

2020 November 29

*First Sunday of Advent*

**Reading:**

**First:** Isaiah 63.16 to 64.1-8 "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!" (64.1)

**The Psalm:** 80 "Turn again, O God of hosts; look down from heaven and see!" (14a)

**Second:** 1 Corinthians 1.3-9 "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (3)

**The Gospel:** Mark 13.33-37 "Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time comes." (33)

### ***Awake, He's on the way!***

There is no break, interval, or rest from being prepared. 'Be awake and be prepared' are the often-repeated call of Jesus. At the beginning of the liturgical cycle we are called to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. At the end of the cycle also we have the same call to be prepared. The first coming was a long expected and promised one and it brought with it with many surprises. He came, not in the expected manner. They expected him in the royal palaces but he came into a manger; expected to be the Mighty One but came as a helpless child born in an absolutely poor family; expected to be an invincible conqueror but was totally vanquished.

However, all these features were well prophesied and documented long before, and they happened exactly as were predicted. Those who awaited for him were totally unprepared. They did not recognize him when he came. Those anointed and commissioned to serve him worked against him. However, those who had the mindset and true internal preparation saw him, recognized him, and were blessed by his coming. Now this part is history and it is 'his-story'.

And his story continues. He has his promises, being fulfilled, and yet to happen. The one promise to be fulfilled is his second coming which, with all its details, were well predicted by him. Everything about that coming is made clear with hardly any room for surprises. However, Jesus has been ever a surprise, a living surprise and also a life-giving one, and a would-be surprise. Though his second coming is predicted in many details, yet the surprises waiting for us are likely to be innumerable.

His promise of life everlasting is the greatest surprise, which no one can understand and explain. His promise of the kingdom is another surprise, which no mortal can comprehend. Only those who are truly awake and are prepared will have these surprises with their excitements. The one thing Jesus said, which we do not understand enough or do not want to understand is "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" (John 18.36) We are looking forward and striving to reach it. That is what now we prepare for in Advent also. Advent needs preparation, and it is a preparation for this kingdom, his kingdom, our kingdom, and the only kingdom that will stay. Let us work on it. The prayers of Isaiah and of the psalmist in today's readings were good for their times, for the time of Jesus' coming and are good now for our times. We must appropriate the blessings Paul imparted on the Corinthians, and incorporate ourselves into the time Jesus predicted in the Gospel today.

*Fr. George*

*(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)*



