

Dear Brothers and Sisters



This Sunday we are invited to "Gaudete," that is to rejoice at the approaching coming of Christ. The Mass vestments are rose colored, as is the third candle to be lit on the Advent wreath, signifying the joy of this liturgy.

This joy is expressed in the readings we will listen to: "*The parched desert will blossom, the blind will see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers will be cleansed*".

These words are addressed to us, to you and to me. When was the last time you had an eye exam? Or your hearing tested? When was the last time you leapt like a deer? Advent and Christmas open our eyes to see the greatness of God, they open our ears to hear his voice speaking to us, and our spirit exults because the birth of this child approaches.

The frenzy of decorating, shopping, putting up the tree, getting the Nativity ready, and wrapping presents can easily make us lose sight of what we are doing all this for. Gaudete Sunday invites us to do all these things joyfully because our spirit rejoices at the advent, the coming of Christ.

St. Francis of Assisi knew this very well. He was the first person to make a Nativity scene, with live animals and people, as a way to contemplate the mystery we are about to celebrate. In his day there was no Garden State Plaza, no Amazon, no online deals, but there was nonetheless the same temptation to lose focus of what was really going on.

We can avoid this temptation by participating in our Advent Deanery Celebration of Reconciliation, this Monday December 16th, at 7:30pm in the Parish of the Assumption, Emerson.

This will lead us to the Novena of Christmas, which begins on December 17th. The Novena, or nine days, is a wonderful opportunity for each family to pray in front of the Manger at home, and sing Christmas Carols.

Then, on the last night of the Novena, December 24th, the Baby Jesus can be placed in the Manger by the youngest member of the family.

Fr. Sean