

1st Sunday in Advent

Cycle A-2025

In their 1989 song “Wind of Change,” the Scorpions touched on the growing collapse of the Soviet Union that ushered in the end of the Cold War. It was a celebration of a new era of hope, understanding, and unity, between the East and the West, that no one thought was possible. The excitement and expectation brought about by this wind of change was powerfully captured in the following lyrics: “The world is closing in, and did you ever think, that we could be so close, like brothers? The futures in the air, I can feel it everywhere, blowing with the wind of change.” Unfortunately, in the last few years, the “wind of change” appears to be blowing back the other way as we have embarked upon the beginning of a new Cold War.

In our Gospel reading, we are reminded how in the time of Noah, the wind of change unexpectedly came, in the form of a great flood that wiped away everything except the people and animals in the ark. This led me to think about some of the European pilgrimages I was blessed to participate in during my time at St. Jude Church. On one

occasion, I had the opportunity to view and explore the ruins of the ancient Greek and Roman empires. The experience was so surreal, because I had only read about them in history books or by googling on the internet. Now I was encountering them in the flesh. I had to pinch myself, because with my own eyes, I beheld the remnants of these glorious civilizations that significantly contributed to the development and evolution of human ingenuity and consciousness. Even though I embraced this opportunity in a spirit of awe and wonder, it taught me the invaluable and timeless lesson that the winds of change effect everything, even those things that seem like they will last forever, like the Greek and Roman empires. Everything has an expiration date.

Even in our own lives, everything comes and goes. We age, move, and change jobs. Our physical health may decline, and we are devastated by the loss of loved ones. Important relationships come to an end, or the dynamics change forever. On a personal level, I discovered that everything comes and goes relatively early in life. Between the ages of 20-36, I lost my paternal grandfather, brother(my only sibling), maternal grandmother, maternal grandfather, and father, in that order. These deaths left an indelible mark on my soul as

they quickly pierced any illusions I may have had about enjoying an earthly immortality or paradise. Not to mention, how I have been profoundly molded and shaped by frequently moving while growing up and throughout my priesthood.

Loss and change have permeated my whole life. There have been moments where I have been tempted to permanently guard and close my heart by keeping people at an emotional distance. In that way, the pain of loss and change would be less intense and overwhelming. I was able to do it for a time, but I eventually realized I couldn't do it anymore. I wasn't truly living. I was only half alive. I gradually lived into the truth of the cliché: "It is better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all." I began to have the courage to open myself up to people and enjoy sharing in their lives for as long as possible, without excessively focusing on the wind of change that I would eventually experience down the road. I found that living in and savoring the present moment and enjoying the people God placed in my path for a reason, season, or a lifetime, was truly the best way for me to approach life. What has been your experience of loss and change? How have you chosen to respond to this unavoidable aspect of reality?

The philosopher Heraclitus proclaimed that there are two constants in life. They are change and fear of change. In our Gospel reading Jesus tells us, “Be prepared.” One of the things we need to be prepared for is change. It is going to happen. It is part of life. As we experience the wind of change, we are called to cultivate the attitude, inspired by faith: “I am going to bloom where I am planted,” and “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” It doesn’t mean we cannot grieve the past, but we do not want to get hopelessly stuck in it by continually reveling in what we considered to be our glory days. If we do, we may become bitter and discouraged. We are called to actively embrace the present moment and treasure the people, places, things, activities, and experiences, that we love and enjoy and that feed our hearts and souls. We are even faced with the invitation to view the wind of change in a more positive light. We come to see it as a new opportunity for an excellent adventure, personal and spiritual growth, friendship and love, and to build and spread the Kingdom of God.

In our second reading and in the Gospel, Jesus reveals that the most important wind of change is the ongoing spiritual and moral conversion of our minds, hearts,

souls, and lives. This is the change that more fully unites us to God and contributes to our eternal salvation. Do you realize that each of us, in our own unique way, live out the Paschal mystery or the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in our own person and lives? Throughout our lives, we experience this constant rhythm of loss, change, and hopefully positive transformation. It can be scary and overwhelming, but it has the potential to lead us to a higher state of being or consciousness on a personal and spiritual level. We are challenged to embrace this ongoing cycle with a perspective that gradually leads to a deeper level of faith, hope, love, and trusting surrender to God.

Our Christian faith reveals that the one constant in the universe is the love of God. It is a love that embraces us every day and in every circumstance. As the band Firehouse sings: "I finally found the love of a lifetime. A love to last my whole life through." We can take artistic license and joyful proclaim, "A love that lasts for an endless eternity." No one will ever love us the way Jesus Christ does. Not your spouse and children. Not our parents, family members, or best friends. Therefore, let us live for and cherish His love above all else. He is the only One who can provide us with eternal life and

happiness. May we also strive to love like Him through an agape love that is unconditional, sacrificial, generous, and faithful.

At the end of our lives, if we are blessed to walk through the pearly gates of heaven, we will fully encounter the One who was the sole constant in our lives. We will have the joy of being fully immersed in His love, which is “ever ancient and ever new.” Oh, and by the way, since I mentioned the loss of my family members, in heaven, we get our loved ones back, never to be separated again, because “love is stronger than death.” Love is eternal within the heart of God. The Good News is that Jesus Christ makes “all things new.” And I might add, “new and improved.” He provides us with the most beautiful wind of change.