

Advent 2C - December 2021

Be prepared:

The Amish do not believe in an ordained ministry. All their religious services are held in private homes. Whenever a worship service is held, a big black wagon full of benches is driven to the designated home, and the worshipers gather. No one knows in advance who will preach the morning sermon; the leader for the day is chosen by lot or by last-minute consensus. Carter asked an Amish bishop how people could prepare a sermon if they didn't know when they would be called on, and he replied, with a genuinely modest attitude, "We always have to be prepared." [(New York: Random House, Inc., 1996), p. 260.]

Wow! Imagine coming to worship never knowing when you might be called on to give the sermon. It's hard enough to prepare yourself to listen to a sermon, but what if I unexpectedly called on you to deliver the message for the day? You would probably come to worship better prepared! So, let's do a check-list and ask once more, are we prepared internally to celebrate Christ's birth? (Fr. Tony) (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>) L/21

Change your thinking! Change yourself!

Once upon a time there was a king, who ruled a prosperous country. One day he went for a trip to some distant areas of his country. When he came back to his palace, he complained that his feet were very sore because it was the first time that he had gone for such a long trip, and the road he had used was very rough and stony. He then ordered his people to cover every road of the country with leather. Definitely this would need skins of thousands of animals, and would cost a huge amount of money. Then one of his wise advisors dared to question the king, "Why do you have to spend that unnecessary amount of money? Why don't you just cut a little piece of leather to cover your feet?" The king was surprised, but later agreed to his suggestion to make a 'shoe' for himself.

We often say, "I wish things would change or people would change." Instead wise people say: "Change your thinking and change your world." (*John Pichappilly in The Table of the Word; quoted by Fr. Botelho*). (Fr. Tony) (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>) L/21

Shake It Off and Step Up!

A parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule. The mule fell into the farmer's well. The farmer heard the mule braying and went to the site. After assessing the situation the farmer sympathized with the mule but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead he called his neighbors and asked them to bring their shovels and bury the poor mule and put him out of his misery. The mule seemed hysterical. When the dirt struck his back he shook it off. As the farmer and his friends continued to shovel a thought struck the farmer. After each shovel of dirt was thrown onto the mule he said, "Shake it off and step up." The mule did what he asked, after every shovel of dirt. After a time the old mule stepped triumphantly out of the well.

What seemed to bury him actually became his road to freedom. There is an alternative to every impossible situation. The way is not always visible to us. But our task is not to work miracles, that is up to God.

Our responsibility is to prepare the way, committing every ounce of energy we have to the possibility of the transforming power of God, remembering that a single act of kindness can bring hope to generations yet to come. (by Keith Wagner from *Possibilities Unlimited*)

"Then do not be a pond. Be a bay."

"There is a story told about a young monk who approached an experienced desert Father. He expressed his frustration, ***"I feel so restricted. I am stagnating like a pond or a puddle."*** The elderly monk responded, ***"Then do not be a pond. Be a bay."*** A bay of course is joined with the immense ocean. Each day it has a fresh exchange of water. It rarely stagnates. St. John the Baptist was like that. He was in an extremely lonely spot - the Judean desert. But desert is a place where one encounters God. Also, he did not stagnate, for he always connected himself with the great ocean, viz. God's mercy.

So, during this Holy Period of Advent when we prepare ourselves for the coming of Our Lord, what should our response be? There can be two responses on our part:

First, we need once more to hear the challenging call of John the Baptist to baptism of repentance and forgiveness, and connect ourselves to the ocean of God's mercy, and

second, we have to realize that our own role is not unlike that of John the Baptist. Like him, each one of us has a mission to communicate the message of hope, love, freedom and peace to others, so that - **"All flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord!"** (Fr. Albert Lakra). (Fr. Tony) (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>) L/21