

SAID ED December 7, 2008

The Year of Mark. The second season of the call to renewal, Spirit Alive. The beginning of the church year. December and Advent. What do all these have in common?

YOU!

That's all of us individually and collectively. We are all on a journey toward a fuller, deeper and richer life in God's Spirit. We find ourselves today at the Second Week of Advent. It's a time to get ready, to shovel some snow, to bundle up against the cold Winter weather and a time to prepare our hearts to celebrate the great Mystery of the Incarnation – Christmas.

This year we are reading the Gospel of St. Mark. It's the shortest of the four Gospels and probably the first one to be written. Last weekend we blessed the Bibles of everyone who brought theirs to church. We did this as a special reminder of the central place that the Sacred Scriptures have in our lives. We suggested that everyone start reading the same Gospel during this Advent season. In fact, parish communities throughout our 12 county Diocese of Rochester are doing this along with us. We will be hearing from St. Mark at each Sunday Mass during the approaching months (We are now in "Cycle B" of our common lectionary – that's the Scripture arranged thematically according to the Sundays of the year. I say "common lectionary" because it is used not only in all Catholic churches throughout the world, but it is also used by most Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, United Church of Christ members as well as most other mainline churches.)

This season of the Spirit Alive Renewal is calling us to become more familiar and comfortable with the Bible. We are being urged to show reverence and respect for the Living Word of God. We all know non-Catholic Christian friends who can quote the Scriptures at a moment's notice. I've always admired the level of integration that this familiarity reflects. Catholics are not so good at this. We need to get better. This time of renewal is offering us a powerful invitation to do just that.

In church you will notice that we are doing a few new things to heighten the importance of the Word of God. You'll see, for example, that we are now enthroning the Book of the Gospels which we carry into the Assembly in procession each weekend. Since the Psalm is also a reading from the Scripture, you will notice that the Cantor will be proclaiming it in song from the Ambo where we proclaim all the other readings. Each week the bulletin will list the readings for the week so that you can prepare ahead of time by reading the Scriptures at home. We also have Bible Study on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 9:30am in the Parish Living Room (no reservation required) and several Small Christian Communities do their faith sharing around Scripture readings. There are many ways to become more familiar with the Sacred Scriptures.

Parents are urged to reading the Scriptures to their children – perhaps as a bedtime story. Cathy Tocci and Marie Claus each have age appropriate Scriptures for families, teens and kids. Each day our parish website home page lists the readings from the day which you can read on line just with one click of the mouse. Of course, a good practice during Advent especially, is to come to weekday mass at 6:45 or 11:15 each morning as you are able. These are but a few ways you can raise awareness of the Living Word of God in your lives, but there are many many more. Care to share them with us?

We are on this Advent renewal journey together. Let's be praying with each other!

Have a great week.
