



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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Dear Parish Family,

November 28, 2010

Happy New Year! The Church's liturgical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent, that is today. So, Happy New Liturgical Year!

This Friday, our regional celebration of the Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe will begin with a liturgy at St. Paul the Apostle in Ithaca at 7pm. Friday also marks opening night of *Miracle on 34th Street*. Several of the roles are played by parishioners from St. Mary and St. Joseph. Come and see!

In twelve months the new translation of the Mass will begin to be used in our country. There will be additional information on this over the next year.

The video lecture series titled *Boundaries* begins January 5, 2011 at 6:45 pm and continues through the first week of March. The movie *The 13th Day* will be February 11, 2011 at 7:00 pm. Both of these events will be at St. Mary's and are free of charge. A participant's book for *Boundaries* may be purchased.

For those families who lost a loved one during the past year, you may claim the purple candle with their name on it after Mass. If you forget, we will have the candles in the parish offices for you to pick up at your convenience.

During my retreat in Nebraska, I stayed with the priests and seminarians of the Fraternity of St. Peter; and visited the School Sisters of Christ the King. Please remember both these religious communities in your daily prayers.

During this holy season of Advent, let us intensify our prayers in preparation for the great solemnity of Our Lord's Nativity at Christmas. Let us pray for each other; and for those who do not know Christ.

Fr. David

The Faith Explained **THE SEASON OF ADVENT**

Advent (from the Latin word *adventus* meaning "coming") is a season observed as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas. It is the beginning of the liturgical year and commences on Advent Sunday. The Eastern church equivalent of Advent is called the Nativity Fast, but it differs both in length and observances and does not begin the church year, which starts instead in September.

The progression of the season may be marked with an Advent calendar, a practice introduced in Germany. Advent begins four Sundays before December 25 (the Sunday between November 27 to December 3 inclusive). Latin *adventus* is the translation of the Greek word *parousia*, commonly used in reference to the Second Coming of Christ. Advent serves a reminder both of the original waiting of the Israelites for the birth of the Messiah, as well as the waiting of Christians for Christ's return.

The theme of readings and teachings during Advent is both in preparation for the second coming of Christ as well as in commemoration of the first coming of Christ at Christmas. With the view of directing the thoughts of all Christians to the first coming of Jesus Christ as savior and to his second coming as judge, particular readings are prescribed for each of the four Sundays in Advent.

The liturgical color for Advent is purple. On the 3rd Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete Sunday*, the color rose may be used. Many churches make use of Advent wreaths during this season, with one candle representing each of the four Sundays of Advent; and a rose candle being lit on the 3rd Sunday of Advent.

The "Late Advent Weekdays" of December 17-24, mark the singing of the Great Advent 'O antiphons'. These are the antiphons for the *Magnificat* at Evening Prayer and mark the forthcoming birth of the Messiah. They form the basis for each verse of the popular Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel".

From the 4th century the season was kept as a period of fasting as strict as that of Lent. On the third Sunday of Advent, a relaxation of the fast was permitted. The Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches still hold the tradition of fasting for 40 days before the Nativity Feast.

Advent Reflections

ETERNITY

Why must heaven be outside of time? Simply because none of us would want an endless existence on this earth. If it were possible for us to live four hundred years with some kind of vitamin, do you think that we would all swallow them? There would certainly come one moment in our existence when we would want to die. Have you ever been in any one place on this earth that you were absolutely sure would be one in which you would want to spend every day of your life? It is not very likely. The mere extension of time to most of us would probably be a curse instead of a blessing. Then, too, have you ever noticed that your happiest moments have come when eternity almost seems to get inside of your soul? All great inspirations are timeless, and that gives us some suggestion of heaven. Mozart was once asked when he received his inspirations for his great music. He said he saw them all at once in a great heat, a great warmth, a great light. Then there came the succession of notes. So it is in writing a speech. When I prepare a talk, or a telecast, or a book, there comes a moment when the end is seen at the beginning. One cannot write fast enough. There comes to everyone, whether he is good or bad, some dim intimations of immortality such as Wordsworth wrote about. There are, however, people who try to immunize themselves from these thoughts of eternity. They put on a kind of God-proof raincoat, so that the drops of his grace will not get through to them. They shut out eternity.

HEAVEN IS HERE

Too often we think of heaven as being way out there. We draw all kinds of pictures about heaven. Most of them are quite unreal, and because we think of heaven, and even hell, as something that happens to us at the end of time, we keep on postponing it. As a matter of fact, heaven is not way out there; heaven is here. Hell is not way down there; hell could be inside of a soul. There is no such thing as dying and then going to heaven, or dying and going to hell. You are in heaven already; you are in hell already. I have met people who are in hell. I am sure you have too. I have also seen people with heaven in them. If you ever want to see heaven in a child, look at that child on the day of his first communion. If you want to see how much love is related to heaven, just look at the bride and groom at the altar on the day of their wedding. Heaven is there; heaven is there because love is there. I have seen heaven in a missionary nun who was working among the lepers.

Sometimes you see a virtuous young person and you see heaven there. The beauty of such a person is not put on the outside, it is a kind of imprisoned loveliness

that comes from within, as if it were breaking down the bars of flesh in order to find some outward utterance.

HEAVEN GROWS IN US

Heaven is very close to us because heaven is related to a good life in much the same way that an acorn is related to an oak. An acorn is bound to become an oak. He who does not have heaven in his heart now will never go to heaven, and he who has hell in his heart when he dies will go to hell. We must not think that heaven is related to a good life in the same way a gold medal is related to study. Because a gold medal need not follow study. It is purely extrinsic to study. Rather, heaven is related to a good and virtuous life in just the same way that knowledge is related to study. One necessarily follows the other. Hell is not related to an evil life in the same way that spanking is related to an act of disobedience. Spanking need not follow an act of disobedience. As a matter of fact, it rarely follows disobedience today. Rather, it is related in the same way that corruption is related to death. One necessarily follows the other. Therefore, heaven is not just a long way off, we are not to postpone it. It is here. That is to say, it begins here.

I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE

Now we come to what our Lord said about heaven. It was the night of the Last Supper. Jesus gathered about him all his apostles—poor, weak, frail men. He washed their feet. He was facing the agony in the garden, and that terrible betraying kiss of Judas, and even the denial of Peter himself. One would think that all the talk would be about himself. Certainly, when we have trials, that is what we think about. But our Lord thought about the apostles. He saw the sadness in their faces, and he said, “Be not troubled, do not be sad, I go to prepare a place for you. In my father’s house there are many mansions.” How did he know about the Father’s house? He came from there. That was his home. Now preparing to go back home, he tells them about the Father’s house and he says, “I go to prepare a place for you.” God never does anything for us without great preparation. He made a garden for Adam, as only God knows how to make a garden beautiful. Then, when the Israelites came into the promised land, he prepared the land for them. He said he would give them houses full of good things, houses which they never built. He said that he would give them vineyards and olive trees which they never planted. Just so, he goes to prepare a place for us. Why? Simply because we were not made for heaven; we were made for earth. Humanity, by sin, spoiled the earth, and God came down from heaven in order to help us remake it. After having redeemed us, he said that he would now give us heaven, so we got all this: the earth, and heaven too.

Excerpted from “Through the Year with Fulton Sheen”