

## **HOMILY for 1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY of ADVENT – Year C**

This Sunday's Readings talk about the promises that the Lord made to His people back then and at the time of Jesus. Reflecting on it, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

A woman sends her husband out to buy some escargot for a dinner party that night. Instead, of going straight to the store, the husband decides to stop at the local bar to watch the Lions game. He has a few beers, & then some more, & pretty soon he looks at his watch & finds he is over an hour late for the dinner party. So, he dashes to the store, picks up the escargot, & frantically drives home. When he walks in the doors he can hear his wife coming from the kitchen. He quickly takes the bag of snails & throws them all over the floor. When his wife walks into the room, he says, "Come on guys, we're almost there!"

At least he remembered his promise & kept it! Anyway, this Sunday the Church invites us to welcome a new Liturgical Year (Year C) by celebrating the First Sunday of Advent. The new season of Advent usually marks the time of preparation & anticipation in joy & hope for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. We Christians have also used the Season of Advent to commemorate the First Christmas when Jesus entered our world to bring us salvation & show us the way to Heaven & the eternal life.

For a long time, the people of God had prayed & asked for a Messiah/Savior to rescue them from a life of slavery & restore their home country. That Messiah/Savior would be their king who would defend their well-being & dignity & rebuild their homeland. Evidently the Lord heard their cry & promised to send them the Messiah/Savior & restore them to the golden years under the reign of King David. Back then, the people of God were able to enjoy great respect from other nations & a peaceful & prosperous way of life. After the death of King David, all the following rulers of Israel became corrupted & useless & his prosperous Kingdom went through great turmoil of a civil war. It soon was overtaken by other powerful countries; & its citizens were driven into slavery. In fact, this Sunday's First Reading shares with us the Lord's promise to the Israelites as following, "The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel & Judah. In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right & just in the land. In those days, Judah shall be safe, & Jerusalem shall be secure." So, apparently the First Christmas was able to fulfill the promise that the Lord made to the Israelites & send a Messiah/Savior to do what is right for them & bring them protection & safety.

Unfortunately, the Messiah/Savior who was sent to them was not the political leader like they expected. Instead, he was the suffering servant who called on the people of God to change their lifestyle & reconcile with the Lord to avoid His punishments. The Lord then would not use other nations to dominate & punish them by subjecting them to a life of slavery anymore. The Lord would find a just & competent leader to protect them & help them rebuild their homeland. So, by changing their spiritual life & fixing their relationship with the Lord, Jesus the suffering servant believed that the people of God would be able to find the right political leaders & build a strong & prosperous nation. Sadly, the people of God could not understand the Lord's mysterious plan of salvation & hence could not recognize Jesus & His mission at the First Christmas. They continued to indulge in their sinful ways of life & expect a political leader instead. That is why they missed out on the Messiah Jesus & His spiritual

message of reconciliation with the Lord. They did not know that the Lord already answered their prayers & fulfilled His promise to them through the birth of Jesus.

Two thousand years later, Jesus has promised to return the second time & bring His chosen ones to His Kingdom. He wished that His disciples would follow His teachings & continue the mission of salvation that He left behind with them. His mission is to help the world return to God from its current way of life & save as many souls as possible. He wanted His disciples to follow a life of love – loving God & their neighbors - & be willing to make sacrifices for one another. He even showed them what true love looks like & made His own sacrifice for their salvation on the Cross. For that is how they could convince the world to convert from its former way of life & be His disciples. They would help change the current world only by a life of love; not by force or worldly things. In fact, St. Paul wants to remind us about Jesus' wish & mission for us in today's Second Reading as following, "May the Lord increase you & make you overcome with love for one another & for all, even as our love does for you. May He strengthen your hearts, making them blameless & holy before our God & Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His holy ones." So, we are being admonished to follow a holy & loving way of life while preparing for our Lord Jesus' Second Coming.

However, do we really know when our Lord will be returning? No, not really. Only God the Father would. That is why we need to be ready for His Second Coming at all times. We do not want to be caught off guard while following a wrong way of life. We should not disappoint Him by living in darkness & forgetting about His mission of salvation. Rather, we should make Him proud & continue a life of love as He commanded us. Indeed, He left with us the following advice in this Sunday's Gospel, "Be on guard lest your spirits become bloated with indulgence & drunkenness & worldly cares. The great day will suddenly close in on you like a trap... So, be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape whatever is in prospect, & to stand secure before the Sun of Man." So, the Lord Jesus calls us to avoid following the ways of the world & resist a dissolute lifestyle. Instead, we should stay vigilant & keep on praying for strength & courage to follow a life of love only. If we could do that, we would be ready & excited to welcome Jesus' Second Coming at any time.

My dear brothers & sisters, if there is one thing that we Christians all want, besides having a place in Heaven after this life, it would be to see Jesus face to face. We have heard a lot about Him in the Bible & tradition of the early Church. He is our hero & great role model. We cannot wait for that dream come true when we are able to meet Him at His Second Coming. So, I ask you to join me in preparation for His Second Coming by keeping vigil with those Advent Candles & a good prayer life in this season.