

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

December 1, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

The Season of Advent: Some Musings: 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 a wedding. In the months leading up to 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? How will the families be involved? How to pay for all the expenses? Where will the reception be held and what food will be served and who will make the speeches? What songs to dance to? Where will the newly married 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 internally and externally for the Christmas day and the whole Christmas season if this sacred time has 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, prayer, 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 during Advent in order for us to get ready to do what we need to do at Christmas? Let our longing and hope be crystallized in this simple prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Advent Quotes: "Advent: the time to listen for footsteps --- you can't hear footsteps when you're running yourself." --- Bill McKibben. "Advent, like its cousin Lent, is a season for prayer and reformation of our hearts."--- Edward Hays. "Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus." --- Neal A. Maxwell. "Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, achieves the impossible." "Advent: Arrival, Start, Beginning, Dawn, Initiation, Introduction." "Advent: Close your eyes and open your mind."

The Word of God: First Sunday of Advent: In the Gospel of Luke this Sunday, we are given a warning: "Be vigilant at all times and pray.... That you have the strength....to stand before the Son of Man." Reminding us of the apocalyptic end of time and the destruction that would happen at that time, Jesus calls us to be ready, watchful, and prayerful. In Jeremiah, there is a message of hope: "In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure." Judah and Jerusalem would be metaphors for our lives and communities that shall receive God's blessings at the time of his visitation. Paul, too, in the Letter to the Thessalonians instructs us "to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones.." In short, the Word of God invites us this First Sunday of Advent to be vigilant, prepared, ready, and alert. It's a wake-up call! Are we ready to be awakened?

Monday, December 9, Immaculate Conception, a Holy Day of Obligation, Masses at 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.: As you know, this year this glorious feast has been moved to Monday December 9 because December 8 falls on a Sunday. 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 would be chosen 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, Saturday December 7: I'll be giving three talks on the theme of "The Church we love and cherish." The Retreat will start with the 8:30 a.m. Mass followed by coffee and light breakfast." We will have some singing at the sessions and reflections and plenty of time to socialize and renew friendships. After the sessions are over, we will have lunch. Please register! The forms are available at the parish office and in the church.

Parish Advent / Christmas Confessions: On Saturday, December 21 at 10:30 a.m. as a way of preparing ourselves for Christmas.

Simbang Gabi Masses: These Masses will be held December 16 through 24 at the regular 8:30 a.m. Masses. On Sunday Dec. 22, it will be at the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Coordinator of these Masses is Gloria Trinidad and her team May Devera and Beth Pasco. If you'd like to sponsor or participate in any way, please do contact them. Let's make our Simbang Gabi tradition a special way of preparing ourselves for Christmas.

Humor: Dear Belinda, I have been unable to sleep since I broke off our engagement. Won't you forgive and forget? Your absence is breaking my heart. I was a fool --- nobody can take your place. I love you. All my love, Jack. P.S. Congratulations on winning this week's lottery.

Wishing you a hope-filled Season of Advent,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Fr. Charles Puthota