

## ***Remembering and Repeating, Advent Again!***

As we come again to the Season of Advent (which I personally have now come to 57 times in the course of my life) I think of a question someone asked recently: *Why recite pre-written prayers like the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be? What do I gain/learn by reciting them from memory?* Good questions! One might ask the same kind of questions about the Season of Advent as it comes round again, or any of our “pre-written” Liturgical Feasts and Seasons which we pray “from memory” again and again, year after year. The simplest answer I would give to such questions is that what the seasons and feasts we celebrate deal with aspects of our lives that remain with us throughout our entire life. That is, they concern the *eternal* aspects of the lives we live in time, and so call for ongoing and repeated observance and celebration. At the same time that the particulars and details of our lives change constantly, there are other things about our being human that remain unchanged no matter what our age, things like our basic needs and desires, fears, joys, sorrows, hopes, dreams, disappointments, and so on. For example, the Season of Advent speaks and prays about our need and hope for a new experience of God’s power and love in our lives. It means to renew our attentiveness to the promise and possibility of that, and what we must do to receive it. Our religious rituals (that is, our *pre-written* and *memorized* prayers, feasts, seasons, and celebrations) are intended and designed to give expression to these *eternal* aspects of our lives, and so either foster and develop them, or contain and lessen them. Because such experiences are so very familiar and repetitive in our lives, familiar and repetitive rituals can serve them best. Of course, such rituals must also be personalized and celebrated afresh and anew if they are to have their intended transformative benefit in our lives. It is not enough simply to repeat them mindlessly from memory, however well written and designed they may be (and we Catholics do have some very well written and designed rituals!). They deal with mystery, not magic, and we must *fully, consciously, and actively* enter into their celebration if we are to get the most out of them. It occurs to me at this point that perhaps a better – and certainly simpler! – response to the questions above would be *Why **do** you recite pre-written and memorized prayers...? How personally **do** you enter into full, conscious, and active participation in them, and into all the feasts and seasons and rituals of our religion?* Our answer to those questions will determine what we gain, learn, and benefit from them.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at [tkautza@saintmaryhc.org](mailto:tkautza@saintmaryhc.org).