

[Readings: Is 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matt. 24:37-44]

Over the past few weeks, I presided at the funeral of one man who was 102 and another man who was 101 years old. As I prayed privately before their Funeral Masses, I thought of all the things that they witnessed in their early years, and what they saw in their later years.

In 1920, transportation was moving from horse and buggy to the automobile. Communication was by telegraph for long distances and primitive hand-cranked or rotary telephones for local calls. News was read in newspapers. Handwriting was an art. Fires were put out with buckets of water. Prohibition begins in the United States. Women received the right to vote.

Then I thought of what they might have seen this year. Self-driving electric cars. Smart phones. Face Book, Twitter and twerking. Google News. Indecipherable handwriting! 30,000 pound fire trucks with aerial ladders. So much progress. But they also learned about abortions, bullying, addiction, pornography, road rage, noise pollution, and global warming.

This year, we find ourselves having to protect what it means to be male and female, what it means to be truly married, what it means to be a family. We prayed and worked for the defeat of Proposal 3 in the State of Michigan, but it passed. Progress generally is a good thing. Once in a while, though, our progress is hampered by setbacks. Obstacles we had not anticipated. Unexpected problems. Confusion, uncertainty and even despair.

That's when it's time to go mountain climbing! Now, I don't mean literally. I mean spiritually. Advent is a time for spiritual mountain climbing. In the time of the prophet Isaiah, the mountain top is where God lived. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain." You cannot get higher than God. You cannot be smarter than God. We go mountain climbing so that God may instruct us in God's ways and that we may walk in God's paths. We walk in the light of the Lord. We emerge from life's shadows and crevices to the splendor and radiance of the summit of God's mountain.

The mountain is where we have a sacred encounter with the God of the Universe and the best version of ourselves.

Have you ever had such an experience, a mountain-top experience? Where you encountered God in a profound way?

Where did Jesus let you know that He was and is near you in your deepest, darkest experiences of life and faith?

This is part of the meaning of the four weeks of Advent. And it is different from the six weeks of Lent. Lent is a time for repentance. Advent is a time for preparation. How do we prepare? We beat our swords into plowshares, and our spears into pruning hooks. We take our capacity for war and violence and transform it into a means of outreach, dialogue and assistance. As St. Paul says in today's Second Reading: we wake from our spiritual sleep, we throw off those sinful deeds of darkness and put on the armor of Christ.

Today's Gospel passages contains the controversial reference to what some Pentecostals and Fundamentalists call "the Rapture" and what led to the writing of books called the "Left Behind" series. Our Gospel passage is not proof of "the Rapture;" it is proof of life's random bad things that happen to good or innocent people.

The "coming of the Lord" which we anticipate during Advent has two rich meanings of the original Greek word, Parousia. Sounds like "Paris – See Ya!" It can mean the visitation of an important dignitary or politician, or it can mean God visiting a group of people with grace and gifts and salvation. Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of the Lord.

The coming of the Lord at Christmas, at the end of our earthly lives and at the end of the world. When will this happen? Jesus pretends He doesn't know, but He does – He's God! But He warns us: "Stay awake! Be ready, for you do not know at which hour or on which day your Lord will come."

We usually think of penance, prayer, fasting and almsgiving as something we do during Lent.

But after the November 8 passage of Proposal 3, Archbishop Vigneron asks us to do this during the first two weeks of Advent, beginning today. He

writes: "Abortion is now legal in Michigan at an unprecedented level, and millions of lives are at stake. We must pray and ask God for his mercy upon us for allowing this evil to happen in our state. **For this reason, I want to invite all the faithful to join me in the first two weeks of Advent, from November 27 to December 9, in doing penance, giving alms, praying, and fasting.** We must use these spiritual practices to make reparations for the great sin of abortion in our midst. [We are planning a Mass of Reparation for Wednesday, December 14 at 7 PM here at St. Martin de Porres. We invite our Family of Parishes to come.]

We also renew our commitment to accompanying women and families in need, with greater resolve than ever. This work is more critical now, as the unborn have been stripped of their basic right to life and their mothers face the harmful lie that the death of their children is a solution to their struggles. In response to the passing of Proposal 3, we must step forward with no judgment, open arms, and effective resources to help women reject the "solution" of death and empower them to choose life for their children.

In the Archdiocese of Detroit, we do this largely through Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, [Walking with Moms in Need \(WWMIN\)](#) and Project Rachel. I urge you to please get involved in these ministries.

We will continue our efforts to build a culture of life in which abortion is unthinkable, all families receive the support they need, and the dignity of all people is recognized. We do this with confidence in the ultimate victory of Christ, Whose Resurrection to life has defeated the powers of death. St. Gianna Molla, the patroness of mothers, physicians, and unborn children, pray for us. Our Lady of Guadalupe, who carried the Savior in her womb, pray for us."

So stay awake. Jesus is coming. Are you ready?

COME, LORD JESUS! AMEN!