

The First Sunday in Advent
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
The Advent Collect Romans 13.8-14
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It's the weekend after Labor Day 2022. The Location: A popular members' only shopping mecca. Post-Labor Day Sales have ended. Christmas trees have appeared. Christmas music is playing in the background. Wait a minute! Christmas decorations and music in September!

Today is Advent Sunday and the commencement of a New Church Year. While the secular world is busy advertising great Christmas bargains...we have other things to think about. Not that Christmas bargains are bad. They just shouldn't be what we focus on during the Advent Season.

There is a wonderful hymn in the Hymns for Children section of the Hymnal. It goes like this:

*Advent tells us Christ is near;
Christmas tells us Christ is here.
In Epiphany we trace;
All the glory of his grace.*

The hymn was written by Katherine Hankey in 1858. She was an Anglican missionary and nurse. The hymn cleverly links the three Seasons of the Church Year that talk about the birth of Jesus.

Mrs. Hankey's hymn teaches us...Advent tells us Christ is near...but he's not here yet. So let's try to hold off singing Christmas hymns and carols...until Christmas Eve. Then we will have twelve days to truly celebrate Christmas.

The word **advent** comes from the Latin word **adventus** and means **coming**. Advent is the season during which we prepare our hearts and minds and souls for the **First Coming** of Jesus at Christmas...and his **Second Coming** at the end of time.

The Advent Collect (*Book of Common Prayer Book, Page 90*) tells us what we

should be meditating on during the Advent Season. We are asking God to give us grace...his special help...to "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light."

Our friend Saint Paul tells us we are God's children and should "live in the light". He means we should avoid doing things that belong to "darkness". We are supposed to be honest. We are supposed to be fair when we deal with people. We are always to tell the truth.

We should never be afraid to be seen doing God's work, not because we want people to congratulate us or because we think we are better than they are, but because there are no secrets in the work we do.

The Advent Season is all about light. The real Light that is coming into the world is Jesus. Jesus in the Light of John's Gospel...the Light that shines in the darkness...and the Light that can never be extinguished.

For the next four weeks we will be getting ready to receive Jesus on Christmas Day. The best way we can get ready is to pay attention to what the Advent Collect says and "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light."

Our friend Saint Paul tells us the "armor of light" equips us to conduct ourselves as God's children now during our time on earth. He reminds us Jesus came to visit us a humble child himself...and will come again in glory and light.

The rubric...the **italicized** words printed below the Advent Collect reads, "*This Collect is to be repeated every day...until Christmas Day.*"

Let's make the Advent Collect our "New Years" resolution. And since this is the Church's "New Years Day", let's not forget to wish each other a Happy New Year.

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