

***The Fourth Sunday of Advent***  
***December 23, 2018***

*“Jesus cried out and said, ‘Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever see me sees the one who sent me.’” (John 12:44-45)*

Children can be very trusting. They view the people in their lives as good, well meaning, and well intentioned. They are not able to see the harm in certain things or activities. Therefore, parents must “child proof” their homes to protect their children. Moreover, they must teach their child, in ways the child can understand, how to protect themselves. I still remember the lines I learned from grade school concerning how to cross a street: “Stop, Look, and Listen before you cross a street. Use your eyes, use your ears, and then quickly use your feet.” Jesus, Himself, is a role model in this area because He continues to carry within Himself this child-like trust even into adulthood. He never comes across as gullible, rather He continues to trust that the men around Him (Apostles) will continue His ministry of Reconciliation after He has physically departed from their presence. He is fully aware of the fact that they will fall (Judas), however He trusts that they will get right back up (Peter), learn from their mistake, and continue His work to the best of their ability. For this, our last lesson of Advent 2018, I want to emphasize the need for us to continue fostering this child-like trust in our daily lives.

Allow me to begin with a question: “When did I (we) become cynical? After pondering this question, I could not come up with a direct answer. Was it the first time someone broke our trust? Was it the moment we realized the stories we believed were in fact only stories? Furthermore, have we allowed this cynical attitude to rob us of a clear view of our world and the people within this world? These, I admit, are difficult questions. No one likes being made a fool, taken advantage of, or hurt by those we love. We now replace lines, like the one cited above, with: “Trust, but verify!” I must admit, it really saddens me that I have allowed both situations and others to rob me of that original trust I had as a child. It further saddens me when I prayerfully reflect and realize that I too have contributed to the robbing others of their child-like trust through my own words and actions. However, these poor decisions of childhood have the potential to mold us into the truthful, reliable, compassionate adults we become.

Jesus’ actions and words display the fact that He did not allow the world to change His trust. Rather, He wanted the world to change and foster this trust. He would say to those who He ministered to: “Go, your sins are forgiven.” He never said: “Go, sin no more, because I will be watching you.” He was not “Trust, but verify.” He was: “Trust, because I believe you can and will . . .” This is the attitude we need to foster in both ourselves and the young. Does it leave us open to hurt and heart break? Yes, but the fact that we woke up this morning opens the door for these to occur. How can we return to this child-like trust? I can only respond by offering the cross of Christ as an answer. We must be willing to join Him on the hill of heart break, the cross, if we want to return to this innocent world view. This should never be associated as being “gullibly childish.” We should view these mistakes and heart breaks as moments for growth in His wisdom and grace. Yes, all of us have made mistakes. Honestly, if Jimmy Stewart is correct, we also have all lived “A Wonderful Life.”