

## After the Heart of Jesus ...

*“In every age, O God,  
you have been our REFUGE.  
In every age, O God,  
you have been our HOPE.”*

These are words we will sing throughout this Advent season as our psalm response. We want to focus on HOPE during this season of preparation. How do we maintain a stance of hope in the midst of the crises we encounter in our world and the personal crises and tragedies of every day living? This is a task worthy of our Advent journey.



Advent has a few basic themes. The scripture readings begin with a world that needs a savior and a people in need of salvation. The focus is on the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time. Towards the end of the season the scriptures tell of the story of how the birth of Jesus came to be and the focus becomes how Jesus can be born anew in our hearts this year.

Too often the temptation is to fast forward to the Christmas story and to not spend time with the readings that call us to admit our need for the savior -- that we live in a world in desperate need of salvation and that we ourselves, as sinners, need forgiveness. We live in Advent Hope that the promises of God for redemption have been and will continue to be fulfilled in Christ. Advent meditation booklets “Living in Hope” are available to help keep us on spiritual track throughout a season filled with distractions.

Father Mario and I have also sent to the families in our School of Religion and Catholic School who have children in kindergarten through third grade a booklet of Advent activities and devotions called ADVENTures. It is our gift to help families prepare for Christmas by learning about the things we see, hear, smell, and touch during this season of anticipation. Extra copies are available in the narthex and at the parish house.

Throughout Advent, we are adding a confession time on Tuesday evenings at 5:30 PM. We will be in the reconciliation room (s) from 5:30 to 6:00 PM, or until all confessions have been heard. These will be in addition to the regular Saturday confessions at 4:00 PM. Hopefully this will afford more people the opportunity to experience the healing grace of God in reconciliation. Of course, we are also available by appointment to celebrate the sacrament of penance.

It was great to see not just a Giving “Tree” but a whole Giving “Forest” full of tags taken to support needy families in the area and other causes that will help others experience a Merry Christmas. All gifts are due back by next Sunday, December 9, for the Big Sort, when presents are prepared to give to the agencies for distribution to families. I want to thank the dedicated families who each year coordinate this effort. *Two of the families that lead the Giving Tree effort would like to hand the reigns of leadership over to other families within the next year. If you and your family feel called to this special role of helping over 1500 people receive a special gift at Christmas, please contact me in the parish house before December 7.*



Also, during Advent Father Mario and I will be visiting all of the homebound in the parish to offer the sacraments of penance, anointing of the sick, and communion. We will be using the list of people visited on Sundays by the ministers of care. If there are others in the parish, who are either permanently or temporarily homebound, who would benefit from a pastoral visit by one of us during Advent, please call me at the Parish House so that we can make arrangements to visit with them.

Please join us for some of the many festivities this weekend with the Fair Trade Fair, Pizza and Salad Supper, Pancake Breakfast, Abbington House Bake Sale and Craft Fair, and the Spirit of Life Chorus Concert. Details about these activities are found inside the bulletin.

**Saturday, December 8, is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, a Holy Day of Obligation.** Our Masses will be on Friday, at 7:00 PM and on Saturday morning at 9:15 AM.

As we begin this Advent season, may we all live ...

After the Heart of Jesus!  
*Father John*