



CENTRAL WASHINGTON CATHOLIC

El Católico de Washington Central

Pāchu Washintin Chmuk Tātpas

NOVEMBER 2017 *Newsletter*

Advent: Have We Lost the True Spirit of the Season?

By Christine Corbett Conklin

Other than the lighting of a candle at Mass on the four Sundays before Christmas – and the realization that we’re running out of shopping days -- what does “Advent” really mean to us?

“Changing customs, especially in connection with preparation for Christmas, have diminished popular appreciation of the Advent season,” suggests the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). “Something of a holiday mood of Christmas appears now to be anticipated in the days of the Advent season. As a result, this season has unfortunately lost in great measure the role of penitential preparation for Christmas that it once had,” the bishops say.

Keep in mind that this statement by the bishops, carried on their current website, was actually written in 1966! It appears that the waning spirit of Advent is nothing new.

So, what is the real purpose of Advent? It is a “season of effective preparation for the mystery of the Nativity,” the USCCB explains.

“The word ‘Advent’ is from the Latin ‘*Adventus*,’ which means ‘coming,’” adds the Aquinas & More website. “Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year (in the western churches), and encompasses the span of time from the fourth Sunday before Christmas, until the Nativity of Our Lord is celebrated ... The liturgical color for this season is purple.” Rose vestments may be used on Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent.

“Like Lent, Advent is a preparatory season,” Aquinas & More explains. “It has significance because it is a season of looking forward and waiting for something greater; both for the annual

celebration of the event of Christ’s birth, and for the time when Christ will come again.”

“(I)t is impossible to state, with any certainty, when this season of prepara-



tion (which had long been observed before receiving its present name of Advent) was first instituted,” notes the Catholic News Agency (CNA). However, the observation apparently began in the west, “since it is evident that Advent could not have been looked on as a preparation for the feast of Christmas, until that feast was definitively fixed to the twenty-fifth of December,” the CNA reports. In the eastern church, Christmas was not fixed on December 25 until about “the close of the fourth century,” while in the western church, this occurred “much earlier.”

Our Catholic parishes offer us opportunities for spiritual preparation for Christmas, such as annual Reconciliation services and other gatherings. The USCCB also recommends seven psalms that are good for reflection during penitential times such as this: Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143.

“Prayerfully reciting these psalms will help us to recognize our sinfulness, express our sorrow and ask for God’s for-

giveness,” the USCCB advises.

Other traditions which may help to keep the spirit of Advent alive in Catholic homes include the Advent wreath, Jesse tree and Advent calendar, points out Aquinas & More. The Advent wreath, like we see at Mass, is a round evergreen wreath, often with three purple candles and one rose candle. By lighting one candle each week, perhaps accompanied by prayer, we mark the approach of Christmas day. The Jesse Tree can be a real tree – or even a paper version – which is decorated throughout Advent with pictures or symbols of prominent people leading up to the birth of Christ. An Advent calendar, which may have a religious theme such as a Nativity scene, has

a small, numbered “door” to open, usually from December 1 through Christmas day.

As the United States bishops state, “(W)e, the shepherds of souls ... call upon Catholics to make the Advent season ... a time of meditation on the lessons taught by the liturgy and of increased participation in the liturgical rites by which the Advent mysteries are exemplified and their sanctifying effect is accomplished.”

The bishops promise, “If in all Christian homes, churches, schools, retreats and other religious houses, liturgical observances are practiced with fresh fervor and fidelity to the penitential spirit of the liturgy, then Advent will again come into its own. Its spiritual purpose will again be clearly perceived.”

And who knows? Christmas Day may take on a fresh new dimension that has nothing to do with “door-buster” sales, strings of tangling holiday lights, and eggnog!

A Message from Bishop Tyson...

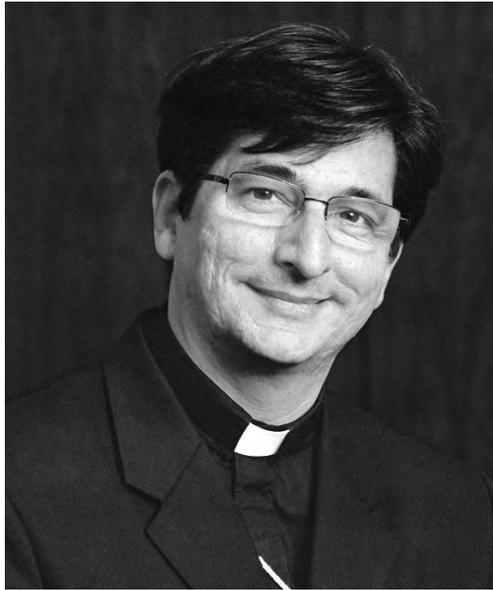
Dear Friends:

Welcome to the November issue of the *Central Washington Catholic*. This coincides with our preparations for the annual Christmas collection for the work of Catholic Charities – especially our PREPARES initiative. It also marks the start of Advent and the December celebrations of the Immaculate Conception of Mary – patronal feast of the United States – and Our Lady of Guadalupe – the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Saint Juan Diego in what is today Mexico City.

If this issue provides some reading to prepare for Christmas, perhaps the visual preparation comes best from the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Unique among the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she appeared as an expectant mother. Etched in her clothing are ancient Aztec symbols of fertility signaling that she is with child – Jesus Christ – the Savior of the World.

No wonder that Our Lady of Guadalupe is not only patroness of our farm worker community but also patroness of the unborn. In her, we see the truth that if we are to save the unborn we must walk through the doors of the campesinos – especially the undocumented – for this is where the unborn dwell today. Pro-life immigration policies demand respect for women, respect for the unity of the family, and care for our many youth here in the Diocese of Yakima whose presence is threatened by the question of DACA revocation and care for their undocumented parents.

At the same time, we should remember



Bishop Joseph Tyson

that, with many immigrants here, it is easy for some to feel like foreigners in their own country. Most English speakers were born in the United States rather than immigrating here. When hearing Spanish, they can feel like foreigners in their own country. It is important – even in the midst of deportation fears – to find ways to reach out to each other and imitate how God reaches out to us by taking on our flesh, our humanity and our suffering in the person of Jesus.

Taken together, here in the Diocese of Yakima, we are uniquely poised to witness to a kind of unity among ourselves as Catholics that can make a difference in our country's polarized social and political climate. The insistence of our Church – coming directly from the initiatives of Pope Francis – that the plight of the unborn

and the plight of the undocumented are inseparable, gives greater strength and greater protection to the dignity of each and every single human life.

Indeed, the foundational resistance of the Church toward the evils of abortion is strengthened when we witness through our parish ministries, through PREPARES and our many other Catholic Charities programs that we care not only for the baby in the womb but afterward – walking the journey of life at every stage. In January, our Mass for Life will be an opportunity to honor all those who work for a greater respect for human life, from conception to natural death.

The dignity we uphold is most clearly seen by God's very act of taking on our flesh. In Jesus, we see God's face. God chooses to enter this world as a vulnerable baby in obscurity and poverty. God continues to reveal himself this way today.

As you get to know our new PREPARES area coordinators in this issue of the *Central Washington Catholic*, I hope you see yourselves in the efforts of our Church to uphold the dignity of every human life. I hope this Christmas reminds you that this God-given dignity is magnified by Mary who gives birth to Jesus – God's very face revealed to us.

Many prayers to you and your family this Advent and Christmas season.

With every best wish and blessing,

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Celebrate Mary in December

Friday, December 8, is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is the patronal feast of the United States and a holy day of obligation.

In view of the great devotion many of our people have for Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop Joseph Tyson is dispensing the obligation to attend Mass December 8 for those who attend a Guadalupe Mass on Tuesday, December 12.

As is already the case, Catholics who are unable to attend Mass on a holy day of obligation may seek a dispensation from a priest or deacon of the Diocese, who can either excuse the person from the obligation completely, or commute it to another pious work, such as praying the Rosary.

If you have been abused or victimized by a member of the Catholic clergy, please believe in the possibility for hope and help and healing. We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

The Yakima Diocese has a sexual abuse hotline for those who wish to report some incident concerning that issue as regards a bishop, priest, deacon or diocesan employee or volunteer. (888) 276-4490

Central Washington Catholic

NOVEMBER 2017 • Volume 57 • Issue 11

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The Central Washington Catholic (ISSN 0195-1831) is published monthly by the Diocese of Yakima, 5301-A Tieton Drive, Yakima, WA 98908-3493.

Submission schedule: Deadline for the submission of material is at noon on the first day of the month of publication.

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Area Coordinators Named for PREPARES

Two new area coordinators have been named for the Diocese of Yakima PREPARES team.

Ann Dibble covers parishes in Yakima and Kittitas counties and Teresa Contreras works with parishes in Chelan, Douglas and Grant counties.

Dibble, one of the Diocese's first PREPARES family companions, volunteered for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for many years before moving to Yakima in 2012. A member of Holy Family Parish, she scaled back her work as a business consultant to



Ann Dibble



Teresa Contreras

join the PREPARES team.

Contreras, a longtime member of St. Joseph Parish in Wenatchee, has 24 years of social services experience, most recently working in the

Washington State Attorney General's Office.

PREPARES is a "life and justice" initiative of the Bishops of Washington State that provides services to mothers, fathers, and their families by walking the journey from pregnancy to the child's fifth birthday.

To learn more about the program, call Dibble in Yakima, (509) 853-2768; Contreras in Wenatchee, (509) 662-4569, Ext. 124; or Syndee Saucedo Cavazos in Richland at (509) 946-4645.

Christmas Collection Assists Catholic Charities

Each year, Catholics throughout the Diocese of Yakima support the work of Catholic Charities Serving Central Washington through their contributions to the Christmas Collection.

Catholic Charities is the social service arm of the Catholic Church, serving people throughout the lifecycle – from walking the journey with

families facing unplanned pregnancies to helping the frail elderly live independently in their own homes.

Since the agency was established in 1949, programs have evolved to meet changing needs in the communities served, but the agency has remained focused on serving children, adults and families in the areas of counseling and behavioral health, basic needs,

child care and early learning, affordable housing, and elder services. With primary offices in Yakima, Wenatchee, and Richland, Catholic Charities operates out of more than 30 service locations and serves nearly

50,000 people each year.

The goal of this year's Christmas collection is \$275,000. Donations will support early learning services that prepare children for kindergarten, PREPARES, emergency services, homeless youth, and elder services.

An initiative of the Bishops of Washington State, PREPARES helps with essential needs such as diapers; trains family companions; and works with other parish ministries and social service agencies to assist families.

"The support we receive through the Christmas Collection provides help to children, families, and elders who are most in need," said Darlene Darnell, Catholic Charities president and CEO. "This support is essential as we work to fulfill our mission of bringing hope to life."

Envelopes for the Christmas collection will be available in all parishes of the Diocese of Yakima.

GIVE THE GIFT OF FAITH

Make an end-of-year gift that will change lives and lead kids to Christ.

Your gifts in support of Catholic education in our parishes and schools are opening the doors for Christ to enter the lives of children throughout Central Washington.

Bless You!

Wishing you the gift of Faith, the blessing of Hope and the peace of His Love at Christmas and always,
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NEWS

from Around the Diocese

Holy Family Church Plans Gala

The ninth annual Holy Family Parish Gala, including dinner, an auction and dancing, is slated for 6 p.m., December 9, in the church gathering hall.

Proceeds from the event will help to support Religious Education, Youth Group and Adult Faith Formation programs.

Tickets are \$60 per person. Payment may be dropped off or mailed to: Holy Family Parish Gala, 5315 Tieton Drive, Yakima, WA 98908. For further information or reservations, contact Dolores at (509) 966-0830.

Mass for Life Is Scheduled

All are invited to the annual Mass for Life, scheduled for 11 a.m. on Sunday, January 28 at Holy Family Church in Yakima. This will be an occasion to honor the dignity of human life from conception through natural death.

The Mass will mark the 45th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, the U.S. Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion.

A lasagna dinner honoring volunteers who support life ministries will be served in the Holy Family Gathering Hall following the Mass. A free-will offering will be accepted.

Volunteers are needed to assist with the dinner. If you are willing to help, please contact Leanne LaBissoniere at (509) 367-5291 or llabissoniere@catholiccharitiescw.org.

Rachel's Vineyard Ministry Needs Counselors

The Rachel's Vineyard Abortion Healing Ministry is seeking one or more Master's-level counselors to be part of the retreat team now being formed by volunteers in the Wenatchee area.

Individuals must have experience, be comfortable in a group setting, have a strong faith rooted in a prayerful, humble spirit and be capable of flexibility and working together with others on the retreat team.

If you know of counselors who might be a good fit for this ministry, encourage them to contact Dr. Lisa Petersen at: lisapetersen65@gmail.com.

The Diocese of Yakima also is working toward establishing a hotline for its Project Rachel abortion healing ministry. If you know of counselors who would be willing to have their names on a referral list for women seeking healing from abortion, encourage them to contact Monsignor Robert Siler at: robert.siler@yakimadiocese.net.

Try Keeping Christ in 'Christmas' Presents

By Christine Corbett Conklin

As the holiday season arrives, I'm remembering how, a couple of years ago, my kids were opening their Christmas presents. My son, Patrick, reached for his last gift from me, stopped and looked at the box for a moment, trying to figure out what it might be.

"Oh, this must be the religious present," he said, recognition flashing in his eyes.

So much for my subtlety as a parent, but, yes, it was a religious present, part of my never-ending quest to keep a little Christ in "Christmas" gifts.

Through the years, my son and daughter, Erin, received many of the "fun" presents – Thomas the Tank engine paraphernalia and dolls when they were younger, gifts related to technology and fashion as they got older. However, I've always tried to work in a little reminder that, in fact, we are Catholics.

Some of my ideas at Christmas, and at other times of the year, have been more successful than others. A game called the "Family Dinner (Faith Edition) Box of Questions" led to a minor argument over an answer and was never played again. A rosary in red (my son's favorite color) has remained wrapped around his truck mirror for years. A set of "angels of the month," small cherub statues, were popular with my daughter for Christmases and birthdays in her teenage years and remain in a display case to this day.

With a little thought, it's possible to come up with ideas for almost every age – including adult relatives and friends. There are religious medallions for baby cribs and now, even car seats. Guardian angel statues for a child's room that can be an inspiration as he grows.

And, of course, religious pictures and crucifixes for everyone including young adults going off to college or to apartments, and newlyweds.

My kids and I are all voracious readers, so there have been many popular Christian books through the years. For example, my son and I both loved the "Restoration" series of four paperbacks by author Terri Blackstock. These books offer a reflection on how life would change when an electronic pulse causes a "global blackout," wiping out everything from car travel to electronic communication and household lighting and appliances. People must revert to a simpler – and some would say better – way of life, with time to talk to each other and time to pray.

My adult friends have appreciated gifts of weekly planners featuring saints and daily flipbook-style calendars with a religious quote for each day. And, when all else fails, you can find candy bars with religious wrappers to tuck into Christmas stockings!

For inspiration, try an online search for "Catholic Christmas gifts," visit your church gift shop or holiday bazaar, or stroll through a Catholic gift store or the Christian section of a book store when you're visiting a larger city.

I think that old saying is true, "It's the thought that counts!" So, why not give a thought to religious gifts that you might give this Christmas season?

