

A Message From Your Rector

11/16/10

Dear Parish Family and Friends:

Greetings of peace and love in the name of the Benevolent! Two Sundays ago we fell backyard one hour, which for me marks the beginning of the cold dark season. Thankfully we live in California where it's not all that bad. The time change also marks the reluctant transition into the holiday season. Stress levels begin to rise as people begin to think about Thanksgiving and Christmas, and all the busyness attached to these holidays. The Church is not exempt. There is a lot to do in preparation. For those who like to plan ahead, the "Greening" of the church will take place this year on Thursday, December 16, beginning at 6:00PM. Of course, for us in the faith community, the gift of the coming birth is what needs to remain in focus.

I'm planning some time away. I've only taken one week of vacation this year, back in March when I went to New York for "Latent" the photography exhibition that featured some of my work. I will be taking the rest of my annual leave beginning with the Thanksgiving weekend. Supply clergy will be available. I will be spending Thanksgiving with my sister in Florida, and traveling to Cuba from there. While in Cuba I will be travelling from one end of the island to the other, beginning in the province of Santiago de Cuba, where most of my family lives, aunts and uncles, and ending in Havana, where I will be staying with cousins. Cuba is still one of those places where cousins are cousins, meaning family ready to embrace you upon arrival! I will return on Friday December 10th, and on Saturday December 11th, there will be a major Eucharistic celebration with a street procession featuring indigenous Mexican dance in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The procession will begin on Galway Street on the other side of Garden Grove, Blvd, and culminate at St. Anselm's. That event will begin at 10:00PM. The Sunday Eucharist will follow, so I will be literally jumping into the frying pan when I hit the ground. I am looking forward to my trip, and seeing my 99 year old aunt who doesn't look a day over 85 ☺. Please keep me in your prayers for safe travel.

We've seen many blessings as of late at St. Anselm's. Among other things, despite our financial challenges, all our parking lot lights have been repaired or replaced, thanks to the generosity of new members, and their gifts of time, talent, and treasure. November is typically stewardship month so it is fitting that I mention this now. This is the time of year where churches gear up their stewardship drives. We don't have the numbers for a major stewardship drive which actually makes your stewardship even more urgent. Remember the parable of the poor widows offering (Luke 20:45-21:4). Two copper

coins, given from a place of fearlessness, is a treasure beyond treasure. Of course, in the widow's case, it represented all her wealth. That is faith! Pledge cards are included with this letter. Please, please, please fill them out, and return them.

Sunday November 14 was special, with special, Bishop Bruno joining us. Between all our language congregations, we had well over 30 people being Confirmed or Received. It's been decades since we have numbers like that. It was a special celebration that began with a procession featuring liturgical dance for the first time at St. Anselm's. The Latino Confirmation class has been meeting on Thursday evenings in the Little Church, and last Thursday we had 22 people present. The level of enthusiasm is palpable. God's Spirit is moving in unexplainable ways, it really is a gift of grace.

In closing, I'd like to call us all to begin preparing for the coming Advent season. It will be upon us before we know it. Make time for prayer and meditation. Ann Yensen has a book for our reading group. Enter the Presence, the Garden of Delight that awaits you. It is so easy to get distracted, but the seasons of the church are season of holiness containing deep spiritual richness. It's time to reclaim these from the prosperity gurus that have taken over the commercialized spirituality market, and lost touch with the richness of our ancient faith. Jesus once walked the face of the earth, he now walks within our hearts, drawing us near to the Source, the place where all is possible. That's what we're all about in our communal life, we walk together, not alone. So, as the crazy world gears up for sales, over-eating, self-indulgence, and all the rest of that, let us remember what we are about, and remember the millions that are hurting financially. This is not the time to flaunt material goods, not with all the hurting people out there unemployed or under-employed. The coming Advent season calls us to a time of holy pondering.

Wishing you the best in the holiday season to come, I remain...

Faithfully Yours,

Wilfredo Benitez+

The Rev. Wilfredo Benitez,
Rector