

Stewardship Messages for Advent 2017

Option 1 messages come from the International Catholic Stewardship Council

Option 2 messages come from Dr. Jerry Martinez

December 2/3, 2017

First Sunday of Advent

“Be watchful! Be alert.” Mark 13:33

The season of Advent is upon us, and in today’s Gospel, Jesus delivers a simple message through the pen of St. Mark: “Be watchful! Be alert!” Christian stewards understand what Jesus meant when he said, “It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task.” Good stewards realize that to each one a task is assigned by God. They have been set in a particular place and station in life, and have been gifted with unique relationships. How do we respond to the tasks or honor our relationships in a way that keeps us alert for the return of Christ?

...OR...

“What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’” (Mark 13:33-37)

Watch Out! Don’t cry or pout. He’s making a list and checking it twice so he’s gonna find out who is naughty or nice. He sees you when you’re sleeping and he knows when you’re awake. He knows who is bad or good, so be good for goodness sake. Have you figured out who “HE” is? There is going to be a celebration of his birth, including singing and eating and drinking. People will visit family and friends and exchange gifts, some of great value and usefulness. Do you know who HE is? It is JESUS, of course! The First Sunday of Advent is the beginning of a brief time for us to reflect on the incredible miracle and mystery of God Incarnate, God become man. It is a time for us to contemplate why the God who created us became one of us. His unconditional, unlimited love for us is certainly one reason. The celebration, the food, and the gifts are nice. But spending time to comprehend the magnitude of God’s love for us is the real purpose of Advent. That is a gift we can give to God who created us and became one of us.

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December 9/10, 2017

Second Sunday of Advent

***“Do not ignore this one fact. Beloved, that with the Lord,
one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day.”*** (2 Peter 3:8)

Today’s second reading is about Christ coming again, “The day of the Lord,” Peter calls it, but that day isn’t December 25th. It’s that other day, the second-coming-day about which Peter is concerned. He waits with great hope and anticipation for God to remake the earth into a place of perfect justice and peace. And he sets some demanding goals for the Christian community as it awaits the final day of accounting and reconciliation: strive to be at peace, without spot or blemish. Christian stewards work for peace. As we await the coming of Christmas, what can we do to promote peace in our homes, workplaces, community, world?

...OR...

***A voice of one crying out in the dessert” “Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.”*** (Mark 1:1-8)

The comment we often hear when someone is acting silly or goofy is, “Oh, that is just George (or whatever the person’s name) being George.” We can wonder what Elizabeth or Zachariah said when people told them that their son was living in the dessert, wearing a camelhair shirt and leather belt and eating locust and wild honey. Did they say, “Oh, that’s just John being John.” If so, they were right. John was being who and what God created him to be – a messenger sent by God to prepare the way of the Lord by making straight his path and calling people to repent for their sins. John had accepted his role and mission in life. He knew he was not the Messiah but that he was to prepare the way for the Messiah. He may have dressed a little strange and eaten an unusual diet, but he did what God created him to do. Are we doing what God created us to do? Are we preparing the way for the Lord, at least the way for the Lord to come into our heart?”

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December 16/17, 2017

Third Sunday of Advent

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)

In today’s second reading Paul concludes his letter to the Christian community at Thessalonica by providing it with actions to take as they wait for the return of the Lord. The first action is to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances. This sounds easy but it is not. The two words that make this task difficult are “always” and “all”. This means giving thanks and rejoicing even when our circumstances are not always moments of joy and thanksgiving, or when we are confronted with a broken world. Prayerful stewards rejoice and give thanks in all circumstances because they are people of hope. A good reflection this week would be how the season of Advent can give you reason to hope.

...OR...

“The one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.” (John 1:27)

Many children have a visit from “Santa” at a family gathering just before Christmas. Typically, Santa sounds like and resembles one of the male elders of the family. Small children are either excited or frightened. As they grow older they get suspicious and start to ask questions, “Why is Pappa never here when Santa comes?” and “Why is Santa wearing Pappa’s glasses and watch?” It is a rite of passage when they finally “get it” and become responsible for keeping treasured family secret. For the Jews in Jerusalem who sent priests and Levites to ask Joh **who** and **what** he was, the implications were much more serious than the identity of Santa. If John was the Messiah, or was proclaiming the imminent arrival of the Messiah, the influence and livelihoods of the priests and Levites could be at risk. They were concerned that God **had** become incarnate. Do you understand the implications of God incarnate? That is why we are preparing to celebrate on Christmas. Are we ready for that?

Stewardship Messages for Advent 2017

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December 23/24, 2017

Fourth Sunday of Advent

“Hail full of grace! The Lord is with you.” (Luke 1:28)

In today’s Gospel reading we hear proclaimed the story of the Annunciation, when the angel of the Lord announced to Mary that she would give birth to Christ through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Mary allowed God’s messenger to speak to her. She was attentive, not afraid to enter into dialogue, then unconditionally obedient. Mary’s acceptance of this mystery is a stewardship model for us. Good stewards remain open to the inclusion of divine life into the normal course of our daily lives. How open are we to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our own lives? What might we do this last week of Advent to be more attentive to the Lord?

...OR...

***“Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word...”*** (Luke 1:26-38)

On the Second Sunday of Advent we noted that “John [the Baptist] was just being John”. He discerned God’s will for him and did it. Now we hear of “Mary just being Mary,” a young teenager in a tiny hamlet on a craggy hilltop in the northern region of Galilee. Mary heard a message from God so amazing she wondered how it could happen. But she realized it was God’s will for her and she consented. There were many details and consequences she could not know, but she said “Yes!” to be the human mother of God incarnate. That was “Mary just being Mary.” That is all God asked of her and that is all God asks of us – to be all that God created us to be. For us, just as for John the Baptist and Mary, we begin by identifying, accepting, and developing all the unique talents, abilities, and gifts God has given to each of us, and then using them to the best of our ability ***for ourselves and for others***. Is that not the greatest gift we can give to Jesus when we celebrate his birthday on Christmas? Is our present for Jesus ready?

Stewardship Messages for Advent 2017

December 30/31, 2017

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

On the feast of the Holy Family, may we heed the following words from our Holy Father, Pope Francis: "*I want to repeat these three words: please, thank you, sorry. Three essential words! We say please so as not to be forceful in family life: "May I please do this? Would you be happy if I did this?" We do this with a language that seeks agreement. We say thank you, thank you for love! But how many times do you say thank you to your wife, and to your husband? How many days go by without uttering this word, thanks! And the last word: sorry. We all make mistakes and on occasion someone gets offended in the marriage, in the family, and sometimes... harsh words are spoken but please listen to my advice: don't ever let the sun set without reconciling. Peace is made each day in the family: "Please forgive me", and then you start over. Please, thank you, sorry! Shall we say them together? Let us say these words in our families!*"