

## THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (year C)

28 NOVEMBER 2021

**Readings:** Jeremiah 33:14-16 | I Thessalonians 3:12-4:2 | Luke 21:25-28

A happy and blessed New Year to you all! It seems strange that as we begin this New Year for the Church our readings focus our attention on the end of time. The Church wishes to start the year inviting us on a great journey – to follow the footsteps of Jesus in all his mysteries so that we may live as he lived. Our attention is to be focused on the end of time, towards the second coming of Christ. Our readings speak of the end of the world as we know it. The end is the coming of God's Kingdom in all its glory. We are assured that it will happen. The Prophet Jeremiah reminds us that God will fulfil his promises by sending his Son, Jesus, among us and he will be the way for us to follow as the kingdom is established and proceeds by God's grace to its fulfilment when as St Luke reminds us today that the whole of creation will be gathered up by Jesus when he returns in glory so that he may present everything to the Father. So here we see three comings of Christ, each of which is the focus of one of our readings today.

As Bishop Barron reminds us in writing about Advent these three comings show the Lord coming in history, his coming today in the here and now and thirdly at the end of time. Jeremiah looks forward in joy to the time when the promise of God to King David would be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus; the expectation of the coming of the messiah would be fulfilled. This coming of Jesus would be more than just an event in the history of the world but would be an axis point of all history, an event that even changed how we denote time. We speak of time being before Christ or after Christ (BC and AD). His coming fulfilled not just the promises to Israel but affected the world at large for ever.

St Paul's First letter to the Thessalonians speaks of the coming of Jesus in the now. This was probably the first of the letters written by Paul when he writes to an early Christian community on how we are to live in the light of the Lord's daily presence among us by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are called to live as the mystical body of Christ, we are united by the Spirit to make the Lord present in the world by the way we live our lives. The love of the Lord is to be

the dynamic of the community of which we are members so that the holiness of the Lord may be seen in us. We are called to let this influence the wider world in which we live. We know that we are weak and in need of all that the Lord offers us and he calls us to be people of prayer who are nourished by his love, his Word in the Scriptures and by his real presence in the Sacraments. This has a particular relevance at this time when the Holy Father has asked the Church to be more deeply engaged with our faith journey in his calling of the Synod which takes place over the next two years. Pope Francis calls us to spend time looking into our own spiritual journey in prayer in the light of the Holy Spirit and encouraging us to share what the Spirit seems to be saying to the Church as a whole as to how we should live at this time as Church and particularly as a missionary Church in the world today. All of us have experiences to share whether we are attending Church or not, for as Baptised Catholics we are the Church. To this end a questionnaire has been produced, copies of which are available in the Churches. These can be filled in anonymously and returned as part of our seeking how the Lord wants us to follow in his footsteps. This is just a beginning. The Lord comes to us daily in this his second coming. The question for us is the one we heard last week: Is Jesus the Lord of my life?

We are if you like the 'inbetweeners' as we look forward to the Third coming of Christ, the definitive coming of Christ at the end of time as history moves to its culmination, the end of time, bringing history to its conclusion. While we live in the present our attention is directed to the fulfilment of God's plan with the coming of the new heaven and the new earth, the new life to which God calls us at the end of time. Jesus has won the battle for us in his passion, death and resurrection and with confident faith we recognise that we are pilgrims on a journey who wait in joyful hope for his coming in his glory. In a real sense we are people of great expectations as we look forward to the coming of God's glory, ready to greet him whenever the day comes.

Jesus encourages us in the gospel today to avoid the excesses of the world which can deflect us from following him. It is extraordinary how consumerism can distract us from the season of Advent as we seek to prepare to celebrate the first coming of the Lord at Christmas. The 'secular' Christmas seems to start earlier and earlier each year and now Black Friday has now become Black

Friday Week! May we find in this holy season of Advent moments of peace to pray and reflect on the enormity which is at the heart of our faith, namely that we are so precious to God our Father that he has sent his Son Jesus to share in the fullness of our humanity, to walk with us daily in his love confident that he is leading us into the fullness of the Father's glory which has been prepared for us since before time began. Advent is a time for us to be nourished by the Lord in Word and Sacrament and make our own the words of today's Psalm:

'Lord, make me know your ways. Lord, teach me your paths. Make me walk in your truth, and teach me: for you are God my saviour. The Lord is good and upright. He shows the path to those who stray, he guides the humble in the right path; he teaches his way to the poor.'

May this Advent be for us all a blessed and joyful time as we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Lord.

God bless you,

Fr Hugh