

Homily for Advent – December 1, 2024

As we begin the season of Advent today, the Church invites us into a time of waiting, a time of preparation for the coming of Christ. This season is not just about remembering Christ's birth in Bethlehem, but also about making room for Jesus to be reborn in our hearts, our lives, and our world. Advent is a time for spiritual renewal, repentance, and reflection on the many ways that Christ comes into our lives: through His Church, the Sacraments, the Word of God, the worshipping community, and ultimately, in His Second Coming at the end of time.

In today's readings, we encounter the theme of waiting, a theme that runs through the entire season of Advent. In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah expresses the hope of the people of Israel for a Messiah, a descendant of King David who will bring peace, justice, and security to God's people. Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and we, as Christians, are called to place our trust in God's promises, knowing that the Lord, our Justice, will fulfill them. Despite the challenges we face in this world, we need not be afraid, because the Lord is with us, guiding us toward His kingdom.

In today's Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 25), we are called to wait patiently for the Lord, to seek His guidance, and to place our hope in His truth. The psalmist prays, "Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for You are God, my Savior." These words remind us that waiting for the Lord is not a passive act. It involves actively seeking His presence, His guidance, and His will for our lives.

In the second reading, St. Paul encourages the Thessalonians to live lives of holiness and mutual love as they await the coming of the Lord Jesus. He urges them not to become complacent or distracted, but to remain vigilant and faithful in their daily lives. St. Paul's words remind us that Advent is not only about preparing for the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time, but also about preparing our hearts for Christ's presence in our lives today.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks about the signs that will precede His Second Coming. He encourages us to be vigilant and expectant, even in the face of challenges and difficulties. He tells us, "When these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads, because your redemption is at hand." Jesus wants us to approach the future with confidence, knowing that He will come again to bring about the fullness of God's kingdom. Our task is to be ready, to be prepared, and to remain hopeful.

So, what does this mean for us as we begin Advent? First, we are called to prepare ourselves for Christ's Second Coming by allowing Him to be reborn in our lives each day. Advent is a time to take stock of where we are spiritually and to make the necessary changes in our hearts and lives. We are invited to engage in acts of repentance, prayer, penance, and sharing with others. It's a time to reflect on the ways we have fallen short and to resolve to do better. The German mystic Angelus Silesius once said, "Christ could be born a thousand times in Bethlehem, but all in vain until He is born in me." As we wait for the coming of Christ, we must ask ourselves: is He being born in me today? Is my heart open to receiving Him?

Secondly, the season of Advent is a time of both warning and hope. The Church reminds us that we will one day stand before Christ the Judge, and that we will give an account of our lives. This

moment may come at the end of our lives, in our private judgment, or it may come at the Second Coming of Christ, the Last Judgment. The readings today invite us to assess our lives during this season and to make any necessary changes, so that when Christ comes—whether in our daily lives or at the end of time—we will be prepared to meet Him. In the midst of life's struggles, we are called to raise our heads in hope, for our redemption is near.

As we enter into this Advent season, let us take time each day to reflect on how Christ is coming into our lives. Let us be vigilant, prayerful, and ready to receive Him, both in the small ways He comes to us each day and in the great moment of His glorious return. May this season of waiting and preparation lead us closer to Christ, who is our hope and our salvation.