

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, CYCLE A

Isaiah 2: 1-5 + Psalm 122 + Romans 13: 11-14 + Matthew 24: 37-44

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: December 1, 2019

December often flies by in a flurry of activities.

Parties and purchases press upon people, and there never seems to be enough time to get everything done.

For many, it is the most stressful time of the year.

The Season of Advent invites us to take a step back from the crazy-busyness of this time of year and reflect upon the reason for our gift-giving and celebrating. God has visited Planet Earth, humbly becoming one with us in all things but sin. The God through whom all has been created, through whom everything holds together, has fallen head-over-heels in love with humankind, and like the best lover of all, wants to be with us in everything.

The Son of God left this world by ascending into glory at His Father's right hand, but He has never really gone away.

By the power of his Spirit he remains with us, stealing kisses from pinched lips and holding our hand in the dark.

These daily visits to us, these comings in mystery, are meant to prepare us for his sudden coming again in glory at the end of time.

The only way we stay awake and prepare ourselves for his coming at our death or in glory at the end of time is by receiving Him now in the midst of the ordinariness of our daily lives.

These hope-filled days of the Advent Season remind us that the Son of God who came and humbly walked this earth and who will come again with power and might, is still coming in mystery, visiting those who are waiting, watching, and alert to his presence.

Advent is not only a Season; advent is a way of life, of being constantly alert for the coming of the Lord.

Advent gifts us with the awareness that Christ has already been born in us by baptism and longs to grow His life within us.

We wait for Him, we long for Him who is the reason for our deepest joy and greatest hope, because He has already come to us in bread and wine to deepen our hunger and thirst for Him.

Those of us who have put on Jesus Christ in baptism and whose life has grown in us by Holy Communion, long for more life in Him.

Our Advent waiting for Him, our longing for Him, is always a movement from something to something more, from life to a more abundant life in Him.

The secret of waiting for Him, and staying awake for his visits, is that he has already come to us and claimed us as His own. Something has already begun which he wants to bring to completion. Our life-long journey of faith is about welcoming Him as he comes to us in so many different ways.

The Risen Lord Jesus, by the ever-creative power of His Spirit, comes to us daily in so many varied ways. In the silence of our prayer, He comes to us. In his word in Sacred Scripture, he speaks to us. By the beauty of His Creation, he sings to us. Through other people, he touches us in love and challenges us to love Him present in them.

Sometimes the Coming One breaks into our lives like a thief in the night, and we are not ready for his coming, because we are not awake, we are not alert to the present moment of his visitation. We are not fully present to the present moment in which he is coming, because we live in the past of pain or the future of worry.

We are also not awake to his coming because we walk in the darkness of sin, which blinds us to his visits. That is why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is such an important way to prepare for his coming, by throwing off the deeds of darkness and walking in the light of his merciful love. To receive Him as he comes to us in Confession, freeing us from all those choices against love, in order that we might receive Him, who is love, more readily.

All of our life is Advent, a life in which we wait, actively present to the moment, trusting that new things will happen to us, new things that are far beyond what we can imagine or dream.

Attentive to the present moment of the Lord's coming, we can look to the future filled with hope.

However, Advent ushers us into the challenge of believing that the world as we know it is not what God intends and that God wills to help us do better.

The prophet Isaiah tells us what God intends for the world:

The life and prayer and witness of believers
will attract all peoples to know and love God.

He speaks of a time when weapons of war are transformed into tools for agriculture,
and when human beings will care for one another and this Earth
as they were created to do.

There is no excuse for a failure to look into that future willed by God.

Neither is there an excuse for failing this very day to start making it happen.