

Weekly Pastoral Letter November 30, 2018

Well it's Friday morning and time to take a few moments to reflect with you about the meaning and purpose of Advent. Advent is a time of preparation, anticipation, longing, excitement, prayer, perseverance and problem solving. Although it's true that each and every one of us could talk about every one of those words endlessly from our own experience, today I just want to focus on preparation.

Jesus is not asking for our anxiety but rather our faithful trust. He does not expect us to be awake at three o'clock in the morning filled with anxiety, self-examination and critical analysis of everything we did the day before. Instead, he invites us to do what we can do with faithful perseverance and patience. We are the servants of the Lord and all that can be expected is our generosity and genuineness.

It helps to accept a specific approach to life. That approach being that we are living each day as if this may be the day we become accountable to God. I think the contemporary phrase is "May you live each day as if it were your last." We are accountable for our lives. We do not know when the ending will come. But we do know that we are here right now. We do know that there is an opportunity to live our lives with enthusiasm, determination and faithfulness.

Many of you will remember your Sunday School days when you heard about John the Baptist. John took a long time in the wilderness to prepare his thoughts and reflections before he proclaimed the good news of the coming Messiah and invited people to be baptized and repent from their sins. Did you know that a contemporary interpretation of sin is, "missing the mark"? Sometimes we just don't quite do the right thing. We may want to do the right thing, we may think about doing the right thing, but we end up doing the easy thing. Sometimes that is just plain wrong. We all make mistakes. John the Baptist invited the people of his time to realize that they had come to the end of the road and that it was time to do an about-turn. Historically, John was considered the last voice among many who were looking for someone to be the bridge between God and humanity. We are invited to move between "me and we". As Christians, we begin our journey at baptism to live out our lives as servants of the Lord. In every task and responsibility we are to make choices that not only benefit ourselves but others as well. Our vocation is to discover what meaning and purpose God has for our lives and how to live out that purpose. The best way to begin this is to decide what we love to do and how we can serve the Lord by doing that. We can acknowledge that these gifts and talents are our gift from God to be shared with the world.

Some might say that we choose to live our lives with the most meaning when our words and actions show the spirit of Jesus in everything that we say and do. So now I come to preparation. Some of us are spontaneous. Some of us have a clear plan. What I'm inviting you to do today is to carefully, prayerfully prepare for the Advent season. Decide who you need and want to see this season. Decide where you want to go and what events you want to participate in. Put aside time and energy for prayerful decisions that allow the season to be a blessing rather than a burden.

Blessings
Fr Stephen