

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
First Sunday Advent (C)
December 1, 2024

“Come Lord Jesus”

My brothers and sisters, today we celebrate the beginning of the Advent Season. The liturgical year has come full circle and begins anew. The past couple of Sundays the scripture passages have focused on our Lord's second coming, a coming that will occur sometime in the future. In the readings we were called to watch for certain supernatural occurrences in the heavens, among the moon and stars. In today's gospel, Jesus reminds His disciples to do the same thing, to observe the sun and moon and stars (Lk 21:25-36). Why the similarities in the readings given the change of seasons? It is because the two liturgical seasons mesh and in a certain way come together for a brief period of time while a transition is taking place between the two seasons of ordinary time and Advent. At the end of ordinary time, the focus was on Our Lord's future second coming. Now the focus returns to His birth in the world, His first coming. This transition takes place much the same way as the faint light of dawn precedes the emergence of the full light of day. It is only perceptible to the one paying attention to it.

The Advent wreath before us is a similar reminder. A new candle is lit for each Sunday of Advent, until all four candles are lit signaling the imminent arrival of Christmas, the birth of the Messiah who is the light of the world and both the Son of the Father and the sun that enlightens our world.

The color violet is used during the season of Advent to remind us that Advent is a penitential season, a time of spiritual preparation for the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah Jesus Christ. The faithful should make every effort to increase their prayer life, fast where possible and receive the sacrament of reconciliation during this time. One should begin this preparation soon because as we know the next four weeks come and go quickly.

Our spiritual attitude during Advent should be one of expectation for our Lord's coming. Certain traditional practices during this season help us in this regard; a Christmas tree, a crib scene of the Holy Family, lights, and Christmas cards. Families are encouraged to have their own Advent wreath at home and explain its meaning to the children, letting them light the candles.

Some people want to go straight to the Christmas celebration and forgo all the very important spiritual preparation process. Advent is a time of waiting for something very important to take place. Waiting can be dreary and requires a lot of patience. The prophets of the Old Testament spoke of a coming Messiah, but no one knew exactly when the Messiah would come. In many instances, they waited for hundreds of years, and when the Messiah finally came, very few were aware of His presence. They were not prepared (Jn 12:37-40). A child gazes at a Christmas tree for weeks imagining the appearance of presents under the tree. He keeps watch and finally the presents arrive as he knew they would. We should watch for the Messiah

in the same way, with the same expectation. Joyful waiting enhances the experience.

Advent and Christmas remind us that Jesus came to His people for the first time two thousand years ago. Now we wait in hope for His second coming in the future. Both of these comings involve the dispositions of preparation, anticipation, and hope. While we remember that Jesus came to us the first time two thousand years ago, and that He will come again in the future, we also know that He comes to us in a very real but hidden way every day in the Holy Eucharist, with His Holy Spirit. St. Bernard refers to this as a “middle coming”, a coming of Jesus into our hearts (*). Jesus as Messiah came to our ancestors in faith two thousand years ago. He is with us now and will come again in glory in the future. Every day is an opportunity to give thanks that Jesus is always with us, Emmanuel. Come Lord Jesus!

NOTE:

(*) St. Bernard, Liturgy of the Hours, Volume 1, p. 169.