

3rd Sunday Advent

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Overheard in the emergency room: "Nurse, how is the little girl who swallowed the 13 quarters?" "No change yet!!"

We have so many members who've had serious surgeries and illnesses the last few weeks! Heart attacks, a gastric bypass, deadly pneumonia, an infant heart surgery, back and prostate surgeries, to name a few. Cancer, sadly, is always with a parish this size. And there are probably many other health crises too.

Do these families want anything from Santa for Christmas? Of course not. Instead, they turn to Jesus. They pray for life itself, or for less pain, or for a miracle, or no complications.

On this particular Sunday of Advent, the Church invites ALL of us to turn to Jesus and to pray for the healing that WE need. Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Prophet Isaiah predicted that God would be coming, and that when God came, the blind would be able to see, the deaf to hear, the crippled leap like a deer.

Jesus did all those healings and more: he cleansed the leper, healed epilepsy and mental illness, raised the dead, and forgave the sinner. And He is here among us right now in a way that he is nowhere else the rest of the week. Santa can give us stuff; Jesus can give us life.

At this Mass especially, we can offer to Jesus our brokenness—whether of body, mind, or spirit—to be made whole. Today we present to Jesus our illnesses, our struggles, our pain and our frequent inability to cope with life as it is. We offer to Christ the

Healer the childhood memories that haunt us, the fears that hold us back, our neediness, the emptiness we try to avoid.

He cleansed the lepers, and so at this Mass, we give over to his power all our broken relationships, our grudges, our vengeance, our desire to punish.

Here, in this sacred place, where Jesus speaks to us and gives us Himself, we begin to heal. And as we heal, we find compassion for our own brokenness and that of others.

What a shame if you and I attend Mass week after week, yet it is said of us, "No change yet!" What a shame if our hopes for Christmas are limited to what can be wrapped or placed under a tree.

God did not take human flesh to pose for Christmas cards, to help retailers, or to have us eat and drink beyond moderation. He came to save us, to heal us, to bring us peace. That's what we need for Christmas!