

ISSUE No. XV

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

3 DECEMBER 2017

Cathedral WEEKLY



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Cathedral WEEKLY

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The point of Advent (which begins the new Christian liturgical year, and itself begins today) is threefold, as I understand it.

First, we prepare ourselves for the anniversary of Christ's nativity, called Christmas through fasting and prayer. Second, we renew our desire to be reborn in Him, in fulfillment of the promise of Christmas through fasting and prayer. Third, we ready ourselves for His coming again, in the end of days, to judge the quick and the dead through fasting and prayer.

It will be seen, that apart from merriment and indulgence, Advent is a season of fasting and prayer. Not on the scale of Lent, before Easter, and barely half the duration of Lent; nor filled with the quality of sorrow and ashes, that marks the Lenten season. Still, fasting and prayer. There will be time enough to celebrate through the twelve days of Christmas, when irreligious men and women are recovering from their own celebration of they know not what. (They have their reward.)

In previous years, I made something like these points at Christmas, but it strikes me now that the first Sunday in Advent would be a more appropriate moment to express regret, and exhortation.

In England, once, I was invited for Christmas to the house of old family friends in north Oxfordshire. I was very poor then, and had thus had a sober and humble Advent, if largely against my will. It was in fact my first Advent as a believing Christian.

The train ticket I'd bought, to take me from London to Banbury, was a major expense, and a luxury. Surprise: the train stopped at Oxford town, twenty-something miles short of my destination, and I was turned out on the platform. I hadn't realized that, under the laudable old socialist regime that Lady Thatcher later swept away, all British Rail trains shut down in a kind of general strike, wherever they happened to be, as midnight approached on Christmas Eve.

Don't get me wrong: it is one of the things about socialism I miss. England in the 1970s was quite dysfunctional. This made it cheap to live there. And around, you could see the decay of what

had once been a great capitalist nation, and the seat of a vast Empire. There is beauty in decay. I miss the chill of the English winter, when the coal miners all went on strike. I miss the candle-light, when the electricity went down. I miss the rotting Brussels sprouts from New Covent Garden. I even miss the pomposity of the working class heroes, running the country into the ground. I remember it all through the pink lens of nostalgia. Ah to be young again, and in England.

And on that platform at Oxford. The couple of miles from Banbury to my friends cottage in the village of Adderbury would have been a fine evening's stroll. But I would now have the pleasure of walking right through the brisk clear winter night, without even the companionship of the crescent moon that was sinking on the western horizon. I found the Banbury Road, and set along on foot. There were no cars on it, either. None.

I remember it as one of the happiest evenings of my life. Just me, and the stars, and the dark world around me, mediaeval under starlight. And the sense that I was walking towards Christmas. (Which of these is the star of Bethlehem?) When I was cold, I sang carols to myself.

I arrived in Adderbury, some time towards dawn. Having no watch, I could guess the time only by the constellations. I knew it was too early to knock on my friend's door. The whole village was sleeping, and the only light was in the sacristy of the ancient church. I went into the churchyard, among the gravestones. I felt at one with forty generations of the English dead.

Suddenly there was a peal of bells, some miles away in the direction from which I'd come. Then another, nearer, at Bloxham. And then, right above me, the bells of St Mary the Virgin, Adderbury, pealing out, deafening in their joy. Bells, everywhere right across England! The bells were pealing, to announce Christmas Day.

This is what I want to share today the bells of Christmas morning with my reader, who is Christian, or lapsed; or never having been a Christian, wonders what it might be like. To hear their glory, we must fast and pray.

*David Warren is an on and off again journalist from Toronto, Canada.
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RENEWAL OF OUR PARISH



Savior of the nations, come!

This weekend the church year begins anew as we begin the holy season of Advent, a name derived from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "the coming." This holy season looks to the two comings of Christ; first, we look forward to our Lord's return in glory at

the end of time, and, second, beginning December 17th, we look back remembering that our Lord came to us in time to be one with us in all things but sin. While it may not have the same depth of austerity as Lent, Advent is a penitential season where the words of the prophets echo to us from ages past to prepare a way for the Lord in our hearts and lives.

I know that this time of year is a busy time for many of us, but I encourage you to not get swept away in the commotion. Advent is a beautiful season and even though it is penitential (thus the use of the color violet), it also possesses a subdued joy and peace. I encourage you to make use of this season and set aside some time for yourself with the Lord. May every nation, home, and heart make room for Christ, the Prince of Peace.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

This Friday, December 8th, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This day remembers that Mary, from the very first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother St. Anne, was kept free from all touch or stain of sin, thus the Latin inscription above the great mosaic in the Cathedral *macula non est in te* (no stain is in you). This great gift of grace was to prepare her to be a perfect vessel in which the Lord Jesus would take on our human nature in all

things but sin, taking his flesh and bone from Mary. This great solemnity is a holy day of obligation; Masses will be at 5:15PM for the vigil on Thursday the 7th and at 7:00AM, 12:05PM, and 5:15PM on Friday the 8th. Come and honor Mary our Blessed Mother, the Immaculate Conception, who is patroness of our cathedral, diocese, and nation.

Greetings from the Holy Land

As you read this I am in the middle of my time in the Holy Land, serving as spiritual director for the diocesan pilgrimage. Last week saw us in Galilee for a few nights and as of Saturday we arrive in Jerusalem for six nights, returning home on the 8th. I am praying for all of you; please pray for the safe journey of the group. God bless you!

Father Christopher House is the Rector-Pastor of the Cathedral and serves in various leadership roles within the diocesan curia, specifically Chancellor and Vicar Judicial.



Cover Image: *The Immaculate Conception* (1660-1665) by Bartolome Esteban Murillo

WEEKLY COLLECTION INFORMATION NOV 25/26

Envelopes - \$ 3,401.34 Loose - \$ 4,677.27
Maintenance - \$ 100.00 TOTAL: \$ 8,178.61

**\$ 7,729.28 short from the amount
needed to operate**

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE UPCOMING WEEK

Monday 4 December

7AM - Puring Garde (Family)

5:15PM - Andrew McGee (Tom McGee)

Tuesday 5 December

7AM - Steve Kinsella (Colleen Cornish)

5:15PM - Agnes Heineman (Steve and Elizabeth Ring)

Wednesday 6 December

7AM - Carol Nadine Rogers (Glen and Betty Rogers)

5:15PM - Bart Rotherham (Betty Rotherham)

Thursday 7 December

7AM - Carol Nadine Rogers (Glen and Betty Rogers)

5:15PM - Rufino and Patria Gotanco (Hati Uy)

Friday 8 December

7AM - For the People 12:05 - Catherine Staab (Norman and Crystal Wiseman) 5:15PM - Bobby House (Father C. A. House)

Saturday 9 December

8AM - Mr. and Mrs. Gene Barish, Sr. (Family) 4PM - For the People

Sunday 10 December

7AM - Joseph McGrath (Family) 10AM - Charles and Mercedes Nesbitt (Kathy Frank) 5PM - Mathias Bates (Family)



Advent Stewardship

As we enter into Advent, we enter into a season of waiting. It is not often

that we enjoy waiting. Waiting in a long line, waiting for test results to come back, waiting for a new job opportunity; waiting is a challenge for many of us. We get impatient, anxious, or needy. What we are waiting for makes it all worth it, right?



*This Sunday's readings from Mark tell of Jesus providing caution to his disciples:
May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.
What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'
-Mk 13: 36-37*

He is speaking to the need to be watchful. This is not just in reference to Jesus' birth, but for Christ's return in glory at the end of time. We are to be alert to God's call for us, watchful of temptations that can distract us. Just as the disciples were to be prepared, we are to prepare.

So, how does being watchful relate to waiting? Think about the last time you were waiting for something... you were mindful of the car ahead of you in the drive-thru; you were tracking the package online to see the delivery time, your son or daughter practicing driving before the driver's test. While these examples

are insignificant, they can remind us that preparation is part of waiting. When you are prepared, you are watchful and situationally aware. How are we watchful in our faith experiences? Are we in a deep relationship with God through daily prayer? Are we participating in the sacramental life of the church, particularly the Eucharist and Confession? Are we serving others, just as

we were reminded to do so in last week's Gospel to serve the least?

This Advent, let us embark on a more watchful and prayerful journey through the season, waiting with open and joy-filled hearts for the Christ child!

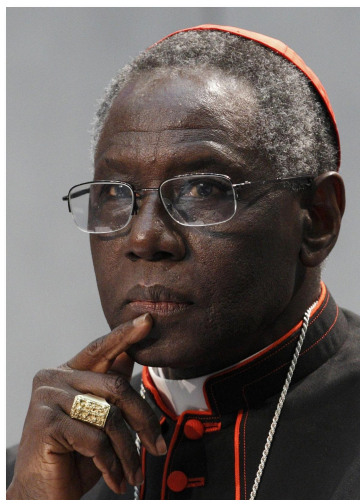
Katie Price is the Coordinator for Discipleship and Stewardship at the Cathedral. She comes with an extensive background in this field after helping dioceses and parishes across the nation meet their goal of making discipleship a priority in their parishes. If you would like to learn more about the work she is doing, email her at kprice@cathedral.dio.org.



Prayer for our Bishop:

God, eternal shepherd, you tend your Church in many ways and rule us with love. You have chosen your servant, **Bishop Thomas John Paprocki**, to be a shepherd of your flock. Give him a spirit of courage and right judgment, a spirit of knowledge and love. By governing with fidelity those entrusted to his care, may he build your Church as a sign of salvation for the world.

Amen.



How Catholics Can Welcome LGBT Believers

The Catholic Church has been criticized by many, including some of its own followers, for its pastoral response to the LGBT community

This criticism deserves a reply — not to defend the Church's practices reflexively, but to determine whether we, as the Lord's disciples, are

reaching out effectively to a group in need. Christians must always strive to follow the new commandment Jesus gave at the Last Supper: "Love one another, even as I have loved you."

To love someone as Christ loves us means to love that person in the truth. "For this I was born," Jesus told Pontius Pilate, "to bear witness to the truth." The Catechism of the Catholic Church reflects this insistence on honesty, stating that the church's message to the world must "reveal in all clarity the joy and demands of the way of Christ."

Those who speak on behalf of the church must be faithful to the unchanging teachings of Christ, because only through living in harmony with God's creative design do people find deep and lasting fulfillment. Jesus described his own message in these terms, saying in the Gospel of John: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Catholics believe that, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church draws its teachings upon the truths of Christ's message.

Among Catholic priests, one of the most outspoken critics of the church's message with regard to sexuality is Father James Martin, an American Jesuit. In his book *Building a Bridge*, published earlier this year, he repeats the common criticism that Catholics have been harshly critical of homosexuality while neglecting the importance of sexual integrity among all of its followers.

Father Martin is correct to argue that there should not be any double standard with regard to the virtue of chastity, which, challenging as it may be, is part of the good news of Jesus Christ for all Christians. For the unmarried — no matter their attractions — faithful chastity requires abstinence from sex.

This might seem a high standard, especially today. Yet it would be contrary to the wisdom and goodness of Christ to require something that cannot be achieved. Jesus calls us to this virtue because he has made our hearts for purity, just as he has made our minds for truth. With God's grace and our perseverance, chastity is not only possible, but it will also become the source for true freedom.

We do not need to look far to see the sad consequences of the rejection of God's plan for human intimacy and love. The sexual liberation the world promotes does not deliver its promise. Rather, promiscuity is the cause of so much needless suffering, of broken hearts, of loneliness, and of treatment of others as

means for sexual gratification. As a mother, the church seeks to protect her children from the harm of sin, as an expression of her pastoral charity.

In her teaching about homosexuality, the church guides her followers by distinguishing their identities from their attractions and actions. First there are the people themselves, who are always good because they are children of God. Then there are same-sex attractions, which are not sinful if not willed or acted upon but are nevertheless at odds with human nature. And finally there are same-sex relations, which are gravely sinful and harmful to the well-being of those who partake in them. People

People who identify as members of the LGBT community are owed this truth in charity, especially from clergy who speak on behalf of the Church about this complex and difficult topic.

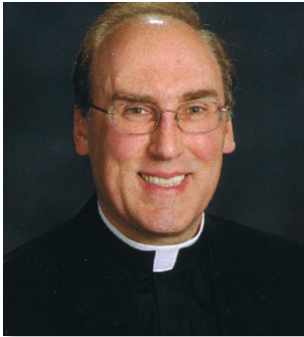
who identify as members of the LGBT community are owed this truth in charity, especially from clergy who speak on behalf of the church about this complex and difficult topic.

It is my prayer that the world will finally heed the voices of Christians who experience same-sex attractions and who have discovered peace and joy by living the truth of the Gospel. I have been blessed by my encounters with them, and their witness moves me deeply. I wrote the foreword to one such testimony, Daniel Mattson's book, *Why I Don't Call Myself Gay: How I Reclaimed My Sexual Reality and Found Peace*, with the hope of making his and similar voices better heard.

These men and women testify to the power of grace, the nobility and resilience of the human heart, and the truth of the church's teaching on homosexuality. In many cases, they have lived apart from the Gospel for a period but have been reconciled to Christ and his church. Their lives are not easy or without sacrifice. Their same-sex inclinations have not been vanquished. But they have discovered the beauty of chastity and of chaste friendships. Their example deserves respect and attention, because they have much to teach all of us about how to better welcome and accompany our brothers and sisters in authentic pastoral charity.

Robert Cardinal Sarah is a Guinean Cardinal Prelate of the Catholic Church. He was appointed as Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments by Pope Francis on 23 November 2014. He previously served as Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and President of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum. He is the author of *The Power of Silence Against the Dictatorship of Noise* and *God or Nothing: A Conversation on Faith*.





The Immaculate Conception

I am confused. I thought that the Immaculate Conception has to do with Mary conceiving by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Actually, the confusion over the "Immaculate Conception" is not uncommon. Some people mistakenly do think the term is related to Mary's conception of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the Immaculate Conception is the belief that "the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin..." (Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*).

In examining the history surrounding this belief we see the beauty of a Church founded by Christ, whose faithful followers struggle to grasp ever more clearly the mystery of salvation. This struggle is guided by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus called "The Spirit of Truth," who "will instruct you in everything and remind you of all that I told you" and "will guide you to all truth" (cf. Jn 14:17, 15:26, 16:13).

Part of the "struggle" with the Immaculate Conception is that there is no specific, crystal clear scriptural citation for it. Nevertheless, the references in the Gospels to the Blessed Mother and her role in the mystery of salvation intimate this belief. In the Gospel of Luke, we find the beautiful passage of the Annunciation, where Archangel Gabriel said to Mary (in our familiar wording), "Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you." While some scripture scholars haggle over "how full is full," the testimony of St. Gabriel definitely indicates the exceptional holiness of the Blessed Mother. When one considers the role Mary was to play in the life of our Lord — whether His incarnation, His childhood, or His crucifixion — she must have been outstanding in holiness, truly "full of grace" in accepting and in fulfilling her role as the Mother of the Savior, in the fullest sense of Mother. We believe, therefore, this exceptional, grace-filled holiness extended to the very beginning of her life, her conception.

On the practical side, if original sin is inherited through our parents, and Jesus took on our human nature in all things except sin, then Mary had to be free of original sin. The question then arises, "How is Christ the Savior of Mary?" Actually much of the debate concerning the Immaculate Conception during the Middle Ages focused on this problem. Duns Scotus (d. 1308) posited one solution saying, "Mary more than anyone else would have needed Christ as her Redeemer, since she would have contracted original sin... if the grace of the Mediator had not prevented this." Quoting the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church the Catechism adds, "The 'splendor of an entirely unique holiness, by which Mary is 'enriched from the first instant of her conception' comes wholly from Christ: she is 'redeemed, in a more exalted fashion by reason of the merits of her Son'" (No. 492). In essence, since

Mary was chosen to share intimately in the life of Jesus from her conception, He was indeed her Savior from her conception.

Perhaps one reason why the discussion over the Immaculate Conception was prolonged is because the early Church was outlawed and under persecution until the year 313, and then had to address various problems surrounding Jesus Himself. More reflection about Mary and her role occurred after the Council of Ephesus (431) solemnly affirmed Mary's divine motherhood and gave her the title, "Mother of God" in that she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and bore Jesus who is second person of the Holy Trinity, one in being with the Father. Several of the early Church Fathers including St. Ambrose (d. 397), St. Ephraem (d. 373), St. Andrew of Crete (d. 740), and St. John Damascene (d. 749) meditated on Mary's role as Mother, including her own grace-filled disposition, and wrote of her sinlessness. A feast day in honor of the Immaculate Conception has been celebrated in the Eastern part of the Church at least since the sixth century.

As time passed, further discussion arose about this belief. In 1849, Pius IX asked the bishops throughout the Church what they themselves, their clergy, and the people felt about this belief and whether they would want it defined solemnly. Of 603 bishops, 546 responded favorably without hesitation. Of those opposing, only 5 said the doctrine could not be solemnly defined, 24 did not know whether this was the opportune time, and 10 simply wanted a condemnation of any rejection of the doctrine. On December 8, 1854, Pius IX solemnly defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in his bull *Ineffabilis Deus*.

Finally, it is also interesting that in several apparitions of our Blessed Mother, she herself has attested to her Immaculate Conception: On December 9 (the date for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in the Spanish Empire) in 1531 at Guadalupe, Mary said to Juan Diego, "I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the true God, through whom everything lives. . . ." In 1830, Mary told St. Catherine Laboure to have the Miraculous Medal struck with the inscription, "Mary conceived free from sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Lastly, when she appeared to St. Bernadette at Lourdes in 1858, Mary said, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

In a homily on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception delivered in 1982, Pope John Paul II wrote, "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who filled you, Virgin of Nazareth, with every spiritual blessing in Christ. In Him, you were conceived Immaculate! Preselected to be His Mother, you were redeemed in Him and through Him more than any other human being! Preserved from the inheritance of original sin, you were conceived and came into the world in a state of sanctifying grace. Full of grace! We venerate this mystery of the faith in today's solemnity. Today, together with all the Church, we venerate the Redemption which was actuated in you. That most singular participation in the Redemption of the world and of man, was reserved only for you, solely for you. Hail O Mary, Alma Redemptoris Mater, dear Mother of the Redeemer."

Fr. William Saunders is pastor of Our Lady of Hope in Potomac Falls, Virginia. He is dean of the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College. The above article is a "Straight Answers" column he wrote for the Arlington Catholic Herald.

Black Elk and the Need for Catechists

I write these words as the annual November meeting of the United States bishops comes to a close. We bishops discussed many significant matters—from racism and immigration to the liturgy for the baptism of children. But I would like to emphasize one theme in particular that came up frequently in our conversations, namely, the catechesis of our young people. I have a rather intense personal interest in the topic since, at the conclusion of this gathering, I officially became chairman of the bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis.

In his formal address to us at the commencement of the conference, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, reiterated statistics that I have often remarked regarding the growing number of “nones” or religiously unaffiliated in our country. He especially noted the rise of this cohort among people under thirty years of age. For every one person who joins the Catholic Church today, he reminded us, six are leaving. We must make a renewed commitment, he concluded, to the indispensable work of handing on the faith. The Archbishop's intuition in this regard was confirmed, over and again, by bishops who spoke, in various sessions and forums, of a crisis of catechesis in our church.

I had this wake-up call from the Pope's representative very much in mind as my friend, Bishop Robert Gruss, the bishop of Rapid City, South Dakota, rose to speak on the second day of the meeting. Bishop Gruss' happy task was to present to us the case for the beatification and canonization of Nicholas Black Elk, a Lakota Indian medicine man who, at midlife, converted to Catholicism. After hearing the bishop's impassioned presentation, we enthusiastically voted to approve the advancement of Black Elk's cause. What especially struck me in Bishop Gruss' brief biographical sketch is that Black Elk, after his conversion, eagerly took up the task of catechesis within his community. Due to his impressive memory and acute mind, he was able to convey the complexities of the Bible and Church teaching to his fellow Lakotans who had embraced the faith. And very much in line with the Catholic conviction that grace builds on and perfects nature, Black Elk endeavored to incorporate his mystical sensibility and healing power into the fuller context of his Catholicism. It was his holiness and prayerful connection to God, even more than his learning, that brought his people closer to Christ.

My prayer is that, if the cause of Black Elk moves forward, we might one day invoke him as a real icon for catechists in the Catholic Church. There is an army of volunteers across our country who give generously of their time to pass on the faith to our

young people, but I wonder how many of these laborers in the vineyard of the Lord truly realize the sacredness of their task. Without good catechists, more and more of our young people will fall into secularism and indifferentism. And as these unaffiliated in ever greater numbers come of age, our society will be adversely affected, for Christian ideas and values will be less and less at play.

So what can catechists today take from the example of Nicholas Black Elk? First, they can commit themselves to the assiduous study of the faith. As I have argued before, huge numbers of the young identify intellectual problems and questions as the reasons they are leaving the faith: religion in relation to science, the existence of God, the objectivity of moral values, etc. Without smart catechists, the kids abandon the faith. It's as blunt and as simple as that. My nephew, who is starting his first year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) this fall, went through religious education as he was coming of age. To be frank, he found the vast majority of his training superficial and remembers

almost none of it. But one year stays in his mind. In his sixth grade religious education class, he had a catechist who had a master's degree in theology and who took the young people, with some rigor, through a study of the Bible. Please don't tell me that the kids can't handle that sort of challenge; on the contrary, it's what they remember—and savor.

Secondly, they can see their work as a true vocation, a sacred calling, a mystical obligation. As Pope Paul VI put it so memorably, men and women of today listen to witnesses more than to teachers, and to teachers in the measure that they are also witnesses. Or as the cliché has it: the faith is caught more than taught. Some years ago, I read a study that indicated what drew young people to the faith were not gimmicks or histrionics or the pathetic attempt to be “relevant” to them. What drew them were teachers who knew their subject matter and were obviously committed to it.

Catechists, the Church needs you! We're losing our kids to secularism. If anyone of sharp mind and faithful heart is reading these words, take seriously the possibility that God is calling you to this sacred work. And I pray that one day catechists can look to Nicholas Black Elk as exemplar and heavenly friend.

*For more of Bishop Barron's articles go to wordonfire.org
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