

Advent I 2020
Sermon- Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Romans 13.8-14 Matthew 21.1-13



Happy New Year!

Advent Sunday is New Year's Day for the Church? The Advent Season this year will be different from last year. Once again, we find ourselves sheltering in place and unable to meet for Sunday Mass in person. So...let's make the most of the Season.

The word **advent** comes from the Latin word **adventus** and means **coming**. Advent is the season during which we prepare our hearts, minds and souls for the **First Coming** of Jesus on Christmas Day, and look forward with hope and expectation to his **Second Coming** at the end of time.

During Advent we contemplate 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 and we want no part of it

In the Epistle, Saint Paul tells us that Christians are supposed to behave in a certain way. We are supposed to be honest, fair in dealing with people, and truthful. We do what's best for others, because that is what Christian love is. Saint Paul says we should walk as children of the Light.

Saint Paul tells us not to do the kinds of things people who sneak around after dark do because they think they're not going to get caught. Instead, we should make the Great Commandment to love God and love others as we want to be loved our Advent Mantra. When we love others, we are showing God how much we love him.

In the Advent Collect we ask God to give us grace, which is his special help, to "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the

armor of light." The Book of Common Prayer instructs us to say the Collect every day during Advent...doing this can help us do what Saint Paul asks us to do...the right thing...walking as children in the Light that is Christ.

If there are areas of our life that need improvement, we should ask God to help us do better. We can make that our Christian New Year resolution. At the same time, we need to thank God for the many blessings he has given us over the past year.

Today's Gospel seems strangely out of place...it is the Palm Sunday story. Jesus is riding into Jerusalem on his donkey. He comes as Messiah and King...but his entrance into the city is the greatest act of humility. When he gets to the Temple he is not happy at what he sees. People were selling things at inflated prices and charging high fees to exchange money. Jesus calls them thieves because they are not doing the right thing. By hurting others...they bring dishonor to God's House...the Temple.

We should never be afraid to be seen doing God's work, not because we want people to notice us or God to congratulate us for what he wants us to do, but because there are no secrets in the work we do. Church work is not secret work...we don't sneak around in the dark. We have nothing to hide. Remember we are the best advertisements for God and his son Jesus, and we always want to make sure we live our lives according to his will.

The Advent Season is all about light. Covid-19 and sheltering-in-place notwithstanding, the real Light that is coming into the world is Jesus. For the next four weeks we will be getting ourselves ready to receive the most perfect Christmas gift ever...God himself made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

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