was the answer to the caste system that had plagued India for centuries, and he seriously considered becoming a Christian. One day he went to a church to attend Mass and get instructions. He was stopped at the entrance and gently told that if he desired to attend Mass he was welcome to do so in a church reserved for blacks. He left and never returned.

Humor: Pope Leo XII in 1825 visited a jail. His Holiness called the prisoners before him and asked each prisoner why he had been jailed. In each case the criminal protested innocence; all except one. "Your Holiness," said the wild-looking fellow falling on his feet, "I was a forger and an assassin and I'm here to expiate my crimes." The Pope turned to his entourage with an ironic smile and said to the governor of the prison, "Let this rascal go at once; I do not wish that his presence should corrupt all these gallant and innocent gentlemen."

Wishing you the blessings of the Advent Season,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota