

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent - A  
Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10;  
James 5:7-10;  
Matthew 11:2-11  
Little Flower - 12/15/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday. The Latin word *gaudete* means rejoice. Gaudete Sunday marks the mid-point of Advent, so we rejoice that our time of waiting is almost over. As a sign of rejoicing at the nearness of Christmas, the Church invites us to wear rose vestments today.

A few weeks ago, we filled out our Archdiocesan stewardship card. Today we begin our parish stewardship program. This year we are separating the three parts of our stewardship—time, talent, and treasure—and focusing our stewardship of time on time given to God.

Time is the most precious gift God gives us. When we are young, we rarely think of time as a gift. We take time for granted. However, as we get older and realize that our time is limited, we begin to realize how much time is a gift, a gift for which we need to be grateful to God. If God gives us the gift of time, we show our gratitude by giving the gift of our time back to God. Today I am inviting you to consider your gift of time to God for the coming year.

Sunday Eucharist defines us as Catholic Christians. For many Catholics, Sunday Eucharist is no longer the priority it once was. If all those registered at Little Flower came to Mass weekly, we would not have needed to change our Mass schedule. The word *eucharist* means thanksgiving. Sunday Eucharist is the primary way in which we give thanks to God for all God's gifts to us, but especially for the gift of Jesus who makes all love possible, and for the gift of time itself. Sunday Eucharist deepens our union with God and our unity with one another. If you do not attend Mass every Sunday and Holyday of Obligation, I would encourage you to give that gift of time to God as part of your stewardship of time.

Daily prayer should be part of the life of every Christian. We all need to ask ourselves how much time we give to God in prayer on a daily basis. As part of our stewardship of time, we might want to make sure that daily prayer is part of our life and, if it already is, to spend more time in prayer or to pray more often during the day. We might also consider spending time in the Blessed Sacrament chapel and possibly even become a scheduled adorer.

Stewardship of time can and should include growth in our knowledge of God. Do we read books or periodicals that help us know God better? Also, our *Invite* Commission has offered multiple programs the last two or three years to help us grow in our knowledge of and love for God. Next month they will offer a Bible Study on St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, one of his most important letters. Those who want to be more radical might consider a day of recollection at Fatima Retreat House or even a retreat at Fatima or St. Meinrad.

A recent survey showed that only 13% of Catholics receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year. Our Advent Penance Service will be this Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Lourdes. We might want to commit ourselves to receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent.

Of course, we cannot separate love of God and love of neighbor. When we give time to those in most in need, those who are marginalized, those who are on the peripheries, we give time to God. We might look for ways to reach out to them.

My brothers and sisters, two weeks ago there were forms in the Theresean that introduced the new stewardship program called the "Three T Challenge," the three T's being Time, Talent, and Treasure. These forms are also in the pews today. We are asking all of you, including teens and children, to examine your commitment to the Stewardship of Time by completing these forms and returning them in the regular collection or to the parish center by next Sunday, December 22. On the back, there are ideas for adults, teens, and children. In six months the forms will be mailed back to you as a reminder of your commitment. We hope that you will embrace this opportunity to strengthen your relationship with Jesus and grow your faith, which is foundational to good stewardship.