

## **Reflection for the First Sunday of Advent**

Today we begin the journey of Advent. This liturgical season reminds us of the coming of Jesus in a threefold dimension:

- His historical coming in Bethlehem, about two thousand and thirty years ago;
- His daily and silent coming in grace and in the sacraments, and in our day-to-day life;
- And His glorious coming at the end of time.

Advent is a time of preparation to receive Jesus, who always wants to come to us, to be born among us, to make Himself present in our life. Over the coming days, step by step, we will prepare the way so that Jesus may come to meet us and so that we may recognize Him and welcome Him when He arrives. The Word of God that we will hear in these days will help us to mark out this path.

The liturgy of this first Sunday of Advent tells us: “watch,” “be attentive,” “do not let yourselves fall asleep.” It would be terrible if, out of comfort, negligence, indifference, or distraction, we were to lose the opportunity to welcome the One who comes to free the world and to give a new dynamism to human history; the One who wants to be born as a child among us in order to tell us that it is by the path of humility that God builds His Kingdom in our midst.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah shares with us his dream of universal peace and fraternal communion among all peoples and nations. Is this a naïve and impossible utopia? It is a promise of God; and the promises of God do not normally fall into emptiness. Jesus, the One whose birth we will celebrate at the end of Advent, was sent by God to us in order to fulfill this promise. He wanted to be born among us to bring into being a new People of God, without borders, without closed doors, but where all have a place at God’s table.

Let us know how to be builders of this Kingdom, opening the doors of our heart to everyone, without distinction of cultures, races, and nations. Every human being is my brother, this is what Jesus taught us. Let us

make the prophecy of Isaiah real today, for it is for this that Christ came to us and continues to come today.

In the second reading, Paul of Tarsus warns the Christians of Rome—and Christians of every age and place—that time is passing and that the day of our definitive liberation is drawing near. Therefore, it is time to abandon the “works of darkness” and to clothe ourselves with the “armor of light.” The Lord Jesus is going to come; we must be prepared for the encounter with Him. Let us open our heart to Jesus, let us prepare ourselves to welcome Him into our life, abandoning hatreds and envy, injustices and lies, violence and death. Let us be sowers of hope and life among us, and in this way we will be prepared to welcome Jesus into our existence.

The Gospel brings us part of a discourse of Jesus spoken before the disciples, on the Mount of Olives, a few days before His passion and death. The instruction that Jesus gives is clear: “Watch, always be prepared, do not let yourselves be distracted by trivialities, live attentive to the challenges that God sets before you, do not forget the Good News that I proposed to you, look with love and mercy upon the brothers and sisters who walk at your side, commit yourselves at every moment to building a world that is more just, more human, and happier.”

For the disciples of Jesus, carelessness, laziness, indifference, and conformism are not an option. Let us not worry about counting the days that remain for the coming of the Lord. Let us not live in fear and anxiety about tomorrow, but let us always be prepared to welcome Jesus, because “at the hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

### **How to live Advent?**

- Create spaces of silence to hear the voice of God.
- Distance yourself from what puts you to sleep spiritually: excesses, distractions, consumerism.
- Rekindle personal and family prayer.
- Value the listening of the Word of God, especially by participating in the Eucharist where Jesus continues to proclaim His Word to us.
- Practice concrete gestures of love.

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- Prepare our heart to welcome Jesus, especially through the sacrament of reconciliation.

More than preparing our homes for Christmas, it is time to prepare our interior, so that Christ may find a watchful, simple, and welcoming heart.

May Mary, Virgin of Advent, teach us to wait, to welcome, and to live the presence of God who comes to meet us.

AMEN.