

Now is the time to get ready for Christmas and Eternal Life!

Two years ago, the *Birmingham News* reduced the number of home deliveries of its newspaper from **7 days a week** to 3 ... just Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

But this week they made a Special delivery of their paper ... on **Thursday** morning.

Actually it wasn't much of a Paper at all ... rather it was **2 inches** of **advertisements** from virtually all of the area stores ... letting you know that they would be open and ready to take your money over the Thanksgiving weekend.

Not only were they telling you to get ready for Doorbusters on **Friday** ... but ... **quite incredibly**, they were telling you to get ready for Doorbusters on **Thursday!**

Yes, **Thursday** ... the day that **our Country** sets aside as Thanksgiving Day ... the day that is a **National Holiday** where **full time employees** ...

are able to take the day off with pay ... the **free day** that enables families to travel great distances to be together around the dinner table to rest, relax and enjoy good food and good fellowship.

Only to have **that special day** interrupted by **greed merchandizers**, who recognize the great number of people who will not be at work that day, and therefore entice them to come spend money in their stores.

What this means is that their employees don't get to spend Thanksgiving with their families because they have to work ridiculous hours serving shoppers.

Wal-Mart, Belk, Macy's and Sears, all opened at **6 PM Thanksgiving evening**,

Best Buy and **others** opened even earlier ... at **5 PM Thanksgiving afternoon.**

Kmart opened at **6AM**; **CVS** opened at **9 AM** & stayed open all Thanksgiving day!

What's so interesting about all this is that **when the Culture** says to get ready ... great numbers of people respond!

They'll eat their Thanksgiving Turkey early so they can be done ... and ready to go out shopping by 5 in the afternoon!

They'll go to bed early so they can get up extra early and go wait in line ... for a store to open back up at 5 in the morning so they can shop some more.

For what? For a sale! For the chance to spend money and save 10 or 20% off the price of things ... which often translates into something less than \$100. And yet ... that moves people to take special and immediate action.

Well, interestingly enough ... there's **another voice** out there telling us to get ready,
it's the voice of ... **the Church**.

I do hope you're listening to that voice ... you're going to like it a lot!

First of all **the window of opportunity to save** is way bigger than three days ...
it's **3-1/2 weeks!**

And **the amount** you can save is way more than 10% ...
It offers a **100% reduction** ... in **the sin** on your soul!

The Culture has **their way** of getting ready for Christmas ...
with **shopping** and **doorbuster sales**.

And **The Church** has **her way** of getting ready for Christmas too ...
with **prayer** and the **Sacrament of Confession**.

The Culture is only interested in the Sale of merchandise ...
while **The Church** is interested in the Sal-vation of souls.

Both are part of this season ... **but one** is way more important for lasting happiness.

So, The Church in her wisdom places a special 3-1/2-week long Season ... called
the **Advent Season** ... in front of Christmas in order to help us to slow down ...
and get ready not only for Christmas ... but for another very important event too
... we referred to it last Sunday when Jesus will come at the end of Time.

We know the date of Christmas ... it's **December 25th** ...
We don't know the date of the end of Time.

But we need to prepare for both.

Each year we prepare ourselves to celebrate the Birthday of Jesus ...
when He came into our world as a man **2014 years ago**.

We must never take this for granted ...
so necessary and long-awaited was **this event!**

For hundreds of year, the **Chosen People of God** yearned for God to show Himself
to them and help them out of their misery and **separation** from Him.

We hear this **in the words** of the **Prophet Isaiah** begging God,
"Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down."

Consider how God answered the Israelites ...

He **didn't just** rend the heavens ... He stepped through ...

And came and gathered us in his arms and invited us to join him for all eternity!

The Prophet Isaiah had it so right when he described God as Father and Redeemer!

The people waited some 500 years before **God did indeed come down.**

He **came down** from **heaven** in the **person** of **Jesus Christ** as our **Redeemer!**

We call this **the Incarnation ... God** who is **pure Spirit** taking on human flesh.

So awesome is this event in **all of history** that we make a reverential bow
when we refer to the Incarnation as we recite our Creed.

After we say, "*For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,*"
we bow as we say, "*and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the virgin Mary,*
and became man."

So, with **joyful anticipation**, we **prepare** to celebrate the Birthday of our
Redeemer ... the first coming of our **Lord Jesus Christ.**

And at the same time we **also** prepare for the Second Coming of **Jesus ...**
that will take place at the end of Time.

It's then that **Jesus Christ**, will come once again to **this Earth ...**
not as Redeemer ... but as Judge.

We profess this truth in our **Creed** when we say,
"He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead."

St. Paul refers to this day in our **Second Reading**,
when He calls us to make use of the grace given to us at **Baptism ...**
as "*(we) wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

And, He encourages us,
"to remain firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ."

In each of the **4 Gospels**, **Jesus** promised that He will come again. **When** will that be?
We don't know. **But** we do know that we need to be ready.

In **Mark's Gospel** today, **Jesus** warns us, "*Be watchful, be alert!*"

If Jesus came to call you home today, **would** you ready to meet Him?

Death happens! This Tuesday, we'll have **our 4th Funeral** in two weeks.

- **Ray Hughes** died at **87**.
- **Mary Tortorici** died at **93**,
- **Susan Dearing** died at **65**,
- **Cliff Papineau Sr.** died last Monday at **82** and will be buried Tuesday.

Mr. Papineau may have been preparing for Christmas ...
but he didn't make it to that day.

But I believe that he was well prepared for the day he met the Lord.

I ask you all the time to go to monthly confession ... Mr. Papineau did!

I ask you all the time to attend weekly Mass ... Mr. Papineau did!

I ask you all the time to offer daily prayers ... Mr. Papineau died ...
with **his Rosary** in his hands ... praying as he walked his dog.

Are you preparing to meet the Lord?

Advent is the time to think about your relationship with Jesus.

Don't be fooled by our **culture**

that jumping into a shopping frenzy is the **most important thing** to do.

Now there's **nothing wrong** with giving gifts at **Christmas**,
but on your list places to go, **such as:**

Go to **Galleria**

Go to **Lowes**,

Go to **Wal-Mart**,

be sure you add ... Go to **Confession!**

There's **just no better way** to prepare for Christmas than to reconcile your **heart**
and **soul** with **Jesus, our merciful Redeemer.**

It's **the greatest gift** you can give yourself. And it's **free!** It doesn't cost a dime.

And there's **no coupon** required.

The **hours** are very reasonable ... and you don't have to wait in long lines!

All it takes is for you to examine your conscience, have sincere sorrow for your
sins and **then** confess them in the **Sacrament** of Reconciliation.

The beauty of your soul is far more important to God

than the beauty of your House or your Tree or your gifts.

Remember **Jesus' warning** in the **Gospel**, "*What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'*"

In fact, in **these 4 verses**, **Jesus** uses the word "*watch*" **4 times!**

We need to **take Him seriously**. We need to **watch** what we're doing ...
And we need to **be on the watch** for Him so that we're **ready to greet Him**.

If we take the time to prepare ourselves for His **Second Coming**,
then we'll receive the most precious Christmas gift ever,
the gift of **Eternal Life** with God in heaven.

Don't be distracted by **the Culture**.

It's not about getting ready for the sale of merchandise.

It's about getting ready for the sal-vation of your immortal soul.