



3rd Sunday of Advent

Advent is quickly passing and soon we shall be celebrating the birth of our Savior. As mentioned in previous Pastor's Corner we hear St. John the Baptist in the Readings calling us to prepare the way – to open our hearts anew – through prayer and penance so that we will be ready to worship and adore the Infant King laying in the crib. The Church for her part helps us to prepare for Christmas. Perhaps these things escape our notice – but they shouldn't. These are the things that Church does through her Liturgy: 1) the Gloria is suppressed through Advent; 2) there are no flowers in the sanctuary – only on Gaudete Sunday are they permitted; 3) the color of vestment is violet or purple. All of these are meant to help us live this season and heed the call of penance to prepare for Jesus – to offer him something so that he sees that we understand what an enormous gift he is to us. One of the things that we can also be attentive to is taking advantage of the many opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Penance (making time to go to confession). This is a good gift to Christ – accompanied by a desire to grow in our relationship with him.

The Sunday is Gaudete (or "joy") Sunday. It is inserted in the Sacred Liturgy to remind us that "he is almost here" (i.e. to heighten that sense of expectation) but also to remind us that the call to do penance is not contrary to joy. Penance –if done right and for the right reasons – helps us to grow in the virtue of faith, hope and charity. In other words it helps us to possess true joy in our life – which is the life of God. The vestments are rose coloured – a color of joy.

One thing that parents can consider doing that will be a very good thing (from a spiritual and supernatural perspective) is to bring your child or children to confession during Advent. Prepare them before they come to confession. This is a very effective way to teach them that Christmas is not about "me" but about "Him" (about God and being ready to celebrate Jesus's birth). Think about it, it will go a long way to helping them focus on what "this" is all about.

Please use the parish website – the Christmas and New Year's schedule is posted there. And in the coming weeks it will be fine-tuned and made even more ready as a tool for information, faith and formation.

One of the things that I am going to offer to parishioners so that people have the opportunity to grow in faith – especially during this Year of Faith – is to host a two night Conference on Faith. Fr. Brian Mullady, OP (the same priest who gave the Parish Mission this past year) is going to be here on January 14th and 15th. Fr. Mullady will speak on the subject of faith as it applies to our daily lives. This is an excellent opportunity to get some faith formation about our faith. The times will be from 7:00pm – 8:30pm in the Church.

I will close with this reflection on Advent from the then Cardinal Ratzinger (now the Pope): Memory Awakens Hope. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Seek That Which Is Above*, 1986:

"Advent is concerned with that very connection between memory and hope which is so necessary to man. Advent's intention is to awaken the most profound and basic emotional memory within us, namely, the memory of the God who became a child. This is a healing memory; it brings hope. The purpose of the Church's year is continually to rehearse her great history of memories, to awaken the heart's memory so that it can discern the star of hope.

It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope."

Let us continue to go forward in our hearts awaiting the great day of the Saviour's birth.

Fr. Hamilton