



December 2016

Dear Saint John's Families,

May the Lord give you His peace!

Why is it So Difficult to Enter Into Advent? It happens every year, as predictably as drawing up a shopping list, decorating the tree and planning the Christmas Dinner. Every year we think, "Now THIS is the year when I really will enter into Advent." And there it stays. Nothing happens. We know in our hearts that Advent can be more than a "pre-Christmas" season, more than those four weeks of getting ready for the Big Day on December 25th. We sit in Church and hear the different readings, the darkness and the promise of hope.

We ponder in our hearts: Our lives are full, our families are good, our homes beautiful. We have everything, simply everything we could want. But in the quiet darkness, we are aware of something stirring in our hearts, a longing we can't name. Something that no trip to the store, no decorations, Christmas dishes or new ornaments can fill. The longing might be risky, even dangerous, so we push it away — quickly — and busy ourselves again. There is so much to do in these weeks.

The stirring returns. What is this promise for *us*? What does it mean for us in our comfortable, complicated and messy lives? We want to be better people, and our lives are not perfect. We don't want to delve into our relationships at home because we don't want to upset the way things are. We are so often impatient with our children, unreasonable with our spouses and we might even admit, disappointed in our lives. We echo the disciples' confusion and disappointment after the crucifixion: "We had thought it would be different." But we have everything we could want. What else is there?

What if this Advent, we allow ourselves to imagine a life that is different? What if our hearts were at peace and our lives more satisfying? That longing in the most hidden corners of our hearts is something holy, a Holy Longing, a desire for a deeper relationship with God.

We might squirm at that and stammer all of the excuses we know: "Not now. I'm really busy. I'm not a very holy person. I'm going to get to a serious relationship with God as soon as my kids are gone... when I don't have to care for my parents; when I get the promotion at work; when we move to a new house." There are dozens of ways we can evade the issue, but still, that longing is there for something more.

Advent is a time to recognize both our holy longing and the healing love God has for us, despite the many barriers we put up between ourselves and God. We can start simply and just rest at the edge of our beds in the mornings, open our hands and whisper, "Come, Lord Jesus!" If we let ourselves feel what is in our hearts, we know they are filled with love. We can carry that experience with us as we go through even the busiest of our days. We may not

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know exactly where to begin or how to fill this longing in our hearts but it is simple. God waits with infinite love and with arms outstretched to meet us. The words we say don't matter. We can speak as if God is a friend we have not seen in a long time, but one with whom we can sit in a comfortable silence.

It's just about taking the first step. Even if we are fearful about this next step, we can say to God what is in our hearts. In this Advent season, it's time to risk, to make the first step, to find our way back home.

***“Come, Lord Jesus, Come and touch my heart. Come and be with me during Advent.***

All of us here at Saint John's School are working diligently with your child every day. Please keep in touch with your child's teacher. It's so important that all of us; parents, educators, and children work together.

Please know of my deep appreciation for all that you do for your child by providing him or her a CATHOLIC education.

Have a blessed and peace filled Advent!

All the best!

Sincerely yours,

Edward J. Higgins  
Principal