

# Good News

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we proceed toward a new liturgical year, it's time to think about our individual approach to the Advent season. Parishes throughout the world will approach the season as a community through the assembly of scriptures and prayers as prescribed by the Roman Missal and Liturgy of the Hours. This is the principal way that the faithful approach the Lord for healing and salvation. These texts reveal the various dimensions of this season, which is both penitential and anticipatory.

However, I want to make one very clear recommendation that is guaranteed not to fail: let's not overcomplicate things. This Advent season will be very brief (three calendar weeks) and little if any spiritual growth will result if too many things are happening. I suggest the focus of Advent be simple.

I propose a simple theme, which I will elaborate on next week: Come to Jesus. If we do not approach Him for our needs, then this will result in a missed opportunity. Think of our friend Zacchaeus, who we heard about two weeks ago. He climbed the tree to hide from the Lord and the crowd. He came down after being called and made the decision in public to repent from his ways and follow the Lord.

This poignant example places the responsibility on each of us to look deeply into the challenges and struggles that hold us back from loving God and neighbor. I figure that if we try to chip away at these using any of the various themes of Advent, we will spend more time examining those things rather than the needs of our heart.

I would like to share in this week's good news article a reflection about spiritual direction by our Faith Formation Director, Mike Denz. He provides some wonderful insights and underscores the true meaning spiritual direction.

God bless,

Fr. Jones

## What is Spiritual Direction?

A question often asked by Catholics striving to live a life centered on Jesus is this, "Should I have a spiritual director?"

The priest who gets this question will often think, and sometimes ask, "What do you mean by a spiritual director?"

The problem being that there are different kinds of direction we look for and generally need that get confused with spiritual direction.

Spiritual direction is not counseling, psychology or psychiatry. It is not about our relationship with others, our feelings or our anxiety. All these things are important, but spiritual direction is not where they are discussed.

To help us know what does belong in spiritual direction it is important to understand the purpose of spiritual direction. A simple way to remember what spiritual direction is, is to look at the phrase itself as pointing us at the purpose. In what direction is our spirit supposed to go?

Our Church passes on the teaching of our Lord Jesus. Few of these teachings are more important than the purpose of our creation: to love God and one another in this life so we can be happy with God in the next life.

The journey through this life and on to heaven is a journey to perfection. In love God gives us the knowledge and grace (sacraments) to achieve perfection, which we could not have otherwise. The Son of God became man for this reason. We respond in love by practicing virtue, a life of prayer and avoiding vice (sin).

Loving God in this life relies to a great extent on prayer. Our relationship with God is built with the time we give Him in prayer. But prayer is not easy.

We don't know how to pray well. We don't know what to do about distractions. What devotion should I use? Should I pray the rosary? Should I go to adoration? How many minutes a day should I pray? What if I don't feel like praying? Should I read the Bible? The questions go on and on.

Some questions are answered by objective truth (so they are the same for everyone). For example, everyone should pray every day and everyone should read the Bible if they are able. However, many questions about prayer depend on the individual. This is where a spiritual director comes in.



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Do you have questions about the Catholic faith?

At All Saints Parish Mike Denz is here to answer any questions you may have.

Would you like to know how someone becomes Catholic?

Please email or call him. All correspondence is confidential.



Michael.Denz@dor.org OR 607-936-4689 ext 224

~ Happening This Month ~

**Thanksgiving Day Mass**

Thursday, November 28, 9am at St. Mary's Church.

**Teen Christmas Candle Light Project**

Please have all donated items returned to St Mary Church or the parish office, **unwrapped** and **labeled** with the "**Teen In Need Card**", by December 1.

**Hands Of Christ Applicants**

High School Seniors who are interested in applying for the Hands of Christ recognition can find an application on our website. Applications must be submitted to the parish office by November 25.

**MARCH FOR LIFE**

Speak out for life! Travel by bus to Washington, DC for the January 24, 2020 March for Life. Cost is \$60. Scholarships are available. School kids (4th grade & up) to adults welcome. Don't miss it! Call Steve Spaulding at 739-9282 for info or to reserve your seat, or to sponsor a rider.

**A Miraculous Medal Reflection  
Ark of the Covenant (Week 5)**

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred item that the Israelites had. The Ark was a gold-covered wooden chest with two carved cherubim above the top and a lid of gold which contained the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, the high priest's staff and a piece of the miraculous Manna. What made the Ark so holy was, in fact, the previous items mentioned were inside of it. The Ark was not placed just anywhere in the Temple, but in the Most Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of the people. Indeed, the Ark exhibited power and was divinely anointed.

However, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son born of a Virgin (Gal.4:4) and the Old Covenant gave way to the New. It is in the New, that God Himself manifested and tabernacled among men. Scripture tells us that "God spoke in time past by the prophets, but has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Heb 1:1-2). The Beloved disciple himself exclaims, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life." (1 John 1:1).

Just as the presence of God was manifested through the Ark in the Old Covenant, the fullness of the Divine was manifested in the New and came through the everlasting gate of the Blessed Virgin

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Mary. Thus she is truly the New Ark of the Covenant. As the original Ark in the Old Covenant contained the high priest's staff, the Law of commandments and a measure of manna, so too our Lady carried within her, He, Who is the Great High Priest, the fulfillment of the Law and the living Manna (Bread of Life)!

When reading Scripture, we have to remember that the original manuscripts did not have chapters and verses attribute to them. It was more or less one big flowing document. It was broken into chapters and verses later in history to make the reading more efficient.

So with this in mind, let us turn to the Book of Revelation and look at the end of chapter 11 and the beginning of chapter 12, remembering that this was all one flowing thought and context.

"Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. (Rev. 11:19)

"A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Rev 12:1)

So we see the Ark in Heaven with a connection to a Woman. This is clearly a reference to our Lady. A little further along in the same passage we see a battle taking place with this Ark and Women. Just as in the Old Testament, when the Ark led God's people, the Israelites into battle, so too does our Heavenly Queen and New Ark lead us into battle. However, this battle is not just temporal but eternal in consequences. For we have an infernal enemy seeking to devour our souls. As the Apocalypse states, "The dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus." (Rev. 12:17).

With Mary as the New Ark, we can be certain of victory in valley of tears and one day look to rejoice with all the saints as we proclaim that the salvation and power and kingdom of our God have come. (Rev 12:10).

Mary, Ark of the Covenant....Pray for us!  
Brian Mizzoni

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The other aspect of our relationship with God is the practice of virtue and avoiding vice – sin. There is the spiritual battle with demons who God allows to test us, so that through the acceptance of His grace we may choose virtue and move closer to spiritual perfection. We are used to this kind of spiritual direction when we receive advice from a priest during confession.

A spiritual director should be one who goes to spiritual direction themselves, is trained as a spiritual director and well educated in the Faith. Strict adherence to the teachings of the Church is vital for a spiritual director.

Not all priests have this kind of training. While they can certainly offer spiritual advice and teaching, taking on an individual to direct is different. The training and ability to identify what an individual needs and is being called to is necessary.

Mike Denz  
Faith Formation Director