

## First Sunday of Advent A/2013

The readings of this first Sunday of Advent talk about the return of the Lord. They remind us that, because every single new day brings us closer than ever to that fatidic day, we have to prepare ourselves by an irreproachable conduct. Therefore, they invite us to vigilance and awakening so that we are not surprised.

The first reading describes a vision Isaiah had about the future of Jerusalem. It shows that Jerusalem will become the center of the world, the source of divine Law and of blessing of peace for the nations. While the city will walk in the light of the Lord, all the nations of the earth will come to it in order to worship God.

What is behind this text is the idea that the choice of Jerusalem is an integral part of God's plan of salvation for the world. Therefore, Jerusalem's choice has a character of exemplarity. In that sense, the people of the earth have to simply look at the relationship between God and Israel in order to understand that he loves them and wants them to be his own. Another idea is the vision that Jerusalem is a foundation for the knowledge of God and a source of blessing and peace for all the nations of the earth.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus, the blessing of nations, speaks of his return. First of all, the Gospel starts with Jesus' warning to his disciples about his return that will happen by surprise, as it was in the days of Noah. Then, it gives the context that preceded the flood by showing how people were busy with their own business and personal concerns until the day they were surprised by the mounting of water. It shows also that, as it was at the time of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man.

After that, the Gospel suggests that the only way to avoid any surprise is to stay awake. Such a conduct is dictated by the fact that nobody knows the day the Lord will come back. In order to reinforce that warning, Jesus gives the example of a master of a house who would never sleep if he knew when the thief would break into his home.

The Gospel finishes with the insistence of Jesus that the disciples must be prepared because the Son of Man will come back at the hour they expect the least.

What do we learn from this Gospel? What I want to bring today is the danger of sleeping in routine and the importance of awakening to faith. In fact, when people ask of me, how my day was, I spontaneously refer to things I did by saying that it was great. If the same question is asked of me about tomorrow, I certainly refer to my schedule and talk about the things I plan to do. In the end, the answer to this question will mostly refer to the routine of things I am used to doing and which I probably project for tomorrow, even if it is true that a new business can bring some change in my schedule.

When we are used to operating this way, it is unlikely that we will include in our plan the possibility of "the end of time" or "the thought of the last activity of my life". In that sense, the routine becomes the modus operandi of our life. It dictates everything we do and the way we approach the future.

But, if our plan does not include the possibility of the end of time, it means that the routine is deadly, not that it kills, but rather in that sense that it lets us sleep in lethargy of things we are used to doing. Jesus says that at the time of Noah, people did exactly the same thing until the day they were surprised by the flood.

So, what is the point of Jesus by telling the story? His point is not that we live in fear because the end will come, nor is his point that we abandon our daily activities because they lead us in routine. His point is that we become aware that on earth we are sojourners and strangers. Therefore, whatever might be the success of our business or whatever we do, we should not forget the importance of our eternal life. As we work hard to succeed here on earth, we should do the same for our eternal salvation.

In that perspective, our business should not become a distraction that prevents us from thinking about our eternal life. That is why it is wise to stay awake and not sleepy in the routine of things we do. Moreover, we have to prepare ourselves each day to the encounter with God in so far that we do not know the day or the hour of the coming of the Lord.

That encounter is imminent because every single day which comes up makes it closer and closer. As St Paul says, time has become shorter than ever, because every day brings us nearer to the end. That is why we have to leave behind us the work of darkness and put on the armor of light. We have to conduct ourselves properly as people who know what they are waiting for and how they can get it.

That is the appeal of Advent: to be awake, prepared and watchful. The example Jesus gives about the person who was robbed in the middle of the night by surprise by a thief, without him being prepared, aims at awakening us to the eminence of the coming of the Lord.

Now, let me finish by telling you a story: There were three fresh devils that were about to be sent in mission on earth. Their Master asked them to prepare their plan and to present it to him. The first said, "Well; my plan will be simple, but efficient. I will tell them that God does not exist". The master replied, "Well, you cannot deceive people that way, because they all believe that God exists". Then, the second came. He pretended too that his plan was efficient and he will tell people that "hell does not exist". The master answered that it was a weak strategy because everybody on earth knows well that if they sin they will go to hell. In the end came the third. He was very determined and serious about succeeding in his assignment. He said: "Well; I will tell them that they do not need to hurry about their conversion". The master appreciated a lot his strategy, because, he said, "that way they will keep living in the illusion that they still have time."

If we do not want to be deceived, let us act now and let us not put off for tomorrow what we can do today for our salvation. Let us set a goal for this first Sunday of Advent that will bring us closer to God. God bless you all!

**Isaiah 2: 1-5; Romans 13: 11-14; Matthew 24: 37-44**



Homily Date: December 1, 2013  
© 2013 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD  
Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)  
Document Name: 20131201homily.pdf