

# H O M I L Y

## ADVENT I the 29<sup>th</sup> day of November 2020

May I be blessed with the insights of Advent in my words  
and the promise of Advent in our hearts.

AMEN

The Lectionary informs us that today we woke to a new Church year. The season of Advent prepares us for Christmas and this First Sunday of Advent might be compared to an alarm clock ringing . . . hopefully rousing us to engage in the four weeks of Advent. The season that prepares us for the excitement of the Christmas morning when all seems possible and the joy at the birth of the Christ Child is complete.

So, if we are to be roused by the alarm, what is the first thing that you do when you wake up?

Check the clock to see if you can roll over and get some more sleep . . .

say a prayer to get the day off to a good start . . .

or just hit the floor running and race to church or to work or to school or to the myriad chores that each day presents.

Florence, a friend of mine started her children's day with a thorough examination of how they felt . . . "Do you have a headache, how are your teeth, is your throat sore, are your lungs congested, do you have a tummy ache, are your bowels running, are your knees stiff or your feet sore from those new shoes?" Only after this litany did the child get out of bed to face the world.

On the other hand, mine were just warned that if they felt badly enough to stay home from school, they felt badly enough to stay in bed, lights out and eat only chicken broth, until the next day.

Needless to say, my children rarely missed a day at school and my friend spent many days nursing a child with an ache - particularly if a test was pending in class!

Well this is the time of year when we go into my friend's mode in examining our relationship with God and our neighbour.

So set aside each morning as you wake, or in the evening before you sleep, and take one aspect of that relationship and examine how you are doing. For instance, look at "peace" one of the things as Christians we strive for. Are you at peace with those you live with, work with, play with? Have you done anything to support the efforts of governments or agencies to promote peace? Have you praised the peace makers? . . .

Come up with your own questions. And then, day by day, move onto other subjects such as Worship; Love; Optimism; Joy; Service; Neighbourhood; Education; whatever constitutes what comes to mind when you consider your relationship with God.

You might even try Flo's system . . . Head, what has my head done to praise God, improve my relationship with Him? Did my mouth open in his praise, did my ears listen to his Word and my eyes appreciate the beauty of the world he created? Will my arms help the youngest in the family make a Snowman . . . or engage in a snowball fight with the older ones because I so appreciate the family God has given me? Do I use my legs to walk to Church? And do my bare feet luxuriate in the textures they touch: the green grass of the garden, the sand of the shores, all God's creation and so much more.

We all can find our own ways of using the season of Advent to balance the wild rush of the season with its expectations of perfection.

Yet, God is content with our spending time with Him, planning the year ahead and considering the year past and enjoying each day that He has given us. Perfection is something never demanded of us by God. Which is just as well . . .

In today's gospel, Jesus kept repeating this phrase - stay awake!

Now he is not recommending that we give up on sleep . . . but that we be alert to the lives we are living, the influences that steer us in the right or wrong direction, that we be ready and prepared.

Some people just seem to sleep walk through life: unaware of the joys they are abandoning, the love that they are missing and the potential for growth that ignored leaves them stunted.

Jesus wants us to look at the areas of our lives that tire us out, physically and spiritually, so that we can fix them.

What exhausts you?

Is it the daily routine?

Having too much to do and too few hours with which to do it?

Too many people making claims on your emotions?

Putting your own needs at the bottom of your list of things you must do?

Or do you put your God there?

Is it that you are on such a merry-go-round that the things you know you should do, are lost in the demands others make on your time, or that you have such expectations of yourself that no one could meet them?

We get one life. How we live it is something that we need to decide upon and work at, ourselves. Our fate, our destiny, our life, should not just be stumbled blindly through.

We should make decisions that would please our God . . . and be good for us. We should not be at the whim of those we meet, or every cause that demands our time, or every advertiser's call on our pocket book.

We need to take back our lives from all the things that have distracted us. And COVID has provided us with the perfect setting and the time to do it. Advent provides us with the time set aside by our Faith, to examine what is going on in our lives.

And having made that examination, it is up to you to act . . . to continue doing what works, to take up the challenges you have identified and to sit down with God and ask Him to help you make the changes that are needed . . . to give you the backbone, or the self-discipline, or the courage, or the resources, or the love . . . what ever it is that you need.

And then put your plan into action.

And that is what Advent is all about.

This week the theme is HOPE.

And my hope is that you will take the time to engage in your conversation with God and your conscience and your own best hopes and wishes for yourself.

If you do, this will be the very best Christmas and New Year, EVER.

And, so may it be.

AMEN

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