

ADVENT SUNDAY I "C"  
DECEMBER 1/2, 2018

A close friend of mine (a former student) periodically spends a couple of days with me to "catch up" on our friendship, but also to have some quiet time for prayer and reflection. My friend is a tinker. Being very technologically savvy he cannot help tinkering with the settings on my television and sound bar. When I turn these devices on after he has gone home, I'm left trying to figure out how to get them back to the settings I had selected. Usually I just give up and select the "Refresh" option on the remote to the factory default settings.

This experience is a good metaphor for the Advent Season leading to our celebration of Christmas and the other seasons and feasts of another Church year liturgical cycle.

In today's Gospel Jesus warns us to not let our hearts become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life (Lk. 21:34 ff). Prior to these words Jesus paints an apocalyptic end of the world scene of cosmic chaos. While uttered by Jesus in the first century of the common era, modern technology brings into our homes, offices, and the electronic devices in the palm of our hands with its twenty-four-hour three-hundred-sixty-five or six days of the year equally, or more, disturbing images of natural and human caused disaster, violence, and chaos. And then there are our personal private experiences of darkness, suffering and fear. Like my friend's tinkering with the settings of my television and sound bar, all of these can cause our faith-setting to become altered in a way in which the brightness of God's love, the contrast between good and evil, and the sound of God's voice all become distorted.

Despite the foreboding nature of today's gospel reading, as Christians we believe in a radical promise—that light is stronger than darkness, love is stronger than hate, and life is stronger than death. The prophet Jeremiah reminds us that God's love has not abandoned us: "the days are coming when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah" (Jer. 33:14,15). Uttered originally to the people of Israel as they experienced the destruction of their political and religious institutions and exile into Babylon, Jeremiah's words are a "default setting" for our faith life at all times. Advent's invitation, uttered by Jeremiah, is to allow God to "refresh" us and bring us back to our "default setting" as his beloved children.

I'd like to suggest some ways we can allow God to "refresh" us during these Advent days to prepare us to experience anew the fullness of his light and life at Christmas.

Each week the cover of the Bulletin or the inside of the front page if the cover image completely covers the outside page, the Scripture readings for the week's daily Mass and the following Sunday are given. While reading all of them is commendable, I'd suggest just reading and reflecting on the selections from the Old Testament. During Advent we read extensively from the prophet Isaiah whose writings are filled with images of hope, peace and consolation. Those who have been practicing the 1% Challenge can use that method to great effect here.

There are some other printed materials we have available for you as well. "Living Faith", "Five Minutes With the Word", "The Word Among Us" all free for the taking are also excellent resources.

Outside the parish office are free guides to Advent prayer resources accessible through apps and websites on electronic devices. You can also access these resources through clicking on the various links in our Tuesday weekly "Let's Stay Connected" email.

You might want to consider praying individually or as a family the rosary every day, and if that isn't possible, at least a decade a day. In the case of the latter you will have prayed the entire rosary in one week.

If your schedule permits, consider coming to daily Mass during this season or begin a daily hour of Eucharistic Adoration in the Burke Chapel.

As we all know these days and weeks are hectic. Our schedules are full. However, I invite all of us to find five, ten, or fifteen minutes to pause and select the "refresh" button of our faith and allow God to advent into our lives anew. That is tinkering we will all benefit from.

*2 December, 2018  
Father Jim Secora*