



## First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2006

*“Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man.”*

*Luke 21: 36*

### “COME, LORD JESUS!”

We are to “be vigilant,” expecting Christ to come into our lives at every moment. We are to “abound in love for one another,” working constantly for the coming of Christ’s love into our relationships and communities. And we are to “stand erect” and pray without fear for the coming of the end of time, when the Lord Jesus will come bringing perfect justice and peace. Christians in the first centuries of the church prayed the acclamation, “Come, Lord Jesus!” The Advent season invites us to enter into this spirit of hopeful expectation for the “advent” of Christ’s reign.

During this season of Advent we remember Jesus’ first coming in time, we anticipate Christ’s coming at the end of time, and we pray with hopeful expectation for our lives right now: “Come, Lord Jesus!”

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### “¡VEN, SEÑOR JESÚS!”

Debemos estar “atentos”, esperando en todo momento que Cristo venga a nuestra vida. Debemos “desbordar de amor de unos a otros”, trabajando constantemente por la venida del amor de Dios a nuestras relaciones y comunidades. Y debemos “estar firmes” y orar sin temor por la venida del final de los tiempos, cuando el Señor Jesús traiga la justicia y la paz perfectas. Los cristianos en los primeros siglos de la Iglesia clamaban “¡Ven, Señor Jesús!” El tiempo de Adviento nos invita a entrar en este espíritu de anhelosa espera por el “adviento” del Reino de Cristo.

Durante este tiempo de Adviento recordamos la primera venida de Jesús, esperamos la venida de Cristo al final de los tiempos y con una gran esperanza para nuestra vida presente rogamos: “¡Ven, Señor Jesús!”

## Notes from the Pastor

Greetings in the Lord,

During this Advent season, we begin a journey of joyous anticipation by remembering, repenting, and preparing ourselves for the birth of Jesus. Our faith community will continue ministering to the poor through the Notre Dame ‘Giving Tree’, - ‘Jesse Tree’- in the narthex of our church. Let each of us accept the challenge to be someone’s “angel”, and then accept God’s blessings for our efforts.

May God continue to bless Deacon Edwin Vigil, who was ordained on **December 2, 2006** in San Fernando Cathedral. We are blessed to have this Notre Dame scholar proceed toward his priestly ordination. Congratulations and God’s blessings.

As of Thanksgiving Day, Notre Dame Faith community began purifying of sacred vessels by the priest, deacon or ordained acolyte. During the week it will be done behind the main altar, and on Sundays by the deacon when present.

I would like to thank all who participated in the Feast for Life Celebration, it was a marvelous example of the outstanding talent present in our young people and adults in the Notre Dame Community.

A special blessing goes to all adorers who came to visit our Lord during the Thanksgiving holidays. When you will be out of town, please be sure to make arrangements for a substitute. May God continue to bless your efforts and your prayer.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Mike



# This Week in the Parish

## **Monday, December 4**

John of Damascus, priest, religious, doctor  
 Is 2: 1-5; Mt 8: 5-11  
 7:00 am †Cristina Colmenarez  
 Diana Cheney

## **Tuesday, December 5**

Advent Weekday  
 Is 11: 1-10; Lk 10: 21-24  
 12:00 pm †Alfredo Colmenarez  
 Diana Cheney  
 †Ruby Norks  
 Lois Pritchard

## **Wednesday, December 6**

Nicholas, bishop  
 Is 25: 6-10a; Mt 15: 29-37  
 12:00 pm †Janet Beyea  
 Beverly & Ernest Valentino  
 5:30 pm Melissa Parker & Family  
 The Holmstroms

## **Thursday, December 7**

Ambrose, bishop, doctor  
 Is 26: 1-6; Mt 7: 21, 24-27  
 8:05 am **NO MASS**  
 12:00 pm In Thanksgiving to  
 Our Lady Of Guadalupe  
 Anonymous

## **Friday, December 8**

Holy Day of Obligation  
 Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
 Gn 3: 9-15, 20; Eph 1: 3-6, 11-12; Lk 1: 26-38  
 8:05 am †Marie Hillbig  
 Clare & Stuart Haby  
 12:00 pm †Lilia Pruneda  
 Armando Gonzalez  
 6:00 pm In honor of Catherine Langlinais  
 Denise Jenschke

## **Saturday, December 9**

Vigil: *2nd Sunday of Advent*  
 Bar 5: 1-9; Phil 1: 4-6, 8-11; Lk 3: 1-6  
 5:00 pm †Francisco Trevino  
 St. Vincent de Paul Society

## **Sunday, December 10**

*Second Sunday in Advent*  
 Bar 5: 1-9; Phil 1: 4-6, 8-11; Lk 3: 1-6  
 8:00 am People of the Parish  
 9:30 am †Ernesto Cervantes  
 Mr. & Mrs. Manuel Cervantes  
 11:00 am Our Lady of Guadalupe  
 Mr. & Mrs. Elias Moreno  
 †Maria Torres  
 Becky Torres

## **Monday, December 4**

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament -7:30 am-Cry Room  
 Bible Study-10:30 am- Family Life Center  
 Our Lady of Perpetual Help Novena - 5:00 pm - Church  
 Men's ACTS -6:00 pm- Kemper Hall Rm 205  
 Advent Mission- 6:00 pm- Church  
 Reconciliations-7:00 pm- Church  
 Boys Scouts- 6:30 pm - Social Center  
 Cub Scouts -6:30 pm -Social Center  
 Cursillos - 7:00 pm - Fireplace Room

## **Tuesday, December 5**

Good Shepherd Level 1- 8:30 am- Kemper Hall- Atrium  
 Bible Study-11:00 am -Family Life Center  
 Lector Practice - 6:00 pm - Church  
 Spanish Choir Practice - 7:15 pm-Kemper Hall-Rm 209

## **Wednesday, December 6**

Good Shepherd- 5:00 pm- Kemper Hall -Atriums  
 Children's Faith Formation- 5:15 pm- Gymnasium

## **Thursday, December 7**

Baptism Class- 6:00 pm -Kemper Hall Rm 205 & 206  
 Fr. Mike's Bible Study- 7:15 pm- Fireplace Room

## **Friday, December 8**

Faith Sharing-12:00 pm -Family Life Center

## **Saturday, December 9**

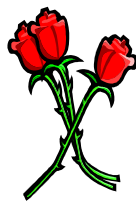
Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament - 11:30 am - Church  
 Child Care -4:45 pm - Nursery-Kemper Hall

## **Sunday, December 10**

Child Care -8:00 am - Nursery- Kemper Hall  
 Teen ACTS-12:00 pm -Kemper Hall Rm 205



*The Sanctuary Lamp will  
 burn this week in  
 Memory of  
 Francisca Pruneda Bill  
 by  
 Eva Bill*



Please pray for those who have died,  
 and have gone to their eternal rest  
 with the Lord, especially *Aladino  
 Calderon and Edward Jakovich*.  
 Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,  
 and let perpetual light shine upon  
 them. May they rest in peace.

**Altar Servers****Lectors****Extraordinary Mins.****Greeters****Bread Bakers**

<b>Saturday, Dec. 9</b>	MC-Shelby Mossman	Kris Wolff	C	B	Peter Casey
<b>5:00 pm.</b>	C-John Dean Domingue	Claudia Sullivan			
	CB-Candice Bayliss				
	CB-Ian Bayliss				
<b>Sunday, Dec. 10</b>	MC-Hanna Schwarz	Peter Rothermel	A	B	Bea Egan
<b>8:00 am</b>	C-Stephen Schwarz	Jim Murphy			
	CB-Christopher Schwarz				
	CB-Michael Schwarz				
<b>Sunday, Dec. 10</b>	MC-Angie Garza	Florencia Martinez	A	C	Mary Vargas
<b>9:30 am</b>	C-Daniel Gonzalez	Anabel Rivera			
	CB-Jonathan Martinez				
	CB-Jacobb Vela				
<b>Sunday, Dec. 10</b>	MC-Halie Domingue	Karen Young	A	F	Ann Fritz
<b>11:00 am</b>	C-Cecilia Cervantes	Tobin Tilley			
	CB-Kaitlin Sutherlin				
	CB-Travis Erickson				



**Pray for** ...

Mary Jane Viebag, Harry Winslow, Jim Wren, Grace Kieberger, Benita Garcia, Frances Vlasek, Irene Peters, Desmond Jones, Gregoria Jureczki, Sharon Schieffen, Maria Murphy, Maria Nowak, Lupe Gonzales, San Juanita San Miguel,

Michelle Mann, Mary Tinch, Irene Trevino, Erasto Ayala, John Aleman, Donnie Couch, Jeanette Bell, Jean Michel Duval, Henrietta and James Bennet, Dorothy Fitzsimmons, Veronica Jansen, Irwin Schilhab, Guadalupe Pena, Lillian Dworaczyk, Robert L. Brantley, Ricardo Chapa, Susie Fenner, Matilda Newsom, Jesse Avila, Wilmer Carroll, Joanne Park, Carmen Pena, Pedro Rangel, Benito Perez, Victoria Tyburski, Coleman Nelson, Chris Dionne, Catalina Piedra, Denise Wright, Alice Ferguson, Arturo Pruneda, Emilio Zamora, Lilia Castillo, Mary Ann Vlasek, Richard Flores, Dr. Edward Prejean, Martha Shankle, Carolyn Huerta, Norman Jackson, Concepcion Gonzales, Isabel Lopez, John L Rico, Rita Currier, Faye Gibson, Josephine Fritz, Arnulfo Valenzuela, Terry Trauth, Walter Schattel, Jlonia Fritz, Maria Stout, Robert Chesi, Barbara Watson, Alonzo Wahrmund, Alice Stone, Sigrid Lathrop, Stephanie Neill, Marge Nickelson, Mary Jane Van Dunker, Rachel Rothermel, Cliff Estes, Patricia Keller, Elvira Sanchez, Catherine Herzog, Cherry Weaver, Beatrice Robles, Bonnie Ochs, Charles Dugosh, Heather Stradinger, Edward Ayala, Tommy Gonzalez, Jim Green, Delfina Sarabia and all the sick of our parish family and friends.



## Weekly Collections

**November 18 & 19, 2006**

Envelopes/Loose Checks	\$14,347.00
Loose Cash	<u>1,811.67</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$16,158.67</b>
Average this month	\$19,244.38
<b>Avg. Needed Each Week</b>	<b>\$18,400.00</b>
School	\$528.00
All Saints/ Souls	\$15.00
Imm. Con/Solemnity	\$15.00
Christmas	\$12.00

Note Balance as of  
October 31, 2006 **\$402,722.92**



## Immaculate Conception Mass Schedule Holy Day of Obligation

**On Friday, December 8, 2006:**

**8:05 am with the children**

**12:00 pm Noon Mass**

**6:00 pm Bilingual Mass!**

## Christmas Novena

Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold.

In that hour vouchsafe, O my God! to hear my prayer and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Mother.  
Amen.

(It is piously believed that whoever recites the above prayer fifteen times a day from the feast of St. Andrew (Nov 30th until Christmas will obtain what is asked.)

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## National Night of Prayer for Life



Immaculate Conception

You are invited to the 4-hour National Night of Prayer for Life on **Friday, December 8 (Feast of the Immaculate Conception) at 9 p.m. through Saturday, December 9 (Feast of Juan Diego) at 1 a.m.** in the church. The National Night of Prayer for Life bridges these two feasts to honor Our Blessed Mother and to pray for the sanctity of all human life.

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## MORNING PRAYER



During Advent of this year, and prior to the 7 a.m. Masses on Mondays and Fridays, we will begin the tradition of praying Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours. This is a part of the Liturgy of the Hours, the official public prayer of the Church. It is a prayer of the entire People of God, and this hour's formal prayer is to sanctify the entire day. "It becomes a complement to the Eucharistic Sacrifice in order to bring about a fullness of Divine Worship, which overflows into all hours of daily living". (Dictionary of the Liturgy, Catholic Book Publishing Co.) You are invited to join others at 6:30 am on those two days to enter into the Church's prayer before Mass at 7:00 a.m. except on **December 8, 2006 at 7:30 am**. The dates are: **December 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup>**.

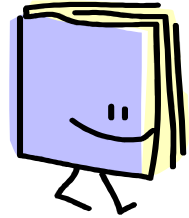
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## CHRISTMAS WALK

The annual Christmas Walk will be held Thursday, December 7 **beginning at First Presbyterian Church, continuing on to Assembly of God then Notre Dame, and ending at St. Peter's with a reception afterward**. This is an ecumenical event which has been a part of Kerrville's celebration of the seasons of Advent and Christmas for many years. Luminarias light the way from one church to the next here in the downtown area. Readings and music of the season are a part of the service at each church, and ministers from other churches in the Hill Country are invited to speak. This year, the Reverend Gini Norris-Lane from Schreiner University has been invited to speak as the "walkers" assemble here at Notre Dame.

# Books to go... Faith to grow.

Reminder: Library Ministry Orientation: Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00am. At the Family life Center (old convent)



Welcome to all who signed up during our stewardship drive and an even bigger invitation for those who missed out on the opportunity to sign up. Come to orientation even if you didn't sign up but would like to learn more about serving our Notre Dame Faith community through the ministry of books.

Volunteers needed for: 1.) New book processors, 2.) typists for the new catalog system, 3.) readers of books willing to write a short summary for the Bulletin that promotes the book, and 4.) **book checkers**, once a month weekend volunteers to check books in and out from the book cart in the narthex before and after Masses on Saturday and Sunday. For more info call Steve or Marcie Denton 895-1976

## Light up for Christ!!!

The Knights of Columbus Council 6409 will light up their Christ Nativity Scene and have their Christmas Social Gathering on Tuesday, **December 5, 2006 at 6:30 pm** at the new hall. All council members and their families are invited. Please bring a **side dish** or **dessert**. The main dish will be provided. A special guest from the North Pole will be stopping by, so bring your children!!!

See you there!

## DANCERS AND MOMS

If you would like your child to dance at our Mass for Our Lady of Guadalupe, we will be meeting in the Church, December 10th at 6:30 at 6:30 pm For more information call Isabel Lopez at 792-5309.

### Bailadoras y Mamas

Si ueste quisiera que su niña baile en la Misa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe por favor acompáñenos el día 10 de diciembre de 2006, a las 6:30 pm en la Iglesia. Para mas información llame a Isabel López al numero 792-5309.



## Gratitude Given to Fishers of Men

*Thanks is extended to all who helped out with the Q&A Forum on the Priesthood with Archbishop José Gomez:*

Irene Alcorta, Red Anderson (Faith Books and Gifts), John and Maria Baldwin, Bill Collins, Coach Keller, Lois Kunz, Lucy Lawyer, Marie Murnane, Principal Barry Neuberger, Fr. Peinemann, Principal Barbara Polewski, Jimmy and Carmen Reno, Casey Ryan, Camille Sarna, John Schmid, Ileana Schneegans, Clarice Stauble, Larry Ullrich and Merrily White.

***A special thanks is extended to the 30+ program participants ... your enthusiasm and example was a jewel in the crown of Notre Dame!!***

*Yours very truly,  
Amy Chapman*



The December copy of "Everyday Catholic" is available on the credenza in the Narthex. Topics this month include "Why do Catholics – Pray to the Saints, Pray for the Souls of the Dead, Confess sins to a Priest?," "A Christmas Question," "Saints and Heroes Among Us," and "Media Watch." Please share with others by returning the newsletter after you have had the opportunity to read it.

Thank you for sharing!! ☺

# NOTRE DAME

# CASH CARDS!!!

"I have finished purchasing gifts for all my loved ones. All I had to do is stop by the school office and turn in my orders. I bought restaurant gift cards for those difficult to please people, I bought toy store gift cards for all my nieces and nephews. I bought department store gift cards for my family & friends. Now I can slow down and really enjoy the magic of the holidays."

Testimonial from an anonymous happy person!

### The Cash Cards are available at:

School Office - Monday thru Friday 7:30 am -3:30 pm  
(During School Year)

After each Mass on the weekends!

### Cash Corner

Total Sales Last Week **\$3,035.00**

Total profit for the Week **\$144.45**

School year profit to date **\*\$7,295.88**

School Year is 07/01/06 through 06/30/07

Thank you so much for your support of our young scholars!



## Poinsettias

NOTRE DAME SCHOOL IS SELLING POINSETTIA'S... We have BIG BEAUTIFUL red poinsettias coming from Fredericksburg Farms! Orders are being taken right now. Reserve your Holiday poinsettias by calling Annette Sudyka at 257-4755 (h) or email her at [ssudyka@stx.rr.com](mailto:ssudyka@stx.rr.com). They are \$12 each! All proceeds benefit Notre Dame School! DELIVERY/PICKUP WILL BE ON **MONDAY DEC. 4<sup>TH</sup>**.



A BIG THANK YOU goes out to RITA'S FAMOUS TACOS...They were inadvertently left off the list of Turkey and Ham Donors to the Turkey Bingo!!!!

## Prepare ye the way of the Lord!!

This year the season of Advent has only 22 days! How long though must have seemed the journey to Bethlehem for Joseph and his beloved wife Mary who was with child. Others were going to Bethlehem to fulfill the census order of King Herod "to be enrolled." There was probably much grumbling and complaining among them about the hardships of the journey. Mary and Joseph also experienced these hardships but their faith and love of God led them to focus on the great treasure Mary was carrying in her womb. Let us travel with Mary and Joseph to help us focus on this treasure, Emmanuel-our God with us.



In the Narthex of the Church there will be a simulation of this journey. It begins the First Sunday of Advent. During the first week we will concentrate on making the road to Bethlehem smooth and straight. The road will be mapped out on a platform in front of the Virgin Mary's statue. At the beginning of the road are stones that can be placed along the road. When you stop by Church for a visit pave the road with some stones representing your prayers and good works.

During the second week of Advent we will begin building the stable by placing sticks at the construction site...During the third week of Advent we will fill the stable and crib with hay and straw to provide food and a place of rest for Joseph, Mary, the Christ Child and the animals!

There are also trees along this roadside to Bethlehem. Throughout Advent please decorate the trees with the cutout ornaments found in the basket at the beginning of the road. You may bring some of your ornaments to put on the trees.

Christmas Day comes immediately after the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and at that time the Bethlehem scene will include Mary and Joseph and the Christ Child in the stable you helped to build. A shepherd and his sheep, the donkey and the cow will be there too!

### \*\*\*\*Second Collection\*\*\*\*

The Second Collection next Weekend,  
December 9 & 10, 2006  
will be for

#### **The Retired Men and Women Religious.**

Next week's appeal for the **Retirement Fund for Religious** asks us to recall those women and men religious whose ministry has nourished our own faith, served our Church, and strengthened our nation. Today, more than 37,000 women and men religious are past age 70. Their institutes face critical economic challenges as the costs of health care escalate and as the need for handicapped-accessible housing increases. Please be generous!



### Bible Study

Please join Fr. Mike Boulette  
in the Fireplace Room on  
Thursday, December 7th  
at 7:15 pm.

### Blessing of the Advent Wreath

Lord God, your Church joyfully awaits the coming of its Savior, who enlightens our hearts and dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin.

Put forth your blessings upon us as we light the candles of this wreath: the splendor of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen

### Bendición de la Corona de Adviento

Señor Dios, tu Iglesia espera gozosa la venida del Salvador, que ilumina nuestros corazones y dispersa las tinieblas de la ignorancia y del pecado.

Derrama tus bendiciones sobre nosotros mientras encendemos las velas de esta corona; concédenos que su luz refleje el resplandor de Cristo, que es Señor por los siglos de los siglos. Amen.

## The Notre Dame Family Giving Tree

During the Advent Season, we begin a journey of joyous anticipation, penance, and preparation for the Birth of Christ. As has been announced in the Church Bulletin for the past few weeks, our Parish will be continuing our Advent tradition of ministering to the poor through the Notre Dame Family Giving Tree. This will allow our parishioners to experience the true meaning of Christmas by bringing happiness, relief, and Jesus' love to the less fortunate in our community.

Perhaps you never thought about it or don't frequently think about it, but there are people in our very community who will be too worried about how they will put food on the table or pay the light/heating bills to think about Christmas for their children. We are being given an opportunity to help families who have experienced job loss, death, severe illness, abuse in various forms, abandonment, or even a combination of these hardships. Seventy-five families have been identified by our St. Vincent de Paul Society, using poverty guidelines, for inclusion on the parish Family Giving Tree.

By selecting an ornament from the Jesse Tree in the Narthex, you will be committing yourself and your family to provide a positive Christmas experience to a less fortunate family. You will be participating in a **celebration of sharing and a ministry of love!** How often do we accept the challenge to be someone's "Angel" and experience such a very special blessing?

The ornaments indicate only basic information, such as size of the family and the number of children, as an aid in making a selection within your means. Due to the need for confidentiality, specific information on the selected family (including names, address, telephone number, and gift ideas) must be obtained from the Pastoral Center Office at 909 Main Street, Kerrville, telephone # 257-5961 during regular business hours on Monday through Friday. Please note the office is closed for lunch between 12 Noon and 1:00 PM.

We urge you to establish or continue this as an Advent tradition for your family. Make it a family experience by shopping for, wrapping, delivering and praying for the recipient family together. Involving your children in this experience is a wonderful way to nurture them into loving and giving adults.

Please remember that a successful Family Giving Tree experience hinges on two activities - giving gifts and comfort to families who are in need and more importantly, sharing God's love with them!

Continued on Next Page



## Family Giving Tree Questions and Answers

### How much money should I spend on gifts?

Spend the amount that you feel is appropriate, keeping in mind that your gifts may be all that the recipient will receive during the holidays. All gifts should be new - no used items, please.

### How do I know what this family needs or wants for Christmas?

Gift ideas are included on the family's application. If you wish to make direct contact with the family to clarify these suggestions, please feel free to do so. If you want the recipient to be able to make their own selections, it would certainly be acceptable to give a gift card or gift certificate. If you choose to give a gift card, please make sure it is to a local store. Also, if clothing is the requested gift and you plan to give a gift card or gift certificate, you are encouraged to get it for a clothing store, such as JC Penney, Beall's, Schreiners, or Belk, to assure it is more likely to be used for the intended purpose.

### How and when will the recipient families receive their gifts?

As the giving family, you may either directly deliver the gifts to the receiving family or bring them to Mass on the third weekend of Advent (December 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>) and place them under the Jesse Tree in the Narthex for the St. Vincent de Paul Society to deliver. If you decide to deliver the gifts directly, you are urged to call ahead to make mutually convenient arrangements during a very busy time for all.

### What else should I be doing for a recipient family?

In addition to providing gifts for child, age 12 and under, the family, you are encouraged, if your means allow, to provide food (or the meat, such as a turkey, ham, or roast) for their Christmas meal or a gift certificate for a grocery store or restaurant. It would certainly be appropriate to give a tin of your homemade Christmas cookies or candy. Consider inviting the receiving family to Mass with you and whatever else you choose to do. *It is always appropriate to remember them in your prayers.*

### What can I do if I do not feel that I have sufficient means to "adopt" a needy family from the Giving Tree?

Many options remain for you to help:

- Consider joining forces with other parishioners and adopt a star as a group effort. This will allow you to participate while sharing the expense.
- Make a financial, food, or toy contribution to our local St. Vincent de Paul Society. Any financial donation can be placed in the collection basket at Mass, but should be clearly marked as intended for the Christmas Assistance Program.
- If you are not able to participate at all because of financial limitations, consider giving the gift of time. Volunteers are always needed at the St. Vincent de Paul Society and will be especially needed the week before Christmas as we sort, group gifts for families not covered by the Family Giving Tree, and arrange deliveries of the gifts. Call St. Vincent's at 896-6898 to obtain specific information about times and duties.



## Christmas Confessions

Paul Turner



Many Catholics go to confession as part of their preparation for Christmas. A lot of people who shop, bake, mail and party throughout December know there is a deeper reason for all this activity. They want to do more than decorate the house and set the table. They want to prepare their hearts so that the King of Kings will find in there a home.

Your parish probably sets aside extra time for confessions in December. **(After the Advent Mission December 4, 2006)** Priests usually hear individual confessions on Saturday afternoon. But they gather people for communal penance service on some other evening of the week at this time of year. During the week or 10 days before Christmas, you should probably find confessions scheduled at your parish or in another one nearby. **(December 18, 2006 at 10:30 am & 4:30pm)**

As an alternative you may a priest for an appointment to hear your confession. Some people do that if they are not free when the parish confessions are scheduled. Priests are busy, especially the week before Christmas, but they will want to help you if they can.

If Christmas comes and you still haven't gone to confession, it is never too late. The good news is you can always go. If your experience of Christmas this year touches your heart; if you are moved by the spirit of gift-giving by family, friends, and strangers; if you realize more deeply that God loved enough to send you Jesus— then open your heart. See God's glory. Acknowledge your weakness. Confess your sins. And rejoice in the grace of forgiveness.

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## Immaculate Conception

Paul Turner



“The Immaculate Conception” is a title for Mary, the mother of Jesus. The expression means that Mary was conceived without sin. The conviction that Jesus was born of a virgin is a distinct belief even though many Catholics erroneously think that the Immaculate Conception refers to Jesus. Contributing to the confusion is the celebration of the Immaculate Conception during the season of Advent. While the faithful are preparing to honor the birth of Jesus, we commemorate the conception of Mary. The choice of Dec. 8 for the Immaculate Conception does not directly relate to Advent; it corresponds more to the traditional date for the feast of the birth of Mary, Sept. 8., which coincides with the dedication of a Jerusalem church in honor of the mother of Mary. The feast for the conception of Mary is backed up from that day nine months. In a similar way we celebrate the Annunciation on March 25, nine months before the birth of Jesus.

Belief in the Immaculate Conception asserts that God preserved Mary from all sin from the moment of her conception, thus preparing a pure vessel for the incarnation of the Son. This belief is not expressly contained in the Scriptures, but it enjoys a widespread following in the church's tradition. Although the Immaculate Conception of Mary has been affirmed since the earliest centuries of Christianity, it was not formally proclaimed a dogma of the church until 1854. Dec. 8 is now a holy day of obligation in the United States, which is placed under Mary's patronage with this title.

When Mary is depicted as the Immaculate Conception, she is often shown wearing a crown of stars as the woman in Revelation 12 and standing on a snake, reversing the temptation of Eve. Mary, the Immaculate Conception, is the exalted queen of heaven who manifests God's power over sin.

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