

From the Pastor
November 29, 2020
The First Sunday in Advent

ADVENT SUNDAY

We come today to the First Sunday of the Church's New Year of Grace, the First Sunday in Advent. As we know the Church Year does not follow the calendar year but rather it begins, not on January 1st but rather on the First Sunday in Advent. Thus, today we begin to place our feet along the way of holiness once more.

The season of Advent is grace filled for it is the time of preparation for the coming of Our Divine Savior on Christmas Day. It is said that in true darkness one can never judge the light in the distance. Sailors have discovered this phenomenon at sea as have travelers in the desert. They may see light in the distance but cannot judge how far away it is...is it five miles or five hundred? For the ancient Jews it was much the same as they awaited the coming of the Messiah.

They had been told on that most tragic day, the day of the ruin of our race, that one day a Savior would come who would crush the head of the ancient enemy of our race, the accursed serpent, the devil. But how long would it be...5 years, 50 years, or 500 years? No one was certain. And thus the ancient people of Israel awaited the coming of the Messiah and watched and waited.

Finally, the long wait ended on that first Christmas night when God became a man. In the world of nature we see the nights growing darker and longer right until the time of Christmas. Then suddenly the sun returns and the light shines ever greater on each day. So we are reminded that Our Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light no darkness will ever extinguish.

Let us use these days then to prepare for the coming of the light and to live in intimate union with Our Lady and St. Joseph as they too await the light.

It is my fond hope that many of you have already received the St. Andrew Novena Card. Please make every effort to say this prayer 15 times each day between St. Andrew's Day (November 30th) and Christmas Day.

FIRST FRIDAY AND FIRST SATURDAY: Friday of this week is the First Friday of the month. There will be Holy Mass at 9:00AM and then adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament immediately following Mass until noon. There will be a special Holy Hour conducted by Deacon ray beginning at 7:00PM and concluding at 8PM. Saturday of this week is the First Saturday of the month. Mass will be celebrated at 9AM followed by the Rosary in honor of Our Lady of Fatima.

TREE LIGHTING: Please make every effort to attend our Tree Lighting immediately following the 4:00PM Mass on the evening of Saturday December 5th. We are grateful to the Knights and Squires for providing this fun-filled and grace-filled evening.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY: Because in this year of 2020 the obligation to attend Holy Mass has been dispensed (lifted), the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception December 8th is not a Holyday of Obligation. There is no obligation to attend Mass on December 8th but, nonetheless, Holy Mass will be celebrated at 7:00PM on Monday, December 7th and at 9:00AM and 12:15PM on Tuesday, December 8th. This is the patronal feast of the United States of America. Please consider coming to Mass that day to honor the Immaculate One. *Vergine Immacolata, aiutateci! (Immaculate Virgin, Help Us!)*

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE: Saturday December 12th is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Empress of the Americas. It is under that title, the River of Light, that Our Lady is the Protectress of all the peoples of the Americas, both North America and South America. Our Lady appeared to a humble Aztec St. Juan Diego on the Tepeyac Hill outside Mexico City four times between December 9, 1531 and December 12, 1531 – 487 years ago. There she said *I have come to make known, to manifest, and to demonstrate my love, for all the peoples of these lands* (North and South America). She asked that a Church be built on the Hill and finally she left us the miraculous image that is the most visited object on earth in the Basilica in Mexico City. We are so blessed to have in our Church the Guadalupe Chapel. There we may see images of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego. Both beautiful images are from Mexico and I brought them to New York myself on one of my 14 pilgrimages to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. What a grace that these images now hang in our own Church, in the Guadalupe Chapel. There we may go to confide to our Lady all the desires of our hearts. There we may find the Christmas Giving Basket

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE: It is never too early to think of Christmas. On Christmas Eve our Masses will be at 2:00PM, 4:00PM, and 10:00PM. On Christmas day Holy Mass will be at 9:00AM and 11:00AM. Since Christmas is still a month away, we do not know what the situation will be. Once again, we remind you that the obligation to attend mass has been dispensed in these times of the COVID-19. Certainly, those who are categorized as *high risk* should not attend Mass. These are the elderly, those who have health conditions, and those who are young. Please be cognizant of the schedule and use good judgment in attending Mass. It would be beneficial for all if the faithful would realize that the 4:00PM Mass has traditionally been the most attended mass. Perhaps, some may consider attending another mass. We do not issue tickets or require reservations.

REMINDERS DURING THE TIME OF PANDEMIC: Once again, may I, as your pastor, remind you that we are living in a dangerous time. The obligation to attend mass has been dispensed. For those attending Mass, may we ask that you wear a mask in the proper way. When receiving Communion, the mask should be lowered so that we are not fussing with the mask with the Sacred Host in our hand. Those who prefer to receive Holy Communion on the tongue (which is fully legitimate) should receive after all other have received by coming to the altar rail and kneeling on the cushion. The priest/deacon will place the Sacred Host upon your tongue. Those who receive the low gluten hosts should go to the place where they have always gone.

The Church is fully disinfected after every Mass. Therefore, may we ask that after Mass you leave the Church as quickly as possible. Do not stay in the Church visiting with friends. (Actually, this is never proper). Please greet your friends **OUTSIDE** the Church. The Priest and Deacon do not process at the beginning or end of Mass. No longer do we greet the faithful. Our greeting is the *Lord be with You* at the Mass.

PARISH OFFICE: When we began renovations at the parish two years ago, we were made aware that the Church would be renovated and plumbing, lighting, and electrical work, would be brought up to code. We were also told that Monsignor Costa Hall (the lower Hall) would be cleaned, repainted, fitted with new windows and modernized. That is almost complete. **The PARISH OFFICE IS NOW LOCATED IN MONSIGNOR COSTA HALL (THE LOWER HALL).** **The offices have been moved from both the Rectory and Barn to Monsignor Costa Hall. Thus, everything will be in one place: the secretary/receptionist/office manager (Mrs. Deb Cosentino), the Office of Faith Formation (Mrs. Louise Shannon), the Office of the Pastoral Associate/ Business Manager (Deacon Raymond P. D'Alessio), and the Office of the Pastor (Monsignor Pereda). This will be easier for all our parishioners in that there is only one place to go for any parish business (Mass cards, Sacramental Forms, Sacramental Preparation, marriage arrangements, etc.)** The Rectory will simply be the Residence and Home of the Priest. This is a great grace for me, as it will be for my successors. This arrangement will also guarantee greater security and protection for both our staff and parishioners in these difficult times. This will take some getting used to, but in the many parishes where this has been done, it has always been of great advantage to everyone

Please note that due to the Covid-19 epidemic, and personal health issues, I am not meeting with anyone except couples preparing for marriage. I have been shocked by the several people who have asked to see me in conference and then have revealed

that they have COVID-19. I am not concerned about myself, but rather for my 71-year-old sister and the many other parishioners I see in emergency situations. Thank you most sincerely in understanding my concern. Although the parishioners may make decisions for themselves as to with what they are comfortable, very often the priest cannot. We, too, are front line workers. (But do not get into Costco at the head of the line)!

**MAY GOD BELSS YOU,
AND MARY KEEP YOU.**

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda