

THE "ABC'S" OF ADVENT

There is a wonderful priest that I know by the name of Msgr. Pat Carney. Msgr. Carney was the pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Hartsdale, New York. Every so often I will meet him at the Cardinal Spellman Recreation Center which is located on the grounds of St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, New York.

The "Gym" as we call it, is more than just that. There is an Olympic size swimming pool, handball and basketball courts, a bowling alley and a steam and sauna room. Sometimes I will enjoy a swim in the pool there and would meet Msgr. Carney who was swimming as well. Jokingly, he would say, "Louis, do you know what my priorities in life are?" I would shake my head in the negative... He would then say, "I can sum them up this way: "A-B-C;" altar, bed and then center! (Meaning the gym!)

Whenever I meet this priest now I remind him of the "ABC'S and ask him how well he is keeping his priorities. Actually, "ABC" is a good list of priorities for all of us to have in the next few weeks of hectic Christmas preparation.

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Season of Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word "Adventus" which means "Arrival" or "Coming." We are preparing for the coming of Christ on Christmas Day. The question we might all ask is, "How well am I doing that?" And "What are my priorities in the next four weeks?" The "ABC'S of Advent are some practical things.

First of all-"A"-Altar! Getting to Mass each Sunday. Recently I was speaking to a parishioner about the fact that there are fewer younger people attending Mass. This gentleman agreed that this is a fundamental problem in the church today. But, as he rightly said, if the parents do not set the example for attendance at church, then the youngsters are not going to usually be inspired to "Go it on their own." Mass during Advent would be a good start in getting our spiritual house in order in anticipation of the Christmas Season.

Secondly "B"-be generous! In a time of selfishness and over indulgence, how about making some sort of sacrifice for others this Advent? The color that the priest wears in the Advent Season is purple. This color represents Penance. If we sacrifice some particular treat or unnecessary item in our lives we are doing penance and could give the money to the poor and underprivileged, or we could use the money that we save in order to purchase a gift for the Giving Tree in the vestibule of the Church. In doing this we show that we are not thinking of ourselves all the time.

Finally "C." "C" stands for confession. When was the last time we made a good and sincere confession? If we find that it has been some time since we encountered the Grace of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, this Advent is a time for us to rediscover this sacrament and to experience the mercy and compassion of the divine physician Jesus Christ.

What are our priorities this Advent? Let's remember our spiritual "ABC'S." If we follow them, we will be led to a greater and more joyful appreciation of the new born Christ Child on Christmas Day!

*Sincerely in the Lord,
Father Jerome*