



November 27, 2022

First Sunday of Advent

*"Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of Jacob,
that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths"*
Isaiah 2:3



Dear Friends,

On this Thanksgiving Weekend I would like to thank all of you. The last couple of months I have been getting treatment for a carcinoid tumor in my left lung. The tumor and lower lobe of my left lung have been removed. My doctors and I will be monitoring my health and determining if any further treatment is needed. This Sunday I am beginning my gradual re-entry into the life of our parish. I am grateful to all of you for your prayers, love, support, and cards. They were a great comfort. I am also thankful to the parish staff, all the parish ministries and the priests who have kept our community vibrant, praying and serving. Thank you!

Today we begin the season of Advent, and the beginning of the new liturgical year 2023. The word "Advent" means "coming." We look to the coming of the "light of the Lord," as it says in our reading from Isaiah. We cast our gaze in two directions. First, we look to the past and discern the presence of God in the faith journey of our ancestors. Secondly, we look with hope to the future Kingdom. That kingdom will bring the fullness of unity, peace, and love. This first part of Advent we look at how God works for our good even in a broken and sinful community.

History is a critical part of our faith journey. We are part of a story larger than ourselves. We are here because we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. Like us, history is made not only of successes but also failures. There is a difference between how Americans generally view history and how our ancestors in faith saw their history. As Americans we tend to think of our history as a triumphant march from the pilgrims' landing to conquest of the continent and a world power. We believe God specially chose us. We tend not to look at the dark parts of our history.

In contrast the faith history of Israel tells the story of a God who loves the weak. Because God loves them God challenges them to move beyond their sinfulness. God challenges them to realize creation is not yet finished. God works with them/us as we are sinful and broken. The book of the Prophet Isaiah begins with an indictment of God's people. But then God invites them, *"Come let us set things right."* (Isaiah 1:3) God does not confine us to our sins but invites us to the possibility of new beginnings. But new beginnings can't happen if we don't honestly acknowledge from where we began (warts and all). We are invited to see the world from God's perspective.

Pope Francis warns that if we lose our sense of history, we are vulnerable to manipulation. This is particularly true of the young. *"If someone tells young people to ignore history, to reject the experiences of their elders, to look down on the past and to look forward to a future that he himself holds out, doesn't it then become easy to draw them along so that they only do what he tells them? He needs the young to be shallow, uprooted, and distrustful, so that they can trust only in his promises and according to his plans."* History gives us flexibility in the face of obstinate ignorance.

To know history frees us from slavery to the present trends, ideologies, and passions. History gives us perspective and the freedom to move in a new way. We can become a new kind of human infused with divine love. We are not condemned to endless cycles of sin, violence, and war, *"one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again."* This Advent let us pray for peace in the Ukraine as we look forward to the coming light of God's peace!

Peace,

Fr Ron

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