

Second Sunday in Advent C - A Good Work is Underway. *“the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

December 5, 2021.

Brothers and sisters, the year of St. Joseph will end the coming Wednesday December 8, but we can continue to pray to him. In his apostolic letter, Pope Francis explains that the aim of this special year is **“to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal,”** describing St. Joseph as a **“beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows.”** **“O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever. Saint Joseph, pray for us, (from Litany of St. Joseph). Amen.**

In this Sunday’s First Reading (5:1-9), **Baruch encourages Israel to foresee the moment when they’ll cast aside the rags of their affliction and dress in their “Sunday best” because the Lord is bringing them back to Jerusalem.** Baruch exhorts the Israelites to get ready to change from their garments of penance to those of joy. The Lord had taken Israel from being a nomadic people wandering in the desert to the Chosen People in the Promised Land, a nation. In Advent we decorate the sanctuary and vest the priests and deacons in purple, symbolizing sorrow, penance, and suffering. **Advent reminds us that salvation is underway, climaxing in the Incarnation and Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ.**

In the Second Reading (Philippines 1:4-6, 8-11), St. Paul reminds us **though Advent is a time of penance and conversion, it is also characterized by Messianic hope: our good work of penance and conversion will bear fruit in the birth of Our Lord at Christmas.** He describes it: **“the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”** Our Lord from all eternity enables us to definitively leave our sinful ways behind and wants us to be gathered around his Son before him in Heaven: a cause for joy. We received the grace of redemption at Baptism; **Paul encourages us today to trust in Our Lord and trust that redemption is underway, it is a work of God’s love: it wants to spark something in us, a love that burns all secondary and disordered loves away.** The Lord’s love reaches out to us first, and it continues to reach out to us even after we’d sinned.

In the Gospel (Luke 3:1-6), **St. John the Baptist is mobilized by the Holy Spirit to get the word out that the Lord is coming to lead anyone to salvation who wants it. John is announcing that the Lord will pave the way for our forgiveness and our conversion. The Lord is coming within reach. We need to start reaching out to him during Advent. Not only do we reach out to the Lord during Advent; in the Incarnation, the Lord also reaches out to us through our penance and striving for conversion. The choice is ours. Conversion and salvation are always within reach.**

Advent, besides getting ready with hope, is also the Time for Some Outreach. The holiday season is a particular time for reaching out especially to those in need, whether spiritually or materially. The Christmas Shoeboxes charity event by the CWL members at St. Paul Parish is a good example, reaching out to children in the third world. We just celebrated the Feast day of St Andrew on December 30. He was a close friend of Christ’s, he was present at the Last Supper, beheld the Risen Lord, witnessed the Ascension, shared in the Pentecost, and helped spread the Gospel in the early days of the Church. **The story of the call of St. Andrew is quite appropriate for the beginning of Advent, because Advent is a time when**

we will hear Jesus call us anew. He invites us with an invitation to give ourselves completely to His divine plan and purpose: to reach out, to be fishers of people. Many people don't know Jesus, but they do know us. **We can be another Andrew for them.** Like Andrew, we have been given special access to the Lord (see Ephesians 2:18; 3:12; Romans 5:2). **Bring people to Jesus this Advent.** There is a beautiful, true story about one woman who re-discovered this active Christian spirit not during the four weeks of Advent, but two days after Christmas. The heroine lived decades ago in the Midwest of USA. She was the owner of a news-stand and novelty shop in a small town. One year, shortly before Christmas, she fell sick and spent the whole holiday confined to bed. She felt rather gloomy and even somewhat bitter about missing Midnight Mass and the other Christmas celebrations. But when she re-opened her store two days after Christmas she had an idea: "Why not make today my lost Christmas?" She carried out her plan by putting the spirit of Christmas into the whole day. She smiled more frequently and more warmly than usual. She tried to be extra accommodating and friendly with her clients. She even gave spontaneous discounts to customers who were low on cash. After closing the store for the day, she took some small presents to several home-bound neighbours. And she also visited some poor families to give candy to the children. **By the time she came home, she was so full of joy and the spirit of Christmas that she had never felt happier in her life. She decided to keep the spirit of Christmas as long as she possibly could.**

How different Advent would be, for ourselves and for those around us, if, with the help of God's grace, we were to spend these four weeks actively ushering in the spirit of Christmas, instead of passively waiting for it to arrive. Reaching out to those who are lonely, those whose family is far away, or those coping with loss. Reaching out to that irascible person who is difficult to get along with. May be it's some one in the privacy of our own home or family. **We Reach Out To The Lord, and He Reaches Out To Us.** **Advent is a time when we need to ponder the great mystery of the Incarnation, of God coming and dwelling with all of us sinners in physical form through Eucharist at every mass. Before we receive the Eucharist we proclaim our faith as the Roman centurion proclaimed two thousands years ago when he outreached and asked Jesus to heal his servant: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my soul (servant) shall be healed."**(Matthew 8:8)

As Saint Ignatius of Loyola said: "After you have made a decision that is pleasing to God, the Devil may try to make you have second thoughts. Intensify your prayer time, meditation, and good deeds. For if Satan's temptations merely cause you to increase your efforts to grow in holiness, he'll have an incentive to leave you alone." The devil's favourite tactic is to make us think so much about ourselves that we lose sight of the bigger picture. **When we go out of our comfort zone to support, console, and encourage those who are suffering even more than we are, we break the devil's spell.**