

HOMILY 2ND SUNDAY ADVENT December 7, 2025

There was an older man in Phoenix who called his son in New York. He said “I hate to ruin your day, especially because it is right before Christmas, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are getting a divorce. Forty five years of misery is enough.” The son shouts at him “Pop, what are you talking about? You can’t do that.” His father said “your mother and I cannot stand the sight of each other anymore. So call your sister in Chicago and tell her,” and he hangs up. The son calls his sister and tells her. She says “oh no they’re not. I am going to call them and I will get back with you. I will take care of this.” So she calls her father and starts screaming at him and says “you are not getting a divorce. Don’t do a single thing until I get back there. Both my brother and I will be there tomorrow.” She hangs up. The older man hangs up the phone and turns to his wife and says “Okay, they are coming for Christmas and they are paying their own way.” Well, I guess mom and dad are going to get what they want for Christmas, or maybe not.

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, we get a picture of peace and total harmony with one another, which is the world we would like for Christmas. In the Gospel reading, we hear from John the Baptist, who is calling us to repent to prepare for Christmas. In this time of Advent, I think we need to have both. We need to have a picture of what we want for Christmas and we need to be willing to do the work involved so that can happen. We spend a lot of time on the physical preparations for Christmas, all of the decorations and the gifts, and all of that is great. But we cannot forget the spiritual preparation for Christmas. The physical preparations, the decorations and the gifts will be empty without the spiritual preparations.

First of all, I think we need to be clear about what we want spiritually. In the story I told earlier, do you think what mom and dad really want is to have their children with them on Christmas and paying their own way? They are going to get that, but what kind of Christmas are they going to have? When their children find out that they were manipulated into coming, what do you think their reaction will be?

The manipulation itself is a sign of deeper problems there. I think what they really want is to have a better relationship with their children and maybe that would not even involve spending Christmas together. This is a pretty extreme example, but sometimes there are conflicts in our relationships with friends or family that need to be addressed. Maybe having a truce to get through Christmas is the best we can do but maybe not. The conflict does not have to be the last word. Do you want to be the peace maker? Sometimes we have to sacrifice our pride. Can you admit you were wrong? Is avoiding admitting that you are wrong more important than being right? Can you respect the dignity of all people, even those you do not like or those you do not agree with? Are you going to allow your relationship to be defined by your area of disagreement? Conflicts in relationships usually involve contributions from both parties. Can you repent of your contributions? Maybe we need to see the difficult people in our lives the way Jesus sees them, with unconditional love.

I think we may focus too much attention on Christmas day forgetting we have a whole Christmas season. Sometimes young families are committed to spending Christmas with both sides of the family so they do not hurt anyone's feelings. Particularly, if families do not live close to each other. They can spend most of Christmas day in the car when what the kids really want is to be at home playing with the toys that Santa brought. Maybe Christmas with Grandparents can be on other days. Maybe there is still time to negotiate that, but have an actual discussion. Do not try and do it by texting. Or maybe a friend or family member is going through a really difficult time this year. Maybe Christmas day can just be about them. Maybe that is what you really want for Christmas. I am going to have a really busy Christmas with all of you. Three Masses on Christmas Eve and one Christmas morning. Spending the rest of the day alone may sound sad to you but it is not for me.

So what do you want for Christmas. Think about the people that you love. Make some of your advent preparation about them. If you just make the material preparations, the decorations and the gifts will be ok, but I think they will be a little empty.

Fr. Jim