

#### 4 For Jan 24-25 It's Time to Ride!

Our neighbors to the south had an inauguration of a new president this past week. I am amazed at how many Canadians were interested in the proceedings, and followed the whole event. Well, here is a bit of American history.

Paul Revere was an American silversmith, engraver, early industrialist, and a patriot in the American Revolution. He is most famous for alerting the Colonial militia to the approach of British forces before the battles of Lexington and Concord, as dramatized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "Paul Revere's Ride." Revere's famous midnight ride took him from Charlestown, Massachusetts, to Lexington and then onto Concord. Overall, Revere traveled over 12 miles on horseback.

For Paul Revere, there was a definite *urgency* to get his message known. It meant life or death, freedom or oppression for the American patriots.

The Scripture readings for this Sunday have a great sense of *urgency* in them. Jonah announces to the residents of Nineveh: "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Only forty days to get the whole culture straightened out. The Ninevites quickly repented, turned from their sin, and God relented. Their city was not destroyed.

St. Paul tells us: "The appointed time has grown short ... the present form of this world is passing away." Then Jesus proclaims: "The Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." Jesus calls his first disciples—Simon and Andrew and James and John—and they *immediately* leave everything behind to follow Jesus.

Now, I don't know about you, but it takes me much too long to pack for even an overnight stay. There is nothing immediate about me going anywhere. The gospel tells us that the first disciples dropped everything and *immediately* followed the Lord. There was such an *urgency* to join Jesus and get the message of God's Kingdom out.

The Lord Jesus still calls people to be his disciples. He has called us! We are to be as willing as Paul Revere was to get on his horse, to risk everything, and to ride into the night with his message. We are called to announce to the world: Salvation is in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis reminds us that to evangelize is not just a task undertaken from time to time; or even most of the time. It is, to put it simply, the Church's defining identity. Evangelization is what the Church exists for. And, we are the Church.

Paul Revere had a message that meant life or death, freedom or oppression to the American patriots. We have a message that means life or death, freedom or oppression for the whole world—eternal life and the freedom from sin and death.

St. Paul reminds us: "The appointed time has grown short ... the present form of this world is passing away." It's time to get on our horse and ride with great *urgency* to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ.