

“There was no room for them.” (Luke 2:7)

“Jesus knew exclusion from the beginning. The innkeeper’s refusal begins a journey that ends with Jesus on the Cross, abandoned by nearly all who claimed to love him. It is no different today when so many doors are closed to Christ. There is simply no room for refugees or families experiencing homelessness, nor are spaces accessible if someone has a disability, lacks health insurance, or whose gender identity does not fit into neat categories. Exclusion, driven by fear, is a powerful enemy that even afflicts Jesus, the Son of God.

“Throughout Advent, we prepared to receive this child for whom the world has no room by making room in our lives. Today and through the Christmas season, we rightly celebrate. How stunning that God would come to dwell with us! What a beautiful mystery the Incarnation is! When this season concludes, however, the

world will still have no room for Christ. Wars will endure, and the victims they create will face bombed out hospitals and closed borders. Prejudice will keep communities of color and queer folk away from the centers of power.

“Jesus’ birth reminds us that discipleship is a movement to the peripheries in growing solidarity with those people who are forced to them. Jesus’ birth also reminds us that the peripheries are blessed. When Christ comes again, the center will be hollowed. Worldly power expelled, God will be centered and draw the peripheries inward toward Himself. The world makes little room for Christ, but there are infinite reasons to celebrate confidently, for God is now with us and all are welcome!

“How is the Christ Child urging me to practice radical hospitality in my life?”

Rachel Schmidt & Robert Shine, Pax Christi

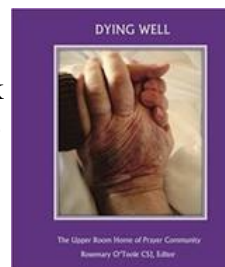
Dear Parishioners,

My heartfelt gratitude to you for welcoming me to share at the **Dying Well: Day of Reflection** on Saturday, November 18th at Sacre Coeur Parish Hall. As the room filled with 51 participants, seated at tables with their coffee, goodies and the little book, we entered into a sacred space and time to share stories and conversations about the journey through the dying process to the ultimate peak, transformative moment of death. As my stories of Mom and others dying journeys were recounted, there was laughter and silence and I believe a deepening trust, faith and comfort happening in hearts throughout the day. May we all live well until we die well making the most of those precious moments to say “I’m sorry. I love you. Thank you... and with no rush, to saying that final Goodbye. A very special thank you to Erin Ryan and friends for looking after the promotion, registrations and hosting etc.

Blessings, Rosemary O’Toole, csj

The Upper Room Home of Prayer,
68 Centrepointe Dr., Ottawa, Ontario. Canada. K2G 6J5

Visit our website: www.theupperroomhomeofprayer.org



DECEMBER 23

(4th Sunday of Advent)

Saturday Mass: 5:00 pm

DECEMBER 24

(4th Sunday of Advent)

Sunday Mass: 10:30 am

DECEMBER 24

(Christmas Eve)

Family Service: 5:00 pm

Choral Prelude/Carols: 8:15 pm

Mass at Night: 9:00 pm

Choral Prelude/Carols: 9:15 pm

Mass at Night: 12.00 midnight

DECEMBER 25

Mass during Day: 11:00 am

DECEMBER 30 (Saturday)

Holy Family: 5 pm

DECEMBER 31 (Sunday)

Holy Family: 9:30 am

11:30 am

DECEMBER 31

(New Year’s Eve)

Mary, Mother of God: 5:00 pm

JANUARY 1

(New Year’s Day)

Mary, Mother of God: 11:00 am

A new heart I will give you, and a

NEW SPIRIT

I will put within you. Ez. 36:26a



ADVENT BEGINS DECEMBER 3

Preparation for Christmas is an important theme for Advent, but more is involved. Advent gives us a vision of our lives as Christians and shows us the possibilities of life. The vision of life that Advent gives us is twofold; it looks back to the first



coming of Christ at Bethlehem, and it looks to the future when Christ will come again. In the interval between these two events we find meaning for our life as a Christian. First we celebrate Christ-become-human. We view his life and experience his presence as a human being in our history. Christ came to show us what life can and should be. He gave us true and valid principles by which we can live true and valid lives. But Jesus knew that the human heart could not live in isolation. He formed the Church around the concept of a people held together by love. In that community we discover unlimited possibilities and meaning. Alone we can do nothing. Together we find real meaning.

When Christ left this earth, he did not abandon us. He remains with us in his Spirit, the Church, the sacraments, the Scriptures and each other. He lives in community with us and keeps his vision of life before us.

When Christ comes again, his presence will no longer be hidden behind the signs and symbols of the liturgy or the words of

the Scriptures. His presence among us will be revealed in all its fullness, a presence that will never end, a presence that will perfect and complete our community.

This is the "greater significance" of Advent. In these few short weeks we take in the sweeping panorama of time - from Christ's birth to his Second Coming. The season of Advent brings us the magnificent vision of life and hope for the future given to us by Christ.

Advent is our time to become more involved, more caught up in the meaning and the possibilities of life as a Christian community. Thus we are preparing not only for Christmas but also for Christ's Second Coming. This means that when he comes again, we will be awake and watchful. He will not find us asleep.

© Liguori Publications Excerpt from Advent - A Quality Storecupboard

Editors’s Note:

This year the Fourth Sunday of Advent falls on December 24, so we really only have 3 weeks to celebrate Advent. Thus it is even more important to plan ahead and begin Advent activities, especially family activities with children, the First Sunday of the season.

Inside this issue:

Finding the Strength to reach across Differences	2
Waiting with Patience	3
Practicing Presence	3
End of Life Issues	3
Radical Hospitality	4
Christmas Schedule	4
Thank You	4



FINDING THE STRENGTH TO REACH ACROSS DIFFERENCES

We are rarely at our best. Too often what shows forth in our lives is not what's best in us: love, generosity, a big heart. More often than not, our lives radiate irritation, pettiness, and a small heart.

Too often, we find ourselves consumed by petty irritations, conflicts, frustrations, and angers. Each of these might be small in itself but, cumulatively, they take the sunshine and delight out of our lives, like mosquitoes spoiling a picnic. Then, instead of feeling grateful, gracious, and magnanimous, we feel paranoid, fearful, and irritable and we end up acting out of a cold, irritated, paranoid part of ourselves rather than out of our real selves.

Why do we do that? Because we are asleep to who and what we really are, asleep in a double way:

When St. Luke describes Jesus' agony in the garden, he tells us that after Jesus had undergone a powerful drama, sweating blood so as to give his life over in love, he turned to his disciples (who were supposed to be watching and praying with him) and found them asleep. However he uses a curious expression to describe why they were asleep. They were asleep, he says, not because they were tired and it was late, but they were asleep "out of sheer sorrow".

That says a couple of things: First, that the disciples are asleep out of depression. Depression is what is preventing them from seeing straight. But they are also asleep to what is deepest inside of them, namely, that they carry the image and likeness of God. Jesus was not asleep to that and, because of this awareness, was able precisely to be big of heart.

As Christians we believe that what ultimately defines us and gives us our dignity is the image and likeness of God inside us. This is our deepest identity, our real self. Inside each of us there is a piece of divinity, a god or goddess, a person who carries an inviolable dignity, with a heart as big as God's.

And that great dignity is not meant to be a source of wrongful pride and a justification for making an unhealthy assertion with our lives. Sadly, too often it does and a rather simple commentary on the state of our planet might be to say that this is what things look like when you have six billion people walking around with each one of them thinking himself or herself as God.

But our great dignity, the Imago Dei inside each of us, is meant rather to be a center from which we can draw vision, grace, and strength to act in a way that, ironically, precisely helps us to swallow our pride.

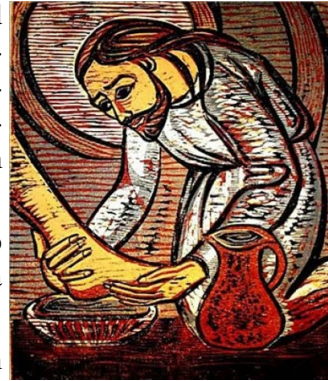
We see this in Jesus. In a famous text, St. John tells us that at the last supper, Jesus got up from the table and began to wash the feet of his disciples, against their protests. That gesture, washing someone else's feet, has classically been preached on as an act of humility. It was that, but in the context of the Gospel of John, it is something more. It was a particular kind of humility, one that requires having a huge, huge heart and swallowing a lot of pride. When Jesus washes his disciples feet in John's Gospel and tells us he is setting an example for us to imitate, he is inviting us to have the strength to bend down in understanding and wash the feet of those whom, for all kinds of reasons, we would rather not have anything to do with. It is akin to having Pro-Life and Pro-Choice, strident conservatives and strident liberals, fundamentalists and atheists, wash each others' feet. Normally we don't have the strength to do that, there is too much pride and desire for righteousness at stake.

So how could Jesus do it? He could do it because he wasn't asleep to who and what he was. In a stunning description of what is going on inside of him when he got up and took the basin and towel to do this. John writes: "Jesus, knowing that he had come from God and was returning to God, and that the Father had put everything into his hands, got up from the table and removed his outer garments." (John 13,3-5).

Jesus took off his outer garments (which symbolize precisely all those things, including our everyday irritations and angers, which block the view of our deeper selves) to show us his deeper reality, namely, the fact that he had come from God and was going back to God. On the strength of that awareness, he could swallow all the pride that he needed to in order to reach out in understanding, forgiveness, and love, beyond wound, irritation, and moral righteousness.

When we are in touch with that fact that we too have "come from God and are going back to God" then, and only then, can we too swallow enough pride to be genuinely loving.

By Ron Rolheiser, OMI



PRACTICING PRESENCE

The presence of God is infinite, everywhere, always, and forever. You cannot *not* be in the presence of God. There's no other place to be. It is we who are not present to Presence. We'll make any excuse to be somewhere else than right here. Right here, right now never seems enough. It actually is, but it is *we* who are not aware enough yet.

All spiritual teaching—this is not an oversimplification—is about how to be present to the moment. When you're present, you will experience the Presence. But the problem is, we're almost always somewhere else: reliving the past or worrying about the future.

As a Franciscan, I have many opportunities to go away for long periods in solitude. When I'm in a hermitage, there's no television, smart phone, computer, or radio. There's pretty much nothing but the natural. You'd think it would be easier to be present to Presence in this setting, and in some ways it is—watching the snow fall, listening to a hawk's cry, walking slowly without any particular destination or deadline. But I can't escape my monkey mind even on retreat. Daily contemplative prayer is crucial to helping me live in the now. It takes constant intention and practice to remain open, receptive, and awake to the moment.

We live in a time with more easily available obstacles to presence than any other period in history. We carry our obstacles in our pockets now, vibrating and notifying and emoji-ing us about everything and nothing. And let's be honest: most of our digital and personal conversation is about nothing. Nothing that matters, nothing that lasts, nothing that's *real*. We think and talk about the same things again and again, like a broken record. Pretty soon we realize we've frittered away years of our life, and it is the only life we have.

We have to find a way to more deeply experience our experiences. Otherwise we're just on cruise control, and we go through our whole life not knowing what's happening. Whether we realize it or not, the divine energy of God is flowing through each one of us. When we draw upon this Source consciously, our life starts filling with what some call coincidences or synchronicities which we can never explain. This has nothing to do with being perfect, highly moral, or formally religious. I wish someone had told me that when I was young. I would still have been religious, but now in a whole different way—and all the time.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, "First Sunday of Advent: To Be Awake Is to Be Now, Here," November 30, 2014 (Center for Action and Contemplation)

END OF LIFE ISSUES

A DISCUSSION

An ethical reflection and response

Thursday, January 18, 2018

7:00—9:00 p.m.

St. Joseph's Parish Hall

Resource Person:

Rev. Mark Miller, C.Ss.R.

Fr. Mark Miller is presently Provincial of the Redemptorists of Canada and a Bio-ethicist. He worked for many years with the Saskatchewan Catholic Health Authority to develop ethical guidelines for health care. His information sessions are always informative, thought-provoking and compassionate.

Put the date in your calendar!

WAITING WITH PATIENCE

How do we wait for God? We wait with patience. But patience does not mean passivity. Waiting patiently is not like waiting for the bus to come, the rain to stop, or the sun to rise. It is an active waiting in which we live the present moment to the full in order to find there the signs of the One we are waiting for.

The word patience comes from the Latin verb *patoir* which means "to suffer". Waiting patiently is suffering through the present moment, tasting it to the full, and letting the seeds that are sown in the ground on which we stand grow into strong plants. Waiting patiently always means paying attention to what is happening right before our eyes and seeing there the first rays of God's glorious coming.

Henri Nouwen

