

“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing”. This is one of the principal admonitions given by author Steven Covey in his book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. This statement also summarizes the season of Advent as we begin a new liturgical year celebrating and contemplating the person and message of Jesus, as well as the theme coursing through all three of the Scripture readings today.

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. But who, or what is the “main thing” in life for each of us? And how much thought and effort do each of us give to keeping the “main thing the main thing”?

For us as the Church the “main thing” is not a thing at all. For us the “main thing” is a person, Jesus, and his gift of the Kingdom of God, not a “thing” or a “place”, but a personal relationship of the heart affecting the whole of our lives. While the liturgical season of Advent concludes with a celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas, it is much more than mere historical commemoration. While grounded in human history, Christmas is about welcoming, proclaiming and celebrating a rebirth of Jesus and relationship with him in my life. Advent is not only looking backward to the first coming of Jesus as the infant child of Bethlehem. It is also about living my relationship with Jesus in the present while simultaneously looking forward to the day when the mission of the Kingdom of God begun in Jesus of fully restoring the human family and the created world to its original blessedness is completed.

Because the working out of the Kingdom of God is a work in “progress” in us and in our world, we all face temptations in daily life of distraction that allure us in any number of ways to take our focus off keeping “the main thing the main thing.” Think for a moment about our use of social media. How many of us are “addicted” to it? —picking up our mobile device every couple of minutes to check for messages or ourselves texting someone? We live in a culture bombarded by 24 hours television news channels. Federal and state transportation agencies continually warn about the dangers of distracted automobile driving

or operating other means of transportation such as a bus or train caused by engaging with mobile devices. Pope Francis recently called for people (including bishops and priests whom he has seen using them!) to put their cell phone, smartphone, electronic tablet or other technological devices away during Mass in order to focus on the encounter with Jesus – keeping “the main thing the main thing.”

Jesus warns us today to “*watch*” to “keep the main thing the main thing” to be ever alert to his presence in our lives, his desire for deepened relationship, his call to us to take up our share of his work of bringing the Kingdom of God to greater realization in our homes, parish, community and world.

St. Paul reminds us today that we “are not lacking in any spiritual gift” as we “wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 1: 3-9). At Pentecost the Father and Jesus poured forth on the whole Church and each of us individually at our baptism, their Holy Spirit, the bond of life and love between them. But, we have to continually make the effort to “keep the main thing the main thing.”

As part of our parish’s participation in Evangelical Catholic, we have been challenged to dedicate 1% or 15 minutes of our day to prayer, to focus on Jesus, through reading, reflection and prayer, especially with the Gospels. Each Sunday’s Bulletin (usually on the cover) lists the daily and following Sunday’s Scripture Mass readings which I invite you to use in carrying out your 1% challenge. The first readings from the prophet Isaiah during this season are also rich sources of reflection. We also have available *Five Minutes With the Word* for this Advent season. One, or both, are an excellent means to begin, or deepen, keeping watch, focusing on the “main thing”—Jesus who once again prepares to be “born again” in each of us. Jesus will not force himself on us. Jesus waits for us to invite him in.

With Isaiah we pray Jesus “rend the heavens and come down” help us to “keep the main thing the main thing.”

Fr. Jim Secora