

Dear Parishioners:

Believe it or not, **Advent** begins this weekend. Advent is traditionally a time of preparation, not merely waiting. The Church teaches us that during Advent we prepare for the two “comings of Christ”. The first half of Advent focuses on the coming of Christ at the end of time. The second half of Advent focuses on the coming of Christ at Christmas. The lighting of the pink candle in the Advent wreath (which takes place on the third week of Advent) symbolizes the change in focus from the coming of Christ at the end of time to the coming of Christ at Christmas.

In either case, the theme of Advent is one of preparation. We prepare our homes for Christmas by cleaning the house, decorating the home (both indoors and outdoors), extra cooking and baking, sending Christmas cards, etc. We put in a great deal of time and effort to make Christmas one of the special times of the year for our families. I would like to challenge us to make Christmas a special time for our families spiritually. I encourage all of us to prepare the home of our heart for the coming of Christ. We have various activities for children and adults. Take advantage of them!

Planning ahead, don't forget to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our sinfulness can act as a weight which drags us down and prevents us from drawing closer to Christ. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) allows the Lord to remove that weight (our sins) from us and helps us to draw closer to Christ. On **Monday, December 21 from 3:00pm – 8:00pm**, a priest will be available to hear confessions. Stop by to receive the grace of that sacrament.

Advent also marks the start of the new “Church” year. While the secular new year is January 1, the Church new year is the first Sunday in Advent. A very concrete change is that we read from a different Gospel. This past year, we read largely from the Gospel according to St. Mark. With the start of the new Church year, we will be reading largely from the Gospel of St. Luke. Luke, purported to be a doctor, also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit, prayer and, above all, forgiveness. Luke is often called the “Gospel of all pardons”. For example, the famous story of the Prodigal Son is only found in Luke's Gospel and the story of the good thief is only found on Luke's Gospel. Perhaps this year we could all focus on both our need to be forgiven and our mandate to forgive those who have hurt us.

Last year, I wrote “for most of us, we can't wait to get out of the year 2020”. Sadly, I think I can say the same about 2021. 2021 has been a year filled with much darkness for so many people. So, I am counting Advent as the beginning of the new year. I look forward to a new year filled with God's grace.

Remember: Together, we can do something beautiful for God.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian

PS: We will re-introduce the Missalettes (with the readings) and the Music Issue books. This will help us with the singing and the responses. I am happy the books are returning!

Don't forget our Christmas raffle; you should have received chances in our Advent mailing which should have arrived this week. They will also be in the Church bulletin.