



## Pastoral Reflection – December 18, 2016

We stand now on the doorstep of Christmas, the Mystery of Jesus' Coming. The threefold coming of Jesus is highlighted. He came; he will come and yet comes every day.

We have first to look back to better appreciate the historical Jesus and how the people of the Old Testament longed for his coming. This look at the past enlightens our understanding and appreciation of the Lord's messenger and increases our love for this child born from the Blessed Virgin Mother.

We also need to look at the future. Jesus will come again at the end of time to bring to fulfillment what he inaugurated at his first coming. This helps us grow in hope and patience that the second coming will end in the triumph of good over evil and that much sufferings will intervene in the process.

The insistence of the Church, however, is that we now welcome Jesus in our hearts as the one announced by the Prophets and came to reconcile us to the Father.

In today's Gospel, Joseph and Mary play an essential piece of the whole story. Divine intervention comes by means of Joseph's dream to learn that God's compassion knows no limits. Though his vision is very limited, his faith allows this child to be born. Mary, through her "yes", is the woman destined to provide humanity to Jesus who is born in lowliness and shame. As Christmas approaches, let Joseph and Mary be our inspiration to accept God's will.

## Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes 12-6-16

- Father Fritzner thanked the council and the entire St. Francis faith community for their great work and support in the past year.
- The council discussed the January 6 parish-wide Christmas potluck party to be celebrated as a kickoff to the Year of Community.
- The Spiritual Life/Education Committee explored ideas and themes for the 2017 Lenten soup suppers.
- The Social Justice Committee reminded the council of the upcoming Nehemiah Action Day, Monday, April 3, 7 p.m.
- Stewardship Council discussed the Liturgical Publications Inc. proposal to print the St. Francis bulletin.
- The Leadership Team reported on feedback on the Alpha pilot project and the photo directory experience.
- A town hall will be held January 30 on the capital improvement project.
- The council will soon call for nominations to fill 4 council seats.

## Second Collection on 12-25-16

**Second Collection** – There will be a second collection next Sunday for the Diocesan Charities. This annual collection allows the diocese to meet a variety of basic needs directly and through diocesan agencies and organizations including J.O.I.N. (Joint Organization for Inner-City Needs), St. Stephen's Community House, Catholic Social Services, St. Francis Center, St. Lawrence Haven, St. Vincent Family Center, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. You can help share in this important work by generously supporting the Catholic Charities collection this year. Please give as you are able.

## Catholic Education Section

### Why do we fast before Communion?

Canon 919 of the "Code of Canon Law" states, "One who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion." Actually this regulation merely reflects an ancient tradition in our Church, which is even rooted in Judaism.

In Acts of the Apostles (13:2) we find evidence of fasting connected with the liturgy. A more normative practice of fasting before receiving Holy Communion appears throughout the Church after the legalization of Christianity in 313 A.D. St. Augustine attested to this practice in his own writings. Granted the specific requirements of the fast have changed over time. Prior to 1964, the Eucharistic fast began at midnight. Pope Paul VI, on November 21, 1964, reduced the fast to a period of one hour.

Moreover, the fast before receiving Holy Communion creates a physical hunger and thirst for the Lord, which in turn augments the spiritual hunger and thirst we ought to have. In the Old Testament, fasting prepared individuals to receive the action of God and to be placed in His presence. For instance, Moses (Ex 34:28) fasted 40 days atop Mount Sinai as he received the Ten Commandments. Elijah (I Kings 19:8) fasted 40 days as he walked to Mount Horeb to encounter God. Similarly, Jesus Himself fasted 40 days as he prepared to begin His public ministry (Mt 4:1ff) and encouraged fasting (Mt 6:16-18). Likewise, this corporal work enhances the spiritual disposition we need to receive Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. In a sense, we fast so as not "to spoil our appetite" but to increase it for the sharing of the Paschal banquet. Jesus said in the Beatitudes, "Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill" (Mt 5:6). In all, fasting is an exercise of humility, hope and love—essential virtues in preparing ourselves to receive the Holy Eucharist.

Therefore, the Eucharistic fast assists us in preparing to receive Holy Communion wholly—body and soul. This physical mortification strengthens our spiritual focus on the Lord, so that we may humbly encounter the divine Savior who offers Himself to us

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## Next Week's Scripture Readings

### Saturday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

Isaiah 62:1 - 5  
Acts 13:16 – 17, 22 - 25  
Matthew 1:1 – 25

### Sunday, December 25 – Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7 - 10  
Hebrews 1:1 - 6  
John 1:1 - 18

## November Financial Report

Total Income	\$21,490.78
Total Expenses	\$19,092.02
Net Income	\$2,398.76