



FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

We begin anew today, with the season of Advent. Since the 10th century, the Roman Catholic Church has started the liturgical year with Advent, the four weeks of hope and joyful anticipation of Jesus' birth. It is a season of expectation – it is a season of preparation, it is integral to our upcoming celebrations of welcoming the Christ Child anew into our lives.

This year marks a return to something that is always to be near and dear to the hearts of all believers, of all Catholics, of all Roman Catholics across the globe, our Sunday obligation. In the letter sent from Cardinal Cupich to parishioners across our Archdiocese, lifting the general dispensation of Sunday obligation, it is his prayer and hope that the First Sunday of Advent, *“will provide us with a fresh start to take up again our life together as a community of faith that gathers together to worship God.”* I hope that all of us who know people, who for a number of reasons, have been away from public worship will be extended an invitation to return, to come back, to grace the doors of the church in the Advent season.

Cardinal Cupich went on to write, *“acknowledging that we owe our obligation to participate in Sunday worship to God, but also to each other.”* Our Cardinal addresses two key points in this sentence. First, we are to participate in Sunday worship. Participate means more than showing up. Participate means more than placing ourselves in a pew in the church. Participate means welcoming those around you in church. Participate means adding your voice to the responses throughout the Mass and the spoken prayers. Participate means to pick up the hymnal, the missalette and sing the songs that enrich our public worship, if not singing, at least praying the words. Marek Rachelski has invited and reminded us of the importance of singing or at least reading along with the verses of music since he began his ministry at St. Mary's last month.

Second, Jesus told his disciples, in Matthew 18:20, that *“whenever two or three are gathered together in His name, He is there in their midst.”* Do you consider your obligation to Sunday worship, not only to God, but also to your fellow parishioners, to every guest that joins us, to every crying baby and mother or father trying to console their child? Our public worship is more joyous and livelier when we come together in a full church. When we sleep in, when we improperly prioritize things of the world, or when we just don't go, our personal decision impacts the community, the public worship, our prayer to God. May each of us consider anew our obligation, to others as we come to participate in Mass at St. Mary's.

You, your family members, your friends, your neighbors, and your co-workers are all invited to the Faith Formation series this Sunday afternoon (at 3:00pm) or Monday evening (at 7:00pm) to be held in the church. Mr. Greg Kozak will be offering the same presentation both days to those who want to begin their Advent journey of prayer, reflecting on how we can live **The Other 167** hours of the week, having been sent from Mass into the world. All are invited, all are welcome to gather.

I came across the following prayer this past week. May it spark inside us a desire to hope joyfully in anticipation of Jesus' birth at Christmas.

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.

We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

— *Attributed to Sir Francis Drake, c. 1577*

May God bless us with hope filled hearts this Advent!