Community Wide Toy Drive

Sponsored by

Powell Council of Community Services

For the

2018 Christmas Basket Program

New and used toys are greatly appreciated. As always, we have a use for dolls, stuffed toys, games, puzzles, wheeled toys, CD's, DVD's, video games, bikes, gift cards, and more.

**DEADLINE FOR TOYS IS**

**DECEMBER 12, 2018**

Please call Sally Montoya at 754-4277 or 202-1663 for further information.
It is the First Sunday of Advent, a time of preparation, a time of anticipation. The word “Advent” stems from the Latin Adventus, which means “coming.” During this special season, we await two important events — the celebration of the birth of Jesus on Christmas and the return of Jesus at the end of the world.

Advent is also a time to reflect on the gift of holiness. Today’s readings tell us the path of holiness is truth, justice, humility, kindness, and consistency. We are encouraged to grow in love, to strengthen our hearts, and to conduct ourselves in ways that are pleasing to God. We are reminded to stay alert, be vigilant, and pray for strength because our redemption is at hand.

Holiness is a gift of grace that begins at our baptism and invites us into deeper union with God. How we respond to the gift of holiness is always a free choice. If we accept, God draws us more deeply into his love. If we refuse, God continues to extend the invitation with the hope that one day we will respond.

“Do not be afraid of holiness,” Pope Francis tells us in his latest apostolic exhortation, Gaudete et Exsultate. “It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self” (32).

Each person is called to holiness in a way that is personal and unique. Everyone has a God-given mission in life, and the Holy Spirit gives us the gifts and talents we need to accomplish our mission. Pope Francis suggests that we become holy when we live our mission with joy.

“Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church,” he explains, “Do you work for a living? Be holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain” (14).

Pope Francis encourages us to “allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today’s world” (23).
• December 6 — Feast of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas, a third-century bishop, was known as a miracle worker and a giver of secret gifts. In some countries, children put their shoes by the door the night before the feast of St. Nicholas. They wake the next morning to find sweets and small toys left by the great saint.

• December 8 — Feast of the Immaculate Conception. This holy day of obligation honors Our Lady, conceived without original sin. This feast day is exactly nine months before our celebration of Mary’s birthday on September 8. Our Lady, under the title Immaculate Conception, is the patroness of the United States.

Happy New Year

The First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year in the Catholic Church. Unlike the secular year, which merely marks the passage of time, the liturgical year celebrates the sacred mysteries of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We begin the liturgical year in anticipation with reflections on the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah.

FAMILY FOCUS

Reflect on Advent as a time of waiting. The idea of waiting is not valued in our contemporary culture, which expects immediate gratification. But waiting is important because it creates in us self-discipline, helps us to appreciate the present moment, and allows us to look to the future with hopeful anticipation.

Talk about the mission that God has given to each member of your family. How does your God-given mission provide meaning and purpose to your lives?

The Advent Wreath

For centuries Catholics have lit an Advent wreath as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. The evergreen branches represent everlasting life promised to us by Jesus. The candles remind us that Jesus came into the world to dispel darkness and radiate the light of God’s love.

To make your own Advent wreath, you’ll need four candleholders, three purple candles, one pink candle, and real or artificial evergreen branches to circle the candles in the shape of a wreath. Some families like to add a white candle in the center which is lit on Christmas Eve.

Here is a simple candle-lighting ceremony to use each week:

1st week: The first purple candle signifies hope. Light the candle and pray: Dear God, help each member of our family to wait patiently for the coming of Jesus. Fill us with hope. Amen.

2nd week: The second purple candle signifies peace. Light two purple candles and pray: Dear God, help each member of our family to wait in wonder and awe for the coming of Jesus. Fill us with a deep sense of peace. Amen.

3rd week: The pink candle signifies joy. Light two purple candles, one pink candle, and pray: Dear God, help each member of our family understand the true meaning of Christmas. Fill us with joy as we wait for the coming of Jesus. Amen.

4th week: The fourth candle signifies love. Light all the candles and pray: Dear God, help each member of our family grow in appreciation of others as we prepare for the birth of Jesus. Fill us with love. Amen.

Advent Prayer

Gracious and loving God, thank you for the gift of holiness. Give us the grace we need to respond to your love. Help us to understand our God-given mission in life. Allow us to use our gifts and talents in ways that are pleasing to you. Amen.