

From the Deacon's Desk

Celebrating the Advent Wreath:

One way to prepare for Christ's coming into our lives is to make an Advent Wreath for your daily household worship. This traditional circular wreath reminds us that God, like the circle, has no beginning and no end. Evergreens on the wreath symbolize our everlasting relationship with God, the source of continuous new life. The wreath has four candles, three of purple or violet and one of rose. On the First Sunday and Week of Advent, we light the first candle and then an additional candle on each Sunday until Christmas. Purple is a royal color, reflecting the kingship of Christ, and also repentance. The rose candle, lighted on the Third Sunday of Advent, represents joy. Thus, the colors of the candles illustrate the themes of Advent: kingship, repentance and joy. The candles also remind us that the incarnation has transformed the darkness of hatred and evil into the light of joy and love.

Thank you to our Art and Environment Committee who are creatively looking at ways to adorn our church during the Advent and Christmas Season: Diane Courter, Bev Kalmar, Valerie Helinski, and Joyce Noyes.

Christmas Decorations Work-Bee:

On Sunday, December 10th after the 9:30 am Mass, we will have a work-bee for all parishioners, especially families with children, to decorate objects that will be used on our banners during the Christmas Season. Each and every time you come to church, you'll be reminded through your personal and individually decorated ornament, that God know you each by name and appreciates the individual talents and gifts you bring to this community of faith. It will only take about ten minutes of your time, so come to the hall after Mass to make your mark.

Advent Ecumenical Service:

On Sunday, December 3, at 4 pm, there will be an Advent Ecumenical Service at St. Vincent's Church between the United Methodist Church and St. Vincent de Paul Parish. The service will be presided over by Rev. Janet Lerner and Rev. Mr. Jerry Green. It will include music by the two church choirs, prayers, readings, a homily, and fellowship afterwards in our hall. Come and celebrate with us as we joyfully prepare to remember the Incarnation between God and humanity. All are welcome!

Funeral Luncheon Committee:

We are asking for help with funeral luncheons. We would like to have 3 or 4 groups of people to rotate the luncheons. These groups would consist of 5 or 6 people. We have revised our activities and food selections in order to streamline our work. If you can help, please call Joyce Riley at the office and leave your name and number. You will be contacted. You are an important member of our church and your help is greatly needed. Thank you in advance.

Advent Theology and the Liturgy:

As written in the Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, Advent is *“the season of preparation for Christmas, known also in some Eastern Churches as the Season of Announcement. The Prayer of the season ‘looks forward’ in relation to the triple coming of the Lord; in history, in grace, at the end of time. Its tone is of anticipation, expectation, yearning.”*

On December 25 we celebrate that the Lord came to us in history through the “incarnation” which literally means, “God becoming human.” It is an event that occurred once in history and we remember it like our own birthdays, but with a lot more fanfare! Just like we don’t pretend we are born again on our birthdays, we also should not focus on the birth of the Jesus as if he is being “re-born” each year. The mystery of the incarnation is not so much that God could become one of us – the inexplicable part is how God could give his love away so freely to his people, without expectation or condition.

The Lord’s coming in grace means that he comes to each of us now, in time, through the gifts of the Spirit and his freely given grace encountered in the everyday lives of those who believe. We anticipate the coming of the Lord each time we celebrate the sacraments of the Church, whether they be celebrated today or in the future, we yearn for that encounter with Christ now and always.

The origins of Advent begin with the Council of Saragossa in the year 380. In this period of history Mass attendance was waning, so the Council reminded the laity of the obligation for daily church attendance from December 17 through January 6. This was in preparation for the celebration of Epiphany as there was no official celebration yet of Christmas, or the Nativity of the Lord. Epiphany was the manifestation of the ministry of Jesus as Son of Hu(man)ity and Savior of all.

Epiphany was also the alternate date for baptisms in the early Church; Easter being the primary. So, by the 5th century, there was an extended period set aside for the catechuminate to prepare for that baptism on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It was in this era that the idea arose that Advent would have a penitential tone added but only for those preparing for baptism. The rest of the people still held a joyful anticipation for the Epiphany.

However, it is in this era of history we begin to see great variances in the practice of Christianity. In modern Church teachings, the General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar preserve the two-fold focus of Advent: the first two Sundays highlight Christ's Second Coming; the last two highlight incarnational themes, with the fourth Sunday always adverting to Mary, the Mother of God.

As we embark on our Advent journey of faith this year, it is still a good time to take a moment each day and dedicate it to God. Like many of you already do, you may want to refer to the Little Blue Books that contain daily readings and prayers: one day a week you may want to attend a daily Mass if it works with your schedule; participate in the sacrament of penance; do a daily act of charity, even if it is as simple as holding the door for someone else and wishing them a joyful or blessed Christmas using more “religious words” than Merry Christmas. I am sure you can think of many things that you could add to this list.

May this Advent season be one that will assist you in preparing for the Coming of Christ, not just in a secular way only focused on his birthday, but one that helps you be expectant of the end of times.