

First Sunday of Advent

Today we begin the season of Advent. Advent means waiting or coming and we wait for the coming of someone we love. During this season, we focus on waiting for the Lord, waiting for the coming of Jesus. We have the three fold waiting. We know that Jesus has already come in history and we remember that during the week before Christmas our waiting changes to waiting for our celebration of the birth of Jesus. We also wait for his final coming at the end times when he will take all to himself. We also experience his daily coming into our life through the Eucharist, word of God and also in the various persons and events of life. Waiting is something very important in the life of the human person. Anytime we wait we do so because we expect something to happen or someone to come.

In our daily routine of life we wait for something to take place, maybe we wait for a friend, for a neighbor, and there is the eagerness within us that makes us look forward to something new that will take place. During Advent we look forward to Jesus who will come in a gesture of love: God becomes man. The Gospel of Mark invites all to a spiritual vigilance. He tells us all to be ever alert so that the coming of the Son does not find us unprepared for no one knows the day or hour of his coming.

Today's Gospel is speaking on the level of the future and present comings of Jesus. The key word placed before us is 'readiness'. He calls on his disciples to be on their guard and to stay awake, because they never know when the time will come. Here Jesus gives a parable about a man travelling abroad. He does two things: he gives various responsibilities to his servants to be carried out while he is away; and he warns the doorkeeper to be vigilant. Jesus tells each one of us to stay awake, because no one knows when the master of the house is coming, evening,

midnight, cockcrow, dawn. If he comes unexpectedly, he must not find his chosen ones asleep and not at all prepared. Therefore he asks all to stay awake and alert.

If they are faithful, they will carry out all those tasks given to them whether the master is present or not. When the master does eventually return, the faithful servants will be in good stead because they have done what they were supposed to do. They have done their task with diligence and loyalty.

Today's readings touch upon a number of spiritual issues. They reveal to us that God is faithful, His Word being unchanging. They teach us the end result of righteousness. They tell us that although we presently dwell in our present sinful physical bodies that seek to oppose what is spiritual, we can still be blameless before God on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are all very powerful statements that deserve to be reviewed so that they may be understood.

The Gospel Reading reminds us that while Heaven and earth shall pass away, the Words of the Lord shall not pass away. Every promise that He has made shall be fulfilled. Thus Jesus gives us the warning: Watch. Do not be caught unawares. On his part this is an eminently positive admonition and the guiding step. The Christian who listens to the words of Jesus lives in permanent expectation of his coming and will welcome him as the long-awaited Master arrives from his journey. Secondly, to be on watch is to be aware each day, through prayer and reflection that the 'today' of salvation is here and now.