

1st Sun Advent (B)

30th November 2014

'An antidote to Advent Shopping!'

Is 63: *O that you would tear the heavens open and come down
look down from heaven and see* Ps 79:
1Cor 1: *waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ
to be revealed* Mk 13: 33–37: *Stay awake, because you do not know when
the master of the house is coming*

Advent is a very beautiful season of the Church's year. Coming out of November, month of remembrance of the dead, and into the season of preparation for the joys of the Saviour's birth, it has a wonderful, rich religious feel to it ... or should have! The problem with Advent, however, in today's culture, is that it can get swallowed up, ignored, wasted in spending money instead of spending time with the Lord. "WAIT," says the Lord. "BE ALERT." "STAY AWAKE." "BE ON YOUR GUARD." These are the watchwords for Advent ... and yet do we really heed these words? No wonder Advent gets lost if we don't do the waiting. The very word "Advent" means "coming," not "already come"! In peace and prayerfulness we should wait for the Lord.

All this, we preach in Advent in the face of society's incessant urge to us to grab and spend. The

images which came out of the news yesterday, of people grabbing and fighting over superstore 'Black Friday' bargains were just horrific. Such grotesque scenes, where store staff and even police had to intervene in violent scuffles over cut-price items for Christmas, were the very antithesis of what Advent — or Christmas, for that matter — should be. Grabbing, selfishness, "me me me" ... this is *not* what our preparation for Christmas should be.

This Advent we have the perfect antidote to an Advent entirely taken up with shopping, and writing the Christmas cards, and posting the parcels! Our second week of Advent will be taken up with the Parish Mission. It seems a very good time of year in which to bring ourselves to stop and reflect in a concerted way on our relationship with the Lord. The Mission Team is from St Patrick's Community, coming over from Ireland, from Co. Leitrim in the northern parts of the Republic, and is very experienced in giving parish missions in

Scotland and England as well as in Ireland. Associated with them is a famous speaker, John Pridmore. I have never heard him myself, but I know plenty of people who have, and tell me that his testimony of conversion away from a life of crime to a life preaching the mercy of the Lord is a very powerful one. As well as addressing the Mission he will also take time to speak to the Primary School children on the Monday and also at St Mary's Secondary School on the Tuesday. Let's make sure we all set out to be here at the Mission on the very first night, Monday 8th December, 7.30pm. From there, I am sure, we will be inspired to give as much of that week to the Mission, and to the Lord. So, please, set aside, for a start, the 8th December evening for Our Lord. That day happens also to be the feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception: Mary, central to our Advent 'waiting' as she patiently bore the unborn Christ child, will help lead us to Jesus, as she always does.

Please pray for the Parish Mission in the coming

week. Each of us, this Advent, and our parish as a whole, is in need of many graces and blessings, many gifts from the Lord. Let's long for *those* gifts this Christmas: the peace and gentleness that Advent should bring us as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Nativity. Commit yourself now to giving time this Advent to the Parish Mission. Bring your children, especially your teenagers, so that they, like all of us, can be touched by the Lord who comes to those who wait with faithfulness.

St Paul says, in that 2nd Reading: "the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed." The witness of those whose lives have been turned around by the Son of God is one of the most powerful testimonies to the goodness and grace of Jesus, at work in the Church. It's up to you to make this Mission a spiritual success. Pray for it; and come to it! And in this way *stand up*, as Christians, for Advent!