



# HOLY CROSS PARISH NEWS

## ANCHORAGE, ALASKA



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### *In Search of Our Kneeling Places*

~ by Ann Weems

In each heart lies a Bethlehem,  
an inn where we must ultimately answer  
whether there is room or not.  
When we are Bethlehem-bound  
we experience our own advent in his.  
When we are Bethlehem-bound  
we can no longer look the other way  
conveniently not seeing stars,  
not hearing angel voices.  
We can no longer excuse ourselves by busily  
tending our sheep or our kingdoms.  
This Advent let's go to Bethlehem  
and see this thing that the Lord has  
made known to us.  
In the midst of shopping sprees  
let's ponder in our hearts the Gift of Gifts.  
Through the tinsel  
let's look for the gold of the Christmas Star.  
In the excitement and confusion, in the merry chaos  
let's listen for the brush of angels' wings.  
This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem  
and find our kneeling places.✝

From her book *Kneeling in Bethlehem*  
Poetry for Advent and Christmas



## *Wait For The Lord!*



Advent, from the Latin words ad/venire meaning to/come, is a season of expectation, a time of waiting, but we are not good at waiting anymore.

I do not say this as a complaint against society, simply a comment on an apparent fact. Everything happens almost immediately: communication is instantaneous; food is fast, and often when we want something we just go and get it or order it on line to arrive as soon as possible.

Advent is about waiting, waiting for God. And that lifestyle of our modern world, which expects everything ‘now’ isn’t great at comprehending God’s time – which is so very different from ours.

How can we rush God? We can’t!

Too often this is the cause of someone giving up their belief in God, that God didn’t answer their prayers on time. But while it might be reasonable to expect a prompt answer from anyone else, a boss, a spouse, a child, we have no right to question God’s time keeping.

The mistake in questioning God’s response is that it relates to doubt, if God doesn’t do our will – within our timeframe - we begin to wonder, is He really there at all.

In the Old Testament Job questioned God’s ways and he got his answer,

“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? (Job 38)

Allowing God to do things in His own time is to enter into the mystery of who God is “God is not human, that he should lie, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?” (Numbers 23:19)

As we prepare liturgically for the celebration of Christmas let us not lose hope of God coming into our lives in a way that is both intimate and transforming. If our experience is not immediate let us learn patience for the reward is great, it is the gift of God himself.

“Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” (Psalm 27:14) †

## Asking for the Gift of Discernment



What is the essence of celebrating Advent each year?

Advent is celebrated in many diverse ways but the orientation of this season has always been essentially thematic which has something to do with the Nativity of Our Savior and His second coming.

Jesus' nativity is His perfect gesture of His love for us thus it is always associated with happiness through giving of gifts, forgiveness, family reunions, or reconciliations; to the extent of doing charities to deserving individuals/groups regardless of race, beliefs, and social affiliations as the Love of God is so immense it transcends all sorts of boundaries.

Jesus' nativity signifies the coming of our Savior for the redemption of our sins, a constant reminder for us to uphold unwavering faith to God like that of the child's because only then can we truly accept the love of God without blemish.

As Christians, we should not rely on our own predispositions but rather, we should ask for the gift of discernment so that we may not deviate from the essence of Christianity. To be Christians is to be Christ-like. As parents, we must strive to set good examples to our children. It does not end at our support to realize their dreams but to mold them into spiritually motivated individuals. After all, we could become the mightiest person in the world but if we do not know God's love, we exist but we have not lived our life in its real and ultimate purpose.

It is therefore a big challenge to all of us parents to look after how we teach our children how to live their lives in accordance to God's ultimate purpose, because the ultimate reality of our existence is that we exist not for ourselves, for our whims, but for the glory of God, for the fulfillment of His ultimate divine mission – that is to reunite us all in heaven – our ultimate destination!

Together this advent let us give ourselves time for reflection as we continue to seek God and invite Him to dwell in our hearts. †

~ Marife Anino



## *Happy New Year! What's the Plan?*



It's Advent already?!? Happy new liturgical year! How fortunate we are to begin our new year with four weeks of Advent and culminate that with the joyous Christmas season.

Sadly, it can be difficult to quietly and reverently observe Advent amidst the secular "Season of Giving" (a term I heard used on a radio ad today), which lasts from Halloween through December 25. What is a Christian family to do to observe Advent as well as keep Christ in Christmas? Plan!

Plan what you as a family want to do to observe Advent. Make a list and put those things on the calendar. What gets planned is more likely to get done. The Catholic Anchor just published an article on Advent traditions by Michaelann Martin in the November 2015 issue which has many good ideas. In addition, why not sing or play some of the beautiful Advent sacred music in your home?

As a family plan your Christmas observance and make a budget for your gift giving and your Advent and Christmas tithing. We are encouraged to tithe ten percent of our income to the Church and/or Church organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Social Services, Catholic schools, etc. This isn't giving away what we have. It is passing on to others some of what God has so freely given to us.

Finally, have the courage to follow your plan. This can be the most difficult part. The "Season of Giving" folks are unscrupulous in using the guilt technique to try to get families to spend time on things that aren't important, to spend money on things that don't matter, and spend more money than was budgeted.

During Advent, as we eagerly anticipate the coming of our Savior, we must remember that to Him, it is never about how many things we have, how many gifts we give, or who receives that Lexus with the big red bow on top. Christmas is all about joyfully singing with the host of angels "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Lk 2:14) and welcoming our Savior! †

~ Cindee Eychaner

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Sign up at [www.SalesianMissions.org/Advent](http://www.SalesianMissions.org/Advent) for the Salesian Missions Advent Devotionals and each week receive a special email with daily scripture passages and inspirational messages to guide you and reconnect you with the true reason for the season. †

## *People in Darkness Have Seen a Great Light*

Have you ever heard the expression “it’s darkest before the dawn”? For those of us who are struggling and fighting with darkness, wandering aimlessly, the dawn of a new day brings with it a sense of relief.

Darkness is used in films and literature to represent the unknown, the dangerous and the terrible. In our own lives, we tend to avoid darkness. When the electricity goes out, we look for flashlights and candles. Darkness deprives us of our most prominent senses, the ability to see what is around us. Isaiah shares this image of the people who walked in darkness seeing a great light. This gives me a sigh of relief.



For those of us who live in a land of deep darkness, having a light shine on us brings comfort and peace; assurance of our direction and joy for life. As uncomfortable as we are with darkness, we have faith that someone has light. Unfortunately, from the prophet Isaiah, we see that the nation, the people, the land was in deep darkness. But, light came from them, like the dawn, first glimmer of light – the stories told by angels, then the stories that spread across the land, and then the light Himself, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with Us, who is the light, spread His presence into the land of deep darkness, chasing out the shadows.

Even more importantly, you and I were given a responsibility of carrying that light with us, always, to everyone... everywhere. It reminds me of a song we sang at an all night vigil during World Youth Day, “Go Light Your World”. Each of us has been given a lamp, a candle, a flashlight, in the gifts we possess. Just as Christ came to bring the light, He has told us to go and take that light with us.

May this Christmas be a reminder that the best gift we have to receive, and the best gift we can give, is the Light of Love, Hope, Peace and Joy, that we receive from Christ. †

~ Theresa Austin, Dir. of Youth Ministry

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Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem.

May we let ourselves be drawn by the Light of God made man. †

~ Pope Francis

## *A Clarion Call For Catholic Men*

An “Apostolic Exhortation” is a term that we hear infrequently associated with a pronouncement from the Pope encouraging the faithful to some action as a part of their faith. It is unusual for a bishop to issue an Apostolic Exhortation, but that is exactly what Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix did on the Feast of the Archangels, September 29, 2015. All bishops are descendants of the Apostles, from the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) to the Archbishop of Anchorage, and thus all have this authority.

When such an exhortation is written, it is written for the flock of the author bishop. For the Pope it is written for the whole world; for an individual bishop for the people of his diocese. In this case the Bishop of Phoenix wrote it specifically for the Catholic Men of Phoenix. It is entitled, “Into The Breach”, and as one of the many reports in the media, worldwide, explained it, the bishop is calling Catholic men to “man up” in the defense of, and the passing on of, their faith in this ever growing secular world.

The bishop begins by quoting rather sobering statistics about the state of the Catholic Church in America. Since the year 2000, 14 million Catholics have left the faith, and participation in the sacramental life of the Church by children and adults has dropped by 25% on average. The largest drop has occurred in those seeking to marry in the Church = 41%!!

This loss of participation, and the fact that few young men attend Mass with any regularity, has caused a “serious breach, a gaping hole in Christ’s battle lines” in the world today, the bishop writes. He is calling for Catholic men, young and old, to “Step Into The Breach”.

His words and suggestions do not only apply to the men in that area of Arizona; they would seem to apply to all Catholic men, everywhere. And so I offer them to you, the Catholic men of Holy Cross Parish, Anchorage, Alaska. I do not intend to go into the document in depth, but to just give a brief overview. (The entire document can be read at: [www.intothebreach.net/into-the-breach/](http://www.intothebreach.net/into-the-breach/))

The bishop poses “three primary questions”:

1. What does it mean to be a Christian man?
2. How does a Catholic man love?
3. Why is fatherhood, fully understood, so crucial for every man?



He then offers answers to these questions in “three important contexts”:

Context #1: A New Apostolic Movement - The “New Evangelization”

Context #2: A Field Hospital and a Battle College

Context #3: Man and Woman are Complementary, not Competitors

In the first context, we as Catholic fathers are called upon to live up to the promises we made at the time of our child’s baptism, to bring him or her to Christ, and to raise them in the faith of the Church. Both parents are charged with this task, but, as St. Paul often reminds us, the task falls more specifically to the man since he is to be the spiritual guide for the family.

In the second context, the Church is in the midst of a battle of faith with the world around us. You see it every day. Pope Francis, in one of his homilies, as the bishop writes, “has described the Church today as ‘a field hospital after battle’ - a constant source of mercy”. He adds, “The Church is, and has always been, a school that prepares us for spiritual battle”, using words from St. Paul’s letters. Men have traditionally been the ones who do battle, even spiritual battle.

In the third context, in this world filled with “confusion about ... sexual identity”, it is important to stress the complementarity of the roles of men and women. Each has a role to play. The bishop cautions, “A father’s role as spiritual head of the family must never be understood or undertaken as domination over others, but only as a loving leadership and a gentle guidance for those in your care.”

The Apostolic Exhortation concludes with words from the hymn, “Faith of our Fathers”. The hymn was written as a “tribute to (the Catholic martyrs of England) who refused to deny Christ”. We are called upon to mirror that same faith in our own day and time. †

~ Deacon Bill Finnegan

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Holy Father’s Prayer Intentions for December:

That all may experience the mercy of God, who never tires of forgiving.

That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope. †

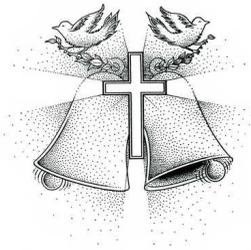
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### *The Editor’s Corner*

Once again the writers and Ivy brought it all together for an enriching Advent Issue... even Pope Francis blends in quite well with all his contributions. Amazing! And now we actively ‘wait’. †

~ Sister Joan

## *The Sacrament of Confirmation*



While teaching the RCIA class last week about the Sacrament of Confirmation, we discussed what is necessary to sustain life. Water, food and air was their response. Perfect... the best analogy of the sacraments that are needed to sustain spiritual life, Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Growth is vital to human life; the body and mind must grow to stay alive. Catholics believe that the soul also needs to grow to maturity in the life of grace, just as the human body must grow through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Catholics believe the Sacrament of Confirmation is the supernatural equivalent of the growth process on the natural level. It builds on what was begun in Baptism and what was nourished in Holy Eucharist. It completes the process of initiation into the Christian community, and it matures the soul for the work ahead.

This sacrament is called Confirmation because the faith given in Baptism is now confirmed and made strong. Sometimes, those who benefit from Confirmation are referred to as soldiers of Christ. This isn't a military designation but a spiritual duty to fight the war between good and evil, light and darkness - a war between the human race and all the powers of hell. Confirmation means accepting responsibility for your faith and destiny.

Childhood is a time when you're told what to do, and you react positively to reward and negatively to punishment. Adulthood, even young adulthood, means that you must do what's right on your own, not for the recognition or reward but merely because it's the right thing to do. The focus is on the Holy Spirit, who confirmed the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and gave them courage to practice their faith. Catholics believe that the same Holy Spirit confirms Catholics during the Sacrament of Confirmation and gives them the same gifts and fruits.

Please pray that the Holy Spirit will be with our Confirmation Candidates this Advent as they receive this important Sacrament of Initiation that completes them into full communion with the church. †

~ Theresa Austin, Dir. of Youth Ministry



## Family Togetherness



“Dear Brothers and Sisters: In our continuing catechesis on the family, today we consider the importance of togetherness.

Sitting at table for the family dinner, sharing our meal and the experiences of our day, is a fundamental image of togetherness and solidarity. Because Jesus gave us the Eucharist as a meal, there is a close relationship between families and the Mass. The togetherness we experience in our families is meant, in the family of the Church, to extend to all as a sign of God’s universal love. In this way the Eucharist becomes a school of inclusion, in which we learn to be attentive to the needs of everyone.

Sadly, the family meal, this great symbol of togetherness, is disappearing in some societies. Food itself, the very sign of our sharing with other, is wantonly wasted in some places, while our brothers and sisters go hungry in others. The Eucharist reminds us that our bread is meant to be shared with all. May our families, and the entire Church, be signs of togetherness and solidarity for the good of the whole human family, especially during the coming Jubilee of Mercy.

Let us pray that every family participating in the Eucharist opens itself to the love of God and neighbor, especially for those who lack bread and affection.” †

Pope Francis 11/11/2015



## Baptisms



September 27, 2015

Jaden Axel Caban Penafort  
Son of Joseph & Angel †

October 4, 2015

Ron Jared Anunciacion Co  
Son of Ronald & Marlene †

September 26, 2015

Jaleah Tammy Waldron  
Daughter of Lenroy & Marilyn †



## *Aging Gracefully = Young At Heart*



Recently the St. Louis Review (Catholic News) had a special SENIOR LIVING section. As an “elder”, I am sharing some thoughts on behalf of all our “maturing adults”.

Richard P. Johnson is a Gerontologist whose work on the spiritual aspects of adult development and aging has inspired maturing adults to follow their hearts and live more abundant lives in Christ. He believes “Aging is a vital, growth-filled, and even power-packed part of God’s eternal plan for our salvation; we cannot shrink from it, we must embrace it with gusto...In our maturing years we’re called to modify our attitudes about a lot of things, but the most basic...of healthy maturing is the realization that aging is a gift of new life, a chance to see ourselves from a new and heightened perspective: fuller, kinder, and deeper. Jesus told us: I make all things new. And ... aging is one of the tools Jesus gives us to make us new.”

He also classifies maturing adults in Midlife (Boomers), Retirement Life (Builders) and Senior Adult Life (Elders)

The Little Sisters of the Poor serving the needy elderly in St. Louis since 1869, believe “Aging is not chronological, it’s spiritual, physical and mental”...Those with greater age and physical limitations can be “just as much alive because they have accepted where God has brought them...taking part as much as they can with a great attitude.” Words of wisdom from their residents:

- Be at peace where you are in life at any moment, with self-acceptance and acceptance of God’s will
- Laughter. Don’t lose your sense of humor. Grin and bear it if you have to
- Participate in life, rather than observe
- Faith-believing that God put me here for a certain reason
- Keep your mind busy. Play games, join clubs, plan what you’re doing tomorrow and keep each day different
- Exercise
- I pray a lot. I don’t want the Lord to be lonely

Finally, from Pope Francis: “...there is a true vocation and mission set aside for older people...Young people and families...need the older generation’s prayers, wisdom and gifts to give them the encouragement, hope and faith they often lack...” ✝

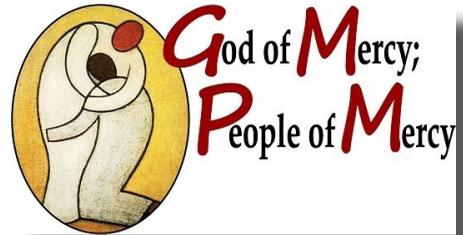
## *“Merciful Like the Father”*

“Merciful Like the Father” is the motto of the Jubilee Year of Mercy which will begin on December 8, 2015 and will end on November 20, 2016. All of us will be called to reflect on what it means to be merciful. This Extraordinary Holy Year will give each of us an opportunity to live out our faith in a new way.

Mercy breaks the yoke of bitterness and unforgiveness. We are asked to forgive ourselves and then to forgive others. It may be very difficult to bring a family together after an argument. I have an Aunt and Uncle (brother and sister) who had a falling out as young adults and never spoke to one another ever again. When one walked in the front door of the family home, for a visit, the other would walk out the back door! What missed opportunities. The family gatherings were never complete. The longer a feud continues, the harder it is to resolve. Sometimes the reason for the anger and separation is forgotten over time. But then someone has to take the first step. A new study shows that conflict and negative interactions with friends and family can harm physical health. So we should never let the sun set on an argument.

The coming year will be an opportunity for us to forgive and move on. We will be called to reach out beyond our comfort zone. How do we even begin this? One of the best ways to start is by reviewing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Jesus by His example showed us, and He wants us to follow His lead. The corporal works are: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. Also we remember the spiritual works: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offenses, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

What is God calling you to do to in order to grow in mercy during this upcoming Jubilee Year of Mercy? †



~ Diane Finnegan

He came! He will come again!  
We must prepare!  
During Advent we prepare for Jesus  
by *Praying, Forgiving, & Rejoicing*

Color in the *Rejoice* candle pink and the rest purple. Decorate your Advent wreath of *HOPE* however you choose! †



~ Andrea Zanders



Spend a few minutes each day of Advent with your children in the Holy Heroes Advent Adventure. †

Fun...Easy...Educational...**FREE**...for all ages.

<http://www.holyheroes.com>