**Preparation**

Today, the second Sunday in Advent, we are called by our readings to remember and be prepared for our Lord in three ways. The first is to remember His first coming when He came as a baby. The second is when we personally invite Him into the inner chamber of our hearts. The third would be in the future, when He will come in power and glory to judge the living and the dead.

In our first reading, Prophet Isaiah described the “Day” or the time of the coming of the Lord as a time when the work of the Devil would be smashed into pieces and destroyed. Isaiah foresaw a day when a Shoot would emerge from the linage of Jesse the father of king David. He gave a vivid description of the Shoot as empowered with the seven gifts of the Spirit of God. They are wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah then prophesied what the Shoot would do at His first coming and at the end of time. His prophecy was not gloomy, but he tells us that the Shoot would rule with justice for the poor and the marginalized. The bullies and evil doers would be exterminated not by weapons, but by the words and breath coming from the mouth of the Shoot.

Peace would be extended to the Gentiles on earth because of the Shoot. All of creation would live together in peace and harmony. For example, “the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,” instead of hunting the lamb for dinner. All would not only hear about God, but would have knowledge of Him; and all would seek Him out.

Advent besides preparing us for Christmas, also looks towards the final day when our Lord would come back again to purify the whole world. It is easy for us to see the end of the world as a time of violence and destruction.

However, we got to look at the end of the world, as a time when God would not destroy what is good, but would destroy what is evil. He would return the world to the condition He created it to be at the beginning of time. God would purify all people and our world, and she would be a new beauty far beyond our imagination.

In our second reading, St. Paul tells us to pay attention to what was written before his time or what was written in the Hebrew Bible. He tells us, in it, we will find hope in the coming of the Messiah. It is similar to what Jesus said **“Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old”** (Matt 13:52). The **“new,”** is the New Testament and the **“old”** is the Hebrew Bible.

Paul said, the instructions in the Hebrew Bible are for our encouragement. That they would help us to endure whatever suffering and trial might come our way. The instructions would help both the Jews and Gentiles to live in harmony glorifying God with one voice and one faith in His glorious dwelling. So we must use both the New and the Old as instruction to prepare for the second coming of Christ.

In our Gospel, we encounter John the Baptist who told us to repent so we can be prepared for the Kingdom of heaven. He made it clear that repentance is crucial to our preparation to enter the Kingdom of God. He made it clear to the Pharisees and Sadducee they should produce good fruits. He told them, they must reform their ways or else, they would end up in the everlasting unquenchable fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.

He let them know that he was not the Messiah but he came to prepare the way for the Messiah who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. He reminded them that God can do anything. That just as He created our first parents form the dust of the earth, so could God create fruitful children for Abraham from stones.

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the Messiah so we can listen to the Messiah. John came to open our eyes, mind and heart so that when the Messiah comes, we would recognize Him. The Messiah came as a vulnerable baby needing to be fed and protected. Similarly, He left Himself with us, in a vulnerable state as food, needing to be protected in the Eucharist.

We are asked to protect Him by receiving Him in a state of grace. Every time we receive Him unworthily, we cause Him pain in His Humanness. As Joseph protected Him and His mother, by taking them to Egypt, so also we must protect Him from those we know would receive Him unworthily. However, He will come again in glory and power to judge the living and the dead and He will not need our protection, but we will seriously need His mercy.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us promise Him we will always be prepared to receive Him worthily.