Christmas Liturgy  
December 8, 2015  
Remarks by Tom Foley

Good afternoon. I want to welcome each of you this afternoon and to offer a special welcome to today’s celebrant Fr. Malachi Van Tassel. Thank you for making the time to be with us at Mount Aloysius today, Malachi, for our third anniversary with you here!

We are reminded that the word Advent, deriving from the Latin *adventus*, alludes to the act of arriving and our anticipation—or waiting—for that arrival. So we join in anticipation in this season for the Messiah’s imminent arrival in and for each of us. A kind of spiritual anticipation as it was.

*We anticipate* in more material ways as well, harking back to the days when we confused the placement of the Baby Jesus in the church manger with the arrival of a certain jolly sleigh master on the roof of our childhood homes. Ha-ha.

So many memories flood our senses at this time of year. The sounds of Christmas—the peel of Christmas bells and of children’s laughter, the non-stop Christmas music that repeats endlessly this time of year (I am famous for sneaking my collection of Elvis Christmas songs onto the family CD player). And the smells of Christmas—each aroma has its own peculiar hold on our memory.

It is good to revel in all those memories—they are part of the *anticipation* that Advent presages. Those memories make us who we are, and they remind us of our most innocent selves.
But we are not children anymore and at Mount Aloysius this is a time of year when we are encouraged to look outside ourselves as well. And what makes Christmas at the Mount especially meaningful is the question we ask at the planting of the Angel Tree and every day since. And that question is “how may we serve others?”

At this school, looking outside of ourselves—serving others—means

- over 800 Mountie students volunteering on 315 service projects with 214 different community partners and
- it means Mountie faculty and staff serving on the boards of 45 non-profits, volunteering at 91 of them and financially supporting 112 different organizations that do good works far beyond our College footprint.

There are so many examples--large and small--that offer clear evidence of the Mount Aloysius approach to the season, an approach that encourages us

- to look outside ourselves and embrace the other in our society
- to reflect our anticipation and do good works for others and
- to find our joy in the smiles that we help to put on the faces of others
- as we practice our core values of mercy, hospitality, justice and service.

Let me finish this welcome, on this very first day of the Pope Francis-proclaimed Year of Mercy, with these words of anticipation, in the form of a metaphor about welcoming “the other.” They come from a poem by Australian poet Mary Wickham called “The Door of Mercy.”

The Door of Mercy is double-hinged,

swinging in, opening out,

sturdy, yet easily moved.

My friend says: You only have to knock once,

and you only have to knock lightly....
The Door of Mercy rests on the threshold of need.
Its single key is kindness, which is always in the lock...

Blessing is for all who come and go, stay and return,
   helper and helped,
   all belonging, each bestowing.
My friend says: You only have to knock once,
   and you only have to knock lightly.
The God of Mercy, whose door it is,
   is always home.

Safe travels home. And the door will always be open for you here at Mount Aloysius.
And let me be the first to say to each of you, Merry Christmas!