

I ADVENT (NOV 28) IS 2:1-5; ROMANS 13: 11-14; MATT 24:37-44

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the 'Sunday of Hope' in God and His Son Jesus Christ through whom God has promised to save and redeem His people. Today we begin our yearly re-enactment of the drama of our salvation, starting with the mystery of the Incarnation (Christmas) and culminating in the celebration of Christ's ultimate victory (Christ the King). It is our yearly pilgrimage through the scenes and events of our history of salvation. Advent is a time for looking both backward and forward. We look backward as we prepare to celebrate the historical birth of Jesus. At the same time, we look forward to his *Second Coming* as we prepare ourselves to welcome him into all areas of our lives during the Advent season. In the Eucharistic Acclamations we profess our faith in Jesus' *Second Coming*: "*Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again*"; and in the Creed we proclaim our belief that "*He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.*" One Bible scholar has estimated that there are 1,845 references to Christ's second coming in the Old Testament and 318 references in the New Testament. We see the traditional signs of Advent in our church: violet vestments and hangings, dried flowers on the altar, and the Advent wreath. We light a candle on this wreath each Sunday until all four are lit. These signs remind us that we are waiting for the rebirth of Jesus in our hearts and lives in love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

The consistent warning in today's gospel text is that we should be prepared for the coming of the master. Our text indicates that the end will seem to be a peaceful and normal time, with people eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and working in their homes or businesses. In this routine normal life, it might be easy to forget the "*coming of the Son of Man.*" In a reference to the story of Noah, Jesus says that the sin of the people was placing too much emphasis on the normal cares and necessities of life. They were too concerned with eating and drinking – just as we are during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays. Jesus reminds us that there is something more important than feasts or weddings: the Son of Man could come to us either at our death or at the end of the world at any time. Since God may show up without an appointment, we must be prepared at all times.

Every morning when we get up, let us pray, "Lord, show me someone today with whom I may share your love, mercy and forgiveness." Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, "Whatever you do in your family, for your children, for your husband, for your wife, you do for Jesus." Every night when we go to bed, let us ask ourselves, "Where have I found Christ today?" The answer will be God's Advent gift to us that day. By being alert and watchful, we'll be getting an extra gift: Christ himself. There is a saying about being saved which goes back to St. Thomas Aquinas: "Without God, I can't. Without me, he won't."

JOKE OF THE WEEK: One Sunday after church, a mother was talking to her young daughter. She told her daughter that, according to the Bible, Jesus will return to earth some day. "When is he coming back?" the daughter asked. "I don't know," replied the mother. "Can't you look it up on the Internet?" the little girl asked.