

From the Deacon's Desk

**Scripture Today: *"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing."***

In today's second reading Paul concludes his letter to the Christian community at Thessalonica by providing it with actions to take as they wait for the return of the Lord. The first action is to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances. This sounds easy but it is not. The two words that make this task difficult are "always" and "all". This means giving thanks and rejoicing even when our circumstances are not always moments of joy and thanksgiving, or when we are confronted with a broken world.

Prayerful stewards rejoice and give thanks in all circumstances because they are people of hope. Pope Benedict once wrote: "Despite its contradictions, worries and tragedies, and perhaps precisely because of them, humanity today seeks a path of renewal, salvation, it seeks a Savior and awaits, sometimes unconsciously, the coming of the Savior who renews the world." A good reflection this week would be how the season of Advent can give you reason to hope.

**Christmas Mass 2017:**

This year the Fourth Sunday of Advent is December 24th, which is also Christmas Eve. That means the fourth week of Advent lasts about six hours. We will have our regular weekend Mass schedule for the weekend of December 23rd and 24th, and then our Christmas Mass schedule on December 24th and 25th. On Christmas Eve we will have Mass at 5 p.m. Mass on Christmas Day is 10:30 a.m. As you make your Christmas plans make sure Mass for both the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas are included.

**Christmas Banners:**

Once Christmas arrives, I invite you to take notice of the stars that adorn our Christmas banners, which were made by our parishioners, young and older, last weekend. 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.

### **Cold & Flu Season:**

As we get into the cold and flu season please keep in mind that if you suspect that you might be ill or wake up on Sunday morning not feeling “up-to-par” then you should refrain from receiving the Precious Blood. As Catholics we believe that Jesus Christ is fully present in both the Body (consecrated host) as well as the Blood (consecrated wine). One who receives either sacred species receives the Lord fully.

Studies have shown that there has never been an outbreak of disease from sharing the Chalice when the following occurs: That the wine used for consecration is altar wine and not “regular” table wine. Altar wine has a higher alcohol level, thus helping to kill some germs. The second factor is that the minister offers the Chalice only after having wiped both the inside and outside of the rim of the Chalice with the purificator after the previous recipient. Our Eucharistic ministers are taught to unfold the cloth (purificator) and use the entire surface to wipe both the inside and outside of the rim after each person receives.

The next thing that is to be done is that the Chalice is turned for the next person so that the same surface is not coming into contact, thus allowing a few seconds for the air to dry the Cup and some of the germs that may remain after wiping. Also, after Mass, the chalices are then washed with hot water and soap so that any remaining germs are washed away before the next use.

Lastly, and maybe most important is that education has to take place that if someone might be ill, they refrain from taking of the Precious Blood at least until after they have recovered from the illness. It is best to refrain for the time being than to pass on any illness that might be present through your hands coming in contact with the Chalice.

Though there has to be a certain amount of trust that God will protect us from disease and/or illness when we partake of His Precious Blood, we also have to acknowledge that we have to be vigilant when we can be, especially during this time of the year. Please keep this in mind along with the realization that I purify the Sacred Vessels after Holy Communion, and they are washed afterwards with soap and water. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.