

December 2, 2018 - 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent

On Monday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month we will have our annual advent penance service with many different priests here for you. And during advent, I will take a couple days during the week, in the morning and have confessions and we will let you know when those days are as I pick them out on my calendar.

Tragically, a bus on a busy street struck an old Catholic man. He was lying on the sidewalk near death, as the crowd gathered. "A priest," the man gasped. A policeman checked the crowd and finally said, "A priest please, isn't there a priest to give this man last rites?" Finally, out of the crowd stepped a little old Jewish man in his 80's. "Mr. Policeman," said the man, "I'm not a priest, I'm not even Christian but for fifty years now I'm living behind the Catholic church on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, and every night I'm overhearing their services. I can recall a lot of it, maybe I can be of some comfort to this poor soul." The policeman agreed and cleared the crowd so the man could get through to the injured man. The old Jewish man knelt down, leaned over the man and said in a solemn voice, "B 5, I 19, N 38, G-54, O 74."

This is our happy new year, as Catholics. This is the first Sunday of our Church year and also the first day of our Church year, so this is our new year. But, we notice that the reading in the gospel today is just a continuation of last Sundays, talking about the end times, the end of the world. Jesus is talking about all of these calamities that will happen, all these things that will happen and everybody will be in dismay, he said. Everybody's all uptight about the end times and always looking at it. No matter where you go anymore there's. "Oh, the earthquakes are overdue, the tsunamis are overdue, the caldera in Yellowstone is overdue," all these things are supposed to happen and then people are predicting there's going to be a disease, a plague. And then they're saying our infrastructure, especially our electric grid was built in the 1930's and it could collapse at any moment or be hacked and then nine out of ten of us will die, if the electric grid goes down. That's a sobering thought. You should say, "Thank you God," every time you plug something in and it still works. And don't be swearing and cussing if it doesn't and have to go to confession. But Jesus is telling us about this and He did the same thing last time because advent is divided into two sections. First two weeks – be prepared; second two weeks – rejoice for the Lord is near. So we have two different types of things and today we continue with the end times. We continue with, being prepared. He said people will die of fright. People are always saying the end times are coming, well, wait a minute, has anyone you know died of fright? No. When I was up in Washington State one year visiting my parents, the Seahawks were in the Superbowl and when they lost, five people had a heart attack. Well, that wasn't fright; that was anger and frustration and all that kind of thing. But, if nobody's dying of fright, don't be worried. And they said everybody would be shaken, not just you but everybody else.

When I was at N.A.U. going to college, I discovered something, I did a little experiment. When I was having a bad day, I'd ask people around me, "Are you having a bad day?" Everybody on campus was having a bad day. So when I had a good day, I asked the same thing and everybody on campus was having a good day. So Jesus is saying, "Hey, everyone is going to feel it at the same time because we are connected," we're so connected. And He said but what do you need to do? He said, "Don't cower in fear, don't worry, stand with your heads erect and your back straight and look for the Son of Man to come." This is what you talk about, the end times. So He says, "Don't worry." As long as you work on trying to be holy, as long as you try and keep yourself with God, don't worry. There becomes the crux of the matter. He said look for the Son of Man, now what direction was he supposed to come from? East (pointing) railroad tracks. Jesus is supposed to come from that direction. I have a friend who wakes up

every morning, he looks out his window, he doesn't see Jesus, he figures he better go to work. Jesus is supposed to come from the east, so He says, "Stand erect and look for Jesus, don't be afraid." But then He gives us a warning, and this is a very good warning. "Be aware that your hearts do not become drowsy." How many of us think that our hearts are asleep? Our hearts are distracted. Yes, we fall in love or what we think is love but that is not what Jesus is talking about. He said. "From carousing and drunkenness." Well, if you're not a college student then that doesn't affect you most every day. That maybe happens once in a while. But the third thing is what everybody has to worry about. The anxieties of daily life; the over stress, the over planning, too many things on your calendar, too many things that you've said yes to and not no. The anxieties of life that will catch you like a trap. Michele Mallican, a journalist, was adding more and more things to her calendar, being busier and busier and she was spending less time with her family. One evening she pulled up in the driveway and there was her little son's face in the window and she was just so overjoyed with motherly love, she wanted to run and grab and hug him. And she did. She ran; she got half way to the house and she realized the car was still in gear and her brake wasn't on, and the driveway was on a hill. She had just passed a group of little kids playing on the sidewalk across the street. Sure enough, as she turned around, the car was going backwards toward the children and there was nothing she could do. She couldn't catch it, she couldn't even scream, she was so shocked. Thankfully, a little maple tree gave its life to protect the children. Then she realized, she was letting the anxieties of life get in the way of her vocation. Anxieties of life getting in the way of her family.

This is what Jesus is talking about. We cannot let those things happen because every time we get too involved in life, our attention goes away from God. Our attention goes away from what really matters: our vocation as husband, wife, mother, father, or our vocation as Christian, followers of Christ. So Jesus is saying, "Beware, don't let your life become so burdened that your heart goes somewhere else; instead of Me, instead of your family." He said it doesn't matter what happens except that you're ready, that you're ready, that you receive the sacraments frequently, that you receive them worthily, and that you're always ready, be vigilant is what He's saying, be ready and pray, always pray. Us Catholics have prayers for everything. After two thousand years, there hasn't been a prayer that we've had to invent lately. There's even a novena hidden in the archives of the Vatican, a death novena that they prayed in the middle ages when they wanted someone to die. Can you imagine? The priest that discovered it wouldn't give me a copy because he was afraid I would use it. I just want to collect these weird prayers. I have a prayer card to "Our Lady of the Confederacy." Okay, that existed because there were Catholics on both sides, just like in a football game, both sides are praying for the win. So, he wouldn't give it to me. But we Catholics have prayers for everything. We have prayers for a happy death, we have prayers that somebody will be there to take us to heaven and not let Satan get hold of us at the hour of our death. We have prayers for everything. He says, "Pray." Find a favorite prayer and just keep saying it over and over again, even if it's just the name of Jesus, say it slowly and prayerfully. Pray that we have the strength to escape the tribulations that are eminent. What are the tribulations that are eminent? Satan taking us to hell. Satan getting through and making us think that we're doing the right thing when we're not. Praying that Satan will not get through to us and to stand for the Son of Man. Jesus is talking about eternal life, not life on this planet. What matters is, are we ready to leave this planet? Parents say, "Oh I want to be with my kids and grandkids." Well that's wonderful and that's nice, but eventually, you're going to. The whole thing is, when you get to heaven and realize you can do more for your family there than down here on earth. And that's what Jesus wants us to think about. Focus in on our end times. Our end time when Jesus is going to come for us. We don't know the day or the hour, but if we

receive the sacraments frequently, if we pray that we are ready at the hour of our death. We may not get a priest for last rites like the guy in the joke, but we'll be ready. Afterall, that's what matters.

God bless you.