



Gate of Heaven --- Our Lady of Victory

2018 — A Year Celebrating the Eucharist

### Third Sunday of Advent Reflection

Our First Advent reflection concerned itself with the presence of God among his people in the Old Testament. We saw how the presence of God among his people grew even more personal and intimate in the New Covenant where Jesus Christ, the God-man, comes among us in His divine and human nature. Before his Passion, Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist to be with us always – the REAL PRESENCE of His Body, Blood, Soul and divinity. He continues to give us this great Sacrament so we can enter into union with Him in Holy Communion and receive the redemptive graces that His great act of love for us on the cross accomplished. His Real Presence dwells in our church Tabernacle and we receive him and His redemptive graces – even daily. We saw how we are Living Tabernacles due to the Indwelling of God in the life of grace and – in a very special way – when we receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

Our Second Advent Reflection looked at how we can clean house and made room in our soul for this union with God so we can keep our spiritual life alive and growing unto eternal life by utilizing the Sacrament of Reconciliation instituted by Christ on the night of His Resurrection.

Today's Third and last Advent Reflection builds upon the prior two and asks – what should a PARISH of Living Tabernacles – growing in union with Christ and His Redemptive graces – look like? We ask this so we can strive for it a God's people. A passage from 1Peter 2 will help us to answer this question even though it uses the metaphor of Living Stones rather than Living Tabernacles. Let us listen to Peter:

*“Come to Him, a living stone rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

Jesus Christ is our cornerstone or foundation and we are built upon him offering our prayers and daily life to the Father through Him. As each Living Stone grows closer to Christ it becomes more tightly knit with other Living Stones that are also moving toward Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells the Living Stones and forms the unity between them.

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While each Living Stone puts his or her God-given gifts into practice everyone's gifts work together as a whole under the orchestration of the Holy Spirit to ring the Mystical Body of Christ to the world. Speaking as a member of the Evangelization Team, this is one of the things that attracts non-believers to Jesus Christ in the world today.

Whether we see ourselves as Living Stones or Living Tabernacles with Christ as the foundation, we are brought further into One Body as we are spiritually nourished in Holy Communion. We grow vertically in union with Christ and horizontally in union with each other. To help us understand how to strengthen this horizontal unity, Pope St. John Paul II advises us to welcome our brothers and sisters and to prize them as a gift from God for all of us. He encourages us to see what is positive and gifted in other parishioners and make room for these gifts to flourish among us. We are to "bear with 'each other's burdens' and resist the selfish temptations that constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust, and jealousy." In summary, we are to make room for each person and his or her gifts; treasure these gifts that God gave to our brothers and sisters as if they were our own; and use our gifts along with them to build up the Mystical Body of Christ for the world. This is a beautiful vision of what it means to be a Christian in relationship with Jesus Christ and, thereby, with others in His mystical body.

Let us pray that this upcoming year of the Eucharist celebrated at Gate of Heaven and Our Lady of Victory churches – in honor of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Diocese of Scranton – will draw each of us nearer to Jesus and to each other so that as Jesus prayed on the eve of His Passion..."that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me."  
(John 17)

The Evangelization Team of our two churches wishes you and your family a blessed remainder of Advent and a very Merry Christmas to come!