

Homily: 1st Sunday of Advent: Cycle A: 2022: Is 2:1-5; Ps. 122; Rom 13: 11-14; Mt 19:24; 37-44

“How to make a good and holy Advent”

1. Today we are beginning a new liturgical year – it is also an invitation from the Lord for a new beginning for each of us. **Advent is a season of great spiritual opportunity** – a call to wait upon the Lord in humility, in love, in holy silence, in hopeful expectation asking Our Lady and St. Joseph to help us do so in a spirit of generosity, gratitude and recollection. We as a Church are calling to mind both Jesus’s first coming as the God-man who became a little child and was born on Christmas day to show us the way back to our Heavenly homeland and save us from our sins, and we are also anticipating Jesus’s Second Coming in glory - when He will judge the human race and establish a new heavens and a new earth.
2. **Are we ready for His coming?** The readings today should lead us to reflect upon that most important question in our hearts and minds. St. Paul in the 2nd reading today challenges us to cast off the works of darkness, of the flesh, and instead to embrace the works of light, of God. *To turn away from rivalry and jealousy, from drunkenness and lust and promiscuity; and instead to be kind and sober, pure and faithful, and diligent in loving God and neighbor.* This is why Advent is a time when all Catholics are encouraged to make a good Confession of their sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in humble honesty (if we are able to do so). Take advantage of the Advent Penance Service - ours at St. Thomas will be in two weeks on Sunday Dec 11 at 4 pm, and please pray for us priests - since hearing Confessions is not an easy task. Making a good Advent Confession is a prime spiritual way to get ready to see the Lord. Jesus is forewarning us in the Gospel by telling us not to wait until it is too late, *for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.* This will either be His Second Coming in glory, or when we take our last breath on earth, if it is before the Second Coming of the Lord.
3. **But are we distracted? Yes!!!** We live in a noisy, disorienting culture - a time of sensory overload. The people of Noah’s time were also distracted as Jesus points out in the Gospel today. They were focused on the here and now, instead of on the

Lord; they were *eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, working, etc.* **Can we all slow down this Advent and allow the Lord to draw us closer to His Heart, in love and peace and trust?** Please take extra some time and gain some time by pulling back, esp. on Sunday, from all *the text messages, the phone calls, the internet, the shopping, and the parties - to pray and reflect more, and interact with others face to face.* Here are a few recommendations of helpful Advent spiritual practices: **1.** *Make a good Confession of your sins (and take a Confession guide from the Church and also look up some good Catholic examinations of conscience - if need be, to help with this).* **2.** *Take some time to read the Infancy narratives in the Gospel of Matthew (chapters 1 and 2) and the Gospel of Luke (chapter 1 and chapter 2 verses 1-40).* **3.** *Try to come to daily Mass or at least one extra day a week (after this week).* **4.** *Pray the daily Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet, preferably with your family if at all possible.* **5.** *Do some good Advent practices with your family and children (Advent wreath/Advent calendars - look on-line).* **6.** *Give more money to charities and reach out to people who are lonely or who you have not talked to or interacted with in a long time, esp. people who have drifted away from others because of the Covid stuff.* **7.** *Come to our Divine Mercy Eucharistic Holy Hour from 3-4 each Friday, the Hour of Mercy – except this week.* **8.** *Invite a lapsed Catholic you know back to the Mass and the practice of his or her faith.* **9.** *Just try to slow down and enjoy the Holy Silence of this Season, to enter into the great mystery of the Christ child-ask our Lady to help with that.* **10.** *Check out a book from the Lending Library.* **11.** *Avoid the materialistic rat-race of this season in our society; and instead when giving gifts really give things that will help people or make a donation to the needy in their name.* There are obviously many more good spiritual practices to do - just ask the Holy Spirit to show you, as well as what you need specifically to detach yourself from - **so as to be more free in the Lord.** I pray that God will bless each of us this Advent season and we will be open to the grace to carry out a few of these good spiritual practices, so that when we arrive on Christmas day - as Jesus gives Himself fully to us, we can give our life to Him as a gift in return, in deeper love and trust and gratitude for the gift of salvation in Him. God bless you.