

## A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

Welcome to the Season of Advent!

Although the Season of Advent is a penitential season of the Church; a season in which we are to be especially mindful of our sins and failings; a season in which we are to strive with God's help to amend our sinful ways and to live according to the Law of God. This season is filled with hope and joyful anticipation for we look forward to the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and the celebration of Christmas. Perhaps the anticipation is best expressed in today's liturgy by the words in the first stanza of the Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 122):

*I rejoiced when they said to me,  
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."  
And now our feet are standing  
within your gates, Jerusalem.*

As Christians we have been called by God to enter into the house of the Lord. This calling should be received with joy and excitement. We should be filled both with a desire to cast off from our lives all the thoughts and actions that are contrary to God's law and to take up every virtue and practice that is recommended to us by our Savior Jesus Christ. When we hear that Christmas is coming we should be thinking less of presents and decorations (I've got nothing against presents and decorations, but they should not be the primary goal of our thoughts and actions leading up to Christmas) and more about the joy that comes from our entering the house of the Lord; which is the Church given to us by Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God promised to us by our Savior.

In the here and now we as Christians are standing inside the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. Just as the gates to an ancient city marked the boundary between the dangerous outside and the secure inside; so too as Christians are we at once at the boundary between two worlds. The outside for us Christians is the society in which we live which is so often hostile to living our lives as disciples of Christ. The inside is the very Kingdom of God, the destination for which we as disciples long for and the goal of our desires. Every time the Season of Advent comes around we need to be reminded to turn our backs on the outside and keep our faces firmly directed to the inside. The celebration of Christmas is a vivid reminder for us who are still in the gate of the glory that lies within the city. With the words of Saint Paul from our Second Reading ringing in our ears, let us keep to the way of the Lord and set ourselves to passing through the gate and going into Jerusalem with joy.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff  
Pastor