

HOMILY 1ST SUN ADVENT YRA 2019

A friend of mine was talking to her son Joey a couple of years ago at Christmas time and he asked her, Mom, why are people putting lights on their houses. She said: “They are celebrating Jesus Birthday. Joey said: “When is Jesus Birthday?” She replied: “He was born on Christmas.” Joey said: “Jesus was born on Christmas! What a coincidence!” She was absolutely shocked that her own son did not know why we celebrate Christmas. Has Christmas become so secularized that we don’t even associate it with Jesus birth? That is amazing.

Today is the First Sunday of Advent. Advent is a time when we prepare for Christmas but it is also a time when we prepare for the second coming of Jesus or our own death, whichever is sooner. The Gospel reading today reminds us that we must be prepared because we do not know when that day will come. “Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, one will be left.” One will be prepared, one will not. The best way to remain prepared at all times is to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. The more we can be aware of Jesus’ presence with us, the more we will stay on track. The easiest time of the year to be aware of Jesus presence in our lives is during Advent and the Christmas season. Everywhere you look there are Christmas lights, which are symbolic of the light of Christ in our lives. It is hard to avoid Christmas music anyplace you go. The evergreen trees and wreaths and garland should remind us of the everlasting love of Jesus. We have constant reminders of Jesus but Christmas has become so commercialized that it has become just the big generic holiday that we celebrate during the winter.

Our theme for Advent this year is “Make Room for Jesus.” We can get so busy this time of year that we can force Jesus right out. During Advent our culture prepares for Christmas and celebrates it at the same time. That is the cause of all of the busyness. We live in this culture so

we must be part of it. Your friends, relatives and coworkers will not be happy with you if you refuse to celebrate Christmas during Advent. In fact, if you refuse to celebrate Christmas until Christmas day, you will probably miss most of the celebrating. Some of us are so tired and sick of Christmas by Christmas Day that we are just glad that it is over with. So let's talk about some ways to "Make Room for Jesus" during Advent and the Christmas season.

My first suggestion is to eliminate "The Holidays" and "Happy Holidays" from your vocabulary. If you are very purposeful about saying the word Christmas instead, it will be a constant reminder that Jesus is the reason for the season.

Make a commitment to come to Mass every weekend during Advent and the Christmas season. You may be tempted to rationalize missing Mass because you are just too busy. I am going to recommend that you spend at least 15 minutes in personal prayer each day. I suggest that you try and pray at the same time every day so you pray every day. It will become a habit after a few days. During this prayer time I want you to just be present to Jesus. During this prayer time I suggest that you ask Jesus to help you keep all of the busyness under control. With Jesus help, you may be able to cross off many of the activities from your to do list. Ask Jesus for help setting your priorities each day. Ask Jesus to help you find meaning in all of the Christmas preparations and celebrating that you are involved in. Sometimes it feels that you are just doing things to check them off the "to do" list. Take time to find the meaning.

Finally I suggest that you try to bring joy into the lives of everyone you come in contact with during Advent and Christmas. This means not just your friends and relatives but also the stranger you come into contact with every day, both in person and on social media. You can be Jesus to everyone you come into contact with. Make room for Jesus in all of your relationships. Be aware that he is with you and be his hands, feet and voice in the world. Make room for Jesus.