

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer of Waiting ~

**Patient God
sometimes I forget
that you wait for me.**

**You wait for me
to finish wrapping
and decorating.
You wait for me
to finish baking
and shopping.
You wait for me
to finish my busy schedule,
my time with friends,
my outside interests.**

**Help me
to give you
more than my wiped-out self
at the end of the day.
Help me
to participate fully
in the birth of Jesus
in my heart.
Amen.**

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].
e-mail: blazekj@gilmour.org

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

WELCOME ADVENT:

Advent beckons our hearts and attention. Advent scrapes away at our doubt, our apathy, and our lack of attention in order to uncover in our hearts our deepest longings for love, for hope, and for mercy. Advent is a call from within to change our approach to life in order to find the fidelity of God's incarnate love. Advent is not just a reordering of our interior lives, but a gesture of hope in the absolute darkness of injustice, wrong-doing, and infidelity. Advent claims our conscience if we allow the passionate scriptures to capture our hearts and lives in the world.

Advent shatters our small expectations of life. Advent preparation goes further than baking cookies for house guests or wrapping gifts in secret to offer our loved ones on Christmas morning. Advent cannot be ordered from Amazon or packaged neatly under a fake tree. Advent releases us from fear when our minds close up and our perspectives in life shrink. Now is the time to reimagine Advent. Now is the time to be quiet in the busiest season of the year. Now is the time to reexamine God's fidelity toward us as we scurry to purchase gifts, create parties, and spend more money than is in our budgets.

Advent carves in our daily lives a well of courage when we discover we have been living in shallowness and insecurity. Advent opens doors of faith as we enter the mystery of these four weeks before Christmas. Advent prepares our hearts but not in the ways we may first realize. Advent opens for us our deepest longings for God. In Advent, we come to realize that we live in the beauty of God's fidelity all year long and we prepare our fragile lives with the abundant care of Christ's presence in the world.

—Father Ronald Raab, C.S.C.

**FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:**

Friday, **December 8th**, is the Feast of the **Immaculate Conception of Mary**. It is a holy day of obligation. This is an important feast day because Mary, under the title of her Immaculate Conception, is the **patroness of the United States**. This Feast is also at the heart of the Advent Season. We will have a **Vigil Mass on Thursday, December 7th at 5:30 PM**. We will also have 3 Masses on **Friday, December 8th: 8:00 AM** [Upper School — **not open to the public** because of lack of extra seating]; **9:30 AM** [Lower School]; and **2:00 PM** [Middle School]. **Please note: there will be NO 5:30 PM Mass on Friday**. All Masses will take place in the chapel. We have much to pray for in our nation at this time. Please mark your calendars so that you will be able to join us for Mass on this important Feast Day.

**ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE:**

On **Monday, December 18th at 7:00 PM**, we will celebrate our **Advent Communal Penance Service**. This service will consist of scriptural reflections by those involved in the Christmas Story. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to straighten the paths of our lives to ease the arrival of our God. Each of us needs to truly hear in our heart the message of John the Baptist: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand" [see Mark 1:15]. The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be an opportunity for individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation following the service. Please join

**FAITH EDUCATION — SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10th:**

Our Faith Education classes have begun. Our Faith Education classes meet on **Sundays from 8:45—9:45 AM**. Please join us as we come together to begin our faith journey for this year by entering into prayer and worship together. If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [[440-473-3560]. **Upcoming class dates: December 10 and January 7-21-28**. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For a couple experiencing difficulty in becoming pregnant
- For the victims of the earthquake in Nepal
- For an end to violence as a means to resolve differences.
- For an end to sexual abuse and lack of respect for human persons.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.
- For a greater awareness of our call to create a more humane and just society.

A MONTH OF CONTEMPLATION:

The signal is clear — there is no time to sink into the quiet of fall that is promised with the coming of Thanksgiving. By the Friday morning that follows it, the raucousness of capitalist Christmas bursts suddenly upon us. The warning of autumn — with its browning of leaves and graying of skies — that life too is susceptible to the wisdom of the seasons — gets lost in the plastic world of limitless desire and limited resources. Shopping becomes what Advent is meant to be — the consuming preparation for one of the greatest feasts of the Christian year.



But commercialism is not the problem. We're a consumer society whatever the season. The problem is that the lack of contemplative consideration that comes with Christmas consumerism too often drowns out the sounds of Advent, and drains not only the feast, but even, perhaps, the rest of the year of its meaning.

As a result we have managed to make Christmas an event, a passing fancy, an exhausting endurance exercise, stripped of reflection by the pressure of social protocols. But judging from the scripture of the season, Christmas is surely meant to be an attitude toward life — not a carnival. It is meant to be arrived at slowly and lived succulently. Christmas is not meant to be simply a day of celebration — it is meant to be a month of contemplation. But because Advent has been lost somewhere between the Thanksgiving turkey and pre-Christmas sales, we have lost one of the richest seasons of the year.

Advent is an excursion through scripture meant to give depth and emotional stability to the days for which there are no songs, no tinsel, no flashing lights to distract us from its raw, tart marrow. Unless we can reclaim Advent, the lack of it will show dearly in the way we go through the rest of life itself.

—taken from the writings of Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B., which appear on the internet

NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:

Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family. Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.

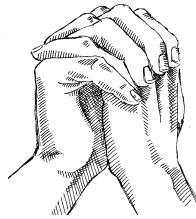


PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Father Larry Jerge, C.S.C., who is under the care of Hospice.
- For Loretta Seidl, sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Elizabeth Toth, daughter of Jeffrey Toth ['84], nephew of James ['86] and Jennifer ['94] Toth, and cousin of Tim ['24] and Kate ['27] Papczun, who is undergoing treatment for a serious health issue.
- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is critically ill.
- For Elizabeth Benson, grandmother of Izzy DiPuccio ['25] who is recovering from a serious illness
- For Sister Mary Ann Lavelle, C.S.J., sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is in hospice care.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Patty Szaniszlo, Chapel Office Associate, who is recovering from hip replacement surgery.
- For Nora Beach, wife of former Gilmour Religion Instructor, Bob Beach, mother of Hannah ['98] and Miriam ['99] Beach, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jennifer Burger ['06], sister of Rachel ['10] and Paul ['16] Burger, who is undergoing treatment for rare form of breast cancer.
- For Maria Ruiz, mother of Elina Gurney, grandmother of Joseph and Christina Gurney, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Chuck Shade, father of Loren Shade, grandfather of Michael, Madeline, and Charles Shade, who is in seriously ill with several health issues.
- For Chuck Campanella, father of Anthony Campanella, who continues in rehab following serious surgery.
- For Judy Collins, aunt of Chief Academic Officer, Elizabeth Edmondson, great-aunt of Mollie ['21] and Abbie ['23] Edmondson, who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For John Roddy, brother of Tim Roddy ['87], and brother of Gilmour Marketing associate, Mary Roddy Stretar, uncle of Katie Stretar ['29], and cousin of Daniel ['83], Mike ['85], and Matt ['86] Roddy, who is undergoing treatment for a recurrence of cancer.
- For James Farmer, father of DEI director, JaiCynthia Farmer, who is recovering from a serious heart-related issue.
- For Robert O'Neill, grandfather of Bobby O'Neill ['33], who is undergoing treatment for bladder cancer.



PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Ralph Gray, father-in-law of former long-time Gilmour teacher, Joy Gray.
- For James Hlavin ['52], grandfather of Lily Elseser ['22]
- For Bill Fesler, husband of former Upper School Director, Elizabeth Fesler.
- For Marianne Culbertson, mother of William Culbertson ['85].

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you. Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord's invitation: "I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart" [Jeremiah 24:7].



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, December 13th at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God's word. It's a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can't come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God's word.



Our topic: What is Hanukkah?

We also need your help — we need future topics. So, if you have a topic that you would like us to discuss, please let Father John know. Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting. Join us. You'll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, December 3: 1 st Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 4:	NO MASS
Tuesday, December 5:	NO MASS
Wednesday, December 6:	NO MASS
Thursday, December 7: Vigil — Immaculate Conception	5:30 PM
Friday, December 8: Immaculate Conception	9:30 AM [Lower School] 2:00 PM [Middle School]
Saturday, December 9: 2 nd Week in Advent	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, December 10: 2 nd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

CAMP GILMOUR IS BACK FOR WINTER CAMP 2023:

Camp Gilmour is hosting three one-day camps for campers ages 5-12 during winter break. Campers can return to campus and renew old friendships, make new ones and have a great time! Winter Camp has something for everyone! Join us for seasonal games and crafts, swimming, ice skating, field trips and more.

Camp is in session from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. [bring your own lunch] on the following dates: Wednesday, December 27, Thursday, December 28 and Friday, December 29. Each day is a separate camp. Cost is \$60 per day per camper. Deadline to register is December 11th. Sign up today for one or all three days at gilmour.org/wintercamp!



OLC “ADOPT A FAMILY” PROGRAM:

For many years, Our Lady Chapel community has worked with St. Adalbert Parish in adopting families to help them celebrate the Christmas Season. **The need is greater than ever.** St. Adalbert identifies families — most often single parent, below poverty level families; we are given the grade levels of the children & other family information, so that you can purchase gifts appropriate to each member. In addition, if possible, we ask that you also provide a Christmas meal for the family [non-perishable items in a food basket, and/or Gift Cards for Giant Eagle, Aldi’s or Family Dollar.] Those from our chapel family who participated in this project last year spoke very highly of the benefit of this project to their own families. This is a project that the entire family can get involved in. Families can be matched according to family size, ages, etc. It was truly inspiring. Adopt-a-family gifts should be WRAPPED. **Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szanislop@gilmour.org] if you and your family would like to participate in this program, or if you have any questions.**

**THE GIVING TREE:**

Our Lady of Fatima Community Center, the West Side Catholic Center and several Senior Health Care Agencies are in great need of items for their clients. Fatima Center needs hats, gloves, socks, underwear, sweaters, sweat shirts, hoodies, infant needs, books, toys and games for children, ages Newborn to 16 years. Senior Health Care facilities need fleece throws, footie socks, as well as hats & gloves. **We have posted a list of needed items next to our giving tree. Select what you would like to give and bring it UNWRAPPED and put it under the tree with a label showing the item needed.** These items would then be gathered and delivered to the various agencies. **Our goal would be to have all items assembled by December 17th, for pickup by the various agencies. Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szanislop@gilmour.org] if you and your family would like to participate in this program, or if you have any questions.**

**REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:**

This Sunday, we begin Advent, the four-week liturgical season that precedes Christmas. The term “Advent” is derived from the Latin word “adventus” which means “coming.” While we remember that coming of Jesus at the first Christmas, this season also invites us to be attentive to the constant comings of Jesus in our lives and in our world. Ironically, because we are so busy preparing for Christmas with buying gifts, making holiday plans, decorating our houses, or making sweets, we are less attentive to the many ways that Jesus continues to be part of our lives. And we are less attentive to the many ways he desires to use us to do his will. To add to this confusion, Advent this year is as short as it can possibly be — because the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve fall on the same day — so we really need to focus in order to be prepared for the great celebration of God’s becoming earthly. The more there is of the pre-Christmas jingle, the more we pray for freedom from the commercial jangle.

The important action of this season is to become more aware of our need for a Savior. We need to gain a greater sense of awareness and alertness to all the various ways God is trying to enter our world and our individual lives. Christ is coming to save all of humankind, but during this liturgical season, we are invited to take time for ourselves — we are the ones to whom he comes.

Isaiah the prophet opens our Advent season with some dramatic statements — some are pleas, some chide God, and some are humble reflections on their own guilt and shame. When all is said, much is needed to be done [Isaiah 63:16-17,19; 64:2-8]. Israel experiences itself as distant from God, and pleads that God would look down from heaven and come right down here and change our behavior.

There is a hint that it is actually God’s fault that Israel has wandered away and been so sinful. If God were closer, Israel would be better. And for all their mild and prayerful complaining, the Prophet

FAITH IS LIVED — NOT LEARNED:

The prophet Isaiah makes sense only when we understand that our biblical writers believed people thought with their hearts, and not their minds. Feelings, on the other hand, originated with their kidneys — not their hearts. So when the prophet accuses his people of “hardening their hearts to God,” Isaiah is actually charging them with closing their minds to God. Since they don’t expect anything from God, they don’t even think about God — “No one calls upon your name or strives to cling to you; for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt.” Though Isaiah knows that God is on the verge of helping those recently released from the Babylonian Exile, God can only do what people permit God to do. How does one go about getting someone to recognize that, “O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter. We are all the work of your hands” [Isaiah 63:16-17,19; 64:2-8]. Anticipation of God’s actions plays a big role in experiencing God’s actions.

Not anticipating and recognizing God’s actions can even apply to the gifts God gives us. That’s one of the reasons Paul of Tarsus is forced to write to the Church at Corinth. Though the Apostle begins his letter by praising the community for “not lacking any spiritual gift as you wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” [1 Corinthians 1:3-9] things go downhill from that point. Some individuals believe the Spirit has given them specific talents for their own sakes — not recognizing how each of those gifts was intended to meld together to build up the body of Christ for the common good. They’re certainly blessed, for instance, with “all discourse and all knowledge,” but some are using their knowledge and discourse to tear Christ’s body apart.

What a shame to have hearts so hardened to the risen Jesus that we can’t appreciate the gifts which are meant to help us carry on her/his ministry. How can we remain “firm to the end” when we don’t understand in what that end consists? It’s our end — not my end. Jesus’ followers are working out this end together.

Perhaps the best message of all is found in Mark’s Jesus’ warning: “Be watchful! Be alert!” [Mark 13:33-37]. Those who strive to become other Christs are obligated to create a unique frame of mind. Though we “catechism-trained” Catholics were deliberately given the impression we pretty much had everything all together — and had put it into one book for safe-keeping — that’s certainly not the mentality of our Christian sacred authors. Thankfully they wrote Scripture, not catechisms. Too often we look for answers, and not a way of life.

Mark’s Jesus directs his call for watchfulness to a community still expecting an imminent Parousia. Yet the command to be alert goes far beyond just looking for Jesus’ Second Coming. The story he tells demonstrates how constantly being on guard is an essential part of our faith. As servants of the risen Jesus, we never know when the “master” is going to break into our lives. There’s no such thing as a sacred place, time, or person who can prepare us for such an encounter. The fact that it happens makes the place, time, or person sacred, not vice-versa. If we’re not continually attentive, we’ll miss what, as Jesus’ servants, we’ve been uniquely trained to experience.

Perhaps we’ve been so occupied with learning “faith stuff” that we neglected to learn a faith “mentality.” We might have just created lots of religious, absent-minded “professors” — people who know all about the facts of their faith, but aren’t alert enough to know what’s actually happening in their faith around them.

Too bad those catechism facts simply served as a sleeping pill. Maybe what we need now is a little more biblical caffeine in our faith. —taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet

HOW TRUE:

I am thankful for my struggle because without it, I wouldn’t have stumbled upon my strength.



unknown future will bring more than we can imagine. That sets us off on a journey of hopeful anticipation.

As we begin Advent, we might recall some of our most memorable experiences of anticipation. Was it waiting for the birth of a child, or the day of our wedding? Perhaps something seemingly much more mundane like the end of the school year, the moment when your date was to pick you up or meet you at the restaurant.

Waiting reminds us that, like it or not, we don't control the universe.

At the same time, we won't discover the new unless we are open to it. Advent anticipation adds open-ended hope to all our anticipation. We keep growing, therefore the future is both unpredictable and promising.

Sometimes, it seems that Advent is designed to be confusing. Theologians call it a time of "already and not yet." Mark's Gospel captures that dilemma perfectly. Jesus says: "Be on the lookout!" [Mark 13:33-37]. For what? For the coming of something you can't predict, something that will take you by surprise at the least expected moment!

Jesus consistently avoided the trap of giving details about the end times. They were — and still are — in an unpredictable process of becoming. Nevertheless, he offered somber hints when he described the unpredictable time to come for him.

He said it would come "in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning" — these are precisely the hours which led up to his passion. Jesus was arrested while praying in the evening. His interrogation by the religious leaders took place after that, presumably around midnight. Cockcrow was the moment for Peter to deny knowing him. In the morning, the Sanhedrin handed him over to Pilate.

These were the moments for which he was watching. The disciples remembered this clearly because those worst of times blossomed into the Resurrection. For what are we supposed to be watching? Although Isaiah asks God to rend the heavens, he describes God much more gently as our father, the potter, our redeemer forever [Isaiah 63:15-17,19; 64:2-8].

The Jesuit mystic Teilhard de Chardin [1881-1957], talked about how to move in this continual journey of becoming more. He wrote: "Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being in the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability — and that it may take a very long time."

Sometimes we are tempted to look to the past as an ideal age: "If only I had lived in the time of Abraham or Jesus, or the days of the Latin Mass or ... [fill in the blank]." That's not what Jesus did. He knew the treasures of his tradition, he cherished them, but he knew that time moves in only one direction; therefore what is to come — hard as it might seem to be — promises to be more than this or any moment of the past.

Our season of Advent — this year the shortest possible because Christmas falls on a Monday — invites us into hopeful anticipation. While we wait "for the revelation of our Lord," we will need to learn to appreciate Jesus' hours of passion and Teilhard's disturbing "stages of instability." We can appreciate them as hope-soaked promises in a process of growing in grace.

Advent is the time to anticipate what we cannot yet see, and to trust that it will come. Each day's grace will build on the last. —taken from the writings of Sister Mary M. McGlone, C.S.J., which appears on the internet



Isaiah does recall the name of God in Israel is "Abba" and "Potter". Israel, who was created as God's people, now admits it needs to be refashioned, renamed and recreated.

There is a strong sense of longing to belong again in the words of Isaiah. There are some pitiful cries for God to not seem so far away, but return to the intimacy of ages past. Our human condition is equally scattered and we're quite unsure to what or whom we belong. Our personal prayer is that of all humanity as well — "Why do you let us wander?" "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down."

As we begin the New Liturgical Year, we also begin to read from the Gospel of Mark. Mark's Gospel for this 1st Week in Advent actually occurs just before Christ's Passion [Mark 13:33-37]. Jesus is exhorting His followers to states of readiness — "Be watchful. Be alert." "Watch!" These are strong words which catch the ear of His disciples.

The disciples are likened to servants whom the master had put in charge of his house — each servant entrusted with his or her own work. What does it mean for me to oversee God's house together with my brothers and sisters? What is the work that God has entrusted me with? As we grapple with these questions, Jesus consoles us that God does not abandon us, but instead, as the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore notes in his poem *Gitanjali*: "he comes, comes, ever comes; every day and every night he comes, comes, and comes." As we enter this season of Advent, may we experience this constant coming of the Lord in our life, as we strive to take care of his house and do the work entrusted to us.

But there is more. What Jesus calls us to is that way that Jesus Himself has lived His personal mission of redeeming this world. Awareness can be a function of fear, but also of love. If being redeemed is our final end, and if Jesus' mission was to redeem us and bring us all back to the Hands of the "potter" — the Creator — then fear of His coming is not the final disaster, but the final revelation of God's creative love.

Jesus uses a little image which is important, but can be easily overlooked — he uses the image of a land owner who goes on a journey, but leaves his servants "each with his/her own work" to do. The challenge is not just to stay awake, but awake so as to do the work of bringing light and life to God's world. Waiting and watching out of fear is passive and paralyzing. Waiting in faith is eager and exciting. We can wait expecting to be caught, or expecting to be caught up in our part in His coming into this world.

Now that I admit to being a bit older, I am waiting more actively for Christmas — and enjoying Advent more. As a younger person, Advent was easily endured because I had my eyes on the prizes of Christmas underneath the largest Christmas tree my father could convince my mother to allow in the house. Emptiness in our living room was replaced with branches whose fullness promised completion. Darkness was replaced by as many lights as our electrical system would permit. Silence was moved out by carols and stories of the old times. We kids enjoyed it all of course, but it was all about having and waiting for more.

I sound like an old fuddy now, but what I ask of Christmas has changed and the days bringing Christmas to me are different. There is the song from the musical play — *Mame* — whose main line is: "We need a little Christmas, right this very minute". Before I need Christmas, I need a little emptiness, darkness and silence. These Advent days do get busier, packed, brighter and louder. What I need is some sense that I need an experience of being redeemed, recreated, renamed, and reborn. I would like to be more watchful and alert to how loved I am and how many ways there are to bring Christ to life in the world around me.

—Edited from the writings of Father Nicky Santos, S.J., and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet



AN INVITING WARNING:

We hosted two other families for Thanksgiving this year — which means I spent the week of Thanksgiving like many of you — cleaning, cooking, and preparing. After the pomp and chaos, I settled in for a long weekend ready to rest — and eat more turkey! I stumbled upon a Hallmark-type Christmas movie centered on the predictable worldly pair falling in love as the snow flurries around them. At one part in the film, the lead female missed a warning sign on the banks of a lake not fully frozen and found herself stranded in the middle, ice skating, as the lake began to crack around her. As expected, the leading male arrived just in time to help her off the ice — admonishing her for missing the warning sign.

In an unexpected way, that scene in the low-budget film has me reflecting a lot on the connection between Advent and the stern warning our Lord gives us in the Gospel — “Be watchful! Be alert! What I say to you all: ‘Watch!’”

The thing with warning signs — in whatever form they come — is that they give a sense of premonition. Something is up ahead. Be vigilant. Watch. Someone who has seen what may cause ruin and destruction has forewarned you to proceed with caution. And like the character in my Thanksgiving show, the consequences of missing that warning could be dire. But why does the Church proclaim these Gospels — each year — on this 1st Week in Advent? What are we coming up to that requires a warning sign?

We find our answer from the Prophet Isaiah [63:16-17,19; 64:2-8]. We hear the beautiful truth that God is our Father, and we are the clay in His hands. It’s oozing with the motion and action of God moving towards us and inviting us into communion with Him, and humanity crying out to the God they’ve offended. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that “God thirsts that we may thirst for Him” [CCC, #2560]. He is the one who always invites; our assent of faith is the response. We are being warned not to miss that.

Throughout the ages, God incessantly calls out to His people, moving toward us, wooing our hearts even when we’ve gone astray. Even the prayers of the Psalm show us this reality — “Lord, make us turn to you” [Psalm 80]. We aren’t praying for us to make the first move, or even the courage to make a move, on our own. We cry out to God as helpless infants — make us turn, Lord. Without Him we are — quite literally — nothing.

This love story in motion between God and humanity climaxes in the love of Christ. His warning is part of the invitation. It’s as if He’s saying: “divine love is in your grasp, don’t let this world cloud your vision and miss it!” As we walk step by step through the days of Advent, Jesus is reminding us to stay alert. Advent begins the liturgical year. It can also signify the beginning of a new foot forward in our own personal faith. It gives us the time to prepare for Christmas, but also time to prepare our hearts to meet Christ when our time here is over. The season is caught up in both the beginning and end — the Alpha and Omega. The Liturgy of the Word for this 1st Week in Advent reminds us to always be ready for the end. We are both beckoned and warned, called and cautioned.

With each step on the road we take, we hear Christ in Mark’s Gospel [13:33-37] reminding us to be alert and to watch out for spiritual pitfalls in our daily lives. For me, this means taking time to weed out the tiny imperceptible moments of distraction that keep me from being ready at each moment to meet our Lord. For others, it might mean heeding warnings that we’ve felt in certain relationships, and cutting them off. Or perhaps it’s a call to remove once and for all certain bad habits preventing us from living life to the fullest. Whatever it is, we can be sure that the more we give in to God’s call to communion with Him, the more fully ourselves we will become.

The alternative, of course, is missing the warning sign and being caught off guard. In the clichéd Christmas movie I watched, it involved meeting the man of her dreams. In our lives, however, it may mean meeting the Beloved of our hearts unprepared. Let’s take this season to listen to Christ’s warning in the form of spiritual invitation. Deep is calling on deep. Let us clean up our souls, prepare our hearts, and respond to Divine Love.

—taken from the writings of Angie Windnagle which appear on the internet.

It is for this reason we need to begin each day with prayer. What happens if we don’t pray on a given morning is not that we incur God’s wrath, but rather that we tend to miss the morning, spending the hours until noon trapped inside a certain dullness of heart. The same can be said about praying before meals. We don’t displease God by not first centering ourselves in gratitude before eating, but we miss out on the richness of what we’re doing. Liturgical prayer and the Eucharist have the same intent, among their other intentions. They’re meant to, regularly, call us out of a certain sleep.

None of us lives each day of our lives as if it was his or her last day. Our heartaches, headaches, distractions, and busyness invariably lull us to sleep. That’s forgivable — it’s what it means to be human. So we should ensure that we have regular spiritual rituals — spiritual alarm clocks — to jolt us back awake, so that it doesn’t take a heart attack, a stroke, cancer, or death to wake us up.

—taken from the writings Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet.

KNOWING JESUS FOR OURSELVES:

On many occasions, Jesus asks his disciples not to tell anyone that he is the Son of God, the Messiah. Why might that be? The only reason for this is because Jesus is saying that every one of us has to come to that knowledge for ourselves. We can’t let someone else do our spiritual homework for us, but many of us do. We Catholics let the pope, bishops, and priests give us all the answers and then we just parrot them back. Has there been any experience of it ourselves? Often, the answer is “usually not.” Many Christians believe what we’re supposed to believe. But here Jesus says, “Who do you say that I am?” What have you experienced? What have you personally discovered? What knowledge do you have?

The passage used most often used to preach the primacy of the papacy is a prime example. In it, Jesus tells Peter: “You are the rock upon which I will build my church.” That’s true, but a couple chapters later Jesus says the identical thing to the whole community: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. What you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven” [see Matthew 18:18]. Jesus is not only talking about the pope; he’s talking about the people of God, all of us. Peter as the symbolic leader has to do it first, but then we all participate in passing on the message.

People who live their prophetic vocation are those who choose this life of love and transformation.

Without a constant infusion of the Holy Spirit, without a constant desire and trust — Lord, give me your Holy Spirit! — we all close down. We do! It’s the nature of life to circle around the smaller and smaller self, to take fewer and fewer risks, and to never go outside our own comfort zone of people who are just like us.

Friends and siblings in Christ, don’t do that! We’re all going to be gone in a few years. We only get one chance to live this life of love. Every day is a lesson in love, learning how not to bind up ourselves and our neighbors, but in fact to free ourselves and others. What Jesus is saying here to Peter and to all of us is that he will back up what we do. We are Jesus’ emissaries. As St. Teresa says: “We are the only hands and feet, the only eyes and ears that Jesus has.” Jesus has handed over the mission and the mystery and the wonder of the realm of God to each of us.

—Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

I made my first Communion when I was 8. I had waited long for it, was dressed up in a dress, veil and shoes — all of them white. I was ready for the big moment. Then, Monsignor Higgins gave the homily. He admired how we were dressed — “Little princes and princesses.” And he told us that it was a great day.

Then he said something I have never forgotten. He said: “Today is the least important time you will ever receive Communion. Every time after this will build on it and be fuller of grace.” How true; unfortunately, would that we lived that way. But Monsignor’s comment also applies to Advent. For the

STAYING AWAKE:

In his autobiography, *Report to Greco*, Nikos Kazantzakis recounts a conversation he once had with an old monk. Kazantzakis, a young man at the time, was visiting a monastery and was very taken by a famed ascetic, Father Makarios, who lived there. But a series of visits with the old monk left him with some ambivalent feelings as well. The monk's austere lifestyle stirred a certain religious romanticism in Kazantzakis, but it repelled him too — he wanted the romanticism, but in a more-palatable way. Here's their conversation as Kazantzakis records it:

“Yours is a hard life, Father. I too want to be saved. Is there no other way?”

“More agreeable?” asked the ascetic, smiling compassionately.

“More human, Father.”

“One — only one.”

“What is that?”

“Ascent. To climb a series of steps. From the full stomach to hunger, from the slaked throat to thirst, from joy to suffering. God sits at the summit of hunger, thirst, and suffering; the devil sits at the summit of the comfortable life. Choose.”

“I am still young. The world is nice. I have time to choose.”

Reaching out, the old monk touched my knee and said: “Wake up, my child. Wake up before death wakes you up.”

I shuddered and said: “I am still young.”

“Death loves the young,” the old man replied. “The inferno loves the young. Life is like a lighted candle, easily extinguished. Take care — wake up!”

We go through our daily lives not only with a lack of reflectiveness and lack of gratitude, but with a habitual touch of resentment as well. Wake up! Wake up before death wakes you up. In a less dramatic expression that's a virtual leitmotif in the Gospels. Jesus is always telling us to wake up, to stay awake, to be vigilant, to be more alert to a deeper reality [Mark 13:33-37]. What's meant by that? How are we asleep to depth? How are we to wake up and stay awake?



How are we asleep? All of us know how difficult it is for us to be inside the present moment, to not be asleep to the real riches inside our own lives. The distractions and worries of daily life tend to so consume us that we habitually take for granted what's most precious to us — our health, the miracle of our senses, the love and friendships that surround us, and the gift of life itself. We go through our daily lives not only with a lack of reflectiveness and lack of gratitude but with a habitual touch of resentment as well — a chronic, grey depression. We are very much asleep — both to God and to our own lives.

How do we wake up? Today there's a rich literature that offers us all kinds of advice on how to get into the present moment so as to be awake to the deep riches inside our own lives. While much of this literature is good, little of it is very effective. It invites us to live each day of our lives as if was our last day, but we simply can't do that. It's impossible to sustain that kind of intentionality and awareness over a long period of time. An awareness of our mortality does wake us up — as does a stroke, a heart attack, or cancer; but that heightened-awareness is easier to sustain for a short season of our lives than it is for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years. Nobody can sustain that kind of awareness all the time. None of us can live seventy or eighty years as if each day was his or her last day. Or can we?

On the one hand, the distractions, cares, and pressures of everyday life will invariably have their way with us, and we will, in effect, fall asleep to what's deeper and more important inside of life. But it is for this reason that every major spiritual tradition has daily rituals designed precisely to wake us from spiritual sleep — akin to an alarm clock waking us from physical sleep.

OBSERVING THE PROPER TIME AND PLACE:

With the start of Advent, we begin preparation for the great feast of Christmas. Advent is a penitential time — though not as severe as Lent — and this is why there are no flowers in the Church, and our music is a little more sober. One of the biggest things we notice is that the “Gloria” is missing from Mass — another way of distinguishing the season.

Often people undertake some fasting in Advent, and in some Christian countries people try to avoid meat throughout this season. Christians often observe a ‘fast before the feast’ which makes the feasting all the more welcome when it finally arrives.

You will also note that the color of the priest's vestment is now purple — reminding us of the purple worn in Lent. In reality, the shade of purple worn in Advent should be slightly different — and a bit lighter — than that of Lent. Sometimes it even is closer to “blue”. This is to reflect the fact that the emphasis is not so much on penance, but rather on expectant waiting.

One of the dangers of modern society is that one seasons tend to blend into one another. An example of this is that prior to the nineteen-eighties, the food available in most grocery stores was seasonal; but today we can easily obtain foods from different parts of the world at any time of the year. Although this availability of foodstuffs throughout the year is intended to enhance our lives, it actually makes life blander. It means that we are increasingly losing touch with the differences that the various seasons ought to bring to our lives.

Our lives can definitely be enriched by experiencing the differences that come with winter, spring, summer, and autumn. By eating foods in the correct season, we will be more in touch with nature, and will have a good balance of light and shade in our lives, and we will be able to enjoy the differences that each season brings. And this is not to speak of the harm to the environment caused by transporting a vast quantity of food across the globe.

The Church understands these things very well; it has its own sequence of liturgical seasons — each with their different emphases. By this means it is able to lead us through the important events of the life of Christ each year. The Liturgical Year highlights the differences of each season with its fasts and feasts, with its times of joy and sorrow, with its times of penance, and — as with the season of Advent — its times of expectation.

Even within Advent, we encounter important differences; each year we adopt the viewpoint of one of the authors of the Synoptic Gospels. Last year we worked our way through St Matthew's Gospel; this year, we see the life of Christ from the perspective of St Mark. Each of these writers has their own particular accent; each sees the significance of certain moments in the life of Christ from a different angle. Again, this is a great enrichment for us all.

The great theme of the Season of Advent is expectation. This expectation has two aspects: [1] we are anticipating the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas; and [2] we look forward to and await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. So, with the one we have an eye on the past, and with the other an eye on the future. These two expectations are inter-related, and as we prepare for Christmas we find that we are doing precisely the sort of things that will help to prepare ourselves to meet Christ on that great Day of Days at the end of time.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells us to stay awake because we never know when that time will come. And of course, the time he is referring to is the Last Day when Christ will come in all his glory to judge the heavens and the earth [Mark 13:33-37]. When Jesus says to us: “Stay awake,” he does not mean that we should literally go without sleep. He is giving us a metaphor and reminding us to be alert and to put our lives in order because we can never know when the Day of the Lord will come. There is always a danger of complacency in the Christian life. It is one of the human weaknesses that the Devil knows very



well he can exploit.

The book, *The Screwtape Letters* by CS Lewis, is a fictional account of a series of letters from a senior to a junior devil. In it the senior devil tells his junior that if all other temptations fail, the junior devil should tell his victim that there is no hurry. This will lead the victim into a false sense of security, and give the junior devil more time to tempt him and so gradually and inevitably lead him away from the Lord.

We fallible human beings often feel that we can carry on with our faults and human weaknesses, and that we can repent on some future date. Unfortunately, that day of repentance quite often never comes. We grow accustomed to our sins and before we know it we discover that they have become deeply ingrained habits that, ultimately, we find we cannot change.

For a long-term smoker to give up tobacco requires a herculean effort, and often they have many false starts. It is the same with us when we find we have fallen into a deeply ingrained habit of sin. When we eventually wake up and realize the consequences of our sinfulness, we find it very difficult to overcome this obstacle to our faith.

Advent is a good time for reconciliation. It is a good time to repent of our sins, perhaps firstly so that we can celebrate Christmas in good conscience, but also so that we can prepare ourselves for that much greater encounter with the Lord of Life on that crucial day when we will meet him face to face.

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister S.D.S., which appear on the internet

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 16th:

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry is then open from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



Our Savior Lutheran's Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

Please let us know in the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.



WHAT TIME IS IT?

Yogi Berra — the former manager for the New York Yankees — is well known because of his unorthodox remarks and peculiar responses. It is from Yogi Berra that we get the phrase “It ain’t over ‘til it’s over!” and “This is like déjà vu all over again.” It is said that on a particular day while he was walking the streets of New York, Yogi Berra was stopped by a stranger who said: “Excuse me sir, do you know what time it is?” Yogi responded: “You mean now?”

wandering aimlessly only because everyone else is wandering aimlessly. But with the Lord, sin, chaos, is conquered. With the Lord, everything falls into place. Even the most difficult experiences of our lives — even suffering and death — have meaning when they become an expression and renewal of the life and death of Jesus Christ.

We long for our Lord's Presence. If we deny this need — this necessity for God to be in our lives — then we chance becoming useless shells — Christians on the outside, but not much on the inside. But if we fight off our inclination to embrace chaos, if we fight off being overwhelmed by the fluff of the world and allow our need for Christ to transform our lives, then we can be what he created us to be — images of His Love on earth. We can be whole. We can be Christians.

Advent is the season of hope. The promise of the prophets will be fulfilled. The Messiah will come to return the world to God's original plan. Our thirst for the Messiah will be quenched by the celebration of his birth and life within our own lives. We wait. We watch. We prepare to celebrate.

To the extent that we do this well, to the extent that our lives are a celebration of the presence of Christ in the world — to that extent, our entire lives are a celebration of Christmas.

—taken from the writings of Monsignor Joseph Pellegrino, which appear on the internet.

SCHEDULE OF ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERVICES:

- **Sunday, December 17 — Decoration of the Chapel for Christmas** following the 10 AM Mass
- **Monday, December 18 — Communal Penance Service at 7:00 PM**
- **Sunday, December 24 — 10:00 AM — Mass for the 4th Week in Advent**
— 4:00 PM — Christmas Eve Mass
- **Monday, December 25 — Christmas Day Mass at 10:00 AM**
- **Sunday, December 31 — 10:00 AM — Mass for the Feast of the Holy Family.**
— There will be **no vigil Mass on New Year's Eve this year** because New Year's Day is not a Holy Day because it falls on a Monday

CONTEMPLATION:

The life of contemplation implies two levels of awareness — [1] awareness of the question; and [2] awareness of the answer. Though these are two distinct and enormously different levels, yet they are in fact an awareness of the same thing. The question is, itself, the answer. And we ourselves are both. But we cannot know this until we have moved into the second kind of awareness. We awaken, not to find an answer absolutely distinct from the question, but to realize that the question is its own answer. And all is summed up in one awareness — “I Am”.

This is not philosophical “mumbo jumbo”. It is not the static awareness of the metaphysical essences apprehended as spiritual objections, unchanging and eternal. It is not the contemplation of abstract ideas. It is the religious apprehension of God, through my life in God, or through “sonship” and “daughterhood” as the New Testament says — “For whoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the children of God. The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our own spirit that we are the children of God. To as many receive Him He gave the power to become children of God” [see Romans 8]. And so contemplation is a religious and transcendent gift. It is not something to which we can attain alone, by intellectual effort, by perfecting our natural powers. It is not a kind of self-hypnosis, resulting from concentration on our own inner spiritual being. It is not the fruit of our own efforts. It is the gift of God Who, in His mercy completes the hidden and mysterious work of creation in us by enlightening our minds and hearts, by awakening in us the awareness that we are words spoken in His One Word, and that Creating Spirit dwells in us, and we in Him. That we are “in Christ”. and that Christ lives in us. That the natural life in us has been completed, elevated, transformed and fulfilled in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Contemplation is the awareness and realization, even in some sense experience, of what each Christian obscurely believes: “It is now no longer that I live but Christ that lives in me”

HOPE IN THE CCU WAITING ROOM:

An essential part of the ministry of any priest is to care for people in hospitals. I want to begin today by speaking about one of the rooms in the hospital — the critical care waiting room. This is the room where family and friends wait while the doctors care for their loved ones who have suffered a devastating stroke, a serious heart attack, a horrible car accident, or some other catastrophic event. I hope you have never had occasion to be in that waiting room. But if you have, you know that it is a place very different from any other place in the world. The people who wait there are bound together like no other people in the world.

Family members and friends can't do enough for each other. No one is proud. No one stands on ceremony or protocol. Petty disputes and hurts are nowhere to be found. Perhaps there are several patients whose family and friends are waiting in that room. These complete strangers feel bound in their shared hope for their loved ones. Class and race melt away. Each person in that room is a parent or spouse or child or close friend of the suffering one first. He or she is a white, black or Asian, a blue collar or white collar worker second. Everyone in the waiting room pulls for each other. If one family receives good news, there is hope and joy for all. If another family hears sad news, everyone in the room feels their grief.

In the critical care waiting room, the world changes. Vanity and pretense vanish. The entire universe is focused on the doctor's next report. All eyes continually glance at the door. The critical care waiting room is a place of hoping. It is a place of anticipating — a place of expecting. It is a place of Advent.

We live in this waiting room. We keep an eye out for the doctor — the Divine Healer — to come. We hope to experience his good news. We long for him to say: "the patient, your loved one, is fine. He or she is going to recover, is going to live."

Who is this Loved One about whom we are so concerned? The Loved One is not another person — the Loved One is that part of each of us and all of us that is right when all else seems wrong. The Loved One is that which is good when all else seems malicious. The Loved One is that within us that is spiritual in a materialistic world. The Loved One is our sharing in the Life of Jesus Christ himself. The Loved One is our soul. But the Loved One is in critical care. Evil forces are trying to destroy this presence. We sit in the waiting room of life — longing for the Divine Doctor to come and tell us that the presence of the Lord is well and strong within us and among us. We call out: "Come! Rend the heavens and come! We are the clay. You are the potter. Mold us back into your own. Come!" [Isaiah 63:16-17,19; 64:2-8].

And so we watch. We watch for the Divine Healer to come and lead us into His Love. We watch for the times — more than we could imagine — when God extends His Love to us. We watch for the times when we can serve His Love by serving others. We watch for the opportunities to unite ourselves closer to His Love through prayer and sacrifice. We wait. We watch. We watch for opportunities to grow. Advent — the time of watching — reminds us that our entire lives must be a watching for ways that we can grow more spiritual, grow closer to Christ.

We have to watch. If we don't prepare for Christ's coming, if we don't live our lives in such a way that we are always open to His Presence, then we will be caught napping. Perhaps the end of our personal world will come before the end of the universe. It makes no difference. We have to be prepared for Christ. We have to watch.

We sit in the critical care waiting room of life longing to live with the Loved One. We need the Lord. We need Him in our lives to make sense of life. Without Him, our lives are chaos. Without the Lord our lives are mad dashing about from place to place, person to person, doing for the sake of doing,



Before we become too critical of Yogi Berra's redundant remark, it might be appropriate for us to remember that time is not as simple as it seems. In fact, there are different ways to understand what time actually is. The Greek language is more sensitive to this issue than is English. In English, we have one word for time; but in Greek — which is the language used in the Christian scriptures — there are two words. Each reflects a different concept of what time is. The two words are *chronos* and *kairos*.

"Chronos" is the word from which we get chronology, which is a listing of events and intervals. "Chronos" is what we might call clock time. Clock time measures things. For example, we could take any interval, say from 8:00 until 8:30 this morning. In that thirty minutes you could decide to dry a load of laundry. In that same interval, three thousand people could die throughout the world, and four thousand people could be born, your thumbnail could grow a fraction of an inch, and a bomb might explode in Jerusalem. All of this in the time in which you dry your laundry. "Chronos" marks that interval and it does not care about any of the things that happen within it. "Chronos" is clock time. Tick Tock. Ho Hum.

But there is another kind of time: "Kairos" is not clock time. It is the right time, the time when good things happen. "Kairos" is the time that we are waiting for, the time when all things come together. "Kairos" is God's time — the time in which we see God working. We find it difficult to remember "Chronos" time. If I were to ask you what you were doing April 7, 1992, you probably could not remember. But "Kairos" is a time that we remember always — the time we met our spouse, found the courage to forgive an enemy, realized what we wanted to do with our lives, held a child or a grandchild in our arms for the first time, or made a sacrifice which changed ourselves and others. We remember these times because they are "Kairos". This is the time on which we hang our lives. "Kairos" does not measure life — it is life. It is not the time we live through. It is time we live for.



Now if we examine our lives, I think that we would all admit that there is a lot more "Chronos" than there is "Kairos". A lot more clock time than there is the right time. But the good news of Mark's gospel is that, whatever proportion we have between these two times does not have to remain as it is. We can choose to have more "Kairos" — more right time in our life. This is why Mark's Jesus keeps telling us: "Be alert! Be awake! Don't fall asleep!" [Mark 13:33-37]. The gospel believes that there is a right time coming. In the next day, in the next hour, perhaps now, a right moment could arrive. We could meet a person that changes our life. We could hear an idea that shifts our thinking. We could find the courage to do something we never thought we could do.

God is coming, and we do not know when. The last thing we would want to do is miss that moment. This is what Advent is about, why we take these four weeks every year to remind ourselves Christ is coming and we want to be alert when he arrives. Spiritual writers believe that the most important thing about being a disciple of Jesus is not saying prayers or doing good works. It is being attentive, being alert to life. At any moment Christ can come. The next moment could be "Kairos".

So the next time that you find yourself waiting for time to pass, see if you can shift and start beginning to wait for Christ to come. The next time that you are waiting at a traffic light, or in line, or for retirement, do not treat that time as time you have to live through. Ask yourself: "Is this the time I've been waiting for? Could God be in this time, inviting me to thanksgiving, insight, action, laughter, or hope?" You see, time is not all the same. There are moments yet to come that can change our lives — gifts that we will remember forever, invitations that can take our breath away. So be alert! Stay awake! Watch! For Christ is coming! That is the message of Advent — that is knowing the difference between clock time and God's time.

—taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

HOW TO ADVENT:

It's the season of Advent — probably my favorite liturgical season. It's December; it's cold outside — well, unless you live in the south like me; you've got your cozy sweater on; the Christmas trees are up; the lights are on; hot chocolate is served; the Advent wreath is up by the altar; and maybe there's even a nativity scene set up with one noticeable figure missing in the middle. All these changes signal the start of a very important season. But in order to get the best out of Advent, we have to do a little bit more than decking the halls and putting the good silver out. Here's a few simple ways to get started:

Celebrate the Season. Sometimes it's really easy for us to skip from Thanksgiving to Christmas. The best way to focus on Advent is to start up some traditions! Set up an Advent wreath in your home, and have a little candle-lighting ceremony — make the Sundays in Advent, or saints' feast days, into a special occasion by hosting a little potluck with your friends and trying out some traditional Advent recipes; listen to some Advent music — distinct from Christmas music people!

Dive into Daily Prayer. When the weather gets colder, all I want to do is stay inside wrapped in a blanket with a cozy sweater on, a book in one hand, and a mug of warm goodness in the other. And, well, that's exactly where you'll find me at any chance I get during this Advent season. Spending time every day is prayer is the most important part of any spiritual journey, and while I'll still go to the Chapel to pray in Adoration, my favorite way to make time to pray — especially when the holiday schedule gets more and more busy — is to simply curl up in a comfy chair at home with my Bible and journal. Spend time sitting with Scripture, and allow Jesus to speak to your heart, and give yourself time to journal your prayers, thoughts, and the ways Jesus is speaking to you. If you're unsure where to start, a great and easy way to dive into this liturgical season is by doing a guided daily reflection through an Advent devotional.

Ask yourself, "What's holding me back?"

Jesus wants to dwell in your heart — but can only do so if you let Him enter in. We all have places in our hearts that we keep hidden from Jesus — or at least we think it's hidden from Him. Maybe it's a secret that we keep locked away from everyone; maybe it's a sin that we can't seem to shake; maybe it's a toxic relationship; or maybe it's an attachment to material things or to ideas of our self. The list is endless. These things keep us from fully entering into communion with Jesus — and takes up all the room at the inn, so to speak, of our hearts.

Make a Good Confession. In order to truly allow Jesus to touch you this Christmas, you've got to make some room. In the sacrament of Reconciliation, we are given an opportunity to make room for Jesus. Maybe all you can offer Him is a shabby stable with a dirt floor and a wooden trough filled with hay. That's OK because we know He makes even the most pitiful and shameful of places beautiful. He will take whatever you can give Him. Start by making an examination of conscience. This is a time to sit quietly with our Lord, and to think of all the ways we have distanced ourselves from Him through sin, and to recognize the ways we have failed in our journey to holiness. Empty yourself out in vulnerability during your Confession — share with Him all the things that hold you back from Him, and invite Him into your heart like never before. Christ did not come to us when we had it all together, or when we were ready. He came in the midst of all our messes, and in the midst of all our busyness. He entered into the literal pig sties of our lives!

Journey Along with Mary. No one does Advent better than our Blessed Mother. After all, she prepared her heart for the coming of Jesus for 9 months! No one knows how to receive Christ like she did — fearlessly, boldly, gently, freely, purely and completely. Ask our Mother to lend you her "yes", to form your heart into a vessel. She is the perfect example of obedience and receptivity, and

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meditating upon her journey has helped me tremendously in understanding how to best receive our Lord each Christmas. Picture yourself walking alongside her as she journeys to Bethlehem, holding her hand and talking excitedly about the baby — how you can't wait to meet him, what a gift He is, what color you'll paint the nursery! Pray the rosary, and meditate upon the mysteries, sit with scripture, and continually look to Mary to help you get ready for Christmas. She's got your back.

Advent is a time set apart. The weeks leading up to Christmas Eve are meant to be a time of prayer and joyful anticipation! It's a time to prepare our hearts for the coming of our sweet Jesus into this world as an infant. And He asks that we receive Him. —taken from the writings of Laurie Medina, a Life Teen associate.

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Chapel. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — lifeteen.com. There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. **Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass.** And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. **Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].**

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

Monday:	Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 8:5-11
Tuesday:	Isaiah 11:1-10, Luke 10:21-24
Wednesday:	Isaiah 23:6-10, Matthew 15:29-37
Thursday:	Isaiah 26:1-6, Matthew 7:21-27
Friday:	Genesis 3:9-20, Ephesians 1:3-6, Luke 1:26-38
Saturday:	Isaiah 30:19-26, Matthew 9:35-10:1
2nd Week in Advent:	Isaiah 40:1-11, 2 Peter 3:8-14, Mark 1:1-8

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.