

First Sunday of Advent



News You Can Use...from Fr. Steve

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like...Christ-miss

Oops a typo. Not really. Just making a point; trying to recover something, or should I say "someone" who is lost at CHRISTmas. Each year, it seems to me, we lose a little more meaning and beauty from our Holy Seasons and Holy Days, as they are contorted and disfigured by commercial and secular priorities. For instance, the Holy Season of Advent, which begins Thanksgiving weekend, will surely be gobbled, as surely as the turkey and all the trimmings. Halloween has scared away All the Saints, Epiphany is drunk away by the frenzy of New Year's, and the Easter Bunny, with his jelly beans and chocolate ears, leaps completely over Lent. Christmas, while not entirely devoured by the commercial compulsions, has become a retail plaything.

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 gigantic 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 may focus clearly 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 Holly day. 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 discipline of Advent requires adult spiritual practices: set aside time for prayerful waiting, remove clutter inside our hearts and carve out a space for Christ to be born, allowing the seeker and the Wiseman in us to surface and focus on what is truly authentic, sacred, and life-giving. Having chosen to give up such rich spiritual postures and attitudes and replaced them with hectic and frenetic busyness, when Christmas finally arrives, devoid of interior preparation – we cannot embrace it as the 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.

Merry Christmas St. Agatha-St. James – Hoping...

Please give some thought and prayer to making your annual Christmas offering to your parish. Hopefully, you will see the needs in the parish that call out for your generous support and the need in your own heart that wants 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 Penance Service – Monday, Dec. 1 at 7 pm

This Week at St. AJ

Saturday, November 29

9:00AM Mass *Holy Souls in Purgatory*
4:00PM Confessions
5:30PM Vigil Mass *Malcolm Mackenzie*

Sunday, November 30

First Sunday of Advent

10:00AM Mass *The Candeloro & Zagrosky Families*
11:30AM Mass *Julian Dobrowolski*
5:00PM Mass *Elizabeth Dobrowolska*
10:00PM Mass *Intentions of Students of our area Universities*

Monday, December 1

7:00PM Parish Penance Service in Church

Wednesday, December 3

7:30AM Mass *Holy Souls in Purgatory*
12:30pm to 2:00pm Church is NOT open this week.

Saturday, December 6

9:00AM Mass *Holy Souls in Purgatory*

Reflective Advent Words

As we prepare for the coming of the Word made flesh, here are some Advent Words that we might en flesh in our lives:

- The chief reason for all the misunderstanding of Christ's teaching is that it is considered to be a teaching we can accept without changing our lives. Leo Tolstoy*
- Any occurrence that moves us out of taking life for granted is a gift. Robert J. Wicks*
- We ask too little of Life. We dream too small. We stand at open gateways into the divine, but forever hesitate, satisfied with the view through cracks in the wall. John Kirvan*
- If I were to let my life be taken over by what is urgent, I would never get around to what is essential. Henri Nouwen*
- A quiet hour is worth more to you than anything you can do with it. Sarah Orne Jewett*

Looking Ahead: Important Dates

- Monday, December 1
Parish Penance Service will be held in Church at 7:00 pm. Attend and start Advent and the Holiday Season correctly.
- Monday, Dec. 8 – Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception Holy Day of Obligation. No Vigil Mass. Mass schedule:
In Church at 7:30 am, 12:05 pm, and 5:15 pm on Dec. 8
At Drexel Newman Center at 1:00 pm and 7:00 pm Dec. 8
- Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve Vigil Mass
This year, St. Agatha-St. James will celebrate a Vigil Mass of Christmas at 8:00 pm instead of a Midnight Mass.
- On three consecutive Sundays - the 4th Sunday of Advent, Dec. 21, and Sunday, Dec. 28 (Holy Family), and Sunday, January 4 (Epiphany), there will be NO 10 PM MASS.

Next Sunday December 7: Farewell to Fr. Zlock

Next Sunday, parishioners and friends will have the opportunity to bid Fr. Charles Zlock a fond farewell as he leaves Saint Agatha-St. James and the Penn Newman Center on December 19 to take up his new job as a member of the Clergy Office. Cardinal Rigali has appointed him to this position and we know he will do well in this important work of ministering to his fellow priests in the various ways that the Clergy Office oversees priestly life and ministry in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Fr. Zlock will be present at all the Masses on this Sunday to say a few words and meet people after Mass. After the 10 and 11:30 AM Masses, we will have coffee and cake in the parish hall. This will serve as our regularly scheduled Hospitality Sunday. After the 10 PM Mass, there will be a gathering for students in the Penn Newman Center.