

Homily - 1st Sunday of Advent YA

Some of the the more memorable experiences at the seminary were shockingly in the confessional. Going to my spiritual director for confession, having that trust relationship already in place, he always used to tell me after I had finished confession my sins, "We begin again." These words are very encouraging as we make our pilgrimage through the fatigue, the frustration, the spiritual setbacks, the worry, the anxiety...the distractions. The words remind us that our God is a God of second chances...fresh starts...new beginnings. Having begun the season of Advent, a new Church year, spiritually we begin again with good resolutions so that we are ready to meet Christ in his final coming in glory and in his coming among us today while remembering the events that surrounded the Lord's coming long ago.

However, the holy season of Advent presents many practical problems as society has adopted and adapted the preparation for the Nativity of Our Lord into its own purposes. Just think, we had "Black Friday" in the US and around the world. There was mayhem in the malls, and some of it caught on camera...these videos are both funny and sad at the same time. Christmas trees at Costco went up in September. As soon as Halloween is finished out comes the lights and other decorations. It is easy for us to be caught up in all these activities during Advent and thus lose focus as to the true meaning of Christmas. Rather than Advent being a time of new beginnings, it is a time to empty our wallets and spin the same wheels being comfortable where we are at rather than progressing in the spiritual life....moving ourselves from maintenance to mission.

Holy Mother Church, through her prayer in the liturgy, helps us make fruitful use of these weeks leading up to the Nativity of Our Lord. We begin again where we left off last week, with our focus on Christ's second coming at the end of time. Our Lord when he went to the right hand of the Father to "judge the living and the dead", promised that he would come again in all his glory. Our response to this promise is faith, which on the one hand requires the assent of our minds to all that he has revealed and on the other hand is a personal adherence to God in which we entrust our lives to him (CCC 150). Looking forward, with this faith, not knowing when the Lord will come again calls us to a readiness...a preparedness. In the early Church, Christians believed that Christ's second coming was immanent, was close at hand. St. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans how we should be living with Christ coming again in glory...by laying aside our sinful deeds, those things we do in the dark and to detach ourselves from this world, always looking to the world to come.

In a similar way, the prophet Isaiah gives us the image of the the mountain of God. You know, if we are going to climb this mountain, we need to be spiritually fit. We need to be disciplined in our spiritual life...we need to shed our spiritual flabbiness. Advent, as a new beginning, is a good time to do this by making good resolutions in our prayer life and in our sacramental practice by getting to confession. Although not Lent, our mentality should be still on penance...and maybe even asking ourselves, what am I going to give up this Advent?

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On December 17th, the pre-Christmas octave, we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord remembering that Our Heavenly Father fulfilled his promise to send us a saviour and as an assurance that His promise to come again will be fulfilled. We shift our emphasis during these 8 days, by listening to the voices of the prophets who announced the coming of the Redeemer, our hearts are filled with joyful hope of all the just people of the Old Testament, with faith of St Joseph, John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zachariah, and with the love of our Blessed Mother so that the holy season of Advent is our new beginning.

In the holy season of Advent, while we wait in prayer for Christ's coming in glory, remembering the great immense act of love which God shows us in the Incarnation, we celebrate the fact that Our Lord is coming among us in the Eucharist. Truly present to us, body blood, soul and divinity... May we be prepared in our hearts and minds to receive Our Saviour and King...the food that nourishes the soul...and strengthens us in our new beginnings.