

Fr. Simon Sez

We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

What do you wish for Christmas this year? What should you wish for Christmas this year? What does God your Father wish to give you this year for Christmas? Every year we wish for ourselves and our loved ones to have a merry Christmas and a happy new year! Isn't this what we want for Christmas and what we want for our loved ones? Doesn't God want this for us?

When we wish people a merry Christmas and a happy new year, we usually want for ourselves and for them more specifically - love, joy, and peace. Searching out a biblical basis for these we find they are among the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23 RSV): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Now, fruit is a useful product of plant growth. So, the fruits of the Holy Spirit are a product, outgrowth, or result of the Holy Spirit working in a person as a person spiritually grows.

The prophet Isaiah taught his people to look for the Messiah to come who will be a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch that grows out of it. The Messiah will be an outgrowth, a fruit, rooted in their ancestry. The second verse goes on to say, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him..." (See Isaiah 11:1-2 RSV) The Spirit of the Lord rests upon him with its seven gifts as traditionally listed (Isaiah 11:2-3 RSV): wisdom, understanding, counsel (right judgment), fortitude (courage, strength, or might), knowledge, piety (reverence) and fear of the Lord (awe, wonder).

This Christmas we celebrate God the Father giving us the Gift of Jesus Christ His Son as our Messiah, Lord, and Savior. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him. He wants to share with us the seven gifts of His Spirit this Christmas. How bad do we want them? Are we willing to do whatever it takes to receive these gifts? In order to receive them we have to heed the Advent cry of repentance, welcome the gifts of the Holy Spirit and practice them in our daily lives. As we grow in these gifts, we will bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Having the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives will make our Christmas wish come true - a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Confirmation Retreat Save the Date: One confirmation requirement set by our bishop is that our candidates attend one Confirmation retreat. The only one available that our diocese is conducting is Saturday, February 4, 2023 from 9:30 am - 5:00 pm in Watertown. We will handle registrations through our YFF sessions. The Sacred Heart Parish Council decided to charter a bus for this event. We will have room for candidates from other parishes. Please save the date.

Kingdom Come: Scott Hahn Reflects on the Second Sunday of Advent



Isaiah 11:1–10
Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 12–13, 17
Romans 15:4–9
Matthew 3:1–12

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” John proclaims. And the Liturgy today paints us a vivid portrait of our new king and the shape of the kingdom He has come to bring.

The Lord whom John prepares the way for in today's Gospel is the righteous king prophesied in today's First Reading and Psalm. He is the king's son, the son of David—a shoot from the root of Jesse, David's father (see Ruth 4:17).

He will be the Messiah, anointed with the Holy Spirit (see 2 Samuel 23:1; 1 Kings 1:39; Psalm 2:2), endowed with the seven gifts of the Spirit—wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

He will rule with justice, saving the poor from the ruthless and wicked. His rule will be not only over Israel—but will extend from sea to sea, to the ends of the earth. He will be a light, a signal to all nations. And they will seek Him and pay Him homage.

In Him, all the tribes of the earth will find blessing. The covenant promise to Abraham (see Genesis 12:3), renewed in God's oath to David (see Psalm 89:4,28), will be fulfilled in His dynasty. And His name will be blessed forever.

In Christ, God confirms His oath to Israel's patriarchs, Paul tells us in today's Epistle. But no longer are God's promises reserved solely for the children of Abraham. The Gentiles, too, will glorify God for His mercy. Once strangers, in Christ they will be included in “the covenants of promise” (see Ephesians 2:12).

John delivers this same message in the Gospel. Once God's chosen people were hewn from the rock of Abraham (see Isaiah 51:1–2). Now, God will raise up living stones (see 1 Peter 2:5)—children of Abraham born not of flesh and blood but of the Spirit.

This is the meaning of the fiery baptism He brings—making us royal heirs of the kingdom of heaven, the Church.