



December 2003 -
January 2004



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Apostleship of the Cross

Houston Center



Advent 2003

Pope calls for reawakening of "Hope for Peace" during Advent

Here is a translation of the address John Paul II gave on November 30 before praying the Angelus with thousands of pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

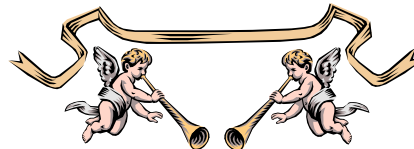
Today is the beginning of the season of Advent, a time of spiritual renewal in preparation for Christmas. The voices of prophets resound in the liturgy, who announce the Messiah, inviting us to conversion of heart and to prayer. John the Baptist, the last and greatest of them all, cries out: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!" (Luke 3:4), because he "will come to visit his people in peace."

Christ is coming, the Prince of peace! To prepare for his Nativity means to reawaken in ourselves and in the world the hope for peace. First of all, peace in hearts, which is built by putting down the weapons of rancor, of revenge and of every form of egoism.



The world is in great need of this peace! I am thinking especially, with profound sorrow, of the last episodes of violence in the Middle East and the African continent, as well as those in so many other parts of the earth reported in the daily news. I renew my appeal to the leaders of the great religions: Let us join forces to preach nonviolence, forgiveness and reconciliation! "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

In this Advent season of waiting and hope, the ecclesial community identifies more than ever with the Most Holy Virgin. May she, the expectant Virgin, help us to open our hearts to him who brings, with his coming among us, the priceless gift of peace to the whole of humanity.



Adopt a Child for the Holidays Program

We are currently conducting our annual “Adopt a Child for the Holidays” program. Typically, each year we have provided gifts for children of Casa Juan Diego. Casa Juan Diego provides hospitality and services for immigrant women, including battered or pregnant women and their children.

It is really quite simple to be “Santa” to a deserving child. Please contact your section coordinator or call Debbie Carrera at (713) 721-9095.

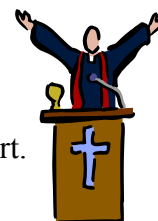


Enjoy the feeling you will get knowing that you have made a difference in a child’s life. “In the measure you give you shall receive” – Mark 4:34.

Coming up in 2004...

“Adopt a Brother” Campaign

The new “Adopt a Brother” campaign will begin in January 2004. The Missionaries of the Holy Spirit are counting on with our prayers and support. You will receive more information in January.



DISCERNMENT

It is true that Fr. Marcos Alba, M.Sp.S. was among us only a few hours, but what he left us is for a lifetime. *Thank you Fr. Marcos!* Here is a summary of what father taught us on November 8 and 9:

- To discern is to let us be led by the Holy Spirit; it is to look for God's will in our daily life.
- And it is not enough to know God’s will, we have to want what God wants for us, and we have to be able to carry out actions in his name.
- The key of discerning is to learn how to listen to God’s voice, to capture the “ways” in which it is revealed to you, his language, his purposes.
- Discerning is the “audacity to let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit”.

Significant Elements:

- Attitude of having a “loving attention”, like a being acquainted with God.
- Attitude of humility: a “de-centering”, letting God be the Director of your life.
- Who am I? What God wants from me? What and how much I have done for God today? What can I do for Jesus?
- We have to have an attitude of bravery, of audacity. The Holy Spirit “inconveniences” us and deprives our lives of ease; even then we have to let ourselves be led blindly by Him.

Three forces that act in us:

- Divine inspiration or inspirations - positive force that pushes us to action - is a movement impelled by God.

- The light: that light that comes from the Holy Trinity and that pushes us to do well in our decisions.
- Tricks: these lead us to sin, oppose the force of the Holy Spirit.

Examination of our Conscience:

- The key to discerning is the examination of our conscience.
- Usually we interpret this exam as an exercise of strong moral and rigid connotation – we examine ourselves with the commandments as a reference base; it is known as an action of self-evaluation vs. a given code, we center it in our failures.



Fr. Marcos with members of the ApC of Houston & Miami

- We have to change of paradigm and not to see it as a questioning of our moral conscience, but as a revision of our Christian conscience, to see how we are getting close to God or far from Him in our daily life.
- The examination of our conscience is a spiritual exercise where God has to be what is most important; it is a theological

- exercise. God has a plan for each one of us, He knows me better than anyone.
- We should give ourselves the opportunity to see his actions in us; He has a plan of sanctity and love for each one of us.
- It is transformed in an exam based in an experience of faith, prayer, listening to God; it is a contemplation exercise that is leading me to Him.
- In this exercise we want to thank Him for the signs of his love in me; be thankful for what he gave me and what I was able to respond to Him like He wanted me to, and if not, to ask for his forgiveness, and change my way and lead it again to Him.
- This daily exercise has to be at a moment or moments that we can set apart 10-15 minutes for each moment.
- It would be beneficial and complete for a good examination of our conscience to ask ourselves the following: How did God love me today? How did I love Him? How do I want to love Him tomorrow?
- Between you and Him the story is one of love; He doesn't want slaves, He wants us his children.
- In the setting of life we will be judged in the love.

A big thanks to Rafael Alvarado for the preceding notes.



IMPORTANT DATES – MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW

December 2003

- 8 Immaculate Conception of Mary
- 8 Conchita's Birthday (1862)
- 9 Christmas Celebration Notre Dame Section
- 11 Christmas Celebration St. Theresa Section
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe
- 17 Fr. Félix Birthday (1859)
- 20 Christmas Celebration St. Thomas More Section
- 24 89° Anniversary Foundation of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit (1914)
- 25 Nativity of our Lord
- 28 The Holy Family

January 2004

- 1° Mary, Mother of God
- 4 Epiphany of the Lord
- 10 Anniversary of Fr. Félix' Death (1938)
- 10 Celebration Foundation of the Works of the Cross with Fr. Roberto Saldívar, M.Sp.S.– Spanish*
- 11 Celebration Foundation of the Works of the Cross with Fr. Roberto Saldívar, M.Sp.S. – English*
- 11 Baptism of our Lord
- 14 110° Anniversary Foundation Works of the Cross (1894)
- 29 Bishop Joe Vásquez will give a talk at St. Thomas More, 8pm. Theme: "Universal Call to Holiness" (The talk will be in English)



* Look for more information soon

Happy New Year!

Words of Reflection...

Advent is a time of preparation and hope.
 It is a good time to make, with special attention, the examination of our conscience.
 It is the moment to analyze ourselves and to remove those things that move us away from God.
 Let us ask the Holy Spirit for purity of soul and body.
 Let us take good care of our personal prayer; let us avoid the indifference.
 Let us maintain alive the desire of sanctity.
 With a pure heart let us go out to welcome our King.
 O come to deliver us, and do not delay!

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***Jesus, Savior of all people,
 Save them!***