

Dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

“Advent is the time we are given to welcome the Lord who comes to encounter us, and also to verify our longing for God, to look forward and prepare ourselves for Christ’s return.” – Pope Francis, Angelus 3 December 2017

Our season of Advent is an abbreviated one this year with the Fourth Sunday of Advent being Christmas Eve. However, this does not diminish our hope, our joy, or our longing. I know that the importance of all that keeps us busy this time of year. The holiday traditions are important because they often bring together family and friends. These are the moments that happen only once a year. It is good that we want to pick out the perfect gift because that is an expression of our love for the person being gifted. More important, however, is the encounter with the Lord.

Let us think a bit more about this encounter for which we are preparing. The thing that sets us apart from most other world religions is the Incarnation. Other belief systems cannot fathom their God being so humble as to become one of us. Just think of how the pagan gods needed to be appeased. For us it is just the opposite. Our God is so humble that He chose to become one of us in all things but sin. God has left the comfortable confines of paradise to live on this earth experiencing all the joys and sorrows that we experience. This is an encounter that changed the course of human history. Moreover, it will continue to change human history if we allow it. That can only be done with intentional preparation and that is why the Church in Her wisdom gives us the Advent season. We are preparing for the encounter of God and man which brought about salvation and fills the longing of every human heart. Yes, our to-do list is important but not more important than that.

We have a number of different resources that can help you pray this Advent season. I sincerely hope and pray that this will be the most fruitful Advent season so that together we will meet at the manger with hearts prepared and full of joy.

Please note that the 11:00 a.m. Mass on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> is canceled. This is to help ease the burden of the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve falling on the same day this year. Also remember that one must attend Mass either the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> or the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> to fulfill the obligation for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Then, one must attend either the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> or the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> to fulfill the Christmas obligation. The Mass schedule is as follows:

Saturday, December 23 – 4:00 p.m. (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent)

Sunday, December 24 – 7:30 a.m. & 9:00 a.m. (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent)

Sunday, December 24 – 4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., 10:30 p.m. (Christmas)

Monday, December 25 – 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. (Christmas)

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Aaron R. Laskiewicz

Pastor