

## *A Note from Fr. Keith, Our Pastor*

Greetings, once again, from military training! Beginning on December 1st, I will have days available for Mass intentions. Please contact the Ministry Center if you would like me to offer a private Mass for your intentions. The normal policies of the Diocese of Joliet regulating Mass offerings will still apply even though I will be in the Middle East at that time. This will be another opportunity for us to remain in spiritual communion during my deployment.

This week we will celebrate Thanksgiving. This secular holiday has religious origins. For example, the Pilgrims would offer days of fasting to thank God for the blessings of harvests and safe ship landings. These were observed with Church services and communal meals. The “First Thanksgiving” between the Pilgrims and Natives took place in October 1621. The scene of unity between the Settlers, themselves survivors of the Mayflower, and the Wampanoag Tribe endures in American history.

Although observed on and off since 1789, Thanksgiving Day was formally proclaimed by President Lincoln in 1863 as a day of remembrance and gratitude during the Civil War. As people of faith, Thanksgiving is an invitation to thank God for the many blessings we have received throughout the year. Furthermore, in the present day, Thanksgiving is an opportunity to pause before the so-called “Christmas creep,” whereby Advent is replaced by consumerism.

This weekend we also celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, which marks the end of the Season of Ordinary, the end of the Liturgical Year, and the transition to the Season of Advent. Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas. It is not the same as Christmas. We celebrate the Nativity (birth) of Our Lord Jesus Christ from Christmas Eve to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. In Europe, Christmas extends to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord which usually falls in early February.

Historically, Advent resembled Lent. Christians would prepare for Christmas by devoting themselves to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Decorations were reserved only for the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) and Christmas. Gifts were not exchanged until after Christmas Mass. The Advent Wreath still symbolizes this penitential emphasis with the three violet (purple) candles, which reflect the somber character of the season, and the one rose (pink) candle which represents the previously mentioned Gaudete Sunday.

This year, I will be celebrating Thanksgiving while on a flight to the Middle East. The tray table and airline snacks will replace turkey and a family table. Regardless of these sacrifices, know of my gratitude for all of you. The Lord has blessed me to be your pastor. Please join me in thanking God from whom all good things come.