

Dec. 17-18, 2016

Thoughts from the pastor,

It is so close to that time of year when our expectations and dreads are at their highest. The children have the hopes of the perfect Christmas gift. Many of them have a hard time figuring out that Jesus is that gift. But they are looking forward to happiness and joy. That is a part of why they can drive their parents crazy during their vacation from school. Anything that doesn't fit into their plan can set them off in the wrong direction, tantrums or fights are some of these. That is why I tend to give children three Our Fathers as their penance at this time of year. I have them pray those prayers for their family so that God will help their family have a peaceful Christmas. Then I pray that it helps. But I know that when children are focused on themselves they are in their "spoiled brat" mode. Focusing on others, especially Jesus, can get them out of that.

For adults we can go different directions. For some of us this time of year is a time of dread. Some have lost a loved one recently or it might be the anniversary of a loved one's death. My Mom died on 12/22/2005 and I still remember planning a funeral and Christmas at the same time. It was through that experience that I understood more completely how focusing on others can help with our own hurts and losses. For we are just like the children. When we get into a selfish mode, we can act like brats. Hopefully we are past the spoiled part of that mode, but we can still be a pain to be around. When we are at our lowest we need to remember that when there was very little hope in the world, a Savior came from heaven to bring us a taste of hope and a promise that we could have more.

For those adults who have the expectation of experiencing a great Christmas, there are also reminders that can be helpful. Parents can think that they need to provide the experience of the perfect Christmas for their children. In doing so they risk pushing their children into the selfish patterns and bring out the spoiled brats. The perfect Christmas will only come in heaven, where we will be with the *reason for the season* for eternity. But we only get there if that is our focus. In all of our rush during these holidays we can forget that they are actually Holydays that are meant to connect us to the Savior. We can even forget that we need the Savior. If our whole effort is to create heaven on earth we will not remember that this is not heaven. Heaven is a place to which only the Savior can give us admittance. So once again the answer to everything is Jesus, the Savior.

Right after our celebration of Mary, the Mother of God Holyday, or the New Year's Day holiday; we come to the celebration of our parish's Patron Saint. That day for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is January 4th, which is a Wednesday this year. In her honor we will be having a party in the Parish Hall on the following Sunday, January 8th. There will be no Rocky & Bullwinkle but we will have a pizza party. We encourage people to come with their families and enjoy each other's company by playing board games and card games. We will have napkins and decks of cards along with the pizza and punch. If you can bring a favorite board game, that you might like to play with the children that would be great. We can hopefully teach a new generation some new card tricks. After all, it is just us old dogs that can't learn new tricks.

The party will start right after the 5:30pm Sunday Mass. That is the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord and also happens to be the beginning of National Migration Week. So it is a perfect time to join together with the Lord and His Saints in moving together to celebrate our parish family. We ask a donation of \$5 per person or \$20 per family.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank