



Dear Parishioners:

We begin a new liturgical year this First Sunday of Advent. Jesus wakes us up with a strong command — Be watchful, be alert. We begin again to focus on God's faithfulness by fulfilling his promise to this world, to you and me.

God created a world where peace was the rule, the behavior of man and beast working in harmony for the good of all. In the beginning, God placed the law in our hearts so that we could live without the rancor so prevalent today. After the fateful day of the original sin, God has not left us alone. He told the snake, *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel* (Gn. 3:15) thereby ensuring a redeemer / savior would come to restore what was lost.

Advent takes us back to the beginning and leads us to hear again God fulfilling his promise. Advent is filled with the holy expectation of the Savior's arrival. Can there be such a thing as a "holy" expectation? The short answer, "Absolutely - Yes!"

Any expectation looks forward to certain results from certain actions. It's a normal human feature. False expectations occur when we think we will score 100 when we don't study, pay attention, etc. Living on the periphery of faith, doing the minimum or less, putting off confession, praying less and less and expecting God to congratulate you for sliding in on the oils is a powerful example of false expectations.

Holy expectations on the other hand originate from a sincere heart and will, focused on God's plan. The first step to living this way is to practice holy desires. I need to know God not for his power but for his friendship and love. When I can love Him this way I begin to expect that He leads me into the same kind of love not only for Him but overflowing into my love of neighbor.

It is holy to expect God to do what He said He would do. He is a person(s) of His word. He is not wishy-washy and vague. St. Paul writes, *"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you by us, Silvanus and Timothy and me, was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has been in him"* (2 Cor. 1:19). I expect to receive the gifts of God promised to me, so I can live with hope and joy.

I expect to grow in wisdom, age and grace because God will give me the grace I need. I expect it. Now when I expect, I look for it because I know God will answer our prayers in his way. Part of my responsibility is to look for the answer even if it's not the one I want.

One very human problem is thinking we always know what is the best answer for ourselves. Yet have we not had the experience of years after an event that was not welcomed or hurtful and now we see that it was one of the best things that ever happened.

Advent is a season of holy expectations — salvation, hope, joy, heaven joining with earth, God with man, and so much more. But we must watchful for Him who is our gift, our joy and our peace. These next few weeks we will hear again the call for a return to holiness and holy expectations. Expect this Christmas to bring a joy in God's faithfulness.

It behooves us to sit down with our families and discuss just how we will, as a family, prepare for the coming feast. There are family traditions to be honored, social obligations, special times set aside for Mass and confessions, etc. Have a serious discussion about the gift giving to be done. What would happen if a decision were made to spend 5% less on presents this year? — An infusion of God's grace of generosity! A winning deal.

Perhaps, as a family, you can help at a food kitchen, or at a food pantry one day. Our consumeristic culture pushes back on these ideas. Let's make this Advent different so that Christmas may be greater for us and the world.

Pace – bene,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Msgr. Bill".

Msgr. William L. Young, III | Pastor