

First Sunday of Advent
Advent Message Series #1

“Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help you God?” We all make all kinds of promises in our lives. We keep some of them and break many of them. How sacred is a promise to you?

On this first Sunday of Advent as well as the first Sunday of our message series our focus is on promise – especially the promise of God. Take for example the first reading today from the prophet Jeremiah. He writes, “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah.” God is someone who keeps his promises: the promise of peace and fulfillment; the promise that suffering will eventually come to an end.

We just heard about someone called “Metro Mel.” Mel has his doubts about God’s promises. It is our job as members of this parish to help Mel understand that God keeps his promises.

One of the titles of Jesus that we toss around in the weeks before Christmas is “Prince of Peace.” Doesn’t the world seem to be more peaceful on Christmas Day? Perhaps you remember the story from World War I where on Christmas Day in 1914 the opposing sides in the war, most of whom were Christian, got together to sing Christmas carols, play soccer, and exchange gifts. For one day the promise of peace rang true.

While most of us are not on the front lines of some war many of us still experience chaos and suffering in our lives. Christmas is precisely the challenge to celebrate while we are still in pain. Jesus’ birth means that God-is-with-us.” More often than not our world looks much the same on Christmas as it does on the other days of the year. Christmas remind us

however, that God sent us a helpless baby, lying in a manger rather than a superhero of some type. Babies change hearts by their gentle presence.

Fr. Ron Rolheiser reminds us that Christmas doesn't rid the world of evil. For the Christian, just as for everyone else, there will still be sickness, senseless hurt, broken dreams and cold, lonely seasons when love is far away. Christmas doesn't promise heaven on earth. Rather it promises us, here on earth, he believes, something else: God's presence in our lives.

And it's that presence, Rolheiser argues, not the power of a superhero that redeems us. He writes, "When we sense that God-is-with-us we can give up selfishness, bitterness, and jealousy because we are no longer alone in them. Everything can be born if it can be shared. We no longer walk alone in them.

Metro Mel needs to see this promise in our lives. Not just in my life, or the life of the parish staff but in the lives of all of you here today. You heard the description of Metro Mel. I want Metro Mel to be a part of our parish community... I can't do it alone... are you willing to help me?

We know the promise of "God-with-us" when we pray, learn and share. These three characteristics of discipleship enable us to witness to Mel. This is our challenge as a parish. I will give some concrete examples next week in my homily on how we can witness. Will you accept the challenge to witness?