

## Homily of First Sunday of Advent Year C

The meaning of Advent Wreath: **Circle** symbolizes eternity of God. **Green wreath** symbolizes life everlasting. **Candle light** symbolizes Jesus Christ, the light of the world. **Four candles** in circle symbolize the four weeks of Advent. **1<sup>st</sup> purple candle** symbolizes hope. **2<sup>nd</sup> purple candle** symbolizes peace. **3<sup>rd</sup> pink candle** symbolizes joy. **4<sup>th</sup> purple candle** symbolizes love. **Purple color** foreshadows the royalty of Jesus. For Advent, purple is not a sign of suffering and mourning as in Lent. The **5<sup>th</sup> white candle** in the middle represents the birth of Christ.

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent Season and a new liturgical year. We are, now, in Cycle C. Advent is observed in the Catholic Church as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Ordinarily, almost everybody, Christians and non-Christians alike, prepare for the celebration of Christmas. Business establishments started their preparation for Christmas business deals months ago. There is, usually, so much external preparation. For us Catholics, spiritual preparation is more important. When you are expecting a visitor, you will get your house in order, you will get food and drink ready, and you will also be clean and well dressed. If the house is in order, and food and drink well prepared and arranged, but the host appears unkempt and shabby, the visitor will be embarrassed and may not stay for the meal. That is why spiritual preparation is necessary, so that there will be an inn for Jesus in our life this Christmas. Spiritual preparation makes every Christmas become the first Christmas. As part of the spiritual preparation, there will be an Advent Penitential Service on Monday, December 17, 2017, at 6:30pm.

The theme of the first week of Advent is hope. Hope means trust, faith, and confidence for a desire to happen. Our ultimate hope and desire is that through our spiritual preparations during the Advent we will experience the blessings of the commemoration of the birth of Christ. St. Paul tells us that this type of hope does not disappoint (Romans 5:5).

A lesson Jesus teaches about waiting in Luke 12:37-38 comes to mind, "Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants." In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that while waiting, our hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life. Rather, we should be vigilant at all times and pray for strength.

In our hopeful waiting, St. Paul prays for us in the second reading, "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all... so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before God and Father..."

While we are waiting in hope for a new experience of the birth of Christ, the first week of Advent requires us to become instruments of hope to others. We are to share love with them and strengthen their hearts as St. Paul prays in the second reading. As Jesus is the hope for humanity, we, his followers, are to be signs of hope to our brothers and sisters. It is by so doing that the season of Advent properly begins. The prayer of St. Francis says, "Where there is despair, let me sow hope." This is our prayer and action point this week.

**Fr. Martin Eke, MSP**