

- Welcome to this beginning day of a new Church year...this first Sunday of Advent... as the Church brings our attention to the celebration of the birth of Jesus and His first coming...but also to enhance realization, and anticipation, of His second coming...as we join in the call of the early Christians: “*Marana tha!*”...
“*Come, Lord Jesus!*”
- When will He return to us? As Jesus just told us, no one knows; that knowledge God has reserved to Himself alone.
- Our task—and wisdom—is simply to live in faith...as if His return is tomorrow, because it may very well be for all that we know.
- And if tomorrow is that great day, let it be one of rejoicing, as it is meant to be...and not one of fear, saying with the unfaithful “*Mountains, hide us! Hills, cover us!*” (cf. Lk 23:30)
- Because it will be pointless to hide. Scripture tells us: “*Can a man hide himself...so that I cannot see him? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth?*” (Jeremiah 23:24 RSV)
- As the psalmist cries out in his contemplation of the omniscience and omnipresence of God: “*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in [the underworld], you are there!*” (Psalm 139:7-12 RSV)
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- But fear, terror, trepidation...not how it is meant to be for us, and not what God wants for us.
- The Father sent His Son to save us from such uncertainty and fear!...to show us the depths of His love for us.
- And there it is!...God sacrificing Himself in love as a proxy for sinners...to fulfill divine justice for our sins and crimes against God and our fellow man.
- This is what is meant with; 🎵 “*O come, O come Emmanuel. And ransom captive Israel*” 🎵...we captive in sinfulness...which we are wholly unable to atone for by ourselves.
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- But people ask: “Can He not overlook justice in His love and mercy?”
- In one aspect, no...for God IS justice...and thus injustice can have no part of Him...just as God is all truth, and thus UNtruth cannot exist in Him. Absences of goodness can no more exist in God than a vacuum in the depth of the ocean.
- For God to have injustice or untruth, hatred or evil, is mutually contradictory. God IS truth, IS justice, IS love...IS goodness. .
- When scriptures speak of God “hating” or “anger” or the like, it is simply the human authors applying to God human emotions to communicate to us like effects—such as God “hating” the sinner, but in reality He simply punishes (in justice!) the sinner.
- God does not literally “hate” anyone...or any thing for that matter. We see that on the cross.
- As we read in the book of Wisdom: “...*you are merciful to all... and you overlook men's sins, that they may repent. For you love all things that exist, and have loathing for none of the things which you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it...You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord who loves the living.*” (Wisdom 11:23-26 RSV)
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- So, strictly speaking, injustice cannot exist in God. And this is why Christ dies on the cross—to satisfy for that injustice caused by our sins. 🎵 “*Ransom captive Israel.*” 🎵
- But...He does not force our acceptance of Christ as our “proxy”, so to speak. We can choose to go before God on our own...devoid of the justice won by Christ.
- And yet...what would we offer to Him to atone for our injustices? All we have is given to us by Him. All that we have that is truly our own is our free will...freedom to choose Him...or not. To live in goodness, in His Word...or not.
- But here is where we choose. Here is where we have the same choice given to the Israelites by Moses: “*I have set before you life*

and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life...loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you...” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20 RSV)

- Advent is a season of introspection, and even repentance...a time of grace (as we begin the Year of Grace!) to do some cleaning of our souls...especially turning from the sins of the flesh as St. Paul emphasizes today...for our sexuality is a holy thing, and thus is for true and sacramental marriage alone; any other use of it very likely rises to grave, if not mortal, sin...for God makes us in purity for purity.
 - As Paul writes: “...*throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.*”
 - Pornography, especially, is a scourge and plague of our day...not only gravely sinful in itself for both producer and viewer, but leading to even more mortal sin.
 - It destroys relationships by betrayal, and it renders viewers incapable of realistic expectations of relationships. Flee from it as from a raging bear or from the deadliest serpent...because it is OF the deadliest of serpents—straight from the fall in the Garden.
 - Satan caused the first fall of Man...and has reveled in causing the fall of men and women ever since.
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- So let us this Advent wash our souls...in conversion, in confession, in practicing more mindfully the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity...visiting that lonely elderly friend or relative...helping the poor and the sick...loosing grudges and putting them away: forgiving, as God is so ready to forgive us...
- ...making a habit of daily reading of the Bible—even a chapter or two a day out of the Gospels...and spending real time with God in

daily prayer...perhaps even an hour in the Blessed Sacrament chapel once a week.

- ...for God has written to us a treasure map; should we not take time to read it and discover how to find the treasure?
- As Isaiah tell us in the first reading:
 - *“Come, let us climb the LORD’s mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths.”*
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- So let us truly “...*throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...put on the Lord Jesus Christ*” as Paul writes.
- ...so that you may sing on that great day our responsorial psalm of today:
 - *I rejoiced because they said to me, “We will go up to the house of the LORD.”*

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- The magi traversed deserts, and braved dangers and hardships to follow the star and find the King of the Jews.
 - We traverse dangers and the desert of this world...the wilderness which so often seems devoid of grace...devoid of Godliness..... devoid of selfless love...by following the star which is Christ—and, through faith and charity, at the end of OUR journey awaits... not a stable, not a manger, not the bleating of sheep...but rather the King of Heaven, choirs of angels singing “Glory to God in the highest”...and life everlasting.

[Is 2:1-5](#)

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz,
saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come,
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest mountain
and raised above the hills.

All nations shall stream toward it;
many peoples shall come and say:
"Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may instruct us in his ways,
and we may walk in his paths."

For from Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations,
and impose terms on many peoples.

They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
one nation shall not raise the sword against another,
nor shall they train for war again.

O house of Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the Lord!

[Ps 122: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

I rejoiced because they said to me,
"We will go up to the house of the LORD."
And now we have set foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Jerusalem, built as a city
with compact unity.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

According to the decree for Israel,

to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

In it are set up judgment seats,
seats for the house of David.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
May those who love you prosper!
May peace be within your walls,
prosperity in your buildings.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Because of my brothers and friends
I will say, "Peace be within you!"
Because of the house of the LORD, our God,
I will pray for your good.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

[Rom 13:11-14](#)

Reading 2

Brothers and sisters:

You know the time;

it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep.

For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed;
the night is advanced, the day is at hand.

Let us then throw off the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light;

let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day,
not in orgies and drunkenness,
not in promiscuity and lust,
not in rivalry and jealousy.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

[Mt 24:37-44](#)

Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

"As it was in the days of Noah,
so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

In those days before the flood,
they were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage,
up to the day that Noah entered the ark.

They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away.

So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man.

Two men will be out in the field;

one will be taken, and one will be left.

Two women will be grinding at the mill;

one will be taken, and one will be left.

Therefore, stay awake!

For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

Be sure of this: if the master of the house

had known the hour of night when the thief was coming,

he would have stayed awake

and not let his house be broken into.

So too, you also must be prepared,

for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”