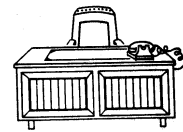


1st Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2019



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Advent Season begins:

A new liturgical calendar begins this weekend with the celebration of the First Sunday of Advent. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *advenire* (to come to) and *adventus* (arrival). Hence, Advent has double meaning: first, as a season of preparation for Christmas when we remember and celebrate the first coming of Jesus. In this sense, Advent is a time of joyous anticipation of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The second meaning of Advent is more eschatological, referring to a season when that remembrance of the birth of the savior moves the hearts and minds of believers to await his second coming at the end of time.

Some church historians trace the origin of Advent back to the fourth canon of the Council of Saragosa in 380. The first observance of Advent took place in the middle of the 6th century after the Synod of Tours established a December fast in the year 567, and the Council of Macon ordered an Advent Fast for the laity in 581. The observance of Advent included forty days of prayer and fasting, just as Lent. Advent initially included the six Sundays leading to Christmas (approximating forty days), but was reduced to four weeks by Pope Gregory the Great, perhaps, to avoid confusing it with Lent. Greek Orthodox Churches retain the forty days of prayer and fasting leading to Christmas, almost in the manner of Lent but with lesser rigor.

The symbol of Advent is the circular evergreen with four candles interspersed. The evergreen is an ancient symbol of immortality, life, and growth. For Christians, it symbolizes the everlasting love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The Advent wreath originated in pre-Christian Germany and Scandinavia as people gathered to celebrate the return of the sun after the winter solstice. The circle itself symbolizes God’s eternity as the one who is, who was, and always will be. The four candles symbolize the four Sundays of Advent. A fifth candle (the Christ-candle) could be placed at the center of the wreath to symbolize Christmas Eve. The ‘light’ of Advent candles represents Christ the light who comes to disperse the darkness of sin and death. As we know, the liturgical color of advent is purple/violet, but rose/pink is permitted on Gaudete Sunday.

For people of faith, Advent is a special time to prepare for God’s gift of his Son to the world. The scripture passages emphasize the importance of readying our hearts and minds to receive the Messiah. This theme of interior preparation is often lost on many in our society as frenzied external preparations for Christmas take hold. Thanksgiving week ushers in the shopping season as people rush in droves to the malls, especially on black Friday, to snatch up enticing deals before they are gone.

As Christmas draws near, anxiety kicks in - there are Christmas presents to wrap, house and yard decorations to finish, Christmas cards to write, parties to plan, more shopping to do, etc. We often come to realize all the time in the world would not be enough to accomplish all that needs to be done despite our best efforts. The joy and anticipation of Christmas turns into anxiety of getting everything done and the dreaded realization we would not get done anyway. However, if we first understand Advent in terms of spiritual preparation, all other preparations will find their proper contexts, leading to lesser anxiety and dread.

Wishing you a prayerful Advent!

Fr. Romanus