



FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

The hope filled season of Advent is marked week by week, with the lighting of the Advent wreath, in our church, and in our homes. This year, we will mark each week with the lighting of the four candles on the Advent wreath, realizing that we have three full weeks to wait in hope, as well as a few hours on the fourth Sunday of Advent, which is also December 24, Christmas Eve.

We will celebrate the 4th Sunday of Advent with Mass on Saturday, December 23, at 5:00pm and two Masses the morning of the 4th Sunday of Advent, at 8:00am and at 10:00am. Please note and plan properly, there is no 12:00 Noon Mass or 5:00pm Mass on the 4th Sunday of Advent. A full schedule of the Masses throughout the Christmas season has been mailed to all registered parish households. If you worship regularly with us at the Church of St. Mary, you are kindly invited and reminded to register at the parish as soon as possible.

I appreciate the prayerful aspects of the season of Advent, as well as the festive opportunities to gather and celebrate with loved ones. There are many offerings available to us to fill our schedules as well as to fill our hearts and lift our spirits.

There are many talented children in our parishioner families. These children excel in the classroom, in sports, and in the arts to name a few. It is a joy to see them perform before their peers, family, and friends. You may have already appreciated their talents and accomplishments this season.

I look forward to being delighted by the music talents and abilities that our youth have developed over years of instruction, practice, and rehearsals. This Sunday, December 10, the LFHS Holiday Choir Band and Orchestra Concerts & Applause Spaghetti Dinner is being offered to members of the greater Lake Forest community. This is the signature event of the LFHS music program. Proceeds fund scholarships, student treats, visiting teaching musicians, and so much more! The concerts take place at the East campus of Lake Forest High School. The schedule is as follows: At 3:00pm is the Band & Orchestra Concert, 4:45-6:45pm is the Spaghetti Dinner, and at 7:00pm is the Choir Concert. (Dinner and concert tickets are \$25 and tickets for only the concert are \$15.) Maybe I will see you walking the halls of the high school on the 2nd Sunday of Advent.

Next Sunday, December 17, we light the rose candle on the Advent wreath, which is meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy that the faithful have reached the midpoint of Advent. The joy of the Lord is celebrated in many ways in our lives. A powerful means of celebrating joy is knowing we are loved and forgiven of our sins. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of two healing Sacraments in the Catholic Church, the other being the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. You are invited to know joy in the forgiveness of your sins in returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation if it has been weeks, months, or even longer since you received absolution of your sins.

Reconciliation is always available by reaching out to a priest or by going to reconciliation at the normal times the sacrament is offered each week. Perhaps you will be one of many that seek out the healing sacrament this Advent. You need go no further than St. Mary's this coming Friday evening, December 15, by attending a beautiful and prayerful Advent Candlelight Adoration. The church will be decorated with candles, Eucharistic Adoration is celebrated and the Sacrament of Reconciliation available from 7:00-9:00pm. You can come and go as you please during this time or stay for the full two hours of prayer. We'll have a mix of praise and worship music and silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. All are welcome and families are highly encouraged to come! Additional priest confessors will be with Fr. Radley and me to share the joy the Lord offers in the forgiveness of our sins.

The following prayer by Henri Nouwen is offered to enrich your time in quiet hope with the Lord this Advent season:

*Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen. — Henri Nouwen*

May God bless us with hearts filled with peace these Advent days,