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Cathedral WEEKLY

ADVENT: A TIME FOR PREPARATION

ADVENT AND THE CHRISTMAS CRIB | POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI
PAUL VI, PROPHET | BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

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Advent and the Christmas Crib

After celebrating the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, we enter during these days into the evocative atmosphere of immediate preparation for Holy Christmas, and we already see the tree set up here

In today's consumer society, this period has unfortunately suffered a sort of commercial "pollution" that risks changing its authentic spirit, marked by recollection, moderation and joy, which is not external but intimate.

It is thus providential that almost as a portal to Christmas there should be the feast of the one who is the Mother of Jesus and who, better than anyone else, can lead us to know, love and adore the Son of God made man.

Let us therefore allow her to accompany us; may her sentiments prompt us to prepare ourselves with heartfelt sincerity and openness of spirit to recognize in the Child of Bethlehem the Son of God who came into the world for our redemption. Let us walk together with her in prayer and accept the repeated invitation that the Advent liturgy addresses to us to remain in expectation — watchful and joyful expectation —, for the Lord will not delay: he comes to set his people free from sin.

Following a beautiful and firmly-rooted tradition, many families set up their Crib immediately after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, as if to relive with Mary those days full of trepidation

that preceded the birth of Jesus. Putting up the Crib at home can be a simple but effective way of presenting faith, to pass it on to one's children.

The Crib helps us contemplate the mystery of God's love that was revealed in the poverty and simplicity of the Bethlehem Grotto. St Francis of Assisi was so taken by the mystery of the Incarnation that he wanted to present it anew at Greccio in the living Nativity scene, thus beginning an old, popular tradition that still retains its value for evangelization today.

Indeed, the Crib can help us understand the secret of the true Christmas because it speaks of the humility and merciful goodness of Christ, who "though he was rich he made himself poor" for us (II Cor 8: 9).

His poverty enriches those who embrace it and Christmas brings joy and peace to those who, like the shepherds in Bethlehem, accept the Angel's words: "Let this be a sign to you: in a manger you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes" (Lk 2: 12). This is still the sign for us too, men and women of the third millennium. There is no other Christmas.

Provided by Catholic Education Resource Center



Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI



RENEWAL OF OUR PARISH



Do I have to go to Mass twice this weekend on Christmas?

Over the past couple of weeks, I have been asked this question several times. Simply put, the answer is **yes**, although I would always prefer for us to understand that we get to go to Mass twice in one weekend rather than we have to go.

This year is unique in that the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve fall on the same day; this happens about every six or seven years although a leap year might render a longer interval. According to the law of the Church, which is based on divine law, Catholics are required to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays and on other days of precept which we know as holy days of obligation. Christmas is a day of precept whose obligation is never lifted, the same as Sunday. Therefore, all Catholics must attend Mass the weekend of December 23/24 for the Fourth Sunday of Advent and also for the Solemnity of Christmas on December 24/25.

The following was recently published by the Committee for Divine Worship of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: "The prevailing view of many canon lawyers is that each obligation must be fulfilled with a separate Mass. Thus, when consecutive obligations occur on Saturday-Sunday or Sunday-Monday, the faithful must attend Mass twice to fulfill two separate obligations... Aside from canonical requirements, it would be hoped, of course, that Catholics foster a love for the Sacred Liturgy and hold a desire to celebrate the holy days as fully as is reasonably possible."

While for many there will be many things happening over the days of December 23-25, we must remember why we gather and

celebrate: the birth of the Lord Jesus. Be sure to make the Masses of the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas a part of your Christmas plans.

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.

The love of God
CAN COME OVER ANY WALL,
CAN OPEN THE DOOR OF ANY HEART,
can find anyone, anywhere,
— IN ANYTHING —



WEEKLY COLLECTION INFORMATION DEC 2/3

Envelopes - \$ 6,714.03	Loose - \$ 6,453.81
Maintenance - \$ 933.00	TOTAL: \$ 14,100.84

**\$ 1,807.05 short from the amount
needed to operate**

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE UPCOMING WEEK

Monday 11 December

7AM - John Montgomery (John Busciacco)

5:15PM - Agnes Heineman (Duane and Kathy Straube)

Tuesday 12 December

7AM - Steve Kinsella (Colleen Cornish)

5:15PM - Dr. David Mack (Friend from Marian Center)

Wednesday 13 December

7AM - Sr. Helen Louise Schmitz (Fish and Linda Richbark)

5:15PM - Anne Gustafson (Jeannette Giannone)

Thursday 14 December

7AM - Catherine Staab (Jim and Rita Keys)

5:15PM - Delia Gonzalez (Bob Barber)

Friday 15 December

7AM - Ben Garde (Family)

5:15PM - Lucille Kelly (Lynn Wagy)

Saturday 16 December

8AM - Elizabeth Mary Foley (Gene and Betty Rogers)

4PM - Steve Rockford (The Bentel Family)

Sunday 17 December

7AM - For the People 10AM - Jean Berthold (Lisa Duffey)

5PM - Special Intention for Lost Souls (CCCW)



Advent Stewardship

The alarm buzzer went off notifying us that someone was at the Cathedral's front door. "Hello, how can we help you?" Father said. "Hi, yes, I am looking to talk to someone." Father and I glanced at each other to see if either of us recognized the individual before we buzzed him into the office.

"Who were you hoping to talk too?" we asked. The gentleman, who seemed to be pressed up against the camera making it difficult to make out who he was, answered that he "just needed someone to talk to...can you please help?"

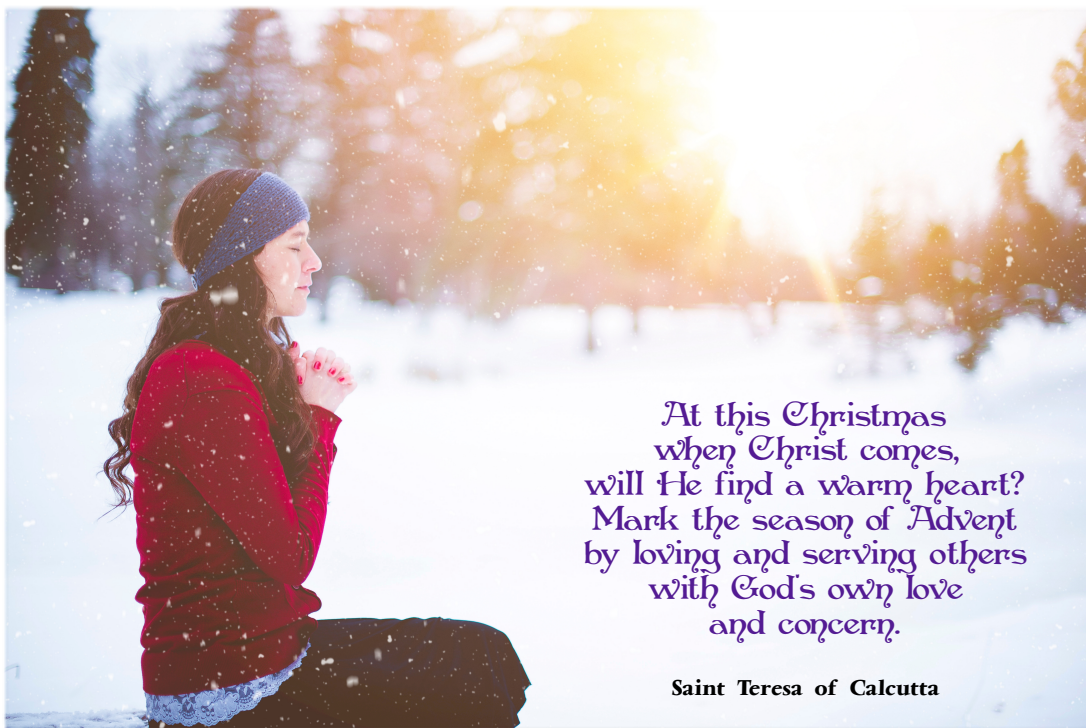
As the spiritual home to many in the Diocese, we often get visitors inquiring about sacraments, tours, or general questions regarding Liturgies. We also get people looking for help. Some of the visitors need emergency assistance, some are looking for cash, and others just need someone to listen. While we minister as best as we can to each of them, often it is difficult to meet all the needs within our community. It is easy to get discouraged or frustrated trying to serve and feeling helpless in the end. Many of you might remember a time when you volunteered and afterward wondered if it made a difference.

So does it? Does our sharing of time or talents make a difference? If you are wondering, yes we buzzed him in. In this case, my new friend and I sat down in the Cathedral office to chat. He told me about financial hard times after an injury resulting in the loss of his 12 year roofing job. He told me about his mother who has fallen ill in Chicago recently and he didn't have the money to

get a train ticket or a bus ticket to get up to Chicago and see her. He told me how frustrated he was, how hard it is to get back on his feet, and how he just wants to make his two sons proud of him because his father was never in the picture. What struck me was this man telling me about his faith, how he tries to believe but that the challenges are sometimes too hard to believe that God is listening. He has considered illegal activity to make a living, but knows that is not what his family or God would want for him. I spent about 30 minutes with my new friend. We provided him some lunch and food and drink for the road. After discussing what options he had for emergency assistance in the area, we made sure he was taken care of to the best of our ability.

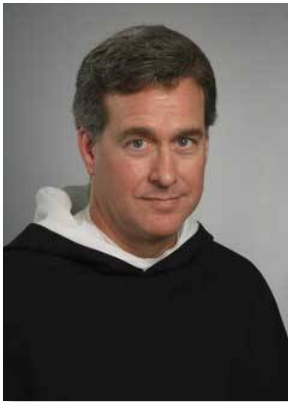
So did this matter? Did our stewardship of time, talent, or treasure help him? Before he left he gave me a huge hug, like one of those hugs that tend to linger a little longer than necessary. As we ended the embrace, I asked him to pray with me. I asked the Lord to help him, strengthen him, comfort him when he is weary, and provide him the courage to continue onward for his family and the faith to sustain him and his sons during this difficult time. Despite not being able to meet every need he had, after our prayer together he said, "That's what I really needed." So yes, stewardship in all ways and for all people does matter. Advent is filled with stewardship opportunities. Beyond the traditional stewardship opportunities (caroling, toy drives, donations, etc.) maybe we can extend our faith to another this season by being present and just listening.

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.



At this Christmas
when Christ comes,
will He find a warm heart?
Mark the season of Advent
by loving and serving others
with God's own love
and concern.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta



A good guide for us this Advent

A good guide for us this Advent is Simon Weil (1909-1943) - the French philosopher whom T.S. Eliot described as "a kind of genius akin to that of the saints"

Weil was a Jewish woman who became a Christian mystic. Fascinated from her childhood with the Gospel commandment of love of neighbor, Weil painstakingly practiced self-sacrificing charity, even to the point of limiting her personal daily allotment of food to that prescribed by World War II rationing, so as to be in solidarity with the afflicted French people under Nazi occupation.

Her love of the Catholic Faith was fostered by encounters with priests like Dominican Fathers Joseph-Marie Perrin and Edouard Couturier. She recounts a dramatic mystical experience:

In a moment of intense physical suffering, I felt, without being in any way prepared for it, a presence more personal, more certain, more real than that of a human being, though inaccessible to the senses and the imagination. Christ himself came down and took possession of me. I felt in the midst of my suffering the presence of a love, like that which one can read in the smile on a beloved face.

We want that certain, most personal Presence of a love to take hold of us this Advent. How can we help it happen? Weil gives us this counsel:

The infinity of space and time separates us from God. How shall we seek for him? How shall we turn towards him?... We cannot make a single step towards heaven. God must traverse the universe and come to us. But in fact anyone who consents to orient their attention and their love outside the world, toward the reality situated beyond every human faculty, is given to succeed.... Across the infinity of space and time the infinitely more infinite love of God comes to possess us. God comes in his time. We have the power to consent to welcome God's love or refuse it.

Weil is entreating us to give our attention to divine wisdom. No wonder, then, that the first of the great O Antiphons of Advent implores, "Come and show your people the way to salvation."

Desire, oriented toward God, is the only force capable of raising the soul. Or rather, God alone comes to possess and lift the soul, but only desire obliges God to descend. God only comes to those who ask God to come — those who ask often, for a long time, and ardently. God cannot prevent himself from coming to them.

This desire is expressed in the ancient traditional Advent plea Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! Or in the words of the O Antiphons, "Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid" — you who are the "desire of the nations" and "the only joy of every human heart."

The attitude that brings about salvation does not resemble any human activity... It is expectant waiting.... The slave that listens before the door to open it when the master knocks is the best image of it. He must be ready to die of hunger and exhaustion rather than changing his attitude.... We must not do anything but wait expectantly for the good and depart from evil.... I realized that Christianity is the religion of slaves, that slaves cannot help belonging to it, and I among others.



We wait like the father of the prodigal son, searching the horizon for the certain return of his beloved child. Our Advent vigilance will pay off in dividends of virtue, for "every time that we truly pay attention, we destroy evil in ourselves." Like famished, eager, listening slaves, we beg through the O Antiphons: "Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness...and lead your captive people into freedom.... Come,

stretch out your mighty hand to set us free."

Simone Weil died at the age of thirty-four from tuberculosis, and she is buried in the Catholic section of the cemetery in Ashford in Kent, England.

Father Peter John Cameron, O.P. is Editor-in-Chief of Magnificat. He is also a playwright and director, the author of more than a dozen plays and many books including: *Mysteries of the Virgin Mary: Living our Lady's Graces*, *Made for Love*, *Loved by God*, *Praying with Saint Paul: Daily Reflections on the Letters of the Apostle Paul*, *Jesus, Present Before Me: Meditations for Eucharistic Adoration*, and *Benedictus: Day by Day with Pope Benedict XVI*.

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What if we got Advent right, this time?

If we miss the point of
Advent, we'll miss the
point of Christmas

In Advent, do we prepare for a
birth, a death, or something else?
The short answer is: "Yes." And I
fear that in all three categories, we

tend to get it wrong.

We may tell ourselves that "Advent is a time of spiritual preparation for the Season of Christmas." That's true — if only it were true of us! Just as many Catholics treat the Saturday 4 p.m. Vigil Mass as the "Let's-Just-Get-This-Out-Of-The-Way!" Mass; just as many Catholics treat Sunday as the vigil for Monday ("When real life begins!"); so too there are many Catholics who use Advent as a time of preparation for the secular Christmas frenzy — shopping, cooking, decorating, partying, drinking, overeating ...

Christ has already been born; the Son of God is already the Son of Mary — we are not preparing for his birth! Advent is a preparation for Christmas only insofar as we need reminding that Christ was born in Bethlehem to begin his mission to save us from our sins. Christmas is mere sentimentality if we aren't convinced that we're sinners who need saving!

To prepare ourselves to celebrate the truly awesome truths that God-Who-Saves is also God-Who-Is-With-Us, we need to take out our moral trash, throw down our idols, and ask for the desire to welcome the salvation that is offered to us. If we're not planning to go to confession during Advent, then we're not serious about Christmas.

Advent is likewise a time to prepare for death — for Christ's and for ours. At his birth, he receives the gift of myrrh (Matthew 2:11), which is a foreshadowing of his body being anointed at his burial (John 19:38-40). From his birth, he is marked for death.

Advent is also a time to prepare for our own death. We're pilgrims on this earth, and at the end of our days we will have to give an account of our stewardship of our lives, our gifts, and all entrusted to us. The shepherds and wise men trembled with awe and joy seeing Christ face to face. Are we so sure right now that when it is our turn, we will do the same? At any moment, death may come for any of us or Christ will return for all of us, and none of us knows when. (Matthew 24:36) Advent is a reminder of the need for preparation, vigilance, and the humility of those who know that they even at their best they are unprofitable servants in need of the Master's mercy. (Luke 17:10) Advent is a time to shed what is unworthy of us, to mend what is broken, reclaim our disciplines and virtues, and to go to confession.

I said at the outset that Advent is also a time of preparation for "something else" — something we're probably inclined to overlook, forget about or discount, namely, the compassion of God.

"Compassion" must not be confused with "pity"; compassion doesn't mean, "I acknowledge that it's terrible that you're you." The Latin etymology of compassion is cum-passio, "to suffer with." The Christ of God was born into the world to suffer for us, yes, of course; he also was born into the world to suffer with us. At Christmas we recall that Christ came into the world, and entered into the fullness of the human condition (all except sin), and entered into our limitations, our darkness, our weakness. He boldly and humbly enters all of our hiding places — for we constantly try to hide from God and ourselves all of our sins, illusions, regrets and shames. The Christ of God, the Light of the World, enters into our darkness, our self-imposed prisons, the basements and attics we cower in, and there embraces us, suffers with us, grieves with us, and then offers us a way forward, a way to light and life and even glory — if only we would let him.

Wasn't it Dietrich Bonhoeffer who said that a proper image of Advent is the image of a cell door unexpectedly ajar, a cell door that can only open from the outside? That image brings us closer to what Advent should be for us — a time to prepare for our deliverance, our emancipation. It is a time to prepare to live forgiven and unshackled. We need time to prepare for such a great rescue because we have acquired habits of mind, heart and practice that blind us to the open door, deafen us to the liberating call, numb us to the strong hands that would lift us up and out.

The opportunity of Advent is this: If we prepare well, then at Christmas time we will gladly embrace and refuse to let go of the one who came to save us.

Father Robert McTeigue, SJ, is a member of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus. A professor of philosophy and theology, he has taught and lectured in North and Central America, Europe and Asia.

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Heavenly Father, your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us, a great sign of your love. Guide us as we strive to walk in that love together as a family this Advent. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, bring us closer to each other and to your son. Give us the grace and strength we need every day. Help us to always trust in you. Come, Lord Jesus, lead all people closer to you. Come and dispel the darkness of our world with the light of your love. Amen.

Paul VI, Prophet

This coming July, we will mark the 50th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's deeply controversial encyclical letter *Humanae vitae*. I won't bore you with the details of the innumerable battles, disagreements, and ecclesial crises that followed upon this text. Suffice it to say that this short, pithily argued letter became a watershed in the post-conciliar Catholic Church and one of the most significant points of contention between liberals and conservatives. Its fundamental contention is that the moral integrity of the sexual act is a function of the coming together of its "procreative and unitive" dimensions. That is to say, sexual intercourse is ethically upright only in the measure that it is expressive of love between married partners and remains open to the conception of a child. When, through a conscious choice, the partners introduce an artificial block to procreation—when, in a word, they separate the unitive and procreative finalities of the sexual act—they do something which is contrary to God's will.

Again, within the context of this brief article I won't detail the arguments for and against this position. But I would like to draw particular attention to a remarkable passage in *Humanae vitae*, namely section 17, in which Paul VI plays the prophet and lays out, clearly and succinctly, what he foresees as consequences of turning away from the Church's classic teaching on sex. Though he is convinced that artificial contraception is morally bad in itself, he's also persuaded that it would, in the long run, adversely affect general societal attitudes regarding sex. Here is a first observation: "Let them consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings—and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation—need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law." Does anyone doubt that, in the last fifty years, we have seen a profound attenuation of marital fidelity? Could anyone possibly contest that the last half century has witnessed a significant breakdown of the institution of marriage? Is anyone so blind as not to see that during the last five decades "a lowering of moral standards" has taken place? To be sure, there are multiple causes of these declines, and certainly not all the blame can be ascribed to artificial contraception. However, Paul VI was intuiting something of great moment, namely, that once we commenced to redefine the nature of the sexual act, we placed ourselves on a very steep and slippery slope toward a complete voluntarism, whereby we utterly determine the meaning of sexuality, of marriage, and even of gender.



Bishop Robert Barron

And the rapid rise in pornography use, the sexual exploitation of children, and human trafficking are functions of this same arbitrariness. What was only vaguely envisioned and feared fifty years ago is now accepted more or less as a matter of course.

In that same section, Paul VI continues to prophesy: "Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection." In the post-Weinstein era, we hear practically every day of another celebrity who has treated women with disrespect, turning them indeed into objects for his own use and manipulation. The entire society is rightly outraged at this behavior, but precious few cultural commentators have noted the link between this kind of objectification and the conscious disassociation of the twin ends of the sexual act. When we are permitted casually to separate love from procreation—or as one analyst had it, to sever the link between sex and

diapers—we place ourselves on a short road to reducing sexual intercourse to a form of self-indulgent recreation.

Section 17 of *Humanae vitae* concludes with a startling act of prescience regarding the political implications of countenancing artificial contraception: "Finally, careful consideration should be given to the danger of this power passing into the hands of those public authorities who care little for the precepts of the moral law. Who will blame a government which in its attempt to resolve the problems affecting an entire country resorts to the same measures as are regarded as lawful by married people in the solution of a particular family difficulty? Who will prevent public authorities from favoring those contraceptive methods which they consider more effective? Should they regard this as necessary, they may even impose their use on everyone." What might have seemed exaggerated, perhaps even slightly paranoid, in 1968 is now a commonplace. The HHS Mandate, which would require even Catholic institutions to provide insurance coverage for contraception and abortifacients, has been so aggressively pursued that even the Little Sisters of the Poor found themselves battling for their rights in court. Pope Francis, an ardent admirer of Paul VI, has picked up on this theme, bemoaning the "ideological colonization" that takes place when the Western powers attempt, through threat of economic sanctions, to impose their sexual program on the underdeveloped world.

This coming 50th anniversary year would be a good time to take another look at *Humanae vitae*. I might suggest we commence with section 17.

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