

## 2019 December 01

### First Sunday of Advent

#### Readings:

**First:** *Isaiah 2.1-5, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord!" (3a)*

**Psalm:** 122, *"Let us go to the house of the Lord!" (1b)*

**Second:** *Romans 13.11-14, "Salvation is nearer to us now" (11b)*

**Gospel:** *Matthew 24.37-44, "For the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour." (44b)*

### *Already, Not Yet!*

Advent is always for a new beginning; the cycle of the New Year begins rolling. In the Scriptural references today we have a message that the 'the Kingdom is already here but, not yet', a message to be awake and watchful. Jesus in his eschatological prophesy speaks of a choice: 'of the two one will be taken and the other left behind'. The choice to be taken or left behind is done or is to be done not by the one who takes but by the one taken. We are the ones that decide to follow or not to follow Jesus. Of course, it has to be on his terms and not ours.

To enter the kingdom of heaven our righteousness should surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees, that is, we cannot stop at the minimum, but have to go beyond; not to go with the current but to go against it; not to be judged by what is 'politically correct', but by what is morally imperative. Isaiah's people go "*to the mountain of the Lord, ... that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his path*" (Isaiah 2:3.) Today Jesus is at the other end of the spectrum, prophesying the end happenings.

It is the Alpha meeting the Omega, or the rendezvous of the beginning and the end, 'the already, not yet'. Being included in the company of those redeemed by the Lord is the already. The Lord has already done his part of redemption. On our part we have to appropriate it. That is the 'not yet' part, the work in progress, to be done by us while on earth. Because of our human frailty we need to be reminded of it, go through a continuous refinement, fine tuning and even repair. Advent is the time we begin that process anew. Let us begin.

Advent is not a period of penance, but of an expectant hope; there is penitence and repairing; rechecking and a three-pronged re-orientations, namely, to God, to our brothers and sisters and to our own self. This is a time to remind us that we here on earth are just stewards of our time, talent and treasure, in need of giving an accounting, that we are the keepers of our brothers and sisters, that we all are part of, and engaged in the building up of the big family of God, and that we are on our pilgrimage to our homeland!

