

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (Year A) 11-30-2025 Homily

I. Introduction

It's quite common for people to fear certain future events or possibilities: for instance, the teenager who worries about his dad's reaction when he finds out he was in a fender-bender with the family car; the very shy college student who anxiously knows she'll have to give a presentation in front of her class before the end of the semester; the employee who's missed a lot of work, and accordingly dreads his upcoming job performance review; the woman who suspects something may be seriously wrong with her health, and is awaiting the results of the medical tests ordered by her doctor; the senior citizen on a fixed income who had to purchase a new furnace with his credit card, but has no idea how he'll pay the bill when it comes due; the family who sadly realizes they'll soon have to put to sleep their beloved but suffering twelve-year-old dog; and parishioners across the archdiocese worried over the possibility of their parishes being closed or merged, or their pastors being reassigned, due to the inevitable restructuring process. It was never God's plan that life be marked by fear, worry, confusion, uncertainty, or any form of mental distress; all these things came into being because of original sin, and it's almost impossible to avoid them during the course of life.

However, as children of God, we can see and experience life's difficulties and challenges with the proper perspective: namely, these things can be a way of growing in grace, of being prepared for life in Heaven, and of being reminded that no matter what happens, God is in charge. A small village was struck by a rare earthquake, and all the people were running around in panic—except for one elderly woman who sat, calmly praying, on her front porch. Once of her distraught neighbors shouted at her, “Aren't you worried about what's happening?” She answered, “No—I rejoice to see that my God is strong enough to shake the world!” That's the attitude Jesus wants us to have, whether in regard to problems and dangers of life, or the events that will be associated with His Second Coming. We are called to wait for the Day of the Lord in a spirit of hope—and those who do so truly have no reason for fear.

II. Development

There are some Christians who, contrary to tradition and the teaching of the Church, believe in something called the rapture: the idea that, before things become too difficult or dangerous on earth, Jesus will return to rescue or evacuate all His followers and take them to a place of safety while the forces of evil are temporarily victorious on earth. Believers in the rapture point to today's Gospel as proof: of the two men in the field, or the two women grinding grain, one will be taken and the other left behind. What they overlook, however, is the saying of Jesus that in the future, it will be as it was in the days of Noah. Who were those taken away? Those sinners swept away by the Great Flood. Who remained behind? Noah and his family—the only righteous people on earth. The Lord arranges all things for the good of those who love Him; as St. Paul says in the Letter to the Romans, “our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.” Moreover, in the 1st Reading Isaiah prophesied a future day of religious unity and peace, in which all people will walk in the light of the Lord. Even when evil seems to gain the upper hand here on earth, God is in control of history, and even if frightening things happen, His plan is unfolding, and His people do not need to be afraid.

III. Conclusion

In Japan many years ago there was a businessman who walked to the train station every morning, accompanied by his dog, named Hachi, and boarded the train on his way to work. Every evening Hachi was there at the train station, awaiting his master's return. One day, however, the businessman died in an accident while in the city. Hachi, of course, was unable to comprehend why his master didn't get off the train that night; he waited an hour, then sadly trotted home. The next evening Hachi was waiting for the train, but the same thing occurred then, and the day after, and the next day, and every day that followed for the next ten years. When someone realized and reported what was happening, the Japanese people were so impressed by the dog's faithfulness that the government actually erected a statue of Hachi at the train station, and sent small statues of Hachi to every school in the country (Roy B. Zuck, *The Speaker's Quote Book*, p. 341).

This is the sort of fidelity and loyalty that Jesus is asking from each one of us. We cannot know in advance the day of our encounter with Him—whether the moment of our own death, or the day of His Second Coming. However, as St. Augustine once said, our ignorance in this regard will not be held against us, provided we are spiritually ready to meet Him, whatever day that happens to be. Our Lord warns us very clearly that we must stay spiritually awake. In practical terms, this means praying every day, even if only for just a few minutes; reading Scripture, and also other worthwhile religious literature, on a regular basis; using Advent resources provided by the parish; attending Mass each weekend; going to Confession at least twice a year; using our opportunities to serve others in Christ's Name; and not giving into society's efforts to turn this holy season into nothing more than a time of spending and self-indulgence. The world is trying to undermine our allegiance to Jesus, and will probably succeed by default unless we consciously choose, again and again, to put Him first in our lives.

Those who live only for themselves, and who allow themselves to be swept along by this world's values, are in danger of losing everything, and have every reason to fear what their future may hold. True disciples of Jesus, however, will find themselves prepared for whatever problems, challenges, and surprises life may bring. The Kingdom of the Lord is indeed coming—and those who are ready for it will have all eternity to rejoice.