

1st Sunday of Advent - C
Jeremiah 33:14-16;
I Thessalonians 3:12:-4:2;
Luke 21:25-38, 34-36
Little Flower - 11/28/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a new Church year. The word *advent* means coming. Our three readings today speak to the three comings of Christ. The reading from Jeremiah prophesies Christ's coming in history. The Gospel looks forward to Christ's coming in glory at the end of time. In his First Letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul writes about preparing for Christ's coming in glory by welcoming Christ into our lives and hearts today.

During the first part of Advent, the Church focuses on preparing for Christ's future coming in glory. During the second part of Advent, the Church focuses on preparing to celebrate Christ's historical coming on Christmas. Throughout Advent, the Church asks us to prepare to welcome Christ anew within our minds and hearts.

Every year as January 1st approaches, we tend to make New Year's resolutions. Today I would like to suggest that if we are going to prepare to welcome Christ anew within our minds and hearts as members of Little Flower parish, we need to make and keep three Advent resolutions, resolutions that will be good for us as individuals and good for our parish family. Because I think these resolutions are so important, I will be suggesting them to the larger parish as well.

First, we need to recommit ourselves to weekly attendance at Sunday Eucharist. It seems to me that although the pandemic is still with us, very few of us have valid reasons for not attending. Right now our Sunday Mass attendance is approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of what it was pre-pandemic. However, our pre-pandemic Mass attendance was only approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of our registered parishioners. Some of our parishioners who faithfully attended pre-pandemic are now coming only intermittently. Although some people are still concerned about returning because of COVID, I fear that many have simply become comfortable not attending or at least not attending every Sunday, or they have become comfortable watching Sunday Mass live streamed or recorded. If we are not attending because of COVID, we need to ask ourselves how much we are going out for other activities. When we celebrate Eucharist, Christ comes to us in his Word, in Holy Communion, and through others. When we receive the Eucharist, we are transformed into the likeness of the Risen Christ.

Second, we need to recommit ourselves to participating in parish ministries. Many of our parish family have not returned to their ministries or have returned only sporadically. In the Gospel stories of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, Jesus multiplies them but then gives them to the disciples to distribute. Just as Jesus needed the disciples to distribute the loaves and fish, Jesus needs us to be his hands and feet in the world today. When we choose to be his hands and feet today in our ministries, we welcome him anew into our minds and hearts.

Finally, Jesus came into the world to reconcile us to God and one another. Therefore, if we want to welcome Christ into our lives and hearts today, we need to commit ourselves to being instruments of healing, peace, and reconciliation within the communities of which we are part. Instead of focusing on what divides us, we need to focus on what unites us. We need to focus on commonalities rather than differences. Whatever our position on any issue, we need to turn down the volume of our posts on social media. We need to attempt to unite rather than divide. We need to listen and understand more and talk less.

My brothers and sisters, in today's reading from Jeremiah, God promised to fulfill his promises. He fulfilled them when Jesus became one of us and lived among us. In today's reading from First Thessalonians, Paul prayed that God would make the Thessalonians increase and abound in love for one another and for all. Our love for one another and for all will increase if we return to Eucharist, commit ourselves to be the hands and feet of Jesus through our ministries, and become instruments of healing, peace, and reconciliation as we await the return of Jesus in glory and the fulness of redemption promised in the Gospel.