

Season of Advent 1st Sunday (Year B) Nov 29

Introduction: The central theme of today's readings is Jesus' warning to us to be alert, watchful and prepared because Christ's *Second Coming*, coinciding with the end of the world, can occur at any time. People, in general, used to have a paranoid fear about the end of the world. They expected it in A.D. 204, 999 and 2000. The title of a best-seller published in 1988 was *101 Reasons Why Christ Returns in 1988*. An extremely popular film released in 1999 about Christ's *Second Coming* was *Omega Code*, and another film released in 2005 was *Left Behind*. Excessive fear of the tribulations accompanying the end of the world led the followers of a religious cult led by Jim Jones (in 1978), and followers of another cult called *Heaven's Gate* (in 1997), to commit mass suicide. But Jesus, in today's Gospel, gives us the assurance that we need not be afraid of the end of the world, Christ's Second Coming and the Last Judgment if we remain alert and prepared. The Church invites us on this first Sunday of Advent to prepare for Christ's Second Coming, first by properly celebrating during this Christmas season the fond memory of Christ's first coming 2000 years ago, second, by experiencing Christ's daily advent or coming in the Eucharistic celebrations, in the Holy Bible and in the worshipping community, and third, by preparing for Jesus' Second Coming which, for us, will happen at the moment of our deaths or at the end of the World.

Scripture lessons: In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah prays for God's active presence so that the Jewish community, returned from Babylonian exile, may remain faithful to their God. In the second reading, St. Paul prays for the reconversion of Christians in Corinth who have misused their gifts and charisms and remain ill-prepared for Christ's Second Coming. In today's Gospel, using the short parable of the servants and gatekeeper of an absentee master who could

return at any time, Jesus instructs his followers to be alert and watchful while doing their Christian duties with sincerity. The gatekeeper and the household servants are expected to be ever vigilant because their master is sure to return. Although the time of his return is uncertain, but the reward or punishment is sure and certain.

Life message: The message of today's Scripture is that we should live in the living presence of Jesus every day waiting for his Second Coming. We can experience Christ's living presence in the Holy Eucharist, in the Holy Bible, in our worshiping community in our parish, in our family, in our own souls and in everyone around us. The early Christians experienced it, and that is why the mutual greeting among Christians was not "Hi!" or "Good Morning!" but the Aramaic, "*Maran Atha*" which means "Come, Lord Jesus." This greeting acknowledged Jesus present in each of them and about to return. May God bless you and keep you ever prepared for Christ's *second coming*.