

2022-11-28 Fr. John's Homily for the 1st Sunday of Advent: *Be Prepared*

Well it's been a few weeks since we last talked and a lot of history has happened since. Some of it was on the world stage, some of it was domestic. Hurricanes, record snowfalls. The elections, particularly here in Michigan, with the passage of that infamous Proposal 3. Lord have mercy on our poor state. But I have also had some history happen in my own life. Nothing bombastic really. But a little break from the routine.

A few weeks back I had occasion to go to a VFW hall in Mason, South of Lansing, to listen to Charley Johnston. He is the founder of a group called CORAC. Which stands for *Corps of Renewal and Charity*. He travels the country talking about his favorite subject which is preparedness, being prepared. And in my travels that weekend, I had lots of driving time so I listened to some YouTube videos on my car radio (I just listened, I didn't watch. Too dangerous). And one talk I really enjoyed was by Doug Barry of a group called *The BR Coalition*, where BR stands for "Battle Ready". And his theme is, again, being prepared.

But in both cases, each of these men speak about being prepared in basically two different ways. Being prepared spiritually and being prepared physically, or practically, for whatever happens in the future. The future may be tomorrow. It might be next month, it might be 10 years down the road. In any case, lots of interesting stuff. You can check it out on our Holy Spirit homepage and under the heading "Get Involved".

So that's the subject for today. Here at the beginning of Advent, and the new liturgical year, Preparedness. And it was there in the last line of our Gospel: "So too, you also *must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.*"

Today in my bulletin article I talk, again, about the *Liturgy of the Hours* which is the official prayer of the Universal Catholic Church. Every day, in the morning we read the *Canticle of Zachariah*. Zachariah is the father of John the Baptist, and remember, he had been silenced by the angel for nine months, but now, filled with the Holy Spirit, his tongue is loosened, and he prays this *vertical* prayer to God. But at a particular moment he changes his focus and looks down at his baby boy in his crib and speaks to him directly, and prophesies about his son. "*And you, my child, shall be called a prophet of the Most High. You will go before the Lord to prepare his way. To give his people knowledge of salvation, by the forgiveness of their sins.*"

What priest is there, I often wonder, who doesn't imagine that this prayer also applies to himself, and to all of us priests, in the here and now! I think part of my obligation to you, as your pastor, is to help *prepare* you for the second coming of Jesus. And of course, that would probably be your death. But it *could* be the time of the last generation, the one that will welcome Jesus at his Second Coming. *Are we that generation?* Many people are beginning to wonder. History has been pretty crazy lately. And there are a lot of rumors flying around. But if it is the final generation, well, we will need to....be prepared. So that's the big question. And again we have to consider those two type of preparedness.

As part of the spiritual battle, there are some things that we should do. Consecration to Jesus, through Mary is at the top of my list. (Examples)

Ongoing daily prayer, particularly the rosary, confession, Eucharistic Adoration. Bible study, spiritual reading watch, watching *The Chosen*, Daily Mass and communion if you can manage it. Almsgiving. Visiting the sick and the homebound. Caring for the least among us. Loving God, and neighbor.

We should know about all these things, so I continue to encourage you to persevere, and to endure. The temptation will always be to give up. To throw in the towel. With the election results a few weeks ago, I think a few of you are tempted—— to do just that. And of course there are also all those distractions that want to pull us in every direction. TV, entertainment, the Internet, social media, sports. So please, I exhort you, to "keep on keeping on". Compete well, run the race, fight the good fight, keep the faith.

I would also like to talk a little bit also about that other type of preparedness. Practically preparing for an uncertain future. We have called it “prepping” And we have had a few dress rehearsals just within these past few months. Two power outages due to “natural” causes. One time we were out of power for four days and the other one just a few hours, but interestingly enough, on a weekend. So we had Mass by candlelight, with a help from electric lamps on the altar, powered by a lithium battery. And I now have my rectory generator completely hooked up and it powered my house for the duration of our most recent outage. And I cooked breakfast on my new woodstove.

But those were (I think), natural disasters. There are other types of disasters that are not-so-natural, and they are becoming quite common. Because, well, these are dark times. Doug Barry is very up-to-date on what’s going on worldwide. He reminded us of the diesel shortage. And many store shelves he said are looking quite bare. How about those things that we would typically get from Ukraine? Like Fertilizer. How long can our truckers and our ships, and our farmers hold out? He also mentioned that recently there was a computer hacking of 14 American airports. It was just their websites, but maybe they were just practicing, and seeing what they can do to wreak bigger havoc at a later date. Again a “dress rehearsal” for bigger and badder things to come? Yes, there are evil people in this world who do things just for the sake of being bad. These are indeed dark times.

With that in mind, Doug Barry makes all kinds of suggestions for preparation in many different areas. Some examples: Carry a Swiss Army knife, a multi-tool. (Here’s mine) and I’ve used it. How about a flashlight? (Here’s mine) I use mine to get my generator going in the dark at the power outage. Lots of extra little batteries. And how about a few of those larger lithium batteries like we used on the altar last week.(this is what they look like.) Always keep your car’s gas tank at least half full. Have a “go bag” in your car just in case you have to go on short notice. With bottles of water, Energy bars, water purifiers, baby wipes, garbage bags and extra cans of gas. And Charlie Johnston says don’t have money in the big banks, but in the small, local banks. And always keep cash on hand. And how about carrying a sidearm? You might need it to shoot an animal for dinner. Or, on the other hand, maybe you will need it to protect your family from someone who wants to come in your house and take your food. Without asking.

From the spiritual side of things, we want to be able to share with our neighbors, but we also want to protect our families from unpleasant people. Most of us find this idea pretty repulsive. If you’re not prepared to do that maybe you at least consider pepper spray. Yes, these are indeed dark times that we are living in.

In closing, let’s return to the *Canticle of Zachariah*. After personally addressing his infant son, he returns to his *vertical* prayer. And he says: “*In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on thosewho dwell in darkness, And to guide our feet..... into the way of peace.*”

You may have heard it said that if you’ve got peace, you really have everything. So pray for the gift of peace. Practice peace. But remember, there’s always a practical side. Act responsibility. Exercise some self-discipline. This is urgent, so don’t put your head in the sand. Do what you can to be detached from the world. Consider removing those things from your life that threaten your peace. Things like television, the Internet, and social media.

Yes, there are always sad, frustrating, and depressing things that happen in our world, and in our own lives, but I can guarantee that you will have more peace if you are more proactive in seeking it.

~Fr. John