



IMMACULATE HEART^{OF}MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR DECEMBER 9, 2018

Dear friends in the Coming Lord,

If your house isn't decorated for Christmas yet, don't worry. You're in good company: the Roman Catholic Church! As you have seen since last weekend, the simplicity of our Advent environment stands in stark contrast to the extravagance of the shops and malls. The Church, of course, doesn't follow the Macy's or Target holiday calendar; we follow a much more ancient wisdom that says that these four Advent weeks are for restraint, for quiet waiting, and for anticipating the joys (and the challenges) of the coming of Jesus into our lives.

I think most of us understand Advent's grace intuitively. How many times we have said during December: "Things are so hectic!" "There's too much to do!" "Christmas has become so commercialized!" Sometimes we've heard so many Christmas carols by the first week of December that by Christmas Day we'd rather hear anything else but!

We have a human and spiritual need to be connected to the ageless Source of life and love—in the still December nights to hear once again the quiet voice of a God who loves us beyond our imagining. Yet all the shopping and decorating and partying can keep us from the very reason we're celebrating Christmas in the first place.

So, although it's counter-cultural to say this: Why not slow down a little and do a little less this Advent? Find the spiritual side of these December days. I learned long ago that I personally must do that if I am to have anything at all to give you as your pastor when Christmas finally arrives. So, at the risk of seeming like a big Scrooge, I will politely decline the kind invitations to parties and socials during Advent. The best spiritual counsel I can offer you is to consider doing the same.

And when Christmas dawns, we'll once again find ourselves out-of-step with the world around us: We'll just be putting up the decorations and singing carols for the first time, while our neighbors will already be recycling their trees and the stores will have moved on to the next marketable holiday. But our Christmas will be the richer for our having waited, our grasp of the mystery of the Incarnation more profound for having entered into the silence.