

From the Director

Welcoming the Heavenly Invasion An Examination of Conscience for Advent

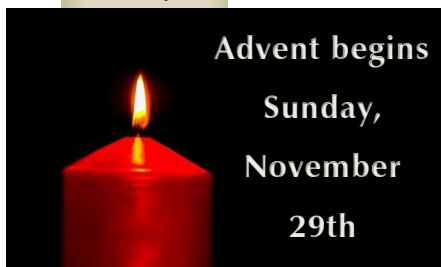


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Say "invasion," and people shudder. The word conjures up a range of disturbing images: hostile armies, aggressive diseases, identity thieves, pests, weeds, even creatures from outer space.

Advent is a time to reflect on an entirely different invasion. This one is just the opposite of a hostile takeover. It is a unique and loving visitation from a Guest who wants each of us to know him as Emmanuel, "God with us."

Jesus, the Lord of all, is coming. What an awesome prospect! If you had to prepare for his visit on your own, wouldn't you be trembling with fear? But be at peace -- you are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with you, offering all the grace you need to get your heart ready. You can count on him to help you repent of your sins and make a good Confession. Use

the following questions as an aid, taking time to reflect on them and listening for the Spirit's still, small voice.

This Advent, let the Holy Spirit surprise you with an invasion of love that will change your life. Come, Lord Jesus!

"In the desert prepare the way of the Lord!" (Isaiah 40:3)

Does God hold first place in my life? By my choices and actions, am I "preparing a way" for him or for myself?

Have I given priority to God on Sundays and holy days by attending Mass and making a special effort to seek him?

Have I been faithful to prayer and Scripture reading, opening myself to God's love and direction every day?

Have I deliberately resisted the Spirit's invitations to speak the truth or spread the gospel?

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."... (John 1:14)

Have I tried to see God's image in other people -- family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, parishioners, and others? Have I treated them with dignity and compassion?

Am I following Jesus' teachings on sexual morality? Do I indulge in lustful thoughts and sexual fantasies? Have I committed sins of impurity?

Do I treat my body with respect, or have I abused it through the willful misuse of drugs, alcohol, or food? Have I lied or gossiped about others in a way that demeaned them or damaged their reputation?

Do I give appropriate honor and respect to legitimate authority?
"Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss."... (Psalm 85:11)

Am I harboring any anger, resentment, or hatred? Is there anyone I need to forgive? Is there anyone whose forgiveness I need to ask?

How am I working for the coming of Christ's kingdom of justice and peace? Am I helping to build a world where human life is valued and respected?

Have I shoplifted, cheated on my income taxes, or stolen anything? Do I need to make restitution?

How have I shown compassion and concern for the poor, less fortunate, sick, and suffering? Or have I been too busy or preoccupied with my own problems?

Holy Spirit, what can I do to "stay awake" and prepare myself for your "invasion" of love? Please show me and help me to change!

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*Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of
Thy faithful and
enkindle in them
the fire of Thy love.
Send forth Thy Spirit
and they shall be
created and Thou
shall renew the face
of the earth.
AMEN*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Have a very blessed Thanksgiving
Father in Heaven,

"Heavenly Father, on Thanksgiving Day, we bow our hearts to you and pray. We give you thanks for all you've done, especially for the gift of Jesus, Your Son. For beauty in nature, your glory we see, for joy and health, friends and family. For daily provision, your mercy and care, these are the blessings you graciously share. So today we offer this response of praise, with a promise to follow you all of our days.

Amen."

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