



LAUGHTER IS GOOD

- I had finished my Christmas shopping early and had wrapped all the presents. Having two curious children, I had to find a suitable hiding place. I chose an ideal spot in the furnace room. I stacked the presents and covered them with a blanket, positive they would remain undiscovered. When I went to get the gifts to put them under the tree, I lifted the blanket and there, stacked neatly on top of my gifts, were presents addressed to “Mom and Dad, From the Kids.”
- Just as the priest began his Christmas Eve service, the electricity in the church failed. The ushers found some candles and placed them around the sanctuary. Then the priest reentered the pulpit, shuffled his notes, and muttered, “Now, where was I?” A tired voice called out, “Right near the end!”





FR. MIKE'S SERMON FOR FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

This week, I witnessed something ugly. I was getting gasoline at Kroger. A patron was filling up next to me all the while smoking a cigarette while pumping. The man was middle aged, big belly and wore a blue flannel shirt with *Oshkosh by Gosh* bib overalls. A John Deere hat topped his head. I didn't say anything but I thought, "Doesn't this guy care he could blow us all up?" Well, the young attendant at the window did care. He left the box to address the issue. He approached the guy, pointed out the danger of gas fumes, and politely asked him to extinguish the cigarette.

What happened next showed me the attitude behind every sin. Bib overall guy just kept smoking. He had this defiant look on his face. He said nothing, but if the look on his face could talk it would scream, "Don't tell me what to do. I'll do what I want!" He continued smoking till the cigarette was finished. He threw it on the ground, stomped on it and told the attendant, "There. It's out." The attendant didn't speak. He kept shaking his head side to side while walking away as if to say, "How stupid. You would risk your life for a cigarette?"

With every sin we tell God, "Don't tell me what to do. I'll do what I want." Defiance against God leads as the root of all sin. This attitude goes back all the way to Adam and Eve who ate the apple so they could be equal to God. When you sin, you tell God you know what's best for yourself. And God just shakes His head in sorrow because He knows what you chose will lead to your harm.

St. Paul tells us today to not only conduct ourselves to please God, but to do "so even more." The Church gives us these four weeks of Advent to remind ourselves Jesus is coming back. We are all going to one day "stand before the Son of Man." Jesus is calling you out on your defiance. He wants you to name and claim your defiance. Have you been mean and unkind? Hurt others with gossip? Too arrogant to ask forgiveness? Carrying a grudge? Been impatient? Ungrateful? Lazy? Stubborn? Selfish? Self-indulgent with your body? Falling asleep during the Pastor's sermon? (I added this one.)

Like a mother who knows her kid will get hurt by playing in the street, God knows you will get hurt by playing with the Devil. The fallen angels were kicked out of Heaven because they rebelled defiantly against God. "Don't tell me what to do." You're playing with the Devil every time you rebel against God's clear plan for your salvation... "Love the right, do the good and walk humbly with your God." We should live Mary's "fiat" every day, "Let this be done to me according to your word." Satan's defiance was crushed by her humble obedience.

Jesus right now is making preparations to come back. This Advent, extinguish your sins. They can cause far more destruction to your soul than a lit cigarette blowing up a Kroger gas pump.