**December Chaplain’s Report**

***Between Drudgery and Joy:*** *Living Liturgically and Keeping Christ in Christmas!*

This past Sunday we celebrated the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a new liturgical year. “Liturgy” stands for the public work of the Church. It refers primarily to those activities of worship which we are engaged in together as a worshiping community, the most important of which is the mass. At its heart, the Liturgy is a reflection of Jesus Christ’s life and work here on earth and unto eternity. The various seasons as a result take us through the various aspects of his life and ministry and give us cause to pause and reflect upon what those mysteries mean for us here and now today.

For some Catholics the Liturgical Year boils down to the simple distinction between “*Lent*” and “*Not-Lent*.” The reason for this is understandable with many of the powerful outward signs and sacramentals that appear around the time of Lent; Ashes, Stations of the Cross, Meatless Fridays etc. The Liturgical Year as a whole though has so much to teach us about how we are to live and love as disciples of Christ in an increasingly secular world; a world very much in need of Christ and his Cross. More immediately, the liturgy has much to teach us about how we may truly “Keep Christ in Christmas,” as the slogan goes.

To illustrate the difference, a book came out last year entitled, ***Numbering My Days: How the Liturgical Year Rearranged My Life*** by Chene Heady. Heady is in this book described his journey from living stress-filled, frantic life according to the clock, or “*Chronos*” time, in contrast with living according to a different sort of a time, a sacred time wherein the same stressors still existed but were carried out with a greater peace, joy and freedom. This sacred time is “*Kairos*” time. “*Chronos*” is the Greek word for describing time that goes according to the clock, the time told in minutes, hours, dates, appointments etc. “*Kairos”* is the Greek word for describing a time on the other hand that is specially appointed, marked by the special presence of God. The Liturgical Year helps us practically live in this sacred time.

*Chronos* time might also be called “*Secular*” time. To say something is “Secular” is to say it is “*of the age*,” or, as the saying goes, “here *today* and gone *tomorrow*.” Our preparations for Christmas by and large secular. Lights come up, lights go down, Christmas trees arrive, are decorated and eventually go the way of all trees. Caught up in the time-bound traditions of Christmas and the time leading up to it, it’s understandable why the liturgical season of Advent is easy to overlook. Society bombards us with secular notions of the “Holiday Season,” a secular substitute for Christmas. We combat such a subversion by way of worship.

The feast we celebrated on the Sunday following Thanksgiving and Black Friday, the last Sunday of Ordinary Time, is worth calling to mind for a moment as we begin reflect upon the true meaning of Advent and the celebration it prepares us to recall – the Incarnation, the Birth of Christ. That feast is the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Pope Pius XI instituted that feast in 1925 and its significance ought not to be lost on us today. The problem that faced the world of Pius XI are not that different from those we experience today. Pius XI’s intention behind establishing this feast was to combat the disease of “*anti-clericalism*” or “*laicism*” by reminding the Christian people in whose Kingdom they have been called to be citizens of by virtue of their Baptism. Both “*anti-clericalism*” and “*laicism*” are synonyms for a word we’re much more familiar with, namely “*secularlism*.” What are the signs of the disease? As practical Catholic men who are brothers, fathers, husbands and sons – as *men*…we should take special note of the signs of this disease. He writes.

*“The rebellion of individuals and states against the authority of Christ has produced deplorable consequences. […] the seeds of discord sown far and wide; those bitter enmities and rivalries between nations, which still hinder so much the cause of peace; that insatiable greed which is so often hidden under a pretense of public spirit and patriotism, and gives rise to so many private quarrels; a blind and immoderate selfishness, making men seek nothing but their own comfort and advantage, and measure everything by these; no peace in the home, because men have forgotten or neglect their duty; the unity and stability of the family undermined; society in a word, shaken to its foundations and on the way to ruin.”*

Pius XI by instituting this Liturgical Feast aimed at helping the men and women of this age break out of the drudgery of day-to-day angst and agitation into the joy and peace of eternity. Advent prepares us not only for the coming of Christ at Christmas but for his coming at the end of time, his second coming. The readings and prayers of the Liturgy call us to reflect upon this reality in the early days of Advent and help us see that the joy and anticipation we feel at Christmas ought to be the model for our joy and anticipation at the Second Coming of Christ.

So what does that look like – how do we live it? “Keeping Christ in Christmas” will only be possible if we first make Christ the cornerstone of our lives as practical Catholics. Advent is not only marked by joyful expectation but also *conversion*. Turning back to God and away from sin. It can be a time to intensify our spiritual exercises – meditation, the rosary, reading scripture. A great aid in helping us live Liturgically is by subscribing to “*The Word Among Us*” of “*Magnificat*.” These provide the texts for daily mass and reflections upon them. Let’s make a special effort as Knights to remind the world of the importance of keeping Christ in Christmas not only by our pins, bumper magnets and lawn signs – let’s remind the world by being the signs of that King who is to come.

Here are some links where you can find daily missalette magazines:

**Magnificat:** http://bookstore.magnificat.net/subscription

**The Word Among Us:** https://wau.org/subscribe/

**Give Us This Day:** https://www.giveusthisday.org/

**Coming Up:**

***December***

* Advent Season
  + Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Friday, December 8, 2017) – Holy Day of Obligation (Always a Holy Day of Obligation regardless of the day it falls on)
  + Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Tuesday, December 12, 2017)
    - To learn more about this fascinating apparition and sign see Knights of Columbus documentary on FORMED.org: “Guadalupe: The Miracle and the Message”
* Christmas Season
  + Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord (Monday, December 25, 2017) – Holy Day of Obligation (Always a Holy Day of Obligation regardless of the day it falls on)
  + Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday, December 31, 2017)
    - Prayer of Consecration of the Holy Family (#10371) available on www. kofc.org

***January***

* Christmas Season (cont’d)
  + Solemnity of Mary Mother of God (Monday, January 1, 2017) (Not a Holy Day of Obligation this year as it falls on a Monday)
* National March for Life (Friday, January 19, 2017)
* National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (Monday, January 22, 2017)
  + Rosary Novena, Fasting and Self-denial in preparation for this day are highly recommended