

Covenant Life

- Our next **prayer meeting** is next Sunday, December 22nd at 3pm. We plan to have Children and Youth ministries.
- **Save the date:** We plan to have a special time of **Eucharistic Adoration** on the second Sunday of January (1/12/25) to pray in the New Year.
- GodsDelight.org has prayer meeting [audio](#), [summaries](#), [transcripts](#), and [teachings](#).
- Your ongoing financial support to the Community is sincerely appreciated. Please donate online [here](#) or mail your donations to P.O. Box 225008 Dallas, TX 75222.

Reflection

In praying through the readings today my attention was drawn to the [Gospel](#) and John the Baptist's response to the speculation that he might be the Christ. His twofold response is worth a time of reflection as we cross the midpoint of Advent and prepare for Christ's coming.

The first part of John's response (*"I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."*) is exciting as he proclaims the coming of Jesus and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But what caught my attention the most was what immediately follows (*"His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*). John did not waste any time balancing the promise of the coming of two persons of the Trinity with the reality of our temporal presence on Earth and the need to prepare for our own eternal judgement.

The younger we are the more confident we often feel that we need not engage much in end-times concerns. The more comfortable we are (health, money, secure jobs, insurance, ...) the more insulated we often feel from concern about our eternal judgement. This is one of the reasons I am confident the Church fathers have Lent and Advent on the annual calendar. We do need to regularly pause from our busy lives and ask ourselves some tough questions about the degree to which we are living all-day every-day with eyes on God and Jesus on the cross.

Advent is a penitential season. A time when we are each encouraged to pause from our many daily responsibilities and remember that the gift of life today is itself a precious gift that must not be taken for granted. I am reminded of Stephen

Covey's second habit "Begin with the end in mind." What if we began every day with our end in mind? What would we do differently? What are our reasons for not doing that today, right now?

In my prayer time, I try to read a few pages from some spiritual book and invite the Holy Spirit to speak. The book I am nearing completion of is "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence. It is a short book composed mostly of letters he wrote in the late 1600s. What has impressed me is the extent to which he tries to be in the God's presence All Day Every Day. This is his message and exhortation. Since I started the book, I have become more cognizant of how much of my day progresses on autopilot. More practice being in the presence of God has caused me to examine areas of my life that are not lived in His presence. This has driven the need for repentance and recommitment. This is what Advent is all about. It is a great time, for those of us Catholic, to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (fortunately many Churches are hosting special opportunities this week).

While Advent is a time of penitential reflection it is also balanced with joy at the coming of our savior. This is especially true today on Gaudete Sunday. Today is a special day, during a season that might be seen as negative and fearful, to remember that the God who loves us is still in charge of every aspect of our lives and so we can await His coming, not with fear, but with joy!

For us as Christians our joy is not a come-and-go feeling, it is rooted in a deep interior delight, a glorious gladness in the joy of the Gospel and the person of Jesus Christ. Our joy in Jesus Christ cannot be extinguished because we know that God's plan for us is better than we can imagine. I matter to Him. Our inner joy never fades because we have confidence in Him and His promises. No matter what the world, the flesh, or the devil throws at us, our joy is based on the confidence that the war has been won. We know that life-on-high with God awaits. No one or nothing can take this from us. With this joy and confidence, we can meet our daily trials head on. We are loved, and our lover is the creator of the universe!

Let us pray, "Father God, I desire to spend every moment of every day in Your presence. Send me Your Holy Spirit to stir my heart to invite You into every action, every decision, every word I utter so that I am fully prepared to meet You when You call me home. Be my constant joy, especially in the tough times. I love

You and endeavor to be Your witness and bring as many as I can with me to You!
Amen."

God Bless,

David