

II ADVENT 2020

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

THE COLLECT ROM. 15.4-13 ST. LUKE 21.25-33

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Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us...Saint Paul tells us in his Letter to the Romans...so we might have hope through the patience and strength the Scriptures give us. The "Scriptures" Saint Paul is talking about is the Hebrew Bible...the Old Testament.

The Second Sunday in Advent is informally called "Bible Sunday"...a name it takes from the Collect and the Epistle. The "Scriptures" to which the Collect is referring is both the Old and New Testaments. Regular reading of ALL of the Scriptures gives us patience and strength...and renews our hope for everlasting life through Jesus.

The Collect was written especially for the first *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer intended the Liturgy to be delivered into the hands of the people in a language they understood. He and other Reformers also wanted the people to become familiar with the contents and teachings of the Bible.

The *Book of Common Prayer*, which is 75% Bible, makes the task of reading Holy Scripture easier. If we follow the Lectionary printed in front of the Prayer Book...we have a systematic and orderly and user-friendly way of working our way through most of the Bible during the course of one year.

The Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer are based on the earlier Monastic Offices. The prayer lives of those early monastics revolved around daily reading of the Psalms. Monastic communities today follow the same pattern of reading the Psalter. Advent is a good time for us to take on the Spiritual discipline of daily Bible reading, so we might better understand God's plan for us.

When we read lessons from both the Old and New Testaments, we begin to see how God has been interacting with his people all along. We are struck by the awesome reality of God's love for his people...of the prophets who taught the people about his love...and of the prophecies about the coming Messiah and our Redemption through Jesus.

We come to understand God's plan for saving us came true with the birth of his Son, Jesus...our Emmanuel...our God with us. At a specific time in the history of mankind...God became like us and walked among us so that one day we might walk with him and all of the Angels and Saints in heaven.

Sermons at Saint Joseph Parish don't normally include props such as this Father Christmas figure. However, since today, December 6, is also the Feast of Saint Nicholas...the real Santa Claus...it seems appropriate. Nicholas patterned his life around daily Bible reading and putting into practice the Scriptural Imperative to help others.

Nicholas was born into a wealthy family in 270 AD. His parents died when he was young. His uncle, also named Nicholas, was Bishop of Myra (Demre in modern day Turkey) raise him. Nicholas grew strong in the faith and was ordained deacon and priest and after his uncle's death, Nicholas succeeded his uncle as Bishop of Myra.

Saint Nicholas was known for his generosity often disguising himself and going out at night to leave gifts of food, clothing and money at the homes of the poor. It's from the Dutch Sinterklass...Saint Nicholas...we eventually get Santa Claus...and Father Christmas. Saint Nicholas gave desperate people hope.

The Gospel is about Jesus' Second Coming. Because we are people of hope, we look forward to his return with eager anticipation. Jesus tells us to stand up and raise our heads when we see him coming with great power and surrounded by light, because he has come to take us back to heaven with him. Jesus tells us the words he has spoken are true and will never pass away...and Jesus always keeps his word.

Advent is also a time of spiritual growth and getting our house in order. Regular reading of the Scriptures helps us to fully embrace the hope we have in Jesus. We shouldn't be afraid to read the Bible.

Let the words of Scripture guide us through this Advent Season...and every day of our lives.

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