

REFLECTION FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

With this First Sunday of Advent, we begin a new liturgical year. The readings will be from Year C and the book of Luke for the coming year. We also begin use of a new lectionary based on the English Standard Version – Catholic Edition of the bible.

The word Advent means waiting for someone to come. Advent, therefore, is the time when the Church awaits the arrival of the Savior -- the arrival of Jesus Christ. This waiting has a past, present, and future dimension.

We remember the past: the waiting for the arrival of the Messiah that the People of God experienced, a waiting that ended with the celebration of the Lord's Christmas.

We celebrate the present: in every moment of our history, we experience the Lord's coming in the present day. Today the Lord continues to want to be born among us, which is why Advent is a fundamental feature of the Christian faith: always waiting for the Lord to come.

We celebrate the future: the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, at the end of time.

On the first Sunday of this Advent season, the Church puts the accent on the future, reminding us that we are still in Advent, waiting for the coming of Christ at the end of time to complete the work of salvation. That is why, on this first Sunday, the Word of God tells us that the “*days are coming*” and gives us indications to prepare for it. It invites us to live this time with joy and hope, because our liberation “is near;” and it challenges us to walk attentively and vigilantly, listening to God and paying attention to our brothers and sisters whom we meet at every step.

In the first reading, through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, the God of the first covenant assures Judah that he has not forgotten his promises and that he will send a “*righteous branch*” from the family of David to bring about the world of justice and peace that the people dream of. The Messiah, the “*offspring*” of David, will bring justice, harmony, and life in abundance to the People of God. The prophets were sowers of hope. Today, may we continue to dream of the world of justice and peace that all hope for, and may each of us commit ourselves to making this dream world a reality. We believe that it is possible to build this new world with our small gestures of solidarity, peace, justice, and forgiveness. One day the Lord will come, and this world will be *true* forever.

In the second reading, Paul indicates the path to follow as we wait for the Lord. We must try to live in irreproachable holiness, in which fraternal love, “*abounds in love for one another and for all,*” and is our hallmark as disciples who faithfully await the coming of Jesus.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples about this awaited “day of the Lord,” the day when the old world, imprisoned by selfishness, evil, and sin, will fall to make way for a new world. That day will be, for us, as the Lord's disciples, the day of liberation, our day of supreme joy. While we wait for that day to come, we must remain faithful and vigilant, listening to God and his calls, attentive to the needs and sufferings of the men and women with whom we walk.

May hope never die in our hearts. Christ is our hope; he has already come; he is coming; and he will come again. A holy Advent season to all.

Amen.