

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

From the Pastor's Desk

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Advent. With the First Sunday of Advent we also begin a new liturgical year. This year, apart from the seasons of Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter and Solemnities, the Gospel of St. Mark will occupy most of the Sundays throughout the year. It would be a good and pious gesture, as spiritual reading, to read the entire Gospel of St. Mark a couple of times throughout the year for personal prayer and reflection. This helps us build a familiarity with the Gospel and a way for us to be open to greater participation in the Sunday liturgies. This leads to greater faith-filled worship as well as our growing relationship with the Lord. As St. Jerome reminds us... "*Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ*". Or to express it in a positive way... "*Knowledge of Scripture is knowledge of Christ*."

Advent is a season of Hope. We rarely take the time to reflect on the virtue of Hope. This may be due to the fact that we tend to confuse the virtue of *hope* with *wishful thinking*. Advent is not a time of wishful thinking. Unless, of course you are a child wishing that Santa Claus will bring you that one gift you have always wanted. As an adult one could wish to win the lottery. Winning the lottery is wishful thinking for those adults who have not bought a lottery ticket. For those who bought a lottery ticket, there is reason to have hope; although the odds are mostly against you. There is a difference between hope and wishful thinking. There is the element of facts and reason behind hope. Hope is based on a fact (I bought a lottery ticket) on which I reasonably believe I can win. Wishful thinking is based on my desire fueled by fantasy (I didn't buy a ticket). Magically my desire will suddenly happen out of nowhere with me not having to do anything to contribute to making it happen wishful thinking.

"*Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you...*" 1Peter 3:15. These words from the first Letter of St. Peter give us a starting point for a reflection on the virtue of hope. The ultimate hope for the Christian is salvation rooted in Jesus Christ. Salvation is the foundation of a joyful life. The doctrine lives loudly within the Christian! Unless of course one is living a life that can hardly be considered the Christian way of life: living an immoral and sinful life. It is just like not buying a lottery ticket! There is no reason for hope. However, there are a number of things we can do to build hope.

First, our hope is based on information: Divine Revelation. The scriptures reveal to us the faithful love of God for his Chosen People. God desires their salvation. Once they live as God's chosen People, they are then to be a light for the nations. From there we become aware of God's desire for the salvation of all people. So great is God's love and faithfulness. This revelation was first revealed to a people, Israel, who in turn were to be the light of revelation for the whole world. The Israelites often failed in their mission as the light to the nations. The problem became obvious of their infidelity with the Babylonian Exile. They were not faithful to God. They did not keep their part of the Covenant. While in exile they were at the point of despair: hopeless. Rejection of God and sin lead to despair: no hope! In the midst of their despair the prophets recalled for them the Covenant. God is always faithful and loves His people. Even with their lack of faithfulness and love God always remains faithful. God never denies the Covenant, and this is their reason to have hope: even in and especially in despair. Hope, like faith and love is hard work.

How great is God's love and faithfulness"? Secondly, we recall the words of St. John 3:16. "*For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him*

should not perish but have eternal life." The one who is the perfect manifestation of God's love and faithfulness is Jesus Christ. God sent His Son because God's Chosen People and humanity were lost in the darkness of sin, death and despair. Jesus did not come to condemn but to save. Jesus came to conquer that which destroys humanity and causes despair: sin. We receive this revelation from Jesus as related to us in the Gospels and the writings of the New Testament: the eyewitness testimony of the Apostles and the life of the early church. The promise of salvation, revealed in Jesus Christ, is the great good in which we hope. We have reason to have hope for salvation because of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not wishful thinking.

However, we must *buy a lottery ticket* as it were. We do this by living a life worthy of this great gift. This means that we must live our lives in imitation of Christ: discipleship. This is how we live in hope which causes others to question our reason for our hope or our joyful living. We offer our reason for hope in our words and actions. We make our hope for salvation visible when we help build the Kingdom of God in the world today. As we build the Kingdom of God today (our ticket as it were) we express our hope in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God at the end of time. We live in hope (the joy of having a ticket). Living in despair, hopelessness does not make the Kingdom of God present in the world. In other words, we do not make the Kingdom of God present by living sinful lives and only wish for salvation.

If we do not live a life worthy of this great gift, then we live in the realm of wishful thinking for salvation. It is a fantasy. It is wishful thinking to live as we want and expect to enter the Kingdom of God at Christ's coming. In other words, there is no reason for hope. (Another insight: Sin is irrational; self-destructive and *unreasonable*.) Heaven becomes a fantasy rooted in wishful thinking and not a reasonable reality. If this is the case in our lives, we are a pitiable people who also have a deficiency in the virtues of faith and love.

During this Advent season we recall the events leading up to the Birth of Jesus. Just as God's Chosen People of the Old Testament received the promise that God would send his Messiah to save his people, we, like them contemplate their anticipation for his coming and their reason to have hope. It is good for us to recall the prophetic messages that refer to Jesus as the promised Messiah. This should remind us of the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus on the day of the Resurrection. Jesus appeared to them, whom they did not recognize, and he explained all the scriptures that referred to him. As he explained the scriptures to them their hearts burned within them. They experienced a reason to have hope. It was also joyful. His words resonated deep in their hearts. As we contemplate the events that led up to his birth at Christmas there is reason for our hearts to burn within us as we renew our faith and love for God. We have reason to have hope. We have joy. We can give a reason for our hope.

Fueled with this, we also have reason to hope for Jesus Christ's second coming. Jesus, the Savior and Son of God, has made us a promise as well. He promised that he would come again. We can be absolutely certain that he will fulfill this promise. The Gospel of St. John tells us... "*In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.*" (John 14: 2-4) Jesus promises us a place in his Father's House. We have reason to have hope. And again, we need to live in a manner worthy of living in the Father's House: heaven.

Advent is a season of hope. It is not a season of wishful thinking. Our hope is sustained as we grow in the virtues of faith and love. The Theological Virtues grow as they are challenged and practiced. Virtue is its own reward. Thus, we pray and reflect on the Word of God. We examine our conscience as we receive and contemplate our participation in the sacraments. We extend ourselves in joyful charity. In our witness to the world we live virtue and goodness. This reveals our reason for our hope in salvation: for ourselves and for all humanity. Again, if we do not, we are only living in wishful thinking. We fool ourselves and fail to give witness to hope.

St. Paul reminds us..., "Hope will not disappoint us." And again... "But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him for the wrath." Trust God's Word. We have good reason to have hope! Let us engage in this holy season of hope. Come Lord Jesus!

Have a blessed Advent
Father Ralko

Extra Times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Friday December 4th 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
Saturday December 5th 11:00 and at the regular time of 4:15.

This week we pray Week I of the Liturgy of the hours.

Parish Finances

Please Note: Parish Finances for the week of November 29th will not be published, due to publication deadlines. Thank you!

Youth Ministry News!

Catalyst Nights – Students grades 7-12 are invited to a Catalyst Night at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in the activity center on Sunday, **December 13th at 6:00 p.m.** The evening is led by the National Evangelization Team (NET), college age missionaries. The night includes dinner, presentations, games, skits, prayer, friends and fun. This is a joint, St. Thomas and St. Nicholas youth event and all teens grades 7-12 regardless of affiliation are invited. Parents are welcome!

Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition program for men and women who experienced the trauma of being raised in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional home. It is a safe place to learn how alcoholism and other family dysfunction affected the past, how it influences the present, and how to heal the wounds for a better future. Meetings are held in the Saint Nicholas Church Social Hall (Church Basement) **MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THURSDAYS at 7:00 p.m.** Please use the Silliman Street door. Meetings are expected to last no more than one hour, and masks are required. Contact James Sullivan for more Information at (740) 670-2959.

Singing and organ music will begin 15 minutes before all the Masses during the entire Christmas season except for the very last Sunday (the Baptism of the Lord). There will be music for only 5 minutes before Mass.

Bishop Rosecrans High School Golf Team Square Board Fundraiser

Based on OSU men's basketball scores for the 2020-21 season. \$25.00 per square. Payout is \$20 per halftime score and \$30 for final score. Please make checks payable to BRHS and mail to 1040 E. Main St., Zanesville, OH 43701

*Names will be assigned when squares are sold. Winners will be notified each week of the season. For more information contact Ed Johnston, enjedj@yahoo.com or Seth Thompson, sthompson@cducation.org



THE GIVING TREE

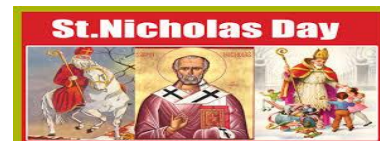
Every Advent we place a Giving Tree in the Church vestibule. It contains paper ornaments with gift items to be purchased for needy families. This year we will be giving the gifts to the Muskingum Valley Clinic for children, Heartbeats, Transitions, and our own homebound St. Nicholas Parishioners. Please pick an ornament, buy the requested item, wrap and securely fasten the ornament tag to the package. All packages must be returned to the church by **December 13th**. You are always so generous, and we thank you for helping others this holiday.

Grief Support – Tuesday December 15th. This month's topic: "The Grief Recovery Method" **Meetings are at 1:00 p.m. and again at 6:30 p.m. in the Parish Office Meeting Room.** The meetings are offered twice in one day to afford the maximum number of participants. Perhaps you have lost someone or know someone who is grieving and would like to learn how to help them. Please join us. The program is free and open to all.



BLANKET DRIVE

Everyone loves a warm blanket on a cold night. The Good Samaritan Nurses Alumni are collecting clean blankets, new or gently used. We do this as a memorial to our nurses who have passed away. The collection will start on **December 1** and end on **December 31**. Drop off blankets at Eastside Community Ministries. Monetary donations can also be made to the Genesis Foundation by making checks payable to the Good Samaritan Nurses Alumni. Blankets are given to Eastside for their clients. If you need more information call Carol Kohler 740-453-9123. Thank you.



Friday, December 6th is the Feast Day of our Patron Saint, St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas was the bishop of Myra in Turkey in the 4th Century. He is remembered for being kind and generous to the poor, to children and to those unjustly imprisoned. Legends tell that St. Nicholas gave anonymously; he did not seek praise but wanted good things to be done and the hearts of children to be delighted.

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time will come." - Mark 13:33

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Book of Intentions - Praying for each other's intentions is an essential part of parish life. The Book of Intentions can be found in the vestibule (back of the church between the doors, under the statue of "Our Lady of Fatima"). If you would like the parish to pray for your intentions, please write the intention in a sentence or two in the book. The intentions will not be read aloud, but will be referenced during the "Prayer of the Faithful" at each Mass.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Mt. Olive Cemetery has a part time position available. Duties would include mowing, weed eating, helping to open and close graves, help pouring footers for headstones and snow removal. If interested, please call the Parish Office at 453-0597.

Bishop Rosecrans Athletic Boosters

It's time again to purchase your Booster Mania tickets for the upcoming year. \$25 each or three tickets for \$60, January 1 is the first drawing, they make a good gift. Questions: Contact Marvin Paul at 740-819-3429.

ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS

St. Nicholas Church has a convenient way to make your regular offerings. With our electronic giving program, you can easily set up a recurring giving schedule. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. Even when something prevents you from attending services, our church will continue to receive your contributions on an uninterrupted basis. To become an electronic giver, call or visit the church office or our website: stnickparish.org.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with those serving our country currently and with their loved ones at home. We pray for a safe homecoming and that the world may one day be at peace.

PLEASE REMEMBER ST. NICHOLAS PARISH IN YOUR WILL. CALL THE PARISH OFFICE AT 453-0597 FOR MORE DETAILS.

Please join us each Monday at The St. Nicholas Parish Office Chapel at 2:00 p.m. as we gather to pray the Rosary asking Our Lady's Intercession for the many needs of our nation, community, and parish.

What's Happening in Our Parish

MONDAY, November 30, St. Andrew

8:00 a.m., Mass: **Ray Andrews**, Church

2:00 p.m., Rosary: **Parish Office**

TUESDAY, December 1

9:00 a.m., Mass: **St. Thomas Intention**, Church

WEDNESDAY, December 2

9:00 a.m., School Mass: **Robert "Shag" Grotegeer**, Church

6:30 p.m., RCIA: **Parish Office**

THURSDAY, December 3, St. Francis Xavier

8:00 a.m., Mass: **St. Thomas Intention**, Church

7:00 p.m., Adult Children of Alcoholics: **Church Basement**

FRIDAY, December 4, St. John of Damascus

8:00 a.m., Mass: **Ned Englehart**, Church

10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Confessions, Church

First Sunday of Advent

SATURDAY, December 5

11:00 a.m. and 4:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m., Confessions, Church

5:15 p.m., Mass: **Brian Sullivan**, anniversary, Church

SUNDAY, December 6

8:15 a.m., Mass: **St. Nicholas Parishioners**, Church

9:15 a.m., Sunday School, **Parish Office**

10:45 a.m., Mass: **Dick Shawger**, anniversary, Church

Readings for Week of November 30

Mon.	Rom 10:9-18	Mt 4:18-22
Tues.	Is 11:1-10	Lk 10:21-24
Wed	Is 25:6-10a	Mt 15:29-37
Thurs.	Is 26:1-6	Mt 7:21, 24-27
Fri.	Is 29:17-24	Mt 9:27-31
Sat.	Is 30:19-21, 23-26	Mt 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8
Sun	Is 40:1-5, 9-11	Mk 1:1-8

Cantor Schedule

December 5 & 6

5:15 Kevin McCarthy

8:15 Janet Moses

10:45 Laura DeCoy

December 8 (Immaculate Conception)

9:00 a.m. no music

7:00 p.m. Sandy Black

ST. NICHOLAS CATHOLIC CHURCH

ADVENT, CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S SCHEDULE



First Sunday of Advent

November 28-29, 2020

5:15 p.m., 8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

9:00 a.m.

7:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of Advent

December 5-6, 2020

5:15 p.m., 8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Third Sunday of Advent

December 12-13, 2020

5:15 p.m., 8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 19-20, 2020

5:15 p.m., 8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Advent is a time to prepare for the Lord's coming. It is time to seek and receive the Lord's mercy and forgiveness. Please check the bulletin for times.

Vigil of Christmas (Christmas Eve)

Tuesday, December 24, 2020

6:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m.



The Nativity of our Lord Christmas Day

Friday, December 25, 2020

9:00 a.m.



The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

December 26-27, 2020

5:15 p.m., 8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

Holy Day of Obligation

Vigil Mass Thursday, December 31, 2020

7:00 p.m.

Holy Day Mass, New Year's Day, January 1, 2021

8:00 a.m.

