Homily by Rev. Robert Schramm, OSFS
1st Sunday in Advent, 2016

There's a fable about three demons being to be sent to Earth to complete their apprenticeships.

Before they departed, Satan asked them how they planned to tempt and ruin humankind.

1. "I'll tell them there's no God." Satan responded, "Won't work, they know there's a God."
2. "I'll tell them there is no Hell." Satan said, "won't work, they know there's a Hell for the unrepentant."
3. "I'll tell them there is no hurry." Satan was pleased and said, "Go! You'll ruin them by the thousands."

One of the most dangerous of all our delusions is to think there's plenty of time. "Maybe I'll do it tomorrow."

We all get into wishing the storm will pass; whatever the storm is. A wise person has said:

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass.
It's learning to dance with the rain."

Advent is about hope - that there will be a better tomorrow. In God's hope, God's dream for a better tomorrow, we are participants, not observers.

Those who wrote the document on the liturgy of Vatican II said the goal of the renewal of the liturgy was the full, active, conscious participation of all of us in liturgy.

That applies not only to liturgy, but to life; to be full, active, conscious participants in life. A certain urgency about it all.

That's our true destiny — to be participants in creating a better tomorrow. Jesus is God's way of teaching us how to dance in the rain.

So, what do you hope for? Are your hopes big enough?

American writer Annie Dillard quotes Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk ---
"There is always an enormous temptation in all of life to diddle around making itsy-bitsy friends and meals and journeys for itsy-bitsy years on end. It is so self-conscious, so apparently moral, simply to step aside from the gaps where the creeks and winds pour down, saying, I never merited this grace, quite rightly, and then to sulk along the rest of your days on the edge of rage. I won't have it. The world is wilder than that in all directions, more dangerous and bitter, more extravagant and bright. We are making hay when we should be making whoopee;
we are raising tomatoes
when we should be raising Cain, or Lazarus."

Millard Fuller was a millionaire at 29.
He founded Habitat for Humanity International in 1976
and served in executive roles until 2005.
His leadership helped forge Habitat into a worldwide Christian housing ministry.

Talk about hope, the dream of God, the vision of God.

Isaiah, in our first reading, speaks of transforming swords into plowshares
and spears into prying hooks
St. Paul talks about throwing off the works of darkness
and putting on the armor of light.
Jesus speaks of the return of the Son of Humanity at an unexpected hour.

There's still lots to do, lots calling for our participation:

• About 40,000 people dying every day from hunger
• A billion people, one fifth of the human race, still do not have decent housing
• 20 million Latin American children sleeping in the street
• Hundreds of millions of people without basic medical care
• One out of every four human beings still has no access to safe drinking water
• Now in this Country we have hired the fox to guard the hen house.

That little devil is still lurking around whispering in our ears
“… but there's no hurry.”

What does all this have to do with preparing for Christmas?
The season of Advent is a time for us to wake ourselves up
and begin preparing better for the coming of Christ.