

+++ *From the Pastor* +++
The First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2015

Advent: A Joyful Season of Hope and Renewal

On this first Sunday of Advent the Church begins a new year of grace in our Lord Jesus Christ. Each year Almighty God generously gives us this holy season of hope and joy to help us prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of our Savior at Christmas. Each year God call us to prepare the way of the Lord through prayer and works of charity. Each year God calls us back to Himself through the renewal of our hearts and minds and souls as we repent all of our sins. Each year during Advent we are called to go deeper into the mystery of God's infinite love for each of us by renouncing our sins and seeking the mercy of Christ.

At the heart of our preparation during Advent is the mystery of the Incarnation: God becoming Man and making His dwelling among us. By leaving behind all of His glory in heaven and coming to be born among men, Jesus Christ proves His love for us. We, in turn, respond to His love by turning away from sin and seeking His mercy, forgiveness and peace.

The Lord, whose birth we celebrate with such joy at Christmas has, as we know, fulfilled His saving mission through His passion, death and resurrection. He was born, He suffered, He died and He has risen to a new life. Christ will come again in all of His glory at the end of time to draw all of creation to Himself.

So it is that the readings from sacred scripture for Holy Mass for the first part of Advent reflect our prayerful watching and waiting for Christ to come again. During the second part of Advent the readings draw our hearts back to Bethlehem as we prepare, with the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, to receive the Christ-child into our lives at Christmas.

As we enter into the mystery of this holy season of light and hope may we pray for one another that we will grow in holiness. May we use this sacred time that God has given us wisely and well to prepare the way of the Lord and make known His love and mercy through prayer, fasting and works of charity. May this holy season of Advent be a time of renewal for each and every one of us. May we help one another to place all of our hope, trust and confidence in the promises of Christ.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saint John the Baptist and the great prophet Isaiah, may we encourage and strengthen one another to prepare the way of the Lord. May God grant you joy during this first Week of Advent at the dawn of this new year of grace. **Looking Ahead: Tuesday, December 8, is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Holy Day of Obligation and the Patronal Feast Day of the United States of America. Holy Mass will be offered at 9:00 AM and 7:00 PM in the cathedral on this day.**

