

I'd like to share with you about a wonderful birthday invitation I have received this year from a father to celebrate the birth of his son..

The father has invited not just me, but my family, my friends, **ALL OF US**, to celebrate His son's birth.

Over the years the Father keeps reminding us of that birth and welcoming us who know Him and His Son to celebrate it.

NO gift IS needed or wanted this year, just our whole heart-ed presence.

**WE ARE THE GIFT GOD THE FATHER WANTS TO GATHER TO CELEBRATE JESUS BIRTH. (repeat)**

It doesn't matter what is going on in our lives or in the events of the world, God the Father wants us to make time to celebrate.

This year as in the past, St. Theodore's Church as well as churches through out the world will light a candle to get our attention to remind us of the Light that came into the world.

We are asked to light our own candle in our own home to to start the preparation to celebrate.

The first of four candles to light the way for the next four weeks, the Advent Season.

Four weeks to prepare ourselves to celebrate.

And in that spirit of celebration many distractions may pull us in many other ways to celebrate a spirit of giving.

It is not wrong to celebrate CHRISTmas with our family and friends, and to share gifts with one another.

**BUT NOT** to lose sight **of WHO we are celebrating and WHY.**

Over the next four weeks, most of our time will be spent just getting through a normal day of doing our normal daily activities **BUT** with the lighting

today with the first candle we are being challenged and reminded to set aside some time to reflect on the Father's invitation to celebrate Jesus birth.

We will hear wonderful words in many ways, cards, songs even advertising to help us get ready to celebrate.

We all have different ways of preparing for events in our lives, but this needs to be the most important for the next 4 weeks.

I'd like to share 4 of them with you some of the most tried and true I have used in the past, they may just help you this year.

Set aside a time for daily prayer, especially if you don't already do it even if it's just a few minutes to remind yourself of WHO is to come.

By scripture reading, especially the birth narrative to open your heart and mind and truly know the wonder and beauty of the Fathers gift to the world.

By going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation to open yourself to be that wonderful gift of yourself as a gift to Jesus.

By bringing a gift, a meal to a shut in or someone less fortunate or in need, or following the Advent idea of our food cupboard in last weeks bulletin.

My memory is not what it used to be, just ask my wife, but sometimes it helps me recall wonderful memories, I'd like to share an event that happed in the past a few years ago.

While visiting a patient at SMH at this time of year, he recalled to me how beautiful the Advent season was to him and how he celebrated it in a very special way.

The first Sunday of advent he placed a birthday candle in a small cup on the night stand by his bed so he could see before he went to sleep and again when he awoke in the morning.

On the second Sunday of Advent he placed a second candle next to the first and so on through the third and fourth Sundays.

On Christmas day he would light them, and gently pray Happy Birthday to Jesus. **It was all he had to bring Jesus.**

Tonight, my wife and I will light the first purple candle in the advent wreath on our dinner table and say an advent prayer.

We will do this before our evening meal and adding another candle for the next 3 Sundays.

We have all received an invitation to celebrate.

What will you do for the next 4 weeks to prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth??

Will it be a tradition you have done in the past? or will it be something different, a new tradition you will start??

**Whatever it is may it always be done from the HEART!!**