



The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

74 Grange Road, Glen Huntly VIC 3163

☎ Telephone: 9401 6336

✉ glenhuntly@cam.org.au

💻 cam.org.au/glenhuntly

ABN: 70548 570 366

Homily at Mass 1st Sunday of Advent Year A – 1 December 2019

Aldi supermarket have worked hard to offer a variety of Advent calendars – this year one that attracted my notice was an Advent calendar made up of various small bottles of wine – white, red, rosé, bubbly. As the weather gets warmer perhaps rosé and white wine might do the trick. As Christmas get closer, it's time to break open the champagne. But in these early days of Advent, perhaps the red wine is better – something stronger, something that takes a bit of handling.

There's nothing sweet or bubbly about the first week or two of Advent. The word 'Advent' means coming or arrival – the sort of thing we undertake ourselves as we tidy the house, mow the lawns, perhaps buy a new bed or paint the room as we prepare for a visitor who perhaps is coming to stay for a while. Governments and local councils do the same if they are preparing for a royal visit – it's often said that the only smell the Queen knows is the smell of fresh paint! The coming or arrival that we prepare for during Advent is the coming of Jesus. In the last days of Advent we prepare to celebrate his coming, his birth at Bethlehem.

In these first days of Advent our focus, our thoughts are on our Lord's return at the end of time. Last Sunday we honoured Christ our King. Today we think about his return in glory, as we say in the Creed, "he will come again to judge the living and the dead". Strong wine indeed!

Eating. Drinking. Partying. That's the way many people spend their lives, especially their weekends. That was a popular way of life, Jesus says, in Noah's day, before the Flood came that swept everything and everyone on earth away. We've all seen the terrible impact of widespread bushfires in Australia in recent weeks. Homes, properties, livelihoods destroyed – some people have even lost their lives. Driving back to Victoria through southern NSW on Wednesday you can see the terrible impact of drought – a farmer told me last weekend he had only 3 weeks water left. At one stage while driving I had to slow down to a crawl while a dust storm blew across the road. Our life here in the city is world's away from the life and experience of our country cousins – they can see frightening and scary scenes all around them. Our Lord's words today perhaps register with them a bit more, while we can be distracted by "Black Friday" sales and the hubbub of Christmas and end of year.

The contrast of night and day, darkness and light stands out in the Word of God today. The prophet Isaiah calls us to ascend the mountain of the Lord, Mt Zion, to go up to the Temple of the Lord, to bring God our worship and praise, embrace a new era of peace, to bathe in the Lord's glorious light. The prophet calls us to live in the Lord's presence, to treasure the Lord's Day and our presence here in God's house Sunday by Sunday, to feel radiant in God's gifts of love, mercy, joy, freedom. On the other hand both Jesus and St Paul warn us about living in the shadows – they both call us to emerge into the light of day, to take strides in the Christian life, to feel free, confident, alive. Little kids are just like this – they are totally innocent in all they say and do, so much so that we adults can feel embarrassed or ashamed. Parents know that their children are like sponges, taking in everything they hear and see. Things like bad language, prejudices and wrong attitudes – where do our children learn these? Most likely from us! By way of contrast, they also pick up all the good things from us as well – the way of prayer, friendship with God and Sunday Mass at the top of the list, along with all those things that we learn as we grow in family life.

In the Bible the desert is a place of testing – that’s where we find the People of God and Jesus during the season of Lent. Biblical darkness is a place of confusion and shame – we’re lost, we don’t know where we are, we’re disoriented, we can’t even feel our way, we fear to take another step. In the dark of night no one can see us – we can perhaps feel emboldened to sin, to drag ourselves and others down because – we think – no one, including God, can see us.

Biblical light, the full light of the sun, the light of day, is another thing altogether. That’s where Jesus calls us to live in freedom and joy. In the bright light of day “stay awake” he says – “stand ready”. Plenty of people seem happy to live in the shadows. But you and I are called to something good, something brighter, something better! O people of God – sons and daughters of one Father, all of us brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus our Lord, our Brother and Friend: let us walk in the light of the Lord!