

PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS

Today, let us reflect on how we prepare to commemorate God's events most especially Christmas. Whenever some people's birthdays, anniversaries, or memorials are upcoming, what comes to their mind may include the fun things to do on that day, which food to eat, where to spend the day, and so forth. In the last Thanksgiving Day, only a few people attended Mass giving the impression that some people may be more interested in meals, get-togethers, and fun aspects of the Thanksgiving Day. The most important aspect of Thanksgiving Day is offering thanks to God. Giving thanks to God is God's will for us (John 17:12-19). The most important way through which we Catholics offer thanks to God is through the Eucharist. We are now in Advent, the period meant for preparing for Christmas. **WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS?** In the Gospel reading today, we are presented with how God sent John the Baptist to prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ. Today's Gospel reading (Mark 1:1-8) pointed out that John the Baptist started preparing the first coming of Jesus Christ by preaching in the desert of Judea telling people to repent and those who came to him to have him prepare them were given baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This kind of baptism is somehow synonymous or related to a greater extent with the Sacrament of Reconciliation we celebrate today. It is a common thing for us to clean our houses or to give our environment an attractive appearance when a special visitor gives us notice of his or her visit to our homes. We need to decorate not only our homes and churches but also our souls in anticipation of Christmas. Before the birth of Jesus, God announced the coming of Jesus Christ through many prophets. Jesus Christ did not just enter our world without a piece of prior information from God. God gave this prior information for the world to prepare for the coming of the Messiah and to know that He has not abandoned the world. Also, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. The Church, in her wisdom and imitation of God, has provided us with the period of Advent for the preparation of Christmas. **CHRISTMAS IS NOT ONLY A PERIOD OF CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY OF JESUS, BUT IT IS ALSO A PERIOD OF RENEWING THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN OUR LIVES.** It is a period of re-inviting Jesus Christ to become the most important part of our lives. For Jesus Christ to become the most important part of our lives, we need to get rid of in our lives what He abhors. This is why we have Christmas Confessions. I have never seen a person who prefers to receive his or her visitors in a messy place. **GOD DID NOT WANT US TO RECEIVE JESUS WITH A LOT OF DIRT ON OUR SOULS, AS A RESULT, HE SENT JOHN THE BAPTIST TO CLEAN THE PEOPLE.** Advent is also a period of seeking God's mercy and forgiveness. When I was in the Seminary, we did lots of spiritual and corporal works of mercy during Advent for God to be merciful to us and to make Jesus Christ happy. Advent is a good period to give alms, seek forgiveness, and pray. **FOR JESUS TO BE REBORN IN OUR HEARTS AND SOCIETIES, WE NEED TO DO THOSE THINGS THAT PLEASE HIM.** How we prepare for Christmas determines if we want Jesus to be happy on His birthday or not, and if we need Him in our lives. Have you heard about a boy who is not happy on his birthday when others are happy? The boy was not happy because his birthday celebration was not prepared the way he wanted and the gifts which he received were not what he wanted. This boy wanted a simple celebration and cheap gifts, but his people had fancy birthday celebrations for him and gave him expensive gifts. All attention was supposed to be on the boy, but the attention was on the boy's people. Put Jesus Christ in that boy's position and prepare

this coming Christmas to make Jesus Christ happy. JESUS CHRIST IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON. Please let us try to please Jesus Christ with our words and deeds in this period of Advent. We please Jesus by doing God's will. "What is God's will? God's will is to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God" (Fr. Jerry). We need to make ourselves happy too because Jesus cannot be happy when we are not happy. MAY GOD HELP US TO PROPERLY PREPARE FOR THE COMING CHRISTMAS AND THROUGH THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS DEEPEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, AMEN.