

- “Robbie...”
“Robbie...pay attention.”
“Pay attention, Son.”
“Pay Attention.”
“ROBERT, pay attention.”

“FOR GOD’S SAKE ROBERT, YOU HAD BETTER PAY ATTENTION”

- I must admit that I was not the most attentive child, easily distracted, bored with repetitive tasks, always looking around at everything else. (I must admit even further that I still am all of the above!)
 - God bless my father who was a man of limited patience and used most of it on me, going through the progression from the gentle calling of my first name to the exasperated prayer of last resort offered through the clenched teeth, and usually movement towards me...
- “FOR GOD’S SAKE, PAY ATTENTION!”
- Not a bad admonition FOR US because Advent is so much more than preparing for Christmas, as much as we need that.
 - I love this time of year precisely because we do look towards Christmas. My house is decorated; I need only get and decorate my Christmas tree. I love seeing people and spending time with family and friends.
 - Certainly, we can’t overlook these things as if we’re monks in a far off monastery with little to do but pray.
 - With all our preparations for Christmas, and the rest of our lives, the Church gives us this time to go further, deeper, beyond the sheen, beneath the facade and look towards the reason for the season.
 - Remember the admonition Deacon George gave us: “Are you preparing more for Christmas than for Christ?”

- Advent is about looking for God.
 - Advent is about waiting, longing, hoping, watching, yearning, expecting God to come which reminds us well the paradox that we celebrate and live every day as Christians: we are waiting for One Who has already come!
 - Advent begins by strengthening the hope we celebrated last week on the feast of Christ the King, that will **CHRIST WILL COME** again in the fullness of His Glory.
 - As Advent progresses, we will also remember that **CHRIST HAS COME** to us in history, 2000 years ago in a manger, beneath a star
- The season of Advent is about finding ourselves in between these two comings: calling us to recognize and to celebrate the way that Christ comes to us right here, right now:
 - Christ comes to us in mystery in a myriad of ways; we need only recognize Him with the eyes of faith.
 - He comes in family and friends, in a shoulder offered to share a burden.
 - He comes in the poor and the struggling, in the cry of those who need our help.
 - He comes in Sacred Scripture and under the form of bread and wine.
 - He comes in words of forgiveness and second chances.
 - Christ comes. Christ comes in an imperfect Church in a struggling world.
 - Advent allows us to pay attention, to sensitizing ourselves to God so we don't miss Him. It's about making room to welcome Christ whenever and wherever and however He comes.

- “Stop, drop, and roll.”
 - You may recall that I offered this snappy, little saying as an instruction for Advent, how we can become aware of the Christ who comes to us.
 - I keep going back to it as a perfect motto for this season.
- **STOP**, drop, and roll.
 - Advent is about stopping our usual journey and moving intentionally towards the Lord. We need to STOP EVERY DAY, rising above the usual tasks and the increased Christmas prep, important as all of that is.
 - As Isaiah called the Israelites in our First Reading, so too God reaches out to us: *Come, let us climb the LORD’s mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways...*
 - We need to stop and spend some time on the mountain of God, not merely forcing one more thing into an already overburdened schedule to allow God to fill us, strengthen us, speak to us and teach us.
- Stop, **DROP**, and roll.
 - The need for us to **STOP** at, perhaps, the most difficult time of year, when we too often feel like George Jetson on the automatic dog-walker is why we also need to **DROP**.
 - We need to drop to our knees, at least figuratively so that we can stop the craziness of our daily lives to make room for God. We need to offer God a better portion (maybe even the best part?!?!) of our daily lives.
 - That’s why we will be doing our liturgies a little different in this season of Advent.
 - To help yourself and others to **STOP**, we are going to try and maintain a prayerful silence before Mass. There will be a musical prelude and then silence. We are suspending the announcements and the in-pew greeting. It’s no that the time to greet one another before Mass or the announcements that speak of the life of our parish aren’t

important. They are and extremely so. It's just that this may be the only way we can provide space and time for others to **STOP**.

- Also, we'll have a different Penitential Rite, Different Mass Setting and a different response to the Mystery of Faith. All point to making sure that we are following along only by rote.
- STOP is more than just halting enough to create a space in my heart and life and schedule for God. As we prepare for Christ, we are called like the warriors in our first reading to drop our swords and spears, to drop that which puts us or keeps us in opposition to Christ.
 - Perhaps your sword is greed or selfishness or laziness or anger or lust. Perhaps it's a hurt we grasp or a discipline we cast away.
 - Christ can make a dropped sword or spear better, more productive, more nourishing for us and for others.
- There are no better helps to turn these swords and spears into plowshares and pruning forks than the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Come daily and taste His love for you. Come, receive God's love and mercy and forgiveness.

- Stop, drop, and **ROLL**.
 - We don't **STOP** and **DROP** merely for ourselves.
 - We are called to **ROLL** toward Christ, working to better my corner of the globe, building up the kingdom for those around me, working to increase the presence of God and sharing that presence with others.
 - Saint Paul reminds us that discipleship should be just as active and just as intentional as our getting dressed. *Let us...put on the Lord Jesus Christ...* It's not enough to keep Him in the manger. We have to put Him on and head out
 - You have heard the adage that "A rolling stone gathers no moss." Similarly, an active, rolling disciples gathers no sin – well fewer sins anyway.

- So, with this Advent, in the roughly four weeks you have, I want you to **STOP**, **DROP** and **ROLL**.
 - **STOP** the daily routine each day, even if it's only briefly, and rise above to God. Stop some activity to allow God in. Once again, this year I am putting my personal screen time on hold, allowing God to fill that space with something better than Netflix, Facebook and Twitter. I'm telling you this year to hold me accountable since I only made it to Tuesday of the first week last year.
 - **DROP** the acts and habits of sinfulness and help God turn them into plowshares of increased goodness for others.
 - **ROLL** towards Christ with actions that reflect always and only the Love of the God who comes to us.

- FOR GOD'S SAKE, PAY ATTENTION.