

Homily

1st Sunday of Advent, December 3, 2017

Think about your last vacation. How much planning did it take? Deciding where to go; how long to stay; how to get there and what to do when you get there; what to pack; there's a lot that goes into planning a trip.

We took our boys to Panama City Beach. We drove. That's over 700 miles one way. I like to plan; that is how I'm wired.

I had every gas station mapped out to maximize our distance between stops and minimize the time we weren't driving. It was well planned.

What I didn't account for was nature's call. For some reason, our bathroom breaks didn't match my map with perfectly positioned gas stations. And once we got out of sequence, my plan pretty much went out the window.

And what about the weather? Donna and I went on our honeymoon to a small village on the east coast. While we were there, one of the most devastating hurricanes came up the eastern seaboard.

We weren't in any danger, but we were without electricity for two days and the only food we could get to was at a small convenience store that had already been picked over. This was something we were not prepared for.

To plan is to lay out step-by-step points of action.

To prepare is to be ready; to do what is needed for what lies ahead.

Most of us have heard the famous line, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry."

Woody Allen said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans."

I don't think God is that cruel, but there is some reality in the sentiment. Do our plans always go according to plan? No. They rarely go close to the plan in my experience. I often say to my team at work, "plan for the best, but prepare for the worst."

Jesus commands us in today's Gospel to "Watch!" "Be watchful!" "Be alert!"

In His parable, he describes how the man traveling abroad orders his gatekeeper to "be on the watch," and, "places his servants in charge, each with his own work."

Today we begin Advent, the preparation of the coming of Christ at Christmas. But we live between the first coming of Jesus at His birth and His second coming at the end of time when He will come as Judge of all.

This is a time of reflection: "We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection *until you come again.*"

We can plan as best we can for the activities in our lives. But we can't plan on when He is coming.

The parallel is beautiful and significant; we prepare for the coming of Jesus in the stable and we prepare for the second coming of Jesus when we will be judged.

Mark's Gospel does a good job of getting us worked up and a little anxious.

Looking closer, we see just what Jesus is telling us to do to prepare; he describes the man traveling abroad and how this man assigns tasks to each of his servants.

The best way for us to prepare is to focus on the work he has assigned each of us.

What work are we assigned to? Each of us has different gifts, abilities and talents.

Fortunately, we have what Jesus has told us many times and in many ways.

Simply put, we are to love. Love God, love our neighbor.

We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned.

We are to embrace the Sacraments; Baptism which opens us to God's graces, Reconciliation which reunites us when we turn away from Him, the Eucharist which nourishes us for this journey, however long and hard.

So today we begin with excitement and anticipation the coming of Christ at Christmas.

And, we remember to prepare for His coming when we can rest our head on His chest and be with all the saints in Heaven.

So let us all work, be alert and WATCH!