

St. Joseph Catholic Church
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Frist Sunday of Advent A 11.27.2016
Christ the King Feast

	St. Joseph	St Francis	St. Anne
Sunday	\$1747.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

In 2014, Gallup estimated that Americans spent an average of \$750 on Christmas gifts. That's just the average!

And that's just on gifts!

If you're spending hundreds dollars on gifts, the last thing you can afford is an another major expense. Christmass is not about prizes; its about the gift of love. Give the gift of love which costs nothing – but your heart!



Advent is a four-Sunday season of preparation for the arrival of Christ into the world which we celebrate as Christ's Mass.

The Advent wreath symbolizes the coming of Jesus with greenery which shows that life never dies and the greenery is laid upon a stand that have 4 candles.. A large white candle, called the Christ Candle, stands in the middle of the wreath and four candles are placed into the wreath surrounding the central candle. The four candles symbolize different expectations. The first candle reveals the hope we have in Jesus. The second purple candle reveals that peace we should have in Christ. The third candle is pink and it tells us to rejoice in the Lord for he is so near. The fourth candle is love. We are to love Our Lord more than we love ourselves.

In the earliest years of the church the only liturgical season was Lent, the seven weeks prior to Easter. Lent was a season of fasting and prayer as the church commemorated the crucifixion of Jesus. The traditional color of banners in the church during this time was a deep purple, signifying royalty, repentance, and suffering. During Lent the Church lit seven candles, one for each week of the solemn season.

However solemn the season was, the story of Lent has a twinge of hope and joy since the death of Christ prefigured the resurrection. So, on the fourth Sunday of Lent, the faithful were not to fast, but to feast. In ancient times on this particular Sunday the Pope would honor a citizen with a pink rose, and as time passed the priests wore pink vestments on this day as a reminder of the coming joy.

Advent Celebrations began in the 4th century and in the 11th century it was defined as the 4 Sundays before Christmass. It was viewed as a mini-Lent, a time for reflection and repentance (thus the purple). In so doing, the Church used four candles and changed the third candle to pink in honor of the Lenten tradition. This is why we have a pink candle in our Advent Wreaths.

To further heighten the sense of anticipation of Christ's coming during Advent, the tradition gave each candle a meaning-- the first being hope, the second peace, the third joy, and the fourth love (there are a number of other traditional names as well, though these are some of the most ancient).

That the pink candle is the candle of joy, the one that speaks to us with its color is the true color of Christmass – JOY!

Prayer leads to adoration, adoration leads to repentance which empowers me to forgive. These are the paths which opens the mind to the knowledge and understanding of the mystery of God. That God became man is the central teaching of Christianity which we celebrate as Christmas.

This Jesus, Emmanuel which means God dwells among his people, became one like me so that I could become one like Him, first by teaching me to pray as He prayed; to Adore My Father as He adored Him; and then to forgive myself and others as He forgave me. This is the meaning of Christmas, the gift of true prayer which frees me from my sinfulness so that I can see my divine dignity: I am created in the image and likeness of God.

Paul writes, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ" (Phil 3:8). Christmas allows us to receive the grace to gain Christ. This is the first step in prayer. That I like Paul pray on my knees: I bow my knees before the Father in "accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self" (Eph 3:16).

Why would he wish that Christians be strengthened through the Holy Spirit? So that "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love," (Eph 3:17). This is the core of Adoration. We bow to our knees praying so we may come to adore the Lord at his birth in sincere love.

Adoration is more than prayer. Prayer is a conversation; adoration is a conversation of love. Adoration creates understanding. "so that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 17 – 19).. Prayer leads me to experience God's love and the adoration that God has for me inspires me to repent and to forgive so I become saintly. This is what Jesus wants us to have: sanctity in his name.

Yet, how does one know Christ in such a way that He is the true gain, before whom all other things are rubbish? By reading the Gospel we come to know Christ as the fulfillment of my life – that I may have life abundantly. We come to know Jesus through our study. But more importantly we come to know Jesus in adoration, specifically the prayer of the Breaking of the Bread – the Story of Emmaus (Luke 24:13). Here Jesus becomes present and our hearts burn, alive in his Spirit. This is adoration!!

Going to worship, reading Scripture, studying the Catechism is not sufficient. In order to be able to understand the breadth and length and height and depth of Jesus, we must experience Him in adoration: "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star^a at its rising and have come to do him homage (Matt 2:2) This is the Spirit dwelling within Who makes us adore the new born Babe Who frees us from sin and enables us to forgive the sins of those who offend us. This is the essence of Christmas. To pray, adore and forgive. Christmas is every day we walk with Jesus hearts alive because He makes his Spirit dwell within so we may adore and forgive!

This understanding goes beyond the superficial, and penetrates into the depths of the mystery of Christ's Birth – the incarnation. We know the Child Jesus! We know Jesus Who heals the sick, preaches, performs miracles, dies and resurrects. We know all of this, but this does not mean we know the mystery of Christ.

The mystery of Christmas is something mystical. He is present in my heart: Like Him, I am born anew in Christ's love, his grace, which the Father gives to me on Christmas Day!

Announcements

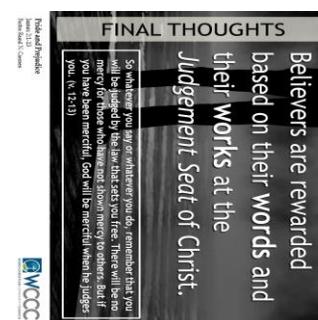
Dec 11 Fr. Tom In Kotz. Fr. Jay in Nome to celebrate Mass.

Dec 14 Kotz Selection committee to choose 3 architects. January to finalize architect choice.

RETROUVAILLE: a marriage weekend retreat to help, heal, grow your marriage Feb. 10/12 907/863/8000 helpourmarraige.com



Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates.



**Man encounters God
As
God becomes man!**

Weekly Schedule:

Date	MassTime	Place	Feast Day	Lector/Minister	Intention	Activity
Mon Dec 12	6:00 PM	Kotz	Guadalupe			
Tue Dec 13	6:00 PM	Kotz	St Lucy			
Wed Dec 14	6:00 PM	Kotz	John Cross			
Thu Dec 15	8:00 AM	Kotz				
Fri Dec 16	9:00 AM	Nome				
Sat Dec 17	5:30 PM	Nome	4 th Advent			
Sun Dec 18	10:30 AM	Nome	4 th Advent			



**“Go and tell John what you hear and see:
the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed,
the deaf hear, the dead are raised,
and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.
And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”**

Can you help me? Can you bring salvation to this mess? Or do I look for another?

You are a Christian. You openly and publicly bear the name of Christ. You identify yourself as a Catholic. You attend Mass, receive the Sacraments, Pray. As a result people are going to look at you to examine your actions, to look into your life. Are you authentic, Are you?

Having been marked with the signs of Baptism and Confirmation, joined into Christ's Mystical Body in Holy Communion, the Church now sends you into the world around us. With Jesus, you are one who is sent. The word "Mass" is derived from "missa", mission, being sent out to preach. Do you preach by your words and actions? Is your Faith real? Is your Faith true and right, or do we look to another?

John questioned Jesus if He was the one truly sent. Jesus sent a reply to him: the blind see, the crippled walk, hopelessly lepers are cleansed, the deaf and dumb hear and understand, and dead men walk!

Each one baptized into Jesus ought to reveal Jesus. See Christ in us: To have a vision and see the meaning and purpose of my life is love, forgiveness, and servanthood. Others see in us that Christ is our light and that his light shines through me into the darkness. I am a light of hope, the hope of freedom from pain, suffering, and death. The hope of the triumph of good over evil. The hope of peace. The hope of salvation. The blind, the deaf, the lame, the lepers, the dead; that is those who are spiritual dead, ought to see God's presence in humanity because of us.

Do I walk with the downtrodden? Do I spend time with the lepers, the sick, the dying, the homeless; those outcasts who are rejected and refused? Do I listen to the pain and problems of others? Do I raise the dead by offering forgiveness to those who feel unforgiven? Do I forgive those who have wounded and hurt me?

Am I sign of Christ in the world?

Witnessing to Christ is not easy; it is possible if we do not take offense as Jesus. He is controversial for He demands each person to be dignified by divine life – not merely earthly life. We are to live by divine law which is a law that holds us accountable for each word, action, thought, and deed. And just like Jesus, we too, if we live the Christian life, will be rejected, reviled, and ridiculed, even by fellow Christians.

We recall what Jesus says to us, "do not take offense at me!" In other words, to be true Christians, we serve others knowing that we will not always be accepted as servants. We will be accused as frauds, but that does not lessen our true identity. Remember Jesus tells us, when they persecute you on account of my name, rejoice for your reward will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Conflict and adversity create division and divorce. Forgiveness and faithfulness create peace and joy. Advent is a time for conflict and adversity for John the Baptist preaches forgiveness and faithfulness which of course the people rebel against because they are steeped in anger and hatred.

John condemns evil for evil creates hatred. We need to have a hatred of evil and condemn the evil – not the person who commits the evil. Persons choose evil. We are to correct them fraternally revealing that the consequence of their choice is grave.

Hatred is good; but it has to be directed towards the evil and sinful in our world. However, as we know the proverb that states, Evil thrives because good people remain silence. John is not silent. John is a strong voice crying out in the wilderness as Isaiah prophecies: "a voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord" (Is 40:3). The voice makes straight what was wrong. The voice holds accountable those who were to protect and defend the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. The voice demands recompense for the people who were supposed to show mercy and compassion, and forgiveness but condemned the very ones they were to shelter.

The voice of course is Jesus. He comes as a thief in the night to make straight the way of the Lord, for everyone knew how crooked and corrupt the Jewish priesthood was. The corruption created conflict, controversy, and contradictions. The clash over Jesus was real and Jesus battled against them with their very own arguments. He told them give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to Him, which they were not doing. The Jews blamed the Romans for their financial problems. In that way they did not have to give their full tithe to the Temple.

Jesus reached out to the lepers, the deaf, the blind and the lame but the Pharisees saw these handicapped persons as a waste, draining their resources. Jesus came to heal and embrace them revealing that the true Kingdom of God is made up of handicapped ones.

Jesus ate and drank with the sinners. He talked and touched the prostitutes and the tax collectors. He engaged the outcasts and welcomed them into his friendship. Most Jews, and most people today, isolate and ignore anyone who lives on the fringes of society. We live protected from the dangers and diseases that plague our world. Jesus befriended them.

Jesus touched the dead and comforted the grieving. The Jewish Elite would never stoop so low as to defile themselves especially the dead of the poor. Yet, we know Jesus welcomed Lazarus into heaven and condemned the rich man into hell.

Jesus is a complete contradiction. John was paradox. Both were considered absurd for they lived by different standards and values than did the ruling elite Jews of his day. Is this any different than what we encounter in our society today? Do we not live in a world filled with conflict and adversity? Do we not have people who divorce and isolate themselves from the handicapped and diseased? Do we not have people condemning others because they live by a different standard?

Christians are to be a sign of contradiction. We are to be a voice crying out– not for change for the sake of change – but change to uphold truth, honesty, integrity, and justice. Are we not to embrace the poor, the lonely, and the broken?

Christians are the sign of contradiction as we live a life of love which forgives the evil ones in our world, which embraces the abusers and attackers of the innocent, which decries the injustices and failures of individuals in power, and which confronts the acceptance of immorality and perversity.

Only those who live in Christ, who experience the mystery of Christ's life and death, only those who know Christ is present to us today in his Eucharistic presence can be the sign of contradiction for which so many people are longing. Christ demands from us a commitment in which we are not offended by the values and morals of others, but have the strength and fortitude to endure the criticisms, attacks and strikes of those who judge and condemn Christianity as too harsh and callous against immorality, too blind and shaded to progressive and open-minded acceptance, too judgmental and critical of those demanding approval and acceptance. Jesus tells us, "Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me" (Mat 11: 6).

Our world is in conflict with sorts of radical, revolutionary, capitalistic, socialist, terrorist, and extreme ideals. But only one ideal heals human divisions: the Christian Ideal.

Christians are to commit to a new law; that law is a law of truth founded upon love. It is not a law of opinion or dominion, but a law of service and servanthood. Jesus came to serve and give his life as a ransom for those who do not take offense at Him. Only those who embrace his ideal are free from the tyranny of the ideals of this world for He frees us from this world to live for his Kingdom, a Kingdom of Peace, Justice, Love, and Beauty!