

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY
First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2020

Today is the First Sunday of Advent. The word advent, from the Latin word, "Adventum", meaning, "Coming". The word in Aramaic is "Maranatha", which becomes the prayer, Come Lord. It is a great prayer to pray during this Advent season, Come Lord Jesus, Come. Advent prepares us for the coming of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. However, since we now have been celebrating Jesus' birth for some 2000 years, we find new ways to celebrate this truth of the mystery of the Incarnation, in our hearts. This Advent is not only the coming of Jesus on Christmas Day but also an anticipation and wonder of his coming at the last day, Parousia, or His second coming by which our Savior and Redeemer will then become our Judge. If we know Him as the Savior and Redeemer, then knowing Him as Judge will go well with us. There are many parables that remind us of this. Last week, the end of the liturgical year, we heard the parable of the Shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. Do you remember what the sheep did to gain the Father's blessing?

There is excitement and anticipation that comes as we await the coming of Jesus. We don't know when, so the questions during the Advent season are what do we do and how can we prepare to celebrate this Christmas as a way to better prepare us for the second coming of Jesus. So we wait. As we often do, we can become anxious, uneasy, impatient, lazy, forgetful and unsure of when this will happen. But the Advent is still there, we must be prepared.

Waiting, we know, is part of life; it is part of our spiritual life. There is hope in waiting. Waiting is way of life. And there are so many "waitings" in life. There is waiting at a table for food to be served. There is waiting for the night to fall. There is waiting for the sun to rise. There is waiting for graduation, payday, exams, and I guess on all of our minds is the waiting for a vaccine against this virus. There is even a waiting for those in quarantine, waiting for the days to end. There is the waiting for the families of those in quarantine. There is the waiting for the pandemic to end. There are a lot of times where all we can do is wait.

The Prophet Isaiah tells us this in the First Reading. Remember this was a time of exile for the Israelites; the homeland was destroyed. The Israelites were a people of waiting. They were asking serious questions to God like are you still with us? When will you hear our prayers? Even though we are sinners, and sinned in your sight, we know our deeds are like polluted rags, made them more humble before God, will you still hear our prayers? And then we hear this from Isaiah, "No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen any God, but you, doing such deeds for those who **wait** for him. Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways!" Isaiah's words to the people of God are to do what you have always been called to do, doing what is right before God. In this, doing what is right is the right attitude as we become accustomed to waiting. Israelites waiting for the Lord to heal and restore. For us today: waiting for a vaccine,

waiting for some normalcy in life, waiting for what? What are we waiting for this Advent?

This is the theme of Advent and we can deepen our awareness of God's love by living a more faith filled life for God throughout Advent. "Watch." We want God to find us always doing what is right, always mindful of Him in our ways. We can only do that if we take time to be with Him each day. This would be the proper attitude of waiting.

The Prophet Isaiah reminds us that there is no god like our God. It is important that we realize that only faithfulness to the One True God will bring us peace, satisfaction, meaning and purpose in this life. No other god but our God can bring us this. Forget all the others little gods in your life, worship the one true God.

What we have to have is Faith. Faith never promises an easy life, or to make us wealthy or powerful—it actually promises the opposite. What faith does promise is that our life will be filled with joy in knowing the Lord and living in His divine will. For all those who learn to wait on Him, there will be no fear about the Second Coming.

The Second Reading is from the First Letter to the Corinthians. In this letter Paul reminds his brothers and sisters, that: "God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." God is faithful. We are not faithful, but God remains faithful. God calls us to fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ. We are called to share the life of Jesus Christ, all because of the faithfulness of God.

The Gospel from Mark reminds us once again: keep alert and keep watching for the Lord! It is so easy today to accept the message and values of the world. At times those values seem to me to be even more compassionate and loving than Gospel values. But I know that it is not right, we have to recognize that doing right is not the same as feeling good about ourselves or about others. One of the great gods of our time is the demand that we always feel good and that we seek our own way of life that makes us happy. We determine what love is, what truth is, against and above the values of the Gospel and the Scriptures. If we don't learn to wait on the Lord, we can get lost in thinking of way of the world. As St. Augustine reminds us, "our hearts are restless until they rest in you O Lord."

"Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come." In other words, be prepared always and to stay awake while **waiting** for His coming at an unknown time. So, while **waiting**, let us better prepare ourselves for His coming.

How? Waiting is about prayer and our prayer life. Beginning now in Advent, let us just focus on our prayer life. We can find more time, or set a regular time for prayer. Whether it is personal prayer or family prayer. Finding time to pray is a great way to find ourselves waiting on the Lord.

May this Advent deepen our faith and help us understand and live what the Scriptures reveal to us. May we find ourselves drawn deeper into the heart of the Church founded by Jesus. It is not easy to stand against the false gods of our time, but this Advent is about receiving this invitation to walk with Jesus once again. This Advent is about waiting with the Lord Jesus, and learning to wait on Him and to seek His will and His ways.

Stay Awake, Watch and Wait on the Lord. Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus, Come.