

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

We have begun a new liturgical year – with the beginning of Advent, the Church year is renewed. In this time, we focus on the **two comings of Christ**, as the Bishop mentioned in last week's letter. The first coming of Christ, of course, is His coming in humility and obscurity. While His birth was heralded by angels, only the lowliest heard their tidings (the shepherds). Gentiles came from afar (the Magi) to adore. Simeon and Anna spoke words of wonder in the Temple. Other than that, no one outside of His family knew of God's silent invasion into humanity. He came like us so that we could become like Him. The "second coming" of Christ is when He will come "**in a cloud with power and great glory**" (Luke 21:27) at the end of time. Then, our souls will be reunited with our bodies – now glorified bodies – and we will rejoice forever in the joy of the Lord.

When we hear about the end of the world, we might get frightened, fearing all the mayhem that will ensue. Jesus warns us not to "**become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap**" (Luke 21:34-35). From this readiness comes our peace – that we don't have to be afraid of the coming of Jesus. After all, He loves us more than we love ourselves. When He comes, if we are prepared to see Him, we will be embraced by Him love.

So here's the question: **How do we get ready?** I could talk a lot about repenting of our sins, but I think there is a deeper Mystery to ponder. The upcoming extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy gives us a hint. (You may have noticed that I mention the Year of Mercy a lot ... I'm really excited, for I think this is going to be a GREAT opportunity for all of us to enter into Christ's Heart of love!) Two weeks ago, I mentioned the **ABCs of Divine Mercy** – "Ask for God's Mercy," "Be Merciful to others," and "Completely Trust in Jesus." This last one, I believe is the secret to being ready, and not fearing the end of time (or, really, anything else!). We become ready to see God by our **trust in His mercy**. You see, Jesus longs to be merciful to us. He died on the Cross so that we could get close to Him. He is not there watching to see if we are going to mess up. No, He is a lover who longs to be with us, to forgive us. When we truly believe this – when we trust His passionate love, when we trust His infinite mercy – it opens us to all His graces. This is the amazing thing... He *Himself* will prepare us for life with Him; He will get us ready for His coming.

So the question then remains, **do we trust in Jesus?** Not kind-of trust in Him; not mostly trust in Him; not, "I trust Him in every area of my life, but this one." Do we really trust His love and mercy? This isn't a test. He's not waiting to see if we will pass or not. As a lover, He longs for us to trust Him. AND, if we don't trust Him, we can ask for the grace and He will *help us to trust Him!*

So in this Advent Season, as we prepare for Christ's coming – His second coming at the end of time, and the celebration of His coming as a baby at Christmas – I invite you to **grow in trust**. Trust His mercy. If you have been away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation (a.k.a. "Confession" or "Penance") I invite you to experience His merciful gaze, and His loving gentleness (check the bulletin for all of the opportunities for Confession, including the **Reconciliation Service** next Sunday at 2:00 here at St. Patrick Parish). If you struggle with letting God into certain parts of your life, I invite you to spend time praying to Jesus in Adoration, asking Him to build up trust in your soul (we have regular Adoration times from 6:45-7:45am Monday-Friday, and every Wednesday from 8:30-9:30am, and 2:00-8:00pm, and the Chapel door is open 24/7). Know that there is nothing you can do that will make God love you any less. So run, don't walk, into the wide-open arms of His mercy!