

Homily: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent: Cycle C: 2021: Jer 33: 14-16; Ps. 25; 1 Thes 3: 12- 4:2;  
Lk 21: 25-28, 34-36

*“A New Spiritual Start”*

1. 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 Jesus who became a little baby to save us from the power of satan, sin and death, and for us to invite others to do the same, especially those away from God and the Church. Invite people you know back to the Faith if they have drifted, or invite them for the 1<sup>st</sup> time if they are not familiar with our beautiful Catholic Faith. In light of all that is going on in the world including the Covid pandemic possibly getting worse this winter, and so many people obstinately refusing to repent of grave sin, **we need to have more a penitential spirit this Advent than usual.**

2. **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 or when we die before then. 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 more profoundly 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 in God’s grace – to repent, reform and change our lives for the better.* 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 the Solemnity of Our Blessed Mother’s *Immaculate Conception*** (which this year is the close of the special spiritual year honoring St. Joseph – inner illumination of conscience coming? – some Catholic mystics are saying – we can only hope and pray that occurs someday!) *and Christmas*; receiving **the Sacrament of Reconciliation** especially if it’s been a long time since we have made a good Confession (*call for an appointment*), truly taking advantage of the times this Sacrament is offered during the Holy Season of Advent (*I will offer some additional times during the week since we’re not having a Penance Service*

*because of Covid getting worse – hopefully during Lent we can have one if things get better*), to receive forgiveness of our sins, which is essential to prepare our hearts to receive the Lord with ever greater love and faithfulness and to love others better in God’s charity. Doing some type of **penance** in reparation for our past sins and for the conversion of hardened sinners in the world is another gift we can give to the Lord this Advent season (*Read up on our Lady’s appearances at Fatima, Portugal in 1917, Akita, Japan in 1973, and Kibeho, Rwanda in 1981 (Nov 28<sup>th</sup> is our Lady of Kibeho’s feast day – see the Documentary about Kibeho on EWTN at 1:30 pm Sunday and replayed at 11 pm that night)*). **All of these recent Church recognized appearances of Our Lady, remind us that by our prayer and works of penance and spiritual sacrifice that we humans can mitigate the chastisements** (*remember prophecies do not automatically occur but happen if people don’t change their evil ways*) **that come into the world because of grave sin, be it wars:** (*at Fatima our Lady said WWI will be soon ending, but if humans don’t repent and change their evil lives there will be a worst war coming – WWII; or at Kibeho if people don’t pray and learn to love each other there will be a river of blood - see 1994 genocide - frightening - but it didn’t have to happen!!*) **or pandemics** (*like right now - this could be gone by now, but it’s not, and worse strains are brewing because most humans have not changed their evil ways since the pandemic started*). Those of us with the gift of Faith must pray and do serious penance – giving up things we like more frequently: be they creature comforts of various sorts and always being satiated with TV, food, drink, and sleep; and making the daily sacrifice of praying extra and offering our sufferings in love concerning our daily vocational duties (see St. Therese’s example in this – I want those souls Lord!) - on behalf of those who do not have Faith or who are blindly immersed in a life of serious sin. **And doing all under the mantle of our Lady in inner communion with the Blessed Trinity –** which also means staying out of serious/grave/mortal sin which is the greatest charity for our own soul and for the souls of others - *since as we grow in holiness our acts of prayer and penance become more spiritual efficacious as the closer we are to God, the more He can channel His graces through us to help others.*

3. **Remember 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. The following are good acts of spiritual sacrifice for souls that hopefully we grow to love doing, over time: **Praying the Rosary daily** (regular and 7 Sorrows – see Our Lady of Kibeho on) **and the Divine Mercy Chaplet** as individuals or even better as a family, and 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 Fridays at 3 pm.** They also are powerful ways we can prepare our hearts to receive the Lord. We also should spend Advent pondering the mystery of the **Infancy narratives** in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew chapters 1 and 2. We also should be giving some extra to help the less fortunate, e.g., our Parish St Vincent de Paul society and other good Catholic charities (*I will put a list in my upcoming bulletin columns*) and not buying unnecessary items for ourselves or others, even our children, which just draw us more and more into **the emptiness of materialism.** All should be done in a spirit of God’s charity; and remembering the gifts of the Wise Men at the Lord’s Epiphany which is the origin of giving gifts at Christmas too. As Jesus warns us 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 speaking about His second Coming, but it also ties into the proper remembrance of His first coming. **Truly Jesus is the only real reason for this season!** If we daily remember that reality, and offer acts of prayer and penance for those who do not, we will be full of the joy and the hope that comes from the Lord and the Advent season, in preparation for our seeing Him at the end of our earthly life. God bless you.

**Recommended Reading:**

1. *Our Lady of Kibeho* by Immaculee Ilibagiza. Hay House Press. 2008 (can also be purchased as an e-book on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).
2. *The Boy who met Jesus: Segatashya of Kibeho* by Immaculee Ilibagiza. Hay House Press. 2011 (can also be purchased as an e-book on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).