

First Sunday of Advent
November 29, 2020

“In other words, it is only the person who has memories who can hope.”
(Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Seek That Which is Above, p. 10).

Each year catholic churches around the world join together to remember the first coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ with the beginning of the Advent season. On this First Sunday of Advent, we too add our prayers with this great symphony of love. Coupled with this celebration, the Archdiocese of Mobile asks us to begin today a year-long focus upon the Eucharist and the Parish. The Archbishop wants to encourage thoughtful reflection and study of the Eucharist which, in turn, could lead to a renewal of our parishes.

In considering this endeavor, I am reminded of a story retold by Pope Benedict XVI concerning the German statesman and literary figure, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe wrote of his experience at a parish celebration of the feast of Saint Roch. Due to the Napoleonic wars, some time had passed between the last celebration and the one Goethe was attending. Goethe, in his commentary, had paid particular attention to the faces of both the old and the young. Both were filled with joy and excitement. The old remembered the celebration from earlier times; while the young were experiencing it for the first time. What struck Goethe as most peculiar was the faces of the middle group. He described these faces as being unmoved, indifferent, bored. He summarized their faces with these words: “they were born in evil times, had nothing good to remember and consequently had nothing to hope for.” Pope Benedict XVI would further this observation with these words: “In other words, it is only the person who has memories who can hope.”

Dear family, if we want to renew our lives, our parishes, and deepen our love of the Eucharist, then I ask what good memories do we have of these things? Memories can bring us hope for both the present and the future. When we remember our time at Saint Thomas and Saint Bridget, what do we remember? I hope all of us can say - I knew I was loved; I knew the priests, sisters, teachers, staff, my parents, my friends, the people, loved and cared for me. It is my desire as we begin this year dedicated to the Eucharist and our parishes to instill within you good memories of being loved. I would ask that you too help me in this endeavor through making good memories of love as well. I prayerfully believe if we begin with this simple starting point, the rest will gradually develop in God’s time.