

Jerry's Journal



If you, a family member, or a friend are in poor health and wish to be anointed, **we are offering the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick on Tuesday evening, December 11 at 7:00.** In past years there was a tendency to wait for an extended period before requesting reception of this Sacrament of the Church. Even up to this day there is a mindset, on the part of some, that reception of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick should be delayed until a person was in close proximity to death. The Second Vatican Council went to great lengths to urge people not to wait until someone is at death's door prior to requesting an anointing.

The introduction to the rite of anointing states: "The Sacrament of the Anointing is proper for those Catholics whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age." It goes on to say: "The priest should ensure that the abuse of delaying reception of this sacrament does not occur, and that the reception of this sacrament should take place while the sick person is capable of participation" and "those needing the sacrament should seek it at the beginning of a serious illness."

A serious illness could be something that involves either physical sickness or a mental illness. If there is a serious decline or a change in the person's health status, then reception of the sacrament can be administered more than once.

There are some who fear the reception of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick because they are concerned that it will "upset" the person who would be anointed. Nothing could be further from the truth. Reception of this sacrament often brings a person peace of mind and the knowledge that they are "right with God." Why would anyone wish to deny a person who is ill this peace?

A second reason for delaying reception of this sacrament is that it is "bad karma." This is seriously flawed logic. Just because a person has been anointed does not necessarily mean that the Grim Reaper is standing outside the door waiting to take an ill person from this world. I have received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick on three different occasions in my life, and, to the disappointment of many, I am still alive and kicking.

It should also be noted that once a person has died, it is not possible for a priest to anoint that person. **SACRAMENTS ARE FOR THE LIVING, NOT THE DECEASED!** It would make no more sense to anoint a person who has died than it would for a priest to place the Eucharist on the tongue of a person who is deceased.

Finally, given the fact that there are far fewer numbers of priests today than 30, 40, or 50 years ago, waiting until the last minute to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick may preclude the possibility of a priest arriving in time to administer this sacrament. There have been times when a priest is presiding at Mass, or is out of town, and by the time he is notified of the request, it is too late as the person has passed away. So please, please, please, if you, a family member, or a friend are a candidate for the reception of this sacrament please give some thought to the Mass of Healing which will take place here at St. Paul of Tarsus on **Tuesday, December 11 at 7 pm.**

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This weekend, a new Church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent. Christ's life will be presented to the assembly through the Gospel of Luke. There are parables in Luke's Gospel which do not appear in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or John: The Prodigal Son, The Good Samaritan, The Road to Emmaus are just a few accounts which come to mind.

More so than in the other three Gospels just mentioned, Jesus is presented as our "Compassionate Savior." Luke's image of Jesus is one of a Redeemer of the World, with love and compassion *for all people*, whether rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, male or female. In other words, those who were poor, marginalized, oppressed, or sinners of the worst sort (in the eyes of those who abused their power and authority.) Jesus, in the Gospel of Luke, makes it abundantly clear that he has a preferential option for those who were demoralized, exploited, or weighed down by the society in which they lived.

Luke gives a special place to women in his writings. More women appear in Luke than the other Gospels. The events leading to the birth of Jesus are told from Mary's point of view. We read of Elizabeth, the cousin of Mary, of Anna, the prophetess in the Temple, of the widow of Nain, and the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Luke also mentions many women who traveled with Jesus and apostles who "ministered to their needs." (Luke 8:1-3).

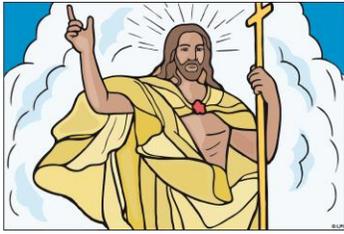
Luke's Gospel also gives a role of prominence to the Holy Spirit (Sophia). The Holy Spirit is active in the initiation of the Incarnation (Luke 1:5, 35, 41, 67, 80), in the early witness to Jesus (Luke 2:25-27), and in the activity of Jesus himself (Luke 4:1, 17; 10:21). Luke's Gospel is infused with the joy of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:14, 47, 58; 2:10; 6:23; 10:17, 20; 19:37). The Gift of the Holy Spirit is available to all who seek (Luke 11:13).

If you wanted to summarize the overall message of Jesus found in Luke's Gospel down to a sound bite, Luke 19:10 would be an ideal verse to quote: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save those who were lost." These words were spoken to Zacchaeus, a tax collector who was a scoundrel, a thief, a crook who defrauded his own people by lining his pockets with ill-gotten money by extortion. Christ did not come for the sake of the squeaky-clean, the religious, the upright, the perfect. He came for those who know that somehow they have lost their way and seek a path to be one with God.

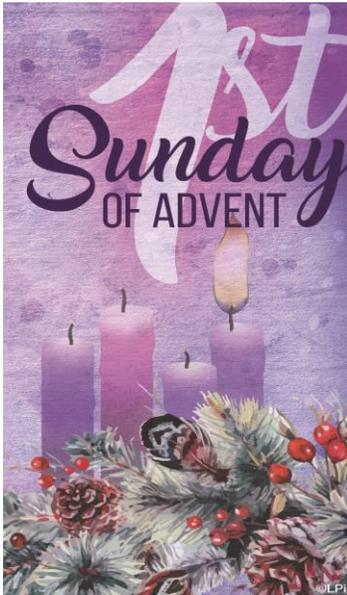
This is the great hope to those all around the world today who feel themselves to be outsiders. It is the work we are all called to. Our task, our responsibility as Christians, as Catholics, is to call people to abandon futile methods which never lead to true happiness and joy by following Christ, the great friend of sinners. (Luke 7:34; 9:57-62; 18:9-14).

*Fr. Jerry Slowinski*

## “Marc” My Words



Wow, here we are in December and it's the First Sunday of Advent. The Gospel reading for today is very similar to the one proclaimed last weekend on the Feast of Christ the King. In Luke's Gospel there is a little different tone. Jesus gives us some encouragement as well as some advice. Jesus says, "But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand."



Jesus advises us to "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that the day will catch you by surprise like a trap...Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations..."

Advent is the season of preparation. We celebrate Christ's coming at Christmas but we should also see that Jesus is telling us to be prepared for the time when we meet him at our particular judgement. We will be judged on how well we have loved one another. It's not the emotional love that Jesus is speaking of, it is the agape love, the love of the will, a self-sacrificial love. This is how we can actually "love our enemies"

without liking them.

Our patron St. Paul of Tarsus offers an appropriate prayer that was proclaimed at Mass in his letter to the Thessalonians. St. Paul wrote, "Brothers and Sisters: May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones."

Our world and our very lives can be filled with distress and anxieties. They slowly creep in and surprise us. It is a slow moving darkness that can inundate us and keep us away from the love of God and neighbor. The first candle of the Advent Wreath that was lit stands for Hope. May our hope in God and in our journey to heaven increase just like the lights of the Advent Wreath and dispel the darkness that can come into our lives. May this ADVENTure bring you God's...

Peace, Love, and Blessings,

Deacon Marc

1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT

