



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop
Michael Jackels

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Three points to ponder as Advent begins

Our Holy Father Pope Francis often organizes his preaching and reflections around three points. I would take inspiration from him to share three unrelated (or are they?) thoughts:

- 1) The formal observance of the Year of Mercy ended this past Sunday. It has made us think of mercy, described by Pope Francis in “Amoris Laetitia” as the beating heart of the Gospel, a criterion for knowing who the true children of God are, and the very foundation of the Church’s life. The Year of Mercy has also been the occasion for attention to the practice of the works of mercy, as individual Christians and as parish communities. If it has been a truly fruitful observance, then we will continue to show mercy as a part of our daily practice of our religion.
- 2) This week we observe our national day of thanksgiving. It is a reminder for us to give thanks for God’s goodness to us, shown in so many ways. But maybe it can be a reminder too for us to say “thank you” and to focus on giving rather than receiving, saying to others, “how can I serve you?” To do so would be a good practice of our religion. Saying “thank you” is an expression of humility, recognizing that everything is an unmerited gift, not an entitlement. And to say “how can I serve you?” is an expression of charity, giving to others as freely and generously as we have received. Humility and charity are the two feet on which we make progress to holiness and heaven.
- 3) Sunday, 27 November 2016, marks the beginning of the holy season of Advent. This is a time to prepare for the celebration of Christmas, for the second coming of Jesus, and for warmly welcoming Christ into our hearts, our daily lives. A lot of parishes schedule communal penance services during Advent, encouraging and facilitating the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation before Christmas. This is a powerful sacrament to bring about and sustain conversion of life.

We would be doing ourselves a big favor to make this a regular part of the practice of our religion, planning to make a confession of sins, say, once a month. A good sign of conversion of life is to practice daily some work of mercy. And this, the beating heart of the Gospel, could be put into practice by saying “thank you” and “how can I serve you?” Don’t let the sun go down on a day without saying these at least once. Happy Thanksgiving. Holy Advent. Mercy!

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