

Happy New Year

You may say to yourself, hey wait a minute Deacon Jim, you are about a month off when you start wishing everyone a Happy New Year. But I am speaking of course about the start of a new liturgical year and not a calendar year.

This weekend marks the start of the Advent season. Of course, when many of us hear the word Advent, our minds drift to all the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season. The shopping, wrapping gifts, meal preparations, office parties and celebrations. Unfortunately, most of us do not take the time to stop for a moment and just relish the beauty of the Advent Season. The church really intended for the season to be a season of preparation for our hearts and souls for the coming of the savior, Jesus.

In this weekend's readings from St. Paul and the Gospel from St Matthew, we hear a lot about people not paying attention to the coming of Christ and thinking only about the celebrations of the secular world. The readings warn us that one day, it will come that we have to be prepared to meet Christ at the end of our time on earth. Will we be prepared?

Many of you know that I have a passion for deer hunting and of course this is the time of year where I get a chance to pursue my passion. Because I am passionate about deer hunting, I spend a lot of time preparing for the hunting season. Preparing tree stands, planting food plots, practicing my marksmanship are all a part of the deer season for me. All these things I take the time to do so that when the moment of truth comes and that opportunity comes to harvest a large whitetail deer, I am thoroughly prepared.

On Monday, I was officiating a basketball game with a good friend of mine. When he came into the gym, he had a perplexed and sad look on his face. The first words that he said to me were Deacon, I just missed the buck of a lifetime. I do not know how I missed. I tried to make a shot, and he came running closer to me with no sign of a wound. I shot again and I missed again, and the large buck just jogged off of the field as if to say, nice try, but you did not get it done. He was

distraught over the next two hours, and he just kept saying to me I wonder how I missed the opportunity.

So many deer stories are about missed opportunities. And if you ask hunters, some of the excuses may be, well I just did not practice enough, or I did not have the time to properly prepare, or I was just taken off guard and I was not ready.

This story is not just about hunting, but it is about life itself. Sometimes football coaches in a press conference will admit that they just did not have the team properly prepared for the opponent. Or someone driving a car with little or no treads left on the tires and the snow starts falling may say, yes, I was going to get around to it.

I think to myself how sad it would be when it comes to our time to face the Lord, that we would have to make an excuse for not being prepared for the biggest moment ever in our lives.

This year, during Advent, our church once again provides us with some great opportunities to take some time to prepare our hearts and our souls for the coming of the Lord. We have the Little Blue Advent books available for you to take home and read, which offers short daily reflections about our faith and the Advent season. We also have the Word Among Us Advent booklets available for your reflection. We will be offering the sacrament of reconciliation for our youth and adults in the next couple of weeks. We have our Catholic bible timeline classes going on and the OCIA program will be starting on Wednesday December 3rd.

These are all great opportunities for you to step back and take a little time and prepare your heart and your soul this Advent for the greatest gift that we will ever have the opportunity to receive. So, start preparing for the beginning of this new year, the new year that may change your life forever.

God's Blessings

Deacon Jim