

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT; Cycle – A; Dec. 1st 20 19

Is.2: 1-5; Rom. 13: 11-14; Mt. 24: 37-44

We come once again to Advent, the beginning of the liturgical year and the great season of waiting. Christian life has a permanent advent quality, for we are always expecting the coming of the Lord; we are waiting for His definitive second coming. There are three dimensions of Advent:

First, the Lord came; and we know it is history and it is true.

Second, He will definitively come; that's His second coming.

And the third, He is coming even now; which means the Risen Lord wants to take up residence in us today.

So Advent is, perhaps most immediately, a preparation for that coming. We are getting ourselves ready to receive Christ who wants even now, to be born in us. We know the story of Zacchaeus. Jesus said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." He came down quickly and received Jesus with joy. Actually, Jesus wanted to reside in his heart than being in his house. How can we receive Jesus into our hearts during this advent season? Today's readings give us some wonderful insights.

Our first reading is taken from the 2nd chapter of prophet Isaiah, where the prophet speaks about the day of fulfilment; the day the Lord will definitively rule over Israel. It's a symbolic manifestation of what it will look like when Christ comes to rule over us individually. **"In the days to come, Isaiah says, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain..."** When Christ comes to reign in us, He must be the highest value in our lives. His house should be on the highest mountain. And we all know, someone or some thing or some value is highest in our lives. It might be our prestige, our wealth, our career, our family, our country, our ego or whatever it is. Everybody has a highest mountain in his/her life. *When Christ comes into our lives, He wants to be the Lord of all aspects of our lives without any competition.*

And then Isaiah says: **"All nations shall stream toward it. Many peoples shall come and say: Come, let us go up to the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob..."** Let this image stay in your mind all through out the advent season; the streaming of all the nations towards Jerusalem, the Lord's house. Let all the

elements of you stream towards Christ; everything in your life - your motions, your mind, your will, your personal projects, your friendships - should turn towards Him. *When Jesus Christ is established as the highest value, then everything in you centers around and streams towards that great value.* It all belongs to Him and He demands to be the Lord of your life. He is not one among many interests in your lives. He should not be limited to 'an hour' on Sunday but be the highest value in your lives.

So the wonderful preparation for this advent is the ordering or reordering of our lives. It should be a time for searching a moral inventory of our lives. Let us go through all dimensions of our lives and ask the honest question, 'can I say, all these dimensions of my life are under Jesus' lordship.' If not everything streaming towards Christ, if we have a highest mountain other than Him, we have to work on our lives during this Advent. All of us, are to some degree at war with ourselves. Sometimes my mind wants this, but my will wants something else. We have one emotion pushing us this way and another emotion pushing us that way. When Christ is not the center of our lives, we do indeed become a jumble of conflicting desires and aspirations. When Christ become the center, all the elements in me come to a harmony. If you want peace in your soul, put Christ at the center.

Now the question is, 'when would all this happen?' That's what we heard in the second reading. St. Paul speaks to the church in Rome: **"...and you know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep"** (Rom13:11) *In the bible sleep is a symbol of spiritual laziness or inattention.* Think of the disciples sleeping at the garden of Gethsemane while Jesus was confronting his great moment of trial. His friends, his intimate disciples are asleep. St. Paul is telling; the time is now; that's the advent. And we read in today's gospel: **"Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come."**

And so, the church once again, at the beginning of the liturgical year, shouts at us once more: WAKE UP, CHANGE, REPENT, PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD.