

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners:

A few Advents back a friend was telling me about her “Black Friday” ritual on the day after Thanksgiving. At 5 in the morning she, her mother and two sisters head off for Wal-Mart and other such stores in order to get in on the official opening of the Christmas shopping season. Why anyone would want to get up early in the morning on a day that for many people is a holiday so that they can stand in lines with thousands of other frenzied shoppers is beyond me. *Black Friday indeed!* I think I would rather get a beating or have my teeth pulled. However, my friend says that she and her family really enjoy it. Must be a woman's thing. A male friend participating in the same conversation said that he thinks the best time to shop is just before closing on Christmas Eve as the stores are largely empty. That would definitely be a man's thing.

In any case, whether we go first thing in the morning on “Black Friday” or the last thing on Christmas Eve, the shopping season of the year is upon us. Much of our economy seems dependent on this seasonal shopping spree and undoubtedly the media will keep us up to date on just how much we consumers are consuming this year.

The giving and receiving of gifts at Christmas is an old tradition. It also adds to the joy of the season as we celebrate Christ's birth. However, it would be well if we sought some guidance from the Lord regarding our gift giving. After all, it is *His* birthday. For many people, who are already burdened with so much stuff that they can't find storage for it all. The additional stuff that arrives at Christmas is unneeded. Yet, there remain many people around us who do need our generosity.

Perhaps this year, when we're thinking of the right gift to give to a loved one or friend, we should consider giving to a charity in their name. A Christmas card informing them of our action would express our affection while our donation would help some good cause. Involving our children in this effort would also be a good lesson for them about the true spirit of Christmas giving. I think many men might like this practice if it would save them a few trips to the shopping mall.

As for the legions of “Black Friday” shoppers, we wouldn't want to deprive them of the pleasures of pathological shopping. However, perhaps next year when they're scurrying around the local Wal-Mart at 5am in the morning, they might consider putting a few items for the poor in their shopping carts.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley