

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on November 28, 2010
First Sunday of Advent - Liturgical Year A

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells us that there will be two men in a field. One will be taken; one will be left. There will be two women grinding at the mill – one will be taken, and one will be left. Some Christians call this “the rapture” – faithful Christians being snatched out of the world to be with God before the Kingdom of God dawns.

As Catholics, we don't see any evidence for this prediction in Sacred Scripture, but there is another way of *being taken* – and of *being left*.

A great example of this happened on October 30, 2010, at Macy's in Philadelphia. At the world's largest pipe organ, a “random act of culture” was performed by the Philadelphia Opera Company. Members of the company were mingling in the crowd of shoppers in the atrium and the food court. The organist segued from one piece into the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah. The Opera Company, from all parts of the atrium, burst into song. The video is amazing to watch. Some folks were *taken* – turning their attention, taking stock of the sudden change from shopping mall into concert hall. But others were *left* – appearing totally unphased by the interruption of the beautiful Messiah crescendo descending into Macy's food court. And on this day before Halloween, there were folks wearing red devil horns, walking through the crowd, totally unphased.

It was a random act of culture, but – to me – a purposeful example of grace. There were the people looking up in response to the descending music and then looking about at those incognito opera singers putting words to the music. These were ordinary people *being taken*, being drawn into the music. And there were others *being left*, ignoring the music, busy about other things.

Advent is a time to be “taken by the music” – not literally by the increasing Christmas music on the radio, but by grace infiltrating life.

I see it as young adults preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation – not just intellectually but truly feeling Christ's presence.

I see it as one friend expressing gratitude to another for many kindnesses, and the other is overwhelmed by the very expression of gratitude.

I see it as a person feeling, for the first time, the desire to serve others consistently, not just as an annual act of kindness at a shelter on Thanksgiving

I see it as a family going through the motions of saying a prayer at dinner every night – and, after months of giggling little ones and eye-rolling teenagers, all of them realize that this moment is one of the best parts of the day together.

These things are not random; they are purposeful incidents of people *being taken* – not by “the rapture”, but by grace at work, coming to a crescendo as the angel comes to Mary and the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, as Advent segues into Christmas, and as grace becomes life.

May this Advent capture our hearts and minds, our imaginations and actions. May there be less tension on the Korean peninsula as swords become plowshares, as Christ *takes* us and as the Kingdom touches others.