

HOMILY 1ST SUN ADVENT YRB 2017

There was a college professor walking through university's science center. Through the window she could see a chemistry class in session but could not hear it. The professor looked very animated in the front of class lecturing with PowerPoint slides. He could see some of the laptops or students sitting in the back of class, and he saw a football game, headline news, e-mail, concert videos, Oprah. How can you really learning during class if you are only half paying attention to the lecture? I have a friend that is a university professor and she has banned phones, laptops, note books, all of that stuff in the classroom. Students need to be involved in processing the information, formulating questions, participating in class discussions, fully attentive to get the most out of a lecture.

In the Gospel reading today Jesus tells us: "Be watchful. Be alert." What is it that we are to be watchful and alert for? I think many of our days are filled with planned, scheduled activities and in between we are totally distracted by our phones or social media. Now I am not condemning phones and social media. I am using my phone more and more to get immediate answers to my questions. And we can use social media to keep up on what is going on, but we cannot be constantly distracted by it. We need to be watchful and attentive to the communications that come from God. God does usually does not communicate to us during our planned scheduled activities. He frequently speaks to us during the down time in between, and if you are always distracted during the down time, you will miss the communication.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. During Advent, we are preparing for Jesus to come into our lives in a new way. Jesus came into the world 2,000 years ago and has never left, but he has come into our lives in an incomplete way. This will never be complete until we get to heaven, but allowing Jesus into our lives in a new way will help it to get there. I suggest that when you are completing your Christmas preparations that you make these preparations meaningful. When you address your Christmas cards, try praying for the people you are addressing the cards to. By holding them in prayer God may identify the people in your life that you need to be more attentive to. When you decorate the house do

not do it alone like something on a list to accomplish. Do it with a friend or family member. Have some quality time with someone you love. When you do your Christmas shopping, maybe you should buy a gift for someone who would not receive a gift otherwise or someone that deserves something special, or someone that you would not normally buy a present for, but needs something special in their lives because they are having a hard time this Christmas.

Schedule some time for personal prayer. Maybe you can just turn off your phone and quietly sit in front of the Christmas tree and have a conversation with God. You might be surprised at what comes up. At Coffee and Conversation this Wednesday at 7:00 in the Church, we will be talking about Centering Prayer. This is a form of prayer where you are quiet in God's presence and allow him to communicate with you on a level below that feeling, intellectual level.

Advent is the season when we prepare to allow Jesus into our lives in a new way. The gift you get from God this Christmas is probably not going to be under the Christmas tree. You need to be watchful and alert. If you are, the gift will come sometime between now and the end of the Christmas season. And you will not recognize the gift if you are distracted constantly by your phone. And you may be the one delivering the gift. Our theme this year for Advent is "Everyone Belongs." This theme came to me because a number of people have told me recently that they feel as though they do not belong anywhere. What a horrible feeling that must be. You may be the one that God is calling to make someone feel as though they belong. You may not even notice them in your life if you are constantly distracted. Christmas is a particularly terrible time to feel that you do not belong anywhere. During this Advent and Christmas season I am going to ask all of you to be watchful and alert when you come to church. Make sure everyone you encounter here feels as though they belong. Everyone belongs at St. Edith.