

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Advent Year “B”  
November 27-28, 2021

*As We Wait in Joyful Hope*

Readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28,34-36

Of the four Advent Sundays, it is this one—the first— that emphasizes Christ’s *second* coming, a theme sustained throughout the weekdays of the first half of Advent. If it does not seem very Christmas-like, it is because it is not! And that is by design! Liturgical norms state that:

Advent has a twofold character, for it is a time of preparation for the Solemnities of Christmas, in which the First Coming of the Son of God to humanity is remembered, and likewise a time when, by remembrance of this, minds and hearts are led to look forward to Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, Advent is a period of devout and expectant delight.<sup>1</sup>

We tend to forget about Advent’s twofold character and only think of one. This brief season is about so much more than anticipating Christmas. It is about preparing the way for the Lord. Besides the two comings of Christ referenced in the liturgy, the abbot St. Bernard of Clairvaux added a third in his preaching.

He spoke of this intermediate coming as “a kind of path by which we travel from the first to the final. In the first Christ was our redemption. In the final he shall appear as our life. In this one, that we may sleep between the middle allotments, he is our rest and consolation.”<sup>2</sup> It is a “hidden” coming, found in those who keep God’s Word. We experience His presence; God enters our hearts through His word. It takes place here and now— it is our deepest desire to serve Him.

Mary treasured the Word made flesh in her heart. Each soul, as well as the entire Church are called in their earthly pilgrimage to wait for Christ, to greet him with faith and love renewed. We do so with joyful hope.

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<sup>1</sup> General Norms of the Liturgical year, no. 39

<sup>2</sup> *Sermo 5, In Adventu Domini, 1-3*: (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Fathers Series, #51), 2007 page 33

As a liturgical season, Advent varies from 22 to 28 days depending upon the day of week on which Christmas falls. This year, from this first Mass of Advent until the first Mass on Christmas Eve, we have been gifted with 26 days, 22 hours, and 45 minutes. The question is- how will we use it?

We have been given precious time to watch and wait, to hope, to remain vigilant. Vigilance in the spiritual life is made more challenging precisely because our society anticipates the full joy of Christmas without the necessary spiritual preparation. Not only that, but do we even really try to prepare ourselves by clearing a place for the Savior to dwell in our souls?

By reminding ourselves of the final coming of Christ, we keep the entire vision before our eyes. The Church gives a collective voice to our waiting through this important, albeit brief season of Advent. Bernard said:

Treasure God's Word in your heart. Earthly bread in the cupboard can be snatched by a thief, it can be nibbled at by a mouse, it can grow stale with age. Once you have eaten it, do you worry about any of these things? In this way, keep God's word...let it enter into the bowels of your soul. Let it pass into your feelings and into your routines.<sup>3</sup>

Read the prophets this Advent. Read Isaiah. The Church guides along the right path all who in good will make this daily journey in hope. Using Advent Wreaths, Advent Calendars readings and prayers at home, your families too can mark this sacred time in a most fruitful manner. I urge you to use these customs in your own family prayer at home. They exist to mark Sacred Time in a special way.

Advent is a time given to us by the Lord of Time, reawakening in our hearts the longing for His reign of Peace and Justice. By combining our hope filled expectation with a period of penitential preparation, we will not be caught off guard. Rather, as we pray at Mass each Sunday, we will wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., no. 2, page 34