

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN THE
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY**

**First Sunday of Advent
December 1, 2024**

SCRIPTURES:

Jeremiah 33:14-16	The Lord will send a new David to bring peace and justice.
1 Thessalonians 3:12 -4:2	God prepares our hearts so we may prepare our lives.
Luke 21:25-28, 34-36	The “great day” is coming; we need to be watchful.
Psalms 25:4-5, 8-9, 10,14	We wait for the day of the Lord.

ADVENT:

Advent means “The Lord comes to the People of the Promise.” The Church stands in the middle of God’s fulfillment of the promises made long ago. The Lord came to bring light to a people in darkness with the birth of the Son of God. The Lord comes to us today in word and in sacrament, in loving service through the ministry of believers. The Lord will come again at the completion of history to introduce the world into the reign of God forever. Past, present and future are the arena of God’s work. Jesus Christ was, is, and will be forever!

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Jeremiah:

The prophet lives in desperate times. The Kingdom of Judah is caught between conflicting world powers much greater than itself. If it allies itself with one, the other will ravage it. The kings walk a tightrope of shifting political alliances. They cannot be safe by trusting in these human strategies. Jeremiah calls the nation to the only alliance that will assure it real safety: faithfulness to the Covenant. Not only is he ignored, he is actually accused of sedition and treachery. He is condemned to prison and torture. Eventually, the last descendent of King David is deposed, blinded, and dies in exile. Jeremiah proclaims that God will send a new David (Messianic king) to lead a newly faithful people in peace and justice. In the darkest of times, God will come to rescue the people and lead them back to glory. “Justice” and “peace” in Scripture derive primarily from a nation’s right relationship with God. These are dynamic terms with implications for law, morality, social order, and fulfilled aspirations. Only God can give these results to a people committed wholeheartedly to the terms of the Covenant. Christians have seen the promises come true in Jesus the Christ, Son of David, who inaugurates God’s everlasting kingdom on earth.

1 Thessalonians:

Here, we have a section of the very first book in the Christian Scriptures to be written for the guidance of the community. Paul wrote to the Church at Thessalonica around 55 AD to offer

consolation and the correction of false teachings. Some believers are dying without having yet seen the Second Coming of Christ. Archconservative Jewish Christians are saying those who die before Christ returns will be denied participation in the rewards of the kingdom. Paul responds with vigor that those who are in Christ will not lack for eternal life in resurrection. They only need to be faithful while still in the world.

Luke:

The world of commerce is preparing for fulfillment of its monetary projections. The Christian world prepares for the celebration of the birth of Christ. The Liturgy of the Church calls the community to prepare for the Second Coming.

There are different agendas in different communities. We have vastly different goals in the many kinds of communities to which we belong. So, we take different means to achieve those goals. In our businesses, we promote and we market. In the Christian communities, we enter into a mode of expectation. We look back and we look forward.

In Luke, just as in Mark and Matthew, Jesus uses apocalyptic imagery to proclaim the fulfillment of God's intentions for the world. The "Day of the Lord" had originally been seen as a time of triumph and victory for Jews over their enemies. The prophets, particularly Amos (5:18-20), saw the day as one of judgment and setting things right in the world. Jesus picks up on that prophetic tradition to announce a day of reckoning. He calls his followers to watchfulness and readiness.

Since Luke wrote this Gospel at a later time than Paul wrote his letters, we sense that a shift has taken place in the community's perception of when the "end" will come. It is already around 90 or 95 in the Common Era. It has been almost 70 years since the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord. When and what kind of "end" do we suppose is going to occur?

The Church is going to be around for a while more, it seems! What are we to do in the meantime? The sort of "watchfulness" that seemed appropriate to Paul does not seem to fit anymore. How can we stay in a constant state of preparedness? We know that our military forces, for example, can only sustain a state of alert for so long. In the long run and for the long haul, our state of preparedness will be different from the "high alert" status of those who expect the end of the world to come tomorrow.

What the Church needs today, just as in the days when Luke wrote, is a message of hope and of encouragement. Perseverance, making the world fit for the eventual Return, seems to be the task and the mission now.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you think the Church community still awaits the coming of Christ in any real way? What evidence do you see for your answer?

2. The Church is constantly at prayer in the worldwide celebration of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, the other gatherings of the faithful for prayer. How is this a response to Christ's invitation to prayer and watchfulness?

3. What can Christians do to restore the spirit of Advent as one of preparation and expectation of the coming of Christ without merely being negative toward the commercialism of the season?

PRAYER

The prayer of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary is most appropriate during the season of Advent. The liturgical season of Advent brings us into the inner heart of the Virgin as she lives in expectation of God's promises. We can spend some of this time with her in prayer to the God of Israel who is always faithful to promises.

**Hail Mary! Full of Grace. The Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women.
And blessed is the Fruit of your Womb, Jesus.**

**Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.**

Mysteries of Light:

- 1. Baptism of the Lord**
- 2. Wedding Feast of Cana**
- 3. Proclamation of the Kingdom**
- 4. Transfiguration of Jesus**
- 5. Last Supper of the Lord**

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

Some of us are puzzled by the fact that the Church insists on the theme of the "End of the World" or the "Second Coming of Christ" when we are actually preparing for the Feast of Christmas. What are we celebrating anyway? The First or the Second Coming?

We might find some answer in looking at the Second Coming in a more positive and friendly light. Christ will come again to fulfill all of God's marvelous promises. The Day of the Lord is a day of blessing and of glory. It is a time when God's faithful people will have overcome even death itself and all its accompanying sufferings and pain. We need to reposition ourselves in a more positive stance with respect to the Day of the Lord. Jesus Christ will come to bless us and to reward us for our faithfulness. We can look to that day with eagerness rather than with fear.

Standing in the middle of history, where God is at work in the unfolding of the eternal plan of salvation, we live in a present time, heirs of our past blessings (including the great blessing of the Incarnation and the birth of the Son of God among us for our salvation), but looking forward always with eagerness to that greatest of all blessings, the fulfillment of the eternal plan of God.

Past, present, and future are the object of our liturgical celebrations. In liturgy, God speaks to us and we speak to God, using symbolic language and gestures. We make the past

present again as we remember the saving deeds of Christ in the Easter triduum. We live out the Easter realities until their crowning in Pentecost. We begin the whole cycle again each year as we move into Advent. The seasons are, as it were, “sacraments” of God’s love for us. The invisible realities of God’s mercy and love are made visible in the gestures and proclamations of the calendar. We allow the seasons to speak to us, and God speaks through the unfolding of the year.

“...(By) sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.” *Catechism* #524.

See: *Catechism* # 1163-78

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