

ADVENT IV 2014
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG

ADVENT COLLECT PHILIPPIANS 4.4 JOHN 1.19

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GOD DOES NOT SPEAK TO US IN BLINDING FLASHES, RATHER WITH A FRAGILE FLAME, A BABY...ACCOMPANYING WORDS FOR LIGHTING ADVENT WREATH CANDLE 4...DROPPING WORKS OF DARKNESS...ACTION 4 PUTTING IN PLACE OUR PERSONAL ARMOUR OF LIGHT – AND LIFE...THE OPENING AND NOW, TRANSITIONAL MANDATE 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 the armour,...protection against darkness...in particular, dark behavior...

Embracing the Culture of Life is the opportunity open to all...for free...this culture is about life that does not end...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* and 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 Procession just 21 days ago I asked us to undertake three Actions...

- **Learn**
- **Organize**
- **Elect Life**

Today add number 4...

- **Reject Deadly Behavior**

Failure to take action on the third is to auto-select the fourth...Deadline...or Hell...a dicey proposition at any time...let alone 4 days prior to Christmas...yet we must face it...for it is another reality... another option...

Consider 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 deadliness devoid of ANY future. That is Hell forever 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*.

What here then...? It commences with individual commitment and concern...acceptance of personal responsibility and accountability... 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 change...God himself among us...not a 2000 year old nostalgic 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 from God...in one word, atheism. The culture of death embraces the despondent chill of atheism. Worse, some are compelled to inflict it upon others by all too familiar methods.

Remove the abstraction. Do we 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...?

Refusal to accept or extend love is among 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...then, from God.

God wants no one to decline love in this life nor to be deprived in the next...refusal is self-selection away from God forever...that condition, is hell...it CAN be created in this life...self-propelled to 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 be illuminated in **THIS NEW LIGHT**...now and embracing forever the **CULTURE OF LIFE**.

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