

Readings Jeremiah 33: 14 -16; Thessalonians 3: 12 - 4: 2; Luke 21: 25 – 28, 34 - 36



Fr Michael says:

Overview

We live in the time, which comes between the First Coming of Jesus at Bethlehem and His Second Coming at the end of time. Advent opens us up to them, starting with the vision of where it is all destined and the need for us to focus on this as the overall priority of our lives and the inspiration by which we live our lives and by what principles and ideals. The history of salvation has to be written into our lives daily, the Messiah is promised to Isaiah and the people, who will discover Him in the way they love each other, as Paul tells us, that is why we need the stimulus of the vision of where we are going to be put vividly before our eyes, as it is in the Gospel. It was seen to be near and so there is a great sense of urgency, a need for vigilance and prayer.

We need to see the whole sweep of the History of Salvation, that is what we do as we journey through the coming year, through the eyes of Luke, who is very much desirous of presenting us with the person of Jesus, who He is and how He reacts and responds to people and the events which occur and through the way people respond to Him in the course of all this, so we are drawn into the whole drama of Jesus' life and are invited to be part of group which accompanies Him up and down the Promised Land. We need to come to it with fresh eyes; we can so easily become stale and we lose the savour of what is going on. This is the constant battle we are called to fight as we listen to the stories we replay our own lives and see where Jesus is with us in them and the more we can do this, the more we will be able to enrich and transform our own daily lives. Today's message to us is therefore for us to start this new journey with renewed minds and hearts. The more we understand where we are going, the more commitment and enthusiasm we will have for ensuring that we will ensure we follow the right path.

The end as understood by the Christians of the time was expected shortly and would have all sorts of spectacular signs to go with it, something we find difficult to accept. What we are called to expect from the end of time is the sense of liberation and salvation that Jesus affirms so strongly. The end of the world is not doom and gloom, as some of the scenarios are painted, but showing the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness of power and glory. We wait is without fear, as we have confidence, are alert and prayerful. Our focus should be on our individual end of our world, for which we do have responsibility, rather than worrying about a cosmic ending about which we can do nothing!

A short reflection: "The hills fade, but will bloom again next year, we never get back our youth. Life is a fragile gift, which we can enjoy only briefly; our life is like the warming of oneself in the sun. We live in a flash before we know it, evening comes and night falls – the very fleetingness of life makes it all the more precious. Lord, may your gentle and sure light guide us on the unfolding road, so that we may walk with confidence towards the light that never fades and the life that never ends."

Homily for the First Sunday of Advent – C Fr Robert Henshaw



Fr Robert said: Advent 1 (C) 2006

Just before Mass the altar servers and I were standing the other side of that door. What were we doing? We were waiting. We were waiting for the beginning of Mass, for the first hymn to start up. When you think of it, we do an awful lot of waiting in our lives. For all I know some of you may already be waiting for this sermon to end, but in an ordinary day, people wait for trains, they wait for buses, they wait for

the post to arrive, they wait for an e-mail or a text message, they wait in queues at the supermarket, at the bank, at the doctors or the dentists, they wait for their favourite programme on television, they wait for their children to come home from school or their wife/husband to come home from work.

And of course, all this waiting is coloured by different feelings. Often we wait with a feeling of boredom or impatience. Sometimes we wait with dread, to know the result of a scan or medical test, but at other times, we wait with a happy feeling, as when we wait for the arrival of a close friend or a loved one.

This short season of Advent is a time of waiting. Children know that because they are waiting for Christmas, they are waiting for their presents and all the nice things about Christmas. In Advent we wait in joyful hope for the coming of Our Saviour. It's true that he has already come when he was born into the world at Bethlehem and we are preparing in Advent to celebrate his birth. But it's also true that the same Jesus Christ will come again in glory at the end of the time and the Gospel of today's Mass reminds us that we must always be ready for that Second Coming.

But there is a third way in which Jesus comes. He comes to us now. Advent is a season of longing for the coming of Our Lord into our hearts and into our homes. It's a time when we try to identify ourselves with the Jewish people who waited so long for the coming of The Messiah. The birth of the Christ-child was God's answer to their expectations. As we prepare to celebrate his birth and to welcome him again with faith and love into our lives, what should our attitude be? Everything in the world around us encourages us to start celebrating Christmas now. We can't escape from the carols piped into the shops or restaurants, the Christmas decorations, the Christmas lights, the commercialisation, but maybe we can keep alive in our hearts the spirit of Advent, which is longing, the hope, the joyful waiting.

When you are waiting for the arrival of a dear friend or a member of the family coming home after a long absence, you know what it is like. There's a sort of exciting tension as we wait for the plane to land or the train to pull in. We keep looking at our watch and scanning the faces of travellers. This is the best sort of waiting, when we open our hearts to welcome someone. One of those rare moments when our attention isn't focussed on ourselves, but on the one who comes.

Personally, I hope that this year my Advent will be a bit like that. That in spite of all the things that have to be done in the next few weeks, in spite of the extra stress, I won't forget the one essential thing—the coming of Our Saviour.