

Fr. Martin's Reflection – December 14, 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

This weekend we celebrate what is known as, **'Gaudéte, rejoice!'** because the Lord is near and the fourth Sunday of Lent says, **'Laetáre, Ierúsalem, be joyful, Jerusalem, and all who love her!'** because she herself is loved by the Lord. The first two weeks of Advent is a time of penance and clearing the mind, heart, and soul of all earthly distractions and sinfulness. The last two weeks is a time to prepare to **'rejoice,'** and **'be joyful'** because our Lord is coming.

Is it possible for us to get our heads around the idea that 'Our Lord' is coming? The challenge for all of us, especially for us who have seen many Christmases, is that the spirit of Christmas is lost on us. A common cry is 'how commercial' it has become. The message all around us seems to be spend, spend, spend. The challenge for us as Christians is to try and not get swallowed up in this commercialism and lose sight of what Christmas is truly about. The Knights of Columbus have a wonderful sign as you come off Crosswicks Street, and on my back porch stating: **'Keep Christ in Christmas.'** For us to keep Christ in Christmas we first must ask, 'what does Christ's coming mean to me? Will his coming, or will I allow his coming, to have any impact on my life? Can I rejoice, can I be joyful and accept that I am loved by the Lord?

One of the saddest things I experience in confession is when people tell me that the sin they have committed is so unforgivable that not even God could forgive them – I quietly cry, I feel God's sadness. The birth of Jesus is a wonderful occasion, but the birth is only the beginning of the story, a story we all know that ended with Christ's suffering and death on the cross. Among the final words Jesus spoke were, 'Forgive them Father, they don't know what they do.' Think about it, these people physically brutalised Jesus and crucified him and he forgave them, could any sin we commit top that? Do not let anything that you have done keep you from experiencing God's love and compassion.

Another sad experience I have in confession is when people come and say I don't have any sins to confess. The only thought that comes to me is, who are you comparing your life to? I know confession is not just about telling our sins, it really is coming into the presence of God's love, to feel God's embrace, to experience God's compassion and allow God to affirm us with the words, 'I am your God, and you are my child.' I honestly believe if we are to fully experience and appreciate the **'Gaudéte'** and **'Laetáre'** of Christmas we need to remove the 'Stuff' that prevents us from rejoicing and truly experiencing the joy of Christ in our hearts and lives. Come to the wonderful sacrament of Reconciliation this Advent.

**Advent/Christmas Confessions: December 16, St Mary Church, Bordentown @ 7pm-8pm &
December 18, Holy Assumption Church, Roebling @ 7pm – 8pm**

Holy Hour at St Mary Church

Since Covid we have had adoration on a Wednesday evening from 7pm – 8pm. Having adoration is a beautiful and wonderful experience but having it at a time that best suits the greatest number of people is also necessary. The numbers on a Wednesday evening are small, and it is felt that 7pm on a Wednesday is too late, especially during the winter months. So, beginning **January 8, 2026, the Holy Hour will move to Thursdays at 1pm**, following the 12:30 Mass. We will try to keep it close to the Wednesday evening Holy Hour, the rosary followed by the Miraculous Medal novena. We will continue to pray for your intentions, so please send them to the office as usual. I would also ask if the people who would normally pray the rosary before Mass on Thursday wait and pray it after Mass during the Holy Hour. I am hoping this time will allow more people to join us for the Holy Hour on Thursdays of each week beginning January 8, 2026.

May God bless you as we move into the last days of Advent and become more aware of the coming of Christ.

Fr. Martin