

NEW ULM DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN

Catholic Women: Instruments of Mercy

December, 2016

ADVENT, 2016 IS HERE

Hope

A PRAYER FOR THE First Sunday of Advent

God of light and life,
give us hope as we wait
for your coming again.
When we are tempted
to be grateful to have found you
while others are lost,
send us out into the darkness
in search of those
who need you most.
Amen.



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Peace

A PRAYER FOR THE Second Sunday of Advent

Jesus, you came among us
with the irresistible power of a baby,
requiring both our hands
and captivating our whole hearts.
Help us to cast aside the sin
and brokenness that we cling to,
so we might be ready to hold you
when you come again.
Amen.



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Joy

A PRAYER FOR THE Third Sunday of Advent

Joy-filled Giver of Life,
let the anticipation of your birth
fill us with overflowing joy.
May our excitement and anticipation
be a sign to the world
that you are always near.
Amen.



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Love

A PRAYER FOR THE Fourth Sunday of Advent

Jesus, you are constantly coming to your people,
even when we fail to see you.
In each and every moment that we are blessed
to recognize you here and now,
give us the courage to leap with joy at your coming.
Amen.



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What is Advent?

The word 'Advent' is from the Latin 'Adventus,' which means 'coming.' 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 first Sunday of Advent is the Sunday nearest the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle (which is November 27th), and so it will always fall somewhere between November 27th at the earliest and December 3rd at the latest. This year the Advent Season is a full 4 weeks -- the longest it can ever be and has already started! The first Sunday of Advent being on November 27th.

In the Season of Advent we await the coming of Christ on all the levels we experience time. In reality there are three comings of Christ: ***The past --- the first coming*** was the babe born in the stable of Bethlehem;

The present --- the second coming is Christ surrounding us in our lives with the graces we are blessed with; ***and***

The future --- the third coming will be when we see Christ face to face as the Judge at the end of our lives or the end of the world whichever comes first.

The Advent Season is when the church emphasizes that we take the time to prepare for that third coming! Too often in our world today we spend much of our time during Advent preparing for Christmas with shopping, decorating, baking and cleaning that we lose sight of the real reason for our activities. These activities are not bad but in the midst of this hustle and bustle we should strive to find time preparing our souls - meditating often on the incredible love and humility of our God in taking on flesh of the Virgin Mary.

For example: *In our shopping and baking, let us remember to purchase and prepare something for the poor. When we clean our homes, maybe distribute some of our possessions to those who lack many necessities.*

While we are decorating our homes for Christmas, let us not forget to prepare a peaceful place in our hearts wherein our Savior may come to dwell.

As noted in the New Catholic Encyclopedia, during Advent, the faithful are asked:

- to prepare themselves worthily to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's coming into the world as the incarnate God of Love.
- thus to make their souls fitting abodes for the Redeemer coming in Holy Communion and through grace, and
- thereby to make themselves ready for His final coming as judge, at death and at the end of the world.

HOW DO WE PREPARE DURING ADVENT?

One of the resources I explored to find out more about Advent suggested we should ***focus on the Liturgy*** during this short season. There are always four Sundays in Advent but not necessarily four full weeks. The liturgical color of the season is purple, except on the Third Sunday of Advent, called Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday, when optional rose vestments may be worn. We rejoice because we are at the halfway mark. The Gloria is not recited during Advent liturgies but the Alleluia is retained. *During Lent the Gloria and the Alleluia are both omitted.*

The prophecies of Isaiah are read often during the Advent season, but all of the readings of Advent focus on the key figures of the Old and New Testaments who were prepared and chosen by God to make the Incarnation possible: the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, Sts. Elizabeth and Zechariah.

The Advent Season also has a Marian and pro-life focus. We meditate on this wonderful mystery of the Word Made Flesh with as much eagerness as His Mother, Mary prepared and awaited the birth of her Son.

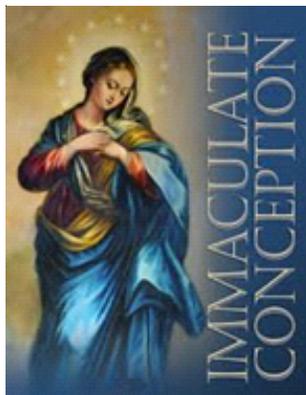
The feasts of the Advent Saints also help to teach the lessons of the season.

(Note: This page takes the place of the Saints page in past issues.)

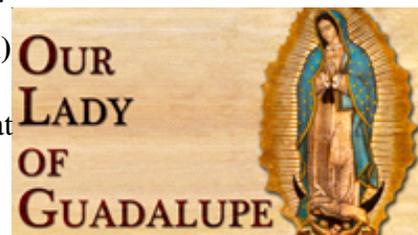
The feast of St. Nicholas, December 6th, is a marvelous opportunity to point out that the reason for Christmas is neither St. Nicholas nor Santa Claus but rather God's desire to begin the work of our redemption as a Child born in a stable at Bethlehem. Following the Dutch custom, children might put out their shoes or hang their stockings from the mantel on the vigil of this feast, and, if they have been good, find in them the next morning goodies (some candy, nuts or cookies). Children who have been naughty get straw -- a gentle reminder that Advent is a time to strive hard to be very good so that we will be ready for Jesus when He comes.



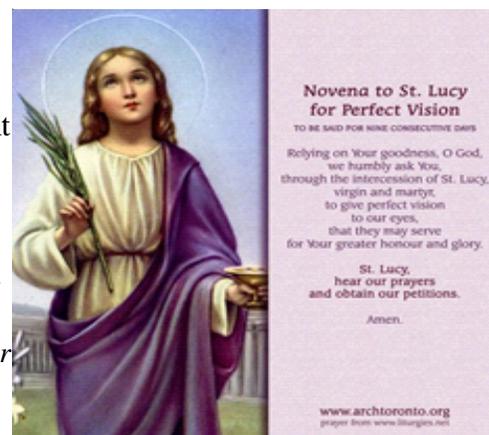
celebrating the season:
ST. NICHOLAS DAY



In the USA we celebrate the special feasts of **the Immaculate Conception, the patroness of the United States of America, on December 8th (a Holy Day of Obligation) and Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, on December 12th.** Our Lady's great privilege is that she was the first one and only one to be born filled with God's life and whose soul was "full of grace" at time of birth without Original Sin. Because she accepted God's will for her, she became an instrument of restoring God's life to all men through her Son.



St. Lucy, Feast Day on December 13th, reminds us that Christ is the Light of the world because her name comes from the Latin word for light --- *lux*. She died a virgin martyr for Christ. Her story is largely legend, though ancient, but the existence of this great saint from Syracuse, on Sicily, is beyond a doubt, and her Mass gives us a beautiful prayer to be read at table or included in your night prayers. She is the patron saint of the Blind. *Marianne Schotzko, our Spirituality Commission Coordinator sent out her story last month - refer to her email giving an excellent summary of this great saint.*



The Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle is celebrated on November 30th.

The beginning of Advent is always determined by St. Andrew's Day. The Sunday nearest to his feast is always the First Sunday in Advent. This year the feast of St. Andrew happened to fall ON the First Sunday of Advent.

Saint Andrew was the first disciple of Jesus. He was the younger brother of Saint Peter and was born in Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee. The brothers were fishermen by trade. Jesus called them to be his disciples by saying that he would make them "fishers of men."

Although little is mentioned in the Book of Acts regarding the life of St. Andrew, much can be learned through St. Andrew's life. He and Saint Peter gave up their lifelong careers and lifestyles, leaving everything behind, to follow Jesus. Their undying faith in a difficult world is an inspiration to all Christians. He is known to be the patron saint of fishermen.



Advent celebration and traditions can vary from place to place, influenced by culture. However, some traditions have come to be common throughout the Catholic Church.

The Advent wreath is likely the most popular tradition, and wreaths are typically present in both the parish church and in the home. It is a more recent tradition, with the modern Advent wreath emerging in Germany and spreading throughout Europe and beyond in the 1930's. It is often circular, representing God's eternity, and it includes 4 candles - one for each Sunday of Advent. Many families have a wreath in the home, and will light the candles each Sunday and say Advent prayers together.

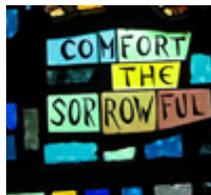
The Jesse Tree is also a popular Advent tradition. A Jesse Tree, named for the father of David, is a tree that is decorated gradually throughout Advent with symbols or pictures of biblical persons associated with the gradual coming of the Messiah, Christ. This includes, among others, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph and Mary. The Jesse Tree tradition provides a wonderful teaching opportunity; it is a perfect way to teach and remind children about the preparatory nature of Advent.

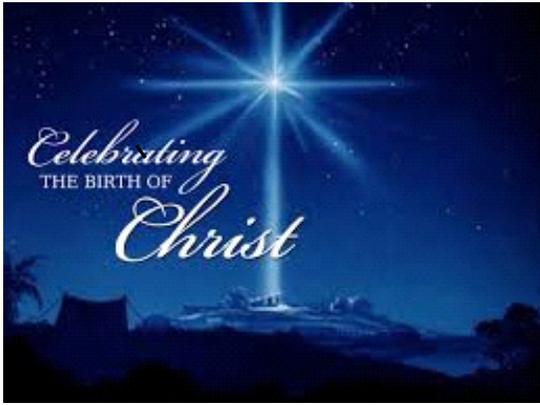
The most perfect way to embrace the spirit of Advent is to attend daily Mass and pray the Liturgy of the Hours. I know that attending daily Mass is not possible in many of our parishes but on a much smaller goal, try to attend one extra Mass during the week and as a possible alternative reading and discussing the readings of the Mass of the day with your family.

Also everyone should try to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) during the Advent season to prepare for the coming of Christ "for it is not possible coherently to celebrate the birth of him 'who saves his people from the sins' without some effort to overcome sin in one's own life."

Other practical ideas that your CCW groups could do-----

1. Prepare gifts of clothing and toys to give to needy families. Most communities will have collection locations for these gifts and have lists of families that are in need and will distribute them.
 2. Visit the elderly in your parish and present them with some kind of gift -fruit basket, goodie basket, or a variety of greeting cards with stamps that they can use through the year.
 3. Donate to our NCCW Partners: Catholic Relief Services or Cross Catholic Outreach.
 4. Encourage members to raid their pantry for canned goods and donate to the local Food Shelf.
 5. Encourage members to acknowledge the Salvation Army bell ringers and donate.
 6. Visit long term care centers and visit some of the residents. Many of them do not have alot of visitors and love to have company.
- etc. etc. etc. etc. Many good deeds and acts of mercy can be done during this Advent Season.





CHRISTMAS ARRIVES

December 25, 2016

*ARE WE PREPARED TO MEET AND
RECEIVE JESUS INTO OUR HEARTS?*

SOME NCCW NEWS

Remember the initiative “A Million Works of Mercy” that I have been promoting in the last issues of the E-Newsletter?? Well it ended on Sunday, November 20th and this is the article by Jane Carter in the December, 2016 Connect and I have copied it to share with you. It’s great to see we almost doubled our goal. She has a lengthy thank you to all affiliate members which is located on the NCCW website. www.nccw.org Please take the time to read it - she did a wonderful job of summarizing the good works and deeds that are being done in all of our affiliate groups and NCCW individual members throughout the country with a hugh thank you with all of them.

NCCW: More than A Million Works of Mercy!

By Jane Carter, NCCW Supporting Member

Thank You! Thank you to the wonderful, prayerful, hard-working and loving women who participated in the "NCCW: A Million Works of Mercy" initiative. We are currently at 1,830,993! It's not to late to send in your count so we can reach two million!

The C-O-U-N-T reflects every prayer you offered to support someone who was hurting, angry, sick, or forgotten. The C-O-U-N-T reflects every hand you provided for someone who was hungry, cold, confused or alienated. Each and every work of mercy is an important part of the success of this program. The "More than a Million Mercies" is a tangible way to show how our members live out the NCCW Mission-responding with Gospel values to the needs of the Church and society.

Thank You! The Extraordinary Year of Mercy ended on November 20th and the C-O-U-N-T-I-N-G is over, but the good works, helping all those in need, will never end. We know that wherever the need exists, the Mission and the mercies will continue because this is who we are and what we do as the National Council of Catholic Women.

Thank You! Thank you to all who were touched in a special way by this program and, maybe for the first time, felt connected with Council sisters across the country and our National organization. We are not only Catholic women in Wisconsin, California, South Carolina or Connecticut--together we are More--we are the Catholic women of the United States of America.

Please consider membership in NCCW; we need each and every one of you to continue the good works!

((hugs)) Jane

Copied from the December, 2016 NCCW Connect



**Advent Prayer Service with Bishop LeVoir
Sunday, December 11 at 4:00 p.m.
Church of St. Michael, Morgan, MN**

Families are encouraged to bring their Baby Jesus Figure from their home nativity set to be blessed by Bishop LeVoir. There will be a blessing on families & expectant mothers. A "swaddling clothes" collection & cash donation collection will be taken for babies in need at "We Care" in Morgan. All are invited to prepare for the true meaning of Christmas.

Shop for Christmas in the NCCW Store!

Are you looking for the perfect Christmas gift? The NCCW Shop has some lovely and unique items that any Council sister or friend will love!

Visit the NCCW website and shop at the store now! www.nccw.org

REMINDER: All CCW Affiliate dues should be paid by January 1, 2017. This includes Region, Diocesan and National CCW dues. Any questions about dues, please feel free to email me and I will try to get an answer for you.

GOD'S SURVIVAL KIT

Items needed-----

1. **TOOTHPICK** -- To remind you to pick out the good qualities in others.(Matt 7:1)
2. **RUBBERBAND** -- To remind you to be flexible, things might not always go the way you want but it will work out. (Romans 8:28)
3. **BANDAID** -- To remind you to heal hurt feelings, yours or someone else's. (Colossians 3:12-14)
4. **PENCIL** -- To remind you to list your blessings every day. (Ephesians 1:3)
5. **ERASER** -- To remind you that everyone makes mistakes, and it's okay! (Genesis 50:15-21)
6. **CHEWING GUM** -- To remind you to stick with it and you can accomplish anything with Jesus! (Philippians 4:13)
7. **MINT** -- To remind you that you are worth a mint to your Heavenly Father. (John 3:16-17)
8. **CANDY KISS** -- To remind you that everyone needs a kiss or a hug everyday. (I John 4:7)
9. **TEA BAG** -- To remind you to relax daily and go over that list of God's Blessings. (I Thessalonians 5:18)

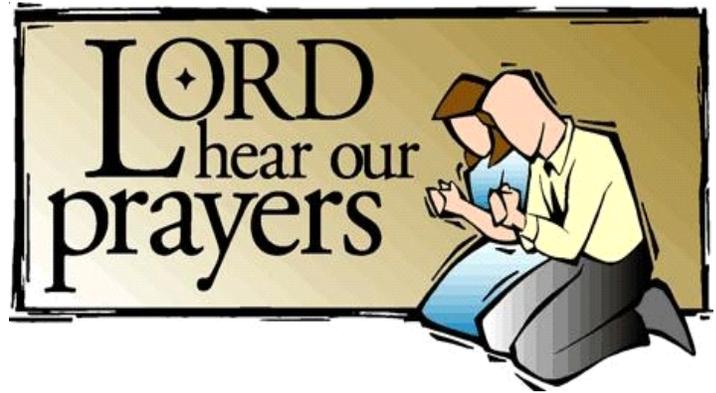


This has been used many times in the past but is always a reminder of good deeds that can be done and that we're not alone doing the tasks - God is always with us. It also reminds us that no one is perfect but we still have much to be thankful for.

Place items along with description in a small plastic bag and give out especially at a CCW Gathering.

Barb Freiberg-Benson brought this to our NUDCCW Associates Gathering on Wednesday, November 16 at the Schoenstatt Retreat Center. I thought it was something worthwhile to be shared with all of our CCW women in the diocese.

December
PRAYER INTENTIONS



POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER

Universal: End to Child-Soldiers - That the scandal of child-soldiers may be eliminated the world over.

Evangelization: Europe - That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel, which gives joy and hope to life.

BISHOP'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR DECEMBER

That this year's celebration of the birth of the Christ Child will inspire many who are alienated from the Church to return home.



FROM YOUR EDITOR

Dear Sisters in Christ



This issue is mostly dedicated to Advent along with ideas of what to do during Advent to always be prepared for the final coming of Jesus in our lives. We are challenged to help educate each other and encourage continued growth in our faith. I hope that the materials in this newsletter will encourage all of you to focus a little more on your prayer life this Advent. I know it's hard when you look around and see lots of things in your home to do but some of it will wait for another day if you take 15 minutes to talk to God. Please also share the newsletter with the CCW members in your parish.

I, along with Diocesan CCW Board, want to take this time to thank all of you for your dedication and volunteering of your time to do CCW work. The Diocesan CCW Board cannot do the work - we can give you support and provide resources but only our parish affiliates can carry out the acts of mercy and good deeds in your parishes and communities.

We, the Diocesan CCW Board and myself, wish all of you a very Happy and Blessed Christmas Season.

Blessings,

Donna Sanders
NUDCCW Newsletter Editor

