

Homily on the First Sunday of Advent
St. John Paul II Parish, Cedar Springs, Michigan
Mary Queen of Apostles Parish, Sand Lake, Michigan
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December 3, 2018

**“Then they will see the Son of Man
coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”
(Lk 21:27)**

A new liturgical year begins with a special and powerful season! “Advent has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation” (*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* no. 39).

So often people only focus on one aspect of Advent, namely to prepare with awe and gratitude for the Feast of the Incarnation of Jesus, born to us as our Savior, and neglect the reminder that we need to prepare for His return at the end of time. The universal judgement at the end of time also reminds each of us about our individual judgment day—the moment, as soon as each completes this earthly journey, giving an account for all the love God has shown to each individual and the gifts He has given to a person during his/her pilgrimage. The individual judgment then prepares each to stand with the entire humanity when the Lord comes again.

This is the key word for Holy Advent: **prepare!** The Gospel of Luke warns, “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life” (Lk 21:34). How easy it is to lose focus on our Lord either by too much indulgence in our lives or by too much worry about our lives. Both extremes are easy to fall into. To avoid these traps we are told to “be vigilant” and “pray for strength to sustain us” (Lk 21:36).

“Be vigilant” means we Christians must put on the attitude of readiness for the intervention of our God as the first reading reminded us: “The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise” (Jer. 33:14). “Be vigilant” means we should ask ourselves some hard questions: Am I staying faithful to my prayer life? Am I using my energy and skills to serve others? Am I overly concerned about material gain? Am I relying on my “stuff” or my investments as my source of comfort or security? Am I living for the moment or for the coming of the Lord?

“May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all... so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen” (1Thes 3: 12-13) is the prayer that St. Paul made to the early Christians in Thessalonica. This prayer is appropriate for all of us today; Christian people standing at the dawn of the Holy Season of Advent.

My dear friends, Advent wastes no time in calling our urgent attention to the theme of preparation. The Scriptures on this first Sunday of Advent shout into the ears of our souls: Wake up and get ready! Yes, let us prepare because the Lord is coming with awe and wonder.

Scriptural Readings:

Reading 1 JER 33:14-16; Responsorial Psalm PS 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14; Reading 2 1 THES 3:12—4:2;
Alleluia PS 85:86; Gospel LK 21:25-28, 34-36
