

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION & THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First Sunday of Advent – 27 November 2022



There are four parts to today's homily.

- 1) Letter of Pope Francis to Ukraine.
- 2) The Gospel of Matthew 24:37-44
- 3) The Queensland Churches Together speak about Domestic Family Violence
- 4) Ordination of Deacon Clint McGoldrick

PART ONE: LETTER OF POPE FRANCIS TO UKRAINE

Pope Francis has written to the Ukrainian people.

While waiting for an official English translation at:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2022/11/25/lettera-popolo-ucraino.html>

there is below a link to the Vatican News article about the Pope's Letter. It provides several quotes of Pope Francis, including the one here.

"Despite the immense tragedy they are suffering, the Ukrainian people have never been discouraged or given over to pity. The world has recognised a bold and strong people, a people that suffers and prays, cries and struggles, resists and hopes: a noble and martyred people."

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-11/pope-francis-letter-ukrainian-people-nine-months-from-russian-in.html>

We pray for all Ukrainian people today.

[pause and pray]

PART TWO: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 24:37-44

'For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.

Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.'

We heed the messages:

'Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.'
'you also must be ready'

If we translate literally from the biblical Greek, we get *'So be on guard'* which has been translated as *"Keep awake therefore"*.

Whether this Advent, recognising the terrible injustices that Ukraine has experienced this year, or Australians have experienced from Domestic Violence, or other critical moral issues, we are called as a society, and as church, to *'be on guard'*, to take a public stand of solidarity with the oppressed.

'Being on your guard' has a much stronger meaning than be prepared. But in this gospel passage there is another meaning. We are expected to be ready for the unexpected, the unknown. We don't believe everything we hear second hand. We try to be aware of what is really happening. We can plan. But God is not restricted to our plans.

PART THREE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – PRAYERS FOR ADVENT

Part Three is also printed in the parish newsletter this weekend so that parishioners who don't have social media access, will still have a copy to take home.

The [Queensland Churches Together](#) have a *Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project*.

This Advent they focus on Domestic Violence Prevention. The following is from their resource which can be found under "Latest News" at gct.org.au

"It is a little over 4 weeks to Christmas when we Christians celebrate the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, as an innocent, defenceless child and as we make our preparations for this wonderful family time, it is important to be aware that not all families enjoy peaceful and joyful get-togethers. For some, the extra financial pressure, stress, being with family where hurts have not been dealt with, school holidays, the heat and lack of resources may push some people to violence and abuse. Some of these people might be members of Christian communities, who terrorise their families in their homes, but might be charming towards others. The family members being abused, live in fear and shame and will often deny that the behaviour of the abuser is not normal. They will also make excuses for the abuser and go to great lengths to convince others that all is well. As family members, neighbours, friends, today's scripture can be a reminder to be alert, to be informed and aware and to be prepared to offer support. Statistically in Queensland, one person is killed at the hands of an intimate partner – estranged or otherwise – every week. These are the cases that come across our News feeds, airwaves or television screens, but for many more, the

suffering happens behind closed doors and in the dark, and while not resulting in death, can be as devastating. The harm to children in such cases is incalculable and the cost to the community is astronomical. Members of the Joint Churches Commission for prevention of Domestic and Family violence have initiated this campaign to raise awareness of this largely hidden blight on our families, neighbourhoods and communities.”

Violence against women is a widespread problem in Australia.

“According to the 2016 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2017)

Since the age of 15:

- Approximately one in four women (23% or 2.2 million) has experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner (intimate partner = a current or previous partner with whom the respondent lives or has lived, or a current or former boyfriend, girlfriend or date with whom the respondent has not lived with).*
- One in six women (17% or 1.6 million) has experienced at least one incident of violence by a partner (partner = a person whom the respondent lives with, or lived with at some point, in a married or de facto relationship).*
- Three in ten women (30.5% or 2.85 million) have experienced physical violence (perpetrated by another person, irrespective of the type of relationship).*
- Approximately one in five women (18% or 1.7 million) has experienced sexual violence (the occurrence, attempt or threat of sexual assault).*
- One in six women (17% or 1.6 million) has experienced an episode of stalking (any unwanted contact or attention on more than one occasion, or multiple types of unwanted contact or behaviour experienced on one occasion, that could have caused fear or distress).*
- Approximately one in four women (23% or 2.2 million) has experienced emotional abuse by a partner. Across their lifetime:*
- One in two women (53% or 5 million) has experienced sexual harassment (experienced or has been subjected to one or more selected behaviours which they found improper or unwanted, which made them feel uncomfortable, and/or were offensive due to their sexual nature).”*

You are invited to join in prayer during the Advent Season

“Leader: Oh God of mercy and compassion, we long for your coming. Help us to be alert to the needs of others as we pray ...

- 1. For those who suffer in silence in abusive relationships ... Gracious God hear us.*
- 2. For communities to offer safe places to go for those wanting to leave abusive relationships. Gracious God hear us.*
- 3. For children who witness violence in their homes, that they may find kindness, compassion and support to tell their stories. Gracious God hear us.*
- 4. For authorities such as Police, Ambulance workers, Medical staff, Social Workers to receive more support so that they may perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. Gracious God hear us.*
- 5. For those who work for peace and non-violence in our society ... Gracious God hear us.”*

Benediction

Gracious God, as we prepare for happy holidays and family celebrations at the birth of your Son, Jesus, please help us to remember to be alert to the needs of others who might be

struggling under the weight of shame and secrecy. In your mercy grant us peace and hope to be your light to others. Amen.

PART FOUR: ORDINATION OF DEACON CLINT McGOLDRICK

Congratulations to Clint and your family.

In the Concluding Rites of the Ordination Mass, these prayers were prayed by the Archbishop.

May God who has called you to the service of others in his Church give to you great zeal for all, especially the afflicted and the poor.

All - Amen

May he who has entrusted you with preaching the Gospel of Christ, help you, as you live according to his word, to be its sincere and fervent witnesses.

All – Amen

May he who has appointed you steward of his mysteries, make you an imitator of his Son, Jesus Christ, and minister of unity and peace in the world.

All - Amen

CONCLUSION

As I shared in the Advent homily three years ago, we live our lives, open to the surprises of God.

In our preparation for this Christmas, may we be ready with open hearts and minds to the surprise invitations that God may ask of us.

Last Friday morning in our church was the celebration of St. Joseph's School Year 4 and Year 2 Buddy Mass.

Thank you to Mrs Hutton, teachers and Year 4 for preparing the liturgy for the Mass.

Thank you to the parents and grandparents who were able to be there.

Year Four shared in their prayer, many things for which they are grateful.

May their example inspire us as we begin our Advent journey to Christmas.

Let us now pause, so that each of us may pray silently for people with whom we include in our Advent journey to Christmas 2022.

Father Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/112722.cfm>