

11/29/15 1 Advent C

-- I suspect if you ask people what the dominant emotion of this time happens to be, many would say "fear." So much has happened recently: the Paris bombing, planes downed, attacks in many parts of the world, threats on our country.

-- Of course, there is such a thing as healthy fear. We don't get too close to a fire for fear we will be burned. Christians speak of "fear of the Lord." This is not terror at being caught and punished, but a healthy awe of God.

-- Some people may look at the gospel reading and parts of it inspire fear in them. Talk of signs in the heavens, people dying of fright, the seas roaring.

-- But this is not what the Lord wants us to focus upon. Fear like that paralyzes; it doesn't help. Fear like that causes us to hate our neighbor who is different from us.

-- In fact, I think we can make the case that fear is a greater threat to us than violence. In reality, fear can lead to violence, on our streets or even between nations and ethnic groups.

-- What is the message Luke tries to convey to the Christian community of his day, and to us? Don't be paralyzed by fear: raise your heads because God is there to save you!

-- Luke wants us to avoid getting caught up in both the worries and the pleasures of the day. Ultimately, all of them will pass away. Yes, we must have a proper concern for security, but that should not keep us from going out into the community and to public events.

-- Yes, it's fine to buy a few nice things for our family members during the holiday season, but their presence and love is much more important than things we can get them.

-- As a country, we cannot be so paralyzed by fear that we are suspicious of every person who does not look like us, and are afraid that any foreigner is automatically a terrorist.

-- Taking prudent precautions is far different than shutting everyone out. Remember, our ancestors in faith were refugees from their land for a while, as our first reading reminds us.

-- St. Paul helps us focus on what we should be doing this Advent season. He tells us, *...increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you.*

-- Those are important words for our own parish to hear in this time when so many have suffered loss due to death and illnesses. We need to strengthen each other's hearts through our support of one another.

-- We also need to continue to reach out in love to our community, and in particular, to the needy in it. Our Christmas for Kids, St. Vincent de Paul and other efforts are more important than ever in this time.

-- Like all people, we face the normal anxieties of life. Sometimes they weigh upon us more than others. We cannot help but be affected by world events and the fear they often inspire.

-- But we need not be paralyzed by it. For we have a faithful God, who asks us to stand up in hope because He will triumph over evil in the end.

-- May we be firm in that hope. May we also support one another and reach out to those in our world who need our healing touch.