

## *Advent 1A 2016*

### *Preparing for God's Future*

Today we begin the season of Advent, a time of waiting and hoping for the coming of Christ (1) in the mystery of Christmas, and then (2) at the end of the ages. This is a time when the prayers and readings of the liturgy focus our attention on the future God has in store, not only for us, but for the whole of creation. It is during this season that we reflect on the gift of salvation we already enjoy in Jesus Christ as we wait for that moment when the fullness of God's salvation will be revealed in us and in the world.

The prophet Isaiah looks forward to this day of universal peace and justice when every weapon of war will be destroyed because there will be no more need for war. On that day every nation will seek to know the truth that is God. And so the prophet urges us to walk in the light of the Lord.

St. Paul reminds us that this day of salvation is closer now than when we first believed in Christ. The dark night of sin and death is receding, and the glorious day of God's salvation is fast approaching. And so we must conduct ourselves as children of the day and children of the light.

But we must be ready and prepared for that day, and so Jesus warns us to be vigilant because the salvation for which we are waiting and hoping will come suddenly and unexpectedly. At a moment we least expect, the light of God's

salvation will break into our lives. And so, we must be ready for the One who brings us life and salvation—the only One who can bring us light and salvation.

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I love this season of Advent because it renews my hope and puts everything into perspective for me. During this season more than any other I understand that my life is part of something greater than I am. Advent reminds me that the future that truly matters, the future that will change and transform me forever, is the future God brings in Jesus Christ. And so Advent fills me with hope and confidence.

I need Advent because without the hope that Advent provides it is easy to become discouraged and disheartened. It is easy to look at the world and say, things are getting worse; there is no reason to hope. It is easy to say that the promises of God are just that, empty promises and nothing more. It is easy to settle for less and become a realist who says, “let’s be satisfied with what we have and what we can do; for the promises of God are too great, too wonderful to hope for.”

This is why I need Advent more than ever this year. The prayers and readings of Advent warn me not to settle for less than God’s promises. They assure me that just as God’s promises were once fulfilled in Christ, so they will be fulfilled anew, in God’s way, God’s time. Advent encourages me to keep on

hoping even when it seems there is no reason to hope. Advent warns me not to settle for something less than the salvation that God and only God can bring.

What are you waiting for this Advent Season? What are you hoping for? Are you still hoping for God's promises or have you already settled for less? Have you become a realist, a pessimist? Have you lost the courage to hope for God's promises? If you have, then you need this Advent season more than ever before. You need to learn to hope for the good things that only God can bring and that God will bring in Jesus Christ.