

Homily
November 27, 2022
First Sunday of Advent
23:04-34:05

Advenire! *Advenire*. It is the root of the word, “Advent.” It means, “The Coming.” But which Coming?

Whenever we begin this season of Advent, the Church has given us three different years of readings, but each follows the same pattern.

The first week: A look at the Second Coming.

The next week: The Coming of the Baptist in his ministry.

The third week: The Coming of Jesus in his ministry, it’s beginning.

Then the last week: The story before the birth, the Coming of the Savior.

That’s what the Scriptures give us. But we in the Season live out three comings. Yes, the Coming at the end of time – the day of the Son of Man. Secondly, we wait for the Coming, the celebration of the First Coming of Christ in the Incarnation. But there is a Third that is essential for the other two to make sense in our lives. The Coming of our Lord into our hearts.

Isaiah the prophet lived in the latter part of the eighth century before Christ. He was a prophet for forty years. And they were very turbulent times. On the one hand, while he was prophesying in Judah, the Northern Kingdom was carried off by the Assyrians. And it left the Southern Kingdom - Judah, shaken. And then Babylon began to rise and there was this rivalry between Assyria and Babylon, pulling Israel (that is, Judah) back and forth, and back and forth. Powers beyond their control threatened their very life.

It is to this situation that our First Reading was written by this prophet Isaiah. He wished the people to realize that no matter what had happened, or what would happen, something marvelous was going to come about. And that marvel was that Jerusalem, Zion, was going to bring about a unity in the world that it had never seen.

Weapons. Swords into plowshares. Spears into pruning hooks. Both of which give life. But more so, there was going to be a time now of universal peace. There would be no more of this back and

forth, being pulled left to right by the powers that be. No. All nations would come and be drawn to this place where God lived in their midst.

A promise of universal peace. We're still waiting for that aren't we? Jesus himself was waiting for it. And the people of his time, they too were pulled back and forth on the one hand, by being part of the Roman Empire and not what they wished to be. And the society around them assaulting their being Jews. They're questioning their religion. They're seeing them as really different. And they were pulled back and forth, and back and forth.

Paul even in our Second Reading alludes to that. When he says, "you need to step away from these powerful cultural things that are going on. You know, orgies and the like and sin. And focus, focus on the Lord in your life."

In the Gospel we know that peace had not yet come. Jesus (the writer Matthew makes it very clear) there will be a Coming, a Second Coming of the Son of Man. And it will be a surprise. If you're not looking for it, even if you are, it's going to be a surprise. So he says, "Stay awake! You do not know the hour. You do not know the day."

Brothers and sisters, we stand in the season of *Advenire*, Advent. We know of that first Coming. We will celebrate it well. December 25th through January 9th.

We know of the Second Coming. We hear it again and again. And we long for it, if we're honest. Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray for his Kingdom to come, his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We long for the coming of that day. But if we're going to wait well for the celebration, or for the Final Coming, we must focus on the Third Coming, the Lord coming into our hearts.

You know, I was sitting in the prayer room upstairs this morning and I found myself trying to immerse myself in these thoughts. And I heard myself saying to the Lord, "Come into my heart. Grasp the latch and come in. Come into my heart. Knock on the door that I might open. Come sit with me."

If we're going to be ready, truly ready for the Lord's Coming, we have to practice. Practice every day. Practice by realizing that his Coming is a source of hope. His Coming has built trust in the past and continues to offer us that trust for the future.

We are called to anticipate in that wonderful way that leaves us almost breathless. Our waiting is not passive. And it's not like standing in the line at CVS. If you've had that experience recently, it's a

long line. No. This is a waiting of the heart, which permeates our days. If we allow that. If we do it intentionally each day through some form of prayer, asking the Lord to come into our hearts.

Or through the use of the reflection booklet that you received this week in the mail. Or through moments of focusing on what the Lord hopes for you. Then no matter how the Lord comes, when the celebration of Christmas arrives – that wonderful season – we'll be prepared. And there will be a sense of joy, not just another holiday to get through.

And if the Lord should come in the Final Coming before then, we will embrace it. We will not run from it. We will not tell the Lord, "Hey can you wait just a minute? I wasn't ready." No. We will be enraptured that he would come and take us home.

Advenire. The Coming. For us, the waiting. May we do it very well. And be filled with joy.