

First Sunday of Advent
Vigilant Waiting for the Lord

Today we inaugurate the Season of Advent, which is the beginning of the Church's Liturgical Year. This season has a double focus. On the one hand, it directs our attention to the coming of Christ in the mystery of Christmas. On the other, it focuses our attention on the second coming of Christ at the end of the ages. One coming or "advent" has already occurred: Christ has come, and we will celebrate that coming at Christmas. The other coming has not yet occurred, and it is for that "advent" that we wait in joyful hope. For, when Christ comes a second time, he will bring the fullness of God's salvation. All things will be set aright, and all will be well because God will be all in all.

The Sundays of Advent have a clearly defined structure that can be summarized in this way. On the First Sunday of Advent, the liturgy directs our attention to the final or second coming of Christ as the end of the ages, and calls us to be vigilant and ready. On the Second and Third Sundays of Advent, the liturgy directs our attention on the first coming of Christ that has already occurred. John the Baptist plays a prominent role in the gospels of these two Sundays, as he calls people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Finally, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the liturgy directs our attention to the Virgin Mary and the mystery of the Word made flesh, the Incarnation. This structure of Advent can be outlined in this way.

<i>Advent 1</i>	<i>The Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Ages</i>
<i>Advent 2</i>	<i>John the Baptist announces the First Coming of Christ</i>
<i>Advent 3</i>	<i>John the Baptist announces the First Coming of Christ</i>
<i>Advent 4</i>	<i>The Virgin Mary and the Mystery of Christmas</i>

This Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, the focus is on the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the ages. The first reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah describes the universal peace that Christ will bring: "one nation shall not raise the sword against the other." The second reading from Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us that our salvation is nearer now than when we first began to believe, and so it is time for us to throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Finally, in the gospel, Jesus tells us to be vigilant because at an hour we do not expect, the Son of Man (Jesus) will return. The central theme of this day, then, is *the need for vigilant waiting*. There will be a moment when God will renew and restore all things in Christ, and if we hope to participate in that salvation we must be prepared. We must be vigilant. For, we are waiting and hoping for something that only God can bring in Christ. We are waiting for that salvation that only God can accomplish. *Father Matera*

These four weeks of Advent also mark the final weeks of our Capital Campaign for our Campus Connection Project. If you have been contacted by one of our volunteers, I urge you to respond as generously as you can. If you have not been contacted, you will have

an opportunity to make your pledge in these final weeks. I thank all of you for your generous response to our Campaign.