**From the Desk Of Fr. John**

**“Be vigilant at all times…” Lk: 21-36.** The Sea- son of Advent (or coming…solemn arrival) and the new liturgical year begin this weekend. It is a four-week preparation for the coming of the Lord (The Parousia-the final triumphant coming) and the proper celebration of when He first came (The Feast of the Nativity…or…Christmas).

Our culture begins the season really focused on the preparation for Christmas. The stores, the TV ads, mailings, etc…etc…etc. have been prepar- ing us long before Advent began. Many folks have had to make plans for this great Holiday months ago, going over details of travel plans… hosting homes…even the times of their celebra- tions.

**The sense of preparation and being vigilant fills the air.** The focus is on very earthly and very wonderful things in our families and in our friendships. However, the Church in the liturgy tries to help us look also at the spiritual side of things…that is the most lasting relationship that we must focus on...our relationship with God.

The world will pass away…Jesus said…but My words will not pass. There is something beyond now and all that is going on… and all the plans we make. Why not listen to Jesus and make plans for eternity?

Our Christian faith and Jesus’ teaching point to more than now…but now is important in how we live. Things happen so quickly and we live in the flow of life that we do not stop and think that…all of our words and actions…right now…have ‘eternal’ consequences. The choices we make need to include the finality and the far-reaching reality of Heaven…and eternal union with God. So let us live our faith…share our faith and all of our gifts with one another, forming a just and peaceful society. Then we can be prepared for Christ’s coming.

**‘Are you the King of the Jews?’** was the ques- tion that drew our attention last weekend. That question about kingship was the question Pilate asked Jesus at his final trial. Pilate may have thought that he had the power…and that he was

putting Jesus on trial. However, Pilate was the one who was afraid of Jesus and the crowd…the mob that was shouting outside. Jesus invited Pi- late to see the truth Jesus was proposing…a truth that would lead to the real Kingdom…the Kingdom Jesus had come to bring.

Many people have been taught and grown up with certain beliefs…just like Pilate in his Roman world of gods and emperors claiming to be gods. Could he accept that this man about to die was the real one…the real king? Jesus tried to assure him that His kingdom was different than what Pi- late was used to seeing…like the Roman world of oppression, repression, fear, intrigue…etc.

Do we use the world’s idea of power and king- dom? Can we open to the mystery of a kingdom of justice, love and peace…of true freedom?

That is what we are called to give witness to as Christians.

**‘Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength…’** is the final sentence of this Sunday’s Gospel. Jesus has been urging the disciples to look beyond the beauty of the tem- ple…and the things of this world…and realize they are temporary and passing. Jesus wants His disciples to keep in view the bigger picture…the final coming of the kingdom…and glorious com- ing of the Son of Man at the end of time…the de- finitive establishment of God’s rule.

Jesus teaches them that ‘the now’ of their lives… and the days and possible years to come…are opportunities of living vibrantly their faith. Jesus urges them to be alert…to be constant in pray- er…and be free of the burdens and the things that can weigh us down and distract us… remember the parable about the seed being sown among the thorns which choked off the word.

**If we live as Jesus has instructed us…** vigilant…prayerful…faithful…we need not be afraid about the final day…but jubilant and ready to joyfully welcome Jesus!