

Reflection for the 4th Sunday of Advent

Here we are gathered as a faith filled people, in this holy and sacred place on December 22, 2024, celebrating the Forth Sunday of Advent. Three days (72 hours) from now we will be gathered once again in this holy and sacred place, and we will not be celebrating the Forth Sunday of Advent but rather we will be celebrating Christmas. Okay, okay, yes, I do know that if a person attended the Saturday 4:00 PM Mass in White Rock and the Christmas Mass at 10:00 AM in Los Alamos there would be 90 hours between the start of these two Masses. Also, if a person attended the Sunday 5:00 PM Mass and the 4:00 PM Christmas Eve Mass, both in Los Alamos, there is just 47 hours between the start of these two Masses. With our Mass Schedule at the Parish there are two ways to get 72 hours between the Mass on the 4th Sunday of Advent and the Mass for Christmas, which is by attending the Saturday White Rock Mass at 4:00 PM and the Los Alamos Christmas Eve Mass at 4:00 PM, or attending the Los Alamos Saturday 6:00 PM Mass and the White Rock 6:00 PM Christmas Eve Mass. Naturally there might be other combinations of Masses I did not think of that would also add up to 72 hours between the start of these Masses. So, the statement that we will once again gather in the Church three days from now is debatable. The important thing to remember is that in a few days from now we will be right back here in Church celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, be it on the 24th or the 25th. Time is short, may we all embrace this moment that is so perfectly summed up in our Gospel Reading this Sunday.

In our Gospel Reading taken from the Gospel of Luke, we hear about the Mary and Elizabeth greeting each other. Both women are with child, Mary pregnant with the Savior of the world and Elizabeth with St. John the Baptist, the last of the Prophets. In this reading we hear Elizabeth say to Mary, *“For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.”* Is this not an amazing statement, the last of the Prophets, the bridge between the Old and the New Testament leap for joy when he was still in the womb of his mother about three months before she gave birth to him. His leaping for joy was because he sensed that his Savior was nearby.

Well in these final days before Christmas may we leap for joy for the celebration of the birth of the savior of the world, is just days away. Knowing that we are just days away from the celebration of Christmas, we might find ourselves tempted to focus on the last-minute details for the celebration of Christmas. I am sure most of us can think of a million things we would still like to do before Christmas. But may we follow the example found in our Gospel reading this Sunday where we hear of John the Baptist leaping for joy, when he is near Jesus Christ. May we be filled with joy at the prospect of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. May we be filled with joy as we approach the Blessed Sacrament at Mass. Leaping is optional, if you would like to leap for joy, just make sure you have enough room, and on second thought it might be best if the leaping is done outside of the Church. But as we approach Jesus on the Altar and celebrate Christmas may we have the same joy that caused John the Baptist to leap for joy.

With all that goes on in our lives in this Holiday Season it is easy to allow the frantic pace of the Season to steal the joy that should be a part of the Christmas Season. May we as a people and as individuals remember the reason for the Season, and that is the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. A number of years ago, about a week or so before Christmas, I was in a grocery store with my Dad, and as he was leaving the store he wished the cashier a Merry Christmas. The cashier informed my Dad that it is better to wish someone Happy Holidays, my Dad responded to the cashier by saying once again Merry Christmas, at this point the store manager came forward and wished my Dad a Merry Christmas. As we left the store my Dad told me, we need to remember the reason for the Season.

Recently, I looked up the etymology for the word, holiday, and this English word comes from the Old English word *haligdaeg*, which is the combination of two Old English words *halig* (holy), and *daeg* (day).

This Old English word originally was used only to refer to special religious days. Today the word holiday has different connotations depending on where you live. In the United States, the word is used exclusively to refer to national, religious, or culturally observed days. In the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth Nations, the word can refer to the period of time that the person is on vacation or traveling. I would think that most of us today would not think of the word holiday referring exclusively to a Feast Day or Solemnity in the Church calendar, but this is the root of the word. At this point you might be wondering if I am going to share the etymology of the word holiday with my Dad, I currently have no plans to do so. I do, however, have plans to share the joy of the Christmas Season with my Dad, my family, the Parish, and everyone that I meet. We as followers of Christ, in this Christmas Season have a great opportunity to follow the example of Mary, Elizabeth, and John the Baptist and share the joy, with everyone we meet. So, in closing know that in this Haligdaeg Season, I wish you and your family joy and happiness as you celebrate Christmas.