

December 1, 2019

***From Fr. Jim . . .***

**Keeping Advent:** Advent is a time of beginning and endings. It embraces the end of the world's civil calendar and the beginning of the church's sacred cycle. Nature's changes and the emergence of winter, the passing of the old year, the end of ordinary time through which we read Luke's Gospel. However, a new gospel is opened. This year we will be reading from Matthew. Each week we light another candle on the Advent wreath. "Watching" and "waiting" is balanced by "rejoice" and "fulfillment" as the community moves into winter's darkness with a clear orientation toward the light which is Jesus Christ and in whom all things can be made new.



At this time of the year, more than any other, we need to see society not as a world that is lost but as the world God refused to be lost; (not as a people condemned but a people beholding of God's dwelling place of merciful, saving, redeeming love. Advent is about longing and desire – not for material gifts – though that may be the reality for many- but longing and desire for the full realization of God's kingdom. With the first Christians, we long and wait for that day to come and we live in such a way that will build the kingdom of God on earth as we wait for the kingdom to be fully realized in heaven. We live not as a people who are lost but as a people whom God has refused to be lost. (We live not in darkness, despair and without hope but in light, forgiveness, and abundance of grace.

The official explanation of the season defines the spirit that should mark the life of each believer and of every believing community as "devout and joyful expectation." We can expect that Christ's first coming and presence has changed and challenged the darkness of sin and death and makes clear God's intention to refuse to allow the world to be lost. We can expect Christ's second coming to bring life to fullness and make the victory over sin and death complete. As believers, we wait devoutly and joyfully for signs of God's presence among us in Word and Sacrament, inviting us to become one with the reign of Christ's love. Advent asks us to wait and hope with devotion and joy as we await his return in glory. The waiting that we do has a two-fold nature: "waiting in memory of the first, humble coming of the Lord in our mortal flesh," and the waiting supplication for his final, glorious coming as Lord of History and "universal Judge." (From the Directory of Popular Piety and the Liturgy.)

**A Reflection:** What if the Season of Advent were commercialized in our stores just like the Season of Christmas? What would it look like? If the stores, radio and television stations were to sell Advent like they do Christmas, what would they sell? What special Advent songs would you hear on the radio? What special programs would air on TV? Who would you interview for Advent? What acts of devout and joyful expectation for being freed from the power of sin and death and for believing that one day you will be completely free from its power, sells you on the Season of Advent this year? How is and will God show you that you are someone who he refuses to be lost? How can we bring this Good News to others? Do participating in any of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy reveal how Christ has come, is come and will come again? Come, Lord Jesus, Come!