

ADVENT

NEWSLETTER

Task one of Advent

Advent is a season to pay attention to the ways that God worked in the past.

Task two of Advent

Advent is to pay attention to the courage God gave our ancestors to face their uncertain future.

Task three of Advent

Pay attention to the promises of God to always be with us and lead us through our own uncertain future

Task four of Advent

Prepare ourselves for the coming of the Son of God in our own space and time. Christmas must always be a 'now' event.

LISTEN TO THE QUIET VOICE OF ADVENT

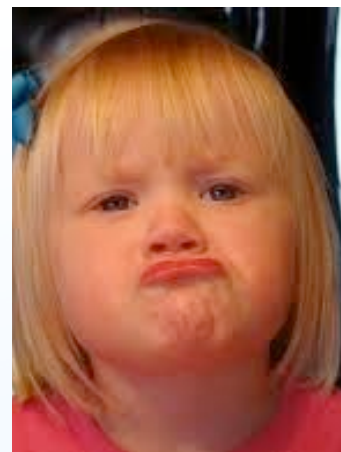
Some years ago in a grade two classroom the teacher made the observation about one of her students. "She is so good every day at school that you have to watch because she will disappear into the wallpaper."

This was the child that never pushed forward for attention and always completed the task at hand without having to be reminded to get busy and get her work done. Such a quiet person could just disappear from our consciousness.

This is where the four weeks of Advent are. We are so busy with social events, preparing for the yearly family celebration of Christmas, plus the onslaught of advertisements and sales that makes your head want to spin. We have no energy to pay attention to the opening to greater spiritual awareness that Advent can offer us. It is right here, we have only to make use of the Scriptures, the prayers and the symbolism that Advent offers.

Human beings are not good listeners to each other. We will hear what we want to hear, as how well our children have done in the school assignments but we miss the many messages that our children tell us about the trouble they are having on the school bus this week.

Advent challenges us to stop. Pay attention to what God is doing in our lives. Pay attention to the wonderful works that have been done in our history and how God will work in new ways today.



Do this little experiment in listening.

Have you observed that if one of your co-workers talks, and talks, and talks some more, that you try to be polite but you mentally do not try to remember any words that he has said! You politely block him out! Now, your seven year old comes in with a gash on his arm. Are you listening to every word and sound? What is the difference?

ADVENT 2014

ADVENT IS AN ATTITUDE

How many times have you heard other people say, "I can't put it into words but I sure can tell the attitude of people. For example, when I went for my flu shot last week I can read immediately if the nurse is just processing people or if she is actually interested in serving people. Her attitude speaks loudly, even if I have a hard time putting it into words."

Advent is all about attitude. This is not a task that must be accomplished. A task to get done would have been your decision to clean your entire house this morning. This was a job to get done, no matter how you feel about the dust bunnies!

The feeling of Advent is attentiveness to God. We want to pay attention to the many wonderful ways that God has worked in the past (our deliverance from slavery in Egypt), to the movement of the Holy Spirit among us today and to the future share in the life and glory of God in eternity.

This is very much a time for the entire Church (all its members) to pay attention to how they are paying attention. It is never good enough to have polite listening and then return to doing our own things. This is a time of engagement with the workings of God.

We may not be able to put it into words, but it is in how we pay attention to the wonderful ways that God has, is and will work with us human beings.

ADVENT IS LISTENING

Pity the teacher who is only concerned that her students know how to read a particular book and then give back the contents of what they have read. This is all head knowledge. It is only useful in giving it back on the exam paper.

Real learning is the teacher who is not only teaching her students to be able to read poetry but also to love the gift of the poet to express life and its manifold manifestations in beautiful and challenging English. This teacher wants the words to jump into the student's lap! She wants the students to be able to sing and dance with the poet! Learning is engagement in and with the daily life of the student.

When the three readings are proclaimed each Sunday it is not directed to our brains. This is a living encounter with God. Not only is God actually speaking to us, God is coming to our hearts and walking with and through the mess that is our lives.

The Word of God must become a living part of our lives. The people of the Church were never meant to sit there politely, nod their heads in agreement and then do nothing!

They are meant to sing the Word of God, work with the Word of God and pack it in the backpacks for the tasks of this very day.

ADVENT IS TRUSTING

We had a very elderly woman, well into her mid-nineties, in very poor shape but she clung to life. The nursing staff was puzzled why she would not die. They discovered only later that there was one important legal detail that was not completed when she sold the family business five years ago. On that particular day, her nephew, a lawyer from another province whom she trusted, found out what was bothering his elderly aunt. He made it very clear that he would tend to the matter and the transactions would be complete.

That same evening, the elderly lady died. Then the nurses put it together. It was the trust that she placed in her lawyer nephew that gave her permission to die.

Trust is to our life what our red blood cells are to our blood. You do not get very far if you are short of either quantity!

Advent is the season to share in the trust that people have placed in God. They received the promise that God would always be with them. We want to share their hesitation to trust and walk with God through some very difficult times,

Then we are brought to the trust that the young woman, Mary, placed in her God. She accepted the request of God to become Mother. She trusted! We have been blest with the very Son of God.

May these four weeks of Advent bring you to a stronger trust in the promises of God.

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MAKE ADVENT HAPPEN

We live in a society that is almost overwhelming. There is too much! I just cannot keep up. The next time you go to buy anything, toothpaste for example, try to make sense of the almost thirty different brands and the qualities that each toothpaste offers. It takes you several minutes to try to locate the toothpaste your mother used to buy when you were kids. It worked then and it will work now!

Survival in this society means that you have to make choices. Choose one and ignore all the rest. Only give attention to what you can handle, successfully! Choose nothing that will cause you guilt because you could not use it or maybe did not need it.

You will only benefit from the season of Advent if you make a definite choice. This is an attitude

and a commitment. Do not try to do everything. What is workable in your life?

The competition out there is tough. Everyone wants your attention and participation. So many things would be enjoyable to do, but choose one. Stick to it! You will be more relaxed and feeling good about your Advent commitment.

Some families will try to have an Advent wreath. Every night before supper, one of the children will light the candles and there is a short prayer. It will be a simple family prayer time.

Other people will find that they will take their missalette, pour their first cup of coffee in the morning, and read the daily Advent readings.

We can start with the best of intentions but unless these are doable they will pass into the empty

Count up all your good intentions.....

How many of your good intentions just ended up the dustbin? Maybe you were unrealistic. Do not try to clean up your entire house today. Just do three rooms. You will feel successful with three rooms. The same with planning to live our Advent. Only do what is possible!

bags of good intentions but no follow-through.

The entire purpose of Advent is to bring the Church to more attentive to the story of our salvation. As we tell the stories of our ancestors we are brought to see the working of the Holy Spirit in our own world. Salvation history is being worked out before us.

Come, Jesus, Come

We do not have the fullness of Jesus. We live and work in a world that is being redeemed. Jesus is at work. Our task is to be co-workers with Jesus.

Come, Jesus, for the poor.

This has not been a good year in the world. How many people had to run for their lives? It was no longer safe for their wives and children. Come Lord in safety for these displaced families

Come, Jesus, to our hearts

Our people are so generous. They pack hampers for those who are a little short this Christmas. Broaden our concerns to ask why they are poor people in such an affluent society. Why would a rich country like ours need a food bank?

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GOD SPEAKS HERE AND NOW

One of our older parishioners spoke about things that irritated him. "My older brother thinks it is so wonderful to spend hours in the mall, just sitting there with his cup of coffee and observing what is going on. He comes back and tells me about people and things he observed. I miss almost everything that he sees in the mall." There was a pause. "Am I missing a lot of life?"

When Christian people share in their Scripture study groups they will often mention how they have been alerted to the movement of God in the lives of other people. Many will share that they were supported by the courage that the Holy Spirit gave to certain members who went through a very tough family struggle. We discover God by listening.

As we begin the season of Advent spend less time trying to figure things out. Rather, be quiet and pay attention to how God is moving within your parish community, your family, your place of work and your own soul.

Advent seeks to deepen that sense of listening and being attentive.

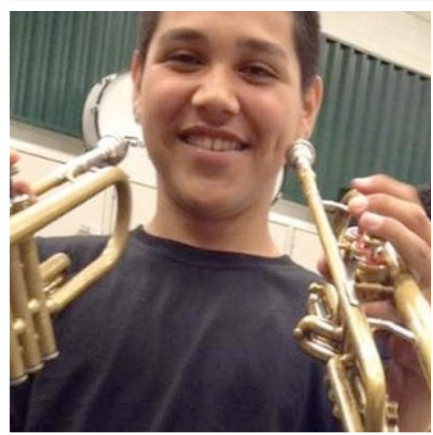


LORD GIVE ME THE ATTITUDE TO BE ATTENTIVE

Lord, there is too much commotion around me. People are in the holiday mood. They are going to parties, spending hours shopping and planning menus. It exhausts me!

Give me no more than just to pay attention to Your hand at work in our society, our Church and my own family.

May I not miss your coming today.



May we hear the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness.

PRAYER BASED ON TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

Lord,

In the Old Testament times the messenger was a delivery man, a government official who had travelled from a far away and delivered a hand written document.

May I see your messenger come today.

May I see your messenger in the Scriptures proclaimed, shared and preached in my parish church.

May I see your messenger in the poor and those who get forgotten right around me.

May I see your messenger in my quiet time of prayer in my own house.