



## Homily - Dec 1, 2024- First Sunday of Advent, Year C - Timestamp 17:00 - 27:47

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When I was in the Seminary at St Meinrad School of Theology back in the early '70's we had a thing called "J Term" or "Interterm." It was the January month where we shared professors from other seminaries and students from St Meinrad or the other seminaries exchanged places. We had Louisville Presbyterian, Southern Baptist and Asbury Methodist, et cetera.

The first time I experienced this, it was wonderful. But at the same time there was a moment where it seemed to be very painful for two of the guys from Asbury Methodist. I was sitting with them. We were trying to - you know - help out the guys who weren't used to St Meinrad.

So we were at Mass and in the midst of Mass I looked at them and they were crying. I thought, "Good Heavens! What have we done?" You know how Catholic guilt is. You know. We must have done something wrong.

On the way to dinner I walked with them. Their names were Dave and Dave. I said, "Guys, did we do something to upset you?"

"Oh no, no."

I said, "Well, why were you crying?"

"We had no idea there was so much scripture in the Mass! It was amazing. There are quotes and allusions to scripture throughout all the prayers. We didn't know that. It made us feel so good because the Word is so important to us."

Boy did I breathe a sigh of relief. What an amazing insight from strangers. Insights that could so easily pass us by because we've heard these prayers in English since the late 1960's. The scriptural allusions often pass us by.

Here's one such that we hear at every Mass. It's part of the prayer after the Our Father. It's that expansion of "Deliver us oh Lord..." The last line is this: "As we await the Blessed

hope, the coming of Our Savior Jesus Christ.” And your response: “For the kingdom the power and the glory are yours now and forever.”

This particular passage in the Mass, “As we await the Blessed hope the coming of Our Savior Jesus Christ,” is taken right out of Paul's letter to Titus. And the latter part is a doxology that is a “Praise Proclamation,” similar to the doxology that if we were sitting with our Protestant brothers and sisters, we would pray, “For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory now and forever.”

This was an addition to the text of Matthew Chapter 6, verse 13, an addition by a scribe in the early days of the Reformation who thought, “Well there's got to be a doxology at the end of the prayer.” There was a doxology at the end of every prayer. So he put it in there. (Yeah. So he really wasn't supposed to do that.)

These words, “As we await the Blessed hope, the coming of Our Savior Jesus Christ,” are quite apt for us on this first Sunday of Advent. Indeed, throughout the season as we await the Blessed hope, which is the coming of Our Savior Jesus Christ.

We spend the next three and a half weeks dealing with three comings of the Lord. These first two weeks we focus upon the Glorious final coming of the Lord. The last two weeks beginning with Gaudete Sunday all the way through Christmas Eve, focuses on the first coming of the Incarnate One's coming into the world and our anticipation of celebrating that great moment.

Well, what's the third? Didn't know there was a third? Well there is the third is the coming of the Lord into our hearts, as alluded to in the readings especially the Gospel. Possibly the first time coming into our hearts. Possibly for a renewal of that presence in our hearts. Possibly an acknowledging of the continual presence of the Savior in our hearts.

For you see there's not a single way.

Perhaps the Lord coming into our hearts is something new to us.

Or perhaps we are kind of, “I don't know about that. That's just a little too close. It's too personal.” The Lord would not be with us there. Or perhaps we had the Lord close to us in our hearts at one point and that's sort of faded.

This time of Advent renewal moving towards celebration of the Incarnation -- this might be that moment when we are renewed within the heart and hold dear the presence of God in Christ.

Or for those who every day seem to have that sense, this is acknowledgement time of thanksgiving for that reality.

Jeremiah was building up a sense of hope for the people who were facing the destruction of their city. He plants within them the hope of one yet to come one like David. And so they lived that hope and they passed it down from generation to generation. Sometimes well. Sometimes not-so-well, until the coming of Our Savior Jesus Christ among his people.

On the other hand, the Gospel passage can be rather frightening with those fiery images. That's the kind of image that we tend to take and go, "Now I'm afraid. Do I really want all that to happen? Do I really want to see everything changed?"

Well, those images, my brothers and sisters, are not just about Cosmic realities. They are meant to stir within those who hear not fear, but rather a look into our lives as Paul suggested in the Second Reading, where we can be changed, converted, and become closer to the one whom we await.

Yes. Because you see, sometimes when we're asked to change it's like fire. It's like earthquakes, waves of the sea knocking us down - not to hurt us but to awaken us to the need. We need not be afraid of those moments, although there's always a bit of fear in us when we have to change or are invited to change.

But at the same time we know that such change is very lifegiving. Thus, that wonderful line in the Gospel, "When these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads, because your Redemption is at hand!" **Stand erect. Raise your heads. Be ready. Look for it and when you encounter it, rejoice!**

So I would raise for us questions. We await the blessed hope, the coming of Our Savior Jesus Christ.

Are you or I anticipating this with fear and trembling? Are you or I anticipating this blessed hope with apathy or seasonal overindulgence? Or are you and I anticipating this blessed hope with openness and joy? It's our choice to make as we begin this time of a blessed hope.