

## **Homily for Nov. 28, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent:**

**This weekend's Gospel seems right in line with the gospel from two weeks ago. In Mark, we heard of tribulations at the coming of the Son of Man. This week, now in Luke, we hear of catastrophic signs related to the coming of the Son of Man.**

**This is not a mistake. The end of the Liturgical Year is a time we remember that Christ is coming again. And this is also the same theme at the beginning of Advent. The name "Advent" is a word that means "coming" or "arrival." And Christ is indeed coming again.**

**One commenter on this week's gospel (Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM) reminds us that in Matthew, Mark and Luke – when the disciples are in Jerusalem they point out the magnificence of the temple buildings. And Jesus responds with words that scholars refer to as the "Little Apocalypse." That is because descriptions of cosmic cataclysms are also a part of the larger book Revelation, or "Apocalypse." And just like two weeks ago, today we hear of things to come that Our Lord is revealing to us.**

**Jesus is teaching us to be ready. And also to not fall into the trap of focusing all our attention only on the here-and-now. Christ points out two results of fixating on the material world alone: first, only immersing oneself in pleasure; and second, allowing the concerns of this world to result in distress and anxiousness. He juxtaposes those who "die of fright" with being able to "stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand."**

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**The Popes often give us a year-long-theme. Pope Francis has recently given us two overlapping years. Through this coming December Eight, we are in a Year of Saint Joseph. And From last March until this coming June, we are in a Year of the Family.**

**A few years ago, knowing of this tendency to give us a "Year of Something-To-Focus-On," one parishioner noticed on a poster showing the liturgical year that we had a "Year of Grace" coming up. At that time, I simply mentioned that this particular title was on the previous year's poster as well, and it just seemed to be a title they had adopted.**

**But I just found it again on another resource, and so I looked it up. In the Roman Catholic Church, this is another name for the Liturgical Year. According to one source (MARKKULA CENTER FOR APPLIED ETHICS), “The liturgical year of the Roman Catholic church is often referred to as the Year of Grace, meaning that people should celebrate their unbounded love of God at all times in all places.” Another person (Sister Joan L. Roccasalvo, CSJ, Homiletic and Pastoral Review, 2012) Tells us that “The Church exhorts the faithful to make the year of grace their very own, so that their lives might be daily made new in Christ...As the liturgical year is repeated, it becomes the primary way through which the Catholic can make the day, the week, and the year a holy, beautiful, and meaningful experience.”**

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**Jesus is Coming. We focus on this during these weeks, but we also remember that is how we live daily. It is a proclamation in the Creed, and is part of the Eucharistic Prayer and the anticipated event the Priest mentions in his prayer following our communal praying of the Our Father.**

**There is a word from the Bible that some people have used in their prayer life. It is an Aramaic word that occurs once in the Bible. “Maranatha.” It can mean: “Our Lord has come,” which is a profession of belief; or “Our Lord, come,” which is a prayer. It is found in First Corinthians (16:22). Most sources I have read sees a similarity to this word, and a phrase used in the final lines of the Book of Revelation, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (22:20).**

**Both meanings are important. Jesus, who is Lord, is coming; and we desire and pray for His coming. “Our Lord has come,” “”Come, Lord Jesus.” Maranatha.**

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**This is that time of year I remind you that this beginning of a new Liturgical Year, a Year of Grace, coincides closely to the calendar new year. Though I don’t meet a lot of people who make New Years Resolutions, this is always a good time to assess how we are doing. Each of us can look back on the past year – and make decisions of how we want to adjust our habits and goals. A good first step is to treat each season, each month, as Lent. Ask ourselves – and Christ – where we want to be at the end of the coming period.**

And as always, I suggest one New Years Resolution. “To Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation one more time this year than I did last year.” And before this year is out, there are North Deanery Reconciliation Services, or “Penance Services,” this Sunday afternoon here at Saint Lawrence and in two other parishes, one this Monday evening, and the other this Tuesday evening.

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As we focus on the coming of Christ, I encourage you to read the article by Mr. Sean Gallagher in this week’s Criterion. It is titled “Waiting is a Theme in Advent That Parents Know Well.” It is in English, but a few paragraphs are as follows:

*“...I’ve found that those called by God to marriage and family life need to always be youthful, no matter how long they’ve been at it. They are always entering new territory in their vocations.”*

*“I’ve been married for 20 years, and been a father for 19. Still, I find new challenges and blessings all the time in this sacred calling. As my five sons have entered into new stages in their lives, they’ve all been new to me because their own unique personalities make those transitions different each time.”*

*“And there are always new experiences to anticipate.”*

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As our country has just celebrated Thanksgiving, it might be helpful if we all spend some time this Advent reviewing all we have been given, all we have made it through, and all the promised God has given us. And give thanks for them. Giving thanks is renewing.

Again referring to the Criterion this week, the Archbishop’s column does a nice job reflecting on various aspects of Gratitude. The second paragraph is worth sharing. Perhaps you may want to read the rest. It goes like this:

*“Gratitude is more contagious than any pandemic. It soothes our bitterness, resentment and fear, and it opens the eyes of our hearts to see how blessed we truly are in spite of our difficulties. Simply by saying “thank you” for whatever blessings—large or small—we have received, we can find relief from whatever pain we feel in our minds, hearts or bodies.”*

**May we cultivate Gratitude everyday this Advent. Our hearts will be the better for it, and lives will be transformed by our transformation.**