

Reflection for the 4th Sunday of Advent

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever. Collect, Fourth Sunday of Advent

This Sunday, the *Collect* or *Opening Prayer* for the Celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass sets the tone for the final Sunday of the Advent Season. This *Collect* not only sets the tone for the Mass this Sunday, but this prayer is the same one prayed in every Catholic Church throughout the world on this Sunday. It is amazing to think that no matter what country you are in, what language the Mass is celebrated in and, what time the Mass is celebrated, the same *Collect* will be prayed at all the Masses. This is because we are the Universal Church, and we walk together in faith. Also, since the Council of Trent the Church has what today is called in English the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. This document that is found in every Roman Missal is what governs the Celebration of Mass in the Roman Rite. Along with this document are the rubrics that are found throughout the Roman Missal, which give further instructions for the Celebration of Mass in the Roman Rite.

At this point as you read this reflection for the Forth Sunday of Advent you might be thinking to yourself, that this information about the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, is interesting but due to the fact that the celebration of Christmas is just five days away maybe this information should be shared at another time. It might seem to most of us that no matter how interesting the information of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* might be, this is a time to focus on the final days, the final hours of preparation for the Celebration of the Birth of our Lord and Savior. This is a very good point, but please if you can bear with me, for in the rubrics of the Roman Missal for the Celebration of Mass from December 17th to December 24th is this statement; “*The following Masses are used on the days to which they are assigned, with the exception of Sunday, which retains its own Mass*”. This rubric is informing us that in the final 8 days before the Celebration of Christmas on December 25th there are dedicated prayers in the Mass to help us as followers of Christ to prepare for the celebration of the Birth of Christ.

Today, December 20, 2020 we find ourselves in the middle the final days of preparation for Christmas. Just like the *Mass Prayers*, for the Forth Sunday of Advent the *Mass Prayers* for the final eight days of preparation for the celebration of the Birth of Christ, have a heightened awareness of the impending celebration and what it means to us as followers of Christ. Knowing that Christmas is just five days away, if there are things one has not done to get ready of Christmas many of these things might not be able to be accomplished in these final days before Christmas. This might be a good thing, for in these final days and hours we can take the time to spend with God or members of our household and prepare our hearts and our minds for Christmas, a historical event that has changed the world and continues to this very day to change the lives of all believers.

In closing know that the Deacons, Parish Staff, and I keep you and your loved ones in our prayers in these final days and hours before the Celebration of the Birth of our Lord. This year has been so different due to the pandemic, and I am sure our celebration of Christmas will be different from the past. But even with things so different for us, may we know that the impact of Christ coming into the world has not changed. He still comes and the world is forever changed. May we allow these final days before Christmas to speak to us of our Lords coming and may we prepare our lives and the world, for there is still time. So, Merry Christmas and may you and your loved ones embrace the joy of the Season.