

Second Sunday of Advent



News You Can Use...from Fr. Steve

Advent

Since the penitential and emptying quality of Advent is completely foreign to secular culture and of no marketable value and therefore ignored, that leaves a large vacuum between Thanksgiving and Christmas, which is filled in by...MORE. Every year, like a junkie who can never be satisfied, we have more lights, more glitter, more tinsel, and more sales, more stuff. When the sacred celebration of Christ's birth finally arrives, we have been stuffed and glutted and horribly distended in mind, body and spirit. It's not a feeling of joy and rejoicing we feel but a feeling of "Thank God it's over."

Of course, the holidays themselves are not to blame for this sad spiritual vacuity, and we cannot blame Wall Street or Wal-Mart for turning Christmas into a commodity. We have only ourselves to blame for how we have chosen to prepare for Christmas. The Church offers the special anticipatory season of Advent to sharpen and heighten our desires and dreams and properly prepare for the Word made flesh, so that we might center our hearts and minds on what Christmas really means.

It's clear to me that Christmas needs Advent. Since we have eviscerated Advent, we have cut the umbilical cord that gives birth to Christmas as a Holy Day instead of a Holiday. It is not surprising that so many Christmas stories are directed backwards, to past childhood memories, trying to recover the lost wonder and joy and innocence. The disciplines of Advent are adult spiritual practices: setting aside time for prayerful waiting, removing clutter inside our hearts and carving out a space for Christ to be born, allowing the seeker and the wise man in us to surface and focus on what is truly sacred and life-giving. Having chosen to give up such rich spiritual postures and attitudes and replace them with hectic and frenetic busyness, when Christmas finally arrives, devoid of interior preparation – we cannot embrace it as our soul's true fulfillment, but only feel relieved that it is finally over. Instead of thanking God for Christmas, we thank God for Christmas Gone.

Advent and Weekday Mass

One of the best ways of celebrating Advent and preparing for the birth of the Savior is to attend weekday Masses in addition to Sunday. Attending weekday Mass offers a fountain of grace for our Advent hearts. The weekday scripture readings are some of the most beautiful and poignant passages in the Old and New Testaments, and rich material for mediation and prayer.

Advent Penance Service: THIS MONDAY...

December 7, at 7:00 pm in Church. Plan to start Advent and the holiday Season right with renewed mind and heart.

Tuesday December 8 – Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception - Holy Day of Obligation

All Masses in Church: 7:30 AM, 12:05 PM, 5:15 PM, 7:00 PM

Merry Christmas St. Agatha St. James – Hoping

Please give thought and prayer to making your annual Christmas offering to St. AJ. You can see the needs in the parish that call out for your generous support and the need in your own heart to express gratitude to Almighty God by being a generous giver to His church, your spiritual family. In your desire to be caring and thoughtful to so many people at this time, don't forget us.

Advent Adult Faith Formation Presentation

Next Sunday after the 10 AM Mass at Catholic Forum, Fr. Steve will offer thoughts on fashioning your personal spiritual environment to support and challenge your commitment to be an authentic disciple. Refreshments available.

This Week at St. AJ

Saturday, December 5

4:00PM Confessions
5:30PM Vigil Mass *Intentions of Parishioners and Benefactors*

Sunday, December 6

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10:00AM Mass *John J. Gilmartin*
Catholic Forum After 10:00AM Mass Downstairs in Parish Hall
11:30AM Mass *Intentions of the Gatto and Seminole Families*
5:00PM Mass *Dorothy Jochem*
10:00PM Mass *Intentions of Students of Area Universities*

Monday, December 7

12:05PM Mass *Special Intention for Lowell*

7:00PM Advent Penance Service in Church

Tuesday, December 8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

7:30AM Mass *Intentions of the Stone Family*
12:05PM Mass *Intentions of the Nguyen Family*
5:15 PM Mass
7:00PM Mass

7:00PM RCIA Meeting Penn Newman Center

Wednesday, December 9

7:30AM Mass *Holy Souls in Purgatory*
12:30PM to 2:00PM Church will be open today.

Thursday, December 10

7:30AM Mass *Intentions of Greg Chesnut*

Friday, December 11

No 7:30 AM Mass on Friday.

Saturday, December 12

9:00AM Mass *Holy Souls in Purgatory*
4:00PM Confessions
5:30PM Vigil Mass *Intentions of Parishioners and Benefactors*



Next Sunday - 2nd Sunday Hospitality

Reminder: Next Sunday, the second Sunday of the month, we have hospitality in the Parish Hall after the 10 am and 11:30 am Masses. All are welcome.

Annual Retirement Fund for Religious Collection

This annual collection is scheduled for next weekend, Dec. 11 and 12. Cardinal Rigali reminds us how important this effort is on behalf of men and women religious who serve the Church so well and who witness so dramatically to God's kingdom in our midst.

"Over the past years the Annual Retirement Fund for Religious Collection in our country has provided much needed assistance for those religious who have generously given of themselves in the service of the Gospel. In these uncertain economic times, we all recognize the additional burden placed upon religious congregations in caring for their elderly, sick and retired members. The role of consecrated religious in the history of the American Church offers a truly remarkable witness. With great enthusiasm, and often in difficult and trying circumstances, these men and women have undertaken the challenge of bringing Christ's salvific message and comfort to so many needing that grace. Sacrifice and prayer give life and sustenance to all our efforts. Once again I ask you for your continued generous support for our devoted brothers and sisters in the Retirement Fund for Religious Collection."

Day of Sanctification for Priests

This Wednesday, Dec. 9, priests of the Archdiocese will gather at St. Charles Seminary for the annual **Day of Sanctification for Priests**. Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, Bishop of Worcester, Mass., will deliver the keynote address. The day will provide an opportunity for an afternoon of prayer and reflection time before the Blessed Sacrament, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, sharing in the fraternity of priesthood, and conclude with a simple buffet meal. Please keep in prayer those priests who participate.