

Advent 1
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

December 3, 2017
Rev. Paul Moore

Happy New Year

Happy New Year!

This is the first Sunday of the liturgical year. We are now in the Sunday Lectionary Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary. Today we start to tell the story of Salvation all over again, like the Church has been doing for hundreds of years.

Now, I am one especially prone to boredom. I quickly get tired of the same old-same old. Is this just the second verse, could be better but it's gonna be worse? No! Even though the elements of the story are the same, and the message is the same, the way we will live it out in our particular time and place is NOT the same. Times are changing, and we are changing, and we must adapt or check out, and I'm not nearly ready to check out. This Advent is the same as last year, but it is not. It is the one and only time we will ever live through Advent in the year of our Lord 2018.

So, what's it gonna be like?

Watching the new year emerge from the mists of the future is a little like watching a football game. You may think you know who is going to win, but you never quite really know until the game is played. Just the same, the emergence of the new year is a new thing. We may think we know some stuff, but ultimately, we will look back at all of the stuff we didn't know. We'd better be awake or we might miss a key play.

Maybe the best way to think about staying awake, of watching, is in terms of taking stock. We can do so with these three questions:

What's going on in my life today that impacts how I relate to God and how I live with others? We have three married sons. Two of them have children. Those two couples have all the children they want to have. The youngest, though, is an open slate. He and his wife have said they want children but as yet do not have any. The oldest and the youngest are coming for Christmas. Unless they come out with a clear announcement... guess what the innuendos and hidden comments are going to be about? We love our grandkids, and we can't wait to see what this couple will provide us.

Grandkids remind us that the world goes on, and that the circle of life is good, and that God holds us all in his hands. Time teaches many things, and the wisdom of age is a beautiful thing, and there's nothing like having a kid to bring you up short by your own short-comings! Having kids is one thing, having grandkids is another. Karisse and I give thanks every night for each and all of them. They are one of the mysteries of life that put us in the presence of God.

What is going on in your life today that impacts how you relate to God and how you live with others?

How can I best understand my life in light of the coming of the Christ Child? The birth of Jesus symbolizes for me hope in the midst of darkness. I will be defending my dissertation in about two weeks. I am in darkness. Ask Karisse—I have been stumbling all over myself not knowing what to do now that there is nothing to do for school. As it stands, my work of art, my magnum opus, the great culmination of three years of study and toil sits in the inboxes of two people who until a couple of weeks ago had not seen it. All 170 pages of my heart and soul are lying there for them to make a judgment call on! But I take hope. My advisor thinks the paper is in "pretty good shape," and I know one of my readers well—he'll be fine with it. The third one is something of an unknown factor in all of this. However, I am confident that the chances of her demanding a complete re-write are small. I am sure I can address whatever tweaks she requires. Then I will be DONE! What a Christmas present that will be! There is hope in the midst of darkness.

How best can you understand your life in light of the coming of the Christ Child?

What am I called to do that I haven't been doing, or to stop, that I have been doing? Since I am not buried in books and wrapped around writing, I have found that I have time that I did not have before. There are several things that have been put on the back burner that are now coming to the fore. Visits to our shut-ins and others—I love being in your homes and talking about life. Work with the Borderland Ministries—I would like us to host a summit of dioceses along the border sometime next year. There are internal projects that the Vestry and I are working on that can now get the attention they need. There is another big diocesan project that has been pitched to us that the Vestry will be taking up soon, and I can read what I want to read rather than what I have to read! These things feed my soul and energize my days.

What are you called to do that you haven't been doing, or to stop that you have been doing?

Happy New Year. What does that mean to you today?