

Jesus Christ, the Son of David, is the shoot that blossomed from the root of the stump of Jesse. Jesus Christ has the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of strength, and the Spirit of knowledge to judge us when we die. “Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land’s afflicted” (Isa 11:3-4).

Jesus Christ was born 2,000 years ago in poverty. He was loved by Mary, the Blessed Mother, who said yes when the Archangel Gabriel asked her to fulfill God’s plan for the redemption and salvation of mankind. In Jerusalem for the Passover, the ruthless and the wicked condemned him to death. He suffered and died on the cross and rose on the third day. 40 days later he ascended to be with the Father in heaven. He is seated on the throne of judgement.

When you die, you will face Jesus in your own Particular Judgement. The soul separates from the body and the soul encounters the risen Christ who judges us fairly and justly. The masks that we wear in this life disappear. All of our pride is stripped away. Jesus reveals our lives to us, the good and the bad. The just are welcomed immediately into heaven. Those who have died and yet are not quite ready for heaven enter into purgatory to be cleansed and purified ... with heaven their final destination after a time for atonement. The ruthless and the wicked who have rejected the way the truth and the life receive the fruits of their selfish labor. Hell awaits them.

With each Advent, we pray for the Second Coming of Jesus. At the end of time, Jesus will come again and all of humanity faces a General Judgement. “All will be revealed, and our Particular Judgment will be ratified for all to see and to understand. Just prior to this ratification all bodies that have died will rise from the dead and reunite with their souls.”¹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that Christ will come in glory to “reveal the meaning of Salvation history and the Providence of God by which justice has triumphed over evil.” To put it differently using images from the Prophet Isaiah of the world to come, “Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them ... There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea” (11:6, 9).

Yes, each Advent is a preparation for the Second Coming of Christ, the end of time, the final judgement. No wonder the Lord warns us to be prepared. No wonder we are called to forgive others as the Lord has forgiven us. No wonder the Lord teaches us to love our neighbor like the Good Samaritan. No wonder the Lord teaches us to store up wealth for heaven rather than the passing wealth of this world. No wonder the Lord tells us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sick, admonish the sinner, counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful, forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead.

The day of the General Judgement is pictured as a threat to all life. Zephaniah tells us, “A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, a day of thick black clouds... On the day of the LORD’s wrath, in the fire of his passion, all the earth will be consumed. For he will make an end, yes, a sudden end, of all who live on the earth” (1:15,18). If we indeed have something to worry about, then this is a call to repentance, a call to turn back to God, a call to abandon sinful ways.

“Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come” (Mark 13:33). Generally, we do not fear Advent. Rather, we look in joyful expectation for the Second Coming of Christ. Let us aspire to a blessed and holy death. Let us prepare. The Just Judge is the dispenser of Divine Mercy. He does not want to lose any soul. He died for all. He wants to save all. So, let us prepare:

“Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground ... In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:13-17).