

## First Sunday of Advent – Year B – 12/3/17

My dear people of God, we have just lit the first purple candle in our Advent Wreath. We have entered into the Season of Advent, and I pray that all of us would have a deeper understanding of what Advent is. We live between the First Coming of Jesus when He was born at Bethlehem and His Second Coming at the end of time when He will come as Judge of all.

Advent is concerned with the two comings of Jesus; our preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth and our preparation for His second coming. Both spiritual preparations are beneficial to us because we would receive the greatest gift. And that gift is not just any gift: it is JESUS, the giver of all gifts. He is the GIFT of the Father to us. Let us make this the best Christmas we have ever had by opening our heart and home to Jesus. As we prepare our hearts we can remember that the Lord has richly blessed us with so many spiritual blessings. Part of our preparation is for us to take seriously what Isaiah said in the first reading: we must allow God the potter to mold us. And we know that it is not difficult to surrender ourselves to God because we have been equipped with the grace needed to have fellowship with His SON. I find the words of Saint Paul in his letter to the Corinthians in our second reading very helpful in order to prepare ourselves:

*I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in Him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, and by Him you were called to fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

To this end, I would rely on the Roman Missal or Sacramentary to help us understand the theme of the season and to grasp more fully today's readings. Let me enhance our reflection on today's reading by offering to you a portion of the Creed which we proclaim every Sunday:

*He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead*

*and his kingdom will have no end.*

I also wish to offer you these acclamations. Either one speaks about the second coming of the Lord. One goes this way:

*We proclaim your Death, O Lord,  
and profess your Resurrection  
until you come again.*

The other one goes this way:

*When we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
we proclaim your death, O Lord,  
until you come in glory.*

In Eucharistic Prayer III, just after the consecration, the Body and Blood of Jesus are offered to the Father as we await the Second Coming of Jesus. The Roman Missal declares:

*Therefore, O Lord,  
as we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son,  
his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven,  
and as we look forward to his second coming,  
we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.*

In Eucharistic Prayer IV, the Roman Missal says it this way:

*Therefore, O Lord,  
as we now celebrate the memorial of our redemption,  
we remember Christ's Death  
and his descent to the realm of the dead,  
we proclaim his Resurrection  
and his Ascension to your right hand,  
and, as we await his coming in glory,  
we offer you his Body and Blood,  
the sacrifice acceptable to you  
which brings salvation to the whole world.*

Tipping and moving the balance of our life's scales away from sin and guilt towards Jesus is the best way to be watchful and alert and is the best way to prepare our hearts and homes for Jesus at Christmas. All the Christmas shopping is a distraction from what Christmas is really all about, Jesus. There is really only one gift at Christmas, Jesus.

That is why receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important part of watching and preparing our hearts during Advent. Let us not postpone receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Being ready for God is too important to postpone, God comes first and deserves our best. Remember the words of Jesus in the Gospel: *“Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all”* (Mark 13:33-37)

God is present with us throughout all of history but the Second Coming of Jesus and the General Judgment will show all of history leading to God's final purpose and goal. At the General Judgment we will see how God's plan for all of history worked itself out.

At the Second Coming of Jesus and the General Judgment we will see all of history leading towards God's goal and purpose. The final conquest of evil will take place when Jesus comes again the second time as Judge which is why we look forward to it.

What does the Lord want us to bring home after this Mass? The Lord wants us to be certain that He wants us to be saved, but that He wants us to cling to His Name, as Isaiah said in the first reading. The Responsorial Psalm exquisitely puts it this way: “Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.”

May we all turn to Him so that we will be saved. Amen.