

FIRST SUNDAY of ADVENT – Year A

A tail gunner was being court-martialed. “What did you hear in your headset?” demanded a superior officer.

“Well,” replied the airman, “I heard my squadron leader holler, ‘Enemy planes at 5 o’clock!’”

“What action did you take?” persisted another officer.

“Why, sir,” replied the gunner, “I just sat back & waited. It was only 4:30.”

Anyway, one of the wars that has been on the headline lately is the war in Ukraine. This war has been going on for almost a year & has affected the whole in every aspect of its life. It has killed thousands of people & wounded several times more. If any Ukrainian who is lucky enough to survive that terrible war so far, one would have to put up with all the destruction & suffer the terrible consequences of war. Many Ukrainians have lost their homes while others have had to endure the lack of food, water, heat, electricity, & other basic necessities. With winter coming, we can only imagine how miserable life would be for the people of Ukraine. That is why no one in the right mind would want to start a war instead of building up a peaceful life. Only an insane person would like to have a war at all costs.

Believe it or not, the people of God had to endure a war with the Roman Empire & other ones with many empires before that. They lost that war & were exiled from their homeland. They were stripped of everything & left without any hope or dream for their future. This Sunday’s First Reading shares with us what was in the hearts & minds of the people of God during their time of suffering. It says, “...In days to come, the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest mountain & raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it... He shall judge nations, & impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares & their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall raise their swords against another, nor shall they train for war again. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!” So, the people of God evidently suffered at the hands of their invaders like the people of Ukraine & hoped to be freed from all wars & their terrible consequences. They dreamt that the Lord would be their ruler, & all nations would turn their destructive weapons of war into useful tools of daily living. They wished that nations would stop fighting & start collaborating with one another & building up a peaceful world.

As you can see, the people of God who had been through so many wars that they were exhausted from all the fighting & terrible consequences of war. Like the people of Ukraine, they had suffered enough from all the killing & miseries of war. All they dreamt about was a new world where everyone would get along & work hard for peace & harmony. But, they are not alone with that dream. Everyone who has ever experienced war would desire for peace more than anything else. As someone who had been through the Viet Nam War, I could not agree more. I would avoid all the fighting & work hard for peace every chance I could. That is why I’m baffled to see many Americans have constantly engaged in fighting over civic & religious matters. They are either ignorant about war, or they are taking peace for granted. Their feisty attitude certainly has contributed to all the random violent acts around our country & discouraged a life of peace. Can you imagine if you are in a relationship or a household that is in constant fight & turmoil? You would never have any peace in your heart. And you would certainly not have any joyful future in your life either.

Realizing how important a peaceful world is for the human family, St. Paul has this advice for us in today's Second Reading, "...It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than we first accepted the faith... Let us cast off deeds of darkness & put on the armor light. Let us live honorably as in day light; not in carousing & drunkenness, not in sexual excess & lust, not in quarreling & jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ & make no provision for the desires of the flesh." So, St. Paul calls us to stop quarreling & start putting on the life of our Lord Jesus. We need to cast off deeds of darkness & put on the armor of light. For that is how we can prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus & appreciate His gift of salvation & the eternal life. Jesus knew that if we keep on quarreling & fighting with one another, we would turn the whole earth into a world of darkness. We would allow evil deeds to take root in our hearts & get accepted by society as a normal way of life. That is why we have seen all the violent acts & lies happening around us every day. We got to resist those evil acts & condemn them when we see them in our lives. Otherwise, we will not allow the light of Christ to enter our hearts & homes in this season of Advent. Worst yet, we would miss out on the true meaning of the upcoming season & its wonderful blessings.

My dear brothers & sisters, one of the messages that we will hear in this Advent Season is the following, "the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light." Our world is currently full of darkness as we see all the fighting & violent acts happen around us. Some of us might even experience personal tragedies & sad situations in our lives. We desperately need the light of Christ to bring us a ray of hope & give us reasons to believe again. I pray that you will join me in adopting a peaceful attitude this Advent Season & allow the light of Christ to enter our world & give us hope for a brighter future.