

First Sunday of Advent (12/2/07)

Surprise, Advent is upon us! It seems hard to believe that we are beginning a new liturgical year. Around us we hear the calls of the season, some good, some too concerned with things rather than God and relationships with our neighbors. The readings point us to an awareness of the nearness of the Lord during our daily life: “Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.” (Is. 2:5). While we continue to live in this in-between time, between the time of the first coming of the Lord and His second coming in Glory, we are to walk as enlightened disciples. Christ has given us His light, and asks us to walk in His light so as to be examples to the world, that the world may be drawn to God.

Thanksgiving is behind us and Christmas lies ahead. What would the next few weeks of our life be like if we truly walked in an awareness of the “light of the Lord” and tried to let that light shine on others? Maybe we can make that a priority of our daily life for the next 4 weeks. Isaiah gives us a vision of what life would be like if everyone lived in charity and justice and peace. Let us resolve to “stay awake” to this vision and the surprises God may have in store for us as we begin to live in the Kingdom of God’s love. Let us walk in the light and show others that light because of our love of the Lord. Will you take this challenge this Advent? Blessings to you!

December 9, 2007 - Second Sunday in Advent

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Third Sunday in Advent (12/16/07)

Be patient! How many times have we heard that? It does indeed come right from scripture. It is from both the Old Testament and today's reading from James. Be patient, for the Lord is coming. He will fulfill all His promises and restore all creation and humanity to perfect harmony. Isaiah gives us such beautiful poetry to describe what it will be like. He of course was talking about the return of Israel from its captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem, something his listeners had never experienced since they had been exiled for about 75 years. Isaiah gives hope to people in darkness, just as the New Testament scriptures give us hope until the final coming of the Lord. Meanwhile, we must patiently work to prepare the way of the Lord.

John the Baptist, imprisoned and perhaps a little depressed, had the courage to ask Jesus if He was the One. Do we sometimes feel like asking Him the same question? Are You going to handle the problems of the world, and of my world? I'm waiting! Sometimes we probably feel exactly like John. When will our problems end? Just as God has spoken to His people for thousands of years, He speaks to us. Be patient! If anyone else had told us to be patient for a couple thousand years, we would certainly abandon them. But in fact, we do know from our own experience that God answers our calls for help. It may not be when or in the way we want, but God does answer. In hindsight we see how God works in our lives and brings us to His love and forgiveness just when we are about to give up. And then we can certainly say, at least until our next trial, He is indeed the One!! He is on His way!

Fourth Sunday of Advent (12/23/07)

When the last Sunday of Advent is so close to Christmas, sometimes we miss the significance of the readings because we are looking ahead. But the readings today remind us that God always has a plan that involves our cooperation for bringing good out of bad. God was planning some 700 years before Jesus was born how He was going to bring about the salvation of His people. Ahaz was king of Judah and was invited by Israel in the North and Syria to join them in rebelling against Assyria, the dominant world power. But Ahaz was afraid and planned to make a deal with the Assyrians to protect his rule. To appease the Assyrians Ahaz had replaced the altar in the Temple with an Assyrian altar and had even sacrificed his firstborn son to the Assyrian god Modoc. The prophet Isaiah told Ahaz to have faith in God and not the Assyrians. But Ahaz had already made up his mind and would not ask for a sign. So in frustration Isaiah promised him a sign from God anyways, the birth of a son who would continue the Davidic line. The child would be a sign that God was still with His people even if their rulers were unfaithful.

Matthew understands this prophecy some 700 years later as referring to the virgin birth of the Messiah, who is truly the fulfillment of the word "Emmanuel" because God was truly with his people as a God-man. Today we are asked to have more faith than Ahaz and to trust that God is with us even when it looks like we are going to be defeated by the events of life. Because God can never be outdone in faithfulness, if we remain faithful to God He will be even more faithful to us. May the blessing of the incarnate son of God always remind you of His eternal presence with us on our pilgrimage of life! And may we give birth to Christ in our hearts each day and share Him with the world! Amen! Merry Christmas!!

Feast of the Holy Family – (12/30/07)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all! I hope your Christmas was blessed and filled with great joy. I pray that this New Year may be blessed and peaceful also. Family and friends at this time of year remind us of the connections we have with each other and of our need to share with others in order to receive. It is especially helpful during these holy days to reach out to neighbors who have few family members and to share some of our blessings and joy with them. As the Lord says, and St. Francis reminds us in song, it is in giving that we receive.

May we empty our hearts of all fears and distractions in this New Year and allow the Lord to reside with us. And having received from the Lord, may we be generous in sharing the Lord's blessings with our brothers and sisters. Amen!