

## DURING CHRISTMAS PREP, PUT FAITH IN FOCUS

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### Shining Armor Pre-Holidays Special edition



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### St. Clare Council 12887's Bulletin

A precursor to IN TO THE BREACH  
Video series

We will be starting Advent shortly and the Christmas preparations will probably be in full swing. It might seem like pop Christmas carols will be dominating the radio since the beginning of time.

But before the first half of this liturgical season, try to take a little time for reflection and preparation. Keep reading for two missions that challenge you to make the most of Advent's opportunities.

#### **Second Week of Advent – Faith**

This week, we focus on faith. Without faith, after all, Christmas is just a big party. With faith, we look forward to it as the celebration of an amazing, cosmos-changing event. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us* (John 1:14.).

That's worth getting ready for.

1. What's a great way to prepare for Christmas? Praying the rosary, especially the Joyful Mysteries, which take us from the Annunciation through Christ's childhood.

2. As you prepare for Christmas, it's also a time to extend the gifts of the Church to others. Think of a friend who may not have a religious practice, or who has fallen away from the Church, and invite him or her to Mass.

As Catholics, we tend to think of ourselves as ordinary folks who try to get along with our neighbors and the larger society. Yet if we stop to think about it, we are called to believe some pretty extraordinary things that don't fit well into our culture's materialistic mindset.

When we recite the creed at Mass each Sunday, do we realize how radical a list of faith statements we are making? Let's look at 7 precepts of our faith that used to be taken for granted in our society yet today would strike many of our peers as radical.

### **1. A virgin gave birth.**

We refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, of course, who conceived Jesus in her womb by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:26-35). The normal path to pregnancy is relations with a man, as Mary admitted, but we believe that God can act outside the laws of nature he created to bring about this virginal conception and birth. In our highly sexualized culture esteem for virginity seems odd and unacceptable. But Mary can also be seen as a remedy for what ails us, reminding us by her purity that sex, though good and certainly necessary, is not life's highest good. Doing the will of God and accepting Jesus into our lives, as Mary did, are our true goods.

### **2. The child was truly God – and truly human.**

How to think about the unique status of Jesus? The Church spent its early centuries debating the question and came up with the definition that asserts certain truths yet leaves much to mystery. Jesus is one divine Person with two natures, human and divine, which are joined yet not mixed or confused. It's called the hypostatic union but we

need not dwell on the theological points. We do best to think of this awesome doctrine from our perspective. In uniting our human nature to his divine Person, Jesus was able to take on our sins and redeem us. Good news, indeed!

### **3 He is one of three Persons in the one God.**

The early heresy of Arianism said that there was a time when Jesus was not, the idea being that God the Father created the Son in time and thus Jesus is not fully God. But we believe that the Father begot the Son from his own nature from all eternity, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from them as Love, also from all eternity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-eternal. Again, putting aside the mystery and looking at the teaching from our limited perspective, we might think of what a great gift the Trinity is. God is a relationship of love, and that love came to earth as a child out of love for humanity.

### **4. He was crucified, died, yet rose from the dead.**

In every age of the Church there have been spiritualizers, those who say that resurrection is a metaphor, an ideal, or an idea that Jesus lives on in the hearts and minds of his followers. Yet Jesus spent most of the 40 days on earth after his resurrection saying and showing just the opposite. He was adamant – not only did he rise in the spirit, he rose in his body, the one that was nailed to the cross.

**5. We eat his body (and drink his blood) at every Mass.**

This sets us apart from nearly every other Christian community. Knock on the door of a Protestant church anywhere in the world and ask what they receive in holy Communion or the Lord's Supper, and whatever they tell you will be much different from that the Catholic Church teaches. But many Catholics do not believe or understand the true teaching on the Eucharist. This is a shame, for the Eucharist, according to Vatican II, is the "source and summit of the Christian life" (Lumen Gentium 11). Much could be written about the Real Presence of Jesus, but in simple terms, when the priest says the words of consecration at Mass, the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus. He is truly and substantially present under the appearance of bread and wine. This is a miracle beyond telling, and we should receive Jesus with clean soul and grateful heart.

**6. He is now in heaven but will return to judge us.**

Jesus is coming back. We don't know how or when he will appear, but his coming will mark the end of the world as we know it and usher in the time of final judgment. The particular or personal judgment takes place when a person dies (this is why we need to be ready at any moment to answer for our thoughts, words and deeds). In the general or public judgment, every person will be judged before all the others who have lived on earth. If you don't want to suffer eternal shame, prepare now with faith and obedience to God's commands.

**7. We too will rise to new life in our bodies on the last day and live forever either in heaven or in hell.**

This may frighten us, which is not a bad thing. The final judgment should instill in us a holy fear for our souls and cause us to reflect on our lives. Where do you want to spend eternity? The time for cleansing in Purgatory will be over and every person who has ever lived will wind up in one of two places: heaven with God and the blessed, or hell with the devils and damned. That's it. The world may not want to hear the message, but now is the time of repentance and mercy.

I encourage all you my brothers in Christ to go your computers and type the Into The Breach and read What the Bishop of Phoenix has to say about before the council introduces the Into The Breach Series.

Enjoy your Thanksgiving and Christmas family gatherings.

Vivat Jesus