

November 29, 2020 | 1st Sunday of Advent (B)

[IS 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7](#)

[PS 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#)

[1 COR 1:3-9](#)

[MK 13:33-37](#)

By Don Timmerman

Just before Christmas, most people are thinking about what we will be getting as gifts for Christmas. They are anticipating something nice for themselves. Few, I believe, ever think of the gift we have already received. What have we received? We have received the gift of love, of God. As is written in the good of Isaiah, “No ear has heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you are doing such deeds for those who wait for him.”

If we know Christ himself was actually coming to our house, what would we do? We would clean the house top to bottom, put out our finest dishes and silverware, prepare the best meal ever, and be on our best behavior. When I was a child, my Mom used to make sure we were on our best behavior if we knew someone was coming to our house. We would not dare do anything bad or be disrespectful. Advent is the time when we prepare for the coming, the birth, of Jesus. We are on our best behavior. We keep watch so that when he comes we will have our house and our behavior in order.

At Casa Maria, where I volunteer, we see every person who comes to the door as Christ himself. We respect and honor the guest as if they were Jesus. We are constantly trying to show respect and love to the guest because we know that whatever we do for that person we do also to Christ. The best way to honor and welcome Christ is by doing what he did and taught. We are to love all people, including our enemies, and do good to them.

How often do we do good things for those who have done wrong and we consider our enemies? Do we work to rid the world of weapons? These weapons were built to destroy, not help, our enemies. Are we reminding our legislators that bombing our enemies is not obeying or respecting Christ? Pope Francis said, “To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence,” and “We need to make active nonviolence our way of life.” We are told by society that violence will change the criminals. It tells us violence can make our enemies behave better. This is the opposite of Christ’s teaching. We must choose to endure hardship, and even death, to do good to those who do wrong. That is what Christ did.

We are in the season of welcoming Jesus into our lives. The way to do that is by following the law of love and nonviolence, being willing to die rather than to do harm to anyone. This only comes with practice. We are to be on watch. We are to constantly remind ourselves of Christ’s teaching. When we are tempted to do wrong to those who have wronged us, we must remember to do good to them. Let us start today to make a habit of doing good to those who are doing wrong. That is the best way to invite baby Jesus into our hearts and minds. It is the best way to make sure that all is prepared for the one who is to come.

May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals within society and in international life.

Don Timmerman is a long-time peace activist, practitioner of non-violence, and a member of the [Casa Maria Catholic Worker Community](#) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.