

Dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

A blessed Advent season to you all! As we begin a new Church year, I hope and pray that this holy season becomes a time of renewal for each of us as we prepare for the Nativity of our Lord. If you are anything like me, every year you resolve not to let the busyness of this season overwhelm you. There is so much that is good—so many traditions, gatherings, and preparations—but in the midst of it all we must remember the true reason for everything we celebrate: Jesus Christ.

Our family gatherings, which we work so hard to prepare for, should ultimately remind us of the Holy Family and the tremendous gift we have in our own families. The gifts we exchange point us to the greatest gift ever given: Jesus Christ, present to us in the Eucharist. To help us prepare well for Christmas, the Church gives us four pillars for the four weeks of Advent.

The first pillar is Hope. What a fitting beginning to this season, especially as we have recently concluded the Jubilee Year of Hope—a powerful reminder that Christians are always called to live with deep, abiding hope. We await Christmas not with a hope based on chance or fortune, but with a confident trust in the goodness and love of God. Our hope rests in the certainty that God keeps His promises.

The second pillar is Peace. How deeply our world longs for peace. When we live with authentic Christian hope, we are naturally led to a place of peace. This peace flows from knowing that God is with us—Emmanuel—and that He desires to dwell among His people. Even as we face the trials and uncertainties of life, we carry within us the peace that comes from knowing that God walks with us and that a lasting, perfect peace awaits us in the life to come.

The third pillar is Joy. The third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday—“Rejoice!”—calls us to delight in the nearness of the Lord. This week encourages us to rest in the joy that comes from knowing Christ is close. Christian joy is not the same as constant happiness; rather, it is a steadfast disposition of the soul rooted in God’s presence. Even in times of sadness, difficulty, or hardship, we do not lose our joy, for it is anchored in the hope and peace that God plants within us.

Finally, the fourth pillar is Love. Everything returns to love, because God is love. It is love that moved God to create us, and love that redeemed us when humanity fell. God’s love is so radical that He became one of us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Incarnation is, at its heart, a divine love story—between Creator and creature, between God and His beloved people.

I look forward to gathering as the People of God at the manger, beholding the Christ Child, and joining the angels in their hymn of praise: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.”

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Aaron R. Laskiewicz

Pastor