

**HOMILY**  
**NOVEMBER 28, 2021**  
**ADVENT # 1**  
**By Fr. Bert Foliot, S.J.**  
*Be on your guard!*

To see the many beautiful birds the Creator has fashioned, a friend planted a pole into the earth and set up a bird feeder filled with sunflower seeds. Soon the little chickadees and the goldfinches and the juncos flit back and forth to the feeder dropping a few seeds on the ground below. The squirrels in their craftiness soon discovered these seeds. Driven by their never-satisfied greed, they climbed the pole to get more. Soon all the seeds were voraciously devoured. And so, a funnel was put around the pole preventing the squirrels from climbing. Not to be outdone, the squirrels jumped from nearby branches, knocked the feeder to the ground and devoured all the seed themselves. The pole was relocated. Soon came the blue jays, the blackbirds and the doves. They were as voracious as the squirrels. With their size they scared the little birds off the perches. They were sloppy eaters, and so to the delight of the squirrels, large quantities of seed fell to the ground. To feed the smaller birds, a small feeder was added. It had tiny perches on which only the small birds could land and eat. The small birds, the bigger birds and the squirrels all had their fill. Then came the wild turkeys. They too enjoyed their share of seed, but then moved on leaving plenty of seed for the squirrels. All were well-fed and living in harmony to the delight of all, especially to my friend. Respectful sharing had replaced destructive greed.

When the Europeans came to the new world and saw all this land, they erected crosses to stake and claim it for their respective monarchs. They ignored the fact that there were inhabitants on this land who had been here for tens and thousands of years. These Indigenous people welcomed the newcomers and were willing to share their land with them according to treaty agreements. In these treaties the Indigenous peoples did not sell or give up their rights to the land and territories. They agreed to share custodial responsibility and stewardship for the land entrusted to them by the Creator to whom the land ultimately belonged. No one imagined that the Europeans would take everything for themselves leaving the Indigenous people to beg for leftovers. But greed entered in. Promises made to care for the land, to respect it and to share it the Indigenous peoples of this land were soon broken. Hunting and trapping, and fishing rights were revoked. Sacred sites were

disturbed and trampled. Treaties were not honoured. Greed had taken hold. And greed has persisted on this land for 400 hundred years. Greed continues to live on in us.

*But the Lord is causing a righteous branch to rise up*, as Jeremiah tells us in today's first reading. In the encounter with the Indigenous people of this land, settlers are offered new values and new insights into how to journey through life. The Indigenous peoples are teaching settlers to learn gratitude to the Creator for the gift of the land and all it produces. They are teaching settlers to respect the land in all its richness. They invite settlers to be willing to welcome refugees and immigrants on to the land, while always remembering the needs and rights of its original inhabitants. In one of the Indigenous treaties, *The Dish with One Spoon*, they teach us all

1. never to take more than our share,
2. to make sure that all have enough,
3. not to foul the dish,
4. and not to take the dish all for ourselves.

*The Two-Row Wampum*, a treaty with the Dutch in 1613, teaches settlers and Indigenous peoples how to walk together without encroaching on each other. It is expressed in two parallel rows of purple wampum beads on a white background of three rows of white beads. These white beads symbolize the peace, friendship and respect agreed upon so that both can travel on the river of life together. As the Indigenous explained, "In one row is a ship with our White Brothers' ways; in the other a canoe with our ways. Each will travel down the river of life side by side. Neither will attempt to steer the other's vessel." Indigenous peoples and settlers agreed to travel alongside each other in peace, respect and friendship. As Jeremiah prophesied, *The Lord was causing to rise up a righteous branch* of harmony.

In 1636 the oracle of Jeremiah was fulfilled once again. *The Lord caused to rise up* a righteous Indigenous man, his wife, his brother and his children. The man's name was *Chiwatenhwa*. Let's listen and learn the prayer he shared with us.

*O God, at last I start to understand you.  
You made the earth, which we live in.  
You made the sky, which we see above us.  
You made us, we who are called people.*

*Now you let me start to know who you really are.  
I know how to make a canoe, and how to enjoy it.  
I know how to build a cabin and how to live in it.  
But you! You made us, and you live in us.*

*The things we make last for a few seasons.  
We only use the canoes we create for a short time.  
We only live in the houses we build for a few years.  
But your love for us will endure so long  
that we cannot count the time.  
You will comfort us forever.*

*You love us so deeply that all I can do in return  
is offer myself to you.  
I claim you as my elder and chief.  
There is no one else.  
Ask me for anything you want.  
Just let me always hold you in my heart.  
I always want to feel you watching and protecting me.*

As Jeremiah prophesied, *Lord, you caused to rise up* this righteous Indigenous man, Joseph Chiwatenhwa. Learning from him, help us to be on our guard against greed. Greed has done so much damage to the land, to the Indigenous people and to us. Teach us to respect and care for the land. Teach us all to learn to share. Deliver us from greed. *Oh God, tear open the heavens and come down.*

**Outline of points for a homily:**

- Be on your guard against greed
- Learn from the Indigenous People to share.
- Learn to walk respectfully and alongside Indigenous people without forcing them to be assimilated.
- Learn from Joseph Chiwatenhwa to stand in awe of the Creator and to give thanks.