

Before I offer a reflection for the week, I would offer a friendly reminder, being that we are in the cold and flu season.

If you have a cold or the flu, please don't come to church. Please stay home and please don't confess not going to church because you were sick as a sin. It is not a sin. If you think it is a sin, the best I can offer you is this: that's your problem (said in jest)

Here we are in the new church year, a new liturgical year and so I say to you: happy new year! This Advent season, we hear about staying awake and being vigilant as we heard in today's readings.

I once heard about a new store owner who wanted to protect his business so he bought what he thought was a watch dog; however, all the dog did was to park himself in the front doorway and fall asleep.

Soon, the store owner put up a sign: Beware of Dog....and after a few weeks, customer would ask him: Why are you telling us to beware of your dog if all your watch dog does is sleep? Well, he said, you have to understand: folks were complaining about tripping over the dog.

Perhaps that's not the best example of being awake and aware. Maybe we can relate better to the example of waiting for loved ones to return home from war or waiting for relatives and friends at the airport. We are filled with anticipation and happiness.

In the Gospel of Matthew which we just heard, Jesus reminds his followers that we don't know when the Son of Man will come again. It might be compared to a thief in the night. He spoke about this because people in his day really thought he would come again during their lifetime.

This section of Matthew's Gospel would be called apocalyptic literature and that's why the first two Sundays of Advent we focus on the Second Coming of Christ and the last two Sundays of Advent, we focus on the imminent coming of Christ.

During this time of year, we find ourselves very busy: busy shopping (Black Friday/Cyber Monday), buying gifts, wrapping gifts...cleaning our homes in a special way, especially if in-laws are coming....buying a tree, trimming and decorating the tree....writing cards....going to parties, dinners, Christmas gatherings and the list goes on.

However, instead of doing so many busy things, perhaps we are not focusing on quiet times and moments of peace.

We all want peace...peace in the world, peace in our country, peace in our homes. However, the biblical understanding of peace is not the absence of war, but rather having that right relationship with God.

And there's a Chinese proverb that sums this up nicely: if we have peace in the soul, there will be peace in the person....and if there is peace in the person, there will be peace in the home...If there is peace in the home, there will be peace in the nation, but it all begins with me (I sing the refrain from the song: Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me)

I would like to suggest an activity we can all do during Advent: and that is to get the booklet of Advent Reflections which we have in the vestibule of the church.

In this booklet we have a reflection for every day of Advent with a scripture reading. Perhaps you can take just a few minutes each day...read the scripture passage and see what it says to you.

What is God saying to you? Hopefully, this will lead to inner peace as we all prepare for Christmas, as we all get away from the busyness of this time of year....and if we have that inner peace, maybe - just maybe there will be peace on earth.

AMEN