

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

THE ADVENT STATION?

There were these two young brothers who got to spend an overnight with their grandparents shortly before Christmas. At bedtime, the two boys knelt before their bed to say their prayers when the older brother started praying at the top of his lungs: "Dear God, I need a new bicycle!" After repeating this prayer three or four times, his younger brother leaned over and said, "You don't need to shout, God isn't deaf!" to which the older brother replied, "No, but grandma almost is!"

This Sunday we enter upon a new season in the Church-the Advent Season. It's a time that kids (like the two brothers) think about what they all want for Christmas and maybe write a letter to Santa listing everything. But Advent is not Christmas. Yet, you'd never know that as you go around town.

Driving down Victory Boulevard last week I noticed that the "holiday" lights were already hung up on the poles. "Seasons Greetings!" the sign read. But it wasn't Advent yet! Then later in the week, sitting in a crowded doctor's office for an appointment, the radio was blaring all kinds of "Christmas" songs such as "Frosty the Snowman," "Silver Bells" and "Santa Baby." But it wasn't even Advent yet!

The Secular world has a different idea about seasons than the Church. In fact, in our very hurried and stressful society today, everything is on "fast forward" if I could use an outdated term. Halloween begins in August. Christmas in early November. In January, get ready for the Valentine's Day displays. Time marches on!

The Church is more sane in her appreciation of the feasts and the seasons of the year. While I do enjoy the Christmas songs on the radio even in mid November, I wonder if it were more appropriate if there were an Advent station? Advent is a beautiful season in itself and we should appreciate it. It's not Christmas!

The word "Advent" means "coming." During the next four weeks we are preparing our hearts and souls for the coming of Christ on December 25th. There is a "penitential character" to Advent. So we notice at Mass that there are few flowers. The altar is draped in purple and the priest's vestments are the same color. The color purple highlights penance and preparation. The joyful hymn that we sing at Mass "The Gloria" is not sung at all during Advent.

This season was at one time considered like a "Little Lent." All that has kind of gone by the wayside in our modern world as we all get sucked into the mindset of the Secular holiday season which begins at Thanksgiving (or before!) and goes right to Christmas Day.

But maybe this year it can be a little different for all of us. Advent can be a time when we do a little more "shopping" in terms of our soul. The Church offers not material gifts and treasures, but spiritual ones and in the long run, these are the ones that count.

In the next four weeks, why not make Sunday Mass a priority? So many of us are so busy at this time of the year. However, if we're too busy to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we're too busy. How about giving a little more time to prayer this Advent? We are blessed at Saint Charles to have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from Monday to Friday. Come and visit Jesus-"The Reason for the Season!"

Finally, if it's been some time since we've been to confession, this is a good time to "come back" to the Lord in sincere repentance. "Reconciliation Monday" will be on December 16th-confessions from 4-8 PM!

Let's all try to tune into "The Advent Station" during this wonderful season and truly prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ on His day-December 25th!

*Sincerely in the Lord,
Father Jerome*