

Advent 1C 2015

“The Days Are Coming”

Today we begin the season of Advent—a time of waiting and hoping as we prepare for the coming of Christ in the mystery of Christmas and, at the end of the ages. And so the prayers and readings of today’s liturgy are filled with a sense of anticipation.

The Prophet Jeremiah tells us *the days are coming* when God will fulfill all of the promises he has made. Saint Paul exhorts us to be *blameless in holiness* so that we can stand in the presence of the Lord when he comes. Jesus exhorts us *to be vigilant* and not to let our hearts become drowsy lest we miss that great day of salvation. Finally, in the opening prayer of today’s Mass, we asked God for the resolve *to run forth and meet Christ* with works of charity when he comes so that we will be worthy to enter the kingdom of God.

Our *Advent wreath* reminds us of this season. Today we lit the first candle—a sign that the light of Christ has entered the world and is slowly overcoming the darkness of sin and evil. In the weeks ahead, we will light the other candles to proclaim our faith that the light of Christ is more powerful than the darkness of sin, that the light of Christ is already overcoming the darkness of evil.

Advent comes at just the right moment. It comes at a time when the days are growing shorter and colder, a time when we are often discouraged and despondent. But this year, it seems to me that we need the hope and promise of Advent more than ever. The recent acts of terror and violence in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East are beginning to take their toll. The unspeakable violence that has happened there fills us

with anger, and yes, perhaps even a hatred can put us into a whirlpool of violence from which we will not escape. There is a sense that the wrong people are winning. There is a sense that God is silent. There is a sense that the power of hatred and violence are too strong to overcome.

This is why we need Advent so much this year. This is why we need to live with the hope and promise Advent gives in these days before Christmas and throughout the entire year. Advent reminds us that God fulfilled his promises in the past, and God will fulfill them in new and unexpected ways in the future. God fulfilled his promise in Jesus Christ the long-awaited Messiah. God fulfills his promises today in the gift of Christ who is our light and salvation. And God will fulfill all of his promises in God's way (not our way), in God's time (not our time). God will be triumphant; God will be victorious—and that is all that matters.

You see, even though we are not always aware of it—indeed most time we are not aware of it—God is always coming to meet us in new and unexpected ways. That is why we need to be vigilant and watchful. That is why we must be prepared to go forth every day to meet the Lord when comes.

The next few weeks will be busy and hectic as we prepare for the holidays. There will be gatherings and parties; people will be buying and selling. But don't let the business of life distract you from the purpose of life—that is the mystery of Christ, who enters our life every day. Be watchful! Be vigilant, because Christ is always coming to meet us; Christ is ever present to us; Christ is never absent.