

December 03 | Sunday of Advent

Today we begin the advent journey and prepare for Jesus coming at Christmas. So you would expect today's Gospel to refer to his birth. But Jesus is not talking about Christmas when he says, "Be watchful! Be alert!". He is urging his disciples to be vigilant as they wait for his return. The central theme of today's readings is Jesus' warning to us to be alert, watchful and prepared because Christ's Second Coming, coinciding with the end of the world, can occur at any time. People, in general, have a paranoid fear about the end of the world. The end of the world was expected and prophesied a multiple time all through the history.

But Jesus, in today's Gospel, gives us the assurance that we need not be afraid of the end of the world, Christ's Second Coming, and the Last Judgment, if we remain alert and prepared. The Church invites us on this first Sunday of Advent to prepare for Christ's Second Coming, 1) by properly celebrating during this Christmas season the fond memory of Christ's first coming 2000 years ago, 2) by experiencing Christ's daily advent or coming in every Eucharistic celebration, in the Holy Bible, and in the worshipping community, and 3) by preparing daily for Jesus' Second Coming which, for us, will happen at the unknown moment of our death or the equally unknown moment when the World will end.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah prays for God's active presence so that the Jewish community, returned from Babylonian exile, may remain faithful to their God. In the second reading, St. Paul prays for the reconversion of Christians in Corinth who have misused their gifts and charisms and remain ill-prepared for Christ's Second Coming.

In today's Gospel, using the short parable of the servants and gatekeeper of an absentee master who could return at any time, Jesus instructs his followers to be alert and watchful while doing their Christian duties with sincerity. The gatekeeper and the household servants are expected to be ever vigilant because their master is sure to return. Although the time of his return is uncertain, the reward or punishment is sure and certain.

The message of today's Scripture is that we should live in the living presence of Jesus every day waiting for his Second Coming. We can experience Christ's living presence in the Holy Eucharist, in the Holy Bible, in the worshipping community of our parish, in our family, in our own souls, and in everyone around us. The early

Christians experienced the living presence and coming of Jesus with absolute certainty. So their mutual greeting was not “Hi!” or “Good Morning!” but the Aramaic, “Maran Atha” which means “Come, Lord Jesus.” This greeting acknowledged Jesus present in each of them and about to return. May God bless you, and keep you ever prepared for Christ’s second coming.

Jesus comes to us every day. He is not passive; he does not wait for us to climb some mountain to find him. He is the initiator. He actively pursues us and seeks us out. That is why he became a man; that is why he promised to be with us always. And that is why he seeks to come into our lives this Advent.

Jesus comes to remind us to pause in our busy lives. He comes to inspire us to pray or read his word. He reminds us that he is with us, even when we feel alone. He stirs our conscience so that we want to turn away from sin and toward his mercy. He comes to us in a friend or stranger in need of kindness. Jesus is constantly seeking ways to come to us. And the more alert we are to his coming now, the more ready we will be when he comes again.

We live in the important interval between Jesus’ first coming and his second coming. Our job is not to sit piously and stare at the sky, recalling Jesus’ first coming and anticipating his second coming. Our job is to complete the work he gave us to do.

Advent is a time when we check on how well we are doing this. Advent is a time when we call to mind, in a special way, that when Jesus returns he will judge us on how well we worked to spread God’s Kingdom on earth.

So, let us be alert and watchful. The Lord who loves us is walking beside us. We only need to notice him.