

## Homily of First Sunday of Advent Year B

Meaning of Advent wreath: **Circle** symbolizes eternity of God. **Green wreath** symbolizes Life everlasting. **Candle light** symbolizes Jesus, the light of the world. **Four candles** 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.

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent Season and a new liturgical year. We are, now, in Cycle B. Advent is observed in the Catholic Church as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus. 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 Advent Penitential Service on Monday December 18, 2017, at 6:00pm.

The theme of the first week of Advent is hope. Hope means trust, faith, and confidence. Our prayer is that through our spiritual preparations during the Advent, our hope, trust, faith, and confidence in God will increase.

The word hope means so much to me at this time because I am living in hope and doing everything in hope and with hope. Our hope, trust, faith, and confidence in God, as a parish and as individuals, are being put to test at the moment. An easy way out would have been to cancel the Parish Christmas Party and the Children Christmas Party since our hall is damaged. I will avoid a lot of stress if I cancel Christmas midnight Mass since our church is damaged, and the Providence House accommodation is limited. The parish accepted, about a year ago, to host the Archdiocesan Altar Servers on the second Saturday of February 2018. It would have been very easy to tell the organizers to find another parish since we do not have accommodation. We are challenged by the situation of things. With hope, trust, faith and confidence in God we are not cancelling any of the celebrations. My hope, trust, faith, and

confidence are that God makes a way when there seems to be no way. As I said, I am living in hope and doing everything in hope and with hope. I take a leap of faith every day. The words of St. Paul strengthens me: "Affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:3-5). With hope, trust, faith and confidence we shall conquer. We will overcome.

We pray with the words of Isaiah in the first reading, "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, with mountains quaking before you, while you wrought awesome deeds we could hope for, such as they had not heard of from old. ...No ear has heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you doing such deeds for those who wait for him. ... O Lord, you are our father; we are the clay and you are the potter: we are the work of your hands." Psalm 27:13 says that because I believe, I shall see the Lord's goodness. St. Paul says in the second reading that God is faithful.

If someone attended last year's Christmas Party with his or her family, but is absent this year because of the uncomfortable situation in the church, where are the person's hope, trust, faith, and confidence? If we do not bring our children and grandchildren to their Christmas Party because of our present condition, where are our hope, trust, faith, and confidence? If someone prefers another church at this difficult time, where are the person's hope, trust, faith, and confidence? At one point Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). I say the same to you all. Let's carry our crosses and follow.

The Gospel of today tells us to be watchful and pray that Jesus may not find us asleep. Let us not be like Jonah who went to sleep at a time he should have prayed. This is a time to be together, to pray together, and go through it all together, and be able to give our testimony together and thank God together when it is all over. The greatest gift we have is the gift of one another.

Blessed are they who put their hope in God (Psalm 2:11). Blessed are they who put their trust in God. Blessed are they who put their faith in God. Blessed are they who have confidence in God. Amen.

**Fr Martin Eke, MSP**