



DECEMBER 2019 (YEAR A)

# ST. JAMES CATHOLIC CHURCH

Monthly News Bulletin

P. O. BOX 1865, Osu- Accra

## *Welcome To Our Parish*

### **MASS SCHEDULES**

Morning Mass: Monday - Friday 6:30am  
Sunday Mass: 8:00am

### **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION / CONFESSION**

Saturdays at 5:30pm - 6:30pm or by  
appointment.

### **COMMUNION TO THE SICK**

Please ensure the parish office is informed of  
a parishioner's ill health. Arrangements will  
be made for a home or hospital visit.

### **BAPTISM**

Dates are communicated by announcements  
during Sunday Mass.

### **HOLY MATRIMONY**

Wedding arrangements should be made with  
the Parish or Associate Priest. Please contact  
the Parish office at least six months prior  
to wedding.

Counselling takes place twice a year:  
January - June  
July- December

### **PARISH PRIEST**

Very Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Obeng  
Codjoe  
024 401 9127

### **ASSOCIATE PARISH PRIEST**

Rev. Fr. John Patrick Tindana

### **ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY**

Esther  
Tel: 0505 256 484 / 0302 798 781

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Mondays 8:00am - 12:00pm  
Tuesday - Friday 8:00am - 5:00pm

### **ST. JAMES MINI MART**

Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00am - 7:00pm  
Sundays 6:30am - 2:00pm



## IN THIS EDITION

- **Pastor's Column**
- **Reflections**
- **Spiritual Focus**
- **Relationship Tips**

*Very Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Obeng Codjoe*

Dearest parishioners!

Today marks the beginning of the last month of the year 2019 and also the beginning of a new Liturgical Year for us Catholics. This is really awesome!

It is amazing to note that we are already in the latter days of 2019. That was a very fast one! No matter how this year has turned out, let us remember the words of St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "Under all circumstances give thanks; for that is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

If we are lucky to be experiencing the last month of 2019, we must count our blessings and name them one by one! Like Job may the latter days of this year see more and abundant blessings than its beginnings (cf. Job 42:12). Amen!

In as much as Advent begins the Liturgical Year (we have ended Cycle C and have now started Cycle A), it also prepares and ushers us into the Season of Christmas, the most important celebration of the Church after Easter. I paid a visit to the Accra Mall and saw a Christmas tree already mounted and shimmering.

As Catholics, we cannot celebrate Christmas without purging our hearts to be the manger that Jesus would be born in. Let us use this season to clear our hearts of desires that prevent us from having intimacy with Jesus. Let us make this New Liturgical Year an extraordinary one. You cannot remain in a particular class in school forever. Yes! You have to move forward. And this is the opportunity Advent gives us.

It is my prayer for all Parishioners to partake in the activities organised for December. Do not miss any programme outlined for this month. Next Sunday, your chief servant will be formally installed as pastor. Pray fervently for him.

*Jesus is Lord!*

**GOD OF MERCY AND COMPASSION**

**"One of the criminals who hanged there kept deriding him saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us! But the other rebuked him saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deed, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." [Luke 23:39-43]**

Again, Jesus tells us in the parable of the lost sheep, how precious all God's children are and that He will not say of anyone that he is beyond redemption, but instead, He will use His precious time to go looking for anyone willing to return to the fold, no matter how far such a person might have fallen. "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." [Luke 15:7]

Jesus is Mercy personified, but, in our human reasoning, God is not fair when he saves a sinner and gives him or her the same status as one who has been a God-fearing, practicing Christian all his life. We almost feel like saying in indignation with Jonah: How dare you, God, put us on the same level as a newly converted sinner. "But this was displeasing to Jonah and he became angry ... for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live" [Jonah 4:2-3] or the labourers who were hired at dawn and were paid the same wages as those who were hired at 5pm: "... they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'" [Matthew 20:1-15]. We always look at the other people's faults but keep a tight lid on our own shortcomings. There is a popular saying that as one points one's finger at others, our other fingers point back to us. Instead of looking and planning how to become a better version of ourselves, we are ceaselessly on the lookout for the failures of others and even celebrate when things go bad for them. We therefore, expect the same from God, but as we say, God is not a Ghanaian, otherwise, He would be reaching out His hands from Heaven to slap us as we continue daily to diagnose the speck in other people's eyes when we can barely see through the beam in our own eyes. Our God is tremendously GOOD and we should appreciate His goodness all the time.

Scripture abounds with such human feelings. We find it in Luke 18:10-14: "two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people... But the tax collector, standing far off would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Then we have the example of the elder brother of the prodigal son, in Luke 15:11-31 who begrudged his father's welcoming treatment of his younger brother. However, the father in his infinite mercy said: "... But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), we learn (but do WE really learn?) that everyone, is our neighbour, not just the rich and famous, but the downtrodden as well. Did Jesus not enjoin us to invite to our luncheons and dinners those who cannot repay us by inviting us to theirs? Did He not also say that 'truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' [Matthew 25:40]

Let us all strive to heed Jesus' command, "that you love one another as I have love you." [John 15:12] and it shall be well with our souls.

Happy Advent season and a Merry Christmas to us all as we emulate our Risen Lord.

## ADVENT

### Introduction

As a little child at the St. Theresa's Parish and School, Kaneshie, I was always happy when we started the Season of Advent. This was basically for two reasons. First, we would sing "O Come O Come Emmanuel...! Emmanuel, is my first name, and for that reason, I will have some 'funs' from my friends. Secondly, I knew that very soon we would be celebrating Christmas and as usual my father would splash his children with many gifts and some cash. Well, growing up and becoming a priest I have come to understand the real meaning of this great season.

### Meaning of the word "Advent"

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*.

### Where from this Season?

During the 4th and 5th centuries, in places like Spain and Gaul, Advent was seen as a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the feast of Epiphany which was (and is still) celebrated in January. This celebration of God's incarnation was represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), the baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29) and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). During this season of preparation, Christians used to spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting. Thus, originally, there was no great connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. By the "coming", what they had in mind was, not Christ's first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but, his second coming in the clouds as the judge of the world. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas.

### Advent today!

Today, the season of Advent lasts for four continuous Sundays leading up to the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas). Thus, we can say that Advent is made up of four weeks which are also represented by the four candles lit during the season. The first Sunday may be as early as 27th November, and then Advent has twenty-eight days, or the first Sunday may be as late as 3rd December, giving the season only twenty-one days.

Advent has two phases. The first phase begins from the first Sunday of Advent through to the 16th of December. This first phase looks forward to the second coming of Christ as judge of this world. The second phase starts from the 17th of December to the 24th of the same month. This phase looks at the first coming of Christ as a native of the earth, that is, the birth of Christ. In fact, that is the period of *Maranatha!*

Within the course of the four weeks of this great season, Scripture readings are taken from passages about Christ's return for judgment (focusing on the first phase of Advent); the Old Testament passages about the expectation of the coming Messiah, to New Testament passages about the announcements of Christ's arrival by John the Baptist and the Angels (focusing on the second aspect of Advent, the birth of Christ).

Number 524 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church summarises the whole message of Advent by stating that:

"When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease.""

## The Advent Wreath



Amazingly, the use of the Advent wreath was borrowed from the German Lutherans in the early 1500s. The wreath is a circle, which has no beginning nor end: So we call to mind how our lives, here and now, participate in the eternity of God's plan of salvation and how we hope to share eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. The wreath is made of fresh plant material, because Christ came to give us new life through His passion, death, and resurrection. Three candles are purple, symbolising penance, preparation, and sacrifice; the pink candle symbolises the same but highlights the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, when we rejoice because our preparation is now half-way finished.

### A Look at The Candles!

The candles also have their own special significance. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple because the colour violet is a liturgical colour that signifies a time of prayer, penance, and sacrifice.

The first candle, which is purple, symbolises hope. It is called the "Prophecy or Prophets Candle" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

The second candle, also purple, represents faith. It is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of the journey to Bethlehem by Mary and Joseph.

The third candle is pink and symbolises joy. It is called the "Shepherds Candle," and is pink because rose is a liturgical colour for joy. The third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday and is meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy that the faithful have reached the midpoint of Advent.

On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Saviour. This final candle, the "Angels Candle," symbolises peace. It reminds us of the message of the angels: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."

Kindly note that some wreaths have a fifth candle which is lit on Christmas Eve. This is the white candle found at the centre of the wreath. This candle is called the "Christ Candle" and represents the life of Christ that has come into the world. The colour white represents purity. Christ is the sinless, spotless, pure Saviour.

### References

[www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-liturgical-season-of-advent.html](http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-liturgical-season-of-advent.html)

[www.christianity.com/christian-life/christmas/what-is-advent.html](http://www.christianity.com/christian-life/christmas/what-is-advent.html)

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[www.getfed.com/the-advent-wreath-tradition-meaning-5924/](http://www.getfed.com/the-advent-wreath-tradition-meaning-5924/)

[www.mercyhome.org/blog/sunday-mass/advent-wreath/#.Xd2Asej7RPY](http://www.mercyhome.org/blog/sunday-mass/advent-wreath/#.Xd2Asej7RPY)

**ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR YOU FROM ISAAC ASARE DAMPTEY (IAD)****STOP!**

I saw this quote on the 700 Club page on Facebook and I thought you needed to see it too. It said, "Stop worrying about the things you have left in God's hands". Did you hear that? Let me repeat. "Stop worrying about the things you have left in God's hands".

You know why I thought this is for you? Reason is I don't understand why you are praying or have been praying to God and are still anxious. I don't know why in spite of your prayers you still doubt God and for some of you, in spite of your prayers, you are still afraid.

Let me ask you: where then is your faith?

The Word today is simple: "Stop worrying about the things you have left in God's hands". Stop! Stop it! Just stop worrying!<sup>33</sup>

Jesus loves you!

**HE IS THE ONE**

While praying, I asked the Lord to take care of things. I entrusted all my endeavours into His hands because without Him, there was no success then immediately Deuteronomy 18:8 NLT came to mind. It says: "Remember the Lord, your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfil the covenant He confirmed to your ancestors with an oath."

One may wonder, how does God make you successful? Is success not about ones hard work?

Well, my friend, hard work is absolutely important. You cannot be successful if you are lazy. Paul instructed the people of Thessalonica. **"Even while we were with you, we gave you this command: 'Those unwilling to work will not get to eat.'"** 2 Thessalonians 3:10 NLT. He who does not work should not eat. If you don't put in the effort, expect no results so hard work is essential so that has got to do with attitude but believe me hard work alone is not enough.

In answering the question, how does God make you successful, let me share with you three things that come to mind.

The First is Life. Success starts with having life. Each day we see is a gift from God to us and it provides the opportunity for us to do what He has called us to do. My mum will often say in the Akan language of Ghana "Wo wo nkwa a, wo wo ade". It simply means if you have life, you have everything. How can you pursue your dream or goals if you don't have life.

Think about all those plans of yours, if tomorrow you are not alive, how would you achieve it. It is God who gives us life first of all to enable us to pursue our endeavours. Once we can breathe, there is hope. Who gives life? He is the one!

The Second thing that comes next to life is good health. Regardless of how ambitious you are, how gargantuan your dreams, it will be hard for you to make great strides if your health fails you. Think about your output the time you were not hundred percent fit. Without good health it is difficult to execute the things on our to-do list, but, who is the giver of good health? The Lord! He is the one!

The last is Favour! Oh my! Yes, hard work pays and we must work hard, but the favour of God seals it all. Joseph comes to mind here but I am sure in your own life you may have experienced how God's amazing favour works. When you have God's favour, things flow even in places where everyone else has failed or you are able to do things considered impossible in the eyes of man. Think of the Virgin Mary, She who was highly favoured. God's favour is key to our success for victory belongs to Him. If you have God's favour, you can do the impossible!

As you plan today, as you prepare, "Remember the Lord, your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfil the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath." Deuteronomy 18:8 NLT

It is the Lord. He is the one. He gives you the power.....

### **HE IS GOOD....**

It appears some in the body of Christ have given up on God or are giving up on Him.

Someone told me the other day she has stopped going to church because she was tired; tired of waiting for the breakthrough, tired of trying but not seeing any results, tired of nothing happening.

I have known this person for a long time, knew the level of her faith back then and to hear her speak in the way she did, broke my heart and made me speechless. I pray that none of us will ever stop believing in God, irrespective of how long we wait or how difficult our challenges may be.

I understand how hard things can be. Oh I understand, don't tell me I don't. Don't! Please don't! For I know, so please don't give up! You have come too far to give up on God.

God takes His time, not ours, in doing things and it is important that we believe and trust Him till the end.

Don't quit to miss God's best. Don't take the wrong decision to complicate matters. Don't compare yourself to those who you think are in a better position than you. I know it's tough, but slowly keep going and keep trusting in the God you chose to serve. He will come through for you.

Look, I want you to hear what the Lord says about those two wait on Him.

***"The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks him."***  
***Lamentations 3:25 ESV***

He is GOOD to those who wait for Him.

What do you mean when you tell others person A or person B is good to me? Now imagine the creator of the universe being good to you.

Yes, the road may have been long. The journey, alongside the shame, the gossip, the hardships, the pain, the temptations, may be unbearable but wait, wait for the Lord. He is good to those who wait on Him, to the soul that seeks Him.

I find comfort in this scripture and it keeps me going. I hope it will comfort you today and keep you going. Don't give up on God. Don't quit on Him. He is good.....



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**WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES**

**Mondays**

- Bible sharing (6:15pm - 7:30pm)
- Youth Choir (7:00pm - 9:00pm)

**Tuesdays**

- St. Anthony's Guild (6:30pm - 7:30pm)

**Wednesdays**

- Church Choir (6:30pm - 8:30pm)

**Thursdays**

- Youth Choir (7:00pm - 9:00pm)
- Charismatic Renewal (6:30pm - 7:30pm)

**Fridays**

- Church Choir (6:30pm - 8:30pm)
- Sacred heart Confraternity (6:30pm - 7:30pm)



**Eucharistic Adoration**

Thursday preceding the first Friday of the month.

**Day born groups**

Last Sunday of the month after Mass or by announcement.

**Faith Bookshop**

- Monday - Friday, 8:00am - 7:30pm
- Saturdays 3:00pm - 7:30pm
- Sundays 9:30am - 1:30pm

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