



FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

Happy Advent!! May each and every one of us make time in our heart, make time in our lives, make time in our calendars to actively and prayerfully make room for spiritual growth in these days of Advent waiting and Advent hope.

As we move into the Advent season we are taking steps towards a return of some normal routines and activities at our celebrations of the Eucharist on weekends. Specifically, we are going to have ushers assisting at Mass, inviting parishioners to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, having altar servers assist the deacon and priests in the sanctuary, and have Extraordinary Ministers' participation in the rite of the distribution of Holy Communion. Allow me to share information and invitation regarding the above.

Would you like to offer a friendly smile and warm welcome to people coming to worship at St. Mary's? Perhaps you are interested in willing to serve your parish community as an usher. This ministry is open to all men and women in St. Mary's. Ushers help direct people to a seat in the church. They work at making sure the bulletins are available at all the doors. They help organize the missaletes after Mass. They invite those worshipping to bring up the gifts. They are often the first contact one has as they enter the church. Perhaps you would like to join this ministry.

If you would like to participate in the offertory procession of the gifts of bread and wine, please reach out to one of our ushers and let them know you are willing. The ushers reach out to families that are in church prior to Mass beginning. Sometimes people want to bring up the gifts when the Mass is being offered for a loved one. Sometimes people want to bring up the gifts to add to their participation in the Mass. The hope is to have different people bring up the gifts each week. The presentation of the gifts is symbolic of the offering, the sacrifice, the prayers we all bring to the altar as we gather as God's family sharing in the Eucharist.

Fr. Radley and Mr. Paul Dyer have been training a new cadre of altar servers. You are invited to affirm these enthusiastic young men and women who will be actively engaged in the Mass as altar servers. Thanks to Mr. Dyer and Fr. Radley for encouraging and training the students.

We are looking forward to having our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion serve the parishioners at Mass in Advent. Some of those who used to serve the parish have stepped back from their ministry. We are looking forward to welcoming new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to assist at the Mass. Please reach out to Lore Nugent if you would like to be part of this ministry.

The Parish Staff, the Parish Council, and the Parish Liturgy Committee continue to look for ways that we can reach out to and welcome people to share in the Eucharist, to participate in the Mass, to come and pray with fellow parishioners. There continues to be what appears to be an increase in those returning to public worship and participation in the liturgy. The celebration of the Mass, the liturgy, and the Eucharist, is a public prayer where one and all have an important role. Your active presence, your spoken responses to the prayers, your offering your gifts, enhance and contribute to the shared prayer. May we participate, may we welcome, may we live lives of compassion and service, being sent forth from the altar into the world.

In the recent newsletter from the Archdiocesan Office for Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship, the following information was shared. May your own devotions and the following help you in your Advent journey.

Catholic Prayer Apps will take you through various types of prayer including meditation, the Examen, the Rosary, Imaginative prayer, Lectio Divina, etc. Having Apps on your phone gives you access to all types of prayer at any moment of the day!

- ◆ **Hallow.com** – “The #1 Catholic App for Prayer, Meditation, Music, and Sleep” - This App and its Chicago roots are highlighted in our "On the Way" show!
- ◆ **Pray As You Go** - both an App and web-based source. “*Pray As You Go* is a daily prayer session, designed to go with you wherever you go, to help you pray whenever you find time, but particularly whilst travelling to and from work, study, etc.” Prayer style is based on Ignatian Spirituality and is about 10-13 minutes in length.
- ◆ **Reimagining the Examen** - “The App is based on Thibodeaux's book, *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen*, which offers 34 adaptable versions of the Examen.”
- ◆ **Laudate App** is available wherever you get your Apps. It is not visually beautiful, but it is free and contains the beauty of an interactive Rosary, daily readings, the Liturgy of the Hours, and many, many prayers, as well as direct links to many Catholic online resources.
- ◆ **Click To Pray** – “*Click To Pray* is the Pope's prayer app which helps us pray for the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church... offers you three brief moments of prayer each day which invite you to meet with Jesus and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.” Join in praying for the Synod on Synodality with this app!

May God bless us with prayerful preparation in this season of hope.

Fr. Mike Nacur