

ADVENT – FOUR SUNDAYS

In the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, the readings of the Mass on the Sundays of Advent have distinct themes:



- 1.) On the First Sunday (Advent Sunday) they look forward to the Second Coming of Christ.
- 2.) On the Second Sunday, the Gospel reading recalls the preaching of John the Baptist, who came to “prepare the way of the Lord”; the other readings have associated themes.
- 3.) On the Third Sunday (Gaudete Sunday) the Gospel reading is again about John the Baptist, the other readings about the joy associated with the coming of the Savior.
- 4.) On the Fourth Sunday, the Gospel reading is about the events involving Mary and Joseph that led directly to the birth of Jesus, while the other readings are related to these.

(www.wikipedia.org/Advent)

THE SOUND OF STILLNESS



There is so much busy-ness at this time of year, so much noise. Can you hear over the voice of the chaos? John the Baptist, says we must change ourselves. A great light is going to appear that will expose our sinfulness and burn up in fire what we cannot hide. We cannot afford to be complacent and think we are doing just fine as we are. Change is a great idea, you think, but how do you do that?

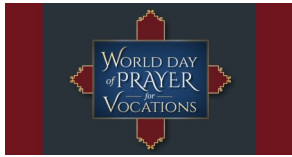
Sixteen hundred years ago a young man grew up in what is now Algeria, on the north coast of Africa. He was the child of a Christian mother and a pagan father. They gave him an excellent education, but as a youth he fell in with a sect called the Manichees, who encouraged sexual promiscuity, drunkenness and many other vices. In his autobiography he tells us that he reached a point in his life when he had no beliefs and neither the prayers of his mother nor the urgings of his best friend to become a Christian seemed to have any effect. He prayed to God to change him. “but not yet”. Finally he stopped and realized his own limited ability, his emptiness and his powerlessness. He could do nothing through his own efforts. At that point he was quiet enough to hear the “still small voice”. God said, “Take up and read,” and the scriptures fell open to a passage in the Letter to the Romans (13:13-14). His heart was changed. His name is Augustine and he became a great Christian theologian, a doctor of the Church. ADVENT is a time to slow down, to be quieter, and to listen more carefully, or we might miss the personal message that God has for us.

LIVING STEWARDSHIP NOW

Drop something you usually do at this time of year but do not enjoy. Choose an ADVENT custom and make it a part of your daily routine.

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The 58th anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations will be observed on Sunday, April 25, 2021. Our Spirituality/Vocation webpage has a direct link to the USCCB website on this topic which explains the purpose of this observance and I quote from it, "the purpose of this observance is to publicly fulfill the Lord's instructions to, 'Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest' (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). As a climax to a prayer that is continually offered throughout the Church, it affirms the primacy of faith and grace in all that concerns vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life. While appreciating all vocations, the Church concentrates its attention this day on vocations to the ordained ministries (priesthood and diaconate), consecrated life in all its forms (male, female religious life, societies of apostolic life, consecrated virginity), secular institutes in their diversity of services and membership, and to the missionary life."

Also, the Catholic Church in our country will celebrate the National Vocation Awareness Week on November 1-7, 2020. The annual celebration is dedicated to promote vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life through prayers and education, and to renew our prayers and support for those who are considering one of these particular vocations.

We may ask at one point in our life, what will be my vocation? Or, how can I serve the Lord?

We have many saints in our Catholic faith who took different paths to answer the call of our Lord. One of them is Saint Therese of Lisieux, also known as "The Little Flower". She followed the Lord's call in her own little ways. She spent the last nine years of her life in a strictly cloistered Carmelite Monastery in the town of Lisieux in Normandy. She died when she was 24 years old. I read that "she is a powerful intercessor and has moved Popes to declare her "the greatest Saint of modern times." She is also known as Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church. Our St. Therese Church in North Fort Myers always celebrates her feast day which falls on October 1.



God chose Mary and She humbly said, "yes" to Archangel Gabriel to answer God's call. With her "yes" She became the Mother of God and our Blessed Mother. You can only imagine how She suffered and felt as a Mother would be when Her Son, Jesus, greatly suffered and died on the Cross for our sins, and Her joy when Her Son rose up from the dead on the third day. As our Mother, we turn to Her for comfort, guidance and protection, asking for Her intercession in times of our need. Our Blessed Mother appeared, as an apparition, to those She called for a purpose. One example of such apparition is when She appeared, during a time of great persecution and deaths in 1917. She appeared from May 13 to October 13, 1917 to the three children as Our Lady of Fatima (Our Lady of the Rosary) in Portugal.

For us who cannot be great saints, we can answer the call of our Lord like St. Therese did, in "her own little ways" while living a single life, married life, as a mother, as a father; or, by sharing our gifts and talents in various stages of our lives --- as priests, as deacons, as nuns and in religious life by serving in one of the various ministries in our churches and religious organizations.

It is hard in the beginning, to discern what God is telling us, what He would like us to do because of so many distractions from all around us. Somebody told me that In order for us to hear what God is telling us, is to quiet our minds and our hearts, sit still for a few minutes and pray to God through the Holy Spirit to ask how He would like us to respond to His calling. We can do this wherever we may be, whether we are at home or in church.

By: Josephine Weiss, FCCW Spirituality/Vocation Committee Co-Chair