**December Chaplain’s Report**

***“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent”***

This past Sunday we celebrated the First Sunday of Advent; the beginning of that season of the Church’s year wherein we prepare immediately to remember Our Lord’s first coming in the flesh as a babe in Bethlehem. This time however also prepares us for the time when Christ will come again, ***“not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*** The word ***“Advent”*** is the Latin rendering of the Greek word, ***“Parousia”*** which refers to the Lord’s Second Coming particularly. This season, short thought I may be is characterized by a spirit of preparation for the Lord whenever and wherever he comes in our lives and hearts.

St. Charles Borromeo, and I am going to quote him at length, sums up this season well in a few short lines writing:

***Each year, as the Church recalls this mystery, she urges us to renew the memory of the great love God has shown us. This holy season teaches us that Christ’s coming was not only for the benefit of his contemporaries; his power has still to be communicated to us all. We shall share his power, if, through holy faith and the sacraments, we willingly accept the grace Christ earned for us, and live by that grace and in obedience to Christ.***

***The Church asks us to understand that Christ, who came once in the flesh, is prepared to come again. When we remove all obstacles to his presence he will come, at any hour and moment, to dwell spiritually in our hearts, bringing him the riches of his grace.***

***In her concern for our salvation, our loving mother the Church uses this holy season to teach us through hymns, canticles and other forms of expression, of voice or ritual, used by the Holy Spirit. She shows us how grateful we should be for so great a blessing, and how to gain its benefit: our hearts should be as much prepared for the coming of Christ as if he were still to come into this world.[[2]](#footnote-2)***

So how can we ensure that our hearts are ***“much prepared”*** as St. Charles suggests the following are a few suggestions. In the gospel for this past Sunday, Jesus spoke to the disciples of his second coming and recommended they beware of three things that could make them sluggish to welcome him when he comes. He said: ***“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise.”[[3]](#footnote-3)***

Carousing, drunkenness and anxiety are spoken of in other terms in the Church’s tradition as our three principle temptations: ***the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.*** Lust has not only to do with sexual sin/temptation but the desire for anything to excess. Lust of the flesh deals with physical pleasure; our desire to feel good/comfortable to excess. Lots of opportunities to counter this temptation during the holidays, especially in our use of food and drink: as in one plate vs. three, two drinks vs. six.

Lust of the eyes deals with the desire for things that make us feel good; things in general. We do well here to consider what we actually need vs. what we only want. We might counter this by generosity, giving not only from our surplus but sometimes from our lack too.

Pride of life has to do with the anxious, excessive desire for control in all things pertaining to our life here and now. We might counter this by way of prayer. One great way of prayer in this time of advent is to consider a particular hymn or prayer pertaining to Christmas and meditatively walking through it. For example, ***“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence.”*** This short song is rich in symbolism and meaning. It is a subtle melody, slow, heavy, and ponderous. As one listens to and considers that melody alone, he cannot help but get the impression something mighty is coming. This one born of Mary is king of kings and the angels bow before him – the mystery of the eternal word taking flesh and dwelling among us. For short verses capture well what no song can adequately render: the singular event upon which time and eternity pivot in man’s experience the dawning of his redemption.

Christ comes to us at Christmas as a babe, at the end of time he will come in glory. Most immediately he comes to us in the sacraments; especially in Penance and the Eucharist. May he find us ready when he comes.

**Practical Tips:**

***1) Make a game plan for Advent***

* ***Take a few moments to prayerfully consider a spiritual game plan for Advent incorporating a little prayer, fasting and almsgiving.***

***2) Make a good confession before Christmas.***

***3) Take up some spiritual reading; e.g. The Gospel of Luke.***

**Coming Up:**

***December***

* Advent Season
  + Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Saturday, December 8, 2018) – Holy Day of Obligation (Always a Holy Day of Obligation regardless of the day it falls on)
  + Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Wednesday, December 12, 2018)
    - 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 (Tuesday, December 25, 2018) – Holy Day of Obligation (Always a Holy Day of Obligation regardless of the day it falls on)
  + Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday, December 30, 2018)

***January***

* Christmas Season (cont’d)
  + Solemnity of Mary Mother of God (Monday, January 1, 2018) (Holy Day of Obligation this year)
* National March for Life (Friday, January 19, 2018)
* National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (Tuesday, January 22, 2018)
  + Rosary Novena, Fasting and Self-denial in preparation for this day are highly recommended

1. [*New American Bible*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nabre?ref=BibleNABRE.Heb9.27&off=3&ctx=+his+sacrifice.s+27%C2%A0~Just+as+it+is+appoin). (2011). (Revised Edition, Heb 9:27–28). Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. St. Charles Borromeo, *The Season of Advent* as seen in Liturgy of the Hours I, *Monday of the First Week of Advent*, pp.152-153. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [*New American Bible*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nabre?ref=BibleNABRE.Lk21.34&off=32&ctx=to+Be+Vigilant.+34%C2%A0%E2%80%9C~%E2%80%A2Beware+that+%E2%80%A2your+h). (2011). (Revised Edition, Lk 21:34). Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)