

HOMILY FOR 1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT – CYCLE A

In her novel, *Memento Mori*, Muriel Spark presents a circle of elderly, eccentric London aristocrats. Each of these individuals receives an anonymous telephone call with the frightening message:

“Remember, you must die. Remember, you must die.”

The different reactions to this message are striking. A snobbish, rich old biddy, overly impressed with herself, is terrified by the caller’s message. She becomes so frightened that she die an unexpected death. A gentleman member of the group decides, after the call, to take a new wife – his third. He attempts to grasp more of life than his old body can handle. Another dismisses the call as silly. And still another finds the call an opportunity to settle scores and to get even.

But one woman has the strangest reaction of all. She says with joyful wonder to the mysterious caller: “I’m so glad you called. You know, at our age we forget so many things. It is good of you to remind me of something so important.” She then goes about rebuilding her life, healing a long and painful misunderstanding with her husband and renewing loving and caring friendships with those who mean the most to her.

To the selfish, the caller's message is a death sentence; to the foolish, it is a "last call"; to the careless, the message is silly; but to the wise, it is an invitation to live the gift of life to the fullest.

We begin our celebration of Advent with a telephone call....a telephone call that comes to us in many different ways.

The Gospel tell us that the thief is going to come. The gospel warns us that we cannot be caught off guard...we must be prepared.

Isaiah suggests that we learn to "walk in God's paths." Isaiah further suggests that we walk in God's paths by learning to make peace....peace within our families, peace within our neighborhoods, peace within our world. Isaiah suggests that we take the swords and spears of our own hatreds and angers and mold them into instruments of peace and of building each other up.

St. Paul says "we must wake up now..." It is time to throw off the deeds of darkness and embrace the armor of light. It is time to "put on Jesus Christ."

In this Advent Season we are once again invited to choose how to prepare for Christ who comes to us not only at Christmas but also at the most unexpected moments in our lives. We can live in isolation and simply give into our own indulgences. We can ignore the message and think it foolish. Or we can be wise and spend this time learning to forgive

and care for each other, to make peace and heal wounds, and to find hope in the power of God's love that emanates throughout this entire season.

The telephone rings, the message is the same... "for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."