

**“Prepare the Way of the Lord!”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, on a hot Sunday in June, millions of Americans watched the U.S. Golf Open on TV. At a critical point in the play, the camera focused on Jack Nicklaus. He was in ‘the rough’ and was preparing to ‘shoot-out.’

Slowly and deliberately, he ‘addressed the ball.’ Then for a full 20 seconds on prime time T.V., he stood poised, perfectly still, and ready to swing. Suddenly, at the last moment, he backed away from the ball and said aloud,

**“That’s the wrong swing!”**

Well, the sports announcer was utterly confused and said,

**“Wrong swing? He didn’t swing. I tell you, he didn’t swing! What’s going on here?”**

Well, a lot was going on, there. And Nicklaus explains what was ‘going on’ in his book, Golf My Way. Therein, he describes how he prepares for every shot he takes. He writes:

**“It’s a process called, ‘mental rehearsal.’ This simply means that I play every shot in my imagination before I play it for real. It’s like a color movie. First, I ‘see’ the ball where I want it to finish, nice and white ...on the bright, green grass.**

**“Then the scene quickly changes & I ‘see’ the ball going there ...even its behavior upon landing.**

**“Then there’s a sort of fade-out, and the next scene shows me making the ‘kind of swing’ that will turn the previous images into reality.”**

What Jack Nicklaus was doing that hot, Sunday afternoon in the U.S. Open is what the Church asks us to do during the Season of Advent. The Church asks us to go through a kind of ‘mental rehearsal’ ...to prepare for the coming of Christ.

And the coming of Christ that we are to prepare for is not just his **historical** coming –which we celebrate on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

And the coming of Christ that we are to prepare for is not just his **sacramental** coming -which we celebrate in each Eucharist, at Communion time.

Rather, and most especially, the coming of Christ that we are to prepare for in this phase of Advent is his **final** coming--which will take place at the end of our own time or the end of the entire world, whichever comes 1<sup>st</sup>!

**“And, just how do we prepare for this **final coming** of Christ?” you ask.**

**Well, of course, I am glad you asked that question!**

We prepare for his **final** coming the same way his cousin, John the Baptist, prepared the people of his day for his **first** coming! Allow me to explain.

John told the people to repent, that is, he told them to turn away from their sins.

You see, if we read a few verses beyond today's Gospel, which I/deacon just read to you from St. Luke, we find Luke being even more specific. He says:

**"Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance."** Lk. 3:8

The Church invites us to take a good, hard look at our lives and ask ourselves:

**"How do we stand before God, right now?"**

Maybe, after we finish looking at ourselves, we'll have to do what Jack Nicklaus had to do in that U. S. Open that Sunday. Maybe we'll have to stop what we are doing, back away, and say,

**"That's the wrong swing (at life)."**

Maybe we'll have to make some changes.

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**Once upon a time**, a 17-year-old Dutch boy, with some others, tried to escape from a Nazi prison camp during WWII. He was caught and sentenced to death. Shortly before his execution, the boy wrote this letter to his father. It read:

**"Dear Dad, It is difficult for me to write this letter to you, but I have to tell you  
...the military court has pronounced a very heavy sentence upon us.  
Read this letter alone and ...then tell mother ...carefully.  
In a little while, at 5 o'clock a.m., 'IT' is going to happen.  
One moment... and then I shall be with God.  
Is that, after all, such a dreadful transition?  
I feel so strongly, my nearness to God. I am fully prepared to die.  
I think my death is much harder on you than on me, because...  
I know that I have confessed all my sins and... I am at peace.  
I have become ...very ...quiet."**

The letter is signed, **Klees.**

When you come right down to it, that's what Advent is all about ...a time of 'mental rehearsal,' a time of 'preparation.' It's a time for asking ourselves:

**"How prepared will I be when Jesus comes for me at the hour of my death?"  
"How prepared am I to meet Jesus, face to face... right now?"**

Can we say what that Dutch boy said?

**"I feel, so strongly, my nearness to God. I am fully prepared to die.  
I have confessed all my sins ... I have become ...very ...quiet."**

If we can't say that right now, will we be able to say it by the end of Advent?

"LIGHT IS ON"—every parish in the dio. will have Reconciliation from 6-9 pm this Wed., 12/9/15. I'll be @ S.I.J. If you suffer from sort of 'fear factor,' try to overcome it. I'm a push-over; not on commission.

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.