

Fourth Sunday in Advent

A Message from Fr. Mark

Dear Parishioners,

Christmas is upon us! Therefore, we gather joyfully in God's house to celebrate! We present ourselves in the Temple of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to rejoice because Christ entered our world through her! Christ enters our midst every time we celebrate Mass (That is why we use that Catholic word: "Christ-mass"!) The same Jesus who lay in the manger now lies upon the altar and on our tongues when we receive Communion!

During the four weeks of Advent, we have prepared our hearts to receive him: studying the scriptures, praying, going to confession and trying to reform our lives. We have begun studying the Gospel of Matthew, which we will hear throughout the new year. Matthew's Gospel presents Saint Joseph as a perfect example of how to prepare our hearts and homes for the coming of Jesus. St. Joseph shows us how to let Jesus in. Joseph was docile and obedient to the message he received from an angel: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home." When we obey God's will, and when we allow Mary to come close to us, then we have created a place when Jesus can be born again in our hearts.

When Jesus was born, there were many who rejected him and refused to make room for him: the innkeepers of Bethlehem, King Herod and his Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. They all closed their hearts and refused to welcome him. Only foreign kings adored him. Only Mary and Joseph and a few poor shepherds showed him reverence and love. We can be like them. Pope Francis tells us: "Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love." (Gaudium Evangelii #286.) Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the other saints helps us to welcome Jesus as they did! My prayer is that every home and every family in our parish will experience the warm love of Jesus at Christmastime!

Fr. Mark