

Year B—1st Sunday Advent - 2014

- Well...I hope you all survived the Black Friday stampede—the annual homage to the gods of materialism.
- Oh, how much wiser we are to remember St. Paul’s letter to Timothy: “...*we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content...For the love of money [and of things] is the root of all evils...But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.*” (1Ti 6:7-11 RSV)
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- That’s one reason our Angel Tree and food drives are so good—they can act as a “check valve” of sorts to remind us to attend to the needs of others...and beware unbridled avarice in ourselves.
- As is written in the book Ecclesiastes: “...*the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*” (Ecc 1:8 RSV)...and our desire for more is endless.
- The times Jesus praises simplicity, kindness, and generosity are many; the times He praises wealth, power and prestige are none.
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- And this is certainly a thing to remember as we enter our preparation for the coming of our Lord—the King of the Universe who yet deigned to be born in a stable. When Jesus taught poverty and simplicity, He walked the walk and He talked the talk!
- Once again we begin a new Church year and enter the holy season of Advent, beginning our annual trek through the salvation history of the Christian era...from Jesus’ incarnation and birth at Christmas...to his death, resurrection, and ascension during Lent and the Easter season...through Ordinary Time which reflects the long period of waiting and growth in the faith in which we now

Year B—1st Sunday Advent - 2014

live...and finally culminating with the last Sunday of the Church year and the solemnity of Christ the King—which we celebrated last weekend.

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- An “advent” in general, of course, is defined as “*a coming onto the scene, or coming into view or into being--an arrival.*”
- In this preparatory season we recall the first “advent” of God in the flesh on the human scene in remembering the events surrounding Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem two millennia ago.
- But Advent is also a time to reflect upon the future...when Jesus will come again in the fulfillment of the promises of God...when we will all witness the fullness His Kingdom.
- When this will be...nobody knows. As Jesus tells us: “*...it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority.*”
- But neither do we need know it; our duty...our obligation...our joy...will be to be found waiting for Him with lamps of faith lighted...truly living our faith and His Word through the grace which He enkindled in us at baptism.
- As Jesus reminds us in the Gospel today: “*Watch...you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming...May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.*”
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- If we fear or dread the coming of Christ, we are definitely doing something wrong—either going against God in some matter, or simply not understanding what His second coming will mean for His faithful.

Year B—1st Sunday Advent - 2014

- His coming is our hope...for when He comes, whatever joy His faithful now have—the joy found only in love—will be increased literally without measure...for God is love, and He is without measure.
- God’s love will be so pure and powerful that, on that day, it will be as if we had never known love before...like a starving man stumbling upon a Thanksgiving feast.
- And this hope of ours is no idle tale or fantasy; it is reality. It is God’s own promise to us, and as St. Thomas Aquinas tells us: *“Truth Himself speaks truly, or [else] there’s nothing true.”*
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- And so...like the ancient Israelites, we, too, await the coming of the Savior...the Messiah...with anxious hope.
- Like John the Baptist, the Church exhorts us during the Advent season to re-examine our lives to ensure that our anxiety at His coming is not the anxiety of fear; if it is, root out whatever causes such a fear, and find the contentment and security of living in His grace.
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- Our first reading from Isaiah today on its face seems to fit better during Lent than during Advent: *“Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people...our guilt carries us away like the wind.”*
- The Church gives us this reading to spur us on to repentance before the coming of Christ.
- So let our Advent be a truly joyful time as we prepare for the coming of the Lord...sweeping out the dirt from the nooks and

Year B—1st Sunday Advent - 2014

crannies of our souls to make truly fit temples for the Holy Spirit... so that our temple is presentable for the King's arrival...accepting the grace offered so freely by God in confession, in prayer, and in weekly and daily Mass.

- For one day, Jesus will say to us as He says to Zacchaeus in the Gospel of Luke: “...*make haste...; for I must stay at your house today.*” (Luk 19:5 RSV)
- Remember your Greek mythology? The story of Hercules diverting the river to wash clean the Augean stables?
- It is by the floodwaters of God's grace that He washes us clean and restores us to the beauty of our baptismal day...if only we let Him!
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- Let us in this holy season renew our resolve to live in accordance with His Word...given to us through His Church. That is what is good; that is what is right; that is what is holy.
- Let our anxiety be the anxiousness of anticipation...as those in darkness watch for the dawn.
- For His dawning is meant to bring joy, not sadness. His dawning is to be a time for exhilaration, not for fear.
- So let us cry out with the prophet Isaiah in our first reading: “*Oh [LORD], that you would rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you...and come to save me.*”
- My friends... this Advent, let us remember the wonders...the love...that God has not only shown to us up to now, but promises to us without limit...all done for one purpose, and one purpose alone: that we, His beloved, may return to him and be with Him in glory.

Year B—1st Sunday Advent - 2014

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- A star rises in the east...a star from which all shadows flee...to light our way, so that through Him who is to be born we may come to the loving embrace of our God and our eternal Father...forever.

Year B—1st Sunday Advent - 2014

Reading 1

[Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7](#)

You, LORD, are our father,
our redeemer you are named forever.
Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways,
and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?
Return for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your heritage.
Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
with the mountains quaking before you,
while you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for,
such as they had not heard of from of old.
No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you
doing such deeds for those who wait for him.
Would that you might meet us doing right,
that we were mindful of you in our ways!
Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful;
all of us have become like unclean people,
all our good deeds are like polluted rags;
we have all withered like leaves,
and our guilt carries us away like the wind.
There is none who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to cling to you;
for you have hidden your face from us
and have delivered us up to our guilt.
Yet, O LORD, you are our father;
we are the clay and you the potter;
we are all the work of your hands.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#)

R. (4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.

Rouse your power,
and come to save us.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Year B—1st Sunday Advent - 2014

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.
Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Reading II

[1 Cor 1:3-9](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account
for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus,
that in him you were enriched in every way,
with all discourse and all knowledge,
as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you,
so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift
as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He will keep you firm to the end,
irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
God is faithful,
and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel

[Mk 13:33-37](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:
“Be watchful! Be alert!
You do not know when the time will come.
It is like a man traveling abroad.
He leaves home and places his servants in charge,
each with his own work,
and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.
Watch, therefore;
you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming,
whether in the evening, or at midnight,
or at cockcrow, or in the morning.
May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.
What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”