

Advent I (Nov. 29th): Jer. 33:14-16 1Thess. 3:12-4:2 Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

There is a beautiful anecdote given by Msgr. Arthur Tonne clarifying the message of today's gospel. Several years ago a bus driver in Oklahoma reached an unusual record. In 23 years he had driven a bus over 900,000 miles without a single accident. When asked how he had done it, he gave this simple answer: "Watch the road." In today's gospel Jesus gives the same advice in several ways: "*Be vigilant at all times,*" "*Stand erect,*" "*Raise your heads,*" "*Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy.*" This is not only a good spiritual advice for the Advent season but also a safe rule for daily life. A good football player or basketball player should always concentrate his attention on the ball and the players. A good student must be alert, awake and attentive, watching the teacher and listening to his or her words. A good Catholic in the Church must be physically and mentally alert, watching the altar and actively participating in the prayers and songs. Like the Roman god Janus with two faces, one looking at the past year and the other looking into future, Christians during the Advent season are to look at the past event of the first coming of Jesus into the world and expectantly look forward to his second coming in glory.

Let us get into the Gospel. Don't you find strange that today's Gospel reading would focus on the end times and not Christmas? But as confusing as this may seem at first, yet there are a lot of similarities between Christmas and the Second Coming.

First, there is the obvious similarity that both events are marked by the coming of Jesus. It's true that he came as a baby at Christmas, and at the Second Coming, he will come in his glory. But in both instances, it's still Jesus, the Son of God.

Second, in both instances Jesus comes to bring the kingdom of God. At Christmas, he came to inaugurate that kingdom through his preaching, his miracles, his death and his resurrection. At the Second Coming he will bring to fulfillment what he began at Christmas. All sin and suffering will be wiped away, and we will enter into eternal life with all the angels and saints.

Finally, both Christmas and the Second Coming are times of excitement and mixed with awe. At Christmas we hear angels singing, see a magnificent star. At the Second Coming, the heavens will open to reveal Jesus, shining like the sun, and all who are opposed to him will face his judgment. Both are times of great hope that call us to examine our own lives.

So as Advent begins, ask oneself who Jesus is for you? Is he just a little baby in a manger? Or is he also the suffering Servant who gave up his life to set you free from sin and death? Is he the Lord of all creation, who is coming back to bring his faithful to heaven? May God open our eyes this season of Advent that we can see Jesus in a new way. Come, Lord Jesus, and make me ready to greet you when you come again!"