

- Well...today we begin a new liturgical year with the beginning of Advent...going to the color purple, representing both penitence and royalty—our penitence; Jesus’ royalty.
 - As we just heard in our Gospel, we never can know when the Lord is coming, or when He will call us home...so the wise heeds His words: “*Watch...you know neither the day nor the hour.*”
 - The Church gives us these readings to lead us toward time of self-reflection that Advent affords...because in Advent we not only remember and celebrate the coming of Christ 2000 years ago, but anticipate His second coming, and prepare ourselves for it by becoming more like Him—loving God, loving neighbor.
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 - That’s one reason for our Angel Tree, food drives, Christian Concern Committee: to remind us to attend to the needs of others...and to beware avarice in ourselves.
 - ...because, as is written in the book Ecclesiastes...and as we find in life’s experience: “*...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*” (Ecclesiastes 1:8) Our desire for more is never-ending...because that which is not of God cannot satisfy.
 - And this is certainly something to remember as we prepare for the coming of our Lord—God Incarnate, who yet deigned to be born in the humblest circumstances...in a stable.
 - Jesus didn’t just teach an attitude of humility and simplicity (“Blessed are the poor in spirit”), but He practiced what He preached, as He always did.
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- I was watching a movie not long ago about Shaka Zulu—the charismatic warrior leader of the African Zulus in the 1800s who

led his people to victory and conquest...causing much consternation among the European colonial rulers of the area.

- One advisor asked the area governor if Shaka might be open to a bribe...to which the governor replied: “Unfortunately, Shaka is one of those rare men whose actions actually match his convictions.”
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 - Ouch! What an indictment against mankind. Yet, what a badge of honor for those it accurately describes.
 - But...sadly...who cannot see the truth of it?
 - ...especially with all the recent revelations of sexual harassment in the news—even by those who condemned such things in the public forum...
 - ...lies and embezzlement by public—and even church—officials, who claim to be “looking out for the little guy”...
 - ...and, to me, the worst of all, the priest abuse scandals...the ultimate betrayal of the good...those most trusted and privileged betraying God and innocence itself.
 - As the song goes: “Where have all the heroes gone?”
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 - Yes, what an honor to be described as “one of those rare men and women whose actions actually match his convictions”...especially should that describe our practice of our faith.
 - And yet...Our Lord did this to perfection, becoming obedient even to the cross...and He calls us to follow His example of fidelity.
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- In our first reading today, the prophet Isaiah laments his own time, and the infidelity among his people:
- *“Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people, all our good deeds are like polluted rags... There is none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you...”*
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- Well...there’s nothing we can do about our past; it is water under the bridge...never to be retrieved...
- ...but there is always something we can do about the future.
- As we venture into this Advent season, let us, then, use the time well...in self-reflection and self-improvement... molding ourselves more closely to the likeness of Our Lord Jesus Christ...and like her who reflected His goodness and humility—Our Blessed and beloved Mother.
- Don’t worry about what is past; what is important is the future... because it is in the future that we go before Our Lord.
- With true contrition, a firm purpose of amendment, and a visit to the confessional, past sins—that past life—is wiped away.
- ...as Isaiah writes in another place: *“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land...”* (Isaiah 1:18-19)
- ...and also: *“...let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”* (Isaiah 55:7)
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- So...as St. John writes: *“Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:18)...striving to ever more perfectly reflect—and return—the love of God...that love with which He loves us.

- The author of the letter to the Hebrews writes: “...*since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us...*” (Hebrews 12:1)
- We will inevitably one day enter the great hall before the judgment seat of God...so let us strive in our faith to hear those witnesses—the angels and the saints—whispering to one another as we approach His throne:
- “*Ah!...Here is another of those rare ones whose actions actually matched his convictions!*”

Reading 1 [Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7](#)

You, LORD, are our father,
our redeemer you are named forever.
Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways,
and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?
Return for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your heritage.
Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
with the mountains quaking before you,
while you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for,
such as they had not heard of from of old.
No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you
doing such deeds for those who wait for him.
Would that you might meet us doing right,
that we were mindful of you in our ways!
Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful;
all of us have become like unclean people,
all our good deeds are like polluted rags;
we have all withered like leaves,
and our guilt carries us away like the wind.
There is none who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to cling to you;
for you have hidden your face from us
and have delivered us up to our guilt.
Yet, O LORD, you are our father;
we are the clay and you the potter:
we are all the work of your hands.

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#)

R. (4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power,
and come to save us.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.
Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Reading II [1 Cor 1:3-9](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account
for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus,
that in him you were enriched in every way,
with all discourse and all knowledge,
as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you,
so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift
as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He will keep you firm to the end,
irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
God is faithful,
and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel [Mk 13:33-37](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad.

He leaves home and places his servants in charge,

each with his own work,

and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore;

you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming,

whether in the evening, or at midnight,

or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”