

**FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK**

Dear Parishioners,

Our Scripture readings for Advent encourage us to prepare the way of the Lord. One of the ways we are called to do this is through our works of charity. The author of the essay below, which I have edited and adapted, makes some good points about this issue.

With my prayers,  
Fr. Conley

**An Advent Examination**

by Fr. Kenneth G. Davis, OFM

Advent is not a season of penance, but of preparation. Advent prepares us for the two comings of Christ, that is, the Incarnation and the Second Coming. However, amid the garlands and the gifts, we all know how easy it is to become wrapped up in the party planning on earth and forget to plan for the eternal banquet in heaven. Thus an Advent examination of conscience is not amiss. While not encouraging it as the grump who steals the joy of Christmas, what better way to prepare for Christ than by preparing our conscience?

To begin, I'll describe a character with whom you are likely familiar, but whom you may not know as well as you think. Thus, as I describe him, try to guess his name. Here are hints: He's a tax-paying small businessman who provides employment for several people. Himself a wit, he cares not a whit for either the politically correct or for worldly respect. And a close textual analysis indicates that this character committed no serious sin. Rather he eats frugally, exercises, and is regular in his habits; he's punctual in his appointments. He's hard working and he lives in great simplicity, even austerity. He's chaste, he's intelligent, he's articulate, he's assertive, he's Scrooge. Ebenezer Scrooge.

Note that I've just described Scrooge before his conversion. And, although he's unpopular and grouchy, he's committed no serious sin. Hence, Marley's ghost does not reproach Scrooge for any sins of commission, but only for sins of omission. Marley himself bemoans his own suffering, which is the result of his own sins of omission, that is, the good that he might have done while alive, but did not. When Scrooge protests that Marley was just a good businessman, Marley wails: "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business." Opportunities to do good left undone are sins of omission. Marley shows Scrooge other suffering spirits, all miserable for the same reason: They eternally long to do good because that is their nature as creatures made by God, the one is the source of all good.

Scrooge, therefore, is not haunted because of any evil he committed; he is haunted by the good he failed to do. Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* for good Christians

like us — hard-working, honest folks enjoying well-deserved comfort, but who fail to move out of our comfort zone to consider the suffering of others. Scrooge is convicted of his sins of omission. This is mentioned always in the second half of a phrase we pray frequently at Mass when we repent for "what I have done and what I have failed to do"...

The individualism, materialism and relativism promoted by our society are at the root of many of our sins of omission. Individualism begets sins of omission in the following ways. (Scrooge is described as "secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster"...). Because each person is not only sacred, but social, sins of omission include: 1) choosing not to share our time with our spouses, children and other family members because we only want to do what pleases us such as t.v., video games, etc. 2) and for the same reasons, choosing not to participate in the fellowship activities in our parish through which we grow together as a genuine community of the followers of Christ.

Second, consumerism fosters sins of omission because it leads us to treat ourselves and others as consumers and competitors such as the following: 1) spending without need and thus with indifference to the needs of others 2) wasting our time on superficial and even immoral entertainment 3) adding to a polluted environment by wasting materials & energy 4) not paying our debts or returning that which was borrowed.

Relativism leads to sins of omission when we disregard the Lord's commandments about helping others as if they do not apply to us. We should remember that when Jesus describes judgement day, He describes sins of omission, that is, what we did or did not do for these least of His brothers and sisters.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions because good intentions not acted upon are sins of omission: time wasted, love unspoken, apologies avoided, forgiveness withheld, thoughtless thanklessness, compliments silenced rather than shared. Sins of omission matter.

As we begin the Advent season we should examine our consciences and confess our sins of omission so that like the repentant Scrooge, we will keep the spirit of Christmas in our hearts every day of our lives.

**OUR ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY, DEC 19<sup>TH</sup> AT 7PM. IF YOU DON'T DRIVE AT NIGHT, YOU ARE WELCOME TO COME TO OUR SCHOOL PENANCE SERVICE AT 10AM ON TUESDAY, DEC 18.**

**INTERCESSORY PRAYER TEAMS NEXT**

**WEEKEND** If you would like to receive prayer for physical, spiritual and emotional healing, trained prayer teams will be present after each Mass.

**FOLLOWING JESUS**

Our Following Jesus series meets again this Thursday from 6:30-8:30 in the hall for dinner, learning & discussion. All are welcome. For more information contact Fr. Conley.

**PRAISING GOD IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES**

We can never understand why and how God does something, but He wants us to accept with our understanding that He does it. This is the basis of our praise. God wants us to understand that He loves us and that He has a plan for us. And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting into his plans (Ro. 8:28). Are you surrounded by difficult circumstances right now? Have you been struggling to understand why they have come to you? Then try to accept with your understanding that God does love you and has allowed those circumstances because He knows that He can bring good out of this for you. Praise Him for what He has brought into your life; do it deliberately and with your understanding.

Praising God is not a magic formula for success. It is a way of life that is solidly backed up in God's Word. We praise God, not for the expected results, but for the situation just as it is. Praise is based on an acceptance of the present as part of God's loving, perfect will for us. Praise is not based on what we think or hope will happen in the future. This is an absolute "law," clearly observable in the practice of praise. We praise God, not for what we expect will happen in or around us, but we praise Him for who He is and where and how we are right now.

From **The Power in Praise** by Merlin Carothers

**ST. MARY'S HEALING PRAYER MINISTRY**

The mission of our healing prayer ministry is to help people to have a personal encounter with the Lord and experience his healing love. We do this by praying with people who are seeking physical, emotional and spiritual healing. Our healing prayer ministry is founded on our confidence in God the Father, who was given us every spiritual blessing in the heavens; Jesus Christ the Son who has redeemed us by his blood; and the Holy Spirit who fills us with the fire of his love. Persons seeking prayer from the healing prayer ministry will be given the opportunity to make an appointment with a prayer team for one or two confidential prayer sessions. To make an appointment to meet with one of our healing prayer teams, please contact Kaye Oliver at 240-682-0646 or Sam Oliver at 301-848-3206. Email can be sent to Samuel\_Oliver @[comcast.net](mailto:comcast.net).

**HELP WANTED: CLEANING & DECORATING THE CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS ON SUNDAY, DEC. 23 AT 1:30 PM.** If interested, please call Sue Wolfe at 301-274-3800 or show up on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**WHAT IS PRO LIFE? ARE WE SURE WE ARE 100% PRO LIFE? – PART I**

The Church teaches that all life is sacred and must be cherished and protected from conception to natural death. By keeping this guiding principle in mind in reviewing all the following moral issues of today, we can quickly see what it means to be 100% Pro Life, no exceptions.

**ABORTION**

This is defined as the removal of an embryo before it can survive outside the uterus. While it may not look or function completely as a baby, it is still a baby. All things are what they are at their inception. By not protecting and nurturing an embryo, we have taken the life of a little boy or girl.

Now we have to ask the difficult questions for some. While many people are against abortion in general, and still calling themselves prolife, they take exception in the following cases: rape, incest, or severe mental or physical birth defects in the unborn child. Those exceptions to abortion are not prolife, because they are not protecting *all* life. We cannot take the life of any unborn child, regardless of their condition or the circumstances of their conception. The child is innocent, created by God in his image, and deserving of God's plans for his life here on earth. +6If you believe that Abortion is wrong, then you are Pro Life on this issue.

*Joann Murray*

*Lucas, Texas*

**MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:**

**SUN:** 8am Margaret Herbert, 10am Parishioners  
**12N:** F. Brooke Matthews, **MON:** 8am Jane E. Swann,  
**TUES:** 8am Jessie Chlysta, **WED:** 8am Gary Edward Williams, **THURS:** 8am Taylor Halbleib & Shirley Hardy, **FRI:** 9:30am J. L. Thompson, Jr., **SAT:** 9am Rev. Joseph Kleinstuber, 4pm Kevin McPherson.

**PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY**

**PRAYERS:** Stephen Balenger, Anna Bankins, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Kevin Gardiner, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Zynae Green, Irma Johnson, Angie Kalnasy, Regina Kijesky, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Mary Reeves, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Jean Turner, Eva Washington, Beth Weise, Pat Werner, Brice Zimmer.

**OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:**

\$10,063.00. The unidentified donations totaled \$581.00. We received \$714.23 for our School Support.