

Homily 1st Sunday Advent Year A -2022

We live in a world of staggering beauty and overpowering wonder and fail to see it or be influenced by it. We stumble along through the miseries and challenges of life of which there are too many to see our way through. Advent is a life-saving opportunity to help us refocus. The focus being where it should always be - on the God who comes to us in Jesus Christ. It is too easy to think that after more than 2000 years God would have run out of ideas for this birthday. God just chuckles and thinks "*But I have only just started!!*"

The word Advent means *coming* and the Jesus who comes this year has very special gifts if we prepare well and are open to receive them. The call to stay awake is about being attentive and aware.

Because God walks so closely and noiselessly by our side, just out of our vision but no less present, we too easily think that God has forgotten us – something that is impossible. Advent is a journey – a journey with the Father, Son and Holy spirit but also a journey with our families and friends, with fellow Christians and all those who live the Way of Christ without necessarily knowing it. That's a great number of people. So, the journey will be far from boring, quite the opposite. Staying awake means acknowledging all those who walk with us. The more we do this, the more we will become aware of God's presence in them and we will discover that God speaks to us through them. It is impossible to make this journey alone.

A story about 5 people who froze to death around a camp fire on a bitterly cold night. Each had a large piece of wood that they could have added to the fire, but for reasons they only knew they refused to give what they had. A woman did not add her wood to the fire because there was a man in the circle. A homeless man did not add his wood because there was a rich man there. The rich man did not offer his piece of wood because his contribution would warm someone who was obviously shift and lazy. Another would not give his wood because he recognised someone not of his particular faith. Another withheld his wood because he recognised a person who was transgender. And so, the fire died out because each person withheld their piece of fuel for reasons justifiable to them.

This story was originally told as a poem which ended with these words:

*Five logs held fast in death's still hand
was proof of human sin.*

*They did not die from cold without,
they died from cold within!*

Staying awake and being aware and attentive to those journeying with us, we will make sure that no one is left out or left behind. Our piece of wood will be encouragement, hope, goodness, caring, and being bearers of **Joy** that the new birth on the horizon inspires within us.

Father George was opening his letters one December morning. Out of one of the letters came a single sheet of paper on which was written only one word: '*Fool!*'. The following Sunday, in church, Father George announced to the assembled congregation, '*I have known many people who have written notes to me and forgotten to sign their names.*

But this week I received a note from someone who signed their name but forgot to write a letter.'

According to my chocolate advent calendar... There are only 3 days until Christmas.

