

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 49. December 1, 2019. ADVENT 1

Happy New (Church) Year!

Today is the first Sunday of Advent and so the first day of the Church's liturgical year. It is also Year A of our three-year lectionary cycle. Our new year, as opposed to its secular counterpart starts off rather quietly with four weeks of reflective preparation for the very unquiet 12-day feast of Christmas, but I'll get into that more fully in my sermon today.

In order to help everyone get the most out of the coming days we have a couple of things planned that we invite you to participate in with us.

First, for Advent - or the later half of Advent. I'm sure all of you are familiar with the uniquely Filipino tradition of Simbang Gabi/Misa de Gallo, the series of evening or pre-dawn masses that begin on the 16th of December as a lead-in into Christmas. It may surprise you to learn that most Episcopal churches in this country follow this tradition, though with their own particular approach. Whereas in Roman Catholic churches these are votive masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Anglican/Episcopal Churches the theme of each is based on a series of traditional scriptural names for Christ, starting with Wisdom on the 16th. (I'll explain the story behind this later.) Now, no worry, I'm not going to insist you all show up at church every morning at 4:30AM from the 16th on! But I'm preparing 'O Come, Emmanuel' - a series of brief meditations on those themes, along with a short reading, a 'point to ponder' and a prayer, so that we all can participate at least spiritually in this tradition along with the millions who will be doing so physically throughout the country. I plan to distribute these reflections by email, but will provide a printed copy for those who want it. Please sign up in the office and indicate whether you want email, printed or both.

But it doesn't end there! We will also be inviting you to sign up for the series #Follow the Star: 12 Days of Christmas Wonder," put out by the Church of England, quite similar, I believe to what you used this year for Lent. This can be accessed in a variety of ways online and we've ordered a bunch of booklets. We'll be filling you in more on this later - but do sign up soon!

I urge all of you to participate in both these daily moments of focus which, though done on our own, unite us in spirit and add depth to our community life. Equally important, the help us hold on to the true meaning of these celebrations that lie ahead, a meaning that is often lost in the cacophony of the consumerist frenzy that Christmas, sadly, has become.