

Revival 6 Reconciling Grace Embracing Peace Presentation

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen.**

Leader: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful

All: **And kindle in them the fire of your love.**

Leader: Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created

All. **And You shall renew the face of the earth.**

Leader: Let us pray.

All: **O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.**

Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Jesus said to his disciples: “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: “Watch”.

The Gospel of the Lord

Many years ago, after celebrating Thanksgiving with my family in Ocean Shores, I was behind the eight ball on a Saturday morning still needing to write a homily for the first Sunday of Advent. And so, I needed to compose one in my head as I was driving home. Since the meaning of the word Advent is “Coming”, as in the coming of the Lord at the end of time and his coming in history on Christmas, the theme that kept running through my mind as I was driving home that year was how difficult it can be to keep watch for Jesus’ coming when the soul is plagued with so much impatience and with so much to do. You see, as a confessor, one of the sins I probably hear confessed the most is impatience: impatience with my spouse, impatience with my kids, impatience with extended family members, impatience with my employer, impatience with the other people driving on the road, impatience with my government and Church, the list goes on. And so, as I was driving home that year, my mind reflected further on how, as a people, we are constantly on the move. We live in a world where people eat big macs while talking on cell phones while driving twenty miles over the speed limit in that rush to make it on time to that next place we simply have to be. And although most of you don’t have a driver’s license, I think we can all agree that the manic pace in which we are at times forced to live our lives can sometimes be symptomatic of what is dysfunctional about our world.

And so there I was that year, driving through Aberdeen, writing these profound reflections in my head, when the flashing lights of blue and red began to flicker in my rearview mirror. Here I was expounding in my mind how impatient everybody in the world was, and I get pulled over for speeding. And, I was indeed going too fast. And it gets more ironic. As I reached for my glove box to get my information for the officer, I noticed my hand passing over a Sausage McGriddle wrapper and my cell phone. The officer noticed this as well and began to preach to me the very same homily I was crafting in my head that morning. She told me that I needed to drive more slowly, that I shouldn't be in such a hurry, that I needed to be more vigilant, that the road ahead can be dangerous. She told me that when I drive, I needed to be aware of the bigger picture, like my safety, the sacredness of life and the lives of those around me. She could have given me a ticket. I certainly deserved one. But she decided to let me go with a warning. I got back on the road thanking God for that moment of grace.

And this, my friends, is why I love the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If we have been speeding along in life, sometimes we simply need to be pulled over so to get the bigger picture. Jesus reminds us in the Gospel reading, "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the lord of the house is coming. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: watch!" His words are meant to help us remember what is most important in life, that we have this God shaped hole in our hearts that only the Lord can satisfy.

The trouble, as we all know, is we find ways to fill our hearts with stuff that is not of God. After a while, we can begin to feel the weight of our sinfulness dragging us down and we need to pull over to the side of the road so to remember the bigger picture, to seek forgiveness and a fresh start. And so, in a minute or so, we will move to the time of night when we have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. We believe Jesus is present in the Holy Eucharist: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. As we await Jesus to be born on Christmas morning and as we wait for Jesus to come again at the end of time, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a time when we can appreciate that Jesus is always present to us and has never left us. Tonight can be a time before Christmas when we are pulled to the side of the road so to simply breathe, quiet our minds, and simply allow Jesus into our hearts. We can use this time to reflect on our day with Jesus, to work through our worries with Jesus, to reflect on what our future could look like with Jesus, to simply pray and again to simply breathe. Adoration tonight can also be a time to reflect on what we feel ashamed about. The guilt we carry inside of us can feel like a cancer in the soul, sometimes eating us alive. The sacrament of reconciliation is an opportunity to get rid of that shame, to truly be forgiven by the grace of God. Although a pro-tip when going to confession is to be first in line while the priests are fresh, we have also given you what's called an examination of conscience that contains some help when it comes to going to reconciliation.

Another pro-tip when it comes to reconciliation is, because God's mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation is superabundant, when we go to confession it is good to consider "the three B's". What are the "3 B's". First, be bold tonight! Be courageous and confess the biggest thing that is weighing on your heart. Start there. I promise you, we priests have heard everything and we are here to show you God's mercy. Secondly, it is OK to be brief. If the priest needs more clarity, we'll ask. You know, when I am pulled over to the side of the road, I usually don't have

much success if I try to justify why I was driving fast. I am usually more successful if I just simply admit yup, I was speeding. It's OK to be brief, and the third "B" is of course, be blessed.

That is what tonight is all about. Tonight is about receiving God's love, mercy and forgiveness. Sometimes what keeps us from the joy God wants for us is that we somehow convince ourselves that we do not deserve God's love. The truth is, deserves have nothing to do with it, God loves you with an irrational love and so let him in tonight. Let him in. You see, I truly believe that if we welcome in our hearts the healing God wants to give us in the sacrament of reconciliation, something remarkable might happen tonight. We might give ourselves permission to be a little less busy this time of year and a little less impatient. We may then become a little more prayerful each day and little more merciful toward the people around us. And, we may even become surprised that we are little more joyful as a result, as we carry inside of us the eager expectation of the Lord's coming at Christmas. Let us stand.