

December 2020

Dear Parishioners,

***Blessing of hope this Advent Season!***

The season of Advent is one of hope and joy. Hope that our Savior is once again being remembered in the promises made to the people of Israel that a ***“Savior will be born to us. A Son is given”***, and joy as we reflect this gift. As we put up the colored banners, Advent Wreath, and other decorations of the Advent season, we are reminded that the time is very short before the Christmas moment of the Lord’s birth. We have 4 weeks to prepare ourselves for this great feast in the church.

Advent is a time of penance and patience. Prayer, contemplation, and meditation are important Christian practices to do during this time of anticipation. How do we set aside a few minutes of every day to prepare? Maybe using the readings from the daily Mass and the readings from Sunday give us ample material to think about. A family reciting the rosary can give us pause during the hectic days of December. Fasting from TV, and other forms of entertainment and certain foods can help us concentrate on the needs of the poor, the stranger who lives among us, the immigrant, and be mindful that there are millions of people who go to bed hungry because of lack of food and water.

The season ritualizes a fundamental theme of biblical thought, that the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is a God who constantly draws near to humanity. From the moment when Adam and Eve hear the voice of God calling, “Where are you” (Genesis 3) until the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation, God draws near to a wandering people through saving deeds and words of wisdom. God longs and loves to take flesh in “figures of expectation” woven into the tapestry of the Advent readings. Four stand out: the prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist, Mary, and Joseph. We take our annual journey of hope in their company.

The impact of Jesus on hearts and minds has never waned. He continues to influence every corner of the world. He inspires fidelity, conviction, courage and generosity, forgiveness, and mercy. Men and women have dedicated their lives to spreading his message and living his ideal. He is celebrated in art, especially in the beautiful Christmas cards that reproduce great paintings portraying the mother and child of Bethlehem. The soaring notes of Handel’s “Messiah” add to the symphony of celebration. This is the power of the little child, in the stable, under the stars of heaven.

Even though we are amid the pandemic and so many things have changed in our world, we welcome this traditional time of year to be bearers of God’s gift to others. Whether they be presents that are laid under the Christmas tree or the greetings that we send announcing the gift of God’s peace to our loved ones, Jesus is the center of it all. Please put up your Christmas Creche (St. Francis of Assisi’s gift to the world at Christmas time) and tell the children the story of Christmas. Be bold as Catholics and keep our spiritual traditions strong.

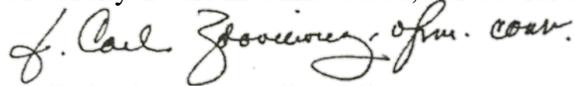
My wish and prayer is that our medical and science world will come together and produce a vaccine that will help us tear down the fear of this dreaded disease.

Enclosed is a small envelope for a Christmas Gift to Our Lady of Mercy Church. It will help with the shortfall in our collections that we experience every month. I hope that your generosity will enable each parishioner to gift the church with some financial assistance.

Thank you all for a year of patience and acceptance of what is. Your understanding and giving of yourselves in ministry are an inspiration to me and to all. Each one of you provides a living stone that together forms the Church. It is the church, the people of God, that we find our nourishment in the Eucharist and the breaking open of the Word of God. May this Christmas season bring more hope and goodness to your homes, families, and friends. May Christ the true Light of the world bring us the morning star that directs us towards revealed truth and goodness.

*O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!"* (Forest Green)

Gratefully Yours in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord,



Fr. Carl Zdancewicz, OFM Conv.

Pastor

