

I Advent 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

The Collect Romans 13.8-14

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The Collect for Advent Sunday sets the tone for the entire Advent Season. The rubric...the italicized words printed in the Prayer Book underneath the Collect, directs us to repeat the Collect every day until Christmas Day. Its words are compelling...

...Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now I the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

There is a sense of urgency in what the Collect instructs us to do. Now is the time for us to put away works of darkness and replace them with the Light of Christ...not tomorrow...not next week...not next month...not next year. We shouldn't wait until the day we die...and we all will some day...to take decisive action to get rid of the bad things that are holding us back. We're asking God to increase in us his wonderful gift of grace to help us to good and positive things.

Advent Sunday is the Church's New's Year's Day. The word *advent*, from the Latin *adventus*, means "coming" or "arrival". The theme of the Advent Season is to prepare our hearts minds and souls to receive Jesus at his *First Advent*...his *First Coming*...the time the Collect tells us he came in great humility. Advent is also the time to get ready for his *Second Advent*...his *Second Coming*...when the Collect tells us we will his arrival surrounded by great light, to judge both the living and the dead.

This morning's reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans is a call to action and the inspiration for the Advent Collect. Paul summarizes the Ten Commandments by stating everything we do must be done out of love for others. If we truly love someone, Paul tells us, then we will never do the other person wrong.

Paul goes on to tell us to conduct ourselves as people who live in the light of day, as people who love God and love others. He gives us list of bad things we shouldn't do. Instead, we are to "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ like a suit of armor. When we were baptized, the Priest made the Sign of the Cross on our forehead and said..*"in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against the world, and the Devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."*

Advent is one of the Church's two penitential seasons...the other being Lent. What we should be doing to welcome Jesus into our hearts, minds and souls on Christmas Day is to take a good hard look at ourselves in the mirror Saint James writes is only a reflection...it isn't who we really are. Advent is about being honest with ourselves and others. Where do we need to make changes...for the better? Have we hurt someone in word or action. Now is the time to reach out and at least try to make things right with the person.

Immediately after the Prayer for the Whole State of Christ's Church, the Prayer Book directs The Exhortation is to be read on First Sunday in Advent, the First Sunday in Lent and Trinity Sunday. It is a fitting meditation for the commencement of the Church's two penitential seasons, and for Trinity Sunday and the long season of spiritual growth which follows. We need to pay attention to the Exhortation's "now is the time" call to action...to examine ourselves and get ready to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar.

The Exhortation commands us to *"Amend our lives, and be in perfect charity with all men"*. That means with God's help we put into practice our resolution not to do bad things anymore, and to act toward everyone on Earth in the way that is best for them, the way we would want them to act toward us. If we do these things, confess our sins, accept Christ's forgiveness, and resolve to do better, we will be receiving Holy Communion properly.

Advent Sunday is about getting our spiritual lives in order, so we will be ready for Jesus' *First Coming* on Christmas Day, and his *Second Coming* at the end of time. Paul tells us now is the time to wake up from our sleep...the moment we will be saved is closer than we think. Now is the time!

