

Homily for  
The First Sunday of Advent  
Sunday November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008

***“Take the time to make the time!”***

(With the Introduction of this Year’s Advent Theme and  
the Blessing of the Advent Wreath)

(Advent means, “the coming of something very important.”)

Last weekend I was away with about 30 of our high school youth on our winter retreat. I’m hoping that during the next couple of weeks we can share with you some of our photographs from the weekend and a few retreat thoughts. I do want all of you to know that the retreat itself was one of the most amazing experiences that any of us have ever been a part of. Thank you for your financial support and, most of all, for your prayers.

During the retreat we talked about many things. One of the conversations that we had, informally, centered around what high school is like now and what it was like when we, the adults, were teenagers. I shared with the group one of the changes that I’ve seen in my own high school. Although I myself have never been present for this particular moment, I’m told that every freshmen class hears what is commonly known as the “24-7-52 Talk.” The point that is stressed in this talk is quite simple: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year, you represent your school. Wherever you go, whatever you do, you represent your school and its values.

Now, not everyone agrees with such an approach when it comes to education. But I’d be willing to bet that we all agree with it when it comes to life in general, our faith, and how we live it. On this, the First Sunday of Advent, the message is clear, ***“the clock is running. Each day—each moment that we breathe—is a gift from God, and what we do with it is crucial.”*** Jesus puts it this way, ***“Be watchful! Be alert! For you do not know when the time will come. What I say to you is this—watch!”*** The 24’s and the 7’s and the 52’s, my friends, are ticking by, and we can ***“watch”*** in one of two ways: we can watch from the sideline—or we can get

involved. It's up to us.

If there ever was a place for the “24-7-52” code of living, it's in everyday life. “Being Christian” is not something for which we're meant to punch a clock. It's not something that we take a vacation from, and it's not just a hat or a uniform that we wear when it feels cool or comfortable or convenient to do so. It's kind of like the idea that “you're never too old to tell your parents that you love them.” To say that “*I'm Christian*” defines us, and we never outgrow it.

The definition of the word “*advent*” means this: “*the coming of something very important.*” We present to you, again this year, a theme to help us have a good advent and Christmas season: “*Take the time to make the time!*”

What are you and I waiting for? “*Waiting and watching,*” in the Jesus sense does not mean sitting around and doing nothing, or sitting around and waiting for someone else to do it, or sitting around and constantly saying, “*oh well, I'll get to it one day.*” Waiting and watching means getting actively involved, watching and waiting for the next opportunity to:

- ⊥ make the world a better place...
- ⊥ to spend more time with the people we love...
- ⊥ to help someone in need...
- ⊥ to take better care of myself...
- ⊥ to forgive someone who hurt me...
- ⊥ to ask forgiveness for my own transgressions...

During these next 4 weeks the scriptures are going to present to us people who “got it,” people who realized that something great was coming and that, in life, the clock is running.

There is an urgency to life, my friends, and if we forget this, well, then we risk becoming lazy, selfish, unhealthy, distant from God—and distant from who we are.

***What do you and I need to take the time for? Who do we need to take the time for?*** This year's hurricane pretty messed up all of our lives, in one way or another. The long-term effects have been expressed by some to me in the words, “*I don't remember my life being as hectic this time last year.*” Or, “*I feel like we've been playing catch-up since Gustav.*” Or, “*everybody's just been kind of blah.*”

Now, I don't know if that's how you are feeling lately, but a lot of people are still there. Every hurricane has its eye, its moment of calm. But a lot of people feel as if they've lost that.

**What** do you and I need to take the time for? **Who** do we need to take the time for?

- ⊥ Better prayer...
- ⊥ Better health...
- ⊥ Better relationships in family...
- ⊥ The healing of past hurts...

*(Pause)*

The storm is over.

It's time to return to the calm.

Whatever your life is like—let Advent calm you.

Amen.