

Homily: 1st Sunday of Advent 2023: Cycle B: Is 63: 16-17, 19: 64:2-7; Ps 80; 1 Corth
1:3-9; Mk 13: 33-37

“Advent: Getting Spiritually Prepared for Jesus’s First and Second Coming”

1. Advent is a time of waiting, active waiting in anticipation, in hope for the coming of the Lord. For the first two weeks of Advent, we continue to ponder the Second coming of the Lord and the Last Things: Death, Judgment, and our eternal destiny of bliss or horror. **“BE WATCHFUL, BE ALERT!”** Jesus tells us over and over today in the Gospel. He is warning us not to get lazy and complacent in our spiritual life, in our daily duties and vocation; instead we are called to be patient and charitable, to strive to live a life of self-giving love and to make reparation for sin: our own and that of others, for those on earth and in Purgatory: by prayer, acts of self-denial and uniting our daily duties and sufferings with the Lord; because He will surely come back in due time, when we least expect it - either in His Second Coming or through the mystery of death. **WATCH!**
2. Then in the 2nd two weeks of Advent we are called to get ready for His Coming by **celebrating & remembering** His first coming on Christmas some 2000 years ago. How do we do that? To make a resolution today to: ***“Remember the reason for this season: the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior.”*** This is easier said than done in our culture. The world’s understanding of Christmas is mixed at best. If we arrived on earth from another planet, and observed the next 4 weeks, it could seem that the only thing really important about Christmas and the weeks leading up to it is to buy a bunch of things, often things that people really don’t really need, or maybe even want. We often witness that many people are agitated and stressed out; it might even be us! Is this a rat race, a time of stress, anxiety and depression for us? I pray we are able celebrate the weeks leading up to Christmas differently than the world, or at least are going to resolve with God’s help to do better this year than in the past. It is an awesome opportunity to draw closer to the Lord, in a spirit of joy. It should be a highlight of the Liturgical year for all of us.
3. There are some practical things that we can do to truly make this season of Advent **a season of joy, anticipation, and hope.** If we are going to buy a gift for

someone, buy one that really shows our love for that person. Also remember to be generous in giving money to charity to help the needy – starting with our own St. Vincent de Paul group - other good charities I will list in my bulletin column in the coming weeks. Also, in relation to your children and grandchildren instead of buying more stuff for them, why not spend more time playing and praying with your children during this Advent season? Remember time and loving attention are the greatest gifts we can give to our children on a **human level**; prayer and living our Catholic Faith in our homes with integrity and love on a **supernatural level**. Also for some of us here, if we are sad, anxious and depressed, not because of the materialistic rat race, but because of the **legitimate sadness** that comes at the holidays from dealing with the recent loss of a loved one or because of troubles in our family situation, may we remember to unite our, all too real, sufferings with Jesus for the spiritual good of all involved and to try our best to be joyful and cheerful in Him, at least - even if the situation on the human level is very difficult! Please remember to pray for all people in these difficult situations. All of us can **prepare** for a beautiful celebration of Christmas this year with some **practical resolutions**: *spend more time with our families and friends, research the holy Catholic Advent and Christmas traditions and do some of them, reach out to those in need – this especially **includes inviting back to the Catholic Faith those who have drifted away: think of at least one person you can invite back to the Catholic faith this Advent or invite someone to the Catholic faith for the first time – the fullness of what God has revealed of Himself to the human race - what a gift the Catholic faith is!**; spend more time in prayer and spiritual reading (e.g., read and meditate on the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke- check out a good book in our parish lending library); pray a daily Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet by ourself and/or with our families; come to daily Mass and/or our Wednesday & Friday 3 pm Holy Hour; make an honest and very good Confession in the Sacrament, especially if it's been a while - remember our penance service is on Sunday Dec 17- or if you like you can make an appointment with me - if it's been a while and need more time to go over things. And finally do some acts of self-denial (see Advent purple). **Watch and Be Alert!** God bless you.*