

HOMILY 2ND SUN ADVENT YRC 2018

Happy Xmas! The secular world starts the celebration of Xmas the day after Thanksgiving. You will know that you are celebrating Xmas if you are experiencing Xhaustion, Xcuses, Xchanges, Xcesses, Xtravagances, Xasperations, Xhibitions and worldly Xcitement. So how do you feel this second Sunday of Advent? Are you experiencing these symptoms? Then you are celebrating Xmas. As Catholics, we are preparing to celebrate Christmas, and if you are going to do that, you have to be very intentional.

In the Gospel reading today, Luke sets that first Advent in the midst of ordinary life, in the midst of sacred and secular history. He mentions secular and religious leaders. We must do the same thing. We live in a culture that starts celebrating Christmas the day after thanksgiving and we will be ostracized by our friends family and coworkers if we refuse to participate in these celebrations, but do not forget the words of John the Baptist: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” John the Baptist went out in the desert during that first Advent where it was quiet so he could hear God’s voice. We cannot do that. The desert where we must go is within ourselves. You need to carve out some quiet time during this Advent to hear God’s voice. Take some time to pray every day.

As you are doing your Christmas preparations do not complete them with panic and anxiety. Do them in a way that promotes goodwill and peace. This will help you grow closer to God and to the people in your life. Let me give you some examples. Take Christmas cards. I used to make sure that I sent a Christmas card to everyone who sent me one. As Pastor, I receive hundreds of Christmas cards and if I tried to send a return card to everyone I would be filled with panic and anxiety, so I gave that up. I send a few Christmas cards to people that I do not see frequently. When I write these cards, I have some quiet time and I pray for the people I am

sending the cards to. I love getting the Christmas cards but I had to give up sending a return card. When you go Christmas shopping make a point of being really kind to the people who work in the store. If you work in retail, you are probably working a lot of hours, the store is probably understaffed, and you are working with a lot of crabby customers. Bring the light of Christ into their day. Be really kind to the other shoppers. Several years ago I was shopping and I saw a woman who was totally exasperated. She had three young children with her, she was trying to find a pair of pants in a particular size, and she blurted out: "I cannot believe there is not one here to help me find the right size!" I said: "What size are you looking for? I will help you." She looked at me and said: "Do you work here?" I said: No, but I will help you." And do not overspend. If your friends and family are anything like mine, no one really needs or wants anything and the presents are opened in a couple of minutes and quickly forgotten. The idea is remembering people e love with a gift. It does not need to be extravagant. Don't go into debt over it. And think about the gifts that you can give to charity, to people really in need. And I did. And when you decorate your house, do not do it alone. Do it with someone else or a group of people and have some quality time with them. This year, I picked up my 16 year old niece from school the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and we listened to Christmas carols and put up my Christmas tree. I have ornaments that belonged to by parents and grandparents and ornaments that people had given me over the years. She wanted to hear the stories surrounding the ornaments and we had a really nice evening. And you do not have to put up every light and piece of garland this year. If you are feeling panic or anxiety over the decorating, just do not do it all this year. If you find yourself getting into a panic or anxious about your Christmas preparation, stop doing it. If you take some quiet time and pray, Jesus will tell you how to relieve your panic and anxiety. Are you celebrating Xmas or preparing Christmas?