

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

November 28, 2008

I'm definitely at that point in my life when it seems that the years go by faster and faster – and faster! (If you don't know what I'm talking about – just wait a year or two...) So it is that it's hard for me to believe that this weekend begins the Advent season – our fifth since the founding of Holy Family Parish. On the Church calendar, a new *year of grace* begins each year on the first Sunday of Advent. The *year of grace* means another year, in which we unfold the mysteries of Christ's life, death and resurrection, beginning with the solemn commemoration of his birth at Christmas time. So, please accept my best wishes for a happy and holy new year!

Yes, *resolutions* would be an appropriate consideration at this time: get the jump on others who will wait until January 1. We might consider resolutions like the following:

- I resolve to expand my care and outreach to the poor through prayer, the parish Giving Trees, the prison outreach project, through monetary donations and, if possible, through volunteering my time.
- I resolve to worship with the Church community each Sunday (or Saturday evening) in the celebration of the Eucharist, and to arrive on time and not to leave early. (To “eat and run” in another's home is rude and impolite; to do so in the Lord's house is sacrilegious.
- I resolve to read the scriptures more faithfully, especially in preparation for Sunday Mass.
- I resolve to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) at least once between now and Easter.
- I resolve to work on at least one my bad habits (gossiping, crude language/swearing, being wasteful, envy, selfishness, tasking loved ones for granted, putting work ahead of more important responsibilities...) and towards changing my behavior in that regard in the year ahead
- I resolve.... (each of us knows best what needs to be resolved in our lives....)

Our parish celebration of Advent includes Advent Evening Prayer, on the Sunday nights of Advent at 7:00 p.m. in the church. If you come to church for Evening Prayer and the church looks dark – please come in! We begin Evening Prayer in the dark, with only the tall Easter Candle, the light of Christ, as our illumination. During an opening hymn, each person lights a taper from light shared from the Easter candle. Most of Evening Prayer is sung – all simple refrains which even first timers learn quickly and easily. There is a short scripture reading followed by a brief reflection. Then, with Mary the Mother of Jesus, we sing her song of praise, the *Magnificat* (in English). This is followed by sung intercessions, to which those in attendance may add spoken intentions if they want to. The Lord's Prayer and a blessing conclude the service which lasts about 40 minutes. Candlelight, some incense, peace, quiet and prayer... if that sounds like something you would welcome – please join us! (We will continue to celebrate Evening Prayer on the two Sundays following Christmas: the Feast of the Holy Family and Epiphany.)

This Advent, we will celebrate a Healing Mass on Monday night, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. Fr. Bob Masciocchi, CSS from the Espousal Retreat Center in Waltham will preside and preach and I will concelebrate the liturgy with him. This will be a service of God's healing and forgiveness. The Mass will include a time for those present to come forward, if they wish, to be anointed and prayed over for healing. We need healing in so many different ways and you are invited to come with whatever you might pray the Lord to heal in your heart, your body, your life... Advent, just before Christmas, is a time to celebrate the healing touch of Christ in our lives! I'll be writing more about this Mass in the next two weeks.

Our regular weekly time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is on Saturday afternoons at 4:00 – 4:30 p.m. in the Penance room located near the choir loft stairs on your right as you enter the church from Monument Square. During the Advent season we will extend that time to 3:30•4:30 p.m. Near the Penance Room you will find leaflets titled,

**“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.**

**It's been so long since my last confession that I forget what to do and say...”**

Included in the leaflet is a guide to help you examine your conscience.

We all spend energy, time and money on preparing for some aspects of the Christmas celebration. Advent (which has no entrance fee!) reminds us to spend some time and energy in preparing spiritually to celebrate the birth of Christ. Welcome to Advent, in the year of grace 2009!

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming

