

ADVENT IV 2013
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
ADVENT COLLECT, PHILIPPIANS 4.4 JOHN 1.19
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***HELP US THROW AWAY WORKS OF DARKNESS...
PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT...THE OPENING
AND NOW CLOSING CALL OF ADVENT...***

Those who seriously undertake Christianity, by it's very nature, commit to embrace the Culture of Life...life is about growing...growing requires light...light is an armor, a protection...protection against darkness...

Embracing the Culture of Life is the opportunity open to all...for free...this culture is about life that never ends...available immediately, forever...no questions asked...

This Season of Advent, now drawing to a close, is like light and darkness, a series of stark contrasts...it prepares us for *new life* while simultaneously compelling us to be mindful of the end...in essence, a mini course in theology...symbolized the Alpha and Omega...the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

As we commenced our Advent journey of preparation just 21 days ago I said, and the Collects remind us, Advent compels us to consider the four final things...death, judgment, heaven and hell...three of which everyone will experience. We have given attention to the first three on each of the prior Sundays...today is number four.

Considering the option of Hell is indeed a dicey undertaking at any time...let alone 3 days prior to Christmas...yet we must...for it is another reality...another option...

One thing we must do is consider the effect of the escalating acceptance of the Culture of Death...the deadly antithesis of life...a perilous behavioral issue that must not be dismissed.

All too often orthodox Catholic Christianity is accused of being just about what mystically happens later...not about the present. That is incorrect...the Culture of Life IS about NOW and the FUTURE.

Conversely the Culture of Death is about present deadlines devoid of ANY future. That is Hell now and in the future. We find ourselves justifiably frustrated with the incessancy of this culture. It is all around us...it permeates lives through active and passive media posing as *just entertainment*. Gratuitous violence is corrupt...serves no worthy purpose...it must cease.

What, then must happen...what can WE do...? There is an understandable outcry for regulatory intervention...more laws, regulations, safeguards,

etc...those debates have their own place and venues...but not here.

Where then...? It commences with individual commitment and concern...acceptance of personal responsibility and accountability...collective /community civility is a great start...

Our role...? WE, and those within our sphere of influence, must make a change of heart. This compels an unreserved embrace of the Culture of Life in all SAID and DONE...IMMEDIATELY...

Advent IS about NOW...preparing to receive the ultimate gift...God himself among us...not a 2000 year old memory...NOW...not sometime later, more convenient when things 'settle down'...

The world into which Jesus arrived was devoid of willingness to understand who God is...a world of bickering; battles, deceit, despondency and self-righteousness...not much love...a hell on earth.

Hell is a self-imposed separation God...the self-imposed absence of love...in one word, atheism. The culture of death is marked by an ascending stridency by some who have embraced the cold, despondent chill of atheism. Worse, some are compelled to inflict it upon others by all too familiar methods.

Remove the abstraction. Do you know someone separated from God? Someone who doubts or refuses to consider the existence of God; refuses to accept or extend forgiveness? Most importantly, what about the person we meet in the mirror...?

One who falls into that category has self-selected a lack of love...has refused to accept God's free gift...the first step toward something that will get only worse.

Refusal to accept or to extend love is an option...albeit a painful choice...it is one of the options of Free Will. The refusal to accept or extend a gift is the path leading to ultimate separation from others in this life and, ultimately, from God.

God wants no one to refuse the gift of love...not in this life nor to be deprived in the next...the refusal of love in this life is self-selection away from God forever...that condition, the total absence of love, is hell...it CAN be created in this life and extended into the next. NOT what God wants for anyone!

God does not speak to us in blazing flashes, but rather with a fragile flame, a baby...the New Light

Let us put on the **ARMOUR OF THIS NEW LIGHT**...now and forever embracing the **CULTURE OF LIFE**.

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