

I ADVENT 2018

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

THE COLLECT



HAPPY NEW YEAR...it's Advent Sunday...the Church's New Years Day.

Last Sunday...we asked God to "stir up"...*"energize"* our wills to be more like his will...to help us always do what is right and pleasing to him. We also asked God to bless the work we do...making it good and productive work.

Asking God to help us re-energize our spiritual lives and make them better amounts to a New Year's resolution of the spiritual kind...it's a resolution we promise God we are going to try to keep...which is possible only with his help.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word **adventus**...meaning **coming**. During Advent we are getting our hearts, minds and souls, ready for the first coming of Jesus on Christmas Day. Most of us are busy buying Christmas gifts and sending out Christmas cards...but that's not the real purpose of Advent.

The Season of Advent is ultimately about our getting ready for the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time...the Season of Advent is about **last things first**: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

- Death is not something we like to think about much less talk about...but death is unavoidable
- Judgment is also something we can't avoid...we will be judged by our words AND actions and how we treat others
- Heaven is what the author of Hebrews writes is our hope...what we have not yet experienced
- Hell is the alternative to Heaven

But the Season of Advent is not about doom and gloom. Advent is a Penitential Season like Lent...as evidenced by the violet vestments and Altar hangings and absence of flowers at the High Altar. Advent is about starting anew and getting our spiritual lives in order...so we are ready for Jesus' birth on Christmas Day and his striking reappearance on the last day.

The Advent Collect was composed for the first *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 and it is compelling. We're asking God to help us turn away from dark and destructive behavior...and embrace Jesus the Light of the World and to help us do this now...not later; reminding ourselves Jesus embraced our humanity...he learned to walk among us so one day we might walk with him in heaven forever.

Today we also have the privilege of welcoming Joseph Calder II (Joey) into the Body of Christ...the Church...through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Joey begins a new life in Christ supported by his parents' and sponsors' word and example. Saint Joseph Parish will also play an active role in Joey's spiritual upbringing...through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism we are all connected in that great fellowship called the Communion of Saints...to which Joey now belongs...it's up to all of us to see to it he grows and matures as a child of God.

Babies like to sleep a lot...that's OK for Joey. Saint Paul tells us in the Epistle it's time for us to wake up spiritually and stop acting like we're asleep all the time. He tell us stop doing things that belong in the dark...act like we're God's children who walk during the daytime. We want to be seen as people who love God and love others...and we must practice genuine love...not duplicitous phony love...our love must be dynamic and active.

The rubric...the *italicized* words printed under the Advent Collect...tell us to say the Collect EVERY DAY until Christmas Day...like the Lenten Collect...this means WAKE UP...PAY ATTENTION...NOW AND NOT LATER.

The Advent Collect is about reordering our spiritual lives now...and not waiting until later in life or when we're less busy with our secular lives...we need to make time for Christ now...not later! In fact...our spiritual and secular lives are connected...we can't separate them.

It's Advent Sunday...the Church's New Year's Day...let's not forget to wish each other **HAPPY NEW YEAR...**and **HAPPY NEW BIRTHDAY TO BABY JOEY!**

