

Dec. 9-10, 2017

Thoughts from the pastor,

About 45 years ago I gave a Christmas present to my parents that I received back when they both passed away. I had painted a picture of the place that my Dad grew up on and then Dad and Mom raised us on, the family farm. They had moved off of it the previous year. There were some photos but with the painting I was able to capture some things that photos just can't do. I could make it look like we saw it rather than what the camera saw. I am happy to say my parents treasured that painting. More than any other place, that farm was home for my family. That painting is now in my room in the rectory.

In two weeks we will be hearing about Joseph and Mary leaving their home in Nazareth and heading to Bethlehem, which was where their families came from. When they arrived there was no place for them to go. The inns were full. They ended up staying in a stable. For a short time it was home for them. What happened in that stable changed what we all call home. Our Savior was born and laid in a manger. He was the way home. The world had no room for him because this was not his home. His home, his kingdom, is not here. He made that clear right before he died.

As we prepare for Christmas, one of the things we must do is decide where we want our true home to be. Is our whole focus going to be on the things of this world, or will we try to find our place with Jesus? In order for us to find a place with Jesus we must first give Him a place within us. Will we be a place in which the Bread of Life will always be welcome or will we turn Him away because we have other things to worry about? Will we invite Him to come for an occasional visit when we have time, or will we change whatever we need to in order to make time for Him?

When I painted the picture of the farm, we had already moved on. We no longer lived there. Since I have left home I have lived in eighteen places if I only count the places in which I lived for three months or more. For a brief time I made a home in each one of those places, but I knew they were temporary. It has taken me a while to get totally orientated to the idea that I will never find a real home in this world. I want to be in the Kingdom of God. That is where Jesus is inviting us all to follow Him. It all started with the first Christmas. Jesus made Himself homeless so we could find a home through Him.

This time of year is a time when we need to continue our work of preparing a place for Him in our hearts. We do that in prayer but not just prayer in our own homes but in the place where He is available for us, in the Eucharist and the tabernacle. Otherwise it is like trying to make Him make His home in this world. As we come for visits to His Place, we need to prepare ourselves with the Sacrament of Reconciliation; so we don't stink up His Place. We don't want to smell like a stable. The SEAS penance service is Monday, 12/18. The St. James penance service is Tuesday, 12/19. Both are at 7pm. Then we can enjoy being at home with Him until He brings us home to the Father.

Just a reminder, the last Mass for the 4th Sunday of Advent will be the 11am one on 12/24. That evening will start the Christmas Masses, 4pm, 6:30pm, midnight, 7:30am, 9am, & 11am. I made a mistake on the Advent calendar concerning the New Year's Eve Mass at 5:30pm. It counts for Sunday, the Feast of the Holy Family. The 8 & 11am Masses on New Year's Day count for the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, which is not a holyday of obligation this year because it is on a Monday.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank