



A word from Fr. Bill.....



Dear Parishioners:

I trust you all had a nice Thanksgiving. I know a number of people who say Thanksgiving is their favorite holiday because it does not involve all the hecticness of Christmas. It is truly a time to gather with family and friends without worrying about trees, lights, and presents, etc. I hope you enjoyed your turkey and those with whom you ate it.

This now brings us to a new Church year and the First Sunday of Advent. This year Advent is the longest it can ever be--four full weeks. This is a time for us (first two weeks) to prepare for the second coming of Christ and then (second two weeks) to prepare for the celebration of the first coming of Jesus. Our society tells us that the Christmas season begins immediately after Halloween and ends on Christmas Day. The reality for us as Christians is that the Christmas season begins on Christmas and ends at the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord which this year is Monday, January 9th. It is very easy to get swallowed up in our culture and consequently not take advantage of the Advent Season. We offer the following five ways in our parish to help prepare for the celebration of the first coming of Jesus and to prepare His second coming.

- 1) You will find in the back of the church two different booklets which suggest a reflection for each day. One is a reflection on the scripture passages from each day's Mass. The other is a reflection each day from either Pope Francis, St. Mother Teresa or Fr. Henri Nouwen. Please take one of each.
- 2) In the four weekend bulletins in Advent, you will find an insert with reflections on a scripture passage, a suggested Advent prayer, a suggested family activity, a connection with the Catechism of the Church and several practical suggestions to practice Advent Joy. An example of one of the suggestions is not to participate in Cyber Monday but to be part of Giving Tuesday.
- 3) In addition to being available for confessions at the regular time on Saturdays at 4:30 PM, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will also be available during Advent after the 11:00 AM and 7:00 PM Masses on Sunday. In a recent talk (November 15th) to Dutch Pilgrims at St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis said Confession can change the Church. If everyone took advantage of this Sacrament and turned from our sins, it would be a different world.
- 4) A number of us will be gathering on the Tuesdays of Advent to learn, reflect on and discuss what Pope Francis says concerning our environment and the "The Care of our Common Home." Topics will include climate change, global warming, drinkable water, what dominion over the earth means, pollution, etc. If you would like to join us, please let me know.
- 5) As in past years, The Giving Tree will be decorated with tags with suggestions for gifts for seven recipients: Adeodatus (former inmates and their families), ADROP (Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor), Women of Hope (a shelter for homeless women), Gift of Life Family House (a residence for transplant patients and their families), Our Brothers Place (a food pantry for the poor), Family House Now (residents in recovery programs) and the Filipino Medical Mission (a mission in the Philippines called FIAT- Filipinos in America Today) where the poor are able to receive assistance. It is not an exaggeration that the gift you buy for someone could be the only Christmas gift that person receives this year. We are grateful to Deidra Gatta for organizing this for us.

At the 5:15 PM Mass this weekend two men will participate in what is called "The Rite of Acceptance" which is part of the process of "The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults" (RCIA.) As the name implies, this is the process which adults experience who are preparing to become Catholic. Let me put all this in context.

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Ignacio (Junior) Romanowski and Pierre Hannecart have been meeting each week since September with Patrick Lanza and me in what is called, "The Inquiry Stage," the initial period in the process of RCIA. During this time, among other things, they have inquired about the journey of faith, the meaning of the Mass, scripture, the role of the pope, bishops, priests, deacons and the laity, the saints, Mary, prayer and the sacraments in general and in particular the sacrament of Baptism.

Having inquired, discussed and reflected on these topics and similar ones, Pierre and Junior now celebrate the "Rite of Acceptance" and move into the next stage of the process. At the 5:15 PM Mass on Saturday, they will tell the community that they are seeking to grow in faith. They will be introduced to the community by their respective sponsors and the parish community assures them of our prayers and support.

Pierre who has never been baptized is now officially called a "Catechumen" as he continues the process to receive all the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, April 15th.

Junior, who is called a "Candidate" has been baptized Catholic but he has never made his First Communion or Confirmation. He will receive these sacraments the Sunday after Easter, April 23rd.

We assure Pierre and Junior of our support and prayers during their "Journey of Faith."

Have a wonderful Advent and a great week.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Bill".

Fr. Bill