

First Sunday of Advent A2022

Each year with the time of Advent, the Church starts a New Liturgical Year. This year, at the request of our Archdiocese, we combine the appeal for the preparation for the return of the Lord with the renewal of the Eucharist.

Advent season is all about the coming of our Lord. Of course our Lord has already come at his birth, by taking flesh and living among us. Of course, he comes daily to us in word and sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist. But, this time it is about his final coming when he will gather us all into the peace and joy of his kingdom.

Such an event of his return requires a serious spiritual preparation so that whenever he comes, wherever he comes and however he comes, he might find us ready to welcome him. The readings of this Sunday give us some tips to follow in this awaiting, which can allow us to detect the obstacles that can prevent us from welcoming him.

First of all, we have Isaiah who talks to us about God's dream. His dream is also that of our Lord Jesus. God dreams of all nations streaming together to the mountain of his house where all will live in peace and harmony. At that time, all the instruments of death and destruction will become farming tools to grow the food that gives us life. Not only will there be no more war, there will not even be training for war. That's what God wants and that is his dream.

This God's dream challenges us. We have to ask ourselves this simple question: how can I make God's dream my dream? Isaiah's vision of universal peace and harmony might seem unrealistic to us at this time when there is violence in the world and in our own country there is a continual shooting almost every week. And yet, what this Isaiah's message brings is the prospect of a better future over the misfortunes of the present.

That is what Advent is all about. It is a call to hope for a better future in spite of the present situation of the world. It is an invitation to believe in the victory of God over the forces of evil. But, how can we hope for better future without working for it? It is so easy, when we think of making peace, to talk about Russia and Ukraine by forgetting that even in our country and in the hearts of many among us, there is no peace.

Are not we divided as a nation and even as a Parish because of politics? There will not be peace in our world, in our nation, in our city; God's dream will not come true, until there is first peace in all our hearts. Thus, the questions become, as I prepare this Advent for the coming of the Lord, "Am I at peace?", "Is there any issue in my life that needs to be resolved for me to have peace?", "Is there any dependency in my life that makes it harder for me to give myself totally to God"?

These questions regarding God's dream are the same when it comes to the Eucharist. What are the obstacles that prevent me from receiving Jesus with a purified heart? Am I not presumptively justifying myself as holy person, and, therefore, worthy of receiving communion without a serious examination of conscience?

All that helps us understand the insistence we find in today's Gospel as Jesus reminds us of the importance of the return of Lord like a thief in the middle of the night. The comparison he made with the story of Noah aims at inviting us to stay awake and vigilant.

At the time of Noah, indeed, while he was preparing himself for the flood that was about to come, the rest of earth's population was unaware and immersed in its business as usual. The concern of every one was just eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day all were swept away by water.

Jesus is telling us Noah's story in order to remind us that whatever might be the state or the success of our business, it should not distract us from the truth that there is a God and that the issues of life and death are in his hands. Therefore, we have to be prepared so that any time he calls us, he might find us ready.

It would be sad that our Lord comes back and finds us unprepared. Human experience has taught us that there is no more bitter separation than that for which someone was not prepared for or was expected the least. Let us not dwell in our routines like the people of time of Noah.

The lack of watchfulness is a source of misery and a disaster for whoever does not prepare himself. No thief sends a message of warning when he is about to break in a house. What can a master of house do than to be vigilant by keeping his valuables safe? That is what we have to do in this time of the awaiting of the Lord.

By telling us this story of Noah Jesus is not pushing us to live in fear about what will happen to us tomorrow. What he wants is that we come to realize that we have to use the present time in order to prepare for his return.

St Paul gives us the right recommendations we better listen too. This is the time we have to awake from our sleep. Time has come for us to leave behind us the work of darkness and put on the armor of light. This is the time of conducting ourselves properly as in the day, and not in orgies or drunkenness, promiscuity and lust, rivalry and jealousy. Salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

Let us, then, pray that we do not put off for tomorrow what we can do today for our salvation. Let us take advantage of this time of Advent to change what we can in our relationship with God and our fellows. Let us work for our conversion in this time of Advent. God bless you!

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



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