1st Sunday of Advent: 11/27/22—5:00 PM; 7:30 and 11:30 AM

**Classic lines for the Season of Advent:**

From the prophet Isaiah: ***They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!...***

From St. Paul to the Romans: ***It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day…***

 From Jesus: ***Therefore, stay awake! you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."*** Indeed classic lines for the Season of Advent as found n today’s readings.

 I have here one of the smoke detectors from the rectory. A couple of weeks ago we moved our clocks back an hour as we switched from daylight savings time back to central standard time. Usually when we do so, there are public service announcements we hear on the radio reminding, at the same time we move our clocks back, to change the batteries in our smoke detectors. It’s a good piece of advice lest those smoke detectors fail to work because of dead batteries. Speaking of dead batteries versus new batteries, I have here two flashlights. This one has dead batteries and so doesn’t work, but this one’s batteries are new and work splendidly. Hearing those words again about “***walking in the light of the Lord***,” from Isaiah, about “***throwing off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light,”*** from St. Paul in Romans, as well as Jesus’ own words, about “***stay(ing) awake!*** and ***“be(ing) prepared,”*** it strikes me that Advent is a lot like this smoke alarm and these two flashlights, in that Advent reminds us to be prepared like this smoke alarm does as well as reminds us to replace or renew our spiritual batteries.

 As we know, there is a lot of spiritual darkness in our world. One doesn’t have to look too far, either listening to the news on TV or on the radio or looking at the newspaper, to know that there is a lot of spiritual darkness in our world. That being the case, it’s easy to be like this flashlight where the batteries are exhausted. Advent calls us to replace our spiritual batteries so we can be like this flashlight. In other words, we need a battery tester, but what might it be? How can we test our spiritual batteries to see if they are like this flashlight as opposed to this flashlight? I think it’s pretty simple. It’s Jesus’ two great commandments which we find in Mathew, Mark, and Luke: ***'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.***' In other words, our God loves us with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, but how well do we return that love? If we don’t, then our spiritual flashlight is like this one, but, if we are doing our best to love our God as our God loves us, then our spiritual flashlight is more like this one. But then too Jesus calls us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We need to ask ourselves that question as well. If we are treating people in a way that we would not like to be treated, then our spiritual flashlight is more like this one, but if we are doing our best to love and treat our neighbor as we would want to be treated, then we are more like this one.

 During this season of Advent, Jesus is calling us to ***walk in the light of the Lord***, to ***throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light,*** as well as to ***stay awake!*** and to ***be prepared.*** During these four weeks of Advent, I hope that we will also take the time to check our spiritual batteries and to change them if they are more like this (dead/dim) rather than like this (bright).