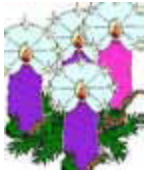


**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT – December 19, 2010**



This week’s article is comprised of two prayers, intended for use in your home, and a brief reflection on the meaning of the gifts we exchange. The prayer for use with the Advent Wreath may be used when you gather for a meal on Christmas Eve. The Blessing of Christmas Presents may be used just before opening the gifts. May you and all those you love, receive the best gift of all this Christmas, a deeper understanding of the close presence of Jesus in your lives!

**Advent Wreath Prayer**

Leader: We have come to the end of the Advent Season and are about to celebrate Christmas. We have tried to focus on the Light of Jesus, who scatters the darkness of sin. Help us to rejoice in your forgiveness. Help us to be more forgiving of each other. Thank you for the new life you give us in the Birth of your Son!

As all four candles are lighted, the leader says: Christ our Light.

Everyone responds: Thanks be to God!

**The First Christmas Gift**

You know the feeling you get when you have given a gift that is just the right one? I mean that wonderful sense of joy from knowing the person who received your gift is thrilled to have gotten it. The material value isn’t important. What matters most is that the gift touched the other person’s heart, making the gift very special to them.

Consider the gift of the Father that first Christmas. Our God, the creator of all, gave himself, in the person of his Son, to us! We did not earn this gift, in fact, in a lot of ways we don’t deserve him, but he continues to be with us!

Can you give your self to anyone else? Even in the most intimate bond of sacramental marriage, a couple must constantly strive to be harmoniously united in body, mind and spirit. Our best efforts at selfless giving are often thwarted by our selfishness.

The birth of Jesus, by contrast, was entirely for our good. Mary and Joseph, the first Christians, were blessed with knowing before anyone else, the beauty of the gift. They knew the gift was just what they and the world needed, and they were thrilled. I bet God the Father was very pleased that Mary and Joseph embraced his gift with deep appreciation and love!

This Christmas Season, try to give and receive the gifts you exchange in the spirit of that first Christmas. It isn’t the cost of the gift that matters as much as why the gift is given at all. When you get right down to it, we give Christmas presents because God has first given LOVE (Jesus) to us. Wrap and unwrap LOVE in every gift you give and receive!

***Merry Christmas! Blessed New Year!***

**Blessing of Presents**

(Begin with the sign of the Cross.)

Leader: As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us read the story of his birth.

Read Luke 2:1-14

Leader: Let us offer our needs to God.

(L) That we may appreciate all the blessings we have, let us pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

(L) That we may follow the example of Jesus who cared about those whom everyone else rejected, let us pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

(L) For those who have no presents to open, that they may still find joy in the birth of Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

(L) That God will bless all who have given us gifts and everyone who has received a present from us. Let us pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

Leader: Let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**All: Our Father...**

Leader: Father of Jesus, everything we have and all that we are is a gift from you. Bless us as we open these presents. No matter how valuable, none of our gifts are as special as what you gave to us when Jesus was born. We remember that your Son, Jesus, is the reason we try to show our love to others on this day. Help us to always be grateful for your Love and to show it to one another the whole year through. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**