

## First Sunday of Advent (11/29/20)

I would like to start today by quoting the Collect for this Mass: “Stir up thy power, we beseech thee, O Lord, and Come: That from the threatening dangers of our sins, we may deserve to be rescued by Thy protection, and be saved by Thy deliverance.” We as a Church live daily in hope for the coming of the Lord, we sit amid our sins - the sins that would condemn us to an eternity of separation for God in Hell if not for the saving action of God in Jesus Christ. It is appropriate that we begin the Church year in vigil for the coming of the Lord to accomplish that saving action. The season of Advent is the response of a Church that sees the need for being rescued from the threatening danger of our sins and who calls out “Come Lord Jesus!”

The Latin word *Adventus* that the Church uses for this season is a unique word. It means “a coming” or “an arrival” - and so it is a fitting word for this season where we remain vigilant for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. However, there are other words in Latin that can convey the same meaning as “a coming” or “an arrival,” so why use this word above those? The word *Adventus* also means to “develop,” to “arise.” This makes it an appropriate term for the coming of the Savior who will develop to completion the plan of salvation and with his rising will provide the vehicle for all to arise. An *Adventus* itself can also refer to an “invasion,” “incursion,” and “appearance.” It is an arrival of one who will invade the current situation, upend the current order, and appear victoriously. In ancient Rome the arrival of the Emperor to the city was celebrated with an event called an “Adventus” - the welcoming of a ruler with global significance. It is for all these reasons that the early Church selected this name for the season where we await the coming of the great king who would invade a world of sin and liberate those loyal to him.

We know that he comes in a way not expected and in a way whose significance must develop to full stature in time (just as the baby Jesus will develop to full stature prior to his passion and resurrection). In the same way those who wait for that promised liberation must develop with him. This development involves, first of all, a spirit of watchfulness and waiting. Through many parables our Lord tells us of the need to be watchful, to be ready upon the return of the Master, to be prepared. We cannot grow with Him if we have not recognized Him. This season calls us to assess where it is that we are not prepared, where it is that we have not allowed

the penetration, the invasion, the incursion, the *Adventus* of the Lord into our hearts. Our human senses draw us to other things, our pride warps our will and points it to things that are not of God. We must prepare once again for that coming of the Lord into our hearts and to welcome him as one would welcome the king and ruler of great global significance - and obediently follow.

We thus begin today a period of waiting and growing awareness. We celebrate each year the singular event of the coming of the Lord at Christmas into the world, but as we do this we can reenter that arrival in a personal and spiritual way. We can open our hearts each year as the stable was opened to receive the Lord at his birth, we can come again each year spiritually to offer our gifts of ourselves and our treasures as the Wise Men did - in short Christmas can be for us a new event of coming each year - a reliving of the joy of the arrival of the savior anew in our hearts. But first there is the preparation, the looking forward to the significance of that coming.

Over the next four weeks we should grow in our openness, we should prepare more earnestly for that coming. As the candles of the Advent wreath are lit, and more light is given off, may they remind us of the growing nearness of the light of the world into the darkness of a world wrapped in the darkness of sin. As the weeks progress may that light aid us in our watchfulness - to see the presence of Jesus in the world around us, to be aware and open to his instructions to us, to guide us away from the loud sounds of the secular world - and the even louder sound of our own voice - to the quiet voice of the child that calls to us. His *Adventus* is a quiet coming - and in this quiet, by prayer and reflection, we are called to prepare for the coming of a king of global significance - a king who comes to save us from “the threatening dangers of our sins, we may deserve to be rescued by [His] protection, and be saved by [His] deliverance.”