

November 15, 2020 Waiting For Christ Homily: In 1956, a rather controversial play, *“Waiting For Godot”* written by the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett, opened on Broadway to mixed reviews. Theatergoers of the Fifties found the play to be confusing, a head scratcher. Here’s why. In the opening scene two men are standing near a tree. They reveal that they are waiting for a man named Godot. Later, a boy appears on stage, who informs them that he is a messenger from Godot. “Godot will not be coming”, he says. “But he will surely come tomorrow.” On the following night, the boy returns and once again tells the two men that Godot will not be coming.

The curtain falls, ending the play.

Huh?

Becket’s message is dark and disturbing. If we wait for God, we will be bitterly disappointed. We will wait forever.

Such a bleak message was unappealing in the Fifties. In the second decade of the Twenty-First century, it has found favor with the entertainment industry, the corporate media, university professors and the technocrats of Silicon Valley. What they each have in common is a skeptical view of religion: Religious faith is a superstition, belief in a personal god is absurd and the very idea of life after death is preposterous.

In Saint Paul’s early letters, he is emphatic on two points. First, there is life after death and second, Christ will return again in glory. In his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul identified the “day of the Lord” with the Second Coming of Christ. (I Thess. 4:16) His coming will be sudden... like a “thief in the night”. (I Thess. 5:2) It will mark the end of human history. Paul is simply echoing a promise made by Jesus himself. On the night of his religious trial, he said, “You will see the Son of Man again when he is seated at the right hand of God’s power and comes on the clouds of heaven”. (Mt. 26:64)

Although the teaching of the Second Coming is an article of faith and is enshrined in our creed (“He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead”), it might be considered a little strange for many of us in the present day. Nevertheless, the Second Coming was taken very seriously by the early Christians. They anticipated with joy the Lord’s return. In many Christian homes, every Saturday night a vigil of all night prayer began that ended on Sunday morning. This was because Christians hoped that Jesus might return at any time. They assumed that he would show up on his day, Sunday, the day of his Resurrection, and they would be waiting and ready to greet him

Saint Paul exhorts his fellow believers to be always vigilant, always on the watch. They must live as “children of the light and children of the day”. (I Thess. 5:5) One can never know when the last day of his life shall be or when. In addition, the Second Coming of Christ will likely take us all by surprise. Our God, according to Pope Francis, is a God of surprises.

In the early years of the last century John Jacob Astor was likely the world’s richest man. By today’s reckoning he would have a fortune in excess of forty billion dollars. Sometime in 1912, he and his pregnant wife set sail for America on a ship’s maiden voyage. While at sea tragedy struck. The doomed

ship, the Titanic, capsized and many lost their lives. Astor's wife was spared because only women and children were allowed to climb into the lifeboats. Jacob Astor's life came to a sudden, dramatic end. He had not yet reached the age of fifty.

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" are the words we pray at mass. They speak to us of Christ.

Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

In his fine book "Catholic Christianity", Peter Kreeft observes, "The most important event in human history has already happened, the Incarnation, the First Coming, the event that divides all time into two, into B.C. and A.D. Only one more great event will happen: the Second coming. There will be no more revelations, no more bibles, no more churches, and no more saviors until the end of time".

At the end of the Book of Revelation, the bible's last book, there is a cry of longing... "Come, Lord Jesus". It is a response to Jesus' promise: "Surely, I am coming soon". (Rev. 22:20)

Do we await him?

Amen!