

Homily. 1st Sunday in Advent. Year. C. 30/11-1/12 2024.

Simply two points that I want to share with you on this New Year for our Church and the 1st Advent weekend. One has to do with goals and the other has to do with peace and focus in times of turmoil.

Whenever we start something it's great to have the goal or end of our efforts in mind. This is most helpful in directing our energy and resources in the best direction towards where we plan and hope we're going. Our Church begins this year and season with the final times and destination firmly before us. The scripture readings tell us that we're not on a trouble free journey through this life and world; quite the opposite. As everything around and in us is subject to change and impermanence experiences of clamour and distress are part and parcel of our ticket of entry to living. These are the challenges, missteps, failures and setbacks that all of us experience, that even creation itself undergoes over the process of time and history. To us they often feel like a shock even though, because they're common, they shouldn't be shocking to us.

The facts are that life and growth demands such movement and change for without these events we could never have fresh insights, new doorways opened to us or find our hearts and minds cast wider to seek God and to grow in compassion and mercy for each other. In short, trouble free idyllic years ahead are wonderful to wish and pray for, but they are exceedingly rare. It's the days and years of challenge and change that plough the fields of our lives for new directions, for the Advent coming of God with us on this journey.

Our focus and peace is found in Jesus, our leader on our journey of faith through life and our Saviour when we feel upset, all at sea and lost and washed up. When we're caught in distress, burnt out by too many demands, too much change and uncertainty, lifting up our souls, our inner selves to the Lord as the Psalm said, is the first thing we need to do.

Jesus said to us that when all of the mess and distress starts happening it right there and then that we are to stand tall and hold our heads up high for our freedom is near at hand. Instead of letting all of the cares of life trap and depress us we are to choose the other direction, standing with confidence before the Son of Man.

This is the same man who began his life by being born in a barn and was soon on the road with Mary and Joseph, refugees seeking safety in Egypt. This is the man who turned the trauma and turmoil of the dead wooden Cross into the tree of life whose leaves are evergreen and never fail. He knows full well that living means changing and the price that this demands. He is the One whose coming we await with quiet, steady, hopeful hearts. His words to us now are; Stay awake and alert; Pray for strength and remain confident in your faith. They are the perfect words for us to heed for the Season we've now commenced.