

## 2nd Sunday of Advent

I remember something that I did even before I was a teenager. My friends and I used to play soccer, volley ball and cricket at least a couple of times every week on my parents' property. Adjacent to their property was the house and the property of our neighbor who was in his 60s. He was a widower and lived by himself. None of his children lived with him because he was so mean. Whenever we played, if the ball landed on the roof of his house or on the property, he would confiscate it and would not return it. We lost so many balls—especially cricket balls. Those balls were not very expensive, maybe just a couple of bucks, but that was too much for us kids. If any ball landed on his roof, he was sure to come out and yell at us. At first we used to be scared and stop the game. When he continued to do it, we got used to it, and we said “sorry” and switched the game. I told my parents about what he was doing, and they ended up scolding me for sending the ball to his property. I knew soon enough that there was no use in telling my parents about it. So we decided to teach him a lesson ourselves. We got the opportunity one day when we were playing soccer. He was standing on the edge of our soccer field waiting for the ball to come onto his property so he could confiscate it. When the ball got near him, and after tackling it, I pretended as though I was going to kick the ball away, but I kicked it at him. Unfortunately, it hit where it should not have hit, and he sat down on the ground. I felt very bad. Fortunately, the ball bounced into the field where we were playing. I told him I was sorry and continued as though nothing happened. He bad-mouthed us for a while and went into his house. Another time, to scare this man, we went to his house when it was dark and threw hands full of rocks on his metal roof. By the time he came out with a flashlight, we were gone. We did that a few times.

There are things in our lives that we wish we had never done. I am sure most of us could recall at least half a dozen things that we did that we'd like to erase from our lives permanently. You cannot erase it once you pass out of this world. You can only do it right here while you live in this world. It is done in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We do have Confession every Tuesday after the morning Mass and every Saturday at 3 p.m. We will have the Advent Reconciliation on December 13th, at 6.30 p.m. at the New Church.

A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a meter. Then he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: “I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses.” When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note: “I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation.”

In the Gospel of today, we have John the Baptist calling us to repentance. He began his ministry calling people to repentance. “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” The appearance of John was sudden. There were no prophets for nearly 400 years prior to John. It was then, when people were wondering why there were no prophets for so long, that John appeared on the scene. John fearlessly denounced evil. He called the Sadducees and Pharisees “a brood of wipers.” He boldly told King Herod that it was unlawful for him to have his brother’s wife. Do you denounce evil whenever you find it or walk away saying, “That is none of my business?” That is when the evil grows. John called people to righteousness. He challenged them to live up to God’s expectations. God’s word always challenges us to be the best persons—to be the best Dad, best Mom, best sister, best brother, best friend, best son, best daughter. John directed the people to Jesus and not to himself. “The one who comes after me is mightier than I, and I am not worthy even to untie his sandals.” There is always a temptation in us to draw people to ourselves. That makes us feel important and appreciated. We are doing the work of God, and he is working through us. Therefore, we are to direct others to God and not to ourselves.

The Jews took pride in the fact that they were the descendants of Abraham and so they will be saved. But John tells them that that alone was not going to save them. But, instead, he tells them to repent and to turn from their sinful ways to God’s ways. So let us repent and confess our sins, for the Lord is near.