

Homily: 1st Sunday of Advent: Cycle C: 2015: Jer 33: 14-16; Ps. 25; 1 Thes 3: 12- 4:2;
Lk 21: 25-28, 34-36

“Holy Preparation in the Season of Advent”

As we begin this holy season of Advent and this new liturgical year it is a wonderful opportunity to draw closer to our loving Lord who became a little baby to save us from the power of satan, sin and death. What can we do on a practical level to prepare our hearts to welcome our Lord on Christmas day?

1. Advent is a time of **anticipation, waiting and preparation**. We are remembering both the first coming of Jesus as a little baby in Bethlehem, and also looking forward to His second coming in glory at the end of time. How do we prepare ourselves for these great spiritual mysteries? Well the best thing we can do, the best gift we can give back to the child Jesus is to allow Him to transform our hearts in His truth and love. This means taking the steps necessary on our end to help bring this about, to have a deeper interior conversion. There are some golden opportunities to do this during the Holy season of Advent: not forgetting about coming to **Mass on the Holy Days: December 8, Christmas and January 1;** receiving **the Sacrament of Reconciliation**, especially if it’s been a long time since we have made a good Confession, truly taking advantage of the many times this Sacrament is offered during the Holy Season of Advent, to receive forgiveness of our sins, which can help prepare our hearts to receive the Lord in a deeper way - if we make a totally honest and heartfelt Confession. Doing some type of **penance** in reparation for our past sins is another gift we can give to the Lord this Advent season. The liturgical color of purple both signifies anticipation and penance. There is no inherent contradiction between having a joyful spirit looking forward to Christmas day and doing some penance at the same time; it is not the same as Lent, but there is a penitential aspect to Advent. **Praying the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet** as individuals or even better as a family, or trying to attend **daily Mass**, or at least one extra day a week if our schedule allows it, as well as coming to our **Eucharistic Holy Hour on Thursday night at 6 pm**, are other powerful ways we can prepare our hearts to receive the Lord. We

also could spend Advent pondering the mystery of the **Infancy narratives** in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew chapters 1 and 2. We also should be **doing some acts of charity** to help the less fortunate, e.g. our Parish mitten tree, and not buying unnecessary items for ourselves or others that just draw us more and more into the emptiness of materialism. **Remember Christ is the reason for the season** - not endless shopping and parties! Although Christmas parties and even a bit of shopping are nice if put in proper spiritual perspective.

2. Advent should be a time that fills us with a spirit of **hope**: the supernatural infused gift of God in our souls, which we receive in seed form in our Baptism, by which we look forward in confidence to the fulfillment of all of God's promises in due time. We can all grow in this virtue. As a Church **we believe with all our hearts that when Jesus comes again in glory there will be a definitive end of sin, death, destruction, injustice, pain, sorrow and misery since Jesus has already won the definitive victory over satan, sin and death: beginning through the Lord's coming as a little baby in His holy Incarnation.** If we allow ourselves to enter into this mystery of the Lord coming among us as a little baby in holy silence and love, it will lead us to greater holiness, life, justice, peace and joy, even now in the midst of our often dark and depressing world! We will be given by God's free gift a more profound spiritual taste of this reality in these next few weeks, if we don't allow ourselves to get caught up in the materialistic rat race of how our secular society celebrates this season whose motto is: **Buy, buy, buy and buy some more** - which is truly depressing! We will be afflicted by what Jesus warns us about in the Gospel today, *Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, or that day will catch you by surprise like a trap.* He is talking about His second Coming, but it also ties into the proper remembrance of His first coming. **Remember Jesus is the only real reason for the season!** If we remember this we will be full of the joy and hope that comes from the Lord. May we reflect this even in how we speak about this season. Remember to wish people

a “*Blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas*” instead of the secular *happy holidays*.”☺

3. One final way we can have a great Advent spiritually is to enter into the **holy silence**. What does this consist of? It means trying to make a concerted effort to step back and ponder and reflect upon the mystery of what is occurring here: *the eternal son of God is becoming one of us*. Wow! To shut off the television a bit, the IPAD, the computer and the cell phone and the text messaging, to pull back a bit from all the shopping and Christmas parties and put ourselves in the state of mind and heart to enter into a prayerful awareness of God’s presence, who always comes in the mystery of silence and stillness. As God says through the psalmist (see psalm 46), “*Be still and know I am God.*” If we make a resolution to do this for **15 minutes** a day, if not more, God will touch our hearts in a profound way. Then we will both **rejoice** on Christmas day in the Lord’s first coming among us to save us from our sins, we will also be better **prepared** to ward off the tricky temptations of the devil in daily life, and will also **be ready** to have our definitive encounter with the Lord: either in earthly death or in His Second Coming in glory- whichever occurs first. *May the Lord bless us all with a spiritually fruitful Advent season, so that we can celebrate Christmas day with hearts renewed in His truth and love, and be able to generously give the Christ child the gift of ourselves on a deeper level, and generously bring the joy and hope of Advent to all those around us.* Finally let’s remember as I mention in my bulletin column this weekend for each of us to pray and invite back at least one person to the Catholic Faith and our Parish family if they live close by- that in the end would be a gift the Christ child would never forget to our eternal benefit and the good of the person or persons we got back to the Church on a regular basis. God bless you.