

I'll be brief today because we have a second speaker from Catholic Community Services who will tell us how to help some people in great need this season.

If you look on the back of a one-dollar bill you will see images of both sides of the Great Seal of the United States. It was designed in 1782, towards the end of the Revolutionary War, and on it are the Latin words *Novus Ordo Seclorum*. This can be translated "A New Order of the Ages." The point being made by its makers is that, with the Declaration of Independence, a new age has come upon humanity. The American regime is meant to bring into being a new way of governing society. This was the beginning of the Age of Revolutions. The Founders saw themselves as apostles of this new way, teachers of the world in the ways of freedom and a just order of public life.

I thought of that phrase and history when I read today's Gospel, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God]." This is the very first line of Mark's Gospel. It serves as the Title of the whole

Gospel. Today I want to note the very first word, “Arche” in Greek. It means “Beginning.” St. John began his gospel in a similar way, “In the beginning was the Word.” My point, and I believe Mark’s point, is that Jesus begins a new order of the ages, a *novus ordo seclorum*. He is the real revolutionary. Jesus brings a new way of life and a new salvation. The Gospel is meant to be the rule of life by which human beings are now to live: our deepest Constitution, so to speak.

In the Gospel we learn the ways Jesus spoke and acted, His ministries we might call them today. He is the beginning of the ministries, but He never suggests that what He does should come to an end. We’re meant to embody them going forward through time. It’s a kind of job description for a Disciple of Christ: to carry out the continuing revolution that Love-Incarnate brings to human affairs. The ministry of CCS is one example of how this new way of life takes concrete form.

So, on this Second Sunday of Advent, we can ask ourselves, “What are the deeds of Jesus that I’m personally being called to continue and embody? Do I see myself as a disciple of a new way of living, meant for the whole world?”

A couple weeks ago I asked you to think about whether you were an American Catholic, or a Catholic American. Which was the noun, and which was the adjective? What was your deepest identity? Another way to answer that question is to examine how much I’m a Christian revolutionary . . . in the sense of desiring to help bring about Jesus’ *novus ordo seclorum*. I suspect for many of us it’s easier to see the revolutionary tendencies of our American Constitution and its universal applicability for improving public life, than it is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus as a new beginning of love and salvation meant for everyone. But if that is the case then this Advent is a perfect time to hear John the Baptist’s call to repent – to change and see things in a new way. What new thing is Jesus calling you to do for Him and His revolution?