

Fr. Simon Sez

Confirmation Retreat Save the Date: As I presented to our Confirmation candidates and their parents in both of our parishes, one confirmation requirement of our bishop is that our candidates attend one Confirmation retreat. It has to be a retreat that has Confirmation as its theme. The only one available as of now is one that our diocese is conducting Saturday, February 4, 2023 from 9:30 am - 5:00 pm in Watertown. Registrations will be done through our parishes. Please do not individually contact the diocese. We will handle registrations through our YFF sessions. We are required to send adults with our candidates to assist with small group discussions. Please save the date.

Prayers for Bishop Swain in Hospice Nearing Death: While Bishop Swain's time during hospice care has seen steady decline, he has taken marked steps today towards imminent death. With the help of nursing care, he has been made to be comfortable, to the degree his human suffering permits him to be. Please, in your charity and support, hold him in prayer. Prayers that a peaceful death might be granted to His Excellency would be a generous favor for the episcopal ministry he has offered our diocese.

Parish Contribution Envelopes & Calendars for 2023: The 2023 contribution envelopes for both parishes are now available for pick up in our church gathering spaces. If we do not have a box marked for you, please let us know. Our 2023 calendars are available too.

EWTN Winter Highlights: EWTN provided handouts for our church gathering spaces that have their TV schedule with event highlights. For the most up-to-date programming, go to ewtn.com/tv/schedule.

Diocese Announcements: For a full list of upcoming events and available Church ministries visit the diocese website www.sfcatholic.org. Catholic Family Services offers a full range of counseling services at many locations around the diocese. If you or someone in your family is in need of some assistance, call 1-800-700-7867 for an appointment.

IRA Charitable Tax Advantage: Each IRA owner over age 72 can make an IRA charitable rollover that is tax-free and not included in adjusted gross income. An IRA charitable rollover may fulfill your required minimum distribution (RMD.) Our parishes are grateful for the financial gifts that you share with us. Call David Vetch at 605-218-0072 or email dvetch@ccfesd.org for more information.



In a Dark Hour: Scott Hahn Reflects on the First Sunday of Advent



Isaiah 2:1–5
Psalm 122:1–9
Romans 13:11–14
Matthew 24:37–44

Jesus exaggerates in today's Gospel when He claims not to know the day or the hour when He will come again. Christ occasionally makes such overstatements to drive home a point we might otherwise miss (see Matthew 5:34; 23:9; Luke 14:26).

His point here is that the exact "hour" is not important. What is crucial is that we not postpone our repentance, that we be ready for Him—spiritually and morally—when He comes. For He will surely come, He tells us—like a thief in the night, like the flood in the time of Noah.

In today's Epistle, Paul too compares the present age to a time of advancing darkness and night.

Though we sit in the darkness, overshadowed by death, we have seen arise the great light of our Lord who has come into our midst (see Matthew 4:16; John 1:9; 8:12). He is the true light, the life of the world. And His light continues to shine in His Church, the new Jerusalem promised by Isaiah in today's First Reading.

In the Church, all nations stream to the God of Jacob, to worship and seek wisdom in the House of David. From the Church goes forth His word of instruction, the light of the Lord—that all might walk in His paths toward that eternal day when night will be no more (see Revelation 22:5).

By our Baptism we have been made children of the light and day (see Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5–7). It is time we start living like it: throwing off the fruitless works of darkness, rejecting the desires of the flesh, and walking by the light of His grace.

The hour is late as we begin a new Advent. Let us begin again in this Eucharist.

As we sing in today's Psalm, "let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord." Let us give thanks to His name, keeping watch for His coming, knowing that our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.