

Happy Advent everyone! Now ***remember***, despite all of the Christmas music that's playing, and all the fun Christmas parties we'll be going to before December 25th, and all of the awesome Christmas movies that are on TV, *Christmas Vacation* and *Home Alone* being my favorites, it's officially ***not Christmas*** yet! I know I sound like the Grinch, but trust me I'm not. Rather, from now until December 24th, we're joyfully observing the great liturgical season of Advent.

And for us as Catholics, Christmas isn't just ***one day*** on December 25th, but we love Christmas so much that the Church celebrates Christmas ***as a season*** and so Christmas officially ***begins*** on Christmas Eve and formally ends on January 8th, which is the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord. So for the love of God, don't take your Christmas trees down on December 26th!

So here we are in Advent, which has a two-fold expectation that's rooted in joy and hope. During Advent, we're not only preparing for the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ at Christmas, which is God's first entrance into human history, but we're also preparing for our Lord's Second Coming at the end of time, when He will come as the definitive

and merciful Judge of all. And so this is what the Liturgy of the Word during Advent really orients us toward—that Second Coming of Christ when the world as we know it will end and we will be judged by our Savior according to our actions.

Now when contemplating this great mystery, we might ask ourselves, “Why doesn’t Christ just tell us when He’s coming back?!” Yet remember, God’s ways are not our ways and His ways are *so much better than our ways*. God in His infinite wisdom and omniscience *knows* each of us better than we know ourselves and He knows that we are all fallen and weak creatures who are inclined to sin.

And so think about it, if God told humanity that the world would end a year from now on December 3, 2018, being the weak and fallen creatures we are, many of us would probably “live it up” in the sinful sense and then by December 2, 2018, the confession lines would probably exceed anything we could imagine. Brothers and sisters, that would totally defeat the entire purpose of sincerely living as a faithful and holy disciple of Christ whose life is defined by love and virtue.

Such an attitude that believes, “I can do whatever I want *now* and commit as many mortal sins as I want *now* with the plan that I can just ‘go to confession’ and God will ultimately forgive me in the end” constitutes the mortal sin of presumption. Such a grave sin is a total and egregious abuse of the infinite mercy of God and it’s a constant temptation that we all need to guard against. The selfish attitude that fosters the sin of presumption is in no way rooted in a pure love for God and neighbor, nor is it based on a genuine repentance and the sincere desire for conversion.

So rather than subjecting us to a severe and massive temptation towards the sin of presumption, the Lord, out of His boundless love for us, does not reveal to us when the Final Judgment will occur. On the contrary, He tells us in today’s Gospel to “Be Watchful! Be Alert!” and in other Gospel accounts, “Stay awake!”

Now if someone repeatedly told you to “stay awake” and “be alert” you would probably go to your nearest Dunkin Donuts and order America’s favorite drug: *coffee!* America truly “runs on Dunkin”! Trust me, I’m not condemning coffee, I’m personally not a big coffee

drinker, but I know enough coffee drinkers to know that if I approach them in the morning before they have a cup of coffee, “watch out!”

So brothers and sisters, if you would indulge me for just a couple of seconds while I use the analogy of coffee to make a homiletic point: in order to be *spiritually watchful*, *spiritually alert*, and *spiritually awake*, we need the “*spiritual coffee*,” if you will, of *grace*! And we don’t just need the “spiritual coffee” of grace during Advent, but we need it *all times* in our lives. Advent only heightens the awareness of our constant need for grace—our constant need for God’s help and His own divine life as we persevere in faith. We absolutely need the grace of Christ to live as faithful disciples whose lives radiate love and virtue. We need the grace of Christ to stay awake, to be watchful, and alert.

Brothers and sisters, the ways through which the grace of Christ is lovingly given to us is through prayer, the Church, and Her sacraments, most especially the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Most Holy Eucharist. During Advent here at St. Ignatius *alone*, we’ll have more than enough opportunities to receive the saving grace of Christ: Starting this Tuesday, we’ll have expanded Eucharistic exposition on Tuesdays

in the chapel until 10 PM. Starting on Monday, we'll have an extra daily mass at 5:30 PM. And there will still be confessions on Saturdays from 3-4, or by individual appointment, or we have our special Advent confessions on Tuesday, December 19th at 7 PM—not to mention all of the other Advent penance services at surrounding parishes.

So this Advent, don't deprive yourselves of the grace that Christ wants to give you so that He can transform you into the best version of yourself—the saint our Lord is calling you to be! This Advent, don't deny yourself the grace that our Savior wants to pour out to you in abundance to help you, to heal you, to forgive you, to guide you, to sanctify you, and ultimately to save you.

So as we prepare to worship and receive our Lord in the Most Holy Eucharist, just take a step back and realize how much the Lord truly loves you and how much grace He wants to give you during this Advent.