

The First Week of Advent

November 29, 2020

“Be Watchful! Be Alert! You Do Not Know When the Time Will Come.”

What are we watching for? Why be alert? What new surprise is coming to us? Should we be scared or excited?

The surprise - Happy New Year 2021! A brand new liturgical year! Today, on this very first day of Advent - as we prepare for Christmas and the next calendar year - let's invite God to be born again in our lives!

In today's first reading, Isaiah tells us that the Israelites are tired of the long, lonely night of sin. Like many people, they've turned from the Lord's path and 'hardened their hearts' against him and they find themselves exhausted. "Why do you make us wander Lord from your ways? Too long have we been like those you do not rule, on whom your name is not invoked" (Isaiah 63:17, 19).

But they also remember that the Lord has rescued them many times in the past, and, so they now call upon God, as we did in today's responsorial psalm: "Turn back again, God of hosts; look down from heaven and see, and help us to change; restore us; light up your face and we shall be saved. (Psalm 80: 15-16a, 19-20)

Many people today are tired. Maybe some of us are among those who feel exhausted. This has been quite a year! Perhaps we too need to turn parts of our lives back to the Lord. This is the time to do a spiritual renewal so

that we may welcome Jesus, our Redeemer, this Christmas, and experience his joy.

If Isaiah challenges us to consider a spiritual overhaul during this Advent season, then Saint Paul, in today's second reading, reminds us that we are not starting from scratch. We live Advent already redeemed. We know how the story ends. Christ first came two thousand years ago to redeem us and he sustains us every moment until he comes again.

“In him, you were enriched in every way. You are not lacking in any spiritual gifts as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you firm to the end. God is faithful, and by him, you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Cor 1:4-7)

St. Paul may be speaking of the Second Coming, but his words remind us that every Advent season is an opportunity for us to slow down, open our hearts, and wait with joyful hope that Jesus will lavish new spiritual gifts upon us.

Advent can be an exciting time filled with surprises. The Lord first came in a way that nobody expected. Isaiah today was hoping the Lord would come and make mountains quake, but Our Lord was born a baby in a manger instead, hidden to most of the world. Most people in the Lord's time missed him completely!

Even though we know that Christmas Day is coming soon, the advent season is a special time for giving the Lord our undivided attention so he can guide us to a better life. How will we hear what he wants to say to us?

There are some wonderful Advent traditions that can help us to build expectations for the coming of Christ this Christmas.

- An Advent wreath has four candles lit week by week to show hope dawning for humanity upon the birth of Our Lord.

- The readings during this season are an excellent source of meditation. Why not take a little time each day to meditate on them? Our parish has provided "The Word Among Us" booklets in English and Spanish and you may pick one up in the back of the Church on your way home today.

In addition, I have put a list of Advent resources in this week's bulletin for you and your family, especially for children. I hope they are useful to you as we prepare for Christmas.

What are we watching for? We are watching for Christ. We have been told. Why be alert? We don't miss what spiritual gifts he wants to give us. We should be scared if we're not ready. But, if we are, then we should be excited. So how are we getting ready to welcome the Lord this Christmas?